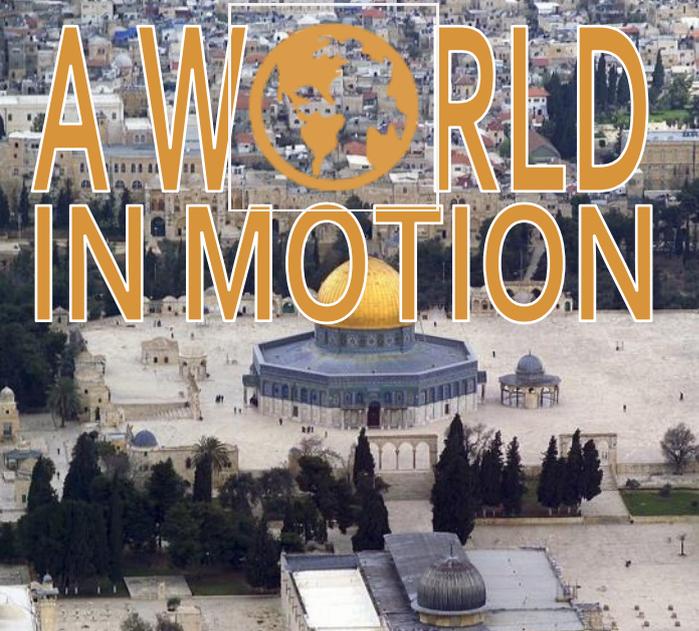


A WORLD IN MOTION



P1 | ISRAEL

The latest Temple Mount dispute in Jerusalem demonstrated yet again the fragility of Arab-Israeli relations.

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PM Nawaz Sharif's recent resignation over charges of corruption exposes the ongoing 'tug-of-war' between various state institutions.

P3 | UKRAINE

As the conflict in East Ukraine drags on, the future of the county is considered in light of Russian influence and Western concerns.

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THE NUMBERS:

TEMPLE MOUNT



1757

The year a 'status quo' was first applied to the ruling of the holy places in Jerusalem



145,686 m²

The area covered by the Temple Mount/ Haram al-Sharif



80 kg

The amount of gold required for refurbishment of the Dome of the Rock's dome in 1993 (\$8.2 million in gold)



11

The number deaths in as many days, during the recent crisis

TEMPLE MOUNT DISPUTE: NOT JUST ABOUT SECURITY



By Donnelly McClelland

Given the scale of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it may seem strange that the latest round of violence was triggered by metal detectors. But the metal detectors in question were installed by Israel at the entrances to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, arguably the most contested sacred precinct on earth, in response to a fatal Palestinian attack on Israelis. (*Bloomberg*)

Significance and the 'status quo'

This latest dispute, like many in the Holy Land, is about more than security measures: it includes issues of sovereignty, religious freedom, occupation and Palestinian nationalism. The Palestinian objection to the metal detectors was that they violated an agreement referred to as the 'status quo' at the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif site. It was determined, under the British government established by a League of Nations mandate after World War I, that Jews and Arabs would follow the same practices that had existed under Ottoman rule. A change in the 'status quo' is full of meaning for the Palestinians, who fear that Israel intends to take over Haram al-Sharif and reclaim it as the site of the Temple of Herod and Solomon.

The area in East Jerusalem – known to Jews and Christians as the Temple Mount, and to Muslims as Haram al-Sharif (the 'Noble Sanctuary') – holds deep significance for all three of the major monotheistic religions. Considered the most holy site in Judaism, the Temple Mount is believed to be Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered his son in sacrifice. Later, it was the site of the first and second temples. For Muslims, it is the third most holy site (after Mecca and Medina), believed to be Muhammad's destination in his night flight from Mecca, and where

he was 'taken up to heaven'. The Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa mosque that stand on the Mount were built in the 7th and 8th centuries AD and are some of the oldest surviving works of Islamic architecture in the world. Israel regained control of the Mount in the aftermath of the Six-Day War in 1967, but immediately returned the Islamic holy sites to the Jordanian Islamic Council ('Waqf') in order to avoid bloodshed. Israel, however, maintained control of security and access.

Only Muslims are allowed public displays of prayer within the complex and have access via 10 of the existing 11 gates. Jews are only allowed public prayer at the Western Wall (also known as the 'Wailing Wall'), outside the complex.

There have been many incidents emanating from the unique status of this site, often resulting in protest and violence.

Actions and consequences

In the early morning of 14 July, three Arab Israelis – using weapons smuggled into the Temple Mount complex – shot and killed two Druze Israeli policemen guarding the complex. Police shut down the complex temporarily, conducting a search for further weapons and investigating the attack. The complex was later re-opened, but metal detectors and cameras were installed (without discussing the matter with the Waqf, the complex administrators), to reduce the risk of a repeat attack. Religious leaders of the Waqf responded by calling on worshippers to boycott the Mount in protest of the 'subversion of the status quo', encouraging them to pray in the streets outside the gates to the Mount.

While many of these protests/prayers proceeded peacefully, others turned violent (with fatalities). Violence extended beyond the area – a Palestinian youth attacked a Jewish family in the West Bank, fatally stabbing three of them. In neighbouring Jordan, an Israeli Embassy security guard who came under attack killed the perpetrator and an innocent bystander, leading to an international incident between Israel and Jordan.

Israel, responding to mounting internal and international pressure, removed the additional

NEWS HEADLINES



President Xi Jinping has vowed **China** will never “swallow the bitter fruit” of foreign meddling or invasion, in his latest move to assert his authority ahead of a key political summit marking the end of his first five-year term. In a 50-minute speech at Beijing’s Great Hall of the People, the Mao era arena of Communist party rule, Xi told members of the military their calling was not as an aggressive or expansionist force.



Spiralling violence between armed factions in **Central African Republic** could plunge the country back into a large-scale humanitarian crisis four years after conflict first erupted, the United Nations’ aid chief and agencies said. A surge in fighting between militias in several hotspots has uprooted more than 100,000 people since April. More than 1 million people are displaced.



Italy is considering issuing temporary visas that would allow migrants to travel around the European Union, its deputy foreign minister said, a move intended to pressure its EU neighbours to do more to help ease the migrant crisis. It also intends to deploy several ships in Libyan waters by the end of August to combat human trafficking and stem the huge influx of immigrants.

security measures days after their installation. The removals were greeted by Palestinian jubilation, viewing it as a rare victory. A large majority of Israelis, however, view the removal as capitulation and are critical of the government’s handling of the situation.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

While the Palestinian Authority, Jordan and other Arab and Islamic countries accused Israel of violating the ‘status quo’ at the Temple Mount, few (if any) denounced the murder of the two Israeli police officers – in fact, many applauded the attack as a “heroic operation” and lauded the attackers as martyrs. Many Christians around the world also chose to side with the Palestinians in this matter, adding their voices to those pressuring Israel to remove the added security measures.

Chris Eden of *Bridges for Peace* (an international ministry supporting Israel and building relationships between Christians and Jews around the world) offers the following insights:

“Islam’s credibility in their assertion as the final and superseding expression of ‘God’ does not depend on the future of Mecca or Medina, it depends on the future of Jerusalem. The two mosques stand, in Muslim minds, as a symbol of Islam’s victory over Judaism and Christianity. The sensible move by Israel to upgrade physical security was perceived as an unacceptable

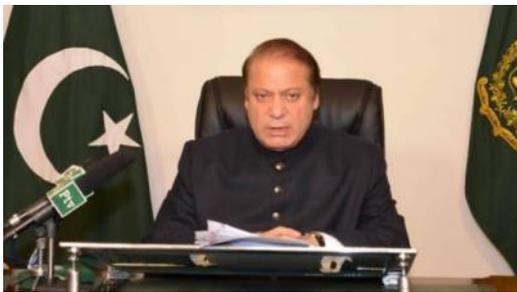
spiritual concession. In the volatile Middle East, where the battle between political and secular Islam rages, Israel’s move unintentionally tipped the scales in the direction of political Islam, hence the flurry of behind-the-scenes diplomacy from countries like Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

The Bible is not neutral about Jerusalem: ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; with great fervour I am zealous for her.’ (Zechariah 8:2) It warns that there will be contention from different sources: ‘And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.’ (Zechariah 12:3)

Those who read God’s Word with literal expectation regard the modern re-emergence of Israel as a fulfilment of many prophetic passages. Ezekiel 36 – which describes the physical return of the people, the restoration of the land and the spiritual redemption of the people – declares that God is doing this, not for Israel’s sake but ‘for the sake of His holy name’ (vs 20) so that the nations may know that He is Lord. The latest fracas on the Temple Mount illustrates the intensity of this battle.”

PRAY > For wisdom for Israel’s leadership in dealing with the highly sensitive Temple Mount area > For the Church to be visible and effective agents of peace, especially during crises in Israel

PAKISTAN LEADERSHIP’S ‘TUG-OF-WAR’



By *Cherolyn Amery*

Lawmakers in Pakistan are to elect a new prime minister to replace Nawaz Sharif, who was ousted last week over corruption allegations. The ruling party has nominated former oil minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi to serve as interim leader. They want him to take on a caretaker role until Mr Sharif’s brother, Shahbaz Sharif, can take over. Mr Abbasi is a long-time ally of Nawaz Sharif. He was jailed for two years in 1999 after the military toppled Mr Sharif, ending the second of his three spells as prime minister. Mr Sharif’s third spell came to an end on Friday [28 July] when he stepped down following a decision by the Supreme Court to disqualify him from office. (*BBC News*)

A long political history

Officially, Mr Sharif was ‘disqualified from holding public office’ because he had failed to demonstrate the political stipulations of “honesty and trustworthiness” by not declaring the salary he received as chairman of a UAE-based company (Capital FZE). Mr Sharif insisted that this was ‘above board’, as he had never withdrawn the

salary, but the Supreme Court still recognised the salary as a “receivable asset”. In a separate matter (linked to the ‘Panama Papers’ leak), Mr Sharif and some of his family are being investigated about offshore companies and ownership of upmarket properties in London.

Mr Sharif’s decades-long political history is chequered. His first term as Prime Minister (1990-1993) ended due to conflict with the president, while his second term (1997-1999) was cut short by a military coup. Despite having been arrested, jailed, sentenced to life imprisonment (on charges of hijacking and terrorism), exiled to Saudi Arabia and receiving a lifetime ban from political activities, he returned to Pakistan in 2007 and won the 2013 election with a two-thirds parliamentary majority for his third term as Prime Minister.

Notable events in his career include ordering Pakistan’s first nuclear tests in 1998, and attempting to pass a constitutional amendment that would have allowed him to enforce Sharia (Islamic) law. During his third term, the number of civilians killed in terror attacks dropped from around 3,000 (in 2013) to 612 (in 2016). He has also attempted to ‘rein in’ the Pakistani military and limit their powers, and it is believed that this is one of the primary reasons behind his latest ousting. Pakistan has a long history of coups, and any leader who has challenged the military has found themselves with a target on their back. Mr Sharif also aggravated many by planning to pursue rapprochement and expand trade ties with India (something the military opposes). According to Barkha Dutt (*Washington Post*), Mr Sharif has taken on “a foreign policy agenda that was inimical to the shadowy Pakistani security

NEWS HEADLINES



As people return home to Mosul and other areas of northern Iraq, freed from Islamic State, homemade bombs and explosives laid on an industrial scale by the insurgents are claiming hundreds of victims and hampering efforts to bring life back to normal. Houses, schools, mosques and streets are all booby-trapped, a big problem in West Mosul following its recapture by government forces this month after nine months of fighting.



Iran successfully tested a rocket that can deliver satellites into orbit, state television reported, an action the United States said breaches a UN Security Council resolution because of its potential use in ballistic missile development.



Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged to make "unrelenting" efforts toward promoting peace in the Middle East following a meeting with PA President Mahmoud Abbas, as China steps up its diplomatic engagement with the region. Palestinian officials urged China, which supports an independent Palestinian state, to do more in the Middle East peace process. Diplomats say that China is trying to play the role of 'honest broker' in the Middle East, as it lacks the historical baggage of the Americans or the Europeans.

establishment that has often used terrorist groups as strategic assets against both India and Afghanistan". With a general election coming up in mid-2018, it is believed that Mr Sharif's party will rally around him and his chosen successor, as infighting would lessen their chances against the many rivals who would be looking to make the most of the power shifts.

The ousting in context

In Pakistan's 70-year history, none of the 18 civilian prime ministers have completed a full five-year term, and the military has ruled the country for roughly half its history. Dismissals have happened by coups, dissolutions of assemblies, votes of no-confidence or by court orders, and much of the regime change has been attributed to the powerful military and its intelligence services. The *New York Times* describes Pakistan's military as "obsessed" with India, "aggressively invested" in nuclear weapons, and involved with "double-dealings" in Afghanistan.

Responses to Mr Sharif's ousting are varied. Some (such as opposition leader Imran Khan) celebrate the decision, saying that it signifies a 'new era' of democracy and holding the political elite accountable. Others, however, say that his dismissal was an undemocratic "judicial coup".

As for regional and global implications, it is widely recognised that political instability in Pakistan could have ripple effects on neighbouring countries and on US interests in the region. Helene Cooper, however, wrote in the *New York Times* that "in most countries where the United States has national security interests, the toppling of a prime minister would prompt hurried meetings in Washington and concern over how the change in government will affect American strategy in the region... but not so with Pakistan." This is because the Pakistani military is widely seen as the 'real' power in the country, and a leadership change would not affect that. In some

ways, this is a good thing: "the military has always controlled the country's nuclear arsenal, and stability within that military structure means fewer worries that amid the country's political turmoil, its nuclear weapons could fall into the wrong hands."

Owais Tohid, a journalist and political analyst, sees the "chaos" in Pakistan as stemming from the "tug-of-war" between the various state institutions – the military, the judiciary, the executive political forces and the media. Some are expecting a period of critical political instability, but M Ilyas Khan wrote in a *BBC News* article that Pakistanis are "by now quite adept at handling such chaos".

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

For Christians in Pakistan – believed to constitute approximately 1.6% of the population – a regime change would probably not make much difference. Officially, the Church is allowed to exist in Pakistan and Christians are allowed to worship, but while active persecution is mostly carried out on a societal and community level (and by terrorist groups), the government is rarely vocal on their behalf (leaders who have attempted to challenge the establishment on the treatment of minorities have often been removed from power, exiled or assassinated).

Yet there is always hope. The *New York Times* wrote that with the upcoming national elections in 2018, Mr Sharif's "rise and fall should at least generate a national debate on how Pakistanis want to be ruled" and "a switch at the top does create opportunities for some change of course".

PRAY > For Pakistan's political leadership to be an effective counter-weight to their highly influential military > For the change in leadership to have a positive influence on the Church in Pakistan, leading to much growth

THE FUTURE OF UKRAINE CONSIDERED



By Andrew Richards

United States Special Representative for Ukraine Negotiations Kurt Volker stresses that there are more Russian tanks in the occupied areas in Ukraine than West European countries have all together, according to *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. "First off, Russia is already in Ukraine, they are already heavily armed," he said in Paris on 25 July in an interview with *Current Time*, the Russian-language network run by *RFE/RL* in cooperation with *Voice of America (VOA)*. Volker said he did not think arming Ukraine with lethal defensive weapons would "provoke Russia to do more than they are already doing, and it also isn't going to change any kind of balance that way. I hear these arguments that it's somehow provocative to Russia or that it's going to

embolden Ukraine to attack. These are just flat out wrong," Volker said. (*UNIАН*)

Support for Russia

Whether or not US lethal (defence) military support will provoke Russia into retaliation, a new report from the PEW Research Centre (*'Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe'*) suggests that most ethnic Russians living in former Soviet republics (Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine and the Baltic States) prefer a strong Russia to balance the influence of the West. When it comes to the war in East Ukraine, the report found that ethnic Russians are less likely to view Russia as a major military threat or to place most of the blame for violence on Russia or pro-Russian separatists.

However, no matter what pro-Russian Europeans think, the rest of the West is keeping a close eye on developments, such as the amassing of military equipment by Russia on the European border. The US might directly support Ukraine with military materials needed to defend themselves from a Russian incursion, but it will not get involved further. Ukraine is not a NATO member and therefore cannot expect long-term assistance from member states, such as the US. However, as with proxy wars fought

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elsewhere, the 'Cold War' between the West and Russia could rapidly turn 'hot' one over Ukraine.

A possible Malorossiya?

According to *The Telegraph* and other credible news sources, Russian-backed rebels fighting against Kiev announced the creation of a new 'state' that they said would take the place of Ukraine and have its capital in their territory. The proposed country would be founded after a referendum and called (should Ukraine allow) Malorossiya, a tsarist-era name meaning 'Little Russia', that once described most of the area covering modern-day Ukraine. A constitution presented by rebel leader Alexander Zakharchenko said representatives from the insurgents' self-declared Donetsk and Lugansk 'People's Republics' and other regions had agreed to "declare the establishment of a new state, which is the successor of Ukraine".

The State Duma deputy, Leonid Kalashnikov, says that Ukrainian authorities have "reached a dead end in East Ukraine, and the new state (Malorossiya) could be a way out. People can't be at war forever; creating an independent state could be a way out for them," he said.

Fighting over East Ukraine, specifically against Russian influence there, has dragged on for more than three years, ending in what seems to be a stalemate, albeit one that could flare into full-blown war any day. Kalashnikov's suggestion of giving the pro-Russian separatists what they want, an independent 'state', sounds a lot like giving up, something the Poroshenko government in Kiev would probably never allow. The same scenario can be seen between Israel and Palestine, who for decades have fought each other over sovereignty. The thought of giving Palestine what they want – an independent recognised state – has crossed many diplomatic minds, but the practicality of Israel accepting such a suggestion is absurd.

Why Ukraine matters

The question as to why Russia cares so much about Ukraine is one that reveals a Cold War between Russia and the West that never went away. Tim

Marshall, in his book *Prisoners of Geography*, suggests that Ukraine, together with Georgia, Moldova and the other Baltic States, form a natural buffer between Russia and the West, in particular NATO. "For the Russian foreign policy elite, membership of the EU is simply a stalking horse for membership for NATO, and for Russia, Ukraine membership of NATO is a red line" says Marshall. This buffer role is encouraged, even by the West, and is one of the reasons why these buffer nations will most likely never become members of NATO. The NATO manifest reads that an attack on one is an attack on all, and to that effect, if Russia overstepped in one NATO country, the others must respond. The relative peace between Russia and the West is thanks to these countries forming this buffer.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

As peacemakers, Christians should stand at the forefront of not only advocating justice for the innocent caught in war, but for the safeguarding of human life. The Orthodox-Protestant divide in Eastern Europe has produced not only a religious divide, but also an ethnic one. However, what has come out of the war in Donbas is that these religious divides have in many ways disappeared with churches working together to help ease the suffering of the innocent caught in the middle.

If Malorossiya were ever to come into existence, the religious divide could destroy the Church. In many practical ways, Malorossiya already exists in the form of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic who govern themselves as independent from Ukraine. Here the Church faces increased pressure, not only from theological differences, but from the far-reaching hand of Russia, which sees non-Orthodox churches as pro-West and therefore a threat to its ability to influence and rule its people.

PRAY > For a breakthrough in the apparent deadlock in East Ukraine > For a deeper co-operation between various churches and Christian groups in Ukraine, on both sides of the frontline > For Ukrainian believers to lead the way in reconciliation and problem-solving

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