

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

Will Trump Bring Peace to the Middle East?

BY REUTERS, JPOST.COM STAFF NOVEMBER 12, 2017

As Trump’s negotiation team begins to create a new peace plan it meets both praise and skepticism.

US President Donald Trump and his advisors have begun formulating a new peace plan that is set to surpass in scale prior Israeli-Palestinian peace-making initiatives, the New York Times reported Saturday,

The report says Trump's main advisors currently working on the plan are special advisors Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt, deputy national security adviser Dina H. Powell, US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman and others from the State Department and National Security Council.

The team is said to consult with the consul general in Jerusalem, Donald Bloom.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu complimented Trump and his advisors last week for “taking a fresh approach” and “thinking out of the box.”

Trump had said in the past that he is Israel’s “biggest friend” and that he was aiming for the “ultimate deal.”

However some skeptics point out that more than a few American presidents entered the Israeli-Palestinian fray with great hopes only to emerge with less success than they had hoped for.

What changed?

Saudi Arabia and other moderate Arab states seem more interested than ever before in solving the Arab-Israeli conflict in order to invest the attention and energy needed to prevent Iran from increasing its dominance in the Middle East.

Egypt had also been an important ally of those who seek stability and possibly a peace agreement by recently brokering a reconciliation deal between the Hamas government in Gaza and Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah.

It remains to be seen if the Palestinian Authority will assume control of Gaza and if Hamas will give up its arms.

Skeptics point out that even a strong personal commitment from a residing US President is not always enough to turn around a century of conflict and personal mistrust between the various leaders involved in the conflict.

“Ultimately, both Netanyahu and Abbas just have this long, long history and they’ve played this game really well,” said Foundation for Defense of Democracies scholar Grant Rumley.

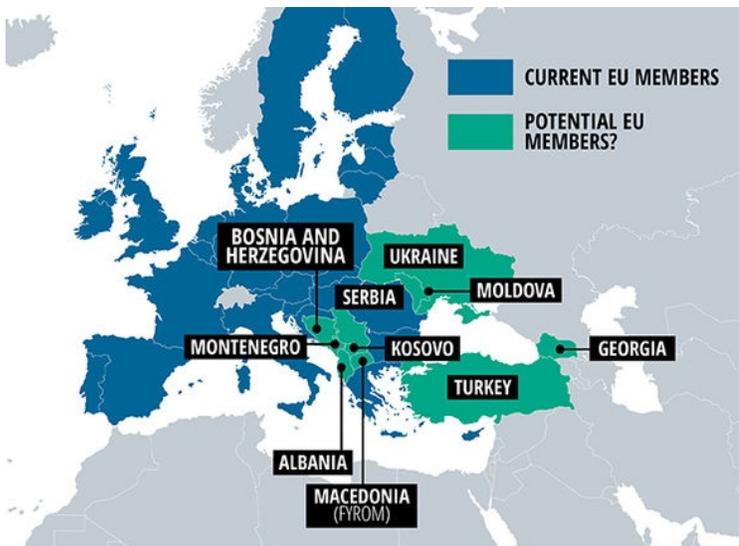
“They don’t trust each other and I don’t think they will ever get to the point where they will trust each other.”

MAPPED: EU plots massive expansion to become 37 country megabloc after Brexit

EUROPEAN Union officials are plotting to continue their plan to take over the continent by creating a 37 state megabloc after Brexit – stretching across 3,000 miles of territory.

By VINCENT WOOD

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Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey could all become members under EU plans.

And they could be joined by Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Kosovo in a vast land grab by the EU.

Meanwhile the bloc is squaring up to Vladimir Putin by attempting to bring Russian allies Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia under their control.

It comes as EU Commissioner Jean Claude Juncker storms ahead with his plan to further unify the continent and bring nation states under

the yoke of Brussels. EU mapGETTY

The bloc has long held membership over Turkey as a way to bend the will of the increasingly autocratic state.

During the height of the migrant crisis Ankara took on 3.4 million refugees headed for Europe at the behest of Brussels in return for aid cash and the promise of membership.

But the state has repeatedly called the bloc’s bluff, earlier this year threatening to allow 15,000 citizens through the border a month after EU criticism of President Erdogan’s increasingly authoritarian stance following last year’s military coup.

During the UK’s EU referendum former prime minister David Cameron claimed Turkey’s membership was a millennia away.

In an interview on LBC Radio on the eve of the crunch vote, Mr Cameron said: "The issue simply isn't going to arise. As I have said, this is the reddest of red herrings.

"At the current rate of progress, Turkey could qualify to join in about the year 3000."

Meanwhile in Albania the EU has demanded officials take control of rampant corruption and organised crime while making key changes to their governmental systems before they are brought into the fold.

And Eurocrats have told the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to prepare their nation to assimilate EU law – and deal with issues between the state and Greece.

Greece has long refused to let the nation join over their name, with Hellenic officials accusing the former Yugoslav republic of stealing Macedonia's heritage from them.

Serbia and Montenegro are both making progress through the bureaucracy of Brussels, with Montenegro close to negotiating entry and Serbia being offered the chance to make its case for membership.

Meanwhile the EU's attempt to link up with Russian allies could cause chaos in the region.

In 2014 hundreds of people died in Ukraine during brutal mass protests after the Russia-aligned president Viktor Yanukovich refused to let his nation join the EU.

The Euromaidan revolution also led to the annexation of Crimea by Russian troops, who took advantage of the chaos to push further into Europe.

The European Parliament said Russia was putting "strong resistance" on further cooperation between the EU and allied states.

But Lithuanian EPP member Laima Andrikiene, who authored a new report on the scheme, said Russian aggression had accelerated the process.

She said: "The changes are due to the military aggression of Russia against Ukraine in 2014, the annexation of Crimea and continuing occupation of Eastern Ukraine by Russian proxies, as well as Kremlin-steered frozen conflicts which remain unresolved in Moldova and Georgia.

"The creation of an Eastern Partnership Plus model for associated countries with the possibility of a future membership in the customs, energy and digital union is crucial."

EU bigwigs held meeting of religious leaders on future of Europe

EU chiefs and religious leaders have met to discuss the future of Europe amid a wave of populism and nationalism sweeping across the continent.

By CHLOE KERR Wed, Nov 8, 2017

Representatives from Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism came together yesterday for discussions under the theme of 'The Future of Europe: a values-based and effective Union'.

The conference focused on the future of Europe and how to make the EU more united, stronger and

more democratic.

It was hosted by European Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans.

Mr Timmermans said religious leaders discussed “the question of our common future from different angles”. He also voiced his appreciation for the adoption of a law which allows anti-Semitic messages to be deleted from social media.



The President of the Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), Irmgard Schwaetzer, demanded churches also discuss their attitudes towards Europe with each other and "the divides and tensions that are currently present about the issue of refugees in the EU".

Imam Tareq Oubrou, director of the Bordeaux mosque, said Europe is the best place for Islam and secular societies to come to a better understanding of one other.

He said: “This is a challenge for us, for Islam, as we don’t have the secular experience”.

The EU is expected to say that they will start internal preparatory work on a post-Brexit transition period and a future trade deal with Britain

Mr Oubrou said there is a difficulty between teaching the spiritual order while respecting the legal and political order of the country.

He said: “Europe is constituted of states with different legal and constitutional orders. But for me as Muslim and as a believer, Europe is for me the adventure of the universal.”

The Luxembourg Archbishop Jean-Claude Hollerich said religion has a responsibility for the peace that makes Europe a success.

Mr Hollerith added it is important for people without religion and believers to peacefully coexist.

The 13th annual meeting is part of the regular dialogue between churches, religious communities, philosophical and non-confessional organisations.

WATER CRISIS: Earth’s fresh water drying up?

UK Express Nov 8

THE world is on the verge of a water crisis, experts have warned, with big business shelling out an incredible £23.4 billion to secure their supplies.

Corporations are panicking their fresh water could dry up in the coming years as global temperatures soar and droughts wreak havoc.

The World Economic Forum now ranks the world water crisis second only to terrorism and climate

change as the biggest calamity facing humanity.

Flooding, huge storms, such as Hurricane Harvey, and raging forest fires of the kind that ripped through California are all contributing to the crisis.

A report by environmental impact charity CDP this week found record levels of annual investment by companies worldwide in using waste water and improving irrigation as they look to shore-up supplies.

Chief executive of emission reduction company South Pole Group, Renat Heuberger, warned the potential devastation was huge and urged further action.

He said: "From Bangladesh to Peru and the US, climate risks - and in particular water risks - have been very real in 2017.

"From storms to droughts, and floods to forest fires, the damage has been enormous."



Droughts are a problem worldwide (GETTY photo)

Last year, a report by the University of Twente warned four billion people worldwide are affected by severe water scarcity for at least one month a year - a much higher figure than previously thought.

And a huge swathe of the globe is being hit, including the western US, southern Europe, Australia and large parts of Africa.

The UK is also affected, with increasing numbers of hosepipe bans over the summer months to prevent a drought in the south.

It is thought the rise in population worldwide and increasing consumption could be escalating the crisis.

Report author Arjen Hoekstra said: "Groundwater levels are falling, lakes are drying up, less water is flowing in rivers, and water supplies for industry and farmers are threatened.

"All over the world, it is clear that the risks associated with high water consumption are being increasingly recognised.

"The growing world population, changes in consumer behaviour, and climate change are having a significant impact on the scarcity and quality of water."

Big name firms splurging money on water security include Sony, Coca Cola, GlaxoSmithKline and Kellogg.

The world has witnessed numerous disasters over the centuries and although most are man-made due to wars and terrorism, mother nature certainly dishes out her fair share of damage.

He said: "The stakes are high as we assess corporate progress towards a water-secure world.

“From brand damage to disrupted supply chains, increased operating costs to constrained growth, water security is now big business and poses increasingly significant threats and opportunities to global firms.”

But others have warned the steps taken so far are not nearly enough.

Eoin Murray, head of investments at UK asset management firm Hermes, told the Financial Times: “Businesses are not yet taking this seriously enough.

“The spending is still a drop in the ocean. But any kind of progress is welcome.”

Israel Hosts Its Largest-Ever Multinational Air Exercise, with U.S., European Nations, India by TheTower.org

Israel's largest-ever biennial aerial exercise, including the air forces of nine countries, is underway, The Times of Israel reported Sunday.

Teams from the United States, Greece, Poland, France, Italy and Germany will be participating in Blue Flag 2017. For the first time a team from India will participate. An eighth country, not identified by Israel, is also participating.

The participation of India in the exercise was described by the Times as “a sign of the improving military ties between Jerusalem and New Delhi.”

There will be over 1,000 pilots, technicians and other support personnel participating in Blue Flag 2017. Previously, Israel hosted the Blue Flag exercises in 2013, and 2015, with each successive exercise getting larger. The training is being held at the Ovda air force base, north of Eilat in southern Israel.

“The participating nations arrived in Israel in their own aircraft and will practice different situations and scenarios,” an IDF statement said. The multinational forces will be challenged by the IAF's Red Squadron, which acts as the enemy in aerial combat exercises.

The hope of the exercise, according to the Israeli army, is to sharpen technical skills and improve “diplomatic cooperation between the countries.”

“Exercise Blue Flag gives opportunity to the IAF to share and learn best practices with some of the best professionals from other Air Forces,” the Indian Air Force said on Facebook, observing that this would be the first time it would be “operating with Israeli Air Force in a multilateral exercise setting.”

In the U.S.-hosted Red Flag exercises last year, the IAF flew along with the United Arab Emirates and Pakistani air forces, even though those two countries do not have diplomatic relations with Israel. A year earlier the IAF participated in the Red Flag exercises alongside Jordan's air force.