

A Perspective for Peace in Syria and the Region

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Prof. Bassam Tahhan: “What is happening in the world today, is a crusade against the Middle East. . . .”

Beyond the nuances of a complex reality, I would say, first of all, that what is happening in the world today, is a crusade against the Middle East, a *real* crusade. I will try and show the similarity between what we are experiencing today, and the Crusades of the past. However, it is not only a crusade, but also a new combat following on the Cold War. In addition to the “unipolar” world and the new world system that was supposed to be imposed, this dimension is undeniable.

Whoever wins the battle of Syria today, will win the first battle of this world, which tends to be bipolar. In other words, the United States and the West are aware that they are losing ground, and must therefore wage not only symbolic wars, but real wars, to assert themselves against Russia, Iran, and its allies in the so-called Shi’ite Crescent. (I claim to have coined the term, and I will come back to the background on this, and how it was misused by the Pentagon.)

The battle for Syria involves the entire world: the United States, Europe, the Eastern countries, and of course the geographical center, which is Syria, the Arab world, Turkey, etc.

I will begin with the Western camp, made up of the United States, England, France, Europe in general, and Germany—fortunately half-heartedly—and Turkey, which is an outpost of NATO. I will go into French policy more in detail. Why? Because the Crusades really very much started in France, and the others were then drawn in.

You probably don’t know a certain general, whose name is General [Henri] Gouraud, who conquered Syria during the 1920s. To give you an idea of the person: After being wounded in a battle, he was asked whether he would rather stay in the hospital for a few months to save his arm, or go back to fight after his arm was amputated, and he said: Okay, amputate my arm, and I will go back to the battlefield. Just a revealing detail.

This General Gouraud, the head of the anti-Syrian expedition, led the French troops who bombarded and occupied Damascus, which had just democratically

FIGURE 1



elected a Parliament, and which planned to create a state¹ representing all of the Near East—Lebanon, Jordan. This was under King Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussein of Mecca, a Hashemite.

A New Crusade

Now, why am I talking about General Gouraud and the Crusades? Because General Gouraud, when he was at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus—where you find the tomb of Saladin, who is a symbol for Islam and the Arabs, because he liberated Jerusalem—what did he say in front of Saladin’s tomb? “We’re back again, Saladin!” We’re back again, Saladin! The reference to the Crusades couldn’t be clearer.

So when we say the war ongoing in Syria is a new

1. The Arab Kingdom of Syria, which lasted from March to July 1920, encompassed the entire eastern Mediterranean coast, including Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine.

Crusade involving Western forces, we are not far from the truth at all. This also holds for all the nationalist colonial wars, waged by France and England mainly, because we can’t say that Germany was a major colonial power compared to those two, but everything is relative. It is the spirit of the Crusades that linked the colonial war in Syria, in application of Sykes-Picot, with what had happened in the past, with the two-century-long occupation of Palestine and Turkey, of Antioch. You see that geographically and geopolitically, all this is very close.

Allow me to remind you of some things about the actual Crusades. Today, we are told that the Pope should apologize to the Muslims because of the Crusades. But frankly, if the Pope were to apologize, he should address it to the Christians of the Orient, because it was after the Crusades that most of the Christians of the Orient converted by force to

Islam. That is a fact. If you read the chroniclers of the Crusades, they say that when Jerusalem was taken, they were proud that the blood came up above the hooves of the cavalry horses. Whom had they massacred? The Christians and the Jews of Jerusalem!

So, the idea of the Crusades setting out to save the Holy Sepulchre, and to safeguard the pilgrims, by securing the pilgrimage routes, was only a pretext. The proof is that different Crusades looted and sacked the Byzantine Empire. Who did it? Western Christianity.

Let me come back to what His Excellency the [Iranian] Ambassador [Sheikh Attar] said, namely, that for Samuel Huntington, Christianity is more Western than Eastern, which is an enormous absurdity, unworthy of a thinker. Why? May I remind you that St. John of Damascus was the author of the first theological summa in the world, well before St. Thomas of Aquinas. And allow me for once to act as the spokesman of



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Saladin (c. 1137-93), said Professor Tahhan, is a symbol for Islam and the Arabs, because he liberated Jerusalem from the Third Crusade. This equestrian statue of Saladin stands at the gate of Damascus.

that Eastern Christianity and to promote it.

To go back to the war against Syria today, of course, all the Christians of the Middle East are threatened, but not only the Christians—all minorities. Why? Because Western policy today is playing the ultra-Sunni orthodox card against the Shi'as, who, in my view, carry a revolutionary message, as a minority which has been persecuted throughout history. I will come back to the concept of the Shi'ite Crescent.

We mentioned the minorities, which takes us back in French policy to François I, [King of France from 1515-47], who had two concerns—the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Germany. He had to counteract them, and to ally with the Turks to do so. Then he obtained [from the Ottoman Empire] the “capitulations,” which gave France the right to safeguard the minorities. So when we speak of the Arab policy of France, we are referring, to begin with, to François I, who prohibited the massacre of these minorities.

This French policy was later taken up in Gaullism. But de Gaulle added something—a rapprochement with Germany. So that meant eliminating the Franco-German rivalry, while, at the same time, protecting the rights of the minorities and considering Islam in a different way.

What Is Left of Gaullism?

Now, tell me what is left of that Gaullism in France today? Not much. If you look at Franco-German relations, there is no love lost. There is no real European force emerging and asserting a political and strategic exception vis-à-vis the United States. Be it France or Germany, they are vassals, in a relation of servility; there is no independence. I wish someone could give me examples of where Europe actually has leeway to act.

Whenever the Europeans wanted to create an intervention force, it was never allowed by the Americans. But a self-respecting country must have the military means to carry out its policy. If the U.S. can make itself heard today, it's because they can mobilize in a matter of hours hundreds of thousands of men, fleets, artillery, etc. So we Europeans are mar-

ginalized. And in this particular casting, we do not have the leading role. Especially France, which just recognized the Coalition,² after first recognizing the Syrian National Council. Who is the majority in both of them? Islamists.

Let's not kid ourselves: Two-thirds of the SNC were from the Muslim Brotherhood! So don't tell me this Crusade was called to free democracy! No, it was done for economic and political reasons aimed at asserting power and preparing a confrontation, perhaps with the East. Because if Syria falls, it opens the way to destabilization of Iran, Russia, and China. Plus, there is a real moral problem in interventionism. What right do we have to intervene with foreign armies, or with foreign-financed extremist groups, to destabilize a country and overthrow a political regime? Whoever does it in Syria, can do it elsewhere.

Thus, France trespasses on her own principles, and not only France but the West. We are in Germany, the land of Kant, which has ethics. So tell me where the ethics are in this intervention. Where are the values of the Christian West, of the secular French

2. The Syrian Coalition of Secular and Democratic Forces, the opposition to the Assad government.

Revolution, of respecting the right of peoples to self-determination?

It seems to me that France deserves all the criticism imaginable, because it is playing a negative role. We are told, “No, we don’t want to arm the rebels”—only they don’t use the word rebels, because they are revolutionaries in their view—“We are not giving lethal weapons to these rebels, but only night goggles.” Which means they let other countries arm them, while we French only put the icing on the cake. . . .

The fact remains that those people are being armed; we are helping them acquire sophisticated electronic means to make the massacres even more effective. We need the audacity to say that other countries like England are arming them. And this takes us back to the Crusades. England was in the Crusades, and is today involved in all the wars in the Middle East. Blair is more of an advisor for war than for peace, be it in the Iraq War or the Syria War today.

And so we ask where is France headed, but also Germany. Germany is an important country. I see it from the outside, I have never lived in Germany, so you can take what I say for what’s it worth, maybe from someone who knows nothing of the problems in Germany, from a geopolitician born in Syria, who has lived in France for 40 years: I say Germany should get over her complex from the Second World War and give herself the means equal to her economic power.

If I were German, I could not live without a total right to exist as I see fit. But there is a constant attempt to marginalize Germany, perhaps because of her economic power worldwide. I don’t see why she does not have a seat on the Security Council. We have to get over the complexes of the Second World War, it’s behind us. We are building a new world now. How long will we accept the U.S. diktats, politically, economically, strategically—for what? If I were German, that would have infuriated me; it is somehow illogical. I would like to hear what you have to say about that.

Today, Blair is advising the Turkish government to deploy Patriot missiles at the Syrian border. Between us, I’m not afraid of the Patriots; I would advise the Americans to hire some German engineers, who could improve their performance. Experience has shown that the American Patriots did not perform very well, and they didn’t stop many of the missiles launched. I find this American arrogance revolting.

Why should Patriots be deployed at the Turkish border? I’ll tell you why, when we see what’s happening in Syria today. Because the Turkish army had the Parliament vote up the right to intervene on Syrian territory. But the city of Harem [on the Turkish border], the Western media do not mention at all; it’s almost amusing. Most of the information that we have on this Middle East crisis is all made up and falsified. This is a military campaign which came after a long campaign in the media to prepare public opinion for an intervention into Syria. Why Syria?

The ‘Shi’a Crescent’

That brings us to the Shi’a Crescent, a term which I claim to have coined.

I have been teaching geopolitics in France for about 30 years. Hafez al-Assad came to power in Syria, in 1970. For those who don’t know it, Hafez al-Assad is Alawite, so he belongs to a minority Shi’a community which was persecuted for centuries. To give you an idea of the hatred of all this Western and ultra-orthodox Sunni propaganda, one of the slogans of the rebels today is: “The Christians in Beirut, the Alawites in coffins.” (It rhymes in Arabic.)

To give you one example, when an Alawite would go through Latakia, a bag of garbage could be thrown at him. So you understand that when war broke out between Iran and Iraq—but here, I must disagree with His Excellency the Iranian Ambassador: The Syrian Ba’ath [party] was not helped by the West, but the Iraqi Ba’ath was helped in order to weaken the Syrian Ba’ath, which was supported at the time by the Soviet Union. And the only Arab country that supported Iran against Saddam Hussein was the Syrian Ba’ath, with Hafez al-Assad.

Assad came to power in 1970, and ten years later, came Khomeini’s revolution [in Iran]. In the meantime, Assad helped the Shi’a in South Lebanon, who are not Alawites, but are Shi’as close to him. It was at that point—I won’t hide it from you—that I said in my courses, that a Shi’a Crescent was being formed. I didn’t invent it; I was reading the history of the Shi’a Fatimid Egypt. In the 11th and 12th centuries, the Egyptian Fatimids created a Shi’a Renaissance that went all the way to the Far East; Iran was not yet Shi’ite at that time.

The idea of the Shi’a Crescent presented by the chroniclers of the time, was to have Shi’ite Egypt, and Syria with a Shi’a majority, encircle the Sunni caliphate

of Baghdad. This Shi'a Crescent succeeded rather well, since Iran became Shi'ite.

Today, the Shi'a Crescent is a positive concept, a revolution against a certain kind of Western thinking, and against the ultra-orthodox Islam which rejects free interpretation, or against the jihad. The Sunnis stopped making personal efforts to explain religion in the 10th Century, while the Shi'as did not. From that standpoint, Shi'ism is an open philosophical system, and as such, revolutionary.

After that, I was invited to the Joint Defense College. The first lecture I gave was on the Shi'a Crescent. This College is a strategic military college which trains some 500 generals per year from all over the world. I spoke of that on French television. And some months later, King Abdullah of Jordan, who is Sunnite but of course a Husseini, who was a Shi'a in the beginning, but became a Sunni under the influence of the Ottoman Empire—this King Abdullah was afraid of the Shi'a crescent, because of French policy after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

We have spoken here of water, but the natural border of Syria goes up to the mountainside of Taurus, the water-rich area of Turkey, which used to belong to Syria. As concessions to Turkey, France pushed back the borders three times, and Syria lost many cities because of that. Even worse, France betrayed her own Arab policy—the defense of minorities, because the capital of the Christians of the Orient, well before Rome, was Antioch; that is where Christians are named Christians in the Acts of the Apostles.

What the French monarchy never dared to do, the Republic did in 1938, by giving Antioch and Alexandria to the Turks after a referendum, in order to split Turkey from Germany. By so doing, it decapitated the Christians of the Orient, and wiped out the historical capital of Syria, Antioch, which had been founded by one of Alexander's generals, Antiochius, while Alexandria was founded by Alexander.

And that's not all. The north of Iraq, I have to say, including Mosul, was part of the blue part of the Sykes-Picot plan—i.e., it was part of France. But just consider the workings of colonialism: It gave Mosul to the English in order to have 23.5% of the oil revenues from the oil company.

Can you really expect the peoples of this region to believe in Western values? Where are the ethics to be found in a policy which takes a country and breaks it

up, giving some pieces to Iraq, or to the English, some to Turkey, while a buffer state is created in Jordan to allow the existence of Israel? And today, the real purpose of the battle for Syria is to break up Iran, and destroy the Shi'a crescent.

The Germans of the Middle East

Iraq has been razed to the ground. But what happened before that? They set up the Madrid Conference. What came out of that? It was just like a consolation prize for the Arabs, but nothing came out of it. It was just done in order to push [PLO leader Yassir] Arafat into signing the Oslo Accords. I am against Oslo, because each article of the agreement would need another conference, just as important. Did the Palestinians gain anything? Nothing.

And if you shatter Syria today, what will that do? You will shatter the only regular army which has not signed a peace treaty with Israel at a discount rate. Because Syria is being asked to sign a discount contract, and to lease the Golan [to Israel] for 99 years! The Golan is Syrian, and yet all of the West is defending that policy. This great Syrian army of half a million men must be...

Look, the Syrians are called the Germans of the Middle East. I am proud of that—maybe I'm even a bastard of Frederick the Great! In popular literature, to humiliate the Alawites of Syria, they are treated like Germans, as a way of saying they're not really Arabs, but leftovers of the Crusaders!

This propaganda is spread by the Allies. Who is going into Africa to set up Wahhabite mosques, with an imam in tow. They take some African, send him to Mecca, teach him the Wahhabite dogma. Then he goes home; he gets a beautiful mosque in marble, and is told: Now, you excommunicate all the moderate Muslims in the area.

Sunni Islam is not fanatic; there are magnificent things in Sunni Islam. I can give you an example: In Baghdad, there was a holy man called Abu Mansur al Hallaj, and there was a cabal against him because he said he communicated with God. The people demanded that he be crucified. While he was being crucified at the gates of Baghdad, one of his disciples passed and asked him: "What is mysticism?" He replied: "The lowest step of the ladder of mysticism is what you see: Crucifixion."

So you see how Sunni Islam has produced people of



The U.S. (G.W. Bush Administration) signed a pact with the family of Saud, charged Tahhan, where, in exchange for Saudi oil, the Saud family would be protected by the Americans for 60 years. Shown: President Bush with Saudi King Abdullah, April 25, 2005, at the Crawford ranch.

extraordinary spirituality. But today, that heritage is not being supported [by the West], but rather, a Wahhabite sect [is being supported]. The roots of Wahhabism in Islam are not deep; it was born in the 19th Century. What happened, is that all of us here in this room, everywhere in Europe, were subjected to the American diktat. They signed [a pact] with the family of Saud, made up of 25,000 princes who exploit the riches of Arabia, which don't belong to them. England gave it to them first, then the Americans followed, and in 2005, [George W.] Bush renewed the contract, where in exchange for Saudi oil, the Saud family would be protected for 60 more years. That shocks me. I was brought up in the century of reason, with Kant's morals, Hegel's dialectics, so I can't accept that on an international level.

And this is where we see that your movement is really extraordinary; it is the dissonant note in the landscape.

Syria Today

Let me come back to Syria today in order to refute the media which hide the truth. I am in contact with Syria on a daily basis. I come from the city of Aleppo. Out of the 3,000 factories Aleppo used to have, there are only a few dozen left. They have been bombed by the rebels. Mr. Ambassador mentioned 5,000 jihadists. In fact, it's more, it's much more. They are importing them by air cargo, Yemenites, Somalis, Libyans; an Is-

lamist International is coming to fight in Syria, massacring the minorities and the moderates. If you're walking down the street and somebody cries out, you have to answer "Allahu Akbar!" Allah is great. For the whole time you're out walking, you have to scream that.

You are told that the loyalist Army is bombing pharmacies. I do not defend the Syrian government, which is a kleptocracy. But that can in no way justify what is happening today, nor the support given by the West to these rebels. Before the events, the right-hand man of [Osama] bin Laden called on al-Qaeda people to go to Syria. A few weeks ago, [al-Qaeda leader Ayman] Zawahiri repeated his call.

Explain to me such paradoxes: When we in the West helped America wage war against Afghanistan, how can we send weapons to the jihadists in Syria?

In the beginning, I was told: Mr. Tahhan, you're a liar. But look at the latest information: The Islamist emirate of Aleppo, with its two battalions, does not recognize the Coalition. Don't tell me there are no Islamists in Aleppo; they're setting up Inquisition tribunals! You are told that, in the liberated parts, the law will be different. But it's the Sharia [Islamic law]! Tell me if the West is not only hypocritical, but criminal. The arms that England will send will be used to massacre people.

Why the Crusades? There were Christians fighting on the Muslim side against the Crusaders at the time; and there were Arab Muslims who made a deal with the Crusaders and betrayed their brothers. Today, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are like those Bedouins you read about in the chronicles of the Crusades who joined the Western camp for one reason or another.

What is shocking is that the Western media think we are naive; like sheep, we are supposed to clap, say yes, avoid any personal judgment. This is enormous. We are participating in crime: arming the rebels in Syria today means participating in organized crime. And what for? To cut the wings of Iran. It was not possible to attack Iran frontally, or the Hezbollah for that matter.

As Mme. [Helga Zepp-]LaRouche said this morning, the ground has to be cleared first, and the test began in Gaza. They couldn't attack the Hezbollah because it's not a state, and it would have responded. They could not attack Iran, because it's so big, with hundreds of thousands of missiles and a huge surface, everyone would have to join in to bring Iran to its knees. Only the weak part was left in the cross-hairs: Syria.

Then the Arab Spring fell from Heaven. So, no need

anymore to provoke something in order to attack Syria: The worm is in the apple. They only had to help the Arab Spring, hijack it, and destroy the country. I say there will not be an intervention, because if they arm the rebels, the Syrian Army will fall apart, little by little, and the country is over 50% destroyed anyway.

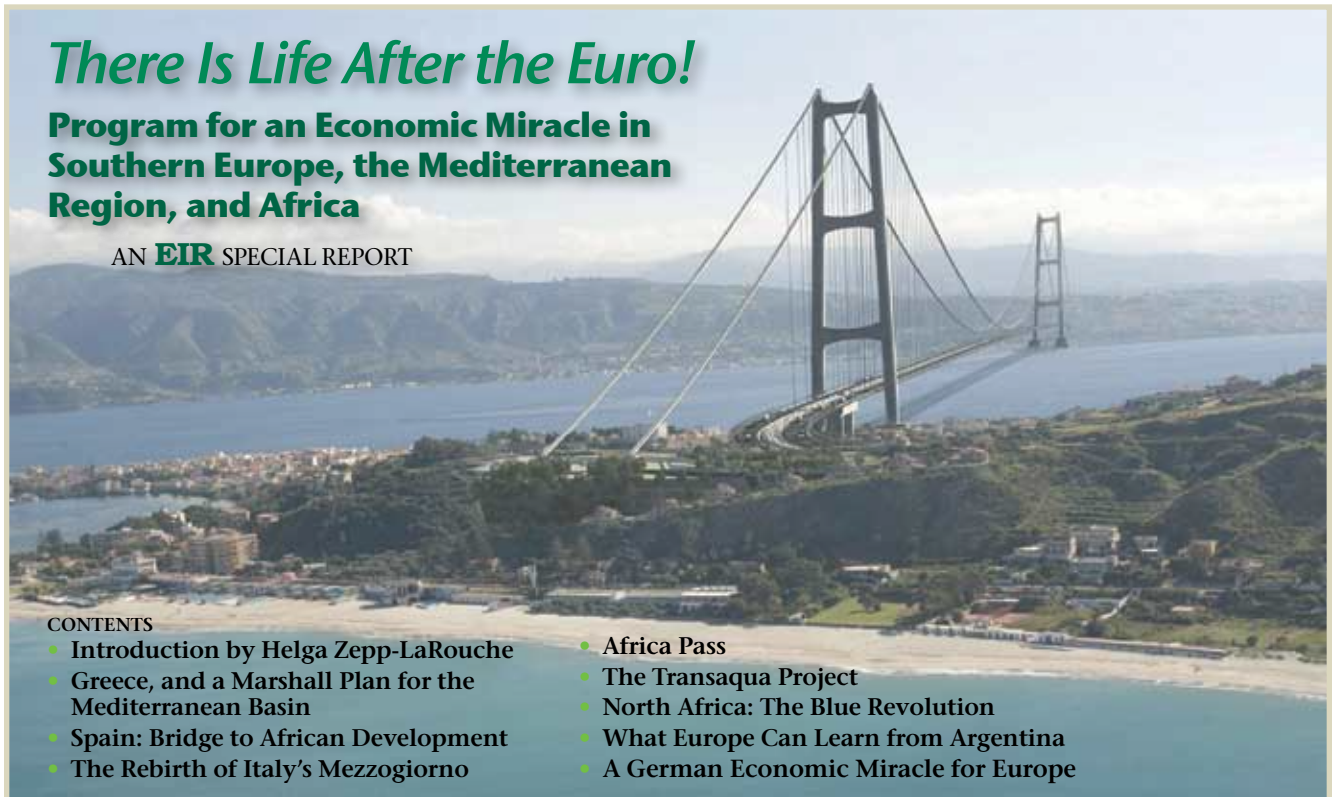
Let me give you one example of the rebels in Aleppo: You know the town of Oradour-sur-Glane, the sad history of that small French village, where everyone was burned in the church [in World War II]. There was an Oradour one and a half months ago in al-Jdeideh, the Christian quarter [in Aleppo], dating back to the 16th/17th centuries. There was an old house, a bit like in the Marais [area of Paris], with beautiful homes; and President Bashar al-Assad used to dine in this luxury hotel, an old Christian house, the Zamaria Hotel. The Islamists attacked al-Jdeideh, and all the Alawite or so-called pro-government families were rounded up in that hotel. They took two tanks of gasoline and let the hotel burn for three days. But you hear nothing about that. The Syrian Observatory in London, which is helped by the British Secret Services, tells you how many deaths occur per day. But they don't say where.

As for the pharmacies, the rebels are the ones looting them, and they destroy all the infrastructure to punish the city of Aleppo for not joining the rebellion, and the factories are taken apart and sold to Turkey. Why is Turkey linked to the Crusades? If you take this little strip on the Turkish border, this is where the small crusading kingdoms were.

So, we come full circle. We have the West, with the blessing of the U.S., and the border outpost of Turkey, who are out to engage war against the Shi'a Crescent. If the Shi'a Crescent were allowed to unite with the Sunni Crescent, its destiny would be a full Moon, and perhaps that is what worries the West.

If you wage this war, what will happen is simple. You will have new wars, and this time, the rebels you are promoting might make it beyond Poitiers.³ Otherwise, there are other revolutionaries who will go beyond Poitiers, and the Arab Spring will no longer be Arab, but European.

3. In the Battle of Poitiers (also known as the Battle of Tours), in 732, the Franks, commanded by Charles Martel, halted the expansion of the Umayyad Caliphate; in 1356, English forces won a second Battle of Poitiers during the Hundred Years War.



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