
International Briefs

Regional Support Meeting for Afghanistan in China, Modi Briefed as Well

The third meeting of foreign ministers of Afghanistan's Neighboring Countries and Afghanistan took place March 30-31 in Tunxi, in the province of Anhui in eastern China, on the sidelines of which Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov had important bilateral discussions on Ukraine and other priorities. Lavrov then flew directly from China to New Delhi, where he met April 1, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in addition to Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

These developments are especially notable, given that Modi did not meet with UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, nor with Daleep Singh, U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economics, both of whom were in New Delhi at the time, attempting to pressure India not to associate with Russia. Singh is President Biden's expert on sanctions. India and Russia are *expanding* trade with each other, not observing U.S. unilateral sanctions.

At the Tunxi conference, Afghanistan was represented by Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, joined by foreign ministers from Russia, Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. They conferred on immediate aid to Afghanistan and on programs for regional development. A separate meeting of the "Extended Troika" was also held, concurrently, with special envoys for Afghanistan from China, Russia, and the United States.

British Pushing Biden on Nuclear First Use Policy

The March 25 headline in London's *Daily Telegraph* blared out, "Joe Biden Ready To Use Nuclear Weapons First in 'Extreme Circumstances'." The blurb stated: "U.S. President abandons plans to water down policy to 'retaliation-only' amid fears Vladimir Putin may deploy weapons of mass destruction."

In the context of the standing U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), on the 2020 campaign trail, Biden had said, "The sole purpose of our nuclear arsenal is to deter and, if necessary, retaliate, for a nuclear attack against the United States and its allies."

But there are reports of a new twist on this stance. Biden's decision on this policy, made last week under pressure from allies, holds that the "fundamental role" of the U.S. nuclear arsenal will be to deter nuclear attacks, unnamed officials told the *Wall Street Journal*. That carefully worded formulation leaves open the possibility that nuclear weapons could also be used in "extreme circumstances" to deter enemy conventional, biological, chemical, and possibly cyberattacks, says the *Journal*. Such a formulation, coming in the context of threats now being made against Russia for supposedly considering the use of such weapons in Ukraine, is particularly ominous.

Putin: 'Who Will Answer?' for the Millions Dying from Food Shortages

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke sternly about the world food

crisis March 16, at a Kremlin meeting on socio-economic support for Russia's regions:

"I want ordinary Western people to hear me, too. You are being persistently told that your current difficulties are the result of Russia's hostile actions and that you have to pay for the efforts to counter the alleged Russian threat from your own pockets. All of that is a lie.

"The truth is that the problems faced by millions of people in the West are the result of many years of actions by the ruling elite of your respective countries, their mistakes, and short-sighted policies and ambitions. This elite is not thinking about how to improve the lives of their citizens in Western countries. They are obsessed with their own self-serving interests and super profits....

"Imposing sanctions is the logical continuation and the distillation of the irresponsible and short-sighted policy of the U.S. and EU countries' governments and central banks. They themselves have driven up global inflation in recent years, and with their actions caused rising global poverty and greater inequality across the world. The question now arises—who will answer for the millions who will die of hunger in the world's poorest countries due to growing food shortages?"

Ukraine's 'Democratic' Government Bans 11 Political Parties

On March 20, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced the decision of his National Security and Defense Council to "suspend" the activities of 11 opposition parties which that body claims are "linked to

Russia.” Among the parties listed are the Opposition Platform-For Life (holding 44 of the 450 seats in Ukraine’s unicameral parliament Verkhovna Rada), founded by Viktor Medvedchuk—who has been under house arrest since about mid-2021—and the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, founded and led by Natalia Vitrenko, an eminent economist, and former presidential candidate.

Three Ukrainian TV stations were closed last February—ZIK, NewsOne, and 112 Ukraine, which were owned by Taras Kozak, a lawmaker and member of the political party Opposition Platform-For Life.

This leaves neo-Nazi parties unchallenged in the leadership of Ukraine. News footage of these right-wing groups who dominate Ukrainian “politics” is characterized by torch-burning ceremonies, violent tattoos, and banners, the *Wolfsangel* or “Wolf’s Hook” symbol popularized by the Nazi SS, and other Nazi-related symbols. President Zelenskyy, who was elected in 2019 on an anti-war policy, praises the “valor” of groups like the Azov Battalion and the Right Sector, known for wanton massacres, and now in the spotlight for torture.

German Railways Suffered Partial Blackout in March

On the morning of March 23, all rail freight traffic in Germany was brought to a standstill because of an “under-supply” of electricity according to a statement by German network operator DB Netz. The Deutsche Bahn had to pull the plug on rail freight in order not to interrupt the commuter network in the middle of the rush hour. The extra power was restored by the afternoon according to an article in RailFreight.com.

No reason was given for the March 23 rail power shortage. Deutsche Bahn has its own energy provider, DB Energie, which produces and purchases the energy requirements for the

railway. DB makes a big deal in its advertising that its high-speed passenger network runs on 100% green energy—whatever that means. The problem is that DB Energie plans by 2038 to be totally green by phasing out all the other sources including, nuclear, coal and gas. Deutsche Bahn plans to replace its nearly 40% of energy that now comes from non-green sources with new wind farms in the North Sea, some of which have yet to be built, and from Norwegian hydropower. The Deutsche Bahn consumes as much electricity as does Berlin, a city of 4 million people.

This blackout event is seen as a portent for more outages ahead, given the West’s blindness to the economic consequences in Europe of demonizing and provoking Russia, while expecting Russia to continue providing oil and gas. Moreover, Europe continues to degrade its energy platform because of green ideology. As of April 1, European customers getting Russian oil and gas will be expected to pay their coming bills in rubles, which predictably is causing squawks of outrage from Brussels.

Lavrov: U.S., NATO, EU Bloc Is Waging ‘Total War’ Against Russia

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, during a March 25 meeting of the Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund in Moscow, [charged](#) that the U.S./NATO/EU combination is already waging a hybrid war on Russia and that its objectives are no different from those of Hitler in 1941:

“Today, a total hybrid war was declared against us. Hitler’s Germany used this term. Now it is mentioned by many European politicians when they talk about what they want to do with the Russian Federation. They do not hide their goals but declare them in public: to break, destroy, eliminate, and stifle the Russian economy and

Russia as a whole.”

Lavrov lashed out at the “sanctions spree” against Russia, pointing out that it is becoming clear that all values that those in the West have been preaching to Russia, like freedom of expression, a market economy, the sanctity of private property and the presumption of innocence, are not worth a red cent. He also pointed to the Kiev regime’s violation of the Minsk Accords and their crimes in Donbas.

Russian Ambassador to Italy Sues *La Stampa* for Encouraging Assassination

The Russian Ambassador to Italy, Sergey Razov, has brought a lawsuit against the Italian daily *La Stampa* for encouraging the assassination of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Filed in late March, the language of the suit cites “criminal solicitation” and “defending a crime.”

Ambassador Razov held a press conference in Rome in front of the court building, at the time of his legal action, stating:

“I think you have taken notice that on March 22, in the newspaper *La Stampa*, an article was published in which the possibility of the killing of the President of Russia was considered: There is no need to say that this is outside ethics and morality and the rules of journalism. In the Criminal Code of the Italian Republic, responsibility for incitement to commit a crime and defense of a crime is provided for. In precise accordance with Italian law, today I went to the Prosecutor’s Office to file a lawsuit with a request to the Italian authorities to objectively examine this case. I trust Italian justice.”

The latest to popularize assassination is Christopher Steele, “ex”-MI6. Razov told *Sky News* March 31: “I think he may well be pushed aside out of the top leadership, or even possibly assassinated by his own people.”