

A WORLD IN MOTION



ISSUE 196 | 7 JUNE 2018

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Russia reaffirmed its longstanding relationship with North Korea (DPRK) by extending an invitation to Kim Jong-un to visit the country.

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THE NUMBERS

RUSSIA-NORTH KOREA



1961

The year in which North Korea and the Soviet Union signed the "Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance"



±32,000

The approximate number of North Korean labourers in Russia, though under UN Resolution 2397, many are being sent home



19 km

The length of the shared border



1 million

The estimated number of North Koreans with some command of the Russian language

RUSSIA INVITES KIM JONG-UN FOR A VISIT



By Donnelly McClelland

Russia has invited North Korean leader Kim Jong-un to visit the country, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on 4 June. Peskov said Kim may visit Russia as part of an economic forum held in the far eastern city of Vladivostok in September. The Kremlin's invitation comes days after Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visited North Korea. (Reuters)

A complicated relationship

Russia (and the former Soviet Union) is the oldest friend and mentor of the ruling family in Pyongyang, but it has not always been a straightforward relationship. The Kim family escaped from Japanese-occupied Korea to the Soviet Union in 1920, when North Korea's revered founder, Kim Il-sung, was only eight years old. He grew up in Russia and joined the Red Army to fight the Japanese in Manchuria. After World War II he returned to his country and, with some Soviet backing, went on to lead North Korea's Communist Party and lay the foundations for a new state, north of the 38th parallel. Diplomatic relations between North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK) and the Soviet Union (USSR, the predecessor state to the Russian Federation) were first established on 12 October 1948 shortly after the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was proclaimed.

During the Korean war, the Korean People's Army received much support from the Soviet military forces. As part of the Communist bloc, North Korea received major Russian support through the years. However, during the China-Soviet split in the

1960s, the North Korean government tried to maintain relations with both countries. The Soviet government contributed hugely to North Korea during the Cold War, but under Mikhail Gorbachev, they began to reduce aid to North Korea after 1985 in favour of reconciliation with the South. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 90s, the new Russian government under Boris Yeltsin refused to provide support for North Korea, favouring South Korea instead. The catastrophic famine in North Korea in the 90s has been indirectly linked to this cut in Soviet support.

Relations improved under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, but North Korea's nuclear ambitions continued to strain their interactions. In 2006 and 2009, Russia supported the UN Security Council's resolutions, condemning North Korea's missile testing. They also supported sanctions against North Korea, but were frequently accused of being lax about the implementation thereof (and even violating the sanctions).

Russia's ongoing interest

Some analysts view the latest invitation and visit by Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to Pyongyang as an indication of Russia's wariness of American influence in East Asia, and an attempt at remaining relevant in the negotiation process. Kim Jong-un is reported to have said to Lavrov: "As we move to adjust to the political situation in the face of US hegemonism, I am willing to exchange detailed and in-depth opinions with your leadership and hope to do so moving forward." This could be viewed as playing towards Russia's insecurities regarding a potential growth in US interests in the Far East, in the hope of retaining their support should the summit with the US not go in their favour on 12 June.

It is in Russia's interest to see a denuclearised and potentially peaceful Korean peninsula as it would open up many lucrative economic opportunities. The possibility of a gas pipeline linking Russia with energy-hungry South Korea, would be high on their agenda. But Russia has cautioned the US in their upcoming discussions with North Korea "not to create unrealistic demands" and to "take a cautious

NEWS HEADLINES



The **US** introduced a 25% tariff on steel and a 10% tariff on aluminium from the EU, Canada and Mexico on 1 June, sparking furious reactions from those countries' leaders who had been hoping for an exemption from the measures. The EU and Canada have filed complaints at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in response, and the EU has also vowed to hit back with retaliatory tariffs on an array of US products.



Safety and "identity" need to be in place for Rohingya Muslim refugees who return to **Myanmar**, the head of the United Nations in the country said, as Myanmar and UN agencies signed an outline deal on returns. The head of the UN in Myanmar, Knut Ostby, said he hoped UN staff would be able to travel to the violence-ravaged north of Rakhine State "almost immediately" to assess the situation and - over time - to help the refugees in Bangladesh make an informed decision about potential returns.



Iran will not heed a call to cooperate more fully with UN nuclear inspectors until a standoff over the future of its agreement with major powers is resolved, its envoy to the agency said on 6 June. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has said Tehran is implementing its commitments, but also called for "timely and proactive cooperation" on providing access for snap inspections.

approach and not try to rush the process". Moscow even went so far as to suggest that North Korea's actions to date, indicating their willingness to denuclearise, should be rewarded with some relaxation of sanctions.

There has been no relaxation of international sanctions against North Korea in the lead up to the US-North Korea summit in Singapore on 12 June. After meeting a senior official from Pyongyang at the White House on 1 June, Mr Trump said North Korea was being more cooperative, and that although sanctions would remain in place, he would hold off on imposing new ones.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

There is great anticipation about the rapidly developing situation on the Korean peninsula. Much has happened in the past six months to inspire optimism for the future of a country that has been in a self-imposed isolation for decades, but there remains a long road ahead, to address the many challenges the nation faces. Denuclearisation has been first and foremost in almost all of the international discussions,

including those with Russia. Russia has also pointed out that such discussions should not be rushed.

But for many Christians inside the reclusive nation and around the world, the issue of human rights is of far greater importance, and this, in their opinion, should be addressed sooner rather than later. The current agenda for the upcoming summit is not what Christians in North Korea have been praying for, according to Eric Foley of Voice of the Martyrs Korea. Foley points out that North Korea often forces the world's attention on their belligerence and the potential threat they pose, thus diverting the world's attention from their treatment of their own people. North Korean Christians are not against peace efforts, but they realise that real peace can only come through a transformation of the human heart, which they do not yet see in the current talks.

PRAY > For Russia to be a positive influence in the negotiations towards a peaceful Korean peninsula > For North Korean leadership to advance the well-being of their nation > For North Korean believers' prayers to be answered

THREAT POSED BY ETHIOPIAN DAM CONSTRUCTION



By Andrew Richards

In an effort to break the stalemate between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, the round of negotiations held between the three countries' foreign ministers, irrigation and water ministers, and heads of intelligence ended 15 May in Addis Ababa with the signing of a document containing five clauses. The aim of the document is to create a new road map that would avoid procrastination and have the three countries renew their pledge to cooperate in accordance with the Declaration of Principles signed in March 2015. (*Al-Monitor*)

Controlling the Nile

The Nile river flows through ten countries, including six of the world's poorest nations. However, only Egypt is widely associated with stories of a great civilisation built upon the banks of the world's longest flowing river. Once known by the Pharaohs as "the Nile's gift", Egypt has always wielded the greatest control over the Nile. As self-proclaimed guardians of the Nile, Egypt signed an agreement (in 1929) with Britain (who then controlled Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania), giving Egypt the right to veto any Nile-related projects higher up that would affect Egypt's share of the water. Then in 1959, Egypt signed another

agreement with Sudan, safeguarding its continued majority share of Nile water. In 1970, Egypt built the Aswan High Dam, providing hydroelectricity and helping to control water levels - by regulating flooding, it has prevented crops being washed away and is a vital water source in years of drought.

In 2011, Ethiopia started construction of what is said to be Africa's largest dam, intended to hold an estimated 79 billion cubic meters of water. According to the Ethiopian government, the purpose of the dam is to generate electricity that will help relieve the demand, as less than half of Ethiopia's population has access to electricity (according to the World Bank). Seleshi Bekele, Ethiopia's Minister for Water, Irrigation and Electricity, claims: "It's not about control of the flow, but providing opportunity for us to develop ourselves through energy development. It has a lot of benefit for the downstream countries."

Conflict

Talk of building a dam that would capture the water of the Blue Nile coming out of Ethiopia has been going on for years. There were countless negotiations between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia that, until 2011, had not reached any conclusive agreement. So, when the 'Arab Spring' revolution impacted Egypt, the Ethiopian government saw an opportunity to start building while Egypt was not looking, embroiled in their own internal struggles. Seven years later, the potential for conflict is greater than it ever was.

While providing electricity for a nation would certainly promote development, the prospect of conflict is a factor that cannot be underestimated, especially when it involves a powerful neighbour like Egypt. The building of Ethiopia's Grand Renaissance Dam could end up being one of the biggest geopolitical blunders Africa has ever seen, leading to a possible military confrontation between Ethiopia and Egypt.

NEWS HEADLINES



The withdrawal of Iranian forces from **Syria**, demanded by the United States, is not up for discussion, a top Syrian official was quoted as saying, adding that Damascus was deciding on its next campaign against rebels. "Whether Iranian forces or Hezbollah withdraw or stay in Syria is not up for discussion because it's the (business) of the Syrian government," Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad said in an interview with Russia's *Sputnik* state news agency.



Italy's new ruling coalition has won a crucial trust vote in the upper chamber of parliament. The alliance of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) and the right-wing League party will now seek support in the lower house where it has a majority. A win there will empower the government, led by political unknown Giuseppe Conte, to carry out its anti-immigration agenda.



Lebanon is working with Damascus for the return of thousands of refugees who want to go back to Syria, a Lebanese official said. As the Syrian army backed by Iran and Russia has recovered territory, Lebanon's president and other politicians have called for refugees to go back to "secure areas" before a deal to end the war - at odds with the international view that it is not yet safe. Lebanon hosts around 1 million registered Syrian refugees according to the United Nations.

The Nile provides up to 90% of Egypt's usable water supply, and any threat to the future of that supply could force Egypt to act. Egypt's farmlands are almost entirely dependent on irrigation from the Nile, and should that supply decrease by even a few centimetres, Egypt's population of 97 million would suffer greatly. Egypt's Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Mohamed Abdel Aty, said: "If the water that's coming to Egypt is reduced by 2%, we (Egypt) would lose about 200,000 acres of land. One acre at least allows one family to survive. A family in Egypt averages about five persons. So, this means about one million would be jobless."

Estimates for the time needed to fill the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam range from three to seven years, and according to the International Rivers Project, the projected cut in flow of the Nile into Egypt could be as high as 25% during the filling period. According to the Telegraph, one study by a Cairo University agriculture professor estimates Egypt would lose a staggering 51% of its farmland if the fill is done in three years. A slower, six-year fill would cost Egypt 17% of its cultivated land, the study claims.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

In January, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn met together in Cairo in an effort to unite against conflict over the Nile, and Mr Sisi said that the Nile should serve as "a source of cohesion and development, not of conflict". Mr Desalegn told journalists: "We agreed that we must make

sure that this great river never becomes an object of competition, mistrust and conflict."

Even with assurances from Ethiopia, any change in the percentage of water flow to Egypt will have an impact on its population. Considering Aty's estimation of a potential one million jobs being lost, the burden on already overcrowded cities like Cairo would have a huge impact, as people would move to the cities in search of work. A drop in the flow of the Nile would also have a huge effect on city residents who depend on the Nile for drinking water, and an *INcontext* source in Cairo says that most people are fearful of the situation.

If the Cairo University estimates are anything to go by, millions may be forced towards the cities. Such a move from rural to urban could have a positive effect on Egypt's Christian population. Much like the Church in Lebanon has been able to engage Syrian Muslim refugees who had fled there (away from an oppressive religious culture in Syria), the Church in large Egyptian cities could have the opportunity to reach the country's rural population that come as 'agricultural refugees', away from the repressive atmosphere and culture (or radicalism) of the Muslim Brotherhood that exerts influence over much of Egypt's rural population.

PRAY > For leaders of the three nations to make constructive and wise decisions, while avoiding conflict > For just decision-making for all affected parties > For people to come to Christ in the midst of the uncertainty and find peace and hope in Him

CAR SEEKS SOLUTIONS TO UNITE THEIR NATION



By *Donnelly McClelland*

Central African Republic has approved a law creating a special criminal court to investigate allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity during more than a decade of ethnic and religious conflict, a lawmaker said. Hundreds have died in the violence and scores more have been raped and tortured but the perpetrators have not faced any meaningful legal pursuit, rights activists say. "With this law, we will now be able to count on the justice system to put an end to the conflicts, to the killings, to the massacres," said a national deputy, Ernest Mezedio. (*Reuters*)

A little-covered war

It has been said that combating impunity, by establishing this special criminal court, can go a long way towards supporting reconciliation and community cohesion efforts in this deeply wounded nation. The Central African Republic

(CAR) is one of those 'fault line' countries, straddling the 'Muslim north' and 'Christian south' of Africa. Philip Kleinfeld, for IRIN News, describes the brutal, prolonged conflict in CAR as "a little-covered war, one that occasionally pops up in international headlines but mostly upends lives out of view of much of the world." CAR is rich in diamonds, gold, oil and uranium but has one of the world's poorest populations and suffers from a state of chronic underdevelopment, since the lives of Central Africans have been shaped by 60 years of almost non-stop violence and instability from the time it gained its independence from France. Despite the fact that more than 76% of Central Africans consider themselves Christian, their nation has suffered under successive oppressive governments, coups and political instability.

Although conflict has been an 'ever-present' reality within CAR, the relatively small Muslim minority often lived side by side with Christians without incident. In 2012, however, there seemed to be a major shift when a predominantly Muslim umbrella terror group known as Séléka (meaning 'alliance'), supported by foreign fighters from neighbouring Chad and Sudan, began to occupy towns in the northern part of the country. A short-lived peace agreement collapsed in March 2013 and the terror group took control of the capital, Bangui, ousting the 'Christian' president, Francois Bozizé. Targeted killings and sectarian violence escalated after this violent takeover. In September 2013, the group was

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formally dissolved by their leader (and self-proclaimed president) Michel Djotodia, in light of international condemnation of the crimes perpetrated by the group. However, the former Séléka fighters simply formed a myriad of smaller splinter groups. In June 2013, in retaliation for the atrocities of Séléka fighters, a self-defence ('Christian') militia of former Central African Armed Forces (FACA) soldiers and other non-Muslims was formed. This so-called 'anti-balaka' force contributed to the escalation of violence in the country as revenge killings became the norm.

Largely peaceful elections in 2015 failed to bring durable peace, and in 2017, the bloodshed started again.

The UN's role and the deepening humanitarian crisis

The UN's peacekeeping mission in CAR, known by its French acronym MINUSCA, began operating in September 2014, with a mandate to help restore order in a country torn apart by civil war. CAR is one and a half times the size of France, but has a population of only 5.5 million (less than the urban area of Paris, which is estimated at 10.5 million), and a government whose influence does not extend beyond the capital. MINUSCA is deployed in an environment far removed from peacekeeping missions of old where actions would be governed by "impartiality, host state consent, and minimum use of force". Many acknowledge that they have entered an environment where there is very little peace to keep. While MINUSCA's mission has been credited for saving countless lives, the peacekeepers (numbering about 13,000) have found that their job of protecting civilians often comes up against the reality of operating in a country where the rule of law has almost entirely broken down.

Added to the logistical challenges of CAR, a series of scandals (including widespread sexual abuse of local women and girls by peacekeepers, and the killing of civilians) has profoundly damaged trust among the population the peacekeepers are

supposed to serve. Many of these crimes and serious breaches of trust have also gone unpunished.

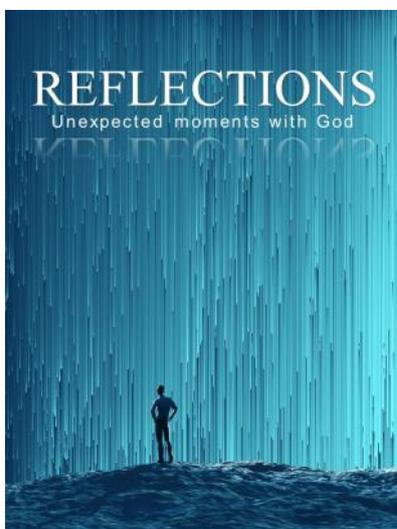
In 2018, one in four Central Africans is either internally displaced (approaching 700,000) or living as a refugee in neighbouring countries (more than 568,000). Half the population (about 2.5 million) is in need of humanitarian assistance. "The level of violence and displacement is unprecedented over the course of the past five years of conflict," said Evan Cinq-Mars, UN advocate at the Centre for Civilians in Conflict, a Washington-based NGO.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Some humanitarian workers and UN officials have described CAR as "mission impossible". They paint a bleak picture of hatred, intolerance, 'tit-for-tat' revenge killings, rape and an almost complete breakdown of the rule of law. But no country is beyond the Lord's reach. A group of women (Muslim and Christian) in the town of Boda, about 100 km from the capital, chose, at the height of the violence in 2014, to seek peace. Against incredible odds, this group of about 50 women (which has grown to over 200) has made huge strides towards healing their town's divisions. They were insulted, threatened and attacked, but they did not give in. The Lord has heard the cry of their heart, and peace has held. The town holds regular events to promote and improve community relations, including Christian/Muslim football matches, drama workshops, and open church and mosque days. Boda's mayor, Boniface Katta, whose brother was killed during the fighting in 2014, has worked closely with Muslim and Christian leaders, imploring them to relay a message of peace to their communities. How important it is for Central African believers to remember that their battle is not against flesh and blood, but principalities and powers of darkness (as described in Ephesians 6).

PRAY > For the effective implementation of court procedures concerning war crimes > For justice for the victims and all those suffering > For the Church in CAR to be a voice and instrument of reconciliation and healing

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REFLECTIONS

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