

Today's News in Light of the Bible

PROPHETIC Newsletter

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My dear friends,

The Bible predicts a global religious system, economy, and government.

As we can see from the article on climate change, the global web is tightening around us every day. However, in Psalms, we are reminded that *“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”* Psalm 24:1

The real tragedy in all this talk of global unity is the absence of any emphasis on the spiritual roots of democracy and freedom.

Today we have a window of opportunity and we need to take advantage of it. It is time for us to take seriously the responsibility of evangelizing the world. May we rise to the occasion, recognizing the struggle for world dominion is between the forces of Christ and the forces of Satan.

Until He returns,

Russia, China Use Ukraine to Pressure Biden’s Foreign Policy



As Russian tanks amassed along the frozen marshes of the Belarus border with Ukraine on January 25, President Joe Biden put 8,500 U.S. troops on high alert for possible deployment. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) moved additional fighter jets and naval ships toward Eastern Europe. “I have made it clear early on to President Putin that if he were to move into Ukraine, that there’d be severe consequences,” Biden said.

However, the opposite has happened: Putin’s gamesmanship has exacted damaging consequences on the U.S. and the Biden Administration. Putin wants to assert Russia’s relevance on the world stage, embarrass Biden, and test the unity of NATO countries. He’s already well

See **BIDEN’S FAILING FOREIGN POLICY** on page 4

Will Climate Change Kill National Sovereignty and Increase Globalism?

As we collectively hurtle into the era of climate change, international relations as we've known them for almost four centuries will change beyond recognition. This shift is probably inevitable, but it will also cause new conflicts. Since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, diplomats — in peacetime and war alike — have, for the most part, subscribed to the principle of national sovereignty. The Charter of the United Nations says foreign countries have no right “to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.”

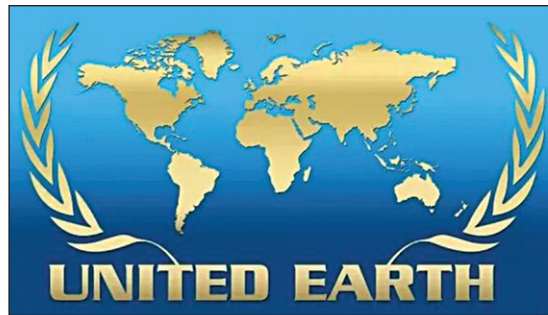
The concept was born, along with the entire system of modern states, in the physical and psychological rubble of the Thirty Years War. Starting in 1618, European powers intervened in one another's territories at will. Round after round of war left about one in three dead. It was in that continental graveyard that statesmen stipulated it was best if every state henceforth minded its own business.

Nobody at the Peace of Westphalia was deluded enough to think this realist notion would end war. After all, by acknowledging sovereignty, the system accepted that countries pursue their national interests, which tend to clash. But at least the new consensus offered the chance of preventing additional indiscriminate bloodletting. Even then, the principle of sovereignty was never absolute or uncontroversial. For a long time, the best idealist counterargument was humanitarian — countries have not just the right but the duty to intervene in other states if, say, those are committing atrocities such as genocide.

Now, however, there's an even more

powerful push against sovereignty, put forth by thinkers such as Stewart Patrick at the Council on Foreign Relations. It's that in a world where all countries collectively face the emergency of global warming, sovereignty is simply no longer a tenable concept.

An early demonstration of this shift in international relations was the dust-up in 2019 between Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and French President Emmanuel Macron. Bolsonaro was allowing fires to burn wide swathes of the Amazon rainforest. Speaking for many, Macron accused Bolsonaro of abetting “ecocide.” Sounds like



the new genocide, doesn't it? Bolsonaro shot back that Macron was a neocolonialist, a European power again trying to force his ideas on another sovereign nation.

The underlying issue is sovereignty: Is a rainforest located in Brazil the business of Brazil or of the world? Would, in a hypothetical future scenario, an alliance led by France be within its rights to declare war on Brazil to prevent ecocide? This opens a new line of thinking about world affairs. Policymakers are already steeped in analyses of the new types of conflict that global warming will cause within and between countries. Those include wars over access to freshwater, the disappearance of arable land or mass migrations.

Will some powers or alliances contemplate military interventions in other states to end what they will define as ecocide? Others may even go to war if they believe rival countries are taking unilateral measures against climate

See **CLIMATE CHANGE** on page 3

Diplomacy May Be Too Late to Stop Iran from Going Nuclear

As negotiations concerning Iran's nuclear program enter the final stages, U.S. officials are attempting to proactively set the narrative as it emerged that several of the U.S. negotiating team had stepped down. White House Middle East coordinator Brett McGurk stated the parties were "in the ballpark of a possible deal" on returning to the 2015 nuclear agreement. However, he said he did not want to place odds on it and that the U.S. was prepared for talks to collapse without a deal.

McGurk told an event hosted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace that negotiations were "close to a culmination point." This tracks with an assessment that Iran is approaching a point of no return that will effectively render the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action irrelevant. The State Department is publicly stressing the urgency of taking advantage of the current window of opportunity. Critics of the negotiations argue Iran is simply using this time to string along their enemies while they continue advancing their progress.

McGurk's remarks came a day after the U.S. and Israel held their regular strategic dialogue on Iran, led by National Security Advisor



Jake Sullivan and his Israeli counterpart, Eyal Hulata. The White House issued a joint statement, noting that "while the United States remains committed to diplomacy as the best means for preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, the United States is preparing alternative options, in coordination with its partners, should diplomacy fail."

McGurk and Sullivan's messaging follows a *Wall Street Journal* report that the U.S. deputy special envoy on the Iran team, Richard Nephew, stepped down, along with two other negotiators, due to frustration over lack of toughness with

See **IRAN GOING NUCLEAR** on page 6

CLIMATE CHANGE from page 2

change that threaten their own interests.

This has caused many to claim national sovereignty should be forfeited and the need for an ecological equivalent to what the World Trade Organization is to commerce: A new international body that makes the conundrum explicit and attempts to maintain order. This

sounds very much like a global government that can force individual nations to do whatever it deems "best for the globe". Could this push lead to a stronger emphasis on globalism and a one-world government? It certainly looks like it could be a possibility and something strongly pushed by progressives in the future. — PNL

PRAY: God has called us to be good stewards of the land. Pray for those seeking to establish a one-world government that they would not achieve their goals.

on his way to achieving those ends. Putin has dragged Biden into responding to a frustrating series of escalations, complicating the U.S. response to Russia's actions, distracting from other diplomatic priorities, and upping the political stakes for Biden. His approval ratings sagged after a turbulent withdrawal from Afghanistan last summer led the Taliban to take control of the country. Ukraine is Biden's second major foreign policy test as President.

Putin's gamble is paying off—at least in the short term. “He's back in the center of attention,” says Charles Kupchan, a professor of international affairs at Georgetown University and former director of European affairs on President Bill Clinton's National Security Council. “Putin craves being at the table and profoundly laments the Soviet Union's dismantlement and Russia's fall from grace.”

Putin now has the world's attention, forcing the U.S. and NATO to hand formal written responses to Russia's list of demands that Western forces withdraw from Eastern Europe and disallow any other former Soviet-bloc nations, like Ukraine, from joining the alliance. Secretary of State Antony Blinken cautioned NATO would not close its “open-door” policy to new members but said there was room for negotiation in other areas. “Whether they choose the path of diplomacy and dialogue, whether they decide to renew aggression against Ukraine,” he said, “we're prepared either way.”

The standoff is proving a major challenge for Biden. So far Putin has played his hand to his advantage. Putin has “shown that he is still very relevant in geopolitical terms,” says Matt Pottinger, who was President Donald Trump's deputy national security advisor. “He's amassed leverage to extract concessions

that Russians have wanted since soon after the close of the Cold War 30 years ago.”

Biden's aides spent days cleaning up his confusing responses during a January 19 White House press conference. He said if Putin launches a “minor incursion” the U.S. and allies will “end up having a fight about what to do and not do.” The next day, Biden tried to clarify that “any assembled Russian units” moving across the Ukrainian border would be considered “an invasion” and there would be a “severe and coordinated economic response.”

Putin's show of force comes at a time when Biden's foreign policy apparatus wants to focus on countering China's growing influence in the Pacific. While much of the world's attention was on the crisis in Ukraine, China flew a large formation of warplanes toward Taiwan. “The White House, they want to focus on China, because they correctly see that as the big strategic challenge for the next three or four decades, and they were sort of hoping that Russia would remain quiet. Well, Russia didn't accommodate,” says Steven Pifer, U.S. ambassador to Ukraine from 1998 to 2000.

Ryan Crocker, a retired diplomat who served as ambassador in Lebanon, Kuwait, Syria, Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan over his 37-year career, believes Biden's mishandling of the withdrawal from Afghanistan caught the attention Russia and China. Following his decision to abruptly pull out of America's longest war, Biden failed to closely consult and coordinate with Western partners, essentially leaving them to scamper for the exits, Crocker said. “The whole world saw what happened,” Crocker says. “He's got to show that he can do a whole lot better on another major international issue than he did on Afghanistan.”—PNL

PRAY: Pray for wisdom for President Biden and his foreign policy advisors and for opportunities to deescalate rising tensions.

Pandemic Opened Door for Greater Persecution Around the Globe

A new survey is slated to reveal how adverse treatment of certain religious groups in several countries significantly worsened during the coronavirus pandemic. The SMART survey, conducted as part of the Religious Freedom Institute's Freedom of Religious Institutions in Society (FORIS) Project, was designed to fulfill an "unmet need for policy-relevant data to identify, understand and address religious freedom restrictions on religious communities across the globe."

Rebecca Shah, a senior fellow at the Archbridge Institute and principal investigator for the Religion and Economic Empowerment Project (REEP), elaborated on the results. "The SMART survey stands for Simple, Meaningful, Accessible, Relevant and Timely," she said. While the survey initially received funding to question experts on the ground about the state of religious freedom in Malaysia, Pakistan, Indonesia and Iraq, the survey was later expanded to other countries, about 10 countries, including India, Egypt, Mexico, Turkey and Greece.

According to Shah, "policymakers ... needed reliable reports that drew on the deep expertise of individuals who could analyze religious freedom violations on the ground in key global locations and provide policymakers with real-time and reliable data on strategic countries." While "a lot of reports on religious freedom restrictions, both individuals and religious institutions," existed prior to the SMART survey, Shah stressed the need for "information that comes from local experts

on the ground in their own countries, rather than, say, somebody's desk in Washington, D.C., or Geneva." She contended that the findings of such a survey were "more likely to be owned by actors in the country and in the region." The "local experts in these different countries" who participated "were asked to fill out the survey from the perspective of a



minority religious community or a majority religious community" based on expertise or membership in a particular religion.

"We started the survey before the pandemic, but as soon as the pandemic hit, we were able to retool the questionnaire to some extent and resubmit the questions to the experts and ask them to fill out COVID-related questions. And so, a lot of the data we got was over the COVID-19 period ... at the height of the Delta variant and others, where we were able to examine and explore the impact of restrictions on religious communities as the pandemic was ongoing," Shah said.

The survey found "an increase in deliberate and direct attacks on houses of worship ... and religious and charitable and other religious institutions across the globe." Specifically, "In Nigeria ... 85.7% of respondents writing about minority Christian communities in northern parts of Nigeria said they were aware of direct attacks of houses of worship in their country. In Iraq, 30% of respondents reporting about minority communities, which included Yazidis and Christians, said they were aware of attacks on houses of worship

See **RISE IN PERSECUTION** on page 4

IRAN GOING NUCLEAR from page 3

Tehran and a disagreement about when to walk away from negotiations. Nephew, largely credited with crafting the economic sanctions that brought Iran to the negotiating table prior to the 2015 deal, is currently still with the State Department despite not participating in any of the negotiations since December.

The nuclear talks between the U.S. and Iran restarted last spring, some three years after President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the JCPOA. The new indirect talks, conducted via European mediators, were put on hold by Iran following the election of hard-liner Ebrahim Raisi as the country's new president last June. Negotiations finally resumed at the end of November after a months-long hiatus. McGurk noted the U.S. could have left negotiations when Iran presented a new set of demands in that first round of renewed talks, but instead opted to present a united front alongside its negotiating partners — including

France, Germany, Italy and Russia — against such proposals.

State Department spokesperson Ned Price was asked about McGurk's "ballpark" comment at a recent departmental press briefing. "I don't want to characterize precisely where we are beyond what you've heard us say during the course of this round, and that is to say that there has been some progress achieved," he told the media. "But if we are to get there, that progress needs to outpace the speed with which Tehran's nuclear program has moved forward, has advanced," he added. "So we need to see progress be more than modest. We need to see it be more than incremental. We need to see that progress continue and quicken if we are going to get there in time to effect a mutual return to compliance with the JCPOA."

It sounds more and more like diplomacy will not be the solution to stopping Iran from becoming a nuclear power. — *PNL*

PRAY: Pray that something will happen that will stop Iran from gaining nuclear capabilities.

RISE IN PERSECUTION from page 5

in their countries. Again, when asked who, in their view, were the perpetrators of these attacks, our data revealed that political actors, which might include local government officials, were responsible for 60% of high or very high levels of restrictions on religious institutions, which include houses of worship ... religious and charitable institutions," she added.

Respondents were asked if they knew of "any acts of discrimination perpetrated against individuals or communities on account of their religion or belief that may have been prompted

by the current COVID-19 pandemic." The results revealed "one out of three respondents from India said they were aware of such types of religiously motivated discrimination" during COVID. Additionally, "one out of five respondents in Indonesia said the same and 10% of Nigerian respondents also said they were aware of this type of ... discrimination." Thus, the global pandemic has allowed for nations to persecute believers to an even greater extent than before and is making persecution more accepting in many countries. — *PNL*

PRAY: Pray for the persecuted church around the globe that is dealing with increasing amounts of persecution through the global pandemic.