

Trumpet Weekly

MARCH 18, 2016

German Chancellor and head of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) Angela Merkel gives a press conference at CDU's headquarters in Berlin on March 14, 2016, a day after election in three regional states.



The Fall of Merkel and Rise of a New Germany

By Stephen Flurry and Richard Palmer

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



“EUROSKEPTIC PARTY ALTERNATIVE FÜR DEUTSCHLAND STRIKES Fear in Rest” read a headline in the *Times* back in September 2013. What was the fear generating story after story in news media around the world? It was the possibility that the new Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) might win a shocking 5 percent of the vote in German elections.

In the “Super Sunday” elections held in Germany this weekend, the AfD won 24 percent of the vote in Saxony-Anhalt, coming in second. The *Financial Times* reported that this represents “the best regional result of any German populist right-wing party since 1945.”

This election was the first time German voters had the chance to voice their opinion on Chancellor Angela Merkel’s pro-immigrant policies, and many rejected them.

The big question to emerge from this election is that of Ms. Merkel’s political survival.

“Sunday’s verdict was a clear warning from the electorate that Germans have lost patience with the chancellor’s deliberate approach to the crisis,” wrote *Politico*.

“For the first time, her own party critics can point to hard election results to argue that her policies are having a detrimental effect on them,” *Politico* continued. “With Merkel’s party already divided on the issue [of immigration], it’s only a matter of time before challengers emerge.”

“Powerful figures within the party may start to look for an alternative leader ahead of next year’s national elections,” wrote the *Telegraph*.

In reality, lasting until 2017 and stepping down before the election is probably a best-case scenario for Ms. Merkel. That election is still a long way off, especially when you look at the headlines that continue to roll out every day on the migrant crisis. In January and February, over 123,000 migrants landed in Greece, compared with only 4,600 in the same period last year. That's an increase of nearly 2,600 percent! What will immigration be like this summer, as the weather warms up and more migrants take the chance of making that run?

Furthermore, Ms. Merkel is not changing course. "German voters on Sunday appeared to send a message to Chancellor Angela Merkel: Close the door on migrants," wrote the *Washington Post*. Germany's *Handelsblatt* took the same message. "The Wake-up Call" was the headline on its front page this morning. "Simply continuing on the same path is not an option," it wrote.

Yet in a news conference on Monday, Angela Merkel gave no sign she would reconsider this issue.

But the political shift demonstrated in Germany over the weekend goes beyond simply one individual.

"Berlin is facing a multitude of interlocking crises that are contributing to the fragmentation of Europe," wrote Lili Bayer for Geopolitical Futures on Friday.

"Despite its position as the largest economy in Europe and the leading political power on the Continent, Germany is finding itself unable to effectively address Europe's crises, and is struggling to maintain its influence in some regions," she wrote. "At the same time, Germany's economic vulnerabilities are coming to the fore. We can expect many more challenging weeks for Berlin in the months ahead."

Europe has a slew of unresolved crises, and they threaten to hit Germany the hardest. Each one will only add to the political instability. Look at where Germany's political system is *already*, as revealed by this weekend's elections. Yet the crises are only just starting to bite.

"We are seeing a normalization of right-wing populist movements in Germany just like elsewhere in Europe, even if here, it takes on a special form because we can't ignore Germany's past," said contemporary history professor at Mainz University Andreas Rödder, according to Agence France-Presse. Similarly, German political analyst Wolfgang Merkel told *Tagesspiegel*, "Until now, right-wing populist or extreme-right parties are considered taboo, considered like aliens in the political sphere."

"This is a tectonic shift in the political landscape in Germany,"

said Bavarian Prime Minister Horst Seehofer.

Spiegel sees the breaking of this taboo as part of the rise of a whole new political system.

"Stability used to define Germany's political system," it wrote. "But the refugee crisis has fundamentally changed the country's party landscape. The rise of the fringe has eroded the traditional centers of power."

Here's how the article began: "Seven or eight months ago, Germany was a different country than it is today. ... It was quiet and comfortable. But then the refugees began streaming into Europe Since then, disgusting eruptions of xenophobia have come in quick succession, a right-wing populist party is on its way to holding seats in several state parliaments Does anyone know what is happening? What is wrong with this country?"

Ms. Merkel's career is at stake over the coming months. But much more than that is on the line. How will these crises change Germany? What will the post-Merkel nation look like—a nation where a borderline xenophobic party can win a quarter of the vote in a major election?

Spiegel is not the only one sounding the alarm. "It was a night in which you could see, in a few hours, how much the country changed—and one could feel how much it is still changing," wrote *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. "The old ways, which determined the political landscape of the Federal Republic for decades, no longer apply. What was once certain is now uncertain. What was once considered impossible now seems likely." (*Trumpet* translation).

The Local, an English-language news website that focuses on Germany, published an article titled "Why German Politics as We Know It Is Crumbling." Talking about the Green Party's victory in Baden-Württemberg, it reported, "This was the first time in post-1945 Germany that a party outside the big two took the largest amount of votes at a state election."

When Germany's top news magazines warn of the rise of a new era in Germany and the end of the political system that has brought Germany one of its longest periods of relative peace in history, we should all take note.

The *Trumpet* has long warned of a radical political transformation coming to Germany and all of Europe. This transformation is already making headlines in Germany—although the writers cannot see where it is leading.

To see what the Bible says about this new political system coming to Europe, read the opening chapter to our free booklet *He Was Right, "Is a World Dictator About to Appear?"*

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MIDDLE EAST

TrumpetDaily

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GERMAN VOTERS BREAK AWAY FROM TWO MAIN PARTIES; RUSSIAN OBJECTIVES ACCOMPLISHED IN SYRIA | MARCH 15

GERMAN VOTERS HAVE SPOKEN AND THE NEW GLOBAL TERRORIST NORMAL | MARCH 14



Putin's Billion-Dollar Bargain in Syria

Brent Nagtegaal | March 20

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



BURDENED BY ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AFTER HIS TAKEOVER OF Crimea and bruised by historic lows in the price of oil, Russian President Vladimir Putin stunned the world last September when he announced a new military mission into the Middle East. At the time, Washington warned that Putin's venture into Syria would inevitably get Russia stuck in a "quagmire," while others busily crunched the numbers and wondered how he could afford such a mission.

Yet six months later, when Putin confidently announced the withdrawal of his forces from Syria earlier this week, he was able to declare "mission accomplished."

In most instances, Putin speaking in such positive terms of his own achievements can be chalked up to mere braggadocio. Yet in this case, he's telling the truth.

What Syria Cost Putin

According to some estimates, Russia's total bill for its near-six-month melee into the Middle East cost about \$1 billion. According to Moscow, Russia's total defense budget for 2015 was \$50 billion, meaning Syria took up about 2 percent of the allocated yearly funds.

For this amount, Putin was able to put into action about 70 aircraft of varying types and mobilize 4,000 supporting personnel to fly, protect and maintain the fleet. This money effected 1,600 sorties by the premier Sukhoi-25 fighter-bombers over the Syrian skies, with the jets spending a total of more than 1,000 hours in rarified air and dropping 6,000 bombs on the "terrorists." Only about 10-20 percent of those bombs hit the terrorists of the Islamic State. The rest hit "terrorists" such as United States-backed rebel fighters and other Sunni groups attempting to overthrow Bashar Assad's dictatorial rule.

What Putin Gained From Syria

Far from being stuck in a quagmire, Putin extracted so many benefits from his escapade in Syria that we need to give them bullet points. Here they are briefly:

- Ensured the Syrian regime's survival: As we [reported](#) earlier,

Putin decided to enter into the fray only after the request came from Assad and his backer Iran. Syria has long been a critical part of Russia's ability to project power into the Mediterranean. With Turkey holding the keys to the Mediterranean Sea for Russia's Black Sea Fleet, it was critical that Russia maintain its hold on its military base in Tartus, long assured by Assad.

- The commercial benefits: As Michael Weiss wrote, "The Syrian war was as much a mediated weapons and hardware expo as it was a client rescue." The display reportedly got a host of nations including Algeria, Vietnam, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Uganda, Nigeria and Ethiopia expressing interest in new weapons contracts. Those contracts alone will likely cover the billion-dollar advertising campaign
- Exposed the U.S. as a weakening power in the Middle East: As George Friedman wrote in *Geopolitical Futures*, "Syria was not about Syria. ... Reshaping perceptions of Russian power and demonstrating that it was prepared to deploy, solve a problem, and leave was. In contrast to the Americans who deploy, stay and sink in the mud, the Russians did what they came to do and are now leaving."
- Announced itself as a resurgent power in the Middle East: As the U.S. retreats from its historical role as Middle East mediator, Russia has shown its ability to handle itself well in a foreign theater—to allies and enemies alike.
- Reshaped its image after Ukraine: Ever since Russia invaded Crimea and instructed its little green men to destabilize Ukraine, Putin was largely an anathema to European powers and the U.S. Yet now, Putin has reshaped his image as a stabilizer in the most volatile of regions.

Looking at the above successes, it's likely even Putin is surprised by how well his Syrian adventure worked out—especially after putting up a measly billion dollars. He has emerged from the potential [Syrian quagmire](#) unscathed, emboldened and empowered.

Follow [Brent Nagtegaal](#)

Lawsuit Over 9/11 Attacks Alleges Iran and Hezbollah Involvement

Jerusalem Post | March 15

DOCUMENTS RELATED TO A LAWSUIT HEARD LAST WEEK BY A FEDERAL court in New York suggest that Iran and Hezbollah were involved in the 9/11 terror attacks, the London-based Arab daily *Asharq al-Awsat* reported Tuesday.

According to the documents, some of the terrorists who carried out the attacks on September 11 had visited Iran prior to the attacks without getting their passports stamped when entering

the country. In addition, the documents revealed that Hezbollah provided the terrorists with aid and instructed them about the attack.

The court ordered Iran to pay about \$11 billion in compensation to the victims' families, so that each family would receive \$1 million, and about \$3 billion to insurance companies that were financially damaged following the attack.

However, the ruling is a default judgment

It was not certain if the U.S. government would be in support of the ruling, as Washington has never accused Iran or Hezbollah of involvement in the 9/11 attacks. ...

The court's ruling might exacerbate the tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia, because while Iran pays a high price, the judge in the case rejected a request from the families to obligate Saudi Arabia to pay compensation, claiming that there is no evidence that the kingdom funded the attacks.

"As [Trumpet editor in chief Gerald] Flurry said, 9/11 was a clear act of war. America answered the call—but all this evidence proves just what the Trumpet said right after that tragedy: It aimed at the wrong target. ... IRAN HAS BEEN WAGING WAR AGAINST AMERICA FOR TEN YEARS! (Or we could go back much further—1979.) IT HELPED KILL 3,000 AMERICANS ON 9/11. IT HAS HELPED IN KILLING THOUSANDS MORE ON THE BATTLEFIELD SINCE. IT IS BLOODING AMERICA'S NOSE, TRASHING ITS REPUTATION, BURNING ITS HONOR, AND DRAINING ITS TREASURY."

"Iran Helped Plan 9/11," theTrumpet.com, Sept. 14, 2011

If Afghanistan Survives 2016, the UN Will Consider It a Success **Bloomberg Business | March 16**

THE UNITED NATIONS HAS SET A LOW BAR FOR SUCCESS IN Afghanistan this year: Survival. ...

"Some may criticize this benchmark as being low," [the UN's top envoy in Kabul, Nicholas Haysom,] said on March 15. "Yet Afghanistan must overcome each and every one of these five hurdles to avoid severe consequences.

Here are the main obstacles:

1. Fragile Economy

When U.S.-led forces began to plan their exit from Afghanistan in 2012, they assumed annual economic growth of 8 percent and revenue from as much as \$1 trillion of untapped mineral wealth.

"It is now clear, however, that neither would occur," Haysom said. ... A job shortage is boosting domestic instability and fueling an immigration crisis. ...

2. Intensifying Insurgency

Violence killed or wounded a record 11,000 Afghan civilians last year—a quarter of these being children [It has] already cost more than \$700 billion and killed more than 2,300 American soldiers. ...

3. Fractious Elites

[Afghan President Ashraf] Ghani's government, which was itself born of compromise, is being criticized for the worsening economic and security concerns. ...

4. Foreign Aid

International finances account for 69 percent of Afghanistan's government expenditure. An increase in global conflict will diversify available resources, so it's important that Ghani shows he's tackling corruption that eats into the cash pile, Haysom said. ...

5. Sustainable Peace

Haysom welcomed efforts of the U.S., China and Pakistan to work with the Afghan government to push the Taliban toward peace talks. The militant group has, however, rejected the call and urged continued conflict. It seeks full withdrawal of foreign forces, freedom for jailed fighters, and removal of Taliban members from a UN blacklist. ...

RELATED: "BURIED IN AFGHANISTAN"

Kurds Declare Federal Region, Muddying Syria Peace Efforts **Agence France-Presse | March 17**

SYRIA'S KURDS DECLARED A FEDERAL REGION IN THE COUNTRY'S north Thursday, in a move that risks complicating already fragile talks under way in Geneva to end the country's brutal five-year conflict.

More than 150 delegates from Kurdish, Arab, Assyrian and other parties meeting in the Syrian town of Rmeilan agreed to create a "federal system" unifying territory run by Kurds across several Syrian provinces.

Both the Syrian government and the main opposition immediately rejected the move, which was expected to create more obstacles at already thorny peace talks under way in Switzerland, from which the Kurdish parties have so far been excluded.

The regime charged the move would "encroach on Syria's territorial unity," while the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) opposition coalition slammed it as "a misadventure (that) is detrimental to the Kurdish cause and the Syrian cause in general."

Speaking ahead of the Kurdish declaration, the UN's mediator in the talks, Staffan de Mistura, branded the federalism push as possibly "dangerous," according to the Swiss news agency ATS.

The Kurds control more than 10 percent of Syria's territory and three quarters of its border with Turkey, and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) are considered one of the most effective forces fighting the Islamic State group.

Yet so far they have been blocked from joining the peace talks due to harsh opposition from Turkey, which considers the YPG a Syrian affiliate of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, an outlawed group that has waged a decades-long insurgency against Ankara.

Washington-based analyst Mutlu Civioglu said the Kurdish announcement was a political message "to the United Nations, the U.S., Russia, and especially to Geneva, that if you ignore us, we are going to determine our future by ourselves." ...

Russia Can Redeploy to Syria 'Within Hours,' Warns Vladimir Putin

Telegraph | March 17

RUSSIA CAN RAMP UP ITS MILITARY PRESENCE IN SYRIA "IN HOURS" if need be, Vladimir Putin has said in an apparent warning to anyone considering taking advantage of his decision to withdraw forces from the country. ...

"You performed like true soldiers of Russia during the military operation in Syria," Mr. Putin [said]. ... He went on to praise the operation as better training than live-fire exercises inside Russia, and said the five-month mission had demonstrated Russia's ability to project force abroad.

"If there's a need, Russia literally within several hours can

ramp up its presence in the region to the size required for the unfolding situation," Mr. Putin said.

The comments are bound to fuel suspicions about the true nature of the Russian withdrawal in Western capitals. ...

Russia launched airstrikes in Syria on September 30 last year, in a bid to avert the seemingly inevitable defeat of Bashar Assad's government.

Mr. Putin unexpectedly ... ordered the withdrawal of the bulk of the expeditionary force after declaring the mission "largely accomplished" on Monday. ...

EUROPE

Trumpet Hour

GERMAN ELECTIONS, PUTIN LEAVES SYRIA,
END OF THE FINANCE ECONOMY, AND MORE | MARCH 18

RODNEY ATKINSON ON BRITAIN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH EUROPE, NEW RADIO
PROGRAM AND MORE | MARCH 16



Germany's Conquest of Europe

Stephen Flurry,

Trumpet Daily | March 18

Germany is on the march—and achieving exactly what it wanted, but failed at, in two world wars.

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Europe Tiptoes Into Libya's Mess

Kieren Underwood | March 17

SATELLITE IMAGERY HAS CONFIRMED THE ARRIVAL OF EUROPEAN special operations forces at an air base near Benghazi, Libya. Stratfor, a geopolitical intelligence firm, released the satellite images on March 9, which showed typical Western security precautions being set up around the air base.

French newspaper *Le Monde* caused a small stir on February 24 when it reported on specialist bloggers who had spotted French special forces in Libya beginning in mid-February.

While Stratfor believes these recent troop additions are French, it recognizes that they are "not intended to take part in any significant combat operations." Yet it predicted that the "preliminary foothold could facilitate a rapid buildup of the base in the future."

Italy, France, the United Kingdom and the United States have

all discussed sending troops to Libya as the conditions deteriorate. Estimates of Islamic State fighters in Libya have ballooned to 6,000 after the United Nations reported around 3,000 in late 2015. At the same time, Libya's multiple competing governments are in a weak position to counter any Islamic State expansion.

The U.S. ambassador to Italy said on March 4 that Italy would send 5,000 troops to Libya; however, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi later firmly denied those statements.

The U.S. is unlikely to commit further troops to Libya, at least not while under the current administration.

Europe has been hesitant to step into Libya since Muammar Qadhafi's downfall in 2011 (even after the [November Paris terrorist attacks](#), which killed 130, triggered France to declare war on the Islamic State). Many Libyans would despise a large international

presence, so Western countries have to work discretely to avoid political repercussions. As the Islamic State's presence in Libya

increases, Europe will be forced to act more overtly. For a big-picture analysis of these events, read [“The Next War in Libya.”](#)



Germany's Dodgy Deal With Turkey

Richard Palmer | March 15

GERMAN CHANCELLOR ANGELA MERKEL ARRANGED A NEW DEAL with Turkey last week designed to finally fix the migrant crisis. On the face of it, the core part of the deal is very sensible: Any migrant who crosses from Turkey to Greece illegally—as the vast majority of current migrants do—will automatically be sent back to Turkey. In exchange for every migrant who is returned to Turkey, the European Union will take in a migrant from a refugee center in Turkey.

The trouble is, the deal is illegal.

Much of the blame lies with Europe's human rights law. It is, quite frankly, stupid. It has long frustrated people in Britain that the nation cannot deport violent criminals and even terrorists because they have certain rights under the European Convention of Human Rights.

The EU directive that deals with asylum seekers says that the EU can only deny a refugee asylum and send him or her back if he or she came to the EU from a “safe third country.” The directive lists some very specific conditions a country must meet to qualify as a safe third country. Turkey does not meet those conditions.

“It is pretty clear that, according to the EU's own rules, Turkey cannot be deemed a safe third country,” wrote Duncan Robinson on his *Financial Times* blog. Thus Chancellor Merkel's plan of sending refugees back to Turkey would be illegal. “The rules are clear, and there is little space for legal gymnastics”

That's not to say the EU law is right. But ignoring the law, no matter how bad it is, is always concerning.

But it gets worse. In making this deal, the EU is cozying up to one of the most evil leaders of a major nation in the world. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is the type of strongman that EU officials used to love to hate. He cracks down on free press and imprisons political opponents. His attack on the Kurds purely to gain a political edge has to be one of the most cynical ploys of modern times.

Just days before Merkel reached her deal, Turkish authorities shut down the nation's biggest daily newspaper, *Zaman*, and arrested its journalists. On Monday last week, the government went on to shut down the Cihan news agency. Now, a handful of small media organizations is all that remains of Turkey's free press.

In the past, Turkey would be risking sanctions for these acts. Instead, it brazenly dismantles its free press at virtually the same time it is negotiating with EU leaders. The EU is supporting these actions by continuing to work with Erdoğan. As part of the deal, Turkey wants another €3 billion (US\$3.3 billion), and it wants its citizens to be able to travel to the EU without a visa by June.

The EU is not just working with this autocrat; it is propping him up. Last year, the EU produced a report highly critical of Erdoğan. Publication was suspiciously delayed until after

Turkey's elections on Nov. 1, 2015.

Back then, it looked highly suspicious, but the smoking gun was found last month. The minutes of a meeting between Erdoğan, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and European Council President Donald Tusk were leaked. The three men were trying to negotiate a migrant deal with Turkey. Erdoğan wanted more money. After arguing for a while, Juncker said, “Please note that we postponed the progress report until after the Turkish elections, and we got criticized for this delay.” He admitted that EU leaders deliberately delayed the critical progress report until after the elections. He said, in essence, *We helped you win the election, now we'd like some payback please.*

The point is not to condemn doing deals with bad people. Sometimes that may be necessary. But this isn't the way the EU usually works. A year or two ago, these kinds of deals would be anathema to the EU. Just as with Europe's approach to human rights, it's the change that is significant, regardless of the right or wrong of the actions themselves.

This deal runs counter to the EU's multicultural, human-rights-loving identity.

And to make matters worse, the deal won't work. The deal the EU hammered out with Turkey last year failed. The longer the migrant crisis goes on, the more concessions Turkey can extract. It has little incentive to make the crisis go away.

This time around, Europe may fail to live up to its side of the bargain. Merkel hammered out the deal with Turkey, but other European nations have not yet agreed. If, and when, this deal fails, what next?

“Postwar Europe was built to value collaboration and cooperation,” wrote [Trumpet columnist Brad Macdonald](#) as the migrant crisis began to build last year.

“It was designed to be enlightened, multicultural and tolerant. It has positioned itself as the world's moral authority: It abhors war; it defends the environment and human rights; it values international cooperation.

“Perhaps the greatest effect of the refugee crisis, together with Russia's dramatic resurgence and Europe's rolling financial problems, is the way it is causing Europe to shed this postwar veneer and return to its past. Being tolerant feels good, until hundreds of thousands of foreigners enter your nation and expect you to foot the bill. Being multicultural is wonderful, until Muslims waving Islamic State flags and eyeing your teenage daughter settle in your village.”

This is what we are seeing in Germany's deal with Turkey: the first major signs of Europe rejecting that “postwar veneer.” When that fails, the situation will become even more desperate—pushing Europe to take even more desperate measures—moving further away from the left-wing, human-rights-loving, multicultural EU we see today.

Ice-cold Geopolitics

German-Foreign-Policy.com | March 15

A NATO WAR GAME, CURRENTLY TAKING PLACE IN NORWAY, WITH the participation of elite units of the German Bundeswehr, includes training the deployment of nuclear arms against Russia. The exercise named “Cold Response” involves the use of B-52 bombers, particularly designed to drop nuclear bombs. According to Adm. Cecil D. Haney, commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, this is to provide “an extra nuclear deterrent” against Russia. Parallel to “Cold Response,” U.S. Navy nuclear submarines are training the tracking of enemy submarines in the Arctic Ocean, to counter an alleged Russian “militarization of the Arctic.” The Bundeswehr, in turn, uses “Cold Response” to train its units, specialized in military operations behind enemy lines. ...

[T]he Bundeswehr has declared that in Norway during “Cold Response,” it seeks to develop its “skills in winter warfare” alongside the 14,000 soldiers from other NATO countries, as well as

those from formally neutral Sweden and Finland. Compatible to the U.S. Marines’ range of tasks, the German armed forces also have the assignment of “creating the prerequisites for a large-scale amphibious landing” under unfavorable climatic conditions. The exercise also focuses on the “collaboration” between conventional troops and elite units, which are assigned to covert commando operations behind enemy lines. This includes the deployment of German Special Forces Commandos (KSK) involved in illegal killings in Afghanistan. According to the Bundeswehr, “Cold Response” is a “free-roaming” exercise, during which soldiers will also encounter the civilian population in public, on the streets, in parking lots or at gas stations. This, however, does not apply to the KSK troops. “They accomplish their tasks preferably with no audience and in the dark.” ...

Judy Asks: Will Populist Parties Run Europe?

Judy Dempsey, Carnegie Europe | March 9

A SELECTION OF EXPERTS ANSWER A NEW QUESTION FROM JUDY Dempsey on the foreign and security policy challenges shaping Europe’s role in the world.

Rosa Balfour | Senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States and rapporteur for the European Policy Center’s project “Europe’s Troublemakers: The Populist Challenge to Foreign Policy”

Populism is on the rise but is unlikely to win enough votes to run Europe. Yet the risk that populism will run Europe by proxy is real if mainstream governments do not address the phenomenon’s underlying causes. Leaders of the center-right and center-left are racing to embrace right-wing populist demagoguery in the hope of catching a few votes. This tactic does not pay off, as Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico discovered in Slovakia’s parliamentary election on March 5. His embrace of the right-wing anti-immigration card boosted far-right parties more than his own. If voters want xenophobia, they will choose the real thing. ...

Thorsten Benner | Director of the Global Public Policy Institute

... Populists ... do not need to control the government to feed on and fuel a new age of fear in Europe: fear of the other (especially

Muslims) and fear of global competition. Populists’ seemingly easy answers—pull up the national drawbridge to keep Muslims and competition out—put pressure on terrified establishment elites and drag political culture to previously unseen lows, depriving policymaking of the oxygen of reason.

This trend is now also threatening to engulf Germany, so far one of the last islands of liberal democratic normalcy. If you want to know what a neurotic Germany feels like, take Bavarian Minister President Horst Seehofer as a harbinger of things to come. Not a pretty prospect for the dream of a self-confident liberal Europe in the 21st century.

Piotr Buras | Head of the Warsaw office of the European Council on Foreign Relations

... [T]he real question is not whether populists are likely to grab power in one or two more EU member states—although a French presidency led by the far-right National Front’s Marine Le Pen would be the end of Europe as we know it. The real (and currently materializing) threat is that so-called mainstream parties will gradually give up their fundamental principles of human rights, civil liberties, equality, and openness out of panic fear of a populist surge. ...

Pope Emeritus Benedict Breaks Silence: Speaks of ‘Deep Crisis’ Facing Church Post-Vatican II

LifeSiteNews | March 16

ON MARCH 16, SPEAKING PUBLICLY ON A RARE OCCASION, POPE Benedict XVI gave an interview to *Avvenire*, the daily newspaper of the Italian Bishops’ Conference, in which he spoke of a “two-sided deep crisis” the church is facing in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. ...

Pope Benedict reminds us of the formerly indispensable Catholic conviction of the possibility of the loss of eternal salvation, or that people go to hell ...

He also speaks of a “profound evolution of dogma” with respect

to the dogma that there is no salvation outside the church. This purported change of dogma has led, in the pope’s eyes, to a loss of the missionary zeal in the church Pope Benedict asks the piercing question ... “Why should you try to convince the people to accept the Christian faith when they can be saved even without it?” ...

Pope Benedict also refutes both the idea of the “anonymous Christian” as developed by Karl Rahner, as well as the indifferentist idea that all religions are equally valuable and helpful to attain eternal life.

“Even less acceptable is the solution proposed by the pluralistic theories of religion, for which all religions, each in its own way,

would be ways of salvation and, in this sense, must be considered equivalent in their effects,” he said. ...

ASIA

Putin's High-Stakes Gambit in Syria Has Paid Off for Moscow

Jonathan Steele, *Gulf News* | March 17

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN'S DRAMATIC DECISION TO cut his military intervention in Syria has flat-footed everyone—from the White House to Syrian President Bashar Assad—and yielded predictably cynical reaction.

“It's a pretty brilliant tactical move,” says the independent military analyst Alexander Golts. Putin has “reaped a positive return” from his intervention, according to the former United States Assistant Secretary of State P. J. Crowley. But there is a more nuanced view.

Putin is essentially telling Assad that, five years after the uprising started, he must take the Geneva talks seriously and finally compromise. Syrian Foreign Minister Waleed Mua'alem's recent statement at a press conference that Assad's future cannot be discussed in Geneva must have irritated Putin. It may have tipped him into making his surprise announcement.

Even though Russia's warplanes changed the balance of power on the ground in Syria, the Kremlin's stark message is that Assad cannot rely on the Russians to bring him military victory. There has to be a political solution. ...

Putin also insisted that the purpose of his military intervention was to accelerate the peace process. Yes, we can stop you being overrun and defeated, he was telling Assad; but you cannot expect us to keep you in power forever.

This message was made clear again when the Russians and Americans, along with the other outside powers involved, met for two rounds of talks in Vienna to hammer out a framework for negotiations among Syrians. In language that Assad and his officials have never copied, the Russians described the conflict in Syria as “a civil war.” Sergei Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, even used the phrase “the legitimate armed opposition.” This was a sharp departure from Assad's terminology. The Syrian president continues to describe the struggle as a battle against terrorists, adding that if only Turkey and other states were to stop

arming extremists, everything would go back to normal.

The Russians will have none of this. They have seen the reality, which is that this war remains primarily an internal conflict, however much it has been hijacked by outside powers. Lavrov has invited Free Syrian Army representatives to Moscow for discussions. The Kremlin has had talks with other anti-Assad groups, such as the Syrian Kurds, who have been the best “boots on the ground” against Daesh (the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant). They have just opened an office in Moscow. ...

Putin is telling Assad: “We gave you a new lease of life. We propped you up in your heartland around Latakia and Idlib and prevented it from falling. We helped you advance around Aleppo. With the Americans and their clients we have brokered a ceasefire. Now it's up to you to reach a compromise with your legitimate opponents.”

For Putin, the Syrian intervention has been a high-stakes game in which he has, so far, done well. He has reinserted Russia into the Middle East as a decisive and tough player. He has become a key player in the region's diplomacy. And he leaves the ball in Damascus's court.

“The German-Russian relationship is the one to watch. Putin's statements indicate he is at least leaving the door open for a deal with Germany. What happens in Syria is very important for the Middle East. But it also reflects on relations around the world. Bible prophecy shows us that the Syrian government will end up an ally of Germany. Russia could try and fight that. It's more likely that the two sides will come to an arrangement. Watch German-Russian relations to see if this will happen. If Russia gives way easily, watch for it to receive something in return.”

“Russia and Europe Moving Toward a Deal on Syria?”
Trumpet, Dec. 22, 2012

Tokyo Anxious Over Donald Trump's Surge

Nikkei Asian Review | March 17

DONALD TRUMP'S STEADY ADVANCES TOWARD THE REPUBLICAN Party nomination for U.S. president are fueling anxiety among Japanese policymakers.

“The U.S. presidential race has a large impact on Japan and the rest of the world,” said Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga at a news conference Wednesday. “So naturally, we are closely

watching how it turns out.” ...

The New York real estate tycoon's fiery rhetoric against Japan has been received with great alarm. He has often slammed key policies pursued by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Trump has called the security alliance between the two nations unfair. “If Japan gets attacked, we have to immediately go

to their aid,” he said in Iowa in August. “If we get attacked, Japan doesn’t have to help us.”

He has also assailed Japan on trade.

“When did we beat Japan at anything?” Trump said when he announced his candidacy last June. “They send their cars over by the millions, and what do we do? When was the last time you saw a Chevrolet in Tokyo? It doesn’t exist, folks. They beat us all the time.” ...

Indian Journalists See More Threats, Attacks With Modi as PM

Katy Daigle and Anna Mathews, Washington Post | March 16

A NEWSCAST ON WHETHER INDIA HAD BECOME INTOLERANT OF dissent quickly spiraled into something darker after a guest on the program referred to a pamphlet that called the Hindu goddess Durga a sex worker. Though the host did not make the remarks, she was accused of disparaging the deity and was bombarded with more than 2,500 threatening calls.

“Some called and said they would douse me with acid,” Kerala journalist Sindhu Sooryakumar said. Six members of a militant group linked with India’s Hindu nationalist ruling party have been arrested.

Sooryakumar is one of a growing number of Indian journalists who say they are increasingly facing a backlash for producing work that raises questions or criticisms of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government or his Bharatiya Janata Party, or BJP. The crackdowns are happening as journalists try to cover a nationwide debate on how Indian patriotism should be defined—as Hindu or multicultural, devout or secular—and whether dissent should be tolerated.

Members of Modi’s government have offered hard-line views on the issue, equating criticism of the government with criticism of the country. Human Resource Development Minister Smriti Irani said last month that “the nation can never tolerate an insult to Mother India,” while Home Minister Rajnath Singh tweeted that anyone

Abe’s office has instructed the Foreign Ministry to find out who is advising Trump on policy issues, but it still does not have a clear picture. It is left analyzing Trump’s Japan policy based on remarks he made as a businessman and later on the campaign trail.

Some government officials believe that if Trump becomes president, he will take a more pragmatic stance like a seasoned businessman would. But others point out that he has held anti-Japan views for more than 30 years and is unlikely to change.

shouting anti-India slogans “will not be tolerated or spared.” ...

Journalists have never been entirely safe in India—11 have been killed since 2010, according to the CPJ [Committee to Protect Journalists]. Most were working outside major cities, often covering small-town corruption, when they were killed.

The fact that journalists in major cities like New Delhi are now being hounded is relatively novel, after years during which they operated largely without fear of retribution thanks in part to the nation’s educated, urban elite and the foreign media bearing noisy witness. ...

In such a climate, it is becoming more difficult for journalists to cover the country’s heated debates about whether people should be allowed to criticize the government, empathize with convicted terrorists, eat beef, or make jokes about Hindu gods. Under Indian law, it is illegal to inflame communal tension or stoke violence. Prosecutors are increasingly applying that ban to anything deemed anti-Indian, though they have not targeted journalists. ...

[Swati] Chaturvedi, the reporter threatened last year, said the environment is one in which “you can’t say anything against Modi.”

“These people are inclined to attack if they don’t like a story,” she said. “It’s a systematic sort of harassment and bullying which will eventually silence a lot of people who don’t have the confidence to fight back.” ...

TW IN BRIEF

Russia, China plan to attack U.S. satellites in event of conflict: Russia and China are gearing up to be able to attack critical American military satellites, in the event of future conflict. On Wednesday, senior Pentagon and intelligence officials told Congress that the threat to American space systems has arrived at a critical tipping point. Air Force Gen. John Hyten said Russia and China “understand our reliance on space, and they understand the competitive advantage we derive from space.” He added that “the need for vigilance has never been greater.” By attacking U.S. satellites, America’s adversaries would degrade the U.S. military’s means of conducting precision strike operations, which are used in most modern weapons systems.

Japan seeks international arbitration over Beijing’s drilling: Japan’s ruling party urged Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s government on Wednesday to consider seeking international arbitration over Beijing’s drilling activities in the disputed East China Sea. Sino-Japanese ties have long been strained over a

group of uninhabited East China Sea islets that both nations lay claim to. Last year, Tokyo accused Beijing of unilateral development, despite a 2008 agreement to cooperate on resource development in the area where no official border between them has been drawn. China then said it had every right to drill in the East China Sea close to disputed waters with Japan. Japan’s concern resembles the Philippines’ ongoing argument against China’s projects in the South China Sea.

North Korea locks up an American: North Korea’s highest court has sentenced an American tourist who allegedly attempted to steal a propaganda banner from a restricted area of his hotel to 15 years of hard labor in prison. Otto Warmbier, a 21-year-old University of Virginia undergraduate student, was convicted and sentenced in a one-hour trial on Wednesday morning at the North’s Supreme Court. He was charged with subversion. Warmbier was arrested in early January as he tried to leave the country after visiting as a tourist with a New Year’s tour group.

North Koreans begin 70-day workweek: To grapple with the effects of intensified global sanctions, North Korea has ordered its working population to work nonstop for 70 days. Leaders are hoping the work marathon will boost production and serve as a demonstration of loyalty to the country. Some analysts believe the decision is also an attempt by the North Korean

government to raise hard currency. Workers have the option to buy vacation days for the equivalent of about half a United States dollar. However, as *Time* magazine reported, that represents about “twice what the average North Korean earns in a month.” State media are referring to the prolonged work period as the “battle of 70 days.”

AFRICA/LATIN AMERICA

Zuma Hammered Amid Warnings of ‘Mafia State’

Independent Online | March 17

JACOB ZUMA FACES A BATTLE TO SAVE HIS PRESIDENCY AS RULING party leaders prepare for a showdown this weekend over a controversy engulfing the government that one top official said is threatening to turn South Africa into a “mafia state.”

The meeting of the African National Congress’s decision-making National Executive Committee comes after revelations that the Guptas, who are Zuma’s family friends and business partners of his son, offered ministerial posts to ruling party officials. On Wednesday, Deputy Finance Minister Mcebisi Jonas said he

rejected a proposal made personally by the Gupta brothers that he take over the Finance Ministry position.

“We need to deal with this; it will degenerate into a mafia state if this goes on,” [African National Congress] Secretary General Gwede Mantashe said on Thursday by phone. “The fact we are talking about this so boldly now shows that things are going to change.” ...

RELATED: [“SOUTH AFRICA: WHERE CORRUPTION, RAPE AND MURDER ARE NORMAL”](#)

ANGLO-AMERICA



The Times of the Gentiles (2016)

Gerald Flurry, The Key of David | March 18

While America and its allies are in decline, Bible prophecy shows three aggressive nations shaping world events.



Military Admits Billion-Dollar War Toy F-35 Is [Flop]

Daily Beast | March 16

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



WAY BACK IN THE EARLY 2000s, THE U.S. MILITARY HAD A dream. To develop a new “universal” jet fighter that could do, well, pretty much everything that the military asks its different fighters to do.

But the dream of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter [JSF] turned into a nightmare. The program is six years behind schedule and tens of billions of dollars over budget. And now, 16 years after the JSF prototypes took off for their first flights, top officials are finally owning up to the trauma the \$400-billion fighter program has inflicted on America’s finances and war readiness.

In a remarkable period, beginning in February and lasting several weeks, senior officers and high-ranking bureaucrats finally

publicly copped to the warplane program’s fundamental failures.

But the timing of the military’s *mea culpa* is ... interesting. For at the same time as the admissions of guilt, the F-35 was passing several bureaucratic milestones that make it more or less impossible to cancel. Too much money’s already been spent. Too many well-established jobs are at stake. Too many F-35s are already rolling out of the factory.

The Pentagon can clear its conscience of the jet fighter’s misdeeds because doing so is, at this late hour, consequence-free.

Officials previously admitted that the new jet lacks maneuverability, that its testing is way behind schedule, and that its software is still incomplete. More recently, military leaders revealed

that the three versions of the F-35 jet aren't nearly as compatible as the military had promised they would be.

Plus, one official conceded that the planes are so expensive that reequipping all of the Air Force's fighter squadrons with them would compel the flying branch to first cut a fifth of the squadrons.

And the kicker—two generals confessed that the whole idea of a do-it-all jet is, in fact, so conceptually flawed that it's unlikely the Pentagon will attempt it again. Right now, the Air Force and Navy are laying plans for so-called "sixth-generation" jets to eventually supersede the F-35. ...

To be sure, the F-35 was carried aloft on grand ambitions. The twin-tail, single-engine plane with the angular nose and stubby wings would be sufficiently fast and maneuverable to battle other planes in the air. It would also possess the stealth and bomb-hauling capacity to penetrate enemy defenses and wipe out targets on the ground.

Not only would the F-35 take off from land bases like most conventional fighters do—it would also be able to launch from aircraft carriers and lift off vertically from smaller assault ships.

To do all these things today, the Pentagon possesses no fewer than eight different types of fighters. Dogfighting F-15s and F-16s. Hard-hitting A-10 ground-attack planes. Several kinds of carrier-launched F/A-18s. Vertical-takeoff Harriers.

The Joint Strike Fighter program, with Lockheed Martin as the main contractor, would replace almost all of these planes—thousands of them—with just three, highly similar variants of the F-35. The Air Force's maneuverable F-35A. An F-35B version for the Marine Corps with an extra, downward-blasting engine for vertical

takeoffs. The Navy's F-35C with a bigger wing for carrier launches.

Winnowing down from eight fighter models to just three versions of the same basic plane design would, in the military estimation, boost efficiency in production, training and spare parts and save tens if not hundreds of billions of dollars.

That assumed that the F-35A, F-35B and F-35C would be highly similar. You'd build one basic fuselage and cockpit and fit different wings or the extra engine, as needed. The military aimed for 70-percent "commonality." In other words, three quarters of, say, an Air Force F-35A would match, for example, a Navy F-35C.

Seventy percent commonality proved impossible as each military branch demanded increasingly specific qualities in its F-35s. As a result, today the various models are mostly incompatible. "It's 20- to 25-percent commonality," [Air Force Lt. Gen. Christopher] Bogdan said on March 10.

Indeed, the main thing the three different variants have in common is their F-35 designation. Otherwise, they're essentially different airplane designs—the very thing the Joint Strike Fighter program had, at its outset, endeavored to avoid.

The lack of commonality helps explain the F-35's high price. Each plane costs more than \$100 million, tens of millions more than Lockheed and the military had predicted early in the program. ...

Work said there's only one solution to the Pentagon's airpower crunch—continue buying F-35s while also keeping today's older fighters, some of which were built in the 1970s, in service into the 2040s. The U.S. military typically retires fighters after 30 years of flying. Keeping some of them around for 70 years would be unprecedented. By then the planes could be badly outclassed by much more modern Russian and Chinese jets. ...

Bernie, Don't Lecture Me About Socialism. I Lived Through It.

Garry Kasparov, *Daily Beast* | March 10

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



2016 SEEMS LIKE A STRANGE TIME TO BE ARGUING THE MERITS OF socialism in an American presidential campaign. ... I have a great deal of interest in socialism.

Last week I expressed some of these thoughts on Facebook after hearing a clip of "democratic socialist" candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders on Super Tuesday. ... My post on the nature of socialism was 113 words long, a quick response to critics of a cartoon I had posted of Bernie Sanders wearing a baseball cap reading "Make America Greece Again."

My goal was to remind people that Americans talking about socialism in the 21st century was a luxury paid for by the successes of capitalism in the 20th. And that while inequality is a huge problem, the best way to increase everyone's share of pie is to make the pie bigger, not to dismantle the bakery. Much to my surprise, my little rant went viral, as the saying goes. Instead of the usual few hundred Facebook shares, this paragraph quickly reached ... over 3,000 comments, 57,000 shares, and a 9.3 million reach that is in the category usually reserved for photos of pop stars and kitten videos.

My conclusion that "the idea that the solution [to inequality] is more government, more regulation, more debt, and less risk is

dangerously absurd" apparently had great resonance, and I think I know why. There is a growing consensus that America has deep troubles, and no one can agree on solutions. Everyone agrees that Washington should change, and some want the government to do much more while others want it to do much less. Many of the traditional economic numbers say that America is doing fine, and yet polls say that Americans—especially Sanders supporters—are angry about the present and fearful about the future. ...

The "revolution" rhetoric of Senator Sanders has struck a chord with many Americans, especially the young voters who are realizing that their own lives are unlikely to match the opportunities and wealth of their parents and grandparents. ...

The problem is with the proposed solutions. A society that relies too heavily on redistributing wealth eventually runs out of wealth to redistribute. The historical record is clear. It's capitalism that brought billions of people out of poverty in the 20th century. It's socialism that enslaved them and impoverished them. Of course Senator Sanders does not want to turn America into a totalitarian state like the one I grew up in. But it's a valuable example of the inevitable failure of a state-run economy and distribution system. ... Once you give power to the government it is nearly impossible to get

it back, and it will be used in ways you cannot expect. ...

Yes, the free market can be cruel, and it is by definition unequal. It has winners and losers. It also sparks the spirit of creativity that humanity desperately needs to flourish in our ever increasing billions. Failure is an essential part of innovation and the free market. Of every 10 new companies, perhaps nine will fail A centrally planned economy cannot imitate this engine You cannot predestine which two college dropouts in a garage will produce the next Apple.

A popular rebuttal is to invoke the socialist leanings of several European countries with high living standards, especially in Scandinavia. Why can't America be more like happy Denmark, with its high taxes and giant public sector, or at least more like France? Even the more pro-free market United Kingdom has national health care, after all. First off, comparing relatively small, homogeneous populations to the churning, ocean-spanning American giant is rarely useful. And even the most socialist of the European

countries only became wealthy enough to embrace redistribution after free-market success made them rich. Still, why cannot America follow this path if that is what the people want? What is the problem if American voters are willing to accept higher taxes in exchange for greater security in the embrace of the government?

The answer takes us back to all those inventions America has produced decade after decade. As long as Europe had America taking risks, investing ambitiously, attracting the world's dreamers and entrepreneurs, and yes, being unequal, it could benefit from the results without making the same sacrifices. Add to that the incalculable windfall of not having to spend on national defense thanks to America's massive investment in a global security umbrella. America doesn't have the same luxury of coasting on the ambition and sacrifice of another country.

Who will be America's America? ...

Sanders's socialist policies would replace banks that are too big to fail with a government that is too big to succeed.

Bill Gross: Negative Rates Are Finance Economy's Last, Dying Gasp **Wall Street Journal | March 3**

MUCH LIKE THE SUN, THE FINANCIALIZATION OF THE ECONOMY has provided an endless stream of fuel for growth, Janus Capital Bill Gross said in his latest outlook letter. Unlike the sun, though, which has a good 5 billion years left in it, the finance economy's fuel is just about spent. The move into the black hole of negative rates might just be the final act, Mr. Gross added

"Instead of historically generating economic growth via a wealth effect and its trickle-down effect on the real economy, negative investment rates and the expansion of central bank balance sheets via quantitative easing are creating negative effects," he wrote. Negative rates threaten bank profits as well as any business models that depend upon 7 to 8 percent annual returns on assets. He's talking mainly about insurance companies and pension funds, a topic he's hit on a number of times. "And the damage extends to all savers; households worldwide that saved/invested money for college, retirement or for medical bills. They have been damaged, and only now are becoming aware of it."

Negative rates are "an enigma to almost all global investors," he

says, that undermine the basic architecture of the financial markets. "But central bankers seem ever intent on going lower, ignorant in my view of the harm being done to a classical economic model that has driven prosperity—until it reached a negative interest rate dead end and could drive no more."

Mr. Gross takes note of the "somewhat suspicious uniform attack on high denomination bills," the sudden crop of arguments against the \$100 U.S. bill or the €500 euro [note]. Why might that be? "It appears that the one remaining escape hatch for ordinary citizens is being closed," he wrote. "The cashless society which appears over the horizon may come sooner than the demise of the penny." If actually banning cash doesn't do the trick, the central bankers might be forced into literal "helicopter" drops of money (or perhaps, in the parlance of the times, that should be drone drops).

"Can any/all of these policy alternatives save the system?" he asked. "We shall find out, but ... you should be aware that our finance-based economic system which like the sun has provided life and productive growth for a long, long time—is running out of fuel

TW IN BRIEF

Drought affecting millions in Zimbabwe: Four million Zimbabweans now require food aid, according to a local government social welfare minister. The number has risen sharply as the nation struggles with its worst drought in over 20 years. The United Nations' World Food Program is currently feeding 1 million people, and the nation has applied for millions of dollars' worth of further aid. The drought has brought drought conditions to other countries too, but Zimbabwe is being hit especially hard because of low mineral commodity prices that are crippling the nation's economy, according to its finance minister.

Puerto Ricans fleeing to Florida: Each week, as many as 1,000 Puerto Ricans arrive in central Florida. They come to join a

community of more than 1 million Puerto Ricans that has grown 10-fold since 1980. Unlike many other Latino migrants—they are all U.S. citizens, so how many ultimately decide to call the mainland home, and how quickly the flow of migrants increases or ebbs is dependent primarily on one factor—the economic condition of Puerto Rico. The U.S. territory is on the verge of bankruptcy. Earlier this year, it was announced that the government would soon be unable to make interest payments on its debt, and it was unwilling to increase taxes on an already tax-burdened population. It was also revealed that the government-run pension plan was almost out of money too. According to one analyst quoted by CNN Money—the capital city of San Juan is beginning to look a lot like Detroit. That doesn't bode well for the socialist-leaning island.