

Trumpet Weekly

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President Obama speaks to the media on March 30 in Washington, D.C., after having lunch with formerly incarcerated individuals who have received commutations.

President Obama's Rapid Transformation of the Criminal Justice System

ONE WAY UNITED STATES PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA IS FULFILLING his stated goal to reform the U.S. criminal justice system is by granting presidential pardons to prisoners.

On March 30, President Obama announced 61 grants of clemency to inmates. More than a third of those prisoners were serving *life* sentences.

Speaking at a luncheon with formerly incarcerated individuals, the outgoing president remarked:

I am going to continue to emphasize the importance of pardons and commutations going forward. Today, we commuted 61 additional individuals who are deserving and who I

believe will be looking at the people sitting here at this table as models and inspiration for what is possible in their lives. That will mean that, at this point, I will have commuted [248] sentences, which is more than the previous six presidents combined.

But we're not done, and we're going to keep on working on this until I leave.

On July 14, 2015, the day after he shortened the prison sentences of 46 people convicted for nonviolent drug crimes, President Obama told the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Philadelphia that "the people in our prisons have made some mistakes—and sometimes big mistakes." But, he added, "they are also Americans."

But giving more rights to the prisoners doesn't only radically



STEPHEN FLURRY

GETTY IMAGES

transform the justice system, it drastically reshapes society!

The 248 sentences which Obama commuted include 92 *life* sentences. The rap sheets of some of the prisoners pardoned by President Obama include crimes such as possession with intent to distribute cocaine, illegal possession of a firearm and ammunition, and using/carrying a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking offense.

At the NAACP meeting, President Obama said:

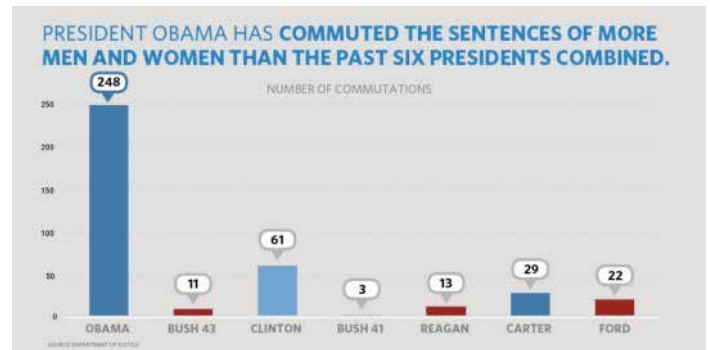
By just about every measure, the life chances for black and Hispanic youth still lag far behind those of their white peers. ...

Part of this is a legacy of hundreds of years of slavery and segregation, and structural inequalities that compounded over generations. It did not happen by accident. Partly it's a result of continuing, if sometimes more subtle, bigotry—whether in who gets called back for a job interview, or who gets suspended from school, or what neighborhood you are able to rent an apartment in [W]e can't be satisfied ... until the opportunity gap is closed for everybody in America. Everybody. But today, I want to focus on one aspect of American life that remains particularly skewed by race and by wealth, a source of inequity that has ripple effects on families and on communities and ultimately on our nation—and that is our criminal justice system. ...

[O]ur criminal justice system isn't as smart as it should be. It's not keeping us as safe as it should be. It is not as fair as it should be. Mass incarceration makes our country worse off, and we need to do something about it.

Two days later, President Obama visited the El Reno Federal Correctional Institution in Oklahoma, becoming the first sitting U.S. president to visit a federal prison. During his visit, the president said in a brief question-and-answer session that what struck him most during his visit was that many of the inmates “are young people who made mistakes that aren't different than the mistakes I made, and the mistakes that a lot of you guys made.” He explained: “The difference is that they did not have the kind of support structures, the second chances, the resources that would

allow them to survive those mistakes.”



But some of those prisoners are repeating the same mistakes that got them incarcerated in the first place. This is especially so among illegal immigrants.

On June 15, 2015, the *Washington Times* reported on government data which attributed 121 murders to illegals released by the Obama administration.

In his *Trumpet* article “The Worst Prison Break in American History,” Jeremiah Jacques wrote:

During the six years Mr. Obama has been in power, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has knowingly released some 195,900 criminally convicted illegal immigrants onto America's streets. That averages out to about 85 convicted criminals released per day.

The administration has not only KNOWINGLY RELEASED these criminals, it has diligently worked to COVER UP these facts!

Meanwhile, many of America's big cities are experiencing huge spikes in violent crimes. High demand for dangerous drugs like heroin among people living in suburbs is fueling violence between gangs selling drugs in the cities. Gangs are being supplied with drugs from Mexican cartels that have been exploiting America's open southern border.

The mix is toxic, and it's leading to the fulfillment of biblical prophecies that forecast violence in our major cities.

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MIDDLE EAST

TrumpetDaily

RADIO SHOW

WAS GEORGE WASHINGTON A FOOL FOR SAYING AMERICAN SOCIETY WAS BUILT ON RELIGION AND MORALITY? | APRIL 7

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TOXIC MIX: MEXICAN CARTELS, OPEN BORDERS, GANG WARFARE, VIOLENT CITIES AND FAMILY BREAKDOWN | APRIL 4



More Missiles, Less Talk

Callum Wood | April 4

“THOSE WHO SAY THE FUTURE IS IN NEGOTIATIONS, NOT IN MISSILES, are either ignorant or traitors,” Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said, attacking his opponents at home.

Launched on the ayatollah’s official website, the statement was a dig at former President Akbar Rafsanjani, who tweeted that “the future is in dialogue, not missiles.”

Khamenei’s speech simultaneously condemns the ever hopeful White House.

United States President Barack Obama and his top nuclear negotiators have continually touted the Iran nuclear deal as a major success, proof that Iran is undergoing some sort of miraculous political metamorphosis. The “moderates” in Iran can say what they want, but the fact is, the ayatollah’s words are actually backed with action.

Since the nuclear deal was signed, Iran has repeatedly violated missile sanctions. In early March, Tehran launched missiles with the words “[Israel must be wiped out](#)” written on them in Hebrew. Experts say these armaments were “inherently capable of delivering nuclear weapons.”

New sanctions have been put in place in a feeble attempt to curtail the missile program. But no sooner than the sanctions came into effect, Iran threatened to walk away from the nuclear deal. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said, “If our interests are not met under the nuclear deal, there will be no reason for us to continue.”

The threat comes as a follow-up to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani’s similar threat back in November, when he said that any new sanctions could force Iran to scrap the deal.

Iran fought vehemently during negotiations to ensure that the ballistic missile program was not a part of the nuclear deal. Yet today, Iran threatens to scrap the nuclear deal if new sanctions are levied against its ballistic missile program.

In reality, the two programs are as closely related as guns and bullets. And while the U.S. is working feverishly to try and stop Iran’s nuclear program, the bullet, it is letting Iran continue working on better missiles, aka the guns.

The ayatollah has made clear that the way forward for Iran is with missiles: bigger, better, faster and with a longer range—all developed under the guise of “national security.”

But anyone who can see how Iran promotes its interests in the

region can see that it does so through sponsorship of terrorism, proxy wars and similar destabilizing tactics. So when the ayatollah says that the way forward is with missiles, he isn’t really referring to them as a deterrent but, rather, as an aggressive projection of power. The ballistic missiles are going to be the next “Hezbollah” or “ Hamas.”

The ayatollah has previously said that “since we consider ourselves the warriors of the 12th imam, we must fight.” In another speech, he said:

The issue of Imam Mahdi [the 12th imam] is of utmost importance, and his reappearance has been clearly stated in our holy religion of Islam. ... We must study and remind ourselves of the end of times and Imam Mahdi’s era. ... We must [prepare the environment](#) for the coming so that the great leader will come.

Israeli diplomat Dore Gold explained:

[G]iven the spread of these “end-of-days” doctrines among the current Iranian leaders, the promise of “massive retaliation” by the West may not deter them from using weapons of mass destruction in a first strike, if they are striving to generate an Armageddon-like scenario, in accordance with their belief structure. Thus anyone who says with confidence that the West can get used to a nuclear Iran and rely on classic deterrence models has absolutely no idea what he is up against.

Keep watching as Iran works to advance its ballistic missile program, even in the face of new sanctions. Iran’s radical leadership has been enacting an aggressive foreign policy for years and has slowly grown in assertive dominance over its neighbors. Ballistic missiles are just the next step in Iran’s plan to dominate the region. Nuclear payloads will follow. Why build a gun if you aren’t planning to build bullets?

As *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry wrote in his 2008 article “[Nuclear Iran Means Nuclear War](#),” we don’t have to see *war* before we *believe* what’s happening in Iran. For more information, read *Trumpet* columnist Brad Macdonald’s article “[Iran and the ‘End of Days’](#).”

Was Russia Let Down by Iran and Hezbollah?

THE SAUDI NEWS SITE ELAPH REPORTED ON MONDAY THAT Russia’s partial withdrawal from Syria was a result of its frustrations over inadequate ground support from Iranian-sponsored, pro-regime forces.

“The division of opinions between Russia and Iran and Hezbollah were stronger than [the Russians’] pact with the Syrian regime, which led to the Russian pullout,” the report quoted a

source saying. “In addition, the coordination between Russia and the West in arranging a ceasefire and negotiations in Syria contributed to the downsizing of forces. Iran and Hezbollah got an unhappy surprise from this coordination.”

According to the report, the source noted three main reasons for the friction. The *Jerusalem Post* explained:

The Russians rejected the strategic view of the Iranian regime, that the regime of President Bashar Assad is the protector of the Shiites in Syria and Tehran's interests in the region, especially against the Gulf countries.

In the same vein, Russia was not happy with Iran's plans to transfer advanced weaponry to Hezbollah in Lebanon. In fact, it was for this reason that Russia reportedly froze the shipment of its S300 anti-aircraft missile defense systems to Iran last month after Israel revealed evidence of Iran transferring advanced weapons to Hezbollah.

The *Post* continued:

The second reason was the Kurds. While Iran sees the

growth in strength of the Kurds in the region as a threat to its internal stability ... Russia supports Kurdish independence, since they have been the most effective and trustworthy fighters against ISIS.

The third reason is the failure of Iran and Hezbollah to achieve significant military victories, including the expansion of the battlefronts in Tadmor and al-Raqqa, and against ISIS in the east towards the Iraqi border.

The source also noted that Iran is increasingly wary of the possibility of a new front in the anti-Islamic State war forming closer to its border with Iraq.

For more about the ultimate geopolitical impact of these developments, read "[How the Syrian Crisis Will End](#)."

Hamas's Biggest Dilemma

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



THE BASIS OF HAMAS'S IDEOLOGY IS ITS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH the Muslim Brotherhood. Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the founder of Hamas, drew inspiration from the Islamist organization. But now, Egypt is demanding an end to that relationship. As we reported at theTrumpet.com, Egypt identified the [assassins of Prosecutor General Hisham Barakat](#) as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas.

A senior Hamas delegation traveled to Egypt in March for talks with Egypt over this issue.

In his Al-Monitor article "[Hamas Finds Itself Between a Rock and a Hard Place](#)," Shlomi Eldar wrote:

Among other things [such as reconciliation with Fatah and the restoration of affairs in Gaza to the pre-2007 state], Egypt demanded that Hamas sever all ties with the Muslim Brotherhood. The Hamas delegation seems likely to accept Egypt's demands, because they have already shown that they want Hamas to survive as a movement. Throughout its existence, Hamas has been forced to compromise, round

its sharp corners and blur its ideological boundaries when they become serious obstacles. That, is what Hamas did, for example, after Israel assassinated the movement's top leaders—Yassin and Abdel Aziz Rantissi in 2004. To survive, the movement decided to stop its campaign of suicide bombings in Israel and adopted a new course. Hamas became a political movement, while its militia, the Izz ad-Din alQassam Brigades, became an army. ... The bitter reality facing Hamas has always been much stronger than the uncompromising ideology that Yassin advocated. It always seemed to oblige his successors to adopt a more moderate course of action.

The main reason for this ultimatum, Al-Monitor explained, is to deny the Muslim Brotherhood "a backdoor into Egypt via Hamas. After all, the Hamas charter defines itself as the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas is now facing its moment of truth. It is no exaggeration to say that its leaders are being forced to choose between life and death."

Scourge of Radical Islam: U.S. Retreating

THE UNITED STATES IS INCREASINGLY WARY OF THE THREAT POSED by the Islamic State and other Islamists in Egypt. CNN reported on Tuesday that the Pentagon is considering withdrawing its personnel from an international peacekeeping base in the Sinai Peninsula.

The report said that 700 U.S. forces may be relocated from the volatile northern Sinai to the southern Sinai. Islamist activity surged in the Sinai region after Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was ousted in 2011.

The *Jerusalem Post* wrote:

Washington is reportedly in talks with Israel and Egypt regarding the possible shift of the U.S.-led peacekeepers [making] up the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), who oversee the terms of the 1979 peace treaty between the

neighboring nations.

The officials who spoke to CNN added that the potential move would not constitute a U.S. retreat due to the threat posed by ISIS, stressing that the U.S. would still be able to fulfill the terms of its duties under the peace treaty. ...

Worry about the safety of the almost 1,900 peacekeepers hiked after six were wounded in September by a roadside bomb.

Cairo sees the MFO as part of a relationship with Israel that, while unpopular with many Egyptians, brings them \$1.3 billion in annual U.S. defense aid, sweetening the foreign-enforced demilitarization of their sovereign Sinai territory.

For Israel, the MFO offers strategic reassurance, recalling that Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi toppled an elected Islamist regime hostile to the Jewish state next door.

U.S. Intercepts Iranian Weapons

A UNITED STATES NAVY VESSEL INTERCEPTED A CACHE OF IRANIAN weapons in the Arabian Sea on March 28. The Pentagon announced on April 4 that the USS Sirocco seized an arms shipment that included 1,500 AK-47s, 200 rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) launchers and 21 machine guns.

Authorities say the weapons were destined for Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Defense officials say this is the third time in two months that

authorities have seized an Iranian weapons shipment. On March 20, French navy destroyer FS Provence intercepted a shipment that included 2,000 AK-47s, 64 Dragunov marksman rifles and 9 antitank missiles.

On February 27, the Royal Australian Navy's HMAS Darwin intercepted a small fishing style vessel carrying nearly 2,000 AK-47s, 100 RPG launchers, 88 machine guns and 20 mortar tubes.

TW IN BRIEF

London, Rome, Berlin—next targets for the Islamic State: The Islamic State released a video on Tuesday threatening to attack more cities in Europe. The video threatened: “If it was Paris yesterday, tomorrow it will be London or Berlin or Rome.” The Islamic State, which claimed responsibility for recent attacks in Europe, warned that those attacks were merely a “cautionary message.” The video showed images of the Colosseum in Rome, the United Kingdom Parliament building and France’s Eiffel Tower crumbling to the ground.

Israel warns: Islamists exporting jihad to Europe: Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon warned that there are “hundreds of jihadists planning to strike Western targets on European soil.” He was speaking in Tel Aviv with Polish counterpart Antoni Macierewicz on Wednesday. Paris and Brussels are just the beginning, Ya’alon warned. About the chief source of the problem, he offered a grim analysis: “We do not expect there to be stability and an end to the bloodshed in Syria anytime soon. In the war there, there are many conflicting interests and too many players in the arena. Some of these players, the global jihad organizations for example, are determined to continue fighting.”

EUROPE

Trumpet Hour

A BODY BLOW TO THE EU, RELIGION IN RUSSIA, MEXICO IN CRISIS, THE BATTLE FOR THE NORTH POLE, AND MORE | APRIL 8

AMERICA'S SUPERPRESIDENT, MILITARY MISSPENDING, \$15 MINIMUM WAGE AND MORE | APRIL 6

The EU Is Changing

IN THE WAKE OF THE PARIS AND BRUSSELS ATTACKS, THE RESURGENCE of Russia, the euro crisis, and the migrant crisis, Europe is beginning to go through some major changes. Its personality is changing. This is something we’ve long forecast at the *Trumpet*. But now the mainstream media is noting the shift too.

Ross Douhat published an article called “[A Transatlantic Role Reversal](#)” in the *New York Times*, April 2, where he wrote:

“Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus.” With one pithy line 14 years ago, the foreign-policy theorist Robert Kagan captured what seemed like obvious differences between the United States and Europe in the post-Cold War, post-9/11 age.

Most Europeans, Kagan argued, thought of themselves

as citizens of “a post-historical paradise of peace and relative prosperity,” in which threats could be safely managed without military force, and systems of “transnational negotiation and cooperation” were making war and nationalism obsolete. ...

Even if (as he conceded) the Mars and Venus language oversimplified things, anyone who observed Western politics in that era could see the pattern he was talking about, the assumptions that separated the American perspective from the worldview of Brussels, Paris and Berlin.

Which is why, in this time of political turmoil on both sides of the Atlantic, it’s so striking to watch Mars and Venus reverse their Bush-era alignment.

It’s too soon to say Europeans are actually *from* Mars

once again. But the Continent's Venusian idyll has taken blow after blow: the euro crisis, the aggressions of Vladimir Putin, and now the convergence of mass migration and Islamist terror. Nationalism is returning, border fences are going up. The center is weakening, the far right is gaining power. The Mediterranean and the Russian marches are zones of conflict again, and ancient habits—French military adventurism, Little Englander separatism, a tense relationship with Islam—are resurfacing.

The European elite still believes in the Kantian dream of perpetual peace, which is how the Continent ended up with Angela Merkel's open-door policy for Syrian refugees. But its leaders are also adapting to post-Kantian reality, and nowhere more so than in France, where the government has basically gone *Le Bush-Cheney* under both Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande: intervening in Libya, Mali and Syria; responding to terrorist attacks with Bush-esque rhetoric; and implementing a terror crackdown that makes the Patriot Act look libertarian.

In certain ways America is mirroring these trends: We're involved in Libya and Syria as well, we have our own refugee-related anxieties, and in Donald Trump we have our own version of Europe's nationalist right. But if nationalism is making Europeans more militaristic, in America it's inclining us to lay down the burdens of empire, to retreat into a self-sufficient Arcadia all our own.

That's a subtext of Trump's rhetoric. Making America great again involves crushing ISIS, yes, but otherwise it seems to involve washing our hands of military commitments—ceding living space to Putin, letting Japan and South Korea go nuclear, calling NATO obsolete. And it's simply the text of Bernie Sanders' campaign. He's running explicitly as the candidate of Venus

The rise of fringe parties within Europe has been a major part of this shift. Luciam Kim focused on this part of the change in his blog entry for Reuters titled [“Germany Can Take That Smug Look Off Its Face”](#):

If a *Der Spiegel* cover is any indication of the mood in Germany, then Europe's largest country is on the verge of an explosion. Two weeks ago, the newsmagazine highlighted the country's growing income inequality in a cover story on “the divided nation.” The cover photo showed a couple in a gilded room with a dozen other people stooped in a claustrophobic cellar below them.

Last week, the magazine featured the “uprising of the ‘*Wutbürger*’”—a new German term combining the words for “rage” and “citizen”—to describe people mad as hell about the political status quo. The headline screamed, “You guys up there are just lying to us all” over a paint-spattered image of German Chancellor Angela Merkel. ...

In the decades following World War II, West Germany built up its fabled social welfare system in part to compete with Communist East Germany and in part to form a bulwark against the type of extremism that had given rise to Adolf Hitler. Consensus became a byword for the German way of doing politics. ...

“The conventions governing Germany's political interactions are changing with incredible speed,” *Der Spiegel* deputy editor Dirk Kurbjuweit wrote in a recent essay. The two-party dominance by the center-right Christian Democrats and center-left Social Democrats is under threat.

A poll by the magazine found that 57 percent of Germans agreed with the statement, “Those guys up there will do whatever they want anyway, and my opinion doesn't count.” Among AfD supporters, 88 percent agreed. With more than 255,000 “likes,” the AfD has more Facebook followers than the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats combined. Facebook has become a popular forum for people who feel their opinions are ignored by traditional media. ...

Liberal societies are at risk in times of economic uncertainty. The political center is stable when the middle class is strong. But if enough people feel they're losing out, social conflict becomes inevitable. Populists feed on and drive polarization.

Further proof of this shift in Germany came from a poll published this week, which *The Local* covered in its article [“Two Thirds of Germans Want End to Open Borders”](#):

Germans appear to be losing faith in the idea of a borderless Europe, as the results of a poll published on Tuesday showed that two thirds would prefer the government to end the Schengen free-movement zone.

The survey by French pollsters IFOP found that while 60 percent of Italians were against Schengen—an agreement which allows people to travel within the EU without showing a passport—across the Rhine, the number of French people wanting borders closed was as high as 72 percent.

It shows that the terror attacks in Brussels and Paris “stoked the feeling that things have escalated out of control,” IFOP opinion research director Jérôme Fourquet told the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

“Before, people always said that an end to Schengen would mean the beginning of the end of the whole EU,” Fourquet went on. ...

Meanwhile, almost half of Germans surveyed—47 percent—said that it would not be possible to take in any more refugees given the number already present.

While the figure has grown from just one third in September 2015, Germans were less likely to agree that there was no more capacity than either the Italians or the French.

Last autumn, *Trumpet* columnist Brad Macdonald [wrote](#):

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. Being antiwar feels righteous, until Russian tanks roll across the border. Europe right now is a place where dreams are beginning to meet reality.

This process is well under way in modern Europe.

The Netherlands Strikes a Blow to EU

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



VOTERS IN THE NETHERLANDS REJECTED A FREE-TRADE TREATY the European Union offered to Ukraine on April 6. Gerald Warner covered the background in an article on CapX titled [“The Dutch Referendum: Another Body Blow to the Failing EU”](#):

Yesterday’s referendum in the Netherlands, in which a sweeping majority of 61 percent of voters rejected the proposed EU-Ukraine association agreement, dealt yet another blow to the imploding European project. The plebiscite was generally viewed as a vote on the credibility of the EU, for which the outcome is a further humiliation in the midst of its currency and migration travails. ...

The history of the Ukraine treaty rejected by the Dutch yesterday also tells us much about the EU. This agreement was originally proposed in 2013 to the Ukrainian government of Viktor Yanukovych, which rejected it. Pro-EU agitators then whipped up rebellion in February 2014 in Kiev, where barricades were festooned with the EU flag, and Yanukovych was violently overthrown. ...

In repudiating closer links with Ukraine, the Dutch electorate has delivered a further body blow to the EU, already on the point of fragmentation under the strain of its toxic currency, the migration crisis and the threat of Brexit.

American commentators were already calling the Netherlands referendum Nexit before the vote, recognizing the anti-EU sentiments that animated the “No” camp. ...

Legally, yesterday’s referendum was advisory rather than binding. It only obliges the Dutch government to pause and consider the situation. As recently as five years ago that process would have been a charade, followed by the stealthy implementation of the Ukraine association agreement. But things are different today, with public opinion across the Continent violently inflamed against the EU. [Dutch Prime Minister Mark] Rutte tried to sidestep that new reality when he said: “We must now find a solution that is acceptable to all parties.”

It would be a major challenge for an individual country to conduct a coherent foreign policy when individual decision can be overturned by direct democracy. For the 28-nation EU, the challenges are even harder. The vote shows the stark choice facing the EU. It can either be a strong, reasonably united power with a coherent foreign, economic and military policy. Or it can be a power where citizens of nation-states are listened to, whose votes count. But it cannot do both.

Remember Greece and the Euro?

ONCE AGAIN, GREECE AND THE EURO ARE IN THE NEWS. THIS time, it’s not about to go bust or run out of money. But officials at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) wish it were. Eamonn McCann explains the latest kerfuffle in the *Irish Times* in an article titled [“Undemocratic EU May Not Survive Grim Challenges”](#):

Last Saturday, WikiLeaks published the minutes of a meeting on March 19 at which two leading officials of the International Monetary Fund discussed how to deal with the Greek debt crisis. It has been popularly assumed that this crisis had come to an end last July when the Syriza government capitulated to the EU and accepted an austerity package more severe than measures rejected by a substantial majority of the Greek people in a referendum just a week previously.

The government of Alexis Tsipras was humiliated, the result of the referendum tossed away like a used tissue and the Greek people told to tighten their belts another notch.

Who could ask for anything more? The IMF, as it happens.

The officials involved in the March meeting were Paul Thomsen, head of the IMF’s European section, and the fund’s “mission chief for Greece,” Delia Velkouleskou. The meeting concerned the possibility of the Greek difficulty escalating into another full-blown crisis. Fresh austerity measures were needed, the two officials agreed—specifically, raising taxes, cutting pensions, and reducing working conditions.

Thomsen complained that the Greeks “are not even getting close ... to accepting our views.” Velkouleskou suggested that the Tsipras administration might climb down and swallow the bitter medicine “if they get pressured enough.”

As to whether the Greek people would placidly yield to pressure in the form of yet another forced reduction in their living standards, we may find out soon enough.

The leak adds to the anger in this rancorous debate. It also exposes, once again, how the euro is [incompatible with democracy](#).

Eastern Europe Fears NATO

ONCE AGAIN, EASTERN EUROPE HAS LED THE WORLD IN MILITARY rearmament, as Andrew Rettman reported in the *EU Observer*, in an article titled [“Russia’s EU Neighbors Boost Arms Spending”](#):

Eastern EU states posted some of the sharpest increases in arms spending in the world last year, driven by a fear of Russia, according to Swedish think tank SIPRI.

Polish spending rose by 33 percent to \$10.5 billion. Romanian spending climbed by 22 percent and is budgeted to climb by 53 percent this year.

Slovak spending grew by 17 percent. Baltic states Lithuania (33 percent) and Latvia (14 percent) also registered significant increases in 2015.

Put into context, the increases are much steeper than, for instance, Saudi Arabia's (5.7 percent). Saudi spending is vastly higher overall (\$87.2 billion), but its relatively modest increase comes despite the fact it is locked in an arms race with Iran, fighting a proxy war in Syria and an open conflict in Yemen.

The SIPRI report attributed the trend in central Europe to "escalating fear of a threat from Russia" following its

invasion of Ukraine and its show of strength in Syria.

It noted that overall spending by NATO's European members, including Turkey, went down by 0.3 percent to \$250 billion.

But the Russian threat, coupled with the war on Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, prompted NATO's main European powers—the UK, France and Germany—to raise spending.

Russian expenditure also continued to climb in 2015, rising by 7.5 percent to \$66.4 billion.

This continues a trend the *Trumpet* covered last year. For more, read *Trumpet* writer Richard Palmer's 2015 article "[A New Global Arms Race](#)."

ASIA

T The Kremlin Cracks Down on Religious Liberty Andrew Müller | April 7

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



DURING THE SOVIET ERA, THOUSANDS OF CHURCHES WERE destroyed and millions of Christians were persecuted. Communist textbooks called religion "the opium of the people" and Christianity "a perverse reflection on the world." In the 24 years since the fall of the Soviet Union, however, Orthodox Christianity has made an astonishing recovery. While only a third of Russians identified as Orthodox in 1991, over two thirds now identify as Russian Orthodox Christians.

Yet the rise of the Orthodox Church hasn't brought religious liberty to Russia. It has simply replaced the Communist Party as the ideological state apparatus used to forcibly unite Russians!

In a court case under way in southern Russia, Viktor Krasnov is facing up to a year in prison for writing "There is no God" on VKontakte (a Russian social media network similar to Facebook). The authorities became aware of this comment when an online user contacted them, claiming that Krasnov was offending Orthodox believers. Police raided Krasnov's apartment and forced him to undergo a monthlong examination at a psychiatric ward. Once he was deemed fit for trial, he was charged under a Russian law that makes it illegal to insult the feelings of religious believers.

It isn't just atheists who are no longer granted religious freedom in Russia. Alexey Koptev was arrested in 2011 after undercover police officers established that he belonged to the Jehovah's Witnesses Christian denomination. In 2009, the city of Taganrog banned the Jehovah's Witnesses denomination for propagating the exclusivity and supremacy of its religion. This denomination

now shares the same legal status as the Islamic State and the National Socialist Society.

In 2002, Russia enacted an extremism law with a provision defining religious extremism as "incitement of religious discord" in connection with acts or threats of violence. Five years later, the law was amended to allow prosecution for inciting religious discord even in the absence of any threat or act of violence. Mormons, Scientologists and even Pentecostals are now coming under increasing government pressure.

In return for public support from Russian Orthodox clergy, President Vladimir Putin attends church services and portrays himself as a defender of "Christian values." Like the Byzantine emperors and Russian czars before him, he is using a *de facto* state religion to unify his empire!

"The Orthodox revival gave Russians an identity after the years of uncertainty that followed the fall of the Soviet Union," private intelligence company Stratfor wrote last month. "The Kremlin has used this to its advantage, so effectively portraying support for Putin's government as a religious duty that the church is now seen as part of the state apparatus."

Post-Soviet efforts to remake Moscow into a representative government are failing. Russia has embraced an authoritarian leader driven to vaunt his nation back to the great power status he feels it deserves. This development has dangerous implications for the world. Russia is swiftly becoming a nuclear-armed czarist empire!

Russia and Turkey Compete for Spheres of Influence

HEAVY FIGHTING ERUPTED ON SATURDAY BETWEEN ARMENIAN and Azerbaijani forces over the separatist region of

Nagorno-Karabakh. At least 30 soldiers and a boy were reported killed. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan said they had inflicted heavy

losses on the other. Officially part of Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh has been under the control of local ethnic Armenian forces and the Armenian military since 1994. Each side blamed the other for Saturday's escalation. The fighting was the worst outbreak of violence since a full-scale war there ended in 1994. Years of negotiations have brought little progress in resolving the territorial dispute. Armenia is aligned with Russia, while Azerbaijan has maintained good relations with both Russia and with Turkey.

Fighting in the area could have larger ramifications for the region. An article by Anna Nemtsova in the *Daily Beast*, "[In Nagorno-Karabakh, a Bloody New War With Putin on Both Sides](#)," says:

The regional implications are hard to miss. Armenia is one of Russia's closest allies and Turkey immediately backed up Azerbaijan at a time when relations between Moscow and Ankara are bitter and vindictive. Given the war in Syria, where Russia and Turkey back opposing sides, and Turkey shot down a Russian warplane in November, the current eruption between Armenia and Azerbaijan is even more geopolitically dangerous than two decades ago.

In 2014, Armenia joined Vladimir Putin's Eurasian Economic

Union, yet Russia has also been courting the Azerbaijani people by selling them tanks, armored vehicles, artillery and mortar systems.

Nemtsova continues:

Experts both in Moscow and in Baku believe that President Putin would do almost anything to avoid a full-scale conflict between Russia and Azerbaijan. "Putin cannot afford to lose Azerbaijan, he would do everything to negotiate the peace for Nagorno-Karabakh now," an independent political analyst, Dmitriy Oreshkin, told the *Daily Beast* on Monday. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was planning to visit Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, this week, while Russian Prime Minister Dmitriy Medvedev planned to visit Yerevan, the capital of Armenia.

As tensions between Moscow and Ankara escalate, Russia and Turkey are competing for spheres of influence in the Middle East. Armenia is firmly in the Russian camp, but Azerbaijan hasn't picked a side. The next few months will be instrumental in determining the future of the Caucasus region and the entire Middle East. Expect Turkey to draw closer to the European Union as it competes with Russia and Iran for hegemony in the region.

How Russia Is Militarizing the Arctic

GENERALLY SPEAKING, FEW PEOPLE CONSIDER THE ARCTIC worth fighting over. Its climate is inhospitable to human life and the lack of dry land makes stationing troops difficult. Only a handful of countries have direct claims to Arctic territories: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States. Few of these nations, however, consider the region a high military priority.

The big exception to this rule is Vladimir Putin's Russia. In an article for the *Week* titled "[How Russia Is Fortifying the Arctic](#)," Kyle Mizokami says:

Russia is staking its claim to the Arctic and is being more than a little unreasonable about it. In 2007, Russian robotic submarines planted the national flag under the North Pole. Russia claims the North Pole on the grounds that the Lomonosov Ridge, an extension of Russia's continental shelf territory, passes underneath the pole.

Russia is preparing to back its claims up too: As of 2015,

it had established six new bases north of the Arctic Circle, including 16 deep-water ports and 13 airfields. Russia has deployed advanced S-400 long-range surface-to-air missiles, as well as "Bastion" supersonic antiship missiles, to protect Arctic bases. The vastness of the Arctic means these weapons don't threaten other countries, but they do create fortified bases that will allow Russia to springboard ships, planes and Arctic-trained troops into contested territory.

As conventional oil reservoirs become harder to find, nations are increasingly turning to unconventional reservoirs like shale fields, tar sands and deep-sea formations. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates 13 percent of the world's undiscovered oil (about 90 billion barrels) lies waiting in Arctic, deep-sea formation. The cost of extracting this oil may be prohibitive now, but Putin's Russia is trying to get a military lockdown on these fields in preparation for the future.

China Buying Up America Companies at Record Rate

DRIVEN BY FAVORABLE GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND A DESIRE TO gain overseas assets, Chinese companies are on an unprecedented acquisition spree in the United States. They've announced a record \$40.5 billion of U.S. deals since the beginning of 2016; already nearly double the amount for all of last year.

In an article for the *Chicago Tribune* titled "[Why Companies Should Beware of Chinese Buyers](#)," Michael Schuman writes:

But the U.S. and other Western market economies shouldn't be naive, either. China presents a special challenge

to free-market ideals. The recent binge of overseas deals by Chinese companies is driven not just by commercial impulses but political ones—including the desire to acquire technology and expertise in strategic sectors. Sadly perhaps, that means it requires a nonmarket—in other words, a government—response to protect U.S. economic interests. ...

More critically, managers at Chinese companies, especially those owned by the state, can ultimately answer to their bosses in the Communist Party, and that means acquisitions could be used to serve national, not commercial

purposes. Take, for instance, state-owned ChemChina's proposed \$43 billion acquisition of agriculture giant Syngenta. China could quite easily take steps to give Syngenta's seeds and other products preferential treatment in the Chinese market over competitors from other countries.

Over the past several years, the Chinese government and large Chinese corporations have been buying up businesses, homes, farmland, real estate and infrastructure all over America. Some economic analysts have speculated that China may be intending to establish "special economic zones" inside the United States modeled after the very successful Chinese city of Shenzhen.

Yu Qiao, a professor of economics at Tsinghua University in Beijing, proposed such a plan in 2009, recommending that Asian investors put their money in U.S. "corporations and infrastructure projects" that are "at less risk from a currency default."

"If the dollar collapsed, the consequences would devastate Asians' hard-earned wealth and terminate economic globalization," Yu writes in a *Financial Times* op-ed. "However, we can make the main reserve currency power more accountable by creating an instrument to help manage the global crisis. The basic idea is to turn Asian savings, China's in particular, into real business investments rather than let them be used to support U.S. over-consumption."

Yu further suggests that the U.S. Federal Reserve needs to set up a special account with the U.S. government allowing sovereign debt to be swapped into industrial investment. If America cannot pay its debts with dollars, then Washington will have to pay them with infrastructure.

RELATED: "CHINA IS BUYING THE CHICAGO STOCK EXCHANGE: A DANGEROUS SIGNAL FOR THE GLOBAL ECONOMY"

TW IN BRIEF

China sanctions North Korea: China announced this week that it would impose sanctions on North Korea because of Pyongyang's refusal to rein in its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. China is restricting its imports of coal, gold and rare earth materials from North Korea. Beijing says it will also ban exports to North Korea of jet fuel and other oil products used to produce rocket fuel. The Chinese measures are in line with new United Nations sanctions on North Korea. Traditionally, China has refrained from joining the UN in punishing North Korea for its belligerent behavior. It is possible that China will continue supporting North Korea in secret—as it has often done in the past. Alternatively, China's sudden willingness to join other global powers in punishing North Korea may mean that Kim Jong-un has finally gone too far in the eyes of his sponsors in Beijing.

Russia to begin shipping missile defense systems to Iran: Russia announced on Tuesday that it would begin its first shipment to Iran of anti-aircraft missile defense systems in the next few days. The first shipment of Russia's advanced S-300 air defense missile systems to Iran was originally scheduled for last

month. Russia reportedly froze the shipment after Israel revealed evidence of Iran transferring advanced weapons to Hezbollah. Israel is concerned that the missile systems will prevent it from striking Iran's nuclear facilities. The systems will weaken Israel's air supremacy in the region.

Media silenced in Russia and China over Panama Papers: Russian state television on Monday downplayed the massive leak of 11.5 million documents from a Panama-based law firm showing hidden offshore assets of politicians, businesses and celebrities from around the world, including Russia. According to Russian state television, the investigation does not prove President Vladimir Putin's connection to the offshore accounts. China went a step further than simply downplaying the issue, as it appears to be censoring social media posts on the Panama Papers. Several members of China's elite have been mentioned in the leaked documents. The BBC found that by the end of the day Monday, more than 481 discussions regarding the leak had been deleted. A website that tracks censorship on one Chinese social media site listed the word "Panama" as the second-most censored term on the network.

AFRICA/LATIN AMERICA

Latest Oil Casualty: Mexico

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



IS MEXICO HEADED TOWARD BECOMING A FAILED STATE? THAT IS the question [the Trumpet asked in 2008](#)—despite the fact that oil prices traded at \$140 per barrel. Now evidence is accumulating that the trend we highlighted is coming to fruition. Mexico is extremely reliant on revenues from Pemex, its giant oil production company. And that company may be about to go bankrupt. Here is what we wrote then:

In dollar terms, oil is the single most important revenue stream for the Mexican government, providing for a whopping 40 percent of all federal spending.

However, Mexican oil production is plummeting. Much of the problem stems from Mexico's super-giant oil field Cantarell. Located in shallow waters off the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, this one field alone supplied about 60

percent of Mexico's output until recently. Output peaked in 2004, after which pumping volumes drastically declined. Production cascaded 13.5 percent in 2006 and 15 percent in 2007, and 2008 looks like it may be an even bigger disaster.

Today, with oil prices in the \$35-per-barrel range, the company may be on the edge of collapse. The question is: Will it take Mexico with it?

In "Debt Spiral Grips Both Pemex and Mexico," Wolf Street author Don Quijjones elucidates:

It was just a matter of time before Pemex, Mexico's chronically indebted state-owned oil giant, began dragging down the national economy it had almost single-handedly sustained for over 75 years.

The company has been bleeding losses for 13 straight quarters. As of December 31, it had \$114.3 billion in assets and \$180.6 billion in liabilities, a good chunk of it denominated in dollars, leaving a gaping hole of \$66.3 billion (*negative* equity), after having been strip-mined over the decades by its owner, the government. And given these losses and the equity hole, new credit is becoming harder to come by.

Now it seems that Mexico's worst nightmare is beginning to come true, thanks in no small part to Moody's Investors Service. The credit rating agency last week downgraded Pemex's credit rating from Baa1 to Baa3; ... it's perilously perched just one notch above junk.

"Moody's believes that Pemex's credit metrics will worsen as oil prices remain low, production continues to drop, taxes remain high, and the company must adjust down capital spending to meet its budgetary targets," the report said.

As to whether Pemex will take Mexico down with it:

Now Moody's also changed the outlook for Mexico's sovereign rating from stable to negative.

This, coupled with the mounting risk of a credit downgrade, heaps further pressure on a government already struggling to shore up its balance sheet ... while the prospect of a massive bailout of Pemex looms ever larger. As if that were not enough, Mexico's manufacturing industry is beginning to feel a very sharp pinch from weakening U.S. consumer demand.

Nor is Pemex the only Mexican company standing on the edge of the financial abyss.

This Monday, the rating agency cranked up the pressure by adding a whole bunch of other Mexican institutions and companies to its negative watch list, including the country's eight biggest banks

Also included on Moody's negative watch list are 22 Mexican states, 42 municipalities, eight government institutions, four heavily-indebted mega-corporations (Arca Continental, Coca-Cola Femsa, and the Carlos Slim-owned telecommunications duopoly America Móvil and Telmex), and four national development banks

As we wrote in 2008: "America's increasingly unstable southern neighbor is facing many stressors and declining revenue, and the situation could melt down quickly. Our Mexican readers would do well to be wary of these conditions. And the amassing of tens of millions of hungry and unhappy people across the Rio Grande is sure to also affect America far beyond simply reducing oil deliveries."

TW IN BRIEF

Venezuelan workers now get Friday off to save electricity: During a televised state appearance last night, Venezuelan President Nicolas Madura announced that Venezuelan workers have to take every Friday off for the next two months in a bid to save electricity. This plan takes effect this Friday and will last until June 6. It comes after Madura shut down electricity for

five days last March, effectively shutting down the country. The majority of Venezuela's electricity is supplied by hydropower. Due to a devastating drought, water reserves needed to power hydroelectricity are extremely low. More crucially, Venezuela's centrally planned economy doesn't have a backup plan if its hydroelectric dams fail.

ANGLO-AMERICA



You Are Gods

Gerald Flurry, *The Key of David* | April 8

'You are Gods!' This is the fundamental truth at the heart of the gospel—and it reveals the incredible future God offers those who obey Him.



Student Loan Problem Created by Government to Be Solved by Government

IF YOU DON'T THINK THE \$1.2 TRILLION STUDENT DEBT CRISIS IS really a crisis, consider this. Over 40 percent of college students who have borrowed money from the government have stopped making payments. Many borrowers have not made even a single payment! The *Wall Street Journal* reports "[More Than 40 Percent of Student Borrowers Aren't Making Payments.](#)"

More than 40 percent of Americans who borrowed from the government's main student-loan program aren't making payments or are behind on more than \$200 billion owed, raising worries that millions of them may never repay.

While most have since left school and joined the workforce, 43 percent of the roughly 22 million Americans with federal student loans weren't making payments as of January 1, according to a quarterly snapshot of the Education Department's \$1.2 trillion student-loan portfolio.

About one in six borrowers, or 3.6 million, were in default on \$56 billion in student debt, meaning they had gone at least a year without making a payment. Three million more

owing roughly \$66 billion were at least a month behind.

Meantime, another 3 million owing almost \$110 billion were in "forbearance" or "deferment," meaning they had received permission to temporarily halt payments due to a financial emergency, such as unemployment. The figures exclude borrowers still in school and those with government-guaranteed private loans.

You can trace this problem right back to government. Under President George W. Bush, government officials passed a law making it illegal for students to have their student-loan debt canceled in bankruptcy court. Thus, suddenly every private lender began indiscriminately giving loans to students regardless of their ability to pay, their probability to succeed at college, their high school performance, or what degree they were pursuing.

The problem has grown so big that politicians are now proposing another big government "fix" to gain votes: debt "forgiveness" and "free" college for everyone.

TW IN BRIEF

U.S. businesses tell Mississippi to repeal law opposed by homosexuals: Executives from several major U.S. businesses urged the state of Mississippi to repeal a new state law, which they believe discriminates against homosexuals. The new law was approved on Tuesday, and since then, calls for its repeal have been received. The new law allows businesses to deny wedding services to same-sex couples on religious grounds. It also allows employers to cite religious principles in workplace policies such as dress, grooming and bathroom access. Executives from major companies like General Electric, Pepsi, Dow Chemical and others sent an open letter to the Mississippi governor condemning the law as discriminatory. The call to repeal the new law was also backed by Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Whole Foods Market, Hyatt Hotels Corp. and Choice Hotels International Inc. Mississippi upholds the new law saying that it is a matter of religious freedom. A recent poll taken in the state found that roughly two thirds of Mississippi voters support the law.

Everyone is getting Diabetes: A new report from the World Health Organization (WHO) released Wednesday says the number of adults with diabetes almost quadrupled worldwide

between 1980 and 2014. In 1980, 108 million adults had diabetes; by 2014, that number was up to 422 million—about 8.5 percent of the adult population. WHO says the increase was especially explosive in China. There, the number of adults with diabetes has doubled since 1980. Nearly 10 percent of Chinese adults are now suffering from diabetes. WHO says people can reduce the risk of getting diabetes by exercising more and having a healthy diet.

Freedom from taxes: Americans now spend more on taxes than they do on food, clothing and housing combined. That's the latest findings released today from the tax-advocacy group Tax Foundation. Tax Foundation is best known for its publication of its Tax Freedom Day, the date each year when Americans will have earned enough money to pay their yearly taxes had they devoted 100 percent of each of their gross paychecks. This year, the group says Americans will need to work until April 24 to earn enough money to pay their taxes. That is one day less than last year. According to the report, in 2016, Americans will pay \$3.3 trillion in federal taxes plus an additional \$1.6 trillion in state and local taxes. That works out to 31 percent of the nation's income—and more than they will spend on food, clothing and housing.



Is This Progress?

Stephen Flurry, Trumpet Daily | April 8

Why modern advances in technology aren't solving the world's problems

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