

JANUARY 13, 2017



Pope Francis receives Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Oct. 17, 2013, in Vatican City.

Why Does the Pope Keep Meeting With Mahmoud Abbas?

Brent Nagtegaal | January 12

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



JERUSALEM

POPE FRANCIS WILL MEET WITH PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY PRESIDENT Mahmoud Abbas in Rome on Saturday, the Vatican confirmed on Tuesday. It will be [the fifth personal meeting between the two since 2013](#), a clear indication of the pope's dedication to the Palestinian cause.

However, the timing of the meeting, at least from Israel's standpoint, couldn't be worse.

Israel is still reeling from the December 23 United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution, which declared any Israeli

construction in the area that Jordan controlled before the 1967 Six-Day War to be illegal and a "flagrant violation of international law." The resolution passed because the United States refused to use its veto against the measure as it had done to similar resolutions in the past. In general, Israelis view the move as a stab in the back by President Barack Obama, after eight years of deteriorating relations during his presidency.

Now, as Israel scrambles to remove the knife from its back, the Vatican is ready to pour salt in the wound.

By meeting with Abbas on the eve of the Paris Peace Conference,

where the international Israel-bashing is set to continue, Pope Francis is inserting himself into a politically charged situation, tipping the balance even further in the Palestinian direction. The timely meeting is tantamount to papal endorsement of the UNSC resolution against Israel, as well as a blatant testimonial of the “righteousness” of the Palestinian cause.

While we cannot be sure about the subject matter of the forthcoming conversation between Abbas and the pope, recent history shows that it won’t serve Israel’s interest.

One meeting between Francis and Abbas took place during the pope’s landmark visit to Israel in 2014. The visit itself was a response to Abbas’s invitation a year earlier, when they met the first time in Rome.

During the trip, the pope met with Abbas and read a prepared statement referring to the Palestinian leader as a “peacemaker.”

During that 2014 visit to Israel, the pope invited Israeli President Shimon Peres, as well as Abbas, to the Vatican. A month later, the three men assembled at the pope’s home in the Vatican and prayed for peace—a seemingly positive and unbiased attempt to bring together two warring leaders.

Trumpet columnist Joel Hilliker wrote about [the milestone event](#):

The landmark meeting ended with the Jewish and Palestinian leaders exchanging kisses [and Francis saying] that the meeting is a response to people who want to live, not as enemies, but as brothers and sisters. Does the pope really believe Mahmoud Abbas wants to be a “brother” to Shimon Peres? Does Peres really believe that?

The next meeting came in May 2015 when Palestinian and Vatican officials signed a joint treaty. During Abbas’s visit to sign the agreement, the pope called him “an angel of peace.” This was a bold title for a man leading the Palestine Liberation Organization, the notorious terrorist organization. However, even more disheartening for Israel was the fact that this treaty was the pope’s formal recognition of the “state of Palestine.”

Trumpet columnist Brad Macdonald wrote about the significance of this development in [“Why Is the Pope Provoking War in Israel?”](#):

Gaining the support of humanity’s most respected and admired leader could be just the boost needed to get the project of Palestinian statehood over the finish line.

For the Jewish state and its declining number of supporters, the Vatican’s decision was an enormous blow. ...

Michael Freund, former deputy communications director in the Israeli prime minister’s office, also put it in dramatic terms in the *Jerusalem Post*. “[G]iven its sordid history of anti-Semitism, book-burnings, forced conversions and Inquisitions, the Catholic Church should think a hundred times over before daring to step on Israel’s toes,” he wrote. “If anything, the pope should be down on his knees pleading for forgiveness from the Jewish people and atonement from the Creator for what the Vatican has wrought over the centuries” (May 18).

Indeed!

Given the pope’s actions over the past three years, he clearly has no qualms about inserting himself into the Israeli-Palestinian political arena. He no doubt understands the optics of meeting with Abbas a day before the Paris Peace Conference begins; a conference where, with everything else horrific going on in the world, diplomats from 70 countries will meet to preserve the two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians; a conference where, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Tuesday, the U.S. likely intends to deliver one final salvo against Israel before President Obama leaves office.

And yet, the day before, the leader of the Palestinian cause will meet with the pope in the Vatican. As the previous three meetings have shown, they no doubt are working together to undermine the Jewish state. Abbas will likely go into the conference with a papal endorsement for his plan toward establishing a Palestinian state. It’s even possible he will proceed to Paris with marching orders from the pope as well.

The *Trumpet* has long called attention to the Vatican’s intrusion into the peace process, not just because of its overt pro-Palestinian bias, but because the Vatican has its own agenda.

The pope’s current support for the Palestinians is but a Trojan horse for the Vatican to pursue its own objectives in Israel and, specifically, Jerusalem.

Mr. Macdonald’s article continued:

The obvious truth is that Pope Francis and the Vatican do not support the presence of Muslims in Jerusalem any more than they do the presence of Jews. There are two simple reasons that the Vatican, *for now*, is making it appear that it supports a Palestinian state and greater Muslim influence over Jerusalem.

First, supporting the Palestinians *undermines Israel’s control over the Holy Land*. ... Second, the Vatican’s endorsement of Palestinian statehood provides ideal cover as it pursues its own enduring ambition to wrest control of Jerusalem from the Jews and Muslims.

We can make such assertions as to Vatican intent based on both history and prophecy.

Historically, the Vatican led wars to capture Jerusalem—from the Muslims. In fact, there hasn’t been a single moment in the past 2,000 years when the Vatican sincerely endorsed Muslim control of Jerusalem. There have, however, been multiple occasions when the Vatican riled up Catholic warriors and dispatched them to the Holy Land to wrest control of it from the Muslims. Why would Pope Francis reject two millennia of Catholic history—even rejecting Catholic doctrine and tradition—and support Muslim sovereignty in the Holy Land?

On Saturday, the pope will meet with Abbas in a declaration of his support for the Palestinian cause. But behind the scenes, understand that the Vatican is working its own agenda that’s neither pro-Israeli nor pro-Palestinian, but pro-Catholic.

As we enter 2017, watch for the Vatican to get more involved in the peace process. As evidenced by his facilitating the Cuban deal between Washington and Havana, the pope is not shy about entering the political arena. His venture into the peace process will likely be even more overt.

Prophetically, the book of Daniel tells of one final crusade the

Vatican will make into the Holy Land (Daniel 11:40-45; read also “[The Dark Side to the Pope’s Visit to Jerusalem](#)”). However, those same scriptures reveal that Catholic domination of Jerusalem will

be short lived. As Mr. Flurry discussed in “[The Last Crusade](#),” that very event is linked to the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His government in Jerusalem. [Follow Brent Nagtegaal](#)

MIDDLE EAST

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Germany Expresses Solidarity With Israel After Terrorist Attack

AROUND MIDDAY LAST SUNDAY, A PALESTINIAN RESIDENT OF Jerusalem got behind the wheel of a large truck and drove it through a group of unsuspecting soldiers as they disembarked a bus. The blatant terrorist attack killed four and wounded 17 before the driver of the vehicle was shot and killed by the tour guide and remaining soldiers. While car, bulldozer or truck ramming have become somewhat commonplace in Jerusalem over the past few years, Sunday’s attack seems to have struck a new chord with European nations who have recently experienced similar style attacks. On Thursday, the *Times of Israel* featured an article titled “[Is Europe’s Jihadist Problem Generating Empathy Toward Israel?](#)” Highlighting the change, Cnaan Liphshiz began his piece this way:

When a Palestinian terrorist used a car to ram and kill an Israeli soldier in eastern Jerusalem in 2014, the European Union urged “restraint” and, without condemning the attack, called it merely “further painful evidence of the need to undertake serious efforts towards a sustainable peace agreement.”

The statement by EU foreign relations chief Federica Mogherini was “a typical EU reaction, which blames the victim for getting attacked,” Oded Eran, a former ambassador of Israel to the European Union and a senior research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, said at the time.

Two years later, however, European officials had a much different reaction to a similar attack in eastern Jerusalem, which killed four Israeli soldiers on Sunday.

“The European Union condemns the murder of these four young Israelis, as well as any praise or incitement for terrorist acts,” Brussels said in a statement, which, unlike the 2014 communiqué, omitted any reference to the fact

that the attack happened in an area of Jerusalem that it considers occupied.

Unusually, following Sunday’s attack the Israeli flag was projected on the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin and Paris City Hall, signs of solidarity with the Jewish state permitted by local authorities. Rotterdam City Hall flew the Israeli flag at half-mast.

To Eran and other observers of Israeli-EU relations, this change in tune is indicative of greater understanding and empathy in Europe to Israel’s fight against terrorism following a wave of terrorist attacks on the Continent beginning in 2012.

“I think it’s a new development that sincerely stems from the change in the mind of many people in Europe, in government and beyond, who now understand better than a few years ago the impact and influence of terrorism on the daily lives of innocent victims,” Eran told [Jerusalem Telegraphic Agency] on Wednesday.

During the week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was clear to point out the correlation between the Jerusalem attack and that in Berlin last month and Nice last June where 11 and 80 people were killed, respectively. Liphshiz continued:

Following the Berlin attack, German President Joachim Gauck said as much in a reply he sent to a condolence message from Gauck’s Israeli counterpart, Reuven Rivlin.

“You and your country are in a position to understand fully what being threatened by terrorism means for a people and a nation because in your country it has become almost a daily phenomenon. We know that you can feel with us and commiserate,” Gauck said.

Israel's ambassador to Germany, Avraham Nir-Feldklein, further drove home the message in a statement following the projection of the Israeli flag on the Brandenburg Gate, a gesture initiated by pro-Israel activists.

"We all find ourselves facing the same terror, from Nice through Berlin to Jerusalem, but together we will stand against evil, and we will prevail," he wrote.

On Twitter, the German Foreign Ministry shared a picture of the projection, stating it was "in solidarity with Israel." Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, by contrast, described the gesture in her city merely as a "tribute to the victims of the attack" in Jerusalem.

The Israeli flag projected onto the Brandenburg Gate was particularly stunning and was discussed widely in Israel over social media. While Israelis are not rejoicing that terrorist attacks are taking place in Europe, there is a sense of "now they know how we feel." It seems that following the Berlin attack, the German government was quicker to express solidarity with the Jewish state.

Biblical prophecy does indicate a closer relationship with the Jews and the Germans in the end time. Hosea 5:13 indicates that Israel actually invites Germany into Israel to help broker a peace deal with the Palestinians. It's possible that given Germany's warming relationship with Israel, Israel will be more comfortable going to Germany for help.



Former Iranian President Rafsanjani Dead

Callum Wood | January 11

AN INFLUENTIAL LEADER AND PROMINENT FIGURE IN THE 1979 Iranian Revolution, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani was one of Iran's most well-known "moderates." On Sunday, at age 82, he died from a heart attack in a hospital in Tehran.

Depending on which news source you read, you will find a variety of obituary-like recounts of Rafsanjani's presidency and life. Many in the left-wing media emphasize his support for fellow "moderate" and current Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, his support of the Green Movement, and his role in the cessation of the Iran-Iraq War as signs of an enduring commitment to moderation and reform in Iran.

But consider: The Green Movement collapsed; Rouhani has failed to raise standards of living or bring moderation to Iran's political elite; and although the Iran-Iraq War is over, today's Iranian military and Shiite militias are a vital part of Iraq's own armed forces—essentially propping up the current Iraqi administration.

Furthermore, Rafsanjani's death strikes a blow to Rouhani. Rafsanjani was a longtime supporter of Rouhani's and was no doubt prepared to help in upcoming elections. Rafsanjani's prominent placement in Iranian politics would have been a bulwark of support for Rouhani.

A blow was also dealt to the broader "moderate" movement in Iran. High-ranking positions in the Guardian Council are primarily comprised of hard-liners—not to mention the top job of the supreme leader himself. The "moderates" and reformists of Iran have lost a powerful spokesman.

Furthermore, the hopes of a moderate supreme leader were further diminished by Rafsanjani's death. Rafsanjani was head of the Expediency Council—the advisory council of the supreme leader. While unlikely to be in the running himself, Rafsanjani would have played a key role in choosing Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's successor.

Rafsanjani's latter works have barely outlived him. But what of his earlier days? One key policy looks set to live on well after his

death. It is a policy that carries with it a warning: Iranian "moderates" are not moderate. Simply look at both Rafsanjani and Rouhani have done to further Iran's nuclear goals.

On al Quds Day on Dec. 14, 2001, Rafsanjani stated: "If one day, the Islamic world is also equipped with weapons like those that Israel possesses now, then the imperialists' strategy will reach a standstill because the use of even one nuclear bomb inside Israel will destroy everything. However, it will only harm the Islamic world. It is not irrational to contemplate such an eventuality." He was discussing the potential of nuclear war.

Rafsanjani's enduring legacy of support for nuclear armaments is indistinguishable from the current ruling class. This begs the question: Will Rouhani—a fellow "moderate"—be remembered as such? Or will his lasting actions, like those of Rafsanjani, only aid in the perpetuation of the radical regime?

The nuclear deal that Rouhani presided over has given the Iranian regime funds to perpetuate terror throughout the region. Rouhani has overseen Iran's gains in Iraq—splintering the nation along the Sunni-Shiite divide. During his time on the world stage, relations with the Sunnis have been strained nearly to the breaking point. His first term in office saw hundreds of thousands die in Syria. He has supported Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Rouhani might not be vocal in calling for nukes, but his deals with the West have given Iran time, legitimacy and money. Rouhani's legacy and dreams will be the same as Rafsanjani's—the same as Khamenei's: radicalism. The only difference is Rouhani might yet see those dreams become a horrifying reality in the form of nuclear weapons.

As Rafsanjani and Rouhani both prove so well, there is no hope in the "moderates" of Iran. These men work only to promote violence, terror and eventually World War III!

You need to understand where Iran is heading, what it means for this world, and how you individually can be saved from the tragedy ahead.

TW IN BRIEF

Iran provokes U.S. Navy in Persian Gulf: A United States Navy destroyer fired three warning shots at armed Iranian patrol

boats as they sped toward the American warship at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, officials said on Monday. A group of four

fast-attack boats of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy had ignored multiple attempts by the crew of the USS Mahan to warn them away. This prompted the decision to fire three warning shots with a .50-caliber machine gun. The incident is the first in 2017 between Iran and the U.S. Last year marked a 50 percent increase in provocative acts by the Iranian Navy against the U.S.

Russian aircraft carrier in Libyan waters supports eastern government: On Wednesday, Gen. Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar of the eastern Libyan government climbed aboard the Russian aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov as it was conducting exercises in Libyan waters. Haftar represents the armed forces of the eastern Tobruk-based government in direct competition with the Government of National Accord (GNA), backed by the European Union and the United States, operating out of Tripoli in the west of the country. While aboard, Haftar held a video conference with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. According to Stratfor, the meeting was a “symbolic show of support for the House of Representatives and a demonstration of Russia’s diplomatic clout. ... For the House

of Representatives, the Russian delegation’s visit is an important step toward establishing itself as Libya’s rightful government.” The meeting took place just one week after the deputy leader of the GNA announced his resignation saying the United Nations-backed administration had failed to tackle urgent problems arising from years of conflict and political disarray.

Lebanese president in Saudi Arabia to request resumption of aid: Recently elected Lebanese President Michael Aoun met with Saudi King Salman on Tuesday in a bid to recommence Saudi Arabia’s \$3 billion arms donation to the Lebanese Armed Forces. Saudi Arabia had frozen the transaction last year as it felt it further losing its power inside Lebanon. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Mr. Aoun is reaching out to Riyadh in an effort to show that Lebanon hasn’t fallen into Tehran’s orbit.” However, Aoun himself, though a Christian, is aligned with Hezbollah’s political movement inside Lebanon. Although Iran looks to hold power in Lebanon through its proxy Hezbollah, the *Trumpet* expects Iran’s dominance over the Mediterranean state to end in favor of a Saudi alliance.

EUROPE

Trumpet Hour

POPE MEETS ABBAS, AMERICA’S VULNERABLE MILITARY,
CALLING ON GERMANY, AND MUCH MORE | JANUARY 13

JERUSALEM’S FUTURE, THE MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE ON EARTH,
BREXIT SOLVING BRITAIN’S PROBLEMS, AND MORE | JANUARY 11

France, and the World, Calls for Germany

GERMANY MUST BECOME A STRONGER MILITARY POWER SAID THE favorite presidential candidate for Germany’s neighbor, and terrorism’s most frequent target.

Center-right French presidential candidate François Fillon said that the Berlin attack and Donald Trump’s election are collectively a “game changer” in which Germany can no longer play the role of a “pacifist.”

Fillion said he wants to “[remobilize the European Union around strategic priorities](#): our collective security, defense, innovation and the retightening of the eurozone,” the *Telegraph* reported. To further discuss his vision for Europe, he will have a meeting with Chancellor Angela Merkel on January 23 in Berlin. Though he has a few disagreements with Merkel, he knows that Germany and France have to form a tighter core in the European Union, and Germany has to take on more responsibility.

Fillion is articulating what has become a common French request. France is trying to control government spending, while sustaining major overseas deployments in the fight against the Islamic State. One way to square that circle is to get Germany’s help with the fighting.

But Fillion is not the only one making this call. Former German Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor Joschka Fischer made

a similar call in a January 6 article for [Project Syndicate](#).

“Judging by Trump’s past statements about Europe and its relationship with the U.S., the EU should be preparing for some profound shocks,” Fischer warned. The EU will be under pressure from both America and Russia and “will have to brace itself for challenging times indeed.”

If “Trump continues to call into question America’s security guarantee for Europe,” then “Europeans would suddenly find themselves standing alone against a Russia that has increasingly employed military means to challenge borders, such as in Ukraine, and to reassert its influence—or even hegemony—over Eastern Europe,” he added.

Because of this, Europe must look to “a second security option.” Like Fillion, Fischer believes that “it will fall to its two largest and economically strongest countries, France and Germany, to bolster Europe’s defense.” He noted how a military cooperation that some once considered impossible is now forging ahead. Fischer concluded:

The old EU developed into an economic power because it was protected beneath the U.S. security umbrella. But without this guarantee, it can address its current

geopolitical realities only by developing its own capacity to project political and military power. Six decades after the Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community, history and current developments are pushing France and Germany to shape Europe's future once again.

But this call to do more is one that Germany is already responding to, as Jay Nordlinger points out in an article for the *National Review*, January 10, titled “[Calls to Arms, Part I](#)”:

Germany and Japan have not been known for military forays since 1945. Much of the world has liked it that way. So have many Germans and Japanese. But a new era is upon us. Germany and Japan are venturing out. They are rethinking their military postures. After 70 years, this was perhaps inevitable. In any case, it is so.

The Germans are sending a battalion to the Baltic states—specifically, to Lithuania. Japan is sending troops to South Sudan under new, indeed historic, rules of engagement: They may use force, not only to defend themselves but to defend others. More broadly, Germany and Japan are responding to new threats.

They are also responding to a new America, which is ready to abandon or lighten the burdens it has long carried.

Not everyone was happy about the reunification of Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall. ... Eventually, many people decided that Germany had been down long enough. Radek Sikorski made a famous statement of his own, when he was foreign minister of Poland. The year was 2011 and he was speaking in Berlin: “I will probably be the first Polish foreign minister in history to say so, but here it is: I fear German power less than I am beginning to fear German inactivity. You have become Europe's indispensable nation.”

Madeleine Albright, remember, had made a famous statement when she was the American secretary of state: “We are the indispensable nation.” ...

Of late, Germany has not been exactly a wallflower on the international scene. They are part of the Afghan coalition

... The Germans have been in Africa—in Mali, for example, and they are planning to build an outpost in Niger. This is all with an eye to counter terrorism. And they have been arming and training Kurds in the fight against [the Islamic State].

But it is Russia that has really concentrated the German

mind. In 2014, Vladimir Putin's state annexed the Crimea, and made war in the Donbass region of Ukraine. This was alarming in Berlin and throughout NATO, and it was particularly alarming in the Baltic states, the eastern flank of NATO. The alliance decided to send fresh battalions to those states: Britons to Estonia, Canadians to Latvia, and Germans to Lithuania.

The Lithuanian president, Dalia Grybauskaitė, made an exuberant statement. “I think we are at a historic turning point,” she said. “First, a lot of time has passed, and a breakthrough is occurring in the German mind-set: Time for self-doubt, fear, reluctance to take responsibility, and dread of what Putin might think is over.” ...

The German Air Force—the *Luftwaffe*—is in Estonia at this moment. They are part of the NATO mission called “Baltic Air Policing.” ...

Germany is embarked on a tremendous military expansion: billions more euros, thousands more soldiers. Giving a speech in October, Chancellor Merkel explained, “In the 21st century, we won't be getting as much help as we got in the 20th.” She went on to say, “We have to spend more for our external security. The conflicts of this world are currently on Europe's doorstep, massively so.”

In saying this, she was surely thinking of Middle Eastern and African migration, as well as Russia.

Constanze Stelzenmüller is an expert on Germany and Europe at the Brookings Institution. And she notes a dog not barking: a lack of protest within Germany over the government's new direction. (There is a lack of protest in Europe at large, too.) Yes, there is some dissatisfaction, as from the Left Party. But generally there is agreement or acceptance. This is in amazing contrast, Stelzenmüller says, with the huge protests that took place over the installation of U.S. missiles in the early 1980s. At the time, she was in Bonn, the West German capital, studying law. She could barely get to class for the crowds. ...

Constanze Stelzenmüller says, “There is a general sense that there's a tsunami heading Europe's way.” This question of military power—of doing the necessary, militarily—“is about values, interests, and the integrity of Europe. And it's about Germany and our future”

Watch for this “tsunami” to prompt Europe to get much more serious about defense.

France Makes Bid for Greater NATO Leadership

FRANCE WANTS TO TAKE BRITAIN'S SPOT AS NATO NO. 2 THE *TIMES* reported January 10:

Britain could lose its leading position within NATO after Brexit under options being discussed by member states.

The tradition that a British officer holds the No. 2 military post in the alliance is under threat as other European countries eye the coveted role, the Royal United Services

Institute think tank indicated. The move would represent a loss of prestige for Britain, which has filled the post of deputy supreme allied commander almost continually since Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery in 1951. The alliance has always been led by an American.

Defense sources identified France as most likely to exploit Britain's exit from the European Union to improve its military standing within NATO. Last autumn, Paris sent

an unofficial delegation to Washington to lobby U.S. officials, claiming that French-armed forces were better placed than their British counterparts to be America's special ally in Europe after Brexit, the *Times* understands.

The French team, including a naval captain and a senior official at the Defense Ministry, "were at pains to point out how useful the French military could be as an ally and their track record in getting things done in trouble spots where

the U.S. was not as strong as it wished to be," said a source with knowledge of the September mission.

The closer integration of European military forces, combined with the decline of Britain's military, is changing the balance of military power in Europe. This change could well be reflected in a historic change in the way NATO is organized.

TW IN BRIEF

Germany receives more migrants: Germany saw about 280,000 new asylum seekers arrive in 2016. It is less than a third of the previous year's influx. The minister said arrivals declined sharply with the closure of the Balkan migrant route in March. The agreement between the EU and Turkey to stem the flow across the Aegean Sea to Greece also helped.

Balkans continue to simmer: Tensions rose in the Balkans, January 9, as the Republika Srpska held its largest-ever celebration for its national holiday. Srpska is a Serb majority state within Bosnia, where many want independence or reunification with Serbia. However, the international community has decided that the right to self-determination in Yugoslavia only applies to those that aren't Serbs. The celebration of the day violated constitutional court ruling. The region is yet another area where Russian and European interests overlap. Germany led Europe

to support the break-up of Yugoslavia, while Russia has historically backed the Serbs. Russia has had contact and some support with Srpska's leaders. The Balkans have settled down for now, but there are old wounds there that Russia could exploit if it wanted. For more, read our article "[Will Putin Reignite the Balkans?](#)"

German GDP grows at fastest rate in five years: Germany's gross domestic product expanded by 1.9 percent in 2016, according to Destatis statistics released on Tuesday. This is the nation's highest growth rate since 2011, beating the government's own prediction of 1.8 percent growth. This economic upswing was propelled largely by a buoyant labor market and a pickup in government spending, in particular, spending on programs to house and train the over 1 million migrants who have entered Germany since 2015.

ASIA

Et Tu, Thailand?

IN RECENT MONTHS PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT RODRIGO DUTERTE HAS shown that he is keen on moving away from the United States and toward Beijing. This prompted columnist Charles Krauthammer to say, "The Philippines openly defected to the Chinese side." Malaysia, too, has taken steps to weaken its decades-long alliance with America in favor of a more China-friendly stance. And now, it seems that a third Asian ally of America, Thailand, may follow suit.

On January 10, news broke that Thailand is buying a sizable quantity of tanks from China. "[Thailand Will Now Buy VT-4 Tanks From China](#)," Defense World wrote. "Also, China will become a consultant in Thailand on joint investments in tank and user machines. The contract was signed for the supply of 28 units of VT-4 technology with the possibility of increasing the number of units purchased in the future."

Back in December, after news broke of China and Thailand's plans to build a joint military production facility, the *Diplomat* said it was part of a broader trend. "[Sino-Thai military cooperation has deepened](#) of late amid a downturn in U.S.-Thai relations over democracy and human rights concerns that emerged following the coup in May 2014 orchestrated by the current ruling junta," it wrote.

The *Diplomat* continued:

Both air forces held their first ever joint exercise in

2015, and Thailand has also ... selected Beijing for a multi-billion-dollar contract to build its first submarines But with bilateral military cooperation between the two countries now slowly expanding ..., the logic of eventually establishing such a facility seems clear.

The National Interest explained some of the main drivers behind the trend of Thailand and other America-friendly states defecting to the Chinese side:

[China's largely unchecked international behavior](#) enables Beijing to coerce other countries to take decisions that undermine their sovereignty. In effect, Beijing is pressuring regional countries to accept a deal that mirrors the contract struck with its own people: economic benefits in exchange for political compliance, with a big stick lurking in the background, threatening retaliation for aberrant behavior. ...

Some regional governments now view China as not only their most important economic partner but also as a friend who, in contrast to the United States, doesn't interfere with their sensitive domestic issues. Moreover, they appreciate that China has by far the largest military force in the South

China Sea, and it is acting aggressively. The United States and its allies, on the other hand, have sporadic military presences in the region and are behaving very cautiously. Significant damage is being done to U.S. and allied credibility. In the absence of major changes in allied policy, much of Southeast Asia will likely shift into Beijing's orbit.

The Japan factor could slow this trend. As the Eurasia Review

wrote on January 12, "After relations between the United States and its longtime allies, Thailand and the Philippines, soured over their internal affairs, [Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō] Abe quickly moved to strengthen Japan's bilateral ties with both countries." But whether Japan's efforts slow the defection of America's allies to China or not, it is clear that American influence in Asia is rapidly waning. And the nations in the region are repositioning themselves in accordance with the new realities.

China or the U.S.? In Trump Era, Moscow's Foreign Policy Is at a Crossroads

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



WITH UNITED STATES PRESIDENT-ELECT DONALD TRUMP HAVING promised both to stand up against China and to improve U.S. cooperation with Russia, Vladimir Putin stands at a crossroads. The Russian president may feel that he needs to choose to either repair Moscow's ties with Washington or continue its partnership with China.

Eurasia Review discussed this dilemma on January 11:

What is at stake for Russia in 2017 is whether it would like to regain its strategic equivalence with the United States in an engagement mode or continue with its existing tag of being the junior partner in the Russia-China strategic nexus viewed as confrontational to the United States and also not viewed favorably by the existing major powers nor by emerging powers like India and Japan? ...

Would Russia opt for restoring its relationship with the United States as one of established global heavyweights, or would Russia persist in siding with a "revisionist power" like China bent on overturning the established stability status quo?

Complex questions which some are likely to dismiss as speculative but that is the reality which Russia's foreign-policy directions have to cope with in 2017. Hopefully, some imaginative American diplomacy could ease Russia's

predicaments in making the right foreign-policy moves of loosening if not full detachment from its China linkages.

[T]he answers to the above questions rest with the Russian president and his foreign-policy establishment as they ponder the policy choices that confront Russia at the strategic crossroads in 2017. A stark foreign-policy choice awaits Russia whether it wishes to be on the right side of history or against it.

Eurasia Review seems optimistic that Russia might opt for "loosening if not full detachment from its China linkages." But Bible prophecy is clear that even if such a "loosening" were to happen, it would be short term and would soon give way to even closer Russo-Sino cooperation.

We explain in our free booklet *Russia and China in Prophecy*: "In the next few years, there will be a staggering turn in world events! A giant Asian superpower, with a modernized Russia and China at the helm, will dramatically affect the course of history. ... [I]n Revelation 9, the sixth trumpet then sounds, which is also called the second woe (verses 12-13). Four angels are released specifically to amass an almost incomprehensibly large, 200 million-man army (verses 15-16). ... The current population in China is over 1.3 billion. Russia has 144 million. Other Asian nations are prophesied to join this alliance"

2017: Not a Good Year for Mr. Trump to Stand Up to China?

CHINA IS ON THE VERGE OF A LEADERSHIP TRANSITION THAT HAS the nation more sensitive than ever to provocations and perceived slights. Because of this, Yahoo Finance has said "2017 Is the Wrong Year for Trump to Mess With China."

The January 8 article reported:

Chinese President Xi Jinping "will be extremely sensitive to external challenges to his country's interests at a time when all eyes are on his leadership," [political risk consultant Ian] Bremmer writes. "The Chinese president will be more likely than ever to respond forcefully to foreign-policy challenges." ...

Trump, who's taken a hard line on China-U.S. relations, broke long-standing protocol last month when he took a phone call from Taiwan's president. He also scolded China in

a series of tweets last month for capturing a U.S. sea drone

Meanwhile, the president-elect has repeatedly threatened to put a 45 percent tariff on Chinese-made goods. ... In light of these recent actions, Bremmer predicts that Trump could be one trigger to "rattle" Xi as he faces an upcoming change in the party leadership.

There is certainly a unique set of circumstances surrounding the upcoming transition. Five of the seven members of the Politburo Standing Committee, China's top leadership body, may retire before the twice-a-decade party congress, leaving only Xi and Premier Li Keqiang remaining.

Xi may be trying to fill the new Standing Committee with allies to block the promotion of a potential successor for when his term is up in 2022

The question of whether Li Keqiang will stay on for a

second five-year term after the 19th National Congress still looms. Speculation has been brewing that Li and Xi are divided over economic policy, and if Li is ousted, his free-market reforms might give way to Xi's more hands-on approach to the economy, a sore subject as of late. ...

The stakes for provoking China in this environment are high, Bremmer writes, as "any misstep by Xi would provoke global economic volatility."

Meanwhile, China's state-run *Global Times* warned on January 9 that if Mr. Trump ends America's recognition of the so-called one-China policy, then China would "take revenge." The threat came just

hours after Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen made a controversial visit to Houston, Texas, where she met with American lawmakers. "If Trump reneges on the one-China policy after taking office, the Chinese people will demand the government to take revenge. There is no room for bargaining," said the *Global Times*. "It should also impose military pressure on Taiwan and push it to the edge of being reunified by force, so as to effectively affect the approval rating of the Tsai administration," the Chinese publication said.

The combination of Mr. Trump's tough stance toward China and Mr. Xi's heightened sensitivity to provocations could make the tensions around the Taiwan Strait, in the South China Sea and beyond more volatile.

In the Era of Brexit and Trump, China and EU Must Deepen Ties

IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE UNITED STATES' PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION and the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union, China and the EU need to work together more than ever. That is the assessment of an opinion piece by Lucie Qian Xia published in the *EU Observer*.

The EU and China have entered uncharted diplomatic waters in the aftermath of the Brexit vote and the U.S. presidential election. They must embrace free and fair trade.

Trade is the DNA of the modern world economy and the anchor of the EU-China relationship. ... It is in the interest of both China and the EU to defend free trade and to energize the multilateral trade order. ...

If EU-China relations were to stand the test of time, both sides need to adapt to the fluidity of the global diplomatic environment and seek new narratives to engage with each other and with the rest of the world in times of strategic uncertainty.

The political logic that underpinned the establishment of the diplomatic relationship between the EU and China in 1975 still holds true today, as was epitomized in the speech by the then Vice President of the European Commission Sir

Christopher Soames: "[B]oth China and the EU have much to gain from the closer and more confident relationship which now opens up before us." ...

The Hamburg summit embodies the pathway that China and the EU are committed to deepening cultural understanding, foster mutual respect, and willingness to work together. As Joschka Fischer, the former German foreign minister, proclaimed at the summit: The show must, and will, go on.

"Seven years ago, *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry forecast the formation of a brief alliance between a German-led European Union and major Asian powers, based primarily on trade and commerce. Mr. Flurry's forecast was based on a prophecy in the biblical book of Isaiah. Last year, China proposed the launch of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)—a new, Chinese-run international bank specifically designed to challenge U.S. global economic leadership. America tried to convince other nations not to join. But it failed—even with its closest allies. Germany is now set to become the fourth-largest shareholder in the AIIB. ... What is now unfolding is just the scenario the Prophet Isaiah described would happen in the end time."
—*Trumpet*, July 2016

TW IN BRIEF

Taiwan scrambles jets: Taiwan scrambled jets and naval vessels on Wednesday after a Chinese naval battle group led by Beijing's sole aircraft carrier passed through the Taiwan Strait. The ships

were returning from exercises in the South China Sea and did not sail through Taiwanese waters. Taiwan's military hardware was deployed to survey and control the passage of the Chinese vessels.

ANGLO-AMERICA

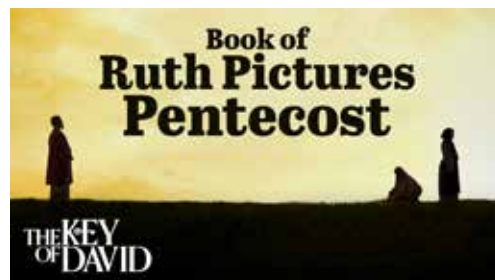


Book of Ruth Pictures Pentecost

Gerald Flurry,

The Key of David | January 15

The book of Ruth is a symbolic love story, recording this virtuous woman's attitude. Discover how Ruth's marriage represents the greatest marriage in the universe.



America Is Losing the Cyberwar

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



IN THE WAKE OF THE ALLEGED RUSSIAN HACK OF THE DEMOCRATIC National Convention, the United States is now grappling with the possibility that it is falling behind in one of the world's most dangerous arenas: cyberwarfare.

According to an article by Matthew Schofield in the *News & Observer*:

The United States has been a lone global military super-power since the collapse of the Soviet Union, but officials have noted that the new cyberwarfield is cheap to enter, relatively easy to work in, and doesn't necessarily favor the massive advantages the United States has maintained in conventional security.

As National Security Agency director Adm. Michael Rogers said during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, "Those who would seek to harm our fellow Americans and our nation utilize the same Internet, the same communication devices and the same social media platforms. ... We're watching sophisticated adversaries."

Later, he would add the U.S. need for "speed, speed, speed." The cyberthreat, like the rest of the cyberworld, is "ever evolving" and favors the agile. In that world, the advantages the United States has in outspending the rest of the world—by a wide margin—on defense becomes less important.

Consider that the primary cyberthreats to the United States come from the same places that remain the primary non-cyberthreats, what are known as "4+1," or China, Iran, North Korea, Russia and the Islamic State/al Qaeda. Combine the military spending of those four nations and the terrorist organizations, and the United States outspends

them by more than 2 to 1.

Cyberwar is considered a type of asymmetrical warfare, because it favors cleverness and cunning over money and matter.

In addition to the recent hack of the Democratic National Convention, North Korea was blamed in 2014 for hacked e-mail accounts at Sony Pictures Entertainment, and the Chinese military has been suspected for years of using cyberwarfare to spy on and hack into American defense installations.

In 1995, *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry highlighted and expanded on De Courcy's 1992 warning: "Computer dependence is the Western world's Achilles' heel, and within a few years, this weakness could be tested to the full."

Mr. Flurry supports that forecast with a prophecy in Ezekiel 7:1-2, 14: "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel; An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land. ... They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof." Notice, as nation-threatening dangers pile up and the call to arms goes out, "none goeth to battle."

Is that because America experiences a massive cyberattack? An attack so deadly it destroys vital U.S. infrastructure, making it impossible to muster the military and sustain trade and commerce, and ultimately thrusting the nation into chaos and anarchy? Twenty years ago, such a scenario would have been surreal, impossible, the plot line of an epic science-fiction movie. Yet here we are in 2017 listening to the National Security Agency director speak seriously and candidly about the potential of a catastrophic cyberattack on the U.S.

Is America's 'Invincible Military' a Myth?

WE TALKED ABOUT THIS



UNITED STATES MILITARY SPENDING IS AROUND THE SIZE OF THE next seven biggest military budgets around the globe, combined. As such, the American military machine is too big to fail. At least, that's what conventionally held wisdom says. But a January 11 report by Pascal-Emmanuel Gobry in the *Week* says the notion of "America's invincible military" is just a myth.

Today, global peace rests on many things, but one of them is the assumption that the United States military is invincible. ... But just like France's invincibility on the eve of World War II, America's military invincibility may just be waiting to be toppled by anyone clever and gutsy enough to give the right shove. ...

1. Supercarriers

He who rules the seas rules the world. ... And on paper,

America's dominance looks total. The United States has 10 aircraft carriers. Russia can barely field just one. China only just recently got one, a retrofitted old Soviet clunker. ... But here's the thing: [C]arrier strike groups, a technology and formation from the mid-20th century, are probably obsolete. ... Up until very recently, America's overwhelming carrier advantage meant that any attempt, say, by China to invade Taiwan, looked like folly. Now it practically looks like an invitation: With its antiship ballistic missiles, China could sink half the U.S. Navy before it even got within range of the island. ...

2. Stealth fighters

Like naval power, air power is absolutely crucial in war. He who controls the skies controls the fight. ... Thankfully, [American fighters] have a silver bullet: stealth! All of the

United States' fighter jets will be stealthy. And when you can't even show up on the enemies' radar screens and you can shoot at them with impunity, you're going to crush them very quickly, right? ...

But there are two problems. One is that Russia and China are also building their own stealth fighters. And the other is that stealth technology isn't actually all that stealthy. In a development that will shock only those who don't know anything about the history of warfare, America's competitors have come up with technologies to counter these gizmos. In fact, a number of new technologies, including active and passive radars, are pretty good at detecting so-called "stealth" planes.

The U.S. Air Force's strategic objective is to have enough of an edge, whether technological or organizational, that it can easily crush a rival's air force. The method for doing so since the early 1990s has been "Stealth! Stealth!" But now, we need something new.

3. Networks and satellites

Since the mid-1990s, strategic planners in the Pentagon have boasted that so-called "network-centric warfare" has revolutionized military affairs. ... Here's the problem: Satellites are enormously vulnerable. Antisatellite missiles are a thing. Why wouldn't the Russians knock down the United States' network in the first move of an engagement, leaving its military deaf, blind and dumb? ...

[T]he United States military is glaringly vulnerable to a devastating attack in a way disturbingly similar to the heretofore-invincible 1940 French military. And if I know this, I'm sure there are people in Moscow and Beijing who do, too.

Added to all of this is the glaring fact that America no longer has the will to use its power in a decisive way. Considering all of these factors, it is not difficult to imagine various scenarios playing out in the months and years ahead that will show that the idea of America's "invincible military" is indeed a myth.

Illegal Immigrants Flock to Chicago Before Trump's Inauguration

MEXICAN CONSUL CARLOS MARTIN JIMENEZ RECENTLY SAID that immigrants are flocking to Chicago before President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration.

Alex Pfeiffer explained in his January 12 article on the [Daily Caller](#):

The Mexican consul in Chicago said that immigrants are flocking to the Windy City before Donald Trump becomes president because Chicago is a sanctuary city, according to a report Tuesday in *El Financiero*.

Carlos Martin Jimenez was speaking at a recent gathering of Mexican ambassadors and consuls in Mexico City and said that Mexicans in Indiana and Wisconsin are coming to the Chicago consulate due to it being a sanctuary for illegal immigrants.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel has vowed to not comply with federal immigration officers heading into the Trump administration. "To all those who are, after Tuesday's election, very nervous and filled with anxiety as we've spoken to, you are safe in Chicago, you are secure in Chicago, and

you are supported in Chicago," Emanuel said in December.

In his classic book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*, Herbert W. Armstrong explained that the nations of America and the British Commonwealth, including Canada, Australia and New Zealand, comprise the peoples of biblical Israel. This is important to understand, because the Bible has specific prophecies concerning these nations. One of those prophecies discusses the problem that these nations would have with out-of-control, illegal immigration.

The imminent fulfillment of the stranger rising up in great numbers and overwhelming the Israelitish people, as described in Deuteronomy 28:15, is a sign of God's curses being poured out on these nations. Lax immigration policies and weak borders are playing an instrumental role in the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. God is cursing the nations of biblical Israel for their failure to hold fast to His laws. God is humbling us—implore us to turn to Him.

Unless the people of Israel repent, "strangers" will continue to pour through their ports of entry and *get above* them until they lose the inheritance afforded them by Almighty God.

Universal Basic Income Under Consideration in Scotland

WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE IF THE GOVERNMENT PAID YOU TO exist? You could just sit on your couch year-round, and paychecks would magically arrive. Sounds like another fraudulent "make money from home" sham cluttering your e-mail inbox. Well, two cities in Scotland, Fife and Glasgow, are looking to make this utopian scheme a reality.

According to an article by Libby Brooks in the [Guardian](#):

Scotland looks set to be the first part of the UK to pilot a basic income for every citizen, as councils in Fife and

Glasgow investigate trial schemes in 2017.

The councilor Matt Kerr has been championing the idea through the ornate halls of Glasgow City Chambers, and is frank about the challenges it poses.

"Like a lot of people, I was interested in the idea but never completely convinced," he said. But working as Labour's antipoverty lead on the council, Kerr says that he "kept coming back to the basic income."

Kerr sees the basic income as a way of simplifying the UK's byzantine welfare system. "But it is also about

solidarity: It says that everyone is valued and the government will support you. It changes the relationship between the individual and the state.”

The concept of a universal basic income revolves around the idea of offering every individual, regardless of existing welfare benefits or earned income, a non-conditional flat-rate payment, with any income earned above that taxed progressively. The intention is to provide a basic economic platform on which people can build their lives, whether they choose to earn, learn, care or set up a business.

The shadow chancellor, John McDonnell, has suggested that it is likely to appear in his party’s next manifesto, while there has been a groundswell of interest among antipov-erty groups who see it as a means of changing not only the relationship between people and the state, but between workers and increasingly insecure employment in the gig economy.

Canada, Finland and the Netherlands will also be testing basic-income schemes on a trial basis next year. Yet the concept isn’t a new idea. Noted Renaissance humanist Thomas More (1478–1535) satirically suggested a guaranteed basic income in his book *Utopia*, and French philosopher Charles Fourier (1772–1836) argued that civilization owes everyone unable to meet his needs a free hotel room and three meals a day. In a 1986 essay titled “The Capitalist Road to Communism,” Robert van der Veen and Philippe van Parijs recommended a guaranteed basic income as a means to gradually eliminate wage labor without nationalizing industries.

Many dream of a world where no one has to work, yet the Bible teaches that work is an essential aspect of social development and character building. King Solomon warned that poverty comes to those who don’t work hard (Proverbs 6). The Apostle Paul wrote, “If you don’t work, you don’t eat.” In 1 Timothy 5:8, he wrote that if a man doesn’t provide for his own household, he has denied the faith. When we depart from biblical principles, disaster ensues.

TW IN BRIEF

Operation Atlantic Resolve begins: American troops, tanks and military vehicles began arriving in Poland as part of the newest phase of Operation Atlantic Resolve. The NATO operation began last Friday. The United States shipped 87 tanks, 144 Bradley fighting vehicles and 3,500 soldiers from Fort Carson, Colorado, to the northern German port of Bremerhaven. The military equipment was then transported by land into Poland. The mission is meant to help allay concerns from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and other NATO allies over an increasingly unpredictable and aggressive Russia. It is the largest deployment of U.S. troops to Europe since the Cold War. A headquarters unit will be stationed in Germany.

President-elect Trump accepts Russian hacking accusations: According to a Sunday statement by incoming United States Chief of Staff Reince Priebus, President-elect Donald Trump has accepted the intelligence report’s conclusions that Russia was involved in cyberattacks during the election, and that Trump may take responsive action. He did not specify whether

Mr. Trump believes Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the attacks. A U.S. intelligence report commissioned by President Barack Obama stated that Putin ordered cyberattacks to disparage Hillary Clinton. However, the same report concluded that vote tallies were not affected by Russian hacking.

President Obama’s farewell speech: United States President Barack Obama delivered his farewell speech Tuesday night in his hometown of Chicago. Delivering his address at McCormick Place, he summed up his tenure in office, highlighting what he hailed as successes with the economy, the Iran nuclear deal, Osama bin Laden’s death, health insurance and legalized homosexual “marriage.” President Obama has since returned to Washington, D.C., aboard Air Force One in what is believed to be his last flight on the aircraft as a sitting president. According to White House spokesman Josh Earnest, Air Force One has been airborne for around 2,800 hours during Obama’s tenure—equivalent to spending 116 days on the plane.



Raising the Ruins

Stephen Flurry,

Trumpet Daily | January 13

What ever happened to Herbert W. Armstrong’s legacy?

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