



PROPHETIC TIMES

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RELIGION MAY BECOME EXTINCT IN NINE NATIONS, STUDY SAYS

March 23, 2011 BBC News reported: "A study using census data from nine countries shows that religion there is set for extinction, say researchers. The study found a steady rise in those claiming no religious affiliation.

The team's mathematical model attempts to account for the interplay between the number of religious respondents and the social motives behind being one. The result, reported at the American Physical Society meeting in Dallas, US, indicates that religion will all but die out altogether in those countries.

The team took census data stretching back as far as a century from countries in which the census queried religious affiliation: Australia, Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Switzerland.

Nonlinear dynamics is invoked to explain a wide range of physical phenomena in which a number of factors play a part.

One of the team, Daniel Abrams of Northwestern University, put forth a similar model in 2003 to put a numerical basis behind the decline of lesser-spoken world languages. At its heart is the competition between speakers of different languages, and the 'utility' of speaking one instead of another.

'The idea is pretty simple,' said Richard Wiener of the Research Corporation for Science Advancement, and the University of Arizona.

'It posits that social groups that have more members are going to be more attractive to join, and it posits that social groups have a social status or utility.'

'For example in languages, there can be greater utility or status in speaking Spanish instead of [the dying language] Quechuan in Peru, and similarly there's some kind of status or utility in being a member of a religion or not.'

Dr Wiener continued: 'In a large number of modern secular democracies, there's been a trend that folk are identifying themselves as non-affiliated with religion; in the Netherlands the number was 40%, and the highest we saw was in the Czech Republic, where the number was 60%.'..."



JAPAN: WHO WARNS OF 'SERIOUS' FOOD RADIATION

March 21, 2011 YnetNews.com reports: "China and South Korea announced on Monday they will toughen checks of Japanese food for radioactivity, hours after the World Health Organization said the detection of radiation in some food in Japan was a more serious problem than it had expected.

China will monitor food imported from Japan for signs of radiation, state news agency Xinhua reported, citing the national quality watchdog, while South Korea will widen radiation inspections to dried agricultural and processed food from fresh agricultural produce.

The WHO said it had no evidence of contaminated food spreading internationally, but officials in Japan's Ibaraki and Fukushima prefectures, the areas closest to the earthquake-damaged Daiichi nuclear plant, found higher than usual levels of iodine in samples of spinach and milk.

'Quite clearly it's a serious situation,' Peter Cordingley, Manila-based spokesman for WHO's regional office for the Western Pacific, told Reuters in a telephone interview on Monday.

'It's a lot more serious than anybody thought in the early days when we thought that this kind of problem can be limited to 20 to 30 kilometers,' he said.'..."

TURKEY WARY AT FELLOW NATO MEMBER FRANCE'S 'PROMINENT ROLE' IN LIBYA

March 22, 2011 VOANews.com reported: "Turkey's prime minister has criticized the severity of the ongoing military operation in Libya, as proposals are being made to transfer control of the operation to NATO. There are questions about whether Turkey, as a NATO member, would accept such a move. Analysts say Ankara's stance could well be influenced by tensions with France.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan used his weekly address to his parliamentary deputies to slam the Western-led air strikes in Libya, and he questioned their stated humanitarian motive. He said the operation is being perceived by Libya and others as oil- and profit-oriented and as an intervention by the West. He said Turkey will not be on the side that points a gun towards Libya.

Mr. Erdogan has been deeply skeptical of any intervention since the beginning of the popular uprising against Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi. Until the last few days, he refused to join his Western allies in calling on Mr. Gadhafi to stand down. Such a stance plays well in Turkey, which remains deeply suspicious of Western military intervention in Muslim countries, according to diplomatic correspondent Semih Idiz of the Turkish daily Milliyet.

"He [Erodgan] is trying to balance his own public opinion in an election year, and he is trying to balance the commitment Turkey has to the

various organizations it is a member of or wants to be a member of. So this is a subtle balancing act that he is maintaining, but the bottom line will be if Turkey can come out and say clearly no in NATO," Idiz said.

Mr. Erdogan, in his Tuesday address, seemed to hint that Turkey could use its veto as a NATO member to stop the alliance from taking control of the Libyan military operation. He said only the United Nations should lead such an operation."..."

MIDDLE EAST BOILS WITH LIBYA STRIKES, YEMEN ON BRINK

March 21, 2011 SpaceWar.com reported: "The Middle East boiled on Monday after fresh air strikes in Libya, a mass protest in Syria and Yemen on the brink after top generals backed protesters battling to overthrow President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Tanks deployed in key locations across Yemen's capital Sanaa including at the presidential palace, the central bank and the ministry of defence, but it was unclear what their orders were or who was in command.

In the first of a series of body blows to Saleh's authority, General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, commander of the Northwest Military District which includes Sanaa, announced he had joined the "revolution."...

Ahmar was followed by fellow generals Mohammed Ali Mohsen, the Eastern Military district chief, Nasser Ali Shuaybi in Hadramawt province and Faisal Rajab in the southern province of Lahij.

Dozens of officers of various ranks went to the tent city near Sanaa University, where demonstrators have kept vigil since February 21 in spite of a wave of attacks, and publicly pledged to support the revolution.

The deputy speaker of parliament, Himyar al-Ahmar, and the governor of the key southern province of Aden, Ahmed Qatabi, also resigned in protest at the treatment of demonstrators.

Sadiq al-Ahmar, who leads the Hashid tribal federation, the largest in deeply tribal Yemen and a crucial source of Saleh's power, told Al-Jazeera it was time for the embattled president to make a "quiet exit."

In Cairo, Saleh's envoys to Egypt and the Arab League, Abdel Wali al-Shemiri and Abdel Malek Mansur, also abandoned him and "joined the revolutionaries," a diplomat told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The defections came a day after Saleh sacked his cabinet in a bid to placate opposition calls for sweeping reforms in the key US ally.

The regime has already lost the support of religious leaders and been weakened by the resignations of ministers, ambassadors and a host of ruling party MPs, but Saleh has refused to stand down until his term ends in 2013."..."

The defection of top officers to the opposition is likely to complicate Washington's support for Saleh, whom it sees as a pillar of stability in a volatile country and a partner in the war against Al-Qaeda."..."

EU LEADERS DISCUSS SPREADING DEBT CRISIS

March 24, 2011 VOANews.com reported: "European leaders are holding talks Thursday and Friday on ways to halt the spread of the eurozone debt crisis that has led to the resignation of Portugal's prime minister.

Even before European Union leaders gathered in Brussels, two events served to remind them that the economic crisis is far from over. Late Wednesday, Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Socrates submitted his resignation after the parliament rejected his latest austerity budget. And thousands of workers demonstrated in the Belgium capital against economic reforms they claim are too pro-business.

EU leaders were supposed to agree during this summit to a comprehensive set of steps to prevent the spread of the financial crisis within the 17 nations sharing the euro currency. But analysts like Olivier Jehan, head of the Brussels office of the French Institute of International Relations, doubt that will happen."..."

Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, whose population has balked at bailing out debt-strapped members like Greece, also is facing key regional elections. Berlin is likely to demand tougher conditions for lending to poorer members.

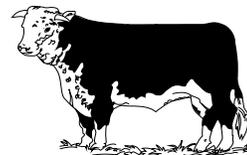
In Portugal, Prime Minister Socrates has been reluctant to follow the path of Greece and Ireland, which both accepted EU bailouts. Jehan doubts a debt measure for Portugal will be agreed to this month."..."

WORST TEXAS DROUGHT IN 44 YEARS ERODING WHEAT, BEEF SUPPLY AS FOOD RALLIES

March 23, 2011 Bloomberg.com reported: "The worst Texas drought in 44 years is damaging the state's wheat crop and forcing ranchers to reduce cattle herds, as rising demand for U.S. food sends grain and meat prices higher.

Texas, the biggest U.S. cattle producer and second-largest winter-wheat grower, got just 4.7 inches (12 centimeters) of rain on average in the five months through February, the least for the period since 1967, State Climatologist John Nielsen-Gammon said. More than half the wheat fields and pastures were rated in poor or very poor condition on March 20.

Dry conditions extending to Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado may cut crop yields in the U.S., the world's largest exporter, as too much moisture threatens fields in North Dakota and in Canada. Wheat futures in Chicago are up 50 percent in the past year, after drought in Russia and floods in Australia hurt output and sent global food prices surging. Wholesale beef reached a record this week, and the U.S. cattle herd in January was the smallest since 1958."..."



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