

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

Another Step Forward To The Magog Scenario As Russia Raises Tensions With Israel

The announcement by Russia on Monday to transfer its advanced S-300 air-defense system to the Syrian government within two weeks is a disturbing yet surmountable challenge to Israel.

In a move that can only be interpreted as an intended punishment against Israel, Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Moscow would transfer the system, as well as electronic warfare systems, to Syria's air-defense units, arming them with advanced weapons to use against the Israeli Air Force (IAF).

The move comes as a response to the downing of a Russian intelligence-gathering aircraft last week, which was shot out of the sky by Syrian air-defense units that fired recklessly while trying to hit Israeli jets. The IAF had struck an Iranian shipment of manufacturing kits for precision missiles, which Iran was planning to smuggle to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

A number of initial conclusions can be drawn from Russia's announcement.

The first is that the IAF's job in Syria--to prevent Iran from flooding the region with weapons and military units--is about to get even more complicated. But that does not mean that this is a "mission impossible."

Syria's airspace is already the most crowded in the world with air-defense systems. President Bashar Assad's regime is currently armed with a range of Russian-made surface-to-air missile batteries (though it lost around half of them to Israeli strikes in recent months). Assad has been eyeing a purchase of the more advanced S-300 systems for years.

Arming Assad with the S-300 will increase the already formidable threat to Israeli jets that are out there, enforcing Israel's red line against Iran's military expansion. It could embolden the Syrian regime to fire even more aggressively at Israel's air force.

The good news, however, is that Israel is no stranger to the S-300 system. It already exists in Syria since Moscow deployed it--and its more advanced version, the S-400--to protect Russia's own bases and port.

Despite the advanced radars of these systems, it appears as if the IAF has learned how to operate without being detected. In addition, the growing Israeli squadron of stealth F-35 fighter jets, which are designed for just these kinds of missions, should be able to penetrate heavily guarded airspace and lead future

missions against Iran's activities.

Israel's use of long-range standoff weapons, which allow jets to strike targets without needing to necessarily enter Syria's airspace, is also an important ability.

What all of this means is that the IAF has likely been developing solutions to the S-300.

Although the threat is growing to Israel's freedom of operation around Syria, the IAF is capable of working around it. The fact that Iran has already taken hold of the S-300, and used it to defend its nuclear sites, also likely served as a good reason for Israel to figure out ways of overcoming the system.

However, what is less encouraging is the fact that the S-300 system in Syrian hands can be used as an offensive weapon to threaten Israel's civilian air traffic.

Because of its long range, the Syrians can use the S-300 to watch, and theoretically target, any commercial flight coming in to land or taking off at Ben-Gurion International Airport. This enhancement to Syria's ability to threaten Israel is an explosive development, and it is not one that Israel will necessarily choose to live with in the future.

The close relationship that exists between the Assad regime, Iran and Hezbollah also means that Russia has in effect rewarded the Iranian-led radical axis, and moved closer to it by choosing to punish Israel and by ignoring Iran's dangerous actions that led to the downing of the Russian plane.

In its effort to defend the Assad regime, Russia is trying to deter Israel and get Jerusalem to scale back its military campaign against Iran's activities in Syria.

Yet Israel's active-defense campaign is a critical preventative policy. It is the only thing standing in the way of Iran's plan to encircle Israel with precise missile arsenals, pointed at Israel's population centers and strategic sites.

Israel cannot afford to allow Iran to move ahead with these plans. While it must manage the risks judiciously, it does not have the luxury of choosing to let the Iranians take over Syria.

The Russian shift away from Israel is a disturbing trend that the Jewish state will need to deal with by employing a combination of assertiveness and modesty. This is the formula that a regional power like Israel must use when dealing with a global military power like Russia.

The United States, on the other hand, as the world's leading military superpower, can take a far stronger position in support of its Israeli ally, when dealing with Russia's role in the Middle East.

Andy Stanley Says Most Former Christians Still Have 'a Crush on Jesus'

By Michael Gryboski , Christian Post Reporter | Sep 25, 2018

North Point Community Church Senior Pastor Andy Stanley has said he believes that most people who've left the church still maintain "a crush on Jesus."

When asked what Christians can do to win people back to church, Stanley responded that he believed even those who are not interested in worship still desire to be loved, "especially when things aren't going well," he said in an interview with ChristianBook.com that he shared on Twitter Monday for his new book, *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed for the World*.

"Post-Christians could care less about my new sermon series. But they're still interested in matters of faith and spirituality," said Stanley.



"And — this is big — most post-Christians still have a crush on Jesus. While modern folks may be hesitant to recognize Jesus as divine, they're not in the least bit hesitant to laud him as someone whose life is worth imitating."

Stanley also spoke about reaching out to those who are unchurched, saying he refuses to use the statement "the Bible says," echoing comments he has made in the past.

(PHOTO: NORTH POINT VIA THE CHRISTIAN POST)

In his interview with ChristianBook.com, Stanley compared using the term "the Bible says" in modern American culture to using the term "the Quran says."

"Appealing to post-Christian people on the basis of the authority of Scripture has essentially the same effect as a Muslim imam appealing to you on the basis of the authority of the Quran," explained Stanley.

"You may or may not already know what the Quran says. But it doesn't matter. You don't view it as authoritative."

Stanley expressed a preference for using terms like "Jesus taught," "Paul wrote," or "Peter declares," labeling phrases like that as "better" and "more accurate."

"I can tell you from years of personal experience, this approach immediately reduces resistance among post-Christians, non-Christians, and Christians who are struggling to maintain faith," Stanley added. Stanley's book, *Irresistible*, was released on Sept. 18 and was written in response to the rise in the number of Americans who've left Christianity to identify as atheist or "religiously unaffiliated."

"'The Bible says' doesn't carry the weight it once did and thanks to our digital world, folks know 'what else' the Bible says without even picking up a Bible. In spite of this, we preach, teach, write, and communicate as if nothing has changed. As if 'The Bible says it,' still settles it," noted the book's official description.

"According to Stanley, it's time to hit pause on much of what we're doing and consider the faith modeled by our first century brothers and sisters who had no official Bible, no status, and humanly speaking, little chance of survival."

Juncker: Make Euro the global trade currency

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker will argue the euro should become the global currency for trade instead of the U.S. dollar in his State of the Union speech Wednesday morning.

Addressing the European Parliament in Strasbourg, he will make a pitch for the EU to "punch above its weight, not below," according to an EU diplomat briefed on the speech. Juncker's message will be that with the Trump administration withdrawing the U.S. from the world, there is an opportunity for Europe to fill the gap. "There's no logic at all in paying energy imports in dollar not euro," an EU diplomat said.

Borrowing a phrase from French President Emmanuel Macron, Juncker's motto for the speech will be "a Europe that protects." Under that rubric, the Commission president will outline a strengthened structure and bolder mandate for the EU's Coast and Border Guard, as POLITICO previously reported. He's expected to propose the EU agency — which will soon have 10,000 operational staff — get its hands dirty by assisting EU countries to return asylum seekers whose applications for refuge are denied. (In practice, that will mainly cover returns of those who arrive by boat and are in "closed centers," which haven't yet been established.)

In a move that may be seen in some countries as an attempted power grab by Brussels, Juncker will propose giving the EU a "stronger mandate on returns," which will include the power to seek the travel documents from the home countries of those asylum seekers who are to be returned, and the power to complete the paperwork for return decisions for member countries. An EU diplomat briefing reporters on Juncker's speech said it is meant to "help break the deadlock" on migration in response to criticism that the EU doesn't secure its borders.

Juncker, who is delivering his final State of the Union speech, will also propose specific foreign policy areas in which the EU should switch to majority (rather than unanimity) votes, according to the diplomat. They will include sanctions, human rights and in launching civilian missions.

In response to the Cambridge Analytica scandal, Juncker will also propose rules for how political parties can use personal data. The measures will include "guidance on the application of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation," as well as a legislation amending the rules on European political party funding, introducing fines of up to 5 percent of the annual budget of a party if data protection rules are infringed.

According to diplomats, the Commission will adopt 18 initiatives that will accompany Juncker's speech. They will include measures to prevent the dissemination of terrorist content online, an Africa package that will seek to shift economic relations from doling out development aid to engaging in trade, anti money-laundering proposals, and a move to scrap the changing of clocks from summer time.

It's Google's World, We Just Live in it

Trump fights Google for the future.

Frontpagemag.com

Daniel Greenfield, a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the Freedom Center, is an investigative journalist and writer focusing on the radical left and Islamic terrorism

Google is throwing itself a hell of a 20th birthday party. And everyone is bringing the gifts.

While the dot com giant puts up celebratory doodles and shows off its original garage headquarters, Attorney General Sessions had already convened 14 state attorney generals to discuss censorship, privacy issues and antitrust issues involving, among other tech monopolies, the cutesy corporation.

Few meetings between Sessions and AGs well to the left, like California's Xavier Becerra, would have gone as well as this, but big tech monopolies were already controversial on the left, now they're also being unfriended by Republicans. There's a growing consensus that they're just too big and powerful.

Google's August search market share in America stood at 84%. That means it defines the internet.

Its secretive algorithms determine what people see when they search. It can unilaterally redefine an issue,

such as when it shifted the search results for “Jihad” away from counterterrorist sites to favor Islamist and pro-Islamist media sites. It shapes how political leaders, including President Trump, are seen, and manufactures an ongoing consensus by simply choosing one set of results over another.

(During the election, its search engine provided more positive results for Democrats than Republicans.)

And then there are the constant privacy scandals.

Even as Google is trying to celebrate its anniversary, it’s under fire for automatically signing Gmail users into its Chrome browser (which is a key link in its chain of monopolies meant to lock users into its search engine). After the outcry, Google, as usual, offered a partial retreat.

The scandal is fairly typical of Google which runs on privacy violations and monopolistic abuses. Before Google was rigging search results for political reasons, it was rigging them to favor its products. Search for “mail” and the first result won’t be the post office, it won’t even be mail.com which actually predated Google by a few years, it will be Google’s own Gmail. And that’s how it always works.

Google searches drive users to Google products. And Google products drive users to Google Search.

Its monopolistic vision of the future is of an Internet of Things, a smart home run on Google with eternally watchful smart speakers in every room of your house, processing your questions through Google, and sending every conversation in your house back along its servers to be analyzed by machine learning to better target you with ads on your smart fridge. And then it really will be Google’s world.

Or Amazon’s world.

America’s political and cultural elites already live in one world or the other. But despite the wide range of both companies, many Americans are unhappy with the power and control they wield over their lives.

And so the utopia in which Google is your home, your car, your clothes, your entertainment and your life, may never arrive. The company has more power, but also more enemies, than ever before.

Even as Google aspires to run the world, investing in a variety of moonshot businesses, from self-driving cars (Waymo) to delivering internet by balloon (Loon) through Alphabet, its mothership company, its core business, search, that delivers most of its revenue through ads, is stagnating. While Google dreams of answering your questions before you ask them using machine learning and voice search, it’s doing a terrible job of answering them when you do ask of them. Like all monopolies, its product is mediocre.

Google Search was retuned for mobile search by making every search trending. Search for “Supreme Court”, and Google will deluge you with Kavanaugh hysteria and assorted lefty media background pieces delegitimizing a “Republican” Supreme Court from FDR’s day to modern times.

This isn’t just a monopolistic abuse of power for purely partisan purposes; it’s also a poor product.

Trending stories are friendlier to mobile users who have less time and patience for extended queries. It’s also simpler to deliver inaccurate results that fit the needs of the lowest common denominator user, who types in Supreme Court to see stories about Kavanaugh, than to deliver actual accurate results.

And Google is rigging search results to browbeat sites into orienting entirely toward mobile. Just as it will, before too long, dumb down search even further, to aid its voice search ambitions.

Turning search into a lowest common denominator exercise isn’t about serving users, but about securing

Google's hold on the future. And, in ways both great and petty (like forcibly logging users into its browser), it isn't shy about herding its user products like sheep into its digital products.

Naked political bias was meant to cover Google's silicon fundament from its greatest political threat. Republican administrations have offered little threat to the big tech companies. It was largely the left that was actively agitating for breaking them up or limiting their power. And Google focused on the left.

(In last year's major Google scandal, former Google exec chairman Eric Schmidt allegedly convinced the New America Foundation, a lefty think tank, to purge Open Markets for its criticism of Google.)

And then President Trump showed up.

The famous video of Google's elites mourning Trump's victory isn't just political bias. As the firing of James Damore showed us, lefty political intolerance is baked into Google's political culture. And anyone at Google who wanted Trump to win has to keep quiet and leak videos. But President Hillary Clinton would have also been really good for Google's business interests.

Eric Schmidt, who once responded to Google privacy concerns by sneering, "If you have something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the first place", was a close Hillary ally. His "Notes for a 2016 Democratic Campaign" sent to Hillary's people proposed a \$1.5 billion operation that would create "a single record for a voter that aggregates all that is known about them."

Schmidt was applying the Google ethos to the Hillary Clinton campaign.

The unspoken back end of the pitch is that privacy violations can be harnessed for the good of powerful political interests. (The manufactured scandal over Cambridge Analytica's Facebook scraping never touched the truly epic dot com privacy violators on the left.) Google's vision of the end of privacy could be very good for President Hillary Clinton and the Democrats. So why regulate it?

That's what Google elites were really mourning after Election Day.

They weren't just crying because their lefty political movement lost, but because the vision of a Clinton-Google alliance running the country was lost.

President Trump has warned Google that it can't expect to abuse its powers and avoid scrutiny. And the leading figures on the Democrat side are less promising for Google than Eric Schmidt's pal.

Google was ranked as the single biggest employer of Bernie Sanders donors, and its search results were accused of favoring Sanders. As the Washington Post noted, "nine of his top 10 results were rated "very pro" in the analysis". Google's current top 10 for Trump, by contrast, includes a bonkers New York Mag conspiracy screed, "What If Trump Has Been a Russian Asset Since 1987?" (In 1988, Bernie Sanders was honeymooning in the USSR, but Google doesn't think that's worth including in Bernie's top 10.)

And while Bernie Sanders has been relentlessly attacking Amazon, a major Google rival, he has been fairly silent about Google. Meanwhile the Washington Post, owned by Amazon's boss, has been critical of Bernie. But that doesn't make him a reliable or ideal ally in Google's war for the future.

Meanwhile Google faces the threat of Trump. A conventional non-populist Republican would have posed little threat to Google's business interests. Elites love Google because of its shiny technocracy. Schmidt's pitch to Hillary's people is seductive to many in the GOP, but alienating to Trump and alien to his insurgent campaign which relied on populist enthusiasm rather than Big Brother level manipulation.

And Trump's impact on the GOP has shifted it away from the unthinking worship of multinationals.

Google's vision of the future is multinational, multilateral, multicultural and multi-everything. It's a borderless world in which we're no longer defined by nations, but by platforms. Every individual is a terabyte profile swimming among the vast server farm zettabytes in Finland, Singapore, the Dalles in Oregon and Quilicura, Chile, to be run on Google products designed by hipsters the Bay Area and manufactured by slave labor in China.

That was Hillary's vision. That's not Trump's vision.

Trump's economic nationalism is antithetical to everything that Google and the big dot coms stand for. Their borderless world requires the dismantling of nations into united markets governed by global treaties. There's no room for national interest if Google or Amazon are to run the world.

America isn't just at war with a nebulous left, but with a leftist vision embraced by the big tech companies that have defined how we talk to each other, what we read and what we know.

Google isn't just leftist by accident. It's leftist by design. Its vision is globalist, its scope is endless and the only thing standing in its way, besides its rivals, is the nation-state. America.

The confrontation between Google and Trump encapsulates the clash between the national and the multi-national, workers in red states and elites in blue cities, tradition and technocracy, the individual and the machine. The struggle will decide whether the future belongs to the individual or to Google.