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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

Vladimir Putin says Russia will fight for the right of Palestinians to their own state

Russian President tells Arab League his country will fight to establish an independent Palestine with a capital in East Jerusalem

22 October 2016 awdnews.com

Vladimir Putin has said Russia will fight for an independent Palestinian state, and called for the issues of the Middle East to be resolved through peaceful means.

Despite international criticism over Russia's own role in the Ukrainian crisis, Mr Putin was hailed last week by a St Petersburg Cossack group for his ability to “bring order and stop wars”.

In an address to the Arab League summit in Egypt on Saturday, Mr Putin spoke against foreign intervention in countries' internal disputes and spoke of the role Russia can play in diplomatic channels.

While Russia openly opposes the stance of US-backed Israel on the Gaza crisis, its position in the Middle East is complicated. Mr Putin is one of Iran's key allies, but as he spoke on Saturday the core nations of the Arab League engaged in air strikes on the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen.

His attempts to urge a peaceful solution in Yemen haven't had much of an immediate impact – on Sunday, the Arab League agreed to the creation of a joint military forces comprised of around 40,000 elite troops to resolve the future “challenges” of the Middle East.

As one of the “Quartet” entities involved in Middle East peace negotiations, Russia has played a key role in talks about the fallout of last year's Gaza crisis.

He told the summit this weekend: “Palestinians have the right to establish an independent and habitable state with a capital in East Jerusalem.

“Russia will continue to contribute to achieving this goal through bilateral and multilateral channels,” he said.

Last month, the Quartet of the US, EU, UN and Russia issued a joint statement after a meeting in Germany to express their frustration at the breakdown of talks in Israel.

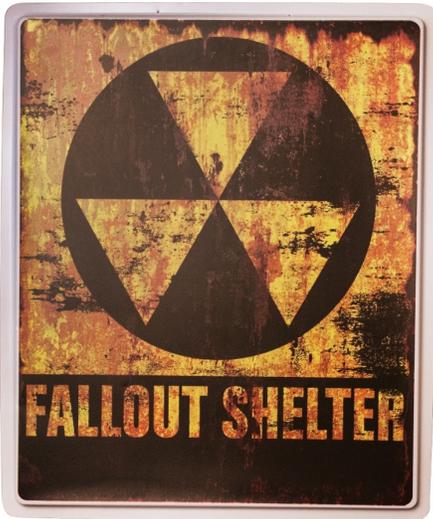
Both sides left the negotiating table with Palestinians angry at continued building on Jewish settlements in occupied territory and Israel objecting to the idea of Hamas entering the Palestinian government, Reuters reported.

All four Quartet members reiterated that talks must respect both Israel's concerns over security and Palestinian demands for statehood.

“The Quartet is deeply concerned over the difficult situation in Gaza where the pace of reconstruction needs to be accelerated to address the basic needs of the Palestinian population and to ensure stability,” the statement read.

The Great American Eulogy: the hidden defect in the U.S. nuclear strategy that could spell its doom

by Utopia: the Collapse



U.S. public fallout shelters are dilapidated. Most are in ruins - if they even still exist at all. Russia is not the one living in fear of the threat of a nuclear strike - U.S. citizens are. America may have won the Cold War but did it also lose its mind in the process by now offering protection for its citizens?

October 2016 – WASHINGTON – Russia currently has over a thousand nuclear warheads aimed at America. Just one of those warheads could kill more Americans than died in the Vietnam War. A dozen could collapse the nation's power grid and other vital networks. So any kind of nuclear exchange, even a “small” one, would be a catastrophe without precedent in American history. Unfortunately, the strategy that Washington has fashioned to avert such a catastrophe is so focused on preventing a cold, calculated act of aggression that it largely ignores other ways nuclear war could unfold -- and maximizes losses the nation would suffer no matter what form the conflict took.

This is the hidden danger in our current strategic posture that policymakers seldom talk about in public, and some may not even grasp. You see, the perverse logic of nuclear deterrence that Washington crafted during the Cold War makes any effort to actually defend America “destabilizing” -- a bad thing -- and thus favors being defenseless. So aside from a very minimal collection of radars and interceptors on the West Coast designed to deal with North Korea, America has no strategic defenses.

What it has is offenses -- about 1,500 nuclear warheads distributed in hardened silos, stealthy submarines and long-range bombers. These forces are known as the nuclear “triad;” along with flying command centers, secure communications satellites and aerial-refueling tankers, the triad is designed to make any act of nuclear aggression potentially suicidal for the perpetrator. The plan is to respond proportionately to any level of nuclear aggression, and make that plan abundantly clear to any nation that might contemplate an attack.

The assumption is that no sane leader would deliberately launch an attack knowing the retribution that would follow. That seems logical enough, but think about the other ways a nuclear exchange might occur. What if we find ourselves facing an irrational adversary with nuclear weapons? What if the other side is rational, but suffers a mechanical failure in its command system? What if it misreads U.S. intentions in a crisis such as war in Eastern Europe? What if parts of its nuclear arsenal are seized by elements intent on fomenting war?

These are not just science-fiction scenarios. The Russian early-warning network of satellites and ground-based radars is so fragile that it could easily fail, or result in mis-interpretation of threat data. If Moscow seriously thought it was under attack, it would be strongly incentivized to launch quickly before its weapons were destroyed on the ground. That might well signal the end of American civilization, because like I said -- Washington has decided as a matter of policy to render itself defenseless to a sizable nuclear attack.

How did we get into this situation? Strategic theorists began espousing the cause of offensively-based deterrence early in the postwar period, arguing it simply wasn't feasible to defend against large-scale nuclear attacks. Even if defenses were 90% effective, the handful of warheads that might get through would kill tens of millions. So the only solution within our grasp was to dissuade potential aggressors by threatening unacceptable

consequences. Over time, this thinking evolved into a belief that being defended could actually make war more likely, because if Russia (or China, or whomever) thought many of its warheads might be intercepted, then it would buy more and more weapons to assure it could retaliate after an attack. So the only way to avoid a dangerous arms race, it was said, was to forego building real defenses. This arrangement came to be known as a “mutual-hostage relationship,” and its logic was enshrined in arms control agreements between Moscow and Washington during the 1970s. –National Interest

CIA prepping for a possible cyber strike against Russia

by Utopia: the Collapse

October 2016 – WASHINGTON - The Obama administration is contemplating an unprecedented cyber covert action against Russia in retaliation for alleged Russian interference in the American presidential election, U.S. intelligence officials told NBC News. Current and former officials with direct knowledge of the situation say the CIA has been asked to deliver options to the White House for a wide-ranging “clandestine” cyber operation designed to harass and “embarrass” the Kremlin leadership. The sources did not elaborate on the exact measures the CIA was considering, but said the agency had already begun opening cyber doors, selecting targets and making other preparations for an operation. Former intelligence officers told NBC News that the agency had gathered reams of documents that could expose unsavory tactics by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Vice President Joe Biden told “Meet the Press” moderator Chuck Todd on Friday that “we’re sending a message” to Putin and that “it will be at the time of our choosing, and under the circumstances that will have the greatest impact.” When asked if the American public will know a message was sent, the vice president replied, “Hope not.” Retired Admiral James Stavridis told NBC News’ Cynthia McFadden that the U.S. should attack Russia’s ability to censor its internal internet traffic and expose the financial dealings of Putin and his associates.

“It’s well known that there’s great deal of offshore money moved outside of Russia from oligarchs,” he said. “It would be very embarrassing if that was revealed, and that would be a proportional response to what we’ve seen” in Russia’s alleged hacks and leaks targeting U.S. public opinion. Sean Kanuck, who was until this spring the senior U.S. intelligence official responsible for analyzing Russian cyber capabilities, said not mounting a response would carry a cost.

“If you publicly accuse someone,” he said, “and don’t follow it up with a responsive action, that may weaken the credible threat of your response capability.” President Obama will ultimately have to decide whether he will authorize a CIA operation. Officials told NBC News that for now there are divisions at the top of the administration about whether to proceed. Two former CIA officers who worked on Russia told NBC News that there is a long history of the White House asking the CIA to come up with options for covert action against Russia, including cyber options — only to abandon the idea.

“We’ve always hesitated to use a lot of stuff we’ve had, but that’s a political decision,” one former officer said. “If someone has decided, ‘We’ve had enough of the Russians,’ there is a lot we can do. Step one is to remind them that two can play at this game and we have a lot of stuff. Step two, if you are looking to mess with their networks, we can do that, but then the issue becomes, they can do worse things to us in other places.” -NBC News

Scientists locate site where ancient Roman armies breached Jerusalem walls

By Megan Gannon, Live Science Contributor Published October 23, 2016



In this undated photo, workers clear a dig site believed to be Jerusalem's 'Third Wall' breached by armies commanded by the Roman emperor Titus in A.D. 70. In this undated photo, workers clear a dig site believed to be Jerusalem's 'Third Wall' breached by armies commanded by the Roman emperor Titus in A.D. 70 (Yoli Shwartz/Israel Antiquities Authority)

Archaeologists say they've found evidence of a battlefield from the Roman emperor Titus' siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Recent excavations revealed a section of the so-called "Third Wall" of Jerusalem that Titus' army breached on

its way to conquering the city, according to the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA).

Outside the wall, the archaeologists found that the ground was littered with large ballista stones (stones used as projectiles with a type of crossbow) and sling stones, suggesting that this area had been under heavy fire from Roman siege engines.

These archaeological remains were unearthed last winter at the site where the campus of the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design is to be built, in an area of the city that is known today as the Russian Compound, IAA officials said.

"This is a fascinating testimony of the intensive bombardment by the Roman army, led by Titus, on their way to conquering the city and destroying the Second Temple," the excavation directors, Rina Avner and Kfir Arbib, said in a statement from the IAA. "The bombardment was intended to attack the sentries guarding the wall and provide cover for the Roman forces so they could approach the wall with battering rams and thereby breach the city's defenses."

An eyewitness to the war, historian Flavius Josephus, wrote the seminal account of the Roman siege of Jerusalem, which included key details about the Third Wall.

Josephus said the wall was built to protect a neighborhood called Beit Zeita, which was built outside the city's boundaries at the time. The construction was started by Agrippa I, King of Judea, and was finished two decades later to help fortify the city as Jewish rebels prepared to revolt against Rome in A.D. 66.

Ultimately, the uprising against Rome was unsuccessful, and in A.D. 70, the Romans took back Jerusalem and destroyed much of the city, including the Second Temple.

The newly uncovered section of the wall is 6.2 feet (1.9 meters) wide. Pottery discovered at the site suggests that this battlefield dates back to Roman times, the archaeologists said. They also discovered the remains of a watchtower along the wall.

The new findings could help settle some debate about the exact location of the Third Wall, which has been going on ever since archaeologist Edward Robinson claimed to have found a portion of the wall in 1838. The discoveries will be presented next week at the New Studies in the Archaeology of Jerusalem and its Region conference.

Original article on LiveScience.

The Funeral of the Oslo Accords

gatestoneinstitute.org

The death of former Israeli President Shimon Peres led to a wave of almost unanimous tributes. Representatives from 75 countries came to Jerusalem to attend the funeral. Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas even left Ramallah for a few hours to show up.

Such a consensus could seem to be a sign of support for Israel, but it was something else entirely.

Those who honored the memory of Shimon Peres put aside the years he dedicated to creating Israel's defense industry and to negotiating key arms deals with France, Germany and the United States. Those who honored the memory of Peres spoke only of the man who signed the Oslo Accords and who embodied the "peace process." They then used the occasion to accuse Israel.

Barack Obama delivered a speech that could have resembled a mark of heartwarming friendship, until he evoked the "the unfinished business of peace talks." A harsh and negative sentence followed, saying that "the Jewish people weren't born to rule another people." The next sentence implied that Israel is behaving like a slave-owner: "From the very first day we are against slaves and masters;" but it is clear to anyone in Israel that there is no such relationship even resembling that. His conclusion followed: "The Zionist idea will be best protected when Palestinians will have a state of their own."

British Prime Minister Theresa May and French President François Hollande issued press releases in the same direction.

At the funeral of Shimon Peres in Jerusalem, standing before representatives from 75 countries, Barack Obama delivered a speech that could have resembled a mark of heartwarming friendship, until he evoked the "the unfinished business of peace talks," followed by a harsh and negative portrayal of Israel.

Despite the unceasing waves of murdering innocent Israeli civilians, Western politicians speak as if Israel were not under attack. They are not interested in seeing the spilled blood, the threats, the hatred constantly spread by Palestinian newspapers, and the incessant and ugly consequences of that hatred. European and American politicians are not interested in hearing what Palestinian leaders say when they call for the ethnic cleansing of Jews. These leaders seem happy to forget the chaos in the Middle East, the ruthless global violence of Islamic extremists, and the outspoken, genocidal intentions of the rulers of Iran. Instead, they speak abstractly of "peace" as if it is something that can be dropped down from sky on people who every day are threatening to kill the Jews.

These politicians practice willful blindness and seem obsessed by a desire illegally to impose the creation of a Palestinian state -- whatever the consequences for Israel. These Western leaders can well imagine what those consequences would be if the Arabs had their way: genocide. One can only assume they are pleased with that.

Israelis, however -- Muslims, Christians and Jews -- cannot practice willful blindness. The spilled blood is not an abstract headline; it is their red blood. The threats, the hatred and the consequences of that hatred are real. Israelis hear clearly what the Palestinian leaders say. They cannot forget what is happening in the Middle East: Jerusalem is 150 miles from Damascus and 1000 miles from Tehran; Hezbollah has more 120,000 missiles aimed at Israel from Lebanon.

Hamas, a designated terrorist group openly dedicated to destroying Israel, rules Gaza just a few miles away. Israelis note the genocidal threats from Iran: Iran can obtain nuclear weapons at any time, along

with long-range missiles to deliver them.

Even though many Israeli citizens were proud to see that so many Western leaders came to honor Shimon Peres, they were not fooled. A recent survey showed that only 28% of the Israeli population believe that a peace agreement is even conceivable; 64% think no agreement will ever be signed. Another survey from July 2016 showed that a clear majority of Israelis are opposed to any withdrawal from Judea and Samaria, and resolutely hostile to any foreign interference in Israeli affairs.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu politely received Western leaders when they came to Jerusalem. He paid tribute to Shimon Peres -- without omitting the first decades of Peres' life. He also answered those who speak of "peace" as if no other factors mattered, and firmly stated his position: security comes first; there is no way that peace can exist without security.

Netanyahu listened to Obama's speech. He doubtless read the press releases of Theresa May and François Hollande. He could easily decipher the innuendos in those speeches and press releases: the same innuendos have been used by Western politicians for a quarter of a century.

Netanyahu has acted to make Israel immune to attacks and Western pressure. Despite tensions and disagreements with the Obama administration, he managed to maintain robust ties of friendship between Israel and the United States, and negotiated a US military-aid agreement of \$38 billion over ten years.

Seeing that Russian President Vladimir Putin has come to occupy one of the places in the Middle East left invitingly vacant by the Obama administration, Netanyahu established working relations with Putin and used the relationship to contain Syria's chaos and ensure that it would not overflow into Israel. Netanyahu also used those relations to curb Hezbollah's and Iran's activities on the Golan Heights and in South Lebanon, and to try to reconcile with Turkey.

Understanding that economic relations between Israel and Europe could deteriorate, he set about negotiating free trade agreements with China, India, South Korea and Japan, and he signed economic and military cooperation agreements with seven African countries also threatened by Islamic terrorism (Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia).

Realizing that Sunni Arab countries were concerned about the rising regional power of Iran, he strengthened strategic ties with Jordan and Egypt. Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry visited Israel in July, and a few weeks ago, the deputy chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Yair Golan, said that military cooperation between Israel, Egypt and Jordan had never been closer.

Netanyahu began a rapprochement between Israel and Saudi Arabia; in April 2016, Saudi prince Al-Waleed bin Talal of Saudi Arabia became the first honorary ambassador to Israel. A few months earlier, the opening of an Israeli diplomatic office in the United Arab Emirates, in Abu Dhabi, was announced.

Against all odds, Israel is now in a much stronger position than it was even a few years ago.

Netanyahu also probably realized that even if Western politicians want to impose the creation of a Palestinian state, Sunni Arab leaders, Russia, and even Iran, despite the inflammatory mullahs, consider that the issue can presently be placed on the back burner until the multiple fires that plague the region calm down; it seems evident they will not calm down any time soon.

Netanyahu also doubtless sees that Abbas came to Jerusalem because Western leaders are now his

main protectors, and that Abbas's usual accusatory speech before the UN General Assembly in New York this year was received by the press and diplomats as a side show.

Netanyahu assuredly also sees that Sunni Arab leaders have had enough of Abbas; that they want normalization between the Arab world and Israel, and that they have a plan that basically envisions relieving Abbas of his position.

Netanyahu also cannot help seeing that France and other Western powers are preparing anti-Israeli maneuvers and are ready to support questionable resolutions at the UN. A recent article in the *Weekly Standard* said that the Obama administration is "manufacturing a crisis with Israel in anticipation of a post-election diplomatic push targeting the Jewish state."

Netanyahu emphasized, when it was his turn to speak before the United Nations, a few hours after Mahmoud Abbas, that Israel is not isolated, and that it will not accept having unacceptable conditions dictated to it.

Both Netanyahu and the Israeli government apparently consider that a page of history has been turned, and that the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Middle East peace essentially belongs to the past.

In private, some people say that the burial of Shimon Peres was also the burial of the Oslo Accords and of a never-ending "peace process" that brought only war.

In 2009, Daniel Pipes wrote that "Israelis eventually must return to their pre-1993 policy of establishing that Israel is strong, tough, and permanent." Israel is going in this direction.

Another eminent scholar, Walter Russell Mead, noted recently that Netanyahu's successes "will not and cannot make Israel's problems and challenges go away," but that they put Israel in a much "stronger global position." Mead added that if and when American liberals understand the causes of Netanyahu's successes, "a new and smarter era of foreign policy debate" might begin.

Western politicians would do well to listen.

Dr. Guy Millière, a professor at the University of Paris, is the author of 27 books on France and Europe.

...and finally, from our "Really Lost Their Grip on Reality and Primed for Delusion" file:

The Chances That Life Is Really a Computer Simulation

By Steve Tobak Published October 21, 2016 ValleyBeat FOXBusiness Opens a New Window.

"There's a one in a billion chance that this is reality." – Elon Musk

There is a growing school of thought in the scientific community that we are all living inside a computer simulation designed by a super-advanced civilization. This is not some fringe idea dreamed up by a weed-smoking wackadoodle in a psychedelic VW van. This is mainstream scientific theory.

A who's who of world-renown philosophers and physicists spent hours discussing the controversial concept known as the simulation hypothesis Opens a New Window. at an annual event at the American Museum of Natural History earlier this year.

The debate moderator, famed astrophysicist Neil DeGrasse Tyson, said the likelihood that you, me and the universe we think we inhabit are not real “may be very high.” Cosmologist Max Tegmark of MIT suggested that what we perceive to be the laws of this universe are simply the rules of the program our virtual characters exist in.

A few Silicon Valley elites are obsessed with the notion that our world is entirely written in software code, as Keanu Reeves’ character Neo discovered in the movie *The Matrix*. I don’t know which is stranger: that Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk Opens a New Window. pegs the chances that this is reality at “one in a billion,” or that I am not the least bit surprised.

This all started when Oxford University philosopher Nick Bostrom published “Are You Living in a Computer Simulation? Opens a New Window. ” The paper hypothesized that a race of posthumans might run countless simulations to replicate their evolutionary history. In that case, the odds that we are the one and only real thing and not one of millions or billions of virtual simulations would be slim-to-none.

Which begs the question, what in the world are posthumans, and would it be genuinely possible for them to create a virtual world that is so realistic that its characters think, feel and perceive it to be real? Posthumans are hypothetical beings that have transcended biological limitations to become unimaginably intelligent and capable of extraordinary technological feats. Whether that state is achieved via genetics, artificial intelligence, or some as-yet unknown technological advance is immaterial. With enough intelligence and computing power, virtual consciousness is conceivable and its subjects would not necessarily be aware of their condition.

I bet I know what you’re thinking. You can’t even get Siri to find a decent Chinese restaurant near the movie theater you’re going out to tonight without hopelessly botching the request. Isn’t it a ginormous reach to think that our descendants will someday create an entire universe with sentient characters out of computer code?

Apparently, Musk spends a lot of time pondering this sort of thing. At Recode’s Code Conference Opens a New Window. in June, he made a case for the simulation argument:

“Call it 40 years ago we had Pong: like two rectangles and a dot. That was what games were. [Today] we have photorealistic 3D simulation with millions of people playing simultaneously and it’s getting better every year. And soon we’ll have virtual reality and augmented reality. If you assume any rate of improvement at all then the games will become indistinguishable from reality.”

Musk doesn’t expect that to happen tomorrow, but thousands of years in the future, should our race survive that long. “Either we are going to create simulations that are indistinguishable from reality or civilization will cease to exist,” he says. “Those are the only two options.” And therein lies the rub. That’s where I think the hypothesis falls apart.

Just because Bostrom and Musk find ancestral simulations interesting does not mean our superhuman descendants would give it so much as a fleeting thought. For all we know, they might be far more intrigued by the future than the past, multidimensional parallel universes or growing the perfect fruit. I think the odds that their interests are even remotely similar to ours are infinitesimally small.

Besides, the question of whether we’re a simulation or not may be entirely academic. How can the hypothesis be tested? Any breach we discover in the laws of physics can just as easily be explained as a legitimate flaw requiring a more advanced theory – as Einstein’s general theory of relativity was to Newton’s law of gravity – or a bug in the simulation program. We would never know the difference.

In the debate, Harvard physicist Lisa Randall said she only found the theory interesting insofar as it could be tested, but was far more intrigued by why so many people think it’s an interesting question. “I actually find the egotism of thinking that if there were simulators around that they’d come up with us kind of audacious and ridiculous,” she said, “it’s the very self-centeredness to this whole thing that I find kind of hilarious.”