

## **Father Time Flies, Leaving Challenges for the New Year**

**ISIS in Southeast Asia: The Sequel** It would appear that terrorism has spread into Southeast Asia with no signs of warning. However, the sudden uptick in violence comes at a time when America's so-called 'pivot to Asia' has ground to a complete halt, providing the United States with an all-too-convenient pretext to reengage and establish itself across the region in a much more insidious manner... Most recently Washington found its relationship with Manila unraveling irrevocably in favor of Manila's increasing ties with Beijing. This was until the fortuitous arrival of militants from the so-called 'Islamic State' on the nation's shores... —“U.S. to Fight U.S.-Saudi Sponsored Terrorism in Asia,” *New Eastern Outlook*, Tony Cartalucci, September 8, 2017

**It Was Only a Technical Issue?** U.S. Special Forces are helping the Philippine Military retake the southern city of Marawi from IS-linked militants, the Philippine army says. The forces are providing technical help and are not fighting. *BBC News*, June 10, 2017

**The Rohingya: There Had to Be More:** Eighty percent of China's needed oil and much of its trade passes through the Malacca Straits—a narrow choke-point between Indonesia and Singapore—and into the increasingly tense South China Sea. U.S. aircraft carrier battle groups stationed there could easily blockade this movement of needed resources... China's development programs are aimed at diversifying and finding ways around a direct confrontation with U.S. military power. China is building a deep-sea port, industrial park, and gas and oil pipelines at Kyauk Pyu in Myanmar on the Bay of Bengal. This would provide China with an alternative route for energy imports from the Middle East that avoids the Malacca Straits.... All countries of the region, including Bangladesh, Myanmar, and China have every interest in a peaceful reconciliation for the Rohingya people. The region needs coordinated development, not the enormous disruption of war.—“Why U.S. and Saudi Arabia back Rohingya in Myanmar.” Sara Flounder, *Workers World*. October 30, 2017

**Hands Off These Lands** Following President Trump's unlawful attempt to repeal Grand Staircase-Escalante and Bears Ears National Monuments, the federal public lands and significant cultural, paleontological, and wilderness resources in those monuments will be left exposed to oil, gas, and coal leasing and development, as well as the location and development of new hard rock mining claims (e.g., uranium).—Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, *suwa.org*, December 4, 2017

**Will It Be Rapprochement?** A constructive relationship with Russia is very much needed to address many international problems, including but not limited to terrorism, securing nuclear materials, and resolving long-running conflicts. We have seen hints of what that cooperation can achieve in recent years with the Iran nuclear deal and the new arms reduction treaty with Russia, both of which required sustained diplomatic engagement. In order to repair ties with Russia, our government will need to make a similar effort over the long term, with Washington refraining from taking further provocative actions... A good place for the Trump administration to start would be to reject the plan to send arms to Ukraine. Such a policy would be unwise in itself—and disastrous for any chance at improving America's relationship with Russia. —“Is Rapprochement Still Possible?” Daniel Larison, *The American Conservative*, December 7, 2017

**Or Russiaphobia?** The bill passed by Congress contains several provisions specifically targeting Russia. It restricts military cooperation with Russia, prohibits the United States from recognizing Russia's legal right to the disputed Crimea peninsula, and requires the military to “develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to counter threats by the Russian Federation.” “Imperfecto: Trump objects to Russia provisions as he signs \$700 billion defense bill,” Gregory Korte, *USA Today*, December 12, 2017

**Stop Vultures Preying on Puerto Rico** Long before the hurricane, Puerto Rico was in crisis. For more than a decade, the island has been under enormous economic pressure. Puerto Rico has been at the mercy of so-called "vulture funds" — Wall Street hedge funds that wait until a borrower is in trouble to buy up their debt at a steep discount... We're using every tool in the toolbox to push the Trump Administration and Congress to step up. And we're working with Puerto Rican leaders to do everything we can to hold back the creditors and make sure the federal relief aid goes to the people – not the hedge funds.—Senator Elizabeth Warren, who has been calling for discharge of Puerto Rico's debt from 2015 through 2017.