

Middle East on Fire

Commentary for March 17, 2016 — Sovereign Nations Are Failing

The title above may surprise some because the Middle East always seems to be “on fire.” At this moment the problems of the region, and the problems of the great powers outside the region, have increased to a great intensity and danger. Several nations in that region have become “failed states.” Simply put, a failed state is a country where the rule of law has collapsed and the government has little control over its population or borders.

“Failed states can no longer perform basic functions such as education, security, or governance, usually due to fractious violence or extreme poverty. Within this power vacuum, people fall victim to competing factions and crime, and sometimes the United Nations or neighboring states intervene to prevent a humanitarian disaster. However, states fail not only because of internal factors. Foreign governments can also knowingly destabilize a state by fueling ethnic warfare or supporting rebel forces, causing it to collapse.”

• *Global Policies Forum*, [“Failed States”](#)

In recent years Lebanon and Syria (both north of Israel), Iraq, Yemen (southwest of Saudi Arabia) have been identified as being failed states in the Middle East. Other failed states near the Middle East are Libya, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (a nuclear power northwest of India). Iraq and Libya have huge energy resources.

Unstable but not yet failed countries are Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and even Russia (a major nuclear power). One organization that monitors internal stability of countries is the [“Fund for Peace Fragile States Index 2015”](#), which lists the countries and gives criteria for their judgment while providing a useful map. In a March 1, 2016 British newspaper article in *The Telegraph*, [“Mapped: Which countries are the greatest threat to global stability?”](#) Ashley Kirk analyzed the information in the Fragile States Index:

“Reflective of the spiraling insecurity in the [post Arab Spring world](#), marred by complex local ethnic and social-economic tensions overlaid with sectarian Sunni and Shia divides and regional power plays, Libya, [Syria](#), Yemen and [Iraq](#) all made the top ten in the Most Worsened for 2015. ... Though each has its own conflict dynamics, political fragmentation and humanitarian crises, the deepening fragility across the four states over the past year is reshaping the whole regional landscape.”

Syria and Iraq today have meaningless borders. New political entities, like the Islamic State and the Kurdish semi-autonomous state are rising,¹ and more countries will be created in the future. War, mass killing, ethnic cleansing, and genocide may continue for a long, long time.

The February 16, 2016 article by Kamran Bokhari, [“The Destruction of the Iraqi and Syrian](#)

¹ The territory where Kurdish peoples live today approximates the old territory of Assyria in the times of ancient Israel and Judah. An “Assyria” will rise again before Christ returns.

[States](#)" from the analysis website [Geopolitical Futures](#) presents a short political history of Syria and Iraq. Bokhari wrote, **"Both countries have disintegrated to the point that their governments no longer have control."** Given the nature of the artificial borders created by victorious British and French powers after World War I, no one wants to return to the boundaries before the Arab Spring in 2011. The old borders were not based on natural geographical divisions of mountains or rivers, but were literally lines drawn on a map imposed by diplomats:

"Tensions were suppressed for decades by the post-colonial states of Syria and Iraq, which kept these ethnic and sectarian forces at bay. Regime change in Baghdad, followed by the efforts to undo its unintended consequences in Damascus, has led to the dismantling of these two neighboring states dominated by rival wings of the Baath Party. What remains is a landmass stretching from the Zagros Mountains to the Mediterranean Sea divided between different warlord-type forces. The Kurds control a good chunk of the northeastern part of this area, though their situation is very vulnerable given the lack of natural boundaries of defense and the fact that they are taking advantage of chaos. The Sunnis control the central parts of this territory while the Shia are in possession of the areas along the far eastern and western parts."

God Is in Control

If God is in control, why does He not stop this horror? He can do so, but He chooses not to do so at this time. After all, He is the God of the living (Mark 12:27), who will give life to the dead (Romans 4:17). Christ is now Lord of the dead and the living (Romans 14:9). Death is not a problem to God or Christ and they shall bring all to repentance (2 Peter 3:9), which God will do in His own good time (1 Timothy 4:10) through Christ; it is His will (1 Timothy 2:4). Death and suffering are part of His plan from the beginning, for us to learn and understand about life without God and Christ. **"The last enemy ... is death"** (1 Corinthians 15:26).

So at present God controls borders of countries and peoples, and He directs who their leaders are at any moment. (Reread my August 17, 2006 article ["The Bible and War in Lebanon"](#) where I explain this understanding.) God is working toward the scenario described in Psalm 83 where 10 nations around Israel are listed. These 10 nations will ally with Israel and then betray Israel before Christ returns. See Dr. Martin's article ["The Prophesied State of Palestine."](#) Therefore, it is necessary for several nations to be dissolved — to become "failed states" — so nations with new borders can come forth to fulfill God's prophecies.

The November 2016 Election in the United States

God will also choose who will be the next president of the United States. I vote in various elections because it is my legal right as a citizen, and I am interested to see if my votes for leaders (and my guesses as to who the winners will be) coincide with God's choices. At a moment's notice, God can raise up people to high office. Those same leaders can be removed just as quickly. It happened to Ariel Sharon. One moment he was Prime Minister of Israel, the next moment he was brain dead from an aneurism. He died January 11, 2014. Man proposes, God disposes. God is on His throne and prayer changes things.

David Sielaff
david@askelm.com