

Newsbytes

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"Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him." Tozer

What to Make of Erdogan's Proposal for a 'Turkish-Iranian-Russian Alliance'

July 21, 2016

In a telephone conversation with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed his willingness to cooperate closely with Iran and Russia "to settle regional crises and restore peace and stability to the region." But what do Russian political analysts make of the Turkish leader's proposals?

As expected, the main topic of discussion between the Iranian and Turkish leaders during Tuesday's phone call was the failed military coup attempt that rocked Ankara on Friday night. Rouhani emphasized that Iran welcomed the return of stability in Turkey, and praised "the great maturity of the Turkish people, who showed during this coup attempt that strong-arm tactics have no place in our region."

Chill in US-Turkish Relations May Signal Ankara's Shift Toward Moscow

But the two leaders also touched on the situation in the Middle East as a whole, and seem to have come to a consensus that there are global forces who are not satisfied with the idea of tranquility in the region. For his part, President Rouhani noted he has no doubt that together with the terrorists, there are also "some superpowers" trying to destabilize things.

Commenting on the conversation, Svobodnaya Pressa columnist Svetlana Gomzikova wrote that "it was not difficult to guess that Rouhani was referring to the United States, which has left quite a mark on the region over the last two decades."

"Perhaps even more surprising was the proposal by the Turkish president to establish a tripartite alliance consisting of Ankara, Tehran and Moscow," she added.

President Erdogan, she recalled, thanked Rouhani for his call and indicated that Turkey is "even more determined to work hand-in-hand with Iran and Russia to resolve regional issues and to strengthen our efforts to return peace and stability to the region."

"What was this?" Gomzikova asked. "Is the Turkish President really ready to cooperate with Iran, with which Ankara has always had serious disagreements, in spite of the US? Or has the vector of Erdogan's interests really changed following recent events? And in general, how can such an alliance change the regional picture in the context of the Syrian crisis?"

Turkey Begins Shifting Position on Syria, Faces Coup Attempt...Coincidence?

For answers, Svobodnaya Pressa turned to Middle East experts Stanislav Tarasov and Vladimir Yurtaev. Tarasov, the director of the Middle East-Caucasus Research Center, indicated that this may very well be a genuine attempt by Erdogan to try and shift his country's foreign policy vector. The first inkling of that shift was witnessed before the coup, when Ankara initiated moves for a rapid rapprochement with both Israel and Russia.

"After that, a strange series of events occurred," Tarasov noted. "A terror attack struck the international airport in Istanbul. Then, information appeared about a planned meeting between Erdogan and the Russian president,

possibly at the G20 forum in China. Then the schedule was changed, and suddenly, there was this incomprehensible and completely inconsistent coup attempt." There are numerous versions regarding the coup, the analyst noted, including the one being pushed by Ankara that the rebelling officers had ties with Fethullah Gulen, the billionaire religious leader residing in self-imposed exile in the United States.

How Turkey's Mighty Military Turned Into a Shadow of Its Former Self

Until very recently, Tarasov noted, Erdogan's 'neo-Ottoman' policy had amounted to "trying to strengthen Turkey's regional influence 'on the wings of NATO'." That strategy would eventually end up failing spectacularly, with Ankara dragged into the regional conflict in Syria and Iraq, and facing the consequences, including two million refugees flooding into Turkey. "Then there's the Kurdish factor, and the fact that they are now supported in Syria by the Americans. Since then, the Kurds have also risen up in rebellion in southeast Turkey," posing a threat to Turkey's own territorial integrity.

Essentially, the analyst argued, it's likely that Erdogan "realized long ago that he had been trapped as a result of Western policy." As a result, "knowing that the Americans will not hand over Gulen, Erdogan is deliberately, for tactical reasons, provoking the aggravation of Turkish-US relations, in order to play the 'eastern card'."

"The Turks used a similar scenario when they sought to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," Tarasov recalled. "Turkey had received the status of a dialogue partner, and then Erdogan said that 'if Turkey was not accepted into the EU soon, it might join the SCO instead.'" Now, the analyst noted, with Turkey's allies in the West hitting Erdogan with a barrage of criticism following the wave of repression that followed the coup, "he is beginning to build a kind of political alternative – giving him bargaining power with the West."

The central problem for Moscow, according to Tarasov, is that much of the Western policy establishment genuinely seems to support the fragmentation of the entire Middle East, Turkey included. For Russia, such a nightmare scenario would have disastrous consequences. "We would receive additional hotbeds of tension across our southern borders. In this scenario, Russia would find it impossible not to join a kind of alliance with Erdogan."

Kremlin Unaware of Reports Claiming Russia Warned Turkey of Coup Attempt

Furthermore, the expert pointed out, if Ankara is genuinely considering the foreign policy U-turn that partnership with Moscow and Tehran would imply, "this means that on the Syrian track, Erdogan must recognize the authority of the Assad government, and negotiate in the appropriate format. This opens up the prospect of resolving the crisis in Syria."

As things stand, however, Turkey does not recognize Assad's legitimacy. In fact, Tarasov noted, given the harsh statements which continue to be made by Turkish authorities, even following the coup attempt, he had not seen "even a note of sympathy for the Syrian leader."

In any case, given a situation post-coup where Ankara faces pressures both inside and out, "it is entirely understandable that Ankara will be looking to create or join some tactical alliances. The government is trying to enlist the support of would-be allies who could act as a counterweight to the strained relations with the West."

Ultimately, the analyst noted, "it's difficult to say what will happen next. Next month Erdogan is scheduled to meet with Putin. Perhaps these issues will be worked out there. And then a certain clarity will appear. Personally, I get the impression that Turkey is genuinely trying to change its geopolitical orientation."

People hold a poster of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, as they listen to Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party, CHP, leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu in Luleburgaz, Turkey,
Why Coup's Failure Portends Death Blow to Ataturk's Vision of Secular Turkey

For his part, Vladimir Yurtaev, a member of the European Society of Scholars of Iran, took note of the model of diplomacy involved in Ankara's proposal — featuring three partners.

"This so-called 'triangular diplomacy' has been found very productive by Tehran in particular. It was first implemented between Russia, India and China by [former Russian Prime Minister] Yevgeny Primakov [in the 1990s]. I refer to it as the 'Primakov triangle'. And the Iranians, more than any other country in the region, appreciate this approach very much, and use it to effect."

Ultimately, Yurtaev suggested that "with regard to how beneficial or useful such an alliance may be for Russia, I cannot judge. [However,] there is no historical precedent for such cooperation in the region" between these three countries.

If Ankara is serious, Moscow should seriously consider the offer, not least because it may help resolve the Syrian crisis, and provide Russia with a conditional voice within the NATO bloc, the analyst concluded.

There is a Russian saying, popularized by the legendary film *White Sun of the Desert*, saying that "the Orient is a delicate matter." Nowhere is this concept more relevant today than in Russia's diplomacy vis-à-vis Erdogan's Turkey.

Shadows over Israel

By Matt Ward raptureready.com

The balance of power in the Middle East is obviously shifting. From Russia to the Caucasus region, from Egypt to the borders of Israel—change is afoot. Nations are entrenching armies, digging in and readying themselves. Alliances are being sought in shady Machiavellian maneuvers across the entire Middle East region. The stage is seemingly being set for war.

Egyptian President Abdel-Fatteh El-Sisi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have over the last few weeks intensified their efforts at closing any gaps between their two nations, especially in their collective approaches to ISIS and militant Islam.

Syria, also, is a common cause of concern for both nations as is the almost miraculous reversal of Syrian President Bashar Assad's fortunes from an international war criminal to the undisputed master of a regime that is now in high demand from all Western nations.

President Barack Obama, who once demanded the head of Bashar Assad and his removal from power as a basic element of his entire Middle East strategy, now views Assad as a potential ally. This despite the fact that Assad has used chemical weapons in Syria on at least ten separate occasions.

Obama now views Assad as the head of a regime capable of making positive advances against ISIS and Islamic terror within Syria, which therefore puts Assad's strategic objectives alongside America's.

At the same time, Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan has secretly extended the olive branch of peace to Assad, potentially allowing for the ominous formation of a Syrian-Turkish-Iranian-Hezbollah-Russian alliance that spans almost the entirety of the Middle East. To say that this has prophetic undertones is a huge understatement.

This Turkish initiative to court Assad comes at the same time as Turkey's tentative attempt at mending relations with Israel breaks news around the world.

These two actions, mending relations with both Syria and Israel at the same time are clearly at odds with each other and lead to the obvious conclusion that Turkey is acting disingenuously toward Israel. This "mending of relations" between the Israeli-Turkish governments is likely duplicitous and not a genuine effort at all.

The outcome of Turkish efforts to placate and re-establish relations with either Assad or Israel will profoundly affect Iran. If Turkey were to renew friendly relations with Assad, instead of Israel, then it would directly impact upon the relative strengthening or weakening of Iran within Syria and the Middle East in general.

Biblically, we should all know on which side of this alliance system the Turks will eventually fall, and it will not be with Israel. Ultimately it will be Iran that is strengthened and emboldened by this alliance system, and not Israel—no matter what this present round of negotiations and shuttle diplomacy bring about.

It is also increasingly clear that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard is actively taking up positions in southern Syria

against Israel. They are entrenching and digging in with significant numbers, both against ISIS encroachment and in preparation for a potential direct future confrontation with Israel.

While these complicated machinations unfold, recent advances by transnational actors in the same Middle Eastern area cannot be overlooked. ISIS and Al-Qaeda's Nusra Front, alongside allied groups, have now completely overrun the entire Syrian side of the border area between Syria and Israel.

This is significant because Israel believes that one of the groups commanding this area is called the Khaled Bin Al-Walid army; a group with very close ties both to Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden's successor, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Its leader, a man called Abu Abdullah al-Madani is a veteran of war and is vastly experienced. Well-financed and well-motivated, Israel believes this group is actively engaged in trying to buy chemical weapons from military bases that have been overrun within Syria.

This group is also currently engaged in training potential homicide bombers using chemical weapons to be detonated inside Israel itself. This group currently controls the border area with Israel facing the Golan region.

If this comes to pass and Israel is attacked with any kind of chemical weapons, it would be, in every sense, a game changer with ominous biblical implications for as yet—unfulfilled Bible prophecy. Which brings us to the unspoken elephant in the Middle Eastern room—Russia.

Amidst all of this ongoing Middle Eastern chaos, Russia continues to methodically and systematically solidify its position in the Middle East. At this point Russia is fully entrenched in Syria and in an almost unassailable position.

Russia continues to insist that the only legitimate regime in Syria is the Assad regime and that all other entities are by definition "terrorists" because of it. Although Washington abhors the tactics used by Russia and the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war, the U.S. fears another void in leadership in Damascus more because of what may come to fill that vacuum, so is muddling from one "peace process" to the next.

Truly, the United States has not looked this irrelevant for generations. Obama seems to have conceded leadership in Syria to Putin, and Russia in general has emerged from this civil war emboldened and significantly more powerful.

This current status quo will ultimately lead to a much more powerful Russia. America and her allies in the Middle East will continue to attack, degrade and destroy ISIS (even if it is at a lukewarm effort because of the weak American president), while Russia will mop up any opposition rebel groups fighting against Assad's regime within Syria. This includes opposition groups that the U.S. have previously agreed to support, who they have now abandoned.

The end result will be a hugely enhanced Iranian presence in Syria; and Hezbollah will have definite resupply from Iran. Russian cover through Syria, and Sunni civilians will continue to abandon Syria and Iraq for Europe. This will leave the victors Russia, Iran and their allies to claim the field of victory, and as conquerors they will remake the Middle East in whatever way they see fit.

Fundamental change is coming to the Middle East region. The countries we know on our maps of the region do not and will not exist in the future as they do today. Countries like Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen, amongst others, no longer exist as they once did. Neither do their borders.

The temporary new Middle East may very well be one made and defined entirely by Russia and her allies. The United States, Britain, France and NATO will play a limited part at best in this reshaping process.

The Middle East seems to be readying itself for the coming of Gog and his horde. Indeed, his shadow covers the entire region at this point. It will not be long until the Lord God Himself, puts His "hooks" into his jaw and "brings him forth."

God is preparing the world and the Middle East for the time to come when He will turn His face once again back to his Holy inheritance, Israel. It will be through Gog and his horde, and the evil that they intend for Israel, that He will

magnify Himself. God will deliver Israel from Gog as He will deliver her from the Antichrist at the conclusion of the Tribulation period.

Soon and once again, the Lord God will be known amongst the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and then the whole world through them.

This Gentile church age is drawing to a close before our eyes. The time is fast approaching when God will address all the nations of this world through Israel, as He always originally intended. He will refine Israel through the fire of the Tribulation, until they reach the point that all hope of human deliverance is gone.

At that point Israel will cry out to Jesus, their Messiah, for the mercy and deliverance He longs to bring to them: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Then the Lord, their God will return to them and He will bring justice, compassion and deliverance!

First though, will come Gog with his hordes. Today, in 2016, you can almost hear their approaching footsteps.

We've lost a spiritual giant

Posted By Joseph Farah On 07/25/2016

The world lost a spiritual giant this week.

And I lost a friend of about 30 years.

Tim LaHaye is known as the bestselling author of the "Left Behind" series, but he was so much more than that – pastor, author of more than 60 books, Bible expositor, founder of a Christian school system, one of the founders of the Moral Majority and the Council for National Policy and the husband of Beverly LaHaye, the founder of Concerned Women of America.

He died Monday morning at 90.

Tim LaHaye was a sweet, sweet soul who cared deeply about others. He was a mentor to me.

Here's one of my favorite personal recollections.

In a former life, I made a living collaborating on books with others – including people like Rush Limbaugh, Hal Lindsey, Greg Laurie and many others.

Tim and I had discussed doing book projects together, but we never did.

One day in 1994, I believe, I called Tim with an idea for a project that had been in the back of my mind of more than 15 years. I had discussed it with other partners over the years, but it just kept getting put off in favor of other book projects.

The idea was a book called "Left Behind."

As I was explaining it to him on the phone, he interjected, "Joseph, you're not going to believe this, but I just signed a collaboration agreement and a publishing contract for that very title."

The rest is history, as they say.

The book and its many sequels went on to sell tens of millions of copies and remain on the New York Times bestsellers list for over 300 weeks.

I had waited too long to make the call.

But Tim remained a trusted friend and confidante, a wise counselor. I looked forward always to seeing his smiling and optimistic face whenever we had the chance to get together.

He had so much energy and vitality right through his 90th year.

His love for his wife, Beverly, and his family was supreme.

He was a blessed servant of His Lord Jesus.

There are few people I know who were as positive as Tim – just consistently positive. If you were in a dark place, he would provide the light. I'm convinced it was a reflection of Jesus. If you were down in the dumps, a few minutes with Tim LaHaye would pull you right out of your funk.

Tim was the son of a Detroit autoworker. His father Frank LaHaye died of a heart attack when Tim was 9. The story goes that Tim was inconsolable – until he heard the pastor's eulogy.

"This is not the end of Frank LaHaye," he recalled the minister saying. "Because he accepted Jesus, the day will come when the Lord will shout from heaven and descend, and the dead in Christ will rise first and then we'll be caught up together to meet him in the air."

"All of a sudden, there was hope in my heart I'd see my father again," said Tim.

He carried that hope the rest of his life. He was like a beacon of hope.

Beverly and he were seemingly inseparable for 69 years of marriage – even though they were both so active and such distinguished leaders in their own right.

He posted this poignant message on his Facebook page recently. It's reminiscent of statements I've heard him make dozens of times over the years: "69 years ago today I married the love of my life, Beverly LaHaye. She has been my faithful partner in marriage, parenthood, ministry, and many things we never dreamed. We are still in love today! God has been faithful to us and we continue to claim as our life verse, Proverbs 3:5 & 6, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.'"

I know that Tim is absent from his body today, meaning he is with the Lord. That's reassuring.

But today I feel like I've been left behind.

Forget Brexit, Quitaly is Europe's next worry

Sluggish growth and high levels of unemployment are reflected in the high level of non-performing loans that are now hobbling Italian banks

First it was Grexit, then it was Brexit. Now the looming threat for Europe is Quitaly, the fear that Italy might decide it has had enough of the single currency and go back to the lira.

Put simply, Italy's economy is floundering and has been for the past two decades during which time there has been virtually no growth and Italian goods have become less and less competitive in export markets.

Sluggish growth and high levels of unemployment are reflected in the high level of non-performing loans that are now hobbling Italian banks. Potential bad debts have almost doubled to €360bn (£300bn) in the past five years and now account for 18% of all outstanding loans.

What is clear, though, is that the non-performing loans reflect a non-performing economy. They are the symptom of the problem and not its cause.

Unlike Greece, Ireland or Spain, Italy did not go through a period of economic boom before the Great Recession

of 2008-09. Instead, its performance has been unremittingly poor. The economy is 10% smaller than it was before the financial crisis and as a result unemployment is high, especially in the poorer southern half of the country.

In the days before it joined the euro, Italy would have been able to make itself more competitive by devaluing the lira. That option is no longer available.

The risk, therefore, is obvious. Europe suffers a fresh slowdown as a result of the shock imparted by Brexit. An already weak Italy suffers more than most and its banks start to fail. Small investors are told that European rules mean that they have to shoulder some of the losses.

Matteo Renzi's centre left government loses power and is replaced by the Five Star Movement, which has pledged to hold a referendum on leaving the euro. Given the state of the economy, Italy could not be ruled out. If it happened, the single currency would collapse.

Andy Stanley's North Point Community Church Hits New Low

"Love the way you turn me on." "You got the right stuff, baby."

Imagine you're sitting in church on Sunday during an official worship service, and singers on stage are singing those lyrics. Would you really want to hear lyrics about how a girl turns a guy on because she has the right stuff baby? That's what happened during a Sunday worship service at North Point Community Church-Andy Stanley's church. They opened an official Sunday worship service with hits from the 1990s.



The Apostle Paul said, "We preach Christ and Him crucified," but Stanley seems to be saying "we will put on an elaborate and worldly show to draw a crowd."

Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ not good enough? Does it really need to be dressed up with cheesy boy band songs from the 90s? On top of that, can anyone imagine that any of those performers had any free time left to study God's Word?

This is a tightly choreographed and professionally performed medley of (secular) hits; it must have taken many hours of practice and rehearsal to accomplish this. Is this what a church should be encouraging it's people to focus their precious time on? North Point and Andy Stanley have a gigantic effect on other

churches in America; many smaller churches study their methods and try to emulate their "success." Lord have mercy...

See the videos if you can stomach it at

<http://www.piratechristian.com/museum-of-idolatry/2016/7/love-the-way-you-turn-me-on-north-point-community-church>