

Pentagon Leaks: Key Emerging Powers Avoid Backing U.S. Standoff With Russia, China



Russian President Vladimir Putin greets Chinese President Xi Jinping in Brasilia, Brazil, on Nov. 13, 2019.

MOSCOW (Sputnik) – An array of major developing nations seek to sit out the U.S.’ intensifying standoff with Russia and China, an American newspaper quoted Pentagon leaks as saying.

The leaks comprise classified U.S. intelligence assessments, which show that such countries as India, Brazil, Pakistan and Egypt try “to straddle allegiances in an era when America is no longer the world’s unchallenged superpower.”

According to the documents, President Joe Biden’s global agenda faces significant challenges as the influential aforementioned regional powers “try to remain on the sidelines” of Washington’s strife with Moscow and Beijing, sometimes capitalizing on this rivalry for their own gain.

As far as Pakistan is concerned, one of the leaked documents cited the country’s Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina

Rabbani Khar as arguing in March that Islamabad can “no longer try to maintain a middle ground between China and the United States.”

Khar reportedly expressed concern in an internal memo that “the instinct” to preserve Pakistan’s partnership with America may damage Islamabad’s “real strategic” collaboration with Beijing.

On India, one more leaked document indicated that the country’s National Security Adviser Ajit Kumar Doval had earlier assured his Russian counterpart Nikolay Patrushev of New Delhi’s support for Moscow “in multilateral venues, also singling out India’s reluctance to support the Western-backed UN resolution over Ukraine.”

Neither the White House nor the U.S. Department of Defense have commented on the matter.

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace scholar Matias Spektor told the

U.S. newspaper that emerging powers are “recalibrating” as China expands “new economic and military clout” and Russia “demonstrates its ability to deflect Western pressure.”

“It’s unclear who will end up in a pole position in 10 years’ time, so they need to diversify their risk and hedge their bets,” the scholar added.

In the U.S.’ new national defense strategy, which was released in late October 2022 along with the country’s Nuclear Posture Review and Missile Defense Review, the Biden administration labeled China as a “consequential strategic competitor for the coming decades,” while calling Russia an “acute threat.”

“(China) and Russia now pose more dangerous challenges to safety and security at home, even as terrorist threats persist,” the document claimed, adding that both countries have deployed space capabilities that could purportedly target the U.S.’ GPS and other “space-based capabilities that support military power and daily civilian life.”

Speaking to reporters after the strategy’s release at the time, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin argued that while Russia “can’t systemically challenge the United States over the long term,” unlike China, it “does pose an immediate and sharp threat to our (American) interest and values.”

As for the classified intelligence documents, they have been leaked on social media sites in the past several weeks, in particular providing intelligence on a spate of sensitive security matters related to the conflict in Ukraine, including Ukrainian air defenses, Russian military activities, and U.S. assessments of the standoff.

Thousands Protest Against French Government’s Migration Plans

PARIS (AFP) – Thousands of people, including many undocumented migrants, have marched in Paris and other French towns, protesting against planned changes to the immigration law and evictions from the Indian Ocean island of Mayotte.

In the French capital, demonstrators marched behind a banner proclaiming “No to the Darmanin law. Against repression, imprisonment and deportations, for a welcoming migration policy”, in a reference to Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin.

The immigration bill, which the government has just postponed until the autumn, “is a racist law, which aims to criminalize foreigners” and lead to “more deportations”, said Aboubacar, 31, an undocumented Malian.

“The problem is not immigration, it’s exploitation and rogue bosses,” added the post office sub-contractor who, with colleagues, has been fighting for 17 months to obtain his official documents to live and work in France.

The protesters also took aim at Operation Wuambushi (Take Back) being carried out by the authorities on the French Indian Ocean Island of Mayotte to send back illegal immigrants, most from neighboring Comoros, currently housed in unsanitary shanty towns.

“The way undocumented Co-



Protesters hold a banner which reads “solidarity with asylum seekers” during a demonstration against the French Minister of Interior, Gerald Darmanin’s legislative proposal on asylum and immigration, in Rennes, western France, on April 29, 2023.

morans are treated is unworthy of a country like France,” said Marie-Christine Vergiat, vice-president of the French Human Rights League and a former member of the European parliament.

The Darmanin bill and the operation in Mayotte are linked, Said Mhamadi, a Comoran civil leader, said in the Southern port city of Marseille, where up to 300 people demonstrated.

The controversial bill, entitled “Controlling immigration while improving integration”, is aimed,

among other things, at providing greater scope for deportation, especially for foreigners who commit crimes.

In the Northwestern city of Rennes, over 1,500 people took to the streets chanting “down with the police state”.

“I came in solidarity with the Comoros and to protest against the brutal measures taken by France in Mayotte, it’s very violent and there are other ways of dealing with it,” 32-year-old Theodore Sobezy told AFP.

NHS Nurses Stage Large-Scale Strike

LONDON (The Independent) – NHS organizations across England are bracing for significant disruption as nurses prepare to stage a 28-hour strike over pay.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) will hold industrial action from 8pm on Sunday until 11.59pm on Monday night after voting to reject the latest government offer, reported.

The union initially said it would not agree to derogations – broad areas of care where staffing is guaranteed despite industrial action – but granted some exemptions last week in an apparent U-turn.

Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) is among organizations where nurses have agreed to derogations after it voiced “serious concerns” about patient safety during the walkout.

The hospital said it was “incredibly grateful” to RCN members but took the decision not to stand down a “business continuity incident” it had previously declared until it was confident it could staff its services over the strike.

Health workers across the NHS have gone on strike several times in past months in disputes over pay and conditions. Unions including Unison and the GMB have voted in

favor of a government pay offer to end the strikes, while Unite and the RCN have voted against.

RCN General Secretary Pat Cullen defended the strike and said cancelled medical appointments were not just the result of industrial action.

NHS England is urging the public to use the health service wisely.

It said emergency and urgent care would remain the priority, with people asked to use other services such as pharmacies and 111 where possible.

Nurses make up a quarter of NHS staff and are the biggest proportion of the health service workforce.

NHS England warned that staffing levels for some areas of the country will be “exceptionally low, lower than on previous strike days”.

It added the number of rescheduled appointments due to strike action is set to hit half a million next week.

A High Court judge ruled on Thursday it would be unlawful for the RCN strike to continue into Tuesday as originally planned, meaning it will now end just before midnight on Monday.

‘Not My King’ UK Republicans Eye Coronation to Rally Support



Republicans voices have been getting louder since the death of Queen Elizabeth II last year.

LONDON (AFP) – Despite his surname, Ryan King will not be among those waving Union Jack flags at the coronation of King Charles III next week.

Instead, he plans to protest on the historic royal occasion, dressed in a yellow T-shirt with the slogan: “Abolish the monarchy.”

“The monarchy has no place in modern society given how outdated and undemocratic it is,” King, 40, told AFP.

He aims to join other protesters rallied by the group Republic, which wants the monarch replaced by an elected head of state.

Republicans voices have been getting louder since the death of Queen Elizabeth II last year.

Charles, who inherited the crown automatically, has been trailed by protesters holding up signs proclaiming: “Not my king!”

Republic’s chief executive Graham Smith sees the spectacle of dazzling jewels and golden carriages as a chance to make their case, particularly as Britons struggle with the rising cost of living.

That makes it “more fertile ground” for recruitment. “People are far more willing to listen and engage,” he added.

Times have also changed since Britons gave deference to those deemed their social superiors.

“People are far more critical generally of our political system, which

comes into this whole debate not just about the royals but about the constitution and the government and parliament,” Smith said.

“And they are far less interested in the royals.”

Royal commentator Richard Fitzwilliams agreed that for the first time, the republican movement was “showing its teeth”.

But he said it still failed to have major political support.

To get its point across, Republic has become more active than ever on social media, to try to mobilize its 130,000-strong base and expand its numbers.

It sends out regular emails about upcoming protests, including last week for a visit by the king and queen to Liverpool, in northwest England.

“Not my king” placards have as a result become more visible. Such protests were virtually unthinkable during Elizabeth’s reign.

Republicans concentrate on levels of support among younger people.

The YouGov poll indicated that 32 percent of those aged 18-24 supported the monarchy, against 38 percent who wanted an elected head of state.

“Polling that shows attitudes towards the monarchy are changing as the younger generation comes to the fore and quite rightly asks themselves, what’s the point of the monarchy?” said King.

Civilians Killed in Ukraine Shelling of Russian Village

MOSCOW (Reuters) – Four civilians died as a result of Ukrainian shelling on a village just over the border in Russia’s Bryansk region, a local governor said.

“Four civilians have been killed,” Governor Alexander Bogomaz said on the Telegram messaging app. Two other citizens were being treated in hospital, Bogomaz said.

Bogomaz earlier said that one residential building had been completely destroyed and two other houses partially destroyed.

Bogomaz blamed the incident on “Ukrainian nationalists”. Ukraine almost never publicly claims responsibility for attacks inside Russia and on Russian-controlled territory in Ukraine.

“Work is continuing at the site of the incident to remove rubble and clear the area,” Bogomaz said. “A state of emergency has been introduced in the village.”

Russia’s Bryansk region borders Ukraine. The village of Suzemka, where the incident occurred, is around 10 kms (6.2 miles) from the border.

Meanwhile, a military spokesperson said that Ukraine remains in control of a key supply route into Bakhmut, as the head of Russia’s Wagner Group threatened to withdraw some of his troops from the eastern city if Moscow did not send more ammunition.

Russian forces have been trying for 10 months to punch their way into the shattered remains of what was once a city of 70,000. Kyiv has pledged to

defend Bakhmut, which Russia sees as a stepping stone to attacking other cities.

“For several weeks, the Russians have been talking about seizing the ‘road of life,’ as well as about constant fire control over it,” Serhiy Cherevatyi, a spokesperson for Ukrainian troops in the east, said in an interview with local news website Dzerkalo Tyzhnia.

“Yes, it is really difficult there ... (but) the defense forces have not allowed the Russians to ‘cut off’ our logistics.”

Ukraine’s top military command said in its daily update on Sunday that its forces had repelled 58 Russian attacks over the past day along the part of frontline stretching from Bakhmut through Avdiivka and on to Maryinka further south in the Donetsk region.

If Bakhmut fell, Chasiv Yar would probably be next to come under Russian attack according to military analysts, though it is on higher ground and Ukrainian forces are believed to have built defensive fortifications nearby.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, founder of Russia’s Wagner Group said that his forces have advanced some 100 to 150 meters (109 to 164 yards) in Bakhmut, leaving just under 3 square km of the city in Ukrainian hands.

But he said he lost 94 troops.

“It would have had been five times fewer if we had more ammunition,” Prigozhin said in an audio statement published on the Telegram messaging app of his press service.

News in Brief

AMRITSAR (AFP) – A gas leak killed 11 people in India, an official said Sunday, in the latest deadly industrial accident in the vast developing economy of 1.4 billion people. The gas leak happened in Giaspora, an industrial area of Ludhiana in the northern state of Punjab. The official, who asked not to be named, said they had yet to ascertain what kind of gas leaked or the source of the leak. “Eleven dead and four in hospital. Rescue operation is on,” the official told AFP after the incident. Industrial gas leaks blamed on poor safety standards and insufficient checks are common in India. Last August, at least 112 women were hospitalized after a gas leak at an apparel manufacturing plant in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. That followed a similar accident in June when around 200 women fell unconscious after a gas leak in the same area, broadcaster NDTV reported. In 2020, at least 15 people were killed and hundreds hospitalized after a gas leak at a chemical plant in Visakhapatnam, an industrial port city in the same state.

LISBON (Reuters) – A man shot three people dead and then committed suicide on Sunday in the Portuguese city of Setubal, about 45 km (28 miles) south of the capital, CNN Portugal said. PSP police commissioner Joao Freire told Reuters that “there are four bodies, which were supposedly the result of a shooting, but the causes and details are not yet known”. The police criminal cases agency PJ was at the scene investigating. Freire said. CNN Portugal said the shooting took place at around 8 a.m. in a poor neighborhood of Setubal called Bairro Azul, and that the gunman committed suicide when police officers arrived on the scene.

SEATTLE (ABC News) – Two people were shot and killed at Cal Anderson Park in Seattle late Saturday, with another person transferred to a hospital in critical condition, police said. Seattle Police Department officials said on Twitter at about 10:30 p.m. that they were investigating a shooting at the Capitol Hill Park. Officials arrived on the scene to find three people with gunshot injuries, according to a statement. “Despite lifesaving efforts by police and Seattle Fire, one man was pronounced dead at the scene,” police said. “Medics transported the two other victims to Harborview Medical Center where one man later died, while the other remains in critical condition.” Police said they were searching for another man “who was involved but left the scene before officers arrived.” Seattle CSI and Homicide detectives will lead an investigation.

ANKARA (Reuters) – Turkey on Saturday closed its airspace to low-cost Armenian airline FlyOne Armenia, the domestic Armenpress news agency cited the carrier’s board chairman as saying. “Turkish aviation authorities cancelled the permission previously granted to the FlyOne Armenia airline to operate flights to Europe through Turkish airspace,” said Aram Ananyan, FlyOne’s chairman. “Turkish aviation authorities implemented the cancellation without prior notification, putting our airline and our passengers in an uncomfortable situation.” FlyOne Armenia, a subsidiary of Moldovan airline FlyOne, began operations in December 2021. In February 2023, Ananyan told Armenpress that the carrier had five Airbus aircraft and offered flights to 14 destinations in eight European and Middle Eastern nations.

TASHKENT (AFP) – Voters across Central Asian Uzbekistan went to the polls Sunday in a constitutional referendum that could allow President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to remain in power until 2040. Mirziyoyev, 65, became president in 2016 after the death of Islam Karimov. He insists the overhaul of the constitution will improve governance and quality of life in the landlocked country of 35 million people. The constitutional changes would extend presidential terms from five to seven years, allowing him to serve two more terms and extend his time in power until 2040. Polling stations opened at 8:00 am (0300 GMT) and closed at 8:00 pm, according to the Uzbek Election Commission. Billboards around Tashkent, the biggest city in Central Asia, encourage people to vote. The campaign appeared to be working. “The new constitution will change my life,” Shamsiddin Zhurayev, a 40-year-old businessman, told AFP outside a Tashkent polling station.

SEOUL (Xinhua) – South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol’s latest U.S. trip was “the most hostile, aggressive and provocative, dangerous trip for a nuclear war,” the state news agency of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) said Sunday. In a commentary, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) voiced harsh criticism and a stern warning, lashing all out at the documents and rhetoric coming out of the recent U.S.-South Korea summit talks in Washington. The commentary began by putting the Washington Declaration, a signature document on upgrading “extended deterrence” against the DPRK, in its crosshairs, reprimanding it as “a typical product of the heinous hostile policy towards the DPRK,” designed to make “a nuclear war against the DPRK a fait accompli.” “There is no precedent that they (U.S. and South Korea) designated the DPRK as a target for a nuclear attack publicly to the world and nakedly stated regular and sustained deployment of strategic nuclear assets to the Korean Peninsula,” it added.