

REPORTS FROM M.T. UPHARSIN

Now Standard: The Double-Standard

March 12—Adm. Philip Davidson, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, delivered a performance worth several double-takes on March 10, when demanding more funds for his apparently beleaguered and outgunned forces to defend “the Indo-Pacific” from Chinese “aggression.” What could be more worthwhile than the Pacific Defense Initiative, for which the Admiral hoped to more than double the \$2.2 billion Congress has thus far approved for 2021?

But when Davidson talked about “external aggression,” one thought of the Mideast, and an entirely different group of aggressors! Said Davidson:

In stark contrast to our free and open vision, the Communist Party of China promotes a closed and an authoritarian system through internal oppression and external aggression. China’s pernicious approach to the region includes a whole-of-party effort to coerce, corrupt and collapse governments, businesses, organizations and the people of the Indo-Pacific.

“Coerce, corrupt and collapse governments and people” definitely would seem to refer to Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and Yemen since 2003, under the “free and open vision” available through the bombings of U.S., British, French, and Saudi planes.

On the other hand, when Admiral Richardson continued on, he seemed to be describing Eastern Europe!

The military balance ... is becoming more unfavorable for the United States and our allies. With this imbalance, we are accumulating risk that may embolden China to unilaterally change the status quo before our forces may be able to deliver an effective response. The greatest danger the United States and our allies face in the region is the erosion of conventional deterrence vis-à-vis the People’s Republic of China.... Our number one job is to keep the peace. But we absolutely must be prepared to fight and win, should competition turn to conflict.

Now, if that doesn’t sound just like President Putin and other Russian officials, looking at the steady march of larger and larger NATO military forces, closer and closer to Russia, and right up to its borders, since 1991. And the Admiral had to be talking about the NATO’s ABM systems in Eastern Europe, and tactical nuclear weapons placements as well: “I see them developing systems capabilities and posture that would indicate that they’re interested in aggression,” he said.

But Admiral Richardson insisted he meant the “Indo-Pacific” and Chinese, not NATO, military policies—and surely, the Admiral is an honorable man.

Moreover ...

March 12—The social media giant Twitter broke new ground on March 8 with simultaneous, dueling interpretations of the First Amendment one for itself, one for the Attorney General of Texas. Twitter sued A.G. Ken Paxton to compel him to stop investigating Twitter, claiming Twitter could not be investigated without “intimidating, harassing and targeting ... Twitter’s exercise of its First Amendment rights.” The First Amendment right Twitter was claiming, was Twitter’s right to abridge President Trump’s First Amendment rights, by barring him from Twitter; and those of Trump’s 70 million Twitter followers, by barring them from getting communications from him.

It’s deeper than that as well. Twitter claims it’s a neutral “bulletin board” for public speech, and isn’t liable for what anyone says via its platform. But now it has gone to law to claim, that in acting merely as a bulletin board, it is actually expressing its First Amendment rights, and that Twitter’s rights can’t be abridged or even investigated, no matter whom Twitter blocks from exercising *their* First Amendment rights.

Like a cop who arrests you for carrying a picket sign—“I just enforce the law,” he says—but adds that if a bystander argues with him, that bystander is violating his First Amendment right to abridge that bystander’s First Amendment rights.