

A WORLD IN MOTION



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Emmanuel Macron became France's youngest president in a decisive victory over far-right rival, Marine Le Pen.

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The new silk road, or 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR) connecting China to Europe via Asia, has the potential to open doors for Chinese missionaries.

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US president Trump met with Palestinian Authority leader Abbas to discuss the possibilities of reigniting the peace process.

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THE NUMBERS: FRENCH ELECTIONS



07.05.2017

The date of the run-off election after no candidate won a majority in the first round on 23.04.17



31,397,916

The number of votes counted in the second round



66.1%

The percentage of voters who elected Macron over Le Pen (33.9%)



84%

The share of the vote Macron attained of the top 10% most educated districts

MACRON SECURES PRESIDENCY WITH DECISIVE VICTORY



By *Cherolyn Amery*

Centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron decisively won the French presidential election, defeating far-right candidate Marine Le Pen. Mr Macron won by 66.06% to 33.94% to become, at 39, the country's youngest president. Mr Macron will also become the first president from outside the two traditional main parties since the modern republic's foundation in 1958. He said that a new page was being turned in French history. "I want it to be a page of hope and renewed trust," he said. *(BBC News)*

Significance of the elections

Much was riding on this French election. On a national level, the French electorate chose between two candidates who both promoted visions of the future that differed greatly from what has previously been in place, and whose visions were entirely opposed. On a regional level, the future of the European Union (EU) may have rested on these elections (France is a founder member of the EU, and if Ms Le Pen had won, she would have pushed to leave the bloc in a similar way to Britain's exit). On an international level, a Le Pen victory would have been a third and critical indication that the growing frustration with Western political establishments was becoming an unstoppable global populist force (Brexit and Donald Trump's election were two 'tipping point' events that pointed towards widespread political shifts).

Mr Macron's victory was obviously a huge relief for EU politicians. Despite calling for some EU reforms, he fully supports the bloc and promotes the EU system as the "best guarantor of peace"

for the continent (*Washington Post*). As well as affecting the EU, a victory for Ms Le Pen could have potentially threatened NATO and other key aspects of the trans-Atlantic alliance.

Within France, there was much rejoicing about Mr Macron's victory, but there is also some uncertainty about what the future holds because the 'old model' of doing things has theoretically gone out the window. In the past, power has mostly swung between the left-leaning Socialists and the right-leaning Republicans, but controversy and antagonism toward both the mainstream parties created a gap and allowed the 'untested' new leader to rise to the front.

Moving forward

Mr Macron now has some major challenges to face as he assumes leadership of the country. Even though he won by a large margin against Ms Le Pen, many who voted for him did not actively support him but were rather voting against his opponent. Additionally, more than 25% of France's eligible voters chose to abstain, and a record 11.5% of ballots cast were intentionally left blank or were spoilt.

The new president's party, En Marche! (meaning "On the Move!" or "Onward!"), has only been in existence since April 2016 and has no parliamentary seats. The party will participate in the upcoming legislative elections (11 and 18 June), but Mr Macron is expected to form a coalition. His leadership team will then have to deal with significant issues: unemployment (nearing 10%, and 25% for under-25s), a struggling economy, terrorism threats (more than 230 people have died in terror attacks since January 2015), and deep cultural rifts (particularly relating to France's Muslim population, the largest in Europe).

Enduring nationalism

Despite her defeat, Ms Le Pen (and the 11 million who voted for her) cannot be ignored or written off. Her gains in this electoral period were double



Mosul's wrecked roads, bridges and broader economy will take at least five years to repair and need billions of dollars of development that Iraq's government will struggle to afford, officials returning to the battle-scarred city said. The airport, railway station and university were all destroyed in the long fight to dislodge Islamic State militants from their main Iraqi stronghold.



The **Palestinian** Islamist group Hamas recently dropped its longstanding call for Israel's destruction, but said it still rejected the country's right to exist and backs "armed struggle" against it. In a policy document presented in Doha by its leader Khaled Meshaal, Hamas also said it would end its association with the Muslim Brotherhood, a move apparently aimed at improving ties with Gulf Arab states and Egypt, which view the Brotherhood as a terrorist group.



As **US** administration drafts an Afghanistan policy, officials are seeking ways to reverse gains by militant groups without wading deeper into a 15-year-long war that has no end in sight. Officially, the US-led international force in Afghanistan ceased combat operations at the end of 2014, but the conflict has proved difficult to exit without risking the overthrow of the government in Kabul.

those of her father (founder of Ms Le Pen's National Front party) when he ran for president in 2002. She has worked hard to make the party more 'socially acceptable', even while denouncing immigration, refugees, minorities (particularly Muslims) and the EU.

Analysts suggest that if Mr Macron 'fails', the populist and nationalist voice is likely to grow stronger than ever, along with the appeal of Ms Le Pen (or others like her).

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

According to the *Economist*, "the old divide between left and right is growing less important than a new one between open and closed" and "the resulting realignment will have reverberations far beyond France's borders". Griff Witte of the *Washington Post* echoes this, saying that the "new fracture lines in modern politics... bear little relation to the relatively modest differences marking the old left-right divide", and that the French elections "illustrated the profound new chasm in the West: between those who favour open, globalised societies and others who prefer closed, nationalised ones".

These dividing lines can be seen in the Church as well, not only in France but throughout the world. In Europe in particular, the Church is faced with the option of opening itself up to refugees and offering refuge and welcome, or adding its voice to those who want to protect themselves against a 'Muslim threat'. Even in countries where Christians are persecuted, the Church faces a dilemma: to welcome Muslims who come seeking a different truth, or to close their doors to possible Muslim converts in fear of a possible backlash from the community.

Mr Macron's election may be keeping France's doors 'open' for a while longer, and now is an opportune time for the Church (however small it is in France) to display a similar attitude for the sake of the Gospel. This is also true for the wider Western Church, in places where political norms are undergoing seismic shifts.

PRAY > For the newly elected president as he forms a government and works towards unifying a deeply divided nation > For French believers to intentionally share the Gospel of truth and hope

NEW 'SILK ROAD' OPENS DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY



By Andrew Richards

The first ever direct train from Britain to China arrived in the eastern city of Yiwu at the weekend [Saturday 29 April] after a 7,456-mile journey. The 'East Wind' locomotive travelled through seven countries before arriving at its destination with a cargo of 88 shipping containers filled with alcohol, pharmaceuticals and baby products. It left London on 10 April and its journey took several days longer than expected. But officials said transporting goods by train is about a month faster than by ship. (*The Independent*)

New silk road

In January, China sent its first freight train across Asia to London by using the 'new silk road' connecting China with Europe. The journey took 17 days from Yiwu in Zhejiang Province to Barking in East London. Economists suggest that the addition of the UK as the 15th country to have a direct rail link with China is London's effort to try and strengthen its trade with the rest of Europe and Asia as it prepares to leave the European Union as part of Brexit.

The new silk road, or 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR) as it is known in China, is primarily

aimed at building China's economy. The overflow, however, will benefit all the countries along the trade route. China is set to profit from the new silk road, with the *Financial Times* estimating "\$900bn of planned investments ranging from ports in Pakistan and Sri Lanka to high-speed railways in east Africa to gas pipelines crossing central Asia". With the railroad crossing several Muslim majority countries, a question has been asked: in what way is the Church in China taking advantage of China's economic expansion?

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

In 2011, one hundred Chinese church leaders met together at a special Lausanne Movement conference in Seoul, South Korea, pledging 20,000 missionaries by the year 2030. The special conference was held for Chinese church leaders who were detained before they could board flights to South Africa in 2010 to participate in a gathering of evangelical church leaders from all over the world (the third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation that was held in Cape Town). The goal of 20,000 missionaries was further confirmed during a 2015 gathering of more than 850 Chinese church leaders at a missions conference in Hong Kong.

When considering 20,000 missionaries from the Church in China, there are several questions that arise. Firstly, are there enough Christians in China for the Church to 'give' so many towards missions? Secondly, is China not still a communist country in need of missionaries? Why then would the Chinese Church send so many outside the borders of China? Thirdly, with the Chinese government placing severe restrictions on the Church, how are Chinese missionaries to fulfil their mission?

NEWS HEADLINES



The number of **Ethiopians** who need food aid owing to drought has surged by more than two million from 5.6 million at the beginning of the year, an official said. Some areas of Ethiopia's Oromiya, Amhara and SNNP regions are now facing severe water shortages, in addition to areas where the main harvests had failed this year.



The leader of **Mozambique's** Renamo opposition party and rebel movement said he was extending a ceasefire indefinitely, part of an agreement reached in talks with the government to end violence since a disputed 2014 election. Renamo and the ruling Frelimo party fought on opposing sides of a civil war (1976 to 1992) in which a million people died before a peace accord was signed.



The **Taliban** says its annual spring offensive will be a mix of conventional, guerrilla and suicide attacks on Afghan and foreign forces, underlining the challenges facing the US administration as it weighs its options. Dubbed Operation Mansouri, after former leader Akhtar Mohammad Mansour killed last year in a US drone strike, the announcement came a week after one of the most devastating attacks on Afghan forces since the Taliban was driven from power 15 years ago.

To answer the first question, the Center for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC) estimates that by the year 2050 the Chinese Church will be 330 million members strong. According to Todd Johnson, director of CSGC, the global average for Christians sending foreign missionaries is 175 per million. If China has 100 million Christians, sending 17,500 would meet the average. According to Luis Bush, who attended the Hong Kong conference, "the idea of the 20,000 was based on a gospel debt or missional debt... they see themselves as an extremity of Acts 1:8."

The second question is perhaps not only for China, but reflects what most Christians ask of missionaries who cross the borders of their own countries to reach the lost in another: why go to another country when the local need is just as much? The *Atlas of Global Christianity* provides a striking picture of just how unbalanced 'servants' are distributed within the Church, for the work of the Church. In 2010, China sent just over 5,600 missionaries to other nations, with more than 237,000 national workers (in-house missionaries) sent out across China to reach their communist countrymen. In other words, the lost in China are not forgotten. (In comparison, South Africa sent out 8,000 while 190,000 served in the country, including 12,000 missionaries that came from other countries.)

The third question – how Chinese missionaries are to fulfil their mission if the government places so

many restrictions on the sending Church – is answered in the form of China's economic ambitions. The 'One Belt, One Road' initiative, inspired by Chinese President Xi Jinping, is focused on improving China's economic ties with Europe, Asia and the Middle East. While China grows its economy, every train that leaves towards Europe opens a door for Chinese missionaries to cross the border. Through Chinese companies directed to build the OBOR, Chinese missionaries have gained opportunities to enter various Muslim countries in the Middle East. China also plans to build a \$46 billion economic corridor (pipeline, rails and roads) through Pakistan. This country of more than 180 million people (95 percent Muslim) could be the recipient of hundreds of Chinese missionaries who either join the Chinese workforce in building the corridor, or make use of the economic relationship between the two countries by opening a business there.

God is using a Communist government to open doors for His Kingdom throughout the world. Pray that more and more Chinese churches will identify the hand of God in China's global economic ambitions.

PRAY > For Chinese believers to seize this opportunity to enter "unreached" areas > For an increase in the number of Chinese missionaries reaching beyond their borders > For a 'rich' harvest

US PRESIDENT MEETS WITH PA LEADER ABBAS



By **Donnelly McClelland**

President Donald Trump said he is confident he can broker a Middle East peace deal, telling Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas at the White House [on 3 May] that he wants to prove sceptics wrong by reaching a goal that has eluded successive US administrations.

A peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians "is frankly, maybe not as difficult as people have thought over the years," Trump told reporters at the beginning of a lunch between the US and Palestinian delegation. Minutes earlier, delivering a statement in the Roosevelt Room alongside Abbas, Trump said, "We will get it done." The US president, a former real-estate developer and author of the 'Art of the Deal', added that throughout his life, "I've always heard that perhaps the toughest deal to make is the deal between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Let's see if we can prove them wrong, OK?" (**Bloomberg**)

What the 'deal' entails

Two peoples fighting for generations about one piece of land – that is still the core of the conflict. The issues have not changed much. However, it is simply not as straightforward as Mr Trump would like to imply. Some hurdles he will need to overcome in the process include twenty-five years of failed peace talks, more than one hundred years of hatred and mistrust, one side's best offer not even meeting the other side's minimum requirements, dealing with Palestinian and Israeli leaders who not only wrestle with each other but also with hard-liners on their own side who have already proven their willingness to scuttle any agreement that relies (as any agreement must) on compromise, and lastly (and possibly pointedly in the context of the meeting of Mr Trump and Mr Abbas), the fact that Mr Abbas is disliked and mistrusted by his own people, two-thirds of whom said last year that he should resign.

Other issues to consider include how to divide resources, including water (and recently discovered gas and oil reserves), what to do about the millions of Palestinian refugees, and how to handle the 1.6 million Palestinians under Hamas rule in the Gaza Strip (Mr Abbas leads the rival Fatah faction in the West Bank).

What the meeting achieved

The meeting was big on promise, but short on specifics. It did, however, bring the Palestine-Israel

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conundrum right back into view when it had begun to look like it would be all but forgotten in a deeply troubled region. It also demonstrated that the Trump administration considers the Palestinian Authority an important international factor and essential role-player within the region. Mr Abbas was among the first 10 leaders received at the White House since Mr Trump took office, thus elevating him, for now at least, to the status of equal partner to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who Mr Trump already hosted back in February this year. It has raised Mr Abbas' standing internationally, affording him a measure of credibility, while domestically his legitimacy has been called into question (he was elected in 2005 and is now in the eighth year beyond the expiration of his term, with no new elections in sight).

What the meeting did not achieve

Back in February, during Mr Netanyahu's visit, Mr Trump expressed a willingness to abandon the long-standing US stance that any resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict should be based on a two-state solution (a final settlement that would see the creation of an independent state of Palestine within pre-1967 ceasefire lines in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, living peacefully alongside Israel), hoping that would spur the two sides to look for more creative solutions.

The meeting with Mr Abbas did not see Mr Trump endorse the two-state solution or propose an alternative. Mr Abbas also appears not to have gotten the assurances he wanted over a settlement freeze (Israel continues to build settlements within areas considered to be illegally occupied after the 1967 war), which his advisors said before the meeting was a requirement for a

process to begin. Lastly, he does not seem to have a commitment, at least not a public one, that the frame of reference for talks to resume will be 'land for peace'.

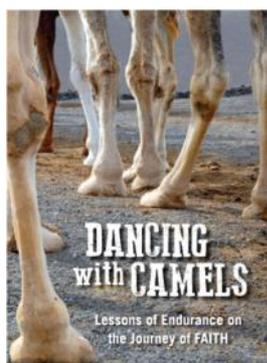
FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Chris Eden, South African National Director of Bridges for Peace (a ministry aimed at providing Christians with an opportunity to support Israel by building relationships between Christians and Jews in Israel and around the world), makes the following points (from a prophetic perspective): "My take is that there is a process underway where God is authenticating Himself and challenging all other powers that have raised themselves up. Islam is a good illustration of this. Despite the quest to return to a 7th century purity, Islam has only delivered increasing misery to its adherents. This failure is magnified by not just the existence, but indeed the success of Israel. A successful 'peace' process that divides up the land and scatters the Jewish people contradicts God's plan of gathering and restoring, and in fact is the very criteria that the prophet Joel (Ch.3) records as the basis for the judgement of the nations."

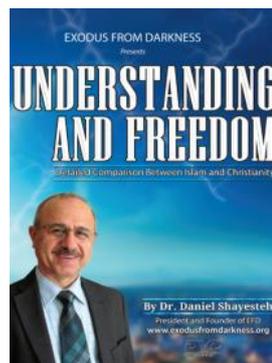
Joel 3:1-2 states, "For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of My people and My heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up My land..."

PRAY > For wisdom for the US government as they attempt to resurrect the peace process > For a genuine desire for peace on both sides: Palestinians and Israelis

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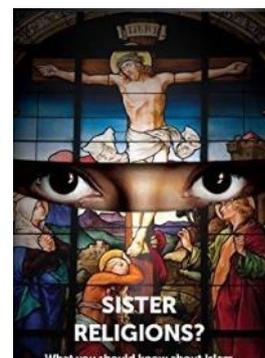
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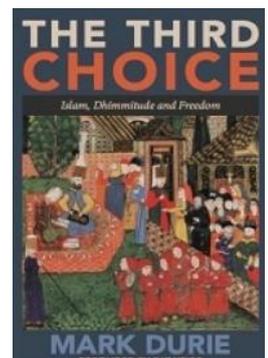
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