

A WORLD IN MOTION

ISSUE 151 | 30 JUNE 2016

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The referendum on 23 June has changed Britain irrevocably, as it plans to leave the EU. But what are some of the effects on Russia and the US?

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The WORLD HOTSPOT LIST is now available in seminar form, offering an overview of key nations in the world.



THE NUMBERS: BREXIT REFERENDUM



51.9%

The percentage of British voters who chose to leave the EU (compared to 48.1% who wanted to stay)



4 million +

The number of Britons who have signed a petition calling for a 2nd referendum



100,000

The number of signatures required on a petition for Parliament to consider it for debate



09/09

The date (9 September) by which a new Conservative leader is expected to be finalised, taking over from David Cameron

THE GLOBAL SHOCKWAVES OF BREXIT



At a tense summit, the 27 remaining European Union members agreed on Tuesday to give Britain some breathing space, accepting that it needs time to absorb the shock of the Brexit vote before triggering Article 50 – an EU treaty clause that begins a two-year withdrawal process. Yet, Jean-Claude Juncker, the European Commission president, warned that Britain did not have "months to meditate" and set a clear timetable for triggering Article 50 after Cameron's successor takes office in early September. "If someone from the 'Remain' camp will become British PM, this has to be done in two weeks after his appointment," he said. If they are from the Brexit camp, then it should be "the day after". (*Aljazeera*)

Russia and the Brexit result

While British leaders try to stabilise the country after the shockwaves of last Thursday's Brexit referendum (which has since seen the resignation and firing of a number of Labour Party leaders, and reports of an increase of xenophobic incidents in the country), EU leaders are attempting to plan the way forward in this new, unknown political territory. Further afield, analysts are speculating what the historic vote could mean for Russia.

In the run-up to the referendum, politicians campaigning in favour of Britain remaining in the EU warned that Russia was backing Brexit and would celebrate if Britain were to leave the EU. Now there are further speculations about

whether this is true, and if so, how Brexit could work in Russia's favour.

According to US political scientist Ian Bremmer, who was interviewed by *Newsweek*, Brexit and a weakened EU plays into the "divide and conquer strategy" of Russian president Vladimir Putin, who "wants to unwind sanctions imposed on Russia, and exert more economic and geopolitical influence over Eastern European nations in what he considers Russia's traditional sphere of influence".

After Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, the EU (Russia's biggest trading partner) imposed strict sanctions against Russia, which resulted in some significant struggles for the Russian economy. However, the sanctions have also impacted the EU – according to *Fortune* magazine, Russia is the EU's fourth-largest trading partner, and supplies almost all of the natural gas for eastern European countries as well as Germany. In the EU negotiations about sanctions, it was Britain (that traded least with Russia) that took the lead and pushed for a more confrontational stance against Russia. Now, with Britain set to leave the EU, there is a very real possibility of these sanctions relaxing in the future, and the EU entering a new season of more relaxed and positive diplomacy with Moscow.

On a geopolitical level, a strained EU focused on the challenges of preventing an all-out internal fracture could choose to ignore some of Russia's actions that would previously have called for response. This could encourage Russia to become bolder in any expansion plans for the region. Mark Galeotti, writing for *Vox.com*, describes this possible scenario as "a West too disunited and inward-looking to be able meaningfully to resist Russian adventurism in its self-claimed sphere of influence".

NEWS HEADLINES



Turkey has declared a day of national mourning after three suicide bombers attacked Istanbul's Ataturk Airport, killing at least 41 people and wounding 239. The attackers arrived at Ataturk, Europe's third-busiest airport, late on Tuesday evening where they opened fire before blowing themselves up. The Turkish government ordered flags to be flown at half-mast on Wednesday, as investigators pored over video footage and witness statements. Turkish officials said that 23 of the dead were Turkish, and 13 were foreign.



Russia is likely to deploy advanced nuclear-capable missiles in its European exclave of Kaliningrad by 2019, casting the move as a reply to a US-backed missile shield, and may one day put them in Crimea too, sources close to its military predict. That would fuel what is already the worst standoff between Russia and the West since the Cold War and put a swathe of territory in NATO members Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in the cross-hairs.



North Korea leader Kim Jong Un said after supervising the test launch of a "medium long-range strategic ballistic missile" that the country now has the capability to attack US interests in the Pacific. South Korean and US military officials said the North launched what appeared to be two intermediate-range missiles.

Meanwhile, *BBC News* writes that in the coming weeks, it is extremely likely that Russian state media will "contrast post-referendum upheaval and uncertainty abroad with a picture of 'stability' back home and images of a 'strong' President Putin at the helm".

What about the US?

Finian Cunningham, in an opinion piece for *Russia Today* (RT), writes that the US' feelings about Brexit may be opposite to those of Russia, and that Brexit may end up having severe repercussions for Washington's "anti-Russian policy" and "nearly seven decades of American transatlantic domination". According to Cunningham, the hasty and unscheduled visit of US Secretary of State John Kerry to Brussels (the EU headquarters) and then to London on Monday 27 June is evidence of Washington's alarm at the result of the British referendum.

Why would the US care so much? Mostly it is due to the "special relationship" (a phrase coined by Winston Churchill) between the US and Britain, which has led to Britain sometimes acting as a 'representative' of the US in EU political debates and supporting the interests of the US in the EU and beyond. With Britain no longer a part of the EU, the US will have far less influence in political decisions across the Atlantic.

Michael McFaul, former US ambassador to Russia, commented in the *Washington Post* that the "dismantling" of Britain (something that is looking likely as Scotland considers its options for independence) would "dramatically reduce the power and stature of one of our closest allies". He also echoed the sentiments of former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher who said that "the Anglo-American relationship has done more for the

defence and future of freedom than any other alliance in the world". Though many would find this statement somewhat controversial, it cannot be argued that the US-Britain alliance has played a major role in global politics, for better or worse.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The call by Christ to His followers in Matthew 5:14 ("You are the light of the world... a town built on a hill cannot be hidden") is a call to influence and relevance. And even though Brexit was a political and economic event, the spiritual consequences of a 'Christian' nation becoming inwards-focused and less relevant on the global stage could be far-reaching.

In a recent report in *Christianity Today* (29 June 2016), it was reported that Russia is proposing a new set of surveillance and anti-terrorism laws that are considered the country's most restrictive measures in post-Soviet history. It will place broad limitations on mission work, including preaching, teaching and engaging in any activity seen as drawing people into a religious group. Brexit is likely to result in a weaker EU and a frailer UK, which will ultimately have less influence on Russia, which in turn could greatly impact the Church in this key nation.

At this stage, it is almost impossible to gauge what all of the eventual repercussions of Brexit will be – all that is certain is that the referendum's effects are going to be felt for years to come, not just in Britain but well beyond its borders. The world seems to be changing by the minute, and the Church needs to keep up and stay involved.

PRAY > For wisdom for British and EU leaders as they feel the way forward > For the British Church to not become insignificant and inward-looking > For effective Western influence on Russia, to the benefit of the Russian Church

ISLAMIC STATE LOSES FALLUJAH TO IRAQI ARMY



Iraqi forces on Sunday recaptured the last district of Fallujah held by Islamic State militants and the commander of the operation declared the battle over following a month of fighting. Iraqi troops reached the city centre, an hour's drive west of Baghdad, last week but militants had holed up in some parts, including the Golan district which the military

retook on Sunday. The assault is part of a wider offensive against the Islamic State, which seized swathes of territory in 2014 but is now being driven back by an array of forces backed by a US-led coalition. Gains in Fallujah give fresh momentum to the campaign to retake Mosul, the largest city anywhere in the jihadists' self-proclaimed caliphate spanning Iraq and Syria. (*Reuters*)

The significance of Fallujah

Even before IS took control of Fallujah, the city (lying 50km west of Baghdad) was known for its violent application of Islamic law and for a dislike of foreigners – it was one of the first places in Iraq where extremist Islamic ideology took hold. Sunni

NEWS HEADLINES



Israel and **Turkey** reached agreement to normalise ties to end a rift over the Israeli navy's killing of 10 Turkish pro-Palestinian activists who tried to sail to the blockaded Gaza Strip in 2010. The deal, politically touchy for both countries, could pave the way for lucrative Mediterranean gas deals and a diplomatic reprieve from Turkish troubles with next-door Syria and Europe.



Bahrain aims to end years of instability with a crackdown on Shi'ite political parties, but it could be a gamble that risks further destabilising the Western-allied kingdom and the wider Middle East. In a series of moves over the past weeks, authorities closed down the main Shi'ite opposition, doubled the prison sentence on the group's leader, detained a prominent rights campaigner and stripped Ayatollah Isa Qassim, Bahrain's Shi'ite spiritual leader, of his citizenship.



More than 1,200 people have died from starvation and illness at an aid camp in northeastern **Nigeria** that houses people fleeing the Islamist militant group Boko Haram, medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres said.

Muslim tribes have long been a powerful presence in the city, and it was a troubled place before 2003, when the US-led coalition invaded. Almost a century before, in 1920, it was there that the murder of a British officer contributed to a nationwide revolt against the British colonial powers that were in place at that time.

After being 'liberated' by US forces, the city of Fallujah was under the control of the Iraqi government until January 2014, when it became the first city to fall to IS. According to Lieutenant General Abdul Wahab al-Saidi, who was in charge of the recent operation to reclaim Fallujah, the Iraqi security forces killed at least 1,800 IS militants.

Expansion in Libya

While IS forces still hold the strategic city of Mosul and the surrounding areas, the rest of its prospects in Iraq and Syria look increasingly bleak. But our *INcontext* correspondent from the Middle East reports that even though gains are being made against IS, causing it to lose territory, the current military assault on IS will by no means bring about the extremists' complete end: "In Iraq, yes, but IS is growing in Libya. Libya has no governing state and this allows for IS to grow very easily."

He expanded on the significance of the North African country: "Libya is very dangerous to the West (Europe and the US), even more than Iraq and Syria. Libya controls the Mediterranean passage by which refugees flee North Africa and the Middle East to Europe. If IS takes control of Libya, it will control the flow of refugees. IS will cause millions more to flee the

region to Europe, and by controlling Libya, it will have the ability to embed terrorists among legitimate refugees, for the purpose of carrying out attacks in Europe."

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Thus, as things currently stand, the new battlefield in the fight against the Islamic State is likely to be Libya, but analysts have also warned that the assault against IS in Iraq could provoke more attacks on Western targets. In the first six months of 2016, attacks by IS (or inspired by IS) have been carried out in Brussels, Orlando and France.

The EU appears to be well aware of the threat of an IS-controlled Libya—EU politicians have suggested plans to stop marine travel from the North African coast. Meanwhile, IS control of Libya could unleash one of the worst periods of Christian persecution in the Arab world. Since IS has been present in the country, numerous Christians have been killed, most notably the 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians (in February 2015) and 28 Ethiopian Christians (in April 2015). Both of these mass killings were featured on social media with a warning to other Christians in the region. While much of the world focuses on refugees who have fled the IS threat, let us not forget about those who are unable to do so, and who continue to face targeting for their faith.

PRAY > For Iraqi leadership as they gradually win back their country > For the regrowth and rebuilding of the remnant Iraqi Church > For protection and courage for the Church in Libya

REFUGEES: REASON FOR FEAR OR COMPASSION?



59.5 million just 12 months earlier. This is the first time that the threshold of 60 million has been crossed. (UNHCR)

Facts and fears

Statistics such as the ones above (further expanded in an infographic on our website [HERE](#)) have caused many to open their hearts and to reach out with compassion to the refugees. However, fear and suspicion still play a big part in how people respond to the millions of people on the move after losing everything. Attacks like those in Paris and Brussels fan the flames of these fears.

A popular argument against accepting refugees and immigrants from a Muslim background is the concept of 'silent jihad' – believed to be a plan by radical Islamists to 'conquer' the West through means other than violence. All that is needed is for Muslim immigrants to produce offspring at a higher rate than the native

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

INcontext Website:

www.incontextministries.org

Please visit our website for up-to-date information on events around the world.

If you have any questions or comments relating to the articles in this publication or on the website, please feel free to contact us at any time.



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population, thereby 'growing' Islam (albeit slowly, over generations).

False messages and emails about this issue have recently started circulating, claiming that Middle Eastern imams (Islamic leaders) told Muslim refugees to only go to Europe and North Africa in order to further the plan of this 'silent jihad'. However, the UNHCR's figures point to a different picture: up to 80% of refugees are more likely to go to a neighbouring Muslim country than to the 'Christian West'. The top six countries currently hosting refugees are in fact Turkey (2.5 million refugees), Pakistan (1.6 million), Lebanon (1.1 million), Iran (979,400), Ethiopia (736,100) and Jordan (664,100).

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Which of the feelings is stronger among Christians – compassion or fear/suspicion?

In a number of reports since an INcontext team visited refugee camps in Lebanon, we have made mention of the opinion of one of the pastors working in the Bekaa Valley: that how we see refugees can impact the possibility of what they might become (i.e. children of God). This is not an easy process, and it requires an active desire to open one's heart. It is also difficult to not be overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the refugee crisis, but the following five suggestions may help:

1) **Be informed.** Find out the correct information about refugees – What countries are they fleeing from? What is the situation in those countries? To which countries are they fleeing, and what is the state of the Church there? What are some of the real-life stories from organisations working with refugees?

How big is the actual threat of terrorism?

2) Consider the **Biblical view** of refugees. Passages like Exodus 23:9, Leviticus 19:33-34 and Deuteronomy 10:18-19 are reminders that our forefathers (the Israelites) were once foreigners in a strange country, and that God opposes any ill-treatment and lack of hospitality when it comes to strangers and foreigners.

3) **Inform others.** Pass on information that you know to be true, accurate and verified. Do not embrace or pass on information that is sensationalist and generates fear, suspicion, negativity and closed hearts.

4) **Pray.** Accurate information should lead us into clear and focused prayer—for the refugees themselves and for the Christian workers and communities closest to them. Then ask yourself: How willing are you to be a practical answer to your prayers?

5) **Get involved.** For those who are in physical contact with refugees, there are many emotional and spiritual needs that should not be neglected through a single-minded focus on only the practical needs. Counselling, as well embracing refugees into a community and welcoming them into family homes, should be a priority. For others living in a different part of the world, there are plenty of opportunities to get involved by offering financial support to Christian workers serving in refugee areas (outreach projects require supplies too). Click [HERE](#) to have a look at where INcontext is involved.

PRAY > For refugees to encounter the Gospel in their countries of settlement > For an active and Godly response to refugees around the world

PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

WORLD HOTSPOT LIST

Book as well as seminar available on request



The **World Hotspot List** offers an overview of 17 key nations that are impacting the world as we know it today, with historical overviews, an analysis of each country's recent significance, and prayer guides.

Seeking to understand what is happening in the world today from a Biblical perspective will enable believers to serve (and pray) more strategically and effectively. The **World Hotspot List** was designed as a tool in order to equip churches, small groups and individuals for more impactful engagement with the world.

To this end, INcontext now offers a **seminar** that accompanies the publication—this seminar allows for questions, more information and dialogue, and offers an excellent starting point for those who want to know more about what is happening around the world.

To find out more about the seminar, please contact Andrew: andrew@incontextministries.org

To order a copy of the **World Hotspot List** (R50 a copy, postage excluded), please contact Donnelly: donnely@incontextministries.org