

1st Anniversary Flashback; Cardinal Burke Still Causing Confusion

[\(New Era World News](#) – Follow Up Tomorrow)

This article was written earlier in the year but serves as a flashback on this First Anniversary of the attempt to force Pope Francis to answer to his detractors. Newera is looking forward to releasing a provocative, demonstrative and current update on the issue tomorrow.

CARDINAL BURKE SEEMS TO HAVE TROUBLE letting go of an issue that has already been settled. Earlier this year [Cardinal Mueller](#), Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) stated that “There’s no problem with doctrine in ‘*Amoris Laetitia*’ (AL). The Cardinal also stated that:

“The document is “very clear” on doctrine, and that making the discussion public is harmful to the Church.”

Nonetheless, on the eve of March 24, 2017 Cardinal Raymond Burke, after several previous public cannonades, was still at it. If the pope is not good enough for him why should the highest doctrinal authority in the Church, beside the pope himself, mean anything to him either? Thus, on that Friday evening, Cardinal Burke presented a talk at [Saint Raymond of Peñafort](#) parish in Springfield, Virginia, during which he stated that “correction” by the Four Cardinals would be forthcoming if Pope Francis fails respond to the *dubia* presented to him by what might *in jest* be a dubious group of cardinals.

The pastor of the parish, Fr. John De Celles, asked about the

dubia:

Fr. De Celles: *There are a lot of rumors circulating about the dubia, which you and four other esteemed cardinals sent to the Holy Father about divorce, marriage, and communion and the like. Do you know if there will be a response to the dubia from our Holy Father or from the CDF?*

Cardinal Burke: *I sincerely hope that there will be because these are fundamental questions that are honestly raised by the text of the apostolic...the post-synodal apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia. And until these questions are answered, there continues to spread a very harmful confusion in the Church and one of the fundamental questions is in regards to the truth that there are some kinds that are always and everywhere wrong – what we call intrinsically evil acts – and so, we cardinals are, will continue to insist that we hear a response to these honest questions.”*

Fr. De Celles: *If there is no response, will, what will your response be, the Four Cardinals?*

Cardinal Burke: *Then we simply will have to correct the situation, again, in a respectful way, that simply can say that, to draw the response to the questions from the constant teachings of the Church and to make that known for the good of souls.*

“In summary, [the five dubia suggest that “Amoris Laetitia” may](#)

have altered traditional Catholic teaching on the following matters:"

- the indissolubility of the sacramental marriage bond;
- the existence of absolute moral norms prohibiting intrinsically evil acts;
- that one can find oneself in an objective situation of grave habitual sin by living in contradiction to a commandment of God's law;
- that circumstances or intentions can never transform an intrinsically evil act into a subjectively good one or into a defensible choice;
- that there can be no "creative" role for conscience to authorize legitimate exceptions to absolute moral norms.

According to the [Jesuit Review](#),

*"The dubia are not really expressions of doubt or questions but rather **assertions that "Amoris Laetitia" appears to have abandoned or altered key teachings of Catholic tradition, especially as they have been expressed most recently by St. John Paul II in his encyclical letter "Veritatis Splendor" (1993).***

This does appear to be the case. The key word is "appears". After reading the document, we begin to wonder if the Cardinal has ever read the document; certain that he has, Newera analysts are left awestruck, did we read the same document? We are left awestruck because after reading the document, nothing "appeared" contrary to the teachings of Catholic tradition. In fact, **Pope Francis strains to make it clear in numerous places throughout the document and esp. in the so-called "troublesome" Chapter Eight that nothing stated in AL about the discernment process that is integral to pastoral theology should be interpreted in such a way that contradicts the long held teaching of the Church on marriage nor may it be interpreted in such a way that prescinds from the Gospel (para**

297, 300, 307, 308, 311). Did the Cardinals miss these statements?

To elucidate the point about Francis' clarity, a chronological list of clarifying statements contained in the original document (Chapter Eight) is provided. To begin, according to the AL,

*"The Synod Fathers stated that, although the Church realizes that **any breach of the marriage bond "is against the will of God"** she is also "conscious of the frailty of many of her children" (para 291).*

Pope Francis begins the so-called difficult chapter by reaffirming the perennial truths of the faith pertaining to the marriage bond and hints at the pastoral dimension that must be taken into account **while upholding the perennial truths, because, according to the pope "any breach of the marriage bond "is against the will of God."** Moreover, the Church

"... constantly holds up the call to perfection and asks for a fuller response to God, "the Church must accompany with attention and care the weakest of her children to enlighten those who have lost their way or who are in the midst of a storm" (para 291).

Again, he clearly states that the Church in addition to protecting the marriage bond from any breach, is also leading all of her children to "*perfection*". Since all men and women are at a different place along the path that leads to God, the Church must meet them where they are at. As witnessed by St. Paul, she must "become all things to all men with the view of winning them to Christ" ([1 Cor 9:22](#)). If the Church and her ministers fail to do this, they will *not* bring anyone to Christ, which is their evangelical mission. She must be especially vigilant about those who have "lost their way";

Like her beloved spouse, Jesus Christ, His bride must leave the secure to seek out the lost but not in anyway that negates the truth about marriage as already clearly stated at the outset of the chapter.

“What man of you that hath an hundred sheep: and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders, rejoicing: And coming home, call together his friends and neighbours, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost? I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance” ([Luke 15:4-7](#)).

Perhaps this pastoral approach taught by the Lord Himself, is too difficult for some who would rather wear medals and debate theological issues while drinking wine and smoking cigars or for another group, the so-called, “self righteous”. While debating theology and enjoying a good cigar are wholesome activities, they are deficient if *not* followed by the difficult task of pastoral work, of seeking out, reassuring, and accompanying the lost while gently guiding them *after* touching their hearts with mercy and compassion rather than cold correction and instant rebuke, which, *more often than not*, turns them away. NO! This is not the way of Jesus Christ, nor is it the way of Pope Francis; anyone who thinks otherwise will have difficulty understanding *Amoris Laetitia*.

Francis continues:

“The Fathers also considered the specific situation of a merely civil marriage or, with due distinction, even simple cohabitation, noting that “when such unions attain a particular stability, legally recognized, are characterized by deep affection and responsibility for their offspring, and

*demonstrate an ability to overcome trials, they can provide occasions for **pastoral care** with a view to the **eventual celebration of the sacrament of marriage**" (para 293).*

Notice that Francis indicates that when civilly married people or even those in "simple cohabitation" have a relationship that is "stable" and are characterized by "deep affection" and "responsibility for their offspring" they can provide an "occasion for pastoral care", not for the sacraments *but* for pastoral care (that might lead to the sacraments). In other words, divorced-remarried couples who are acting maturely and give signs that they might want to mature in the faith should be approached; they should be approached however, not to introduce them to the Sacraments, but with a view of giving them pastoral care that might lead to "*eventual celebration of marriage*". In other words, these people are to be met and encountered, **not to condone their sin, but to bring them to a deeper relationship with Christ and eventually to Christian marriage**. This seems very clear, and it sets the tone for the remainder of the so-called difficult chapter.

To provide further clarity Francis remarks:

"In this pastoral discernment, there is a need "to identify elements that can foster evangelization and human and spiritual growth".

In other words, the pastor is *not* to make excuses and look past sins or worse, to condone them; rather, he is to identify elements that can foster evangelization; that is look for positive behaviors that he can build upon while gently correcting them and leading them to deeper communion with Christ and with each other. Clearly, if they need "spiritual growth," they must be doing something wrong!

It is the pope's desire to lead such people from a sinful to a sanctified relationship:

"We know that there is "a continual increase in the number of those who, after having lived together for a long period, request the celebration of marriage in Church."

A pastor will meet a broad variety of cases; however, according to Pope Francis,

*"Whatever the case, "all these situations require a constructive response seeking to **transform them into opportunities that can lead to the full reality of marriage and family in conformity with the Gospel.**"*

Did Cardinal Burke miss this? Whatever the case, these relationships "require" "transformation." They are "opportunities" that can lead to marriage in "CONFORMITY WITH THE GOSPEL". This is the second time the pope has mentioned the need to conform to the Gospel. He is concerned that the Church reinstate sinners in some way possible, in some way that will lead to fuller participation and *eventual* reception of the sacraments. He does *not* want to cast sinners away like the New England Puritans did, but to embrace them and win them over as Christ did. He wants to do this **not be excusing their sins but by acknowledging their sins and also acknowledging anything good in their relationship and building upon it.**

He makes this point about excusing sin clear (para 297):

*"Naturally, **if someone flaunts an objective sin as if it were part of the Christian ideal (radical homosexual who argues God made him this way), or wants to impose something other than what the Church teaches (for example civil-remarriage), he or she can in no way presume to teach or preach to others; this is a case of something which separates from the community"** (cf. Mt 18:17).*

Again, clearly, anyone who teaches that objective sins are

licit cannot be a teacher or a preacher; **this is a case of “something which separates from the community”**. Can it get any clearer than this? Although good pastors will look for ways to accompany their parishioners, esp. sinful ones always with an eye to something to build upon as mentioned above, *no one can excuse objective sin and the flaunting of it*. **This is NOT acceptable and Francis is straightforward about the matter.**

He then points out at the end of para 297 that **people who have contracted civil marriage**, who are divorced and remarried or simply living together **are living wrongly**, are NOT living up to God’s expectations. Therefore he says that they need help to “*understand the divine pedagogy of grace*” and the need “*assistance so that they can reach the fullness of God’s plan for them*” because obviously **their living arrangement is not up to God’s plan!**

In para 298 he reiterates:

“It must remain clear that this is not the ideal which the Gospel proposes for marriage and the family.”

Nonetheless,

“Such persons need to feel not as excommunicated members of the Church, but instead as living members, able to live and grow in the Church and experience her as a mother who welcomes them always, who takes care of them with affection and encourages them along the path of life and the Gospel.”

Obviously, if they need to be encouraged along the path of the Gospel, they are failing; nonetheless, they should be incorporated into the community, somehow, and encouraged to grow like the rest of the sinners who occupy the pews.

Pope Francis does NOT indicate that priests should accept divorced and remarried people into the community and then

forget their sinful state.

“Priests have the duty to “accompany [the divorced and remarried] in helping them to understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church and the guidelines of the bishop” (para 300).

These couple must be “accompanied” so that they can be “helped”, helped to understand why **their relationship precludes them for receiving Holy Communion “according to the teaching of the Church.”** The pope does *not* say they may be excused by some aberrant pastoral excuse, but he does say they must be developed according to the TEACHING of the CHURCH. For those who want to argue that the additional clause and “guidelines of the bishops” permits admission to Holy Communion; it is simply responded that those guidelines must also be consistent with the teaching of the Church as [Cardinal Muller, Prefect of the CDF is now making clear](#). Aberrant liberal bishops will have to be corrected if their guidelines run contrary to the teaching of the Church, that is the job of the CDF.

For Cardinal Burke to act as if confusion is something new, because some bishops are permitting civilly remarried people *etc.* to receive Holy Communion, is surprising. Aberrant bishops have caused confusion for 2,000 years. THIS IS NOTHING NEW. Catholics have seen this type of abuse even with an Ecumenical Council, why should supposed confusion of a Post-Synodal Exhortation cause any surprise? In fact, confusion is being exacerbated by prelates like Cardinal Burke who keep insisting there is massive confusion where there would be little to none if they would “zip it.” Liberal aberrant bishops will open the door to sin no matter what they are told; a key ingredient to their success is supposed “confusion”.

You are reading a review of Chapter Eight. Do you honestly

see any confusion so far? Cardinal Burke is helping manufacture confusion, perhaps due to a failure to synthesize dogmatic and pastoral theology. This happens to many people, esp. learned ones who spend too much time in their heads and have failed to integrate their minds with their hearts, wisdom with mercy and compassion. If the eminent cardinal had closed ranks behind the pope and interpreted the document as a pastoral exhortation that holds the objective truth about marriage in tact, as it does, aberrant bishops would have less room to operate; Cardinal Burke is opening the doors wide to deviance by continually advancing the theme of confusion.

After saying that divorced and remarried couples should be helped to understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church, the pope further drives home the divorced-remarried couple's error by calling them to an "examination of conscience" followed by "*repentance*" (para 300). **Why a call to penance if not a presumption that they are sinning?** Again, crystal clear!

Clearly, such people cannot be admitted to Holy Communion because according to (para 300), they need to form a "*correct judgement*" of their situation. Until they do so and repent, they are, according to the pope, "*hindered*" from "*the possibility of fuller participation in the life of the Church*". While guiding an aberrant couple to discern the state of their relationship before God, **no priest is licitly permitted to admit them to the sacraments.** To make the point abundantly clear, Pope Francis states (para 300):

"This discernment can NEVER PRESCIND FROM THE GOSPEL DEMANDS OF TRUTH and CHARITY AS PROPOSED BY THE CHURCH."

Did Cardinal Burke just happen to miss this too, perhaps one of the more powerful statements in AL?

Francis' loyalty to the Magisterium, to the Gospels and Tradition become even clearer as he limits the parameters

involved to even qualify a couple as candidates for the whole the process of discernment:

*“For this discernment to happen, **the following conditions must necessarily be present**: humility, discretion and love for the Church and her teaching, in a sincere search for God’s will and a desire to make a more perfect response to it” (para 300).*

In other words, the very possibility of beginning dialogue between pastor and parishioner, dialogue that is intended to place persons on the path of sanctification that *might* lead to the sacraments *if* they do things correctly; the very possibility of this dialogue is contingent upon persons being, “humble”, having “love for the Church” and “her teaching”; it is further contingent upon the couple’s having a “sincere search for God’s will” and a willingness to respond “more perfectly” to it. If these qualifying marks are missing, discernment leading to the sacraments cannot even begin; at least this is what the pope states; do you read something else? What did Cardinal Burke read?

Pope Francis drives this requirement home by stating that these attitudes are “*essential*” (para 300). They are essential to “avoid misunderstanding” and the “grave danger” that might lead a priest to think that he can grant “exceptions” (para 300). Thus, any priest thinking that pastoral theology dispenses him from the constant teaching of the Church in these matters is not only “misunderstanding” what the pope is teaching and what the Church teaches, he is also involving himself and his parishioners in “grave danger”.

Some how Cardinal Burke seems to think that Pope Francis is excusing sin due to ignorance or any number of particular and contingent circumstances. This is patently false. ***Nowhere does Pope Francis say ignorance outright excuses***; what he does say is that ***ignorance “mitigates”***. In fact, this is the title

of the next section of the Exhortation:

“Mitigating Factors in Pastoral Discernment”

Pope Francis begins this section by making the simple moral point, simple for anyone educated in moral theology, that even sinners can experience grace, at least *prevenient grace* that leads them to the sacraments. He even states that “More is involved than mere ignorance” (para 301).

When reading this section, the reader must *not* do as some Protestant Divines do, that is cherry-pick or fail to read the document as a systematic whole, fail to remember everything that was clearly stated previously. At this point, the document moves from *dogmatic* or *speculative theology* into the the more difficult realm of *moral casuistry* or *practical-pastoral theology*, the point where the rubber meets the road so to speak, the point where theory must be applied to practice. Thus, **at this point it necessarily becomes more obtuse**. The obtuseness of the exercise should be expected by anyone with a background in either moral theology or moral philosophy, even a pagan like Aristotle understood the difference; he also taught that the second part, that is the practical part, is the more difficult of the two – this is the simple reason why the document grows more difficult at this point; however, it must not be forgotten that **Francis has already stated at least twice, that a valid interpretation of AL cannot prescind from the Gospel or teaching of the Church**.

Again, throughout this section, the pope speaks about **mitigating circumstances**; he does *not* excuse objective sin, but stresses subjective mitigating circumstances due to the nature of a faulty or malformed conscience, a malformed conscience that is supposed to be corrected in the process of “accompaniment” by the pastor explained in the previous section. As regards mitigating circumstances due to subjective

states, we find Jesus, Himself, clearly teaching this in the Gospels:

“And that servant who knew the will of his lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes” ([Luke 12:47-48](#)).

Jesus position is clearly that of His Vicar. Persons who are invincibly ignorant of the truth, or for any other valid reason fail to comprehend it, reasons such as socialization, psychological immaturity, psychological manipulation by association etc, such persons who commit sins despite their ignorance etc are still guilty of an objective wrong; however, the subjective moral culpability is lessened; how much it is lessened depends on the circumstances which only God alone is master of, a fact that led Francis to once say, “who am I to judge?” Only God and perhaps the person himself can judge such things; it is the job of the pastor to enter into a relationship to better grasp the subjective state of his parishioners.

Without this approach, without such a relationship, the whole process of discernment breaks down and all that is left is a black and white judgement based upon objective facts of dogmatic theology; this is what it means to be dogmatic, or closed minded, closed to deeper truths about the *acting person*, deeper truths that affect their relationship to their sin and his or her moral culpability. These are facts, necessary facts for the successful process of pastoring souls entrusted to a priest’s care. Cardinal Burke seems oblivious to such facts; he prefers to make everything black and white. In this, he is acting more like a judgemental pharisee than a “good shepherd serving his people in the image of Jesus Christ who gave his life for his sheep, a good shepeherd who knows them well enough to call them each by name ([John 10:3](#)).

Again, to make his point clear, Francis states that

“In order to avoid all misunderstanding, I would point out that in no way must the Church desist from proposing the full ideal of marriage.”

“A lukewarm attitude, any kind of relativism, or an undue reticence in proposing that ideal, would be a lack of fidelity to the Gospel and also of love on the part of the Church for young people themselves. To show understanding in the face of exceptional situations never implies dimming the light of the fuller ideal, or proposing less than what Jesus offers to the human being” (para 307).

It is hard to see how Cardinal Burke missed this along with the score of other similar clear pronouncements throughout the Chapter made by Pope Francis. The pope emphatically stresses the point that he wants to “avoid all misunderstanding”. To do so he *again* states that what he is teaching in no way desists from the “full idea of marriage.” Moreover, he anathematizes “relativism” and “undue reticence” to the “full ideal of marriage.” Again he states, that contingent circumstance, that pastoral understanding, compassion etc, “**never imply dimming the light to the fuller ideal (to the fullness of truth) or proposing less**” than Jesus taught.

The Church, he says is

*“...a Mother who, while clearly expressing her **objective teaching**, “always does what good she can, even if in the process, her shoes get soiled by the mud of the street” (that is in the pasture where her ministers must encounter the dirt of sinners lives) (para308).*

Again, he states, again and again, that the Church must hold to her “**objective teaching**”

Pope Francis closes the so-called difficult chapter by restating one more time the commitment to objective truth; however, he teaches that there is one thing greater than the truth, that is love, the summit of Christ's teaching and of His life; it was love that sent Him to the cross and love that redeemed the world ("[Greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends](#)"). No one sent Jesus to the cross; He freely chose the path of salvific suffering, and He chose out of love for sinful humanity. This is the central point Francis wants to make and indeed does make. It is difficult to comprehend how Prelates like Cardinal Burke miss it?

*"Although it is quite true that concern must be shown for the integrity of the Church's moral teaching, special care should **always be shown to emphasize and encourage the highest and most central values of the Gospel**, particularly the primacy of charity as a response to the completely gratuitous offer of God's love.*

*" It is true, for example, that **mercy does not exclude justice and truth**, but first and foremost we have to say that **mercy is the fullness of justice and the most radiant manifestation of God's truth.**"*

In this Francis is seconded by the Sacred Scriptures:

'If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

*And now there remain faith (from which wisdom grows), hope, and charity, these three: but **the greatest of these is charity***” ([1 Cor. 13:1-13](#)).

Equally impressive is the story of Jesus’ dialogue with the rich young man ([Matt 19:16-22](#)). Jesus does *not* simply announce the truth and leave the young man to accept it or reject it. Rather, Jesus engages in a process to bring the young man forward. “Jesus, as a good shepherd, personally leads the young man step by step to the truth

Francis, like Jesus, insists upon two unique but integral aspects of evangelization: First is the proclamation of truth and then the gradual formation of people to internalize and live it. Thus, when the *Pharisees* (dogmatic theologians – men without mercy- [Matt 9:13](#)) questioned Jesus about divorce ([Matt 19:3-9](#)), He communicated the objective facts; He proclaimed the truth: Marriage is indissoluble and exclusive. However, when he interacted with the *Samaritan woman*, He placed less emphasis on the truth and *more* on her personal life journey, a journey that involved her with six men. After engaging her, He told her,

“Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered, and said: I have no husband. Jesus said to her: Thou hast said well, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands: and he whom thou now hast, is not thy husband. This thou hast said truly” ([John 4: 16-18](#)).

Jesus does not break the conversation, but engages her until she (and then many others) finally accepts Him as the Messiah ([John 4:38-42](#)):

“Now of that city many of the Samaritans believed in him, for the word of the woman giving testimony: He told me all things whatsoever I have done? So when the Samaritans were come to him, they desired that he would tarry there. And he

abode there two days. And many more believed in him because of his own word. And they said to the woman: We now believe, not for thy saying: for we ourselves have heard him, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

See what truth in the context of a little encounter and dialogue can do? Pope Francis is exemplifying these two aspects of evangelization, the need to hold to the truth that never "prescinds from the Gospel" and the more difficult process of discernment and engagement whereby alienated people are gradually led , step by step, to communion so that they can eventually be one with Him who is the Way and the Truth and the Life.

FOLLOWUP ARTICLE TO FOLLOW TOMORROW

US Forces Facing Russian Troops in Syria, Will they Cooperate to Defeat ISIS?

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

DURING HIS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN Donald Trump gave many signs indicating a possible rapprochement with Russia in order to forward the war against terrorism. Since his election, political observers have been watching carefully to assess movements relative to this implicit commitment. As the data roles in, it is now possible to make some preliminary remarks based on actions taken by the new president during his first sixty days in office. Before doing so, it is helpful to review a [New Era Forecast](#) issued a month ago (February, 21).

FORECAST:

*“The United States and Russia will continue down a path of rapprochement but not without significant interference, which can be expected from all ends of the political and social-cultural spectrum. Constant, well orchestrated, and confusing series of events can be expected as agents from both the left and right proceed to push confrontation with Russia to a boiling point. Nonetheless, in the long run, the shadow government will fail as it has consistently failed and been out maneuvered in its foreign policy initiatives for the past decade – we have no discernible reason to believe that this chain of events will cease unfolding. **The shadow-government is being opposed by more than Mr. Trump.**”*

The real question is what will Mr. Trump do? Will he continue down the road of his immediate predecessors, or be bold enough to set America on a new course?

Following that forecast, it was stated that *if* the new president continued with the *foreign policy* of the Bush and Obama administrations (as he *appears* to be doing), if he pursued the same path as his predecessors ([a path favored by Neocon War Hawks and Liberal Globalists](#)), American Foreign Policy would continue its downward slide and America would continue suffering one foreign policy embarrassment after another while earning the ire of other nations around the globe. President Obama was never able to disengage from war or to defeat ISIS; Trump however, has vowed to obliterate them, *implicitly* with Russian cooperation. It is this cooperation, above all else, that makes him an enemy of the Neocons (even though they are for the most part Republicans) and their Liberal allies deeply imbedded in ruling establishment.

The Trump Team is facing stiff opposition not only from an

entrenched bureaucracy but from die hard members of the armed service committee and intelligence community who still view Russia through the lens of Soviet Communism or who are so committed to global liberalism that Russia (whom they realize is increasingly becoming a Christian nation-state, a purveyor of traditional family values, and an avowedly anti-liberal global power) must be stopped. Thus, if Trump plans to improve relations with Russia, he will be vehemently opposed by those who continue to insist upon the ideological export of liberal (economic and moral) American values, those who view themselves as patriots whose sacred duty is to confront the nefarious Russian Bear whose commitment to national sovereignty and Christianity is a threat to their global hegemony and the advancement of their Liberal Global Agenda.

Therefore, it was also stated,

“If Mr. Trump moves too quickly, he will not be able to withstand the tumultuous tsunami that is being gathered for a melancholy day of release; he must first cultivate relationships among international leaders (something he has done too little of) who have a very different view of America and American Foreign Policy than that being fed to him by Neocon war-hawks such as Sen. John McCain”, a man who keeps discrediting himself by accusing anyone opposed to his myopic interventionist military policy as “working for Vladimir Putin”, even if the others he assails are US Senators themselves.

Finally, it was also stated in February that

*“It is not time for fisticuffs, so yes, Newera tends to believe that **Mr. Trump has come out with a (foreign policy) rope a dope in Round One**, at least partially so. If he is able to eventually pound ISIS into oblivion with Russian cooperation, he will build up a tidal wall of good-will and support composed of many international components that spell peace, a peace woven into a wall that will be able to withstand any Tsunami the Deep State can bellow in his direction.”*

However, it was warned:

*“**If President Trump collapses before the bellowing winds and succumbs to the mounting global pressures of liberalism, if he fails to deliver on his campaign promises and follows the lead of Neocon war-hawks like Sen. John McCain, New Era foresees an abject failure on the horizon and the ultimate collapse of American Foreign Policy and the waning of American influence.**”*

Unfortunately, Mr. Trump appears to be following the foreign policy of the Neocon and Liberal establishment. Consequently, **the honeymoon given him by foreign nations is coming to an end**. They have waited to see if he would deliver on his promises to treat all nations fairly, to cooperate with Russia to defeat terrorism and to start a new page in American history battling liberalism and seeking an Era of Peace. Apparently, he will do none of these things and continue the foreign policy of his predecessor built on the back of American military might.

World leaders have been looking on and refraining from imminent action while holding things in suspension waiting to see what Trump would do. They are no longer waiting; instead, **global trends are reverting back to where they were before**

Trump took office, the international movement against liberalism has recommenced. As forecast, the United States will either cooperate with this movement and be a purveyor of peace or it will suffer continued embarrassment. New Era holds to this forecast with the caveat that the United States might be pulled into the peace initiative in spite of its current bravado bolstered by an enormous military buildup. President Trump has not decreased but has already increased the military budget by \$54 billion and is beefing up the American military presence around the globe to the ire of China, Russia, Turkey and many third world nations. The remainder of this article is concerned with US foreign policy in the Middle East and how it is alienating Turkey and leading to a surprise *tete a tete* between **US and Russian forces NOW within a grenades distance of each other on the battlefield of North-Central Syria where **THEY ARE BOTH BATTLING ISIS-ISIL-ISLAMIC STATE AT THE SAME TIME AND IN THE SAME PLACE**. This unexpected rubbing of shoulders in Syria offers a glimmer of hope that might signify the beginning of an ongoing cooperation. Don't hold your breath however, Sen. John McCain happens to be in the mix:**

McCain "made a secret trip to a Kurdish-held region in northern Syria last weekend to speak with US military officials, rebel fighters, and leaders in the region."

On Wednesday, (March 23) Julie Tarallo, a McCain spokesperson confirmed the mission, with the following TWEET

This via a McCain spokeswoman:

“Senator McCain traveled to northern Syria this week to visit U.S. forces deployed there and to discuss the counter-ISIL campaign and ongoing operations to retake Raqqa. Senator McCain’s visit was a valuable opportunity to assess dynamic conditions on the ground in Syria and Iraq. President Trump has rightly ordered a review of U.S. strategy and plans to defeat ISIL. Senator McCain looks forward to working with the administration and military leaders to optimize our approach for accomplishing ISIL’s lasting defeat.”

What is Happening in Syria and How it Might Affect Relationships with Russia and Turkey

President Obama alienated Turkey with his ongoing support of the **Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG)**, whom the Turks view as an ally of the **Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK)**, which operates in Turkey and is designated by Ankara as a terrorist organization. **President Trump is headed down the same road.** Foreign Policy Magazine [notices the trend](#). On March 21 they pointed out that warhawks and top US commanders regard the YPG as “[the only viable option for ousting the Islamic State](#) [Daesh].” If the YPG represents the only viable solution, clearly **Washington has ruled out cooperation with Russia, the most obvious solution.**

Following its own initiative, an initiative ostensibly calculated to *Make America Look Great Again*, the Pentagon is deploying 1,000 troops to assist the **Syrian Defense Forces (SDF)** to battle the Daesh in Raqqa. The SDF, is a Kurdish dominated militia established in 2015 and sponsored by the United States to help establish a Kurdish enclave in Northern Syria. The SDF is composed primarily of Kurds fighting under their own banner of **People’s Protection Units (YPG)**. More specifically, it might be said that **the YPG is a Kurdish**

dominated militia, which is fighting alongside the American backed SDF who are opposed to radical Islamic terrorists and also to the Russian-backed Syrian government of Bashar al Assad. Currently the SDF is planning to engage in an all-out assault on Raqqa, the capital and stronghold of ISIS-ISIL or the Islamic State. According to [The Foreign Policy Group](#) (FP)

“Even as the Trump administration weighs its options, the U.S. military is ramping up for the assault, drawing up plans to deploy up to 1,000 more American soldiers to Syria in support of the YPG and allied forces, known collectively as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which [have advanced](#) mere miles from the city (of Raqqa). Pentagon officials [assess](#) that the roughly 27,000 Kurds in the 50,000-strong SDF are the more effective, experienced fighters.”

The [New York Times](#) (March 15) corroborated this report by FP:

“The U.S. military has drawn up early plans that would deploy up to 1,000 more troops into northern Syria in the coming weeks, expanding the American presence in the country ahead of the offensive on the Islamic State’s de facto capital of Raqqa.”

“The deployment...would potentially double the number of U.S. forces in Syria and increase the potential for direct U.S. combat involvement in a conflict that has been characterized by confusion and competing priorities among disparate forces.”

The plan to deploy 1,000 more troops is meant to bolster a previous deployment of United States Marines already ordered by President Trump. On March 9, the [Guardian](#) reported on the deployment of several hundred US Marines to Syria:

“A few hundred marines with heavy artillery have been

deployed to Syria in preparation for the fight to oust [Islamic State](#) from its self-declared headquarters of Raqqa, a senior US official said on Wednesday.”

“The marines moving into [Syria](#) are positioning howitzers to be ready to help local Syrian forces, said the official, who was not authorised to discuss the deployment publicly.

There are already approximately 500 U.S. Special Operations forces in Syria operating alongside the SDF. They are complemented by an additional 250 Army Rangers and 200 US Marines. **The additional 1,000 U.S. troops will most likely be part of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit** that are part of a

“... [flotilla of ships loaded with 2,200 Marines that is now steaming toward the region](#) – and the U.S. Army’s 82nd Airborne Division, of which 2,500 recently arrived in Kuwait.”

Regarding this deployment, [Turkish Prime Minister, Binali Yildirim](#) cautioned US leaders:

“If (Washington) insists on carrying on this operation with terror organizations (Kurds whom the Turks consider as terrorists and public enemy number one), our relations will be harmed – that is clear.”



Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim

Prime Minister Yildirim’s statement is especially meaningful in the context of the [Astana Meetings](#) previously hosted by Russia, Iran and Turkey (in Astana, Kazakhstan), which have resulted in a military coalition consisting of Turkey, Russia, and Iran, already operating in Syria where they are

acting as a peacekeeping force. Rather than joining the peace initiative, the US continues following its own foreign policy thereby driving Turkey further away from Washington. In fact, **this latest US maneuver, might also compromise US relationships with the United Nations**, which is beneficiary of Russian efforts at Astana: The Russian, Turks and Iranians provided the military backbone which brought the contending parties to the UN sponsored meeting of diplomats in Geneva (Feb 2017).

[The cooperating powers all agreed to the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the Syrian nation](#), implying that **they will uphold the right of Syria as a sovereign nation**, a nation entitled to determine for itself who its leaders will be and who will be invited to fight alongside it against common enemies.

*“The delegations of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey, in line with the Joint Statement of their Foreign Ministers made in Moscow, on December 20, 2016 and the **UN Security Council resolution 2336**...” reaffirm their commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, non-sectarian and democratic state.”*

Sergey Lavrov, Foreign Minister of Russia emphasized this point:

The talks in Astana are “an important contribution to... a comprehensive political settlement in Syria which will continue in wider activities in Geneva.”

The prospect of ongoing US support of Kurds, esp. in Northern Syria, is seen in Ankara as a threat to Turkish security, a threat seemingly ignore by Donald Trump, a threat that drives Turkey deeper into a meaningful coalition with Russia.

To make the scenario extremely interesting, Russia is also backing the Kurds also to the ire of Turkey who is simultaneously fighting side by side with Russia as agreed to by the Astana Accords. The whole complicated situation is growing ever more complex. Turkey has been assisting Syrian Government forces (Assad' forces backed by Russia) as they move toward Manbij a city held by US backed Kurds; therefore the US has deployed troops there to oppose a Turkish offensive. As reported by the [New York Times](#) :

“In recent weeks, U.S. Army Rangers have been sent to the city of Manbij west of Raqqa (in NW Syria) to deter Russian, Turkish and Syrian opposition forces all operating in the area, while a Marine artillery battery recently deployed near Raqqa (70 miles SW) has already come under fire, according to a defense official with direct knowledge of their operations.”

It is interesting that Syrian forces supported by the Syrian government engaged in warfare with Islamic terrorists in their own country are referred to as *“opposition forces”*. Opposition to whom, to the United States? If the Russian-Turkish backed Syrian army is fighting ISIS (Islamic State) and is called the *“opposition”*, who is the United States fighting?

Turkey finds itself in a quandary, it is assisting Russia who is supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. At the same time, it is a NATO member and thus a US ally. The United States has been backing rebel forces against Assad and supposedly, at the same time, also fighting Islamic terrorists such as ISIS and Daesh whom the Russians and Turks are also fighting. **Turkey has indicated that it would commit ground troops to help US backed forces topple Raqqa but that eventuality is contingent upon US relinquishing its support of the Kurds (YPG) whom the Russians are also supporting.**

Moreover, as a result of the Russian brokered Astana Accords,

Syrian rebels, that is those that are Syrian and *not* Islamic terrorists imported from throughout the Middle East, Syrian rebels who were opposed to Assad are now working with the Assad government to oust radical Islamic terrorists, which means if the terrorists are defeated there are virtually no indigenous forces of any considerable size left opposing the Syrian government; who will the United States support then? That is who will the United States support in Syria once ISIS or the Islamic State is defeated? **Ostensibly, the Kurds will have the backing of both the United States and Russia**, the preferred diplomatic position for both countries *vis a vis* Turkey. That is, **it is better for the United States to have strained relations with Turkey over the Kurds if Russia also has strained relations with the Turks and for the same reason!** Turkey will just have to get use to it – the US and Russia are apparently headed down a course leading to some type of cooperative agreement even if it is happening *willy nilly*.

The unexpected might be occurring, viz., Russia and the US are being pulled together by supporting the Kurds in Syria albeit at risk of exacerbating relations with Turkey. Sarah El Deeb is one of the few to recognize the unexpected. As reported in the [Chicago Tribune](#):

“Ankara (that is, Turkey) has effectively unified Russia and the U.S. in the goal of limiting Turkish expansion in the north (North Syria where the Kurds live). Syrian experts say Ankara has lost influence to realize its aim of pushing the Kurdish forces back to the east of Manbij across the Euphrates. Moreover, Washington is pushing ahead with partnering with the Kurdish-led forces in the planned attack on Raqqa, despite Turkish opposition.”

According to [Ragip Soylu](#) a reporter for [New Turkey](#), Turkey’s efforts to disrupt the US-Kurd alliance

“...has been tossed away as the Russian military and U.S. Special Forces moved last week in Syria’s Manbij to prevent Turkish-backed Syrian opposition forces from attacking the city,”

Russia has taken an unexpected stance on Manbij, instead of advancing on the city, THEY ARE WORKING TO PREVENT any further Syrian-Turkish advance deeply desired by the Turks. They are now involved in the mutual defeat of ISIS. At the moment they, the United States and Russia, are involved in planning an assault on ISIS in Raqqa and mutual support of the Kurds; the latter to the chagrin of the Turks

Complex as it is to discern, **the future is perhaps beginning in Manbij and Raqqa**, as [U.S. Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend](#), of the anti-ISIS coalition has said:

“All the forces acting in Syria have converged within hand-grenade range of one another. We encourage all forces to remain focused on the counter-ISIS fight and concentrate their efforts on defeating ISIS and not toward other objectives that may cause the coalition to divert energy and resources away from Raqqa.”

In other words, the US is not focused on toppling the Assad government (at least not now and possibly not again in the future). **The mission is for once clear: defeat ISIS.** This is **something both the Americans and Russians can agree upon.** The Russian are *not* looking for war between its allies, Turkey and Syria, versus the US forces in Manbij or Raqqa. **Turkish and Syrian troops moving toward Manbij were halted** due to a [deal brokered by Russia that established a “buffer zone”](#) between the Kurds and advancing Turk-Syrian forces. This zone is intended to **protect the Kurds** in Manbij and to keep Russian backed Syrian and Turkish troops out of conflict with the United States, esp. since they are all, as US General Townsend has stated: *“within hand-grenade range of one another.”*

Unfortunately, [Turkey has not honored the zone](#):

“On Thursday, Syrian government media said Turkish shelling killed a number of its troops. Kurdish officials said Turkish advances continued even despite the buffer zone.”

Turkey, long a backer of terrorism throughout the Middle East, is now suffering a bout of what appears to be irremediable consternation. Since **the United States and Russia are now face to face in Syria**, since **the United States and Russia are both supporting the Kurds** in Syria, since **the United States and Russia are both fighting ISIS** in Syria simultaneously and at the same exact location, **it will be difficult for Turkey to play anymore deceptive games designed to advance its own agenda and keep the two superpowers apart**. The Turks however have at least three allies in this game, *viz.*, the US Neocons, global liberals, and Israeli Zionists who will do anything to hinder real peace by keeping the two apart!

Nonetheless, will the United States begin to coordinate efforts with Russia to

(1) Protect Manbij, a city held by US backed Kurdish-led forces thereby increasing tensions with Turkey but lessening them with Russia (for the US that is)?

(2) Somehow pacify or restrain Turkey – something much easier if they cooperate – thereby bringing Turk dreams for a renewed Ottoman Empire or at least an Arab World under Turk domination to naught and as a result bring Turkey’s leaders to their senses?

(3) Defeat ISIS in a mutual effort to *“bomb the shit out of them”* as Trump promised during his campaign – Raqqa represents the possibility of fulfilling a campaign promise and of moving towards normalizing relations with Russia,

although in a very unexpected way as explained above.

Or will the US act to salvage its relations with Turkey thereby lessening support for the Kurds and increasing tensions with Russia? Quite possibly Turkey will have to make a choice, that is, to seek a deeper alliance with the United States or Russia; either way, it will have to come to grips with the Kurds whom neither is likely to abandon. The only player in the region with more to lose than Turkey, is Israel (Saudi Arabia also stands to lose, but not as much as Israel) who has benefited from the enormous pounding its enemies have given to each other over these years – Israel benefits by continued conflict – it does not want peace between the US and Russia nor mutual-agreement over Syria and the Kurds. It remains to be seen what Israel will do in this situation; it has already [violated Syrian airspace this past week.](#)

“The Syrian military said the Israeli strikes had targeted a military installation near Palmyra (in Syria).”

“The incident was highly unusual in that it also saw the Israeli military break its customary silence over raids in Syria to release a statement to admit that its aircraft had been targeted while operating there.”

“Overnight, March 17, IAF aircrafts [sic] targeted several targets in Syria,” said the statement.”

The United States might not be fighting Syria at the moment but Israel is apparently trying to keep Syrian ally Iran from sending weapons to Hezbollah stationed on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights. Israel is *not* averse to violating international law to carry out its objectives, nor was Turkey who is now paying a price for its transgressions. [Is Israel](#)

about to learn a similar lesson or will they influence the Trump administration to keep up war on Syria once ISIS is obliterated?

“Brig Gen Nitzan Nuriel, a former director of counter-terrorism in the Israeli prime minister’s bureau, said conflict with Hezbollah was inevitable as the group sought ever more advanced anti-aircraft missiles, heavy rockets and tactical weapons, but he believed Assad had seriously misread the situation.”

“Assad has not read the map correctly,” he said. “He believes it is only a question of weeks or months before he can declare a full victory and is looking to the next stage. I believe he is mistaken and that clashes in [Syria](#) will stay with us for the next three to six years.”

“Discussing Russia’s role in Syria, he added more controversially: “Russia got the messages it needs to receive from Israel.” That was, he said: “Israel will not allow anyone, including Russia to get in the way of implementing our military mission.”

Although Israel favors continued conflict, as long as its enemies are killing each other and as long as Syria is potentially neutralized along with its ally Iran, although Israel favors such things, New Era is forecasting eventual peace – if the US and Russia actually cooperate to defeat ISIS – which means something will have to give in Israel, perhaps something significant.

Israeli-Russian Relations Tested Over Syria as US and Russian Backed Forces Near Each Other

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

AT THE END OF FRIDAY'S ARTICLE, "[Are United States and Russia Headed for Cooperation Despite Neocon-Liberal Objections?](#)", it was concluded that, "The only player in the region with more to lose than Turkey, is Israel...who has benefited from the enormous pounding its enemies have given to each other over recent years – Israel benefits by continued conflict – it does not want peace between the US and Russia nor mutual-agreement over Syria and the Kurds. It remains to be seen what Israel will do in response to possible US-Russian cooperation in the battle over ISIS about to unfold in Raqqa (Syria); will they fight each other or cooperate? Chances are high that they will cooperate, but signs are being genratd that indicate that they might not. Nonetheless, the question remains, "How will Israel respond to unexpected cooperation?" If events that occurred earlier last week are any indication, the Israelis do not like what is unfolding, they have already [violated Syrian airspace and fired missiles in Syria](#) just a few days ago. In response, the Syrian military said that

"The Israeli strikes had targeted a military installation near Palmyra (in Syria)."

*"The incident was highly unusual in that it also saw the Israeli military break its customary silence over raids in Syria to **release a statement to admit that its aircraft had been targeted while operating there.**"*

“Overnight, March 17, IAF aircrafts [sic] targeted several targets in Syria”, ‘said the statement.’”

The United States might *not* be fighting against Syria *at the moment* but Israeli operations in Syria indicate that the Zionists are apparently engaged in operations against them as well as their ally, Iran who is legally transiting weapons across Syria to Hezbollah soldiers stationed on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights, at least, that is the Israeli version of the story. [Professor Eyal Zisser](#), a Syrian expert who teaches at Tel Aviv University in Israel, discussed an agreement made between Vladimir Putin and PM Netanyahu (June 7, 2015) in which the Russians supposedly gave their word that military equipment being transferred from Iran to Hezbollah is solely for purposes of waging war against ISIS; it would *not* therefore, be employed in any type of attack on Israel.

Thus, according to the Syrian accounts, **Israel targeted Syrian military positions combating ISIS** (not weapons being shipped to Hezbollah). Either way, [Israel violated international law](#) and the right of Syria to national sovereignty. Do weapons used against Syria transited through Turkey permit Syria to violate Turkish airspace and bomb Turkish infra-structure? The airspace of sovereign nation is supposedly protected by international law.

“According to the set principles governing international law, a state has complete and exclusive sovereignty over the sky above its territory. Without permission, it is absolutely forbidden for foreign military planes to enter the territorial airspace of other states.”

Therefore, the [Syrian Foreign Ministry drafted a complaint to the UN](#) in which they stated

“Syria calls on the UN Secretary General and the President of the UNSC to condemn this blatant Israeli aggression, to force Israel to stop supporting terrorism in Syria, to implement all UNSC resolutions on counter-terrorism, including resolution No. 2253, to withdraw from the whole occupied Syrian Golan to the line of June 4th, 1967, and to implement resolution No. 497 for 1981”

Israel has its own interpretation of events to justify its action: Iran is transferring weapons to Hezbollah to be used against Israel. Here is a taste of Israeli justification from its [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) who stated that Israel would continue to act militantly to prevent transfer of advanced weapons to Hezbollah:

“Our policy is very consistent: when we identify attempts to transfer advanced weapons to Hezbollah, and we have the intelligence and operational feasibility – we work to prevent this.”

This is an open admission, what appears to be a braggadocio admission, followed by a dose of strained logic:

*“That’s how it’s been and that’s how it will be, **we have determination, and the proof is that we are acting, and everyone has to take this into account,**” he added.*

In other words, the morality of the act is to be judged by the fact that Israel can get away with it, “the proof is we are acting” and “everyone has to take this into account.” This is not a reasonable or moral justification; it is nothing more than a “might makes right” argument, the rule of the jungle that governs animal interaction; it can only be hoped that this is not *how* Zionists view gentiles?

*“Then they brought Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium. It was morning. And they (**the Jews**) themselves **did not enter the***

praetorium, in order not to be defiled.”

This type of justification *might* have worked in the past, but more and more people are waking up to the dignity of the human person (all persons); this is a rationale that people seeking peace and a two-state solution are growing tired of – being a citizen of Israel does *not* give anyone any type of hyper-human-status that empowers them to trample on the rights of others.

If this is really representative of Netanyahu’s logic, the Israeli PM is acting hypocritical. Israel would not permit foreign jets to invade their airspace and then annihilate targets without a media blitz fired around the globe amid a veritable storm of moral objections. **The PM has just opened the doors to Syrian and Iranian jets flying into to Israel to obliterate what they perceive to be security threats to be used on targets in their own countries or that of their allies.**

Apparently, Israel is *not* averse to violating international law to carry out its objectives, nor was Turkey who is now paying a price for its transgressions. [Is Israel about to learn a similar lesson or will they influence the Trump administration to keep up war on Syria once ISIS is obliterated?](#)

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“Assad has not read the map correctly,” he said. “He believes it is only a question of weeks or months before he can

*declare a full victory and is looking to the next stage. I believe he is mistaken and that **clashes in Syria** will stay with us for the next three to six years."*

"Discussing Russia's role in Syria, he added more controversially: "Russia got the messages it needs to receive from Israel." That was, he said: "Israel will not allow anyone, including Russia to get in the way of implementing our military mission."

This is a former Israeli Brigadier General's perspective, but others are interpreting and reporting it differently. In fact, after the Israeli attack, the Russian government almost immediately summoned Gary Koren, the Israeli Ambassador, and requested an explanation – something they have not done following previous Israeli violations in Syria). Rather than smooth things over for the Israeli side, Avigdor Lieberman, Israeli Defense Minister, following the Netanyahu line, [exacerbated them](#):

*"The next time the Syrians use their air defence systems against our planes we will **destroy them** without the slightest hesitation."*

As if to say that Israel has a right to annihilate targets in other countries, but these countries somehow act wrongly if they defend themselves as if the Zionists were some type of privileged people and the and the rest of the world is made up of outcasts. Israel has run into a Western nation that will not follow its script. Russia, apparently, will *not* allow itself be pushed around by the playground bully or be intimidated by empty chutzpah. Contrary to PM Netanyahu and Brig. Gen. Nitzan Nuriel, Dr. Bashar al-Jaafari, Syrian Ambassador to the United Nations, stated that

*[“Putin sent a clear message,”](#) he said. “The fact is that **the Israeli ambassador** (to Russia) was summoned for a conversation... and was told categorically that this game is over.”*

Jaafari also [stated](#) that “Syria will no longer sit by while Israel blatantly attacks its forces”; implying that the response will be greatly amplified if an Israeli attack occurs again.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, however, took a more pragmatic and realistic approach that moves beyond rhetoric to make decisions based upon actions. After stating that Russia expects Israel to honor agreements made between Putin and Netanyahu during the latter’s state visit to Moscow earlier this month, he stated that Russia

“...will judge (Israel) not by their statements, but by their actions, to what extent our Israeli partners are sticking to these agreements.”

If these type of actions continue, a Russian response can be expected. In this regard, [Syrian President Bashar Assad told visiting Russian legislators](#) that Syria is depending on Russia to avert further Israeli attacks and to help Damascus avoid a “full-blown conflict with Tel Aviv”. This does *not* appear to be something Syria desires and which it is trying to avoid, nor is it something desired by Russia.

At the June 7 meeting (discussed above) between Netanyahu and Putin, host [Vladimir Putin concluded](#):

“Russia and Israel can take pride in our high level of partnership, fruitful cooperation and far-reaching business contacts”

According to the [Jerusalem Post](#),

“Since then, that partnership has continued to grow, but the looming crisis in Syria threatens to upset this dance.”

If the Israelis keep their word and discontinue bombing runs in Syria, the risk of confrontation with Russia will be minimized and most likely become non-existent (at least at this time). What the Jerusalem Post is referring to is the current situation in Syria where both US and Russian troops and their allies are all [within a grenade's distance of each other](#), each wanting to defeat ISIS, which is now isolated in its Syrian capital, Raqqa. The offensive against this city is slated to begin in a few days; at this moment it is unclear how Russian and American forces will interact in this crucial campaign. Israel is a staunch US ally but has also entered into serious negotiations and agreements with Russia, will they risk their recent gains?

The entire scenario discussed above is contingent upon US and Russian cooperation or conflict in Syria. Will they cooperate [to defeat ISIS at Raqqa and to craft a mutual-plan to support the Kurds in Northern Syria](#) and Iraq? If they fail to do so, if the United States or Russia have other plans in Syria, plans that would exacerbate rather than ameliorate American-Russian relations, the entire situation changes from a possible peace scenario to one of increased conflict, as will be discussed tomorrow.

US Special Forces Facing Russian Troops in Syria, Will

they Cooperate to Defeat ISIS?

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

DURING HIS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN Donald Trump gave many signs indicating a possible rapprochement with Russia in order to forward the war against terrorism. Since his election, political observers have been watching carefully to assess movements relative to this implicit commitment. As the data roles in, it is now possible to make some preliminary remarks based on actions taken by the new president during his first sixty days in office. Before doing so, it is helpful to review a [New Era Forecast](#) issued a month ago (February, 21).

FORECAST:

*“The United States and Russia will continue down a path of rapprochement but not without significant interference, which can be expected from all ends of the political and social-cultural spectrum. Constant, well orchestrated, and confusing series of events can be expected as agents from both the left and right proceed to push confrontation with Russia to a boiling point. Nonetheless, in the long run, the shadow government will fail as it has consistently failed and been out maneuvered in its foreign policy initiatives for the past decade – we have no discernible reason to believe that this chain of events will cease unfolding. **The shadow-government is being opposed by more than Mr. Trump.**”*

The real question is what will Mr. Trump do? Will he continue down the road of his immediate predecessors, or be bold enough to set America on a new course?

Following that forecast, it was stated that *if* the new president continued with the *foreign policy* of the Bush and Obama administrations (as he *appears* to be doing), if he pursued the same path as his predecessors ([a path favored by Neocon War Hawks and Liberal Globalists](#)), American Foreign Policy would continue its downward slide and America would continue suffering one foreign policy embarrassment after another while earning the ire of other nations around the globe. President Obama was never able to disengage from war or to defeat ISIS; Trump however, has vowed to obliterate them, *implicitly* with Russian cooperation. It is this cooperation, above all else, that makes him an enemy of the Neocons (even though they are for the most part Republicans) and their Liberal allies deeply imbedded in ruling establishment.

The Trump Team is facing stiff opposition not only from an entrenched bureaucracy but from die hard members of the armed service committee and intelligence community who still view Russia through the lens of Soviet Communism or who are so committed to global liberalism that Russia (whom they realize is increasingly becoming a Christian nation-state, a purveyor of traditional family values, and an avowedly anti-liberal global power) must be stopped. Thus, if Trump plans to improve relations with Russia, he will be vehemently opposed by those who continue to insist upon the ideological export of liberal (economic and moral) American values, those who view themselves as patriots whose sacred duty is to confront the nefarious Russian Bear whose commitment to national sovereignty and Christianity is a threat to their global hegemony and the advancement of their Liberal Global Agenda.

Therefore, it was also stated,

“If Mr. Trump moves too quickly, he will not be able to withstand the tumultuous tsunami that is being gathered for a melancholy day of release; he must first cultivate relationships among international leaders (something he has done too little of) who have a very different view of America and American Foreign Policy than that being fed to him by Neocon war-hawks such as Sen. John McCain”, a man who keeps discrediting himself by accusing anyone opposed to his myopic interventionist military policy as “working for Vladimir Putin”, even if the others he assails are US Senators themselves.

Finally, it was also stated in February that

“It is not time for fisticuffs, so yes, Newera tends to believe that Mr. Trump has come out with a (foreign policy) rope a dope in Round One, at least partially so. If he is able to eventually pound ISIS into oblivion with Russian cooperation, he will build up a tidal wall of good-will and support composed of many international components that spell peace, a peace woven into a wall that will be able to withstand any Tsunami the Deep State can bellow in his direction.”

However, it was warned:

“If President Trump collapses before the bellowing winds and succumbs to the mounting global pressures of liberalism, if he fails to deliver on his campaign promises and follows the lead of Neocon war-hawks like Sen. John McCain, New Era foresees an abject failure on the horizon and the ultimate collapse of American Foreign Policy and the waning of American influence.”

Unfortunately, Mr. Trump appears to be following the foreign policy of the Neocon and Liberal establishment. Consequently, **the honeymoon given him by foreign nations is coming to an end.** They have waited to see if he would deliver on his promises to treat all nations fairly, to cooperate with Russia to defeat terrorism and to start a new page in American history battling liberalism and seeking an Era of Peace. *Apparently,* he will do none of these things and continue the foreign policy of his predecessor built on the back of American military might.

World leaders have been looking on and refraining from imminent action while holding things in suspension waiting to see what Trump would do. They are no longer waiting; instead, **global trends are reverting back to where they were before Trump took office,** the international movement against liberalism has recommenced. As forecast, **the United States will either cooperate with this movement and be a purveyor of peace or it will suffer continued embarrassment.** New Era holds to this forecast with the caveat that **the United States might be pulled into the peace initiative in spite of its current bravado bolstered by an enormous military buildup.** [President Trump has not decreased but has already increased the military budget by \\$54 billion](#) and is beefing up the American military presence around the globe to the ire of China, Russia, Turkey and many third world nations. The remainder of this article is concerned with US foreign policy in the Middle East and how it is alienating Turkey and leading to a surprise *tete a tete* between **US and Russian forces NOW within a grenades distance of each other on the battlefield of North-Central Syria** where **THEY ARE BOTH BATTLING ISIS-ISIL-ISLAMIC STATE AT THE SAME TIME AND IN THE SAME PLACE.** This unexpected rubbing of shoulders in Syria offers a glimmer of hope that might signify the beginning of an ongoing cooperation. Don't hold your breath however, Sen. John McCain happens to be in the mix:

McCain “made a secret trip to a Kurdish-held region in northern Syria last weekend to speak with US military officials, rebel fighters, and leaders in the region.”

On Wednesday, (March 23) Julie Tarallo, a McCain spokesperson confirmed the mission, with the following TWEET

This via a McCain spokeswoman:

“Senator McCain traveled to northern Syria this week to visit U.S. forces deployed there and to discuss the counter-ISIL campaign and ongoing operations to retake Raqqa. Senator McCain’s visit was a valuable opportunity to assess dynamic conditions on the ground in Syria and Iraq. President Trump has rightly ordered a review of U.S. strategy and plans to defeat ISIL. Senator McCain looks forward to working with the administration and military leaders to optimize our approach for accomplishing ISIL’s lasting defeat.”

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Following its own initiative, an initiative ostensibly calculated to *Make America Look Great Again*, the Pentagon is

deploying 1,000 troops to assist the **Syrian Defense Forces (SDF)** to battle the Deash in Raqqa. The SDF, is a Kurdish dominated militia established in 2015 and sponsored by the United States to help establish a Kurdish enclave in Northern Syria. The SDF is composed primarily of Kurds fighting under their own banner of **People's Protection Units (YPG)**. More specifically, it might be said that **the YPG is a Kurdish dominated militia, which is fighting alongside the American backed SDF who are opposed to radical Islamic terrorists and also to the Russian-backed Syrian government of Bashar al Assad.** Currently the SDF is planning to engage in an all-out assault on Raqqa, the capital and stronghold of ISIS-ISIL or the Islamic State. According to [The Foreign Policy Group](#) (FP)

“Even as the Trump administration weighs its options, the U.S. military is ramping up for the assault, drawing up plans to deploy up to 1,000 more American soldiers to Syria in support of the YPG and allied forces, known collectively as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which [have advanced](#) mere miles from the city (of Raqqa). Pentagon officials [assess](#) that the roughly 27,000 Kurds in the 50,000-strong SDF are the more effective, experienced fighters.

The [New York Times](#) (March 15) corroborated this report by FP:

“The U.S. military has drawn up early plans that would deploy up to 1,000 more troops into northern Syria in the coming weeks, expanding the American presence in the country ahead of the offensive on the Islamic State’s de facto capital of Raqqa.”

“The deployment...would potentially double the number of U.S. forces in Syria and increase the potential for direct U.S. combat involvement in a conflict that has been characterized by confusion and competing priorities among disparate forces.”

The plan to deploy 1,000 more troops is meant to bolster a previous deployment of United States Marines already ordered by President Trump. On March 9, the [Guardian](#) reported on the deployment of several hundred US Marines to Syria:

“A few hundred marines with heavy artillery have been deployed to Syria in preparation for the fight to oust [Islamic State](#) from its self-declared headquarters of Raqqa, a senior US official said on Wednesday.”

“The marines moving into [Syria](#) are positioning howitzers to be ready to help local Syrian forces, said the official, who was not authorised to discuss the deployment publicly.

There are already approximately 500 U.S. Special Operations forces in Syria operating alongside the SDF. They are complemented by an additional 250 Army Rangers and 200 US Marines. **The additional 1,000 U.S. troops will most likely be part of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit** that are part of a

“... [flotilla of ships loaded with 2,200 Marines that is now steaming toward the region](#) – and the U.S. Army’s 82nd Airborne Division, of which 2,500 recently arrived in Kuwait.”

Regarding this deployment, [Turkish Prime Minister, Binali Yildirim](#) cautioned US leaders:

“If (Washington) insists on carrying on this operation with terror organizations (Kurds whom the Turks consider as terrorists and public enemy number one), our relations will be harmed – that is clear.”



Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim

Prime Minister Yildirim's statement is especially meaningful in the context of the [Astana Meetings](#) previously hosted by Russia, Iran and Turkey (in Astana, Kazakhstan), which have resulted in a military coalition consisting of Turkey, Russia, and Iran, already operating in Syria where they are acting as a peacekeeping force. Rather than joining the peace initiative, the US continues following its own foreign policy thereby driving Turkey further away from Washington. In fact, **this latest US maneuver, might also compromise US relationships with the United Nations**, which is beneficiary of Russian efforts at Astana: The Russian, Turks and Iranians provided the military backbone which brought the contending parties to the UN sponsored meeting of diplomats in Geneva (Feb 2017).

[The cooperating powers all agreed to the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the Syrian nation](#), implying that **they will uphold the right of Syria as a sovereign nation**, a nation entitled to determine for itself who its leaders will be and who will be invited to fight alongside it against common enemies.

*"The delegations of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey, in line with the Joint Statement of their Foreign Ministers made in Moscow, on December 20, 2016 and the **UN Security Council resolution 2336**..."reaffirm their commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, non-sectarian and democratic state."*

Sergey Lavrov, Foreign Minister of Russia emphasized this point:

The talks in Astana are "an important contribution to... a comprehensive political settlement in Syria which will continue in wider activities in Geneva."

The prospect of ongoing US support of Kurds, esp. in Northern Syria, is seen in Ankara as a threat to Turkish security, a threat seemingly ignore by Donald Trump, a threat that drives Turkey deeper into a meaningful coalition with Russia.

To make the scenario extremely interesting, Russia is also backing the Kurds also to the ire of Turkey who is simultaneously fighting side by side with Russia as agreed to by the Astana Accords. The whole complicated situation is growing ever more complex. Turkey has been assisting Syrian Government forces (Assad' forces backed by Russia) as they move toward Manbij a city held by US backed Kurds; therefore the US has deployed troops there to oppose a Turkish offensive. As reported by the [New York Times](#) :

“In recent weeks, U.S. Army Rangers have been sent to the city of Manbij west of Raqqa (in NW Syria) to deter Russian, Turkish and Syrian opposition forces all operating in the area, while a Marine artillery battery recently deployed near Raqqa (70 miles SW) has already come under fire, according to a defense official with direct knowledge of their operations.”

It is interesting that Syrian forces supported by the Syrian government engaged in warfare with Islamic terrorists in their own country are referred to as *“opposition forces”*. Opposition to whom, to the United States? If the Russian-Turkish backed Syrian army is fighting ISIS (Islamic State) and is called the *“opposition”*, who is the United States fighting?

Turkey finds itself in a quandary, it is assisting Russia who is supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. At the same time, it is a NATO member and thus a US ally. The United States has been backing rebel forces against Assad and supposedly, at the same time, also fighting Islamic terrorists such as ISIS and Daesh whom the Russians and Turks are also fighting. **Turkey has indicated that it would commit ground**

troops to help US backed forces topple Raqqa but that eventuality is contingent upon US relinquishing its support of the Kurds (YPG) whom the Russians are also supporting.

Moreover, as a result of the Russian brokered Astana Accords, Syrian rebels, that is those that are Syrian and *not* Islamic terrorists imported from throughout the Middle East, Syrian rebels who were opposed to Assad are now working with the Assad government to oust radical Islamic terrorists, which means if the terrorists are defeated there are virtually no indigenous forces of any considerable size left opposing the Syrian government; who will the United States support then? That is who will the United States support in Syria once ISIS or the Islamic State is defeated? **Ostensibly, the Kurds will have the backing of both the United States and Russia**, the preferred diplomatic position for both countries *vis a vis* Turkey. That is, **it is better for the United States to have strained relations with Turkey over the Kurds if Russia also has strained relations with the Turks and for the same reason!** Turkey will just have to get use to it – the US and Russia are apparently headed down a course leading to some type of cooperative agreement even if it is happening *willy nilly*.

The unexpected might be occurring, viz., Russia and the US are being pulled together by supporting the Kurds in Syria albeit at risk of exacerbating relations with Turkey. Sarah El Deeb is one of the few to recognize the unexpected. As reported in the [Chicago Tribune](#):

“Ankara (that is, Turkey) has effectively unified Russia and the U.S. in the goal of limiting Turkish expansion in the north (North Syria where the Kurds live). Syrian experts say Ankara has lost influence to realize its aim of pushing the Kurdish forces back to the east of Manbij across the Euphrates. Moreover, Washington is pushing ahead with partnering with the Kurdish-led forces in the planned attack on Raqqa, despite Turkish opposition.”

According to [Ragip Soylu](#) a reporter for [New Turkey](#), Turkey's efforts to disrupt the US-Kurd alliance

"...has been tossed away as the Russian military and U.S. Special Forces moved last week in Syria's Manbij to prevent Turkish-backed Syrian opposition forces from attacking the city,"

Russia has taken an unexpected stance on Manbij, instead of advancing on the city, THEY ARE WORKING TO PREVENT any further Syrian-Turkish advance deeply desired by the Turks. They are now involved in the mutual defeat of ISIS. At the moment they, the United States and Russia, are involved in planning an assault on ISIS in Raqqa and mutual support of the Kurds; the latter to the chagrin of the Turks

Complex as it is to discern, **the future is perhaps beginning in Manbij and Raqqa**, as [U.S. Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend](#), of the anti-ISIS coalition has said:

"All the forces acting in Syria have converged within hand-grenade range of one another. We encourage all forces to remain focused on the counter-ISIS fight and concentrate their efforts on defeating ISIS and not toward other objectives that may cause the coalition to divert energy and resources away from Raqqa."

In other words, the US is not focused on toppling the Assad government (at least not now and possibly not again in the future). **The mission is for once clear: defeat ISIS.** This is **something both the Americans and Russians can agree upon.** The Russian are *not* looking for war between its allies, Turkey and Syria, versus the US forces in Manbij or Raqqa. **Turkish and Syrian troops moving toward Manbij were halted** due to a [deal brokered by Russia that established a "buffer zone"](#) between the Kurds and advancing Turk-Syrian forces. This zone is intended to **protect the Kurds** in Manbij and to keep Russian

backed Syrian and Turkish troops out of conflict with the United States, esp. since they are all, as US General Townsend has stated: *“within hand-grenade range of one another.”*

Unfortunately, [Turkey has not honored the zone](#):

“On Thursday, Syrian government media said Turkish shelling killed a number of its troops. Kurdish officials said Turkish advances continued even despite the buffer zone.”

Turkey, long a backer of terrorism throughout the Middle East, is now suffering a bout of what appears to be irremediable consternation. Since **the United States and Russia are now face to face in Syria**, since **the United States and Russia are both supporting the Kurds** in Syria, since **the United States and Russia are both fighting ISIS** in Syria simultaneously and at the same exact location, **it will be difficult for Turkey to play anymore deceptive games designed to advance its own agenda and keep the two superpowers apart**. The Turks however have at least three allies in this game, viz., the US Neocons, global liberals, and Israeli Zionists who will do anything to hinder real peace by keeping the two apart!

Nonetheless, will the United States begin to coordinate efforts with Russia to

(1) Protect Manbij, a city held by US backed Kurdish-led forces thereby increasing tensions with Turkey but lessening them with Russia (for the US that is)?

(2) Somehow pacify or restrain Turkey – something much easier if they cooperate – thereby bringing Turk dreams for a renewed Ottoman Empire or at least an Arab World under Turk domination to naught and as a result bring Turkey’s leaders to their senses?

(3) Defeat ISIS in a mutual effort to “*bomb the shit out of them*” as Trump promised during his campaign – Raqqa represents the possibility of fulfilling a campaign promise and of moving towards normalizing relations with Russia, although in a very unexpected way as explained above.

Or will the US act to salvage its relations with Turkey thereby lessening support for the Kurds and increasing tensions with Russia? Quite possibly Turkey will have to make a choice, that is, to seek a deeper alliance with the United States or Russia; either way, it will have to come to grips with the Kurds whom neither is likely to abandon. The only player in the region with more to lose than Turkey, is Israel (Saudi Arabia also stands to lose, but not as much as Israel) who has benefited from the enormous pounding its enemies have given to each other over these years – Israel benefits by continued conflict – it does not want peace between the US and Russia nor mutual-agreement over Syria and the Kurds. It remains to be seen what Israel will do in this situation; it has already [violated Syrian airspace this past week.](#)

“The Syrian military said the Israeli strikes had targeted a military installation near Palmyra (in Syria).”

“The incident was highly unusual in that it also saw the Israeli military break its customary silence over raids in Syria to release a statement to admit that its aircraft had been targeted while operating there.”

“Overnight, March 17, IAF aircrafts [sic] targeted several targets in Syria,” said the statement.”

The United States might not be fighting Syria at the moment but Israel is apparently trying to keep Syrian ally Iran from

sending weapons to Hezbollah stationed on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights. Israel is *not* averse to violating international law to carry out its objectives, nor was Turkey who is now paying a price for its transgressions. [Is Israel about to learn a similar lesson or will they influence the Trump administration to keep up war on Syria once ISIS is obliterated?](#)

“Brig Gen Nitzan Nuriel, a former director of counter-terrorism in the Israeli prime minister’s bureau, said conflict with Hezbollah was inevitable as the group sought ever more advanced anti-aircraft missiles, heavy rockets and tactical weapons, but he believed Assad had seriously misread the situation.”

“Assad has not read the map correctly,” he said. “He believes it is only a question of weeks or months before he can declare a full victory and is looking to the next stage. I believe he is mistaken and that clashes in [Syria](#) will stay with us for the next three to six years.”

“Discussing Russia’s role in Syria, he added more controversially: “Russia got the messages it needs to receive from Israel.” That was, he said: “Israel will not allow anyone, including Russia to get in the way of implementing our military mission.”

Although Israel favors continued conflict, as long as its enemies are killing each other and as long as Syria is potentially neutralized along with its ally Iran, although Israel favors such things, New Era is forecasting eventual peace – if the US and Russia actually cooperate to defeat ISIS – which means something will have to give in Israel, perhaps something significant.

Medjugorje (Part 5 of 5): Spiritual Guides Disobedient, Excommunicated, Unchaste

[\(New Era World News\)](#)

THE FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS of the Medjugorje “Seers” have scored a “trifecta”; all three of them have been laicized, excommunicated, or suspended *a divinis*. Father Tomislav Vlastic was the third spiritual adviser of the Medjugorje “seers” to be suspended from his ministry (2009). The second was, Father Jozo Zovko, who was suspended by Bishop Peric in 2004. Father Iveca Vego holds the infamous dishonor of being the first; he was suspended on Jan. 29 1982, six months after the apparitions began at Medjugorje. Nonetheless, he continued to exercise his priestly ministry in defiance of the Bishop of Mostar. Vego refused to comply until after the Vatican got involved and the other two were implicated on various charges serious enough to warrant suspension and excommunication before the Curia took up Vego’s case in 2009.

Father Iveca Vego

According to Bishop Zanic, Father Ivica Vego, a Franciscan priest among the first confidants and spiritual directors of the “seers”, was dispensed from his vows and expelled from the Franciscan Order in January (1982) by his superiors in the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) after which the bishop appealed to the Vatican *Congregation for Religious* to have him reduced to the lay state.

According to [Bishop Zanic](#), eventually Ivica Vego’s behavior, which included persistent and flagrant disobedience and immoral sexual

conduct (the seduction and impregnation of a nun named Sister Leopolda) caught up with him.

"By an order of the Holy Father the Pope, he was thrown out of his Franciscan religious order OFM by his General, dispensed from his vows, and suspended "a divinis".

Nonetheless, like other Franciscan Friars stationed at Medjugorje both before and after him, Vego disregarded the canonical sentence and continued to hear confessions and to offer Mass.

"He did not obey this order and he continued to celebrate Mass, distribute the sacraments and pass the time with his mistress."

Why mention such a distasteful event? The reason: **the "seers" claimed that Our Lady** appeared to them on thirteen occasions during which she **stated** in one way or another that **Father Vego was innocent**, that he was as entitled to celebrate Mass as any other priest, and that the bishop was a harsh overlord. The most egregious aspect of the whole affair is the supposed attitude of the Virgin Mary, who according to Vicka, sided with the disobedient Franciscans.

On December 19, 1981 [Vicka wrote in her diary:](#)

*"Our Lady said that **the bishop is to blame** for the disorder in Hercegovina. She also said that Fr. Ivica Vego is not to blame, yet that the bishop has all authority. Our Lady said that he (Vego) should remain in Mostar and not leave."*

On April 15, 1982 Vicka reported that the Virgin stated that Father Vego and another Franciscan priest likewise suspended by the bishop, had the Gospa's permission to both say Mass and hear Confessions.

*"Vicka asked Our Lady a question. 'Could you generally tell me everything about Ivica Vego and Ivan Prusina?' Our Lady smiled at the first and then she said: 'They are innocent.' She repeated twice that: '**The bishop has made a mistake . . . let them remain in Mostar . . . they can say Mass sometimes but they should be careful to stay***

away from attention until things calm down. They have no faults.'"

On April 26, 1982 Vicka stated that Our Lady said:

"The bishop has no real love of God in his heart. Regarding the bishop, may Ivica and Ivan remain calm. What the bishop is doing is contrary to the will of God, yet he can do as he pleases, but one day justice such as you have never seen shall be revealed."

Then, on January 3, 1982, all the "seers" together asked Our Lady about Fr. Vego. She answered:

"Ivica is innocent. If they expel him from the Franciscan Order, may he remain courageous . . . Ivica is innocent." She repeated this three times.

Vicka has never denied that the Gospa spoke these words. Their authenticity is confirmed by a cassette recording taped by Rev. Grafenauer SJ during interviews he conducted with [Marija](#) and [Vicka](#). Rev. Grafenauer provided copies to the parish of Medjugorje and to the the bishop; he also provided an additional cassette for the Yugoslavian Bishops' Conference. The cassette contains the following dialogue:

Grafenauer: "You told the bishop that he is to blame and that those two [Vego and Prusina] are innocent and that they can perform their priestly duties?"

Vicka: "Yes I did."

Grafenauer: "Can they hear confessions? Did Our Lady mention this?"

Vicka: "Yes".

Grafenauer: *“If Our Lady said this and the Pope says that they cannot...”*

Vicka: *“The Pope can say what he wants, I’m telling it as it is”*
[Original: Nek Pope govori, kako ja kazem onak jest].

Grafenauer: *“See, this is how one can come to the conclusion that this is not Our Lady... when the Pope says no, they cannot celebrate Mass, and they cannot hear confessions, and then on the other hand, Our Lady says they can do both, this cannot be!”*

“Vicka: I know what is right [What Our Lady said].”

Grafenauer: *“This cannot be true. I would put my hand into fire to testify that this is not Our Lady speaking. When a person has a greater gift there also exists a greater danger that the devil could be at work upon this person.”*

[[Ogledalo Pravde. Biskupski ordinarijat u Mostaru o navodnim ukazanjima i porukama u Međugorju](#) (The Diocesan Curia of Mostar on the Alleged Apparitions and Messages of Medjugorje), Mostar, 2001, pp. 22-23]

An excerpt of the dialogue with the “seer”, Marija:

Grafenauer: *“Did Our Lady say that the bishop is to blame?”*

Marija: *“Yes”.*

Grafenauer: *“Did she say that Vego and Prusina were not to blame?”*

Marija: "Yes".

Grafenauer: "When Our Lady says that the bishop is to blame this immediately appears suspicious and we could conclude that this is not Our Lady speaking. The seers are apparently spreading word around that the bishop is to blame".

Marija: "Our Lady told us this".

[Msgr. P. Žanić, [The Truth About Medjugorje](#), § 12]

To make matters worse, on **21 June 1983** another seer, [Ivan Dragicevic](#), wrote a letter to the bishop, which contained a warning from Our Lady given during an apparition. Significantly, *Father Ivica Vego was present at this apparition as he often was* (He was also present when the Virgin Mary supposedly dropped the baby Jesus, to be examined elsewhere).

Ivan wrote:

"Excellency. These are the thoughts that she (the Virgin Mar) told me: 'Tell the Bishop that I seek a quick conversion from him towards the happenings in Medjugorje, before it is too late. May he accept these events with plenty of love, understanding and great responsibility. I want him to avoid creating conflicts between priests and to stop publicizing their negative behaviours.'"

*"The bishop is the spiritual father of all the parishes in Hercegovina. For this reason I seek his conversion towards these events. I am sending my second-last warning. **If what I seek does not come about, my judgement and the judgement of my Son await the Bishop. This means that he has not found the way to my Son Jesus.**"*

Although Vicka remained defiant, when Leopolda became pregnant, they

both left the religious life and began to live together near Medjugorje where their child was born. They now have four children. Finally, on **October 30, 1984, as mentioned above, Vego was** suspended *a divinis* and reduced to the lay state ([by the Vatican Congregation for Religious](#)) and dismissed from the Order (by the General Curia in Rome).

Since Vego was encouraged by the Gospa of Medjugorje to be disobedient (as recorded in the diary of Vicka and statements of the visionaries), by a “Gospa” who continually proclaimed his innocence while also claiming that the bishop was in error; since Vego was encouraged by such a Gospa (who by implication also disagreed with the pope who affirmed his suspension), the question about the authenticity of these messages is becoming increasingly clear. It becomes sharper still with consideration of another confidant of the seers, Father Jozo Zovko.



Father Jozo Zovko OFM

Jozo Zovko was born March 19, 1941 in the province of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Medjugorje devotees like to point out that Father Jozo was imprisoned **after** the supposed apparitions began. Police records, however, reveal a much different story: “Father Jozo, was considered a political enemy *not* for his support of the seers; rather, he was considered an enemy of the State because of his alleged support for the Croatian Ustasa. Like the condemned [liberation theologians](#) of Latin America, many Franciscans, including Father Jozo, were thought guilty of supporting Catholics vigilantes who took up arms in the name of Christ.

Police reports dating back to 1977, well **before** the beginning of the apparitions, indicate that Father Jozo supported the Croatian “Ustasa

while serving as Pastor at Posušje (related documents are quoted in [Misterij Međugorja](#))."

Connection between Franciscans and Ustasa Results in State Officials Mistrusting of Franciscans

Before the Communist breakup under M. Gorbachev, Bosnia was a province of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was the pearl in an otherwise rusty crown of Communist states. Yugoslavia offered Western consumer goods, exported high quality modern mechanical products including the Yugo automobile, and was a highly desired tourist attraction boasting splendid cities, beautiful mountain lakes, an inspiring coast, and spectacular mountain scenery.



Dubrovnik in Southern Croatia



Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia

Nonetheless, there was much discontent, esp. in Catholic Croatia where Catholics regularly suffered oppression and heinous treatment at the hands of their Serbian Communist overlords, which sparked a covert nationalist undercurrent known as the Ustasa, a group of Catholic insurrectionists that took up arms against the Communist Government and government officials. Poland, another country situated in Eastern Europe, also faced a hostile Communist regime; however, **unlike the Ustasas, the Poles rallied peacefully under the banner of Solidarity**, a social movement inspired by bishops and cardinals opposed to violence in favor of peaceful protest fueled by prayer and sacrifice, the traditional Catholic form of resistance ever since the first martyrs peacefully witnessed for the faith and had their blood spilled throughout the anti-Christian Roman Empire. Things were quite different in Croatia where a minority of zealous insurrectionists decided to resolve the issue through more violence. At the center of the turmoil was a small relatively unknown town named *Medjugorje*, the

subject of an intensive study conducted by **Dutch sociologist Mart Bax**. Bax invested nearly sixteen years researching this small town, which became an international pilgrimage destination sparking unprecedented growth and globalization after it was reported that the Virgin Mary was appearing there.

According to [Jonathan Levy](#), an attorney working for victims of the Ustasa, who reported on Bax's findings:

'Medjugorje was a small agrarian hamlet in Herzegovina prior to 1981, notable only for being near the site of a massacre of Serbs by Croats in 1942. The Croats who allied themselves with Nazi Germany took revenge on the Serbs under whose rule the Croats had chafed after WWI. The Croats formed the paramilitary Ustasa organization and with the help of Roman Catholic clergy (like the [Franciscan Liberation Theologians of Latin America](#)) sought to purge Croatia and Bosnia of the hated Serbs who were Orthodox Christians. Operating from Medjugorje, the Ustasa rounded up the local Serbs and slaughtered several hundred Serbs disposing of them in a ravine at a place called Suramanci.

It is not the intent of this article to judge the guilt of the Communists, Orthodox Serbs or Croat Catholics, but only to demonstrate that the some Croats were provoked into insurrection by their maltreatment and that their activities were give support by some members of the Franciscan community who should have been counseling peace, prayer, and sacrifice as the bishops of Poland were doing just North of them. Josip Tito's Communist government was determined to rid Bosnia of what they referred to as the "Ustasa" or "fascist" opposition esp. throughout Croatia, a predominantly Catholic region. By 1957 it appeared that Tito had crushed the Ustasa opposition. However,

*"Blood feuds continued in Bosnia. Likewise the **Franciscan Order** which had openly sided with the Ustasa during World War II, eventually returned to their churches and monasteries...In 1972, the Franciscans built a new church in Medjugorje. By 1981 when the*

Virgin Mary appeared to six children there, the Franciscans were (also) locked in an administrative dispute with the Bishop of Mostar over control of the village church and their activities.”

*“Bax reminds us that Bosnia Herzegovina was the locale of 400 years of war between the Turks and Austrians; the area became a checkerboard of separate ethnicities, Serbs, Croats, and Muslims. **The founding of Yugoslavia in 1919 did little to quiet the region as the Serbs dominated the government. Croats were discriminated against and formed bands of Ustase, the Serbs retaliated by forming paramilitary bands known as Chetniks. The Second World War turned Bosnia into a huge battlefield where Croats and Muslims aligned with the Germans and fought Serbs and Communist Partisans. The Partisans were victorious and the Ustase eliminated, but by the late 1970’s the Croats including those in Medjugorje were again forming Ustase bands.**”*

Thus, it is not surprising that Father Jozo was a suspect of the Communist authorities, *not* for his connection to the seers, but rather for his connection to Catholic nationalists that posed a threat to the Serb dominated Communist government. On **October 21, 1981** Vicka appealed to Our Lady to assist Fr. Jozo who was awaiting sentence from the court (the Medjugorje event could easily be interpreted as an anti-Communist ploy with the Franciscans suspected of complicity – it was more likely a financial ploy or part of a Communist plan to subvert the Catholic faith and bring it into line with the evolutionary spirituality of the New Age favored by high adepts in the Communist Party such as L. Breznev and then later M. Gorbachev who favored a one world religion as a central thread of the program to move socialism forward to its next stage of historical development (this complex subject is taken up throughout the pages of [Trinitarian Humanism](#)” in which the author discusses the New Age leanings of M. Gorbachev and his affiliation with the New Age Movement), which is NOW unraveling as Medjugorje appears to be. Nonetheless, in 1981, the Gospa of Medjugorje stood with the friars, including Father Jozo. The

seers pleaded with her:

“Dear Gospa, I know that you do not have the spirit of vengeance, but try nevertheless to bring certain people to reason, so that they might judge impartially.”

The Gospa responded:

*“Jozo looks well and he greets you warmly. Do not fear for Jozo. **He is a saint**, I have already told you.”*

It is hard to understand how the Virgin Mary, the perpetually obedient “Handmaid of the Lord”, could refer to Fra Jozo as a “saint”. In reality this Franciscan was habitually and blatantly disobedient to his superiors and had already been suspended three times, a first time by bishop Zanic on **August 23 1989** (diocesan letter Nr. 622/89) and a second time by bishop Peric on **June 14, 1994** (diocesan letter Nr. 423/94).

Here is a list of disciplinary actions taken against Jozo Zovko through 2009 ([for more detail visit Official Documents of Medjugorje](#)):

August 23, 1989 Fr. Jozo was **suspended by Bishop Zanic**

*Jozo refused obedience and appealed to the Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples. **The Congregation confirmed his suspension** (Feb 15, 1990) and requests he domicile in a convent far removed from Medjugore.*

Jozo refuses to comply.

July 25, 1991 The Franciscan Provincial of Hercegovina requests the Bishop Zanic to transfer Jozo to the convent of Siroki Brijeg, less than 30 miles from Medjugorje.

The bishop rejects the request.

Nonetheless, Jozo shows up in Siroki Brijeg. Despite protests from Bishop Zanic, Father Jozo continued to administer the Sacraments in Siroki Brijeg.

August of 1993 Bishop Peric is installed as the new bishop of Mostar and Jozo remains non-compliant and insubordinate.

November 11, 1993 The Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples contacts the Minister-General of the Franciscan order and confirms Jozo's suspension; nonetheless, Jozo continued to boldly exercise his priestly ministry within the vicinity of Medjugorje.

December 29, 1993 the Franciscan Province of Hercegovina informs bishop Peric that Jozo has been appointed as a Parish Administrator in Siroki Brijeg. The bishop responds and expresses his bewilderment. Seven months later, the bishop undertakes a canonical visit to Siroki Brijeg and finds out that Jozo is hearing confessions in spite of his suspension. Two days later **the bishop formally suspends Jozo again** according to [Canon 1378, par 2](#). and notifies his Superior in the Franciscan Order. **Jozo disregards the suspension.**

June 11, 1998 During his ad limina-visit to Rome, Bishop Peric informs the Holy See of the situation.

2002 The Franciscan Provincial in Medjugorje promotes Jozo to Medjugorje devotees as a "devout priest" who "on invitation gives spiritual retreats on the island of Jakljan and in Medjugorje." The provincial was bold enough to make such licit public promotions while **failing to mention anything about Jozo's suspension or irregular status.**

June 26, 2004 Bishop Peric suspends Jozo for a third time on account **obstinate disobedience.** The bishop invites Jozo to the diocesan Curia to present him with documents detailing his unauthorized and illegitimate pastoral activities and others related to his 'moral' life.

Jozo again refuses to obey.

February 9, 2009 Jozo's personal assistant, Vesna Cuzic, informs all Medjugorje devotees, that Jozo will be unavailable for spiritual direction for the remainder of the year due to a need for convalescence while renovating buildings **on the island of Badija-**

Croatia.

Apparently, following the suspension of Fr. Tomislav Vlastic by the Vatican in 2008, a new commission took up Fr. Jozo's case. Fr. Jozo's superiors then finally complied with the bishop's requests: They confirmed his suspension by Bishop Zanic (1989) and sent him to a remote island of Badija **far from Medjugore** – if he is still hearing confessions etc. is another issue.

Conclusion

St. John of the Cross asserts that Our Lord “through His public revelation, has given all that is needed for salvation.”

“We must suspect those apparitions that lack dignity or proper reserve, and above all, those that are ridiculous. This last characteristic is a mark of human or diabolical machination.”

The priests advisors and spiritual confidants of the supposed seers certainly present a host of problems for Medjugorje. Their disobedience is a hallmark of willful pride and fraudulent practices. The children have been caught in numerous prevarications, and they, both priests and seers, implicate Our Lady in their designs making her to be the cause of their disobedience, which, according to the seers themselves, was supported by Our Lady even in the face of ecclesial pronouncements by both bishops and the Pope himself.

The theme of *disobedience, sexual aberrance*, and a new wrinkle – cultic *New Age Spirituality* – will be examined in Article Six wherein another Franciscan Friar, Spiritual Director, and Confidant of the “seers”, Father Tomislav Vlastic, is examined for all three of these transgressions.

In closing it is well to remember that Our LADY IS QUEEN MOTHER” OF THE “NEW ISRAEL”, A POWERFUL POSITION FROM WHICH SHE INTERCEDES FOR GOD’S PEOPLE AND DISPENSES GRACE NECESSARY FOR SALVATION AND SANCTIFICATION, SHE HAS NOT HOWEVER BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH THE POWER OF THE KEYS, THAT POWER HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED SOLELY TO PETER AND THE BISHOPS IN UNION WITH HIM.

[Go to Article Six: Tomislav Vlasic Laicized Medjugorje Spiritual Guide & New Age Master of "Manipulation"](#)