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GERMANY AND FRANCE 'DISCUSSING' RADICAL OVERHAUL OF EU

November 10, 2011 BBC News reports: "Germany and France are reported to be in talks on a radical overhaul of the EU towards a more integrated Eurozone.

A senior EU official told Reuters news agency 'intense consultations' had been taking place 'at all levels' and that a smaller Eurozone was one possibility. German Chancellor Angela Merkel's office denied plans to reduce the zone, saying Berlin aimed to 'stabilise the Eurozone in its entirety'. But France's president has talked openly of a 'two-speed Europe'.

The BBC's Europe editor, Gavin Hewitt, says it is now clear the financial crisis in the Eurozone is spurring a debate about the future of the bloc. There are as yet no detailed plans, but the development has prompted a stern warning from European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso about the dangers of splitting the Eurozone, Gavin Hewitt adds..."

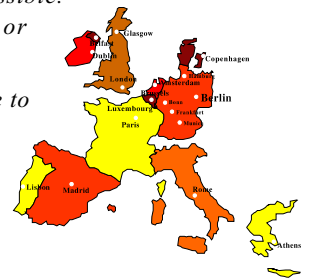
TWO-SPEED EUROPE, OR TWO EUROPE'S?

November 10, 2011 The Economist reported: "NICOLAS Sarkozy is causing a big stir after calling on November 8th for a two-speed Europe: a "federal" core of the 17 members of the euro zone, with a looser "confederal" outer band of the ten non-euro members. He made the comments during a debate with students at the University of Strasbourg. The key passage is below:

"You cannot make a single currency without economic convergence and economic integration. It's impossible. But on the contrary, one cannot plead for federalism and at the same time for the enlargement of Europe. It's impossible. There's a contradiction. We are 27. We will obviously have to open up to the Balkans. We will be 32, 33 or 34. I imagine that nobody thinks that federalism—total integration—is possible at 33, 34, 35 countries.

So what one we do? To begin with, frankly, the single currency is a wonderful idea, but it was strange to create it without asking oneself the question of its governance, and without asking oneself about economic convergence. Honestly, it's nice to have a vision, but there are details that are missing: we made a currency, but we kept fiscal systems and economic systems that not only were not converging, but were diverging. And not only did we make a single currency without convergence, but we tried to undo the rules of the pact. It cannot work.

There will not be a single currency without greater economic integration and convergence. That is certain. And that is where we are going. Must one have the same rules for the 27? No. Absolutely not [...] In the end, clearly, there will be two European gears: one gear towards more integration in the euro zone and a gear that is more confederal in the European Union."



At first blush this is statement of the blindingly obvious. The euro zone must integrate to save itself; even the British say so. And among the ten non-euro states of the EU there are countries such as Britain and Denmark that have no intention of joining the single currency.

The European Union is, in a sense, made up not of two but of multiple speeds. Think only of the 25 members of the Schengen passport-free travel zone (excluding Britain but including some non-EU members), or of the 25 states seeking to create a common patent (including Britain, but excluding Italy and Spain).

But Mr Sarkozy's comments are more worrying because, one suspects, he wants to create an exclusivist, protectionist euro zone that seeks to detach itself from the rest of the European Union. Elsewhere in the debate in Strasbourg, for instance, Mr Sarkozy seems to suggest that Europe's troubles—debt and high unemployment—are all the fault of social, environmental and monetary "dumping" by developing countries that pursue "aggressive" trade policies..."

In other words, France, or Mr Sarkozy at any rate, does not appear to have got over its resentment of the EU's enlargement. At 27 nations-strong, the European Union is too big for France to lord it over the rest and is too liberal in economic terms for France's protectionist leanings. Hence Mr Sarkozy's yearning for a smaller, cosier, "federalist" euro zone..."

RUSSIA ACCUSES ISRAEL OF USING 'DANGEROUS RHETORIC' AGAINST IRAN

November 8, 2011 Haaretz reported: "Russian President Dmitry Medvedev accused Israel on Tuesday of using 'dangerous rhetoric' that could lead to a war with Iran, amid rising tensions over the latter's nuclear program.

Speaking in Berlin after meeting his German counterpart Christian Wulff, Medvedev said a threatening atmosphere was being created by the Israelis, as media speculation abounded that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak were considering a military option against Iran.

'The threat of a military strike could lead to a major war,' he warned, adding that it was now vital to calm the situation, 'take a deep breath and open talks.'

Moscow had repeatedly urged Tehran to prove to the world that its nuclear research was purely peaceful in its objectives. 'Unfortunately there hasn't been any movement in this direction,' said Medvedev, who was later to attend a ceremony to open an undersea gas pipeline through the Baltic Sea..."

RUSSIA'S PUTIN SLAMS 'ARROGANT WORLD POWERS'

November 8, 2011 SpaceWar.com reported: "Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin lashed out Monday at 'arrogant world powers' as he hosted his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao for a regional security summit Moscow bills as a counterpart to NATO. Russia's likely new head of state after next year's presidential elections accused Western nations of hypocrisy for backing revolutions in North African countries that previously enjoyed their strong support.

'It really is just like you said -- these are arrogant world powers,' Putin said in response to remarks from Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi made during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Saint Petersburg.

'They also supported the old North African regimes,' news agencies quoted Putin as saying in a clear reference to European powers and the United States.

'But what is interesting, they also supported the North African revolutions as well, the ones that overthrew the old regimes.'

Russia strongly opposed NATO's air campaign in Libya and has warned the West against acting tough towards its close Soviet-era ally Syria..."

UK EXPECTS ISRAELI ATTACK ON IRAN NEXT MONTH WITH US LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

November 19, 2011 Debkafile reported: "A senior Foreign Office official says British government ministers have been told to expect Israeli military action in the wake of the UN watchdog report "as early as Christmas or very early in the new year," the London Daily Mail reported Thursday, Nov. 10. The ministers were told that Israel would strike Iran's nuclear sites "sooner rather than later" – with "logistical support" from the US.

According to the British paper, which has good military and intelligence ties in London, President Barack Obama would "have to support the Israelis or risk losing Jewish-American support in the next presidential election." The bigger concern is that once Iran is nuclear-armed, it will be impossible to stop Saudi Arabia and Turkey from developing their own weapons to even out the balance of nuclear terror in the Middle East.

Debkafile's military sources add that Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan has told Obama more than once this year, "If Iran gets nuclear arms, Turkey will get nuclear arms."

The Daily Mail goes on to report that in recent weeks, British Ministry of Defense sources confirmed that contingency plans had been drawn up in the event that the UK decided to support military action. Debkafile refers to an earlier report that the British chief of staff, Gen. Sir David Richards, paid a secret visit to Israel on Nov. 2, followed the next day by the arrival in London of the Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak for talks with British defense and military heads.

The reference to US logistical support is explained by our military sources as pointing to the Libyan model of military intervention whereby France, Britain and Italy spearheaded the action against the Qaddafi regime while the United States from "a back seat" laid on satellite and aerial intelligence and placed at their disposal its logistical supply network, including the in-flight refueling of bombers and ordnance.

Transposing this model to an offensive against Iran, Israel's air and naval forces would front the attack on Iran with logistical and intelligence backup from the United States, while leading NATO powers France, Britain, Germany, Holland and Italy would participate directly or indirectly in the Israeli operation.

Since this attack would almost certainly bring forth reprisals from Tehran and its allies, Syria, Hizballah and the Palestinian Hamas and Jihad Islami, it would almost certainly expand into a wider Middle East conflict, thus also broadening US and West European military intervention.

Prospects are fading for the alternative to military action - tough new sanctions able to choke Iran's financial operations and oil exports after the nuclear agency confirmed its surreptitious attainment of a nuclear weapon capability..."



IRAN THREATENS TO HIT BACK WITH 'IRON FISTS' TO ANY ISRAEL, U.S. ATTACK

November 10, 2011 Haaretz reports: "Iran's Supreme Leader warned the United States and Israel on Thursday not to launch any military action against its nuclear sites, saying it would be met with 'iron fists', state television reported.

'Our enemies, particularly the Zionist regime [Israel], America and its allies, should know that any kind of threat and attack or even thinking about any (military) action will be firmly responded to,' the television quoted Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as saying.

'The Revolutionary Guards and army and our nation ... will answer attacks with strong slaps and iron fists,' he said.

Speculation about an imminent attack on Iran was fuelled last week when Israel test-launched a long-range missile near Tel Aviv and by comments by some Israeli officials that Tehran's nuclear program posed a 'direct and heavy' threat..."

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