

FINANCIAL TIMES

The  
‘Uberisation’  
of Brazil’s  
working  
class

By Geoff Dyer

Rafael Antunes was a truck driver for two decades, a job that allowed him to buy a small house in the northern suburbs of Rio de Janeiro and put a daughter through a private university. But ever since he lost his job two years ago, Antunes has been driving for Uber.

“It depends on the month, but sometimes I earn only half of what I did before,” said the 52-year-old. “But look, a guy my age, it is the only work that I can get these days.”

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China’s Export  
Boom Masks  
Deep  
Economic  
Problems  
at Home

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By Hannah Miao

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

BEIJING—Vivian Wei is shutting down her business. After more than a decade as a headhunter, work has dried up. The big Chinese tech companies that once paid Wei to recruit engineers by the hundreds have been laying off employees instead.

Wei, 46, estimates that her income has more than halved in the past few years. Lately, she and her husband have cut down on nonessential spending to save money. She used to splurge on skin-care products, but switched to a cheaper domestic brand.

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Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of the world’s Orthodox Christians, welcomes the election of the new pope, the 69-year-old American Pope Leo XIV, while speaking to The Associated Press at an event in Athens, Greece, Thursday, May 8, 2025.

PHOTO: PETROS GIANNAKOPOULOS/ANSA

TO BHMA International edition

Bartholomew’s Overtures to  
Rome: Can East and West Meet?

By George Gilson

With 35 years as occupant of the first-ranking throne of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew is the

longest serving primate in the 1,700-year history (counting from the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325) of the Church of Constantinople.

During his tenure, he has opened the patriarchate of Constantinople to

the world and has met with countless religious and political leaders globally, including US presidents, always being received with high honors.

He has carried an anti-war message of peaceful reconciliation among peo-

ples, bemoaned socio-economic inequality and, most emphatically, stressed the urgency of environmental protection to avert a global catastrophe. This has earned him among leaders and the international press the moniker of “Green Patriarch”.

Since the start of his ministry in 1991, Bartholomew has been dedicated to advancing through theological dialogue a stronger rapprochement between the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches.

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CRISTINA NICOLE

Emma Maidment, Tyson Venables and their two children pictured in their vineyard on the outskirts of Rethymno.

TO BHMA International edition

The Australian Couple Who Bet  
Everything on a Vineyard

By Maria Katopodi

From Minoan times to the present day, the vineyards of Crete have never fallen silent. It is no coincidence that the oldest known wine press, more than 3,500 years old, was unearthed at Vathypetro. Wine’s place in Minoan life is etched into every palace on the island, from striking amphorae to

vast underground storerooms—testament to the starring role it played in Cretan society.

So what would lead a couple from the other side of the world to settle on Crete and try their luck in the fiercely competitive world of winemaking?

Speaking to *TO VIMA International Edition*, Emma Maidment and Tyson Venables share their story, from the rewards to the hurdles

they have faced along the way.

**A phone call and a flood**

Neither has Greek roots. What brought the Australian husband-and-wife duo to Greece was, quite simply, a phone call. A friend who had moved to the country and bought a property called them to describe his new life.

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One with the future

TO BHMA

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# The 'Uberisation' of Brazil's working class

The gig economy has become an informal safeguard, as country's strong headline figures mask heavy discontent

*Continued from Page One*

His experience explains much about what is happening beneath the surface in Brazil's economy — and why President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's re-election bid is struggling badly. While the world's wealthiest countries dread the impact of AI on their labour markets, Brazil is still trying to adapt to the last technological wave, as the gig economy spreads like wildfire.

The economy's headline numbers look strong under Lula, with solid growth throughout his third term and unemployment at its lowest rate since current records began in 2012, at 5.3 per cent.

But voters are not convinced. A September poll by Quaest showed 49 per cent believe the economy has got worse over the past year, amid a rise in household debt, and only 19 per cent think it is better.

One explanation for the disconnect lies in the dramatic growth of Uber and delivery apps, which are acting as a form of economic safety net for many people struggling to find full-time work.

Almost 2mn people, mostly men, now work full-time for transport or delivery apps — around 2 per cent of the workforce — with driver numbers climbing 37 per cent in three years, according to government research. The most common reason people work for the apps is that they could not find another job, Brazil's statistics agency found.

The trend is so pervasive that it has acquired a Portuguese word: the "Uberização", or "Uberisation", of the economy. Some workers, however, have come to question whether Lula, a former 1970s trade union boss, is best placed to manage such a transformation.

"Uber has become this sort of guaranteed employment programme, except in this case it is sustained by private demand without it, unemployment would definitely be higher," said Daniel Duque, a Brazilian economist who calculated that the gig economy has reduced the overall unemployment rate by about one percentage point.

Brazil provides perfect terrain for Uber, with huge sprawling cities and patchy



An Uber driver picks up a passenger in downtown Marília, São Paulo, Brazil.

public transport. It has relatively low wages and a large proportion of the workforce without formal labour contracts, while a growing number are attracted to working for themselves.

Brazilians take more Uber rides than any other nation in the world, and around 85 per cent of its adults have used it at least once. In most months, three of Uber's top five cities are in Brazil: São Paulo, Rio and Belo Horizonte. Duque estimates that in Rio, 10 per

cent of men aged 25-29 work for apps, with 7 per cent in São Paulo.

Some economists say the phenomenon is one element of a "vibecession", when strong economic indicators do not match how people feel about the economy — similar to that experienced under Joe Biden in the US.

They argue hidden economic discontent is one reason for hard-right Senator Flávio Bolsonaro's unexpected success in the first round of the presidential election this month, winning 47 per cent of the vote, versus Lula's 45 per cent. He is now the favourite in the second round on October 25.

The increasing reliance on the gig economy has added to "a broader sense of resentment in Brazil that has been building for some time", said Guilherme Klein Martins, an economist at the Federal University in Rio de Janeiro.

More than 80 per cent of households are paying off personal debts, aggravated

by Brazil's high interest rates, he said. Brazil's real incomes are only just recovering from a decade of economic turbulence and high inflation.

Uber's explosion also reflects a broader cultural shift towards individualism and entrepreneurship that marks a step change from the desire for unionised labour prioritised by voters during most of Lula's time in politics.

"30 years ago the first job was often in industry — maybe for a big company, which had active trade unions but now it is likely to be Uber," said Mansueto Almeida, a former senior finance ministry official, now chief economist at BTG Pactual.

The second most common reason workers cited for joining the gig economy is its flexibility. Klebson Vitorino, 23, quit his job as a printing machine operator to drive an Uber in São Paulo. He plans to go to university to study agricultural

engineering but will continue working for Uber to support his studies.

"I'm treating it more as a pastime until I manage to achieve my goals," he said.

Carlos Ribeiro, who has been a driver for the Uber Black service in São Paulo for the last two years, said he now has more control over his life.

"If I have to take my kids to the doctor or something like that, I can be there every time," he said.

But Leandro Cruz, the head of an app drivers' union in São Paulo, said many drivers start out excited, then find they make less and less money as problems mount with their car, either after it breaks down or they have accidents. "Many end up having to work seven days a week to keep up," he says.

People working on digital apps used to earn more than the average private sector wage, but the latest data showed salaries are now similar, while the gig economy's average workweek was 5.4 hours longer.

Uber said its platform has had a positive impact, increasing worker income and reducing unemployment. It is investing R\$2bn in technology in Brazil.

The ruling Workers' Party, which Lula founded after leading a trade union in São Paulo, now risks losing its connection with younger members of the working class, some analysts say. He has aimed to address the issue this year, launching a credit line of up to R\$30bn (\$6bn) for drivers to buy their own vehicles in a bid to court gig-economy workers.

"When we produce a policy that allows an Uber driver to have his own car that is the sort of thing only the state can do," he said.

Nielson Costa, a 37-year-old from São Paulo who has been an Uber driver for three years, did not vote in the first round and has not been persuaded by the government's new measures.

"If I didn't have debts, I wouldn't need the government's help," he said. "The government does not really care about app drivers."

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By Panos Kougias

Trips to Thessaloniki never cease to surprise us Athenians. The city always finds a way to welcome us, to sweep us up into its unique rhythm and transmit the pulse of its artistic creation. This time around, it was a sunny autumn morning, the kind that makes October feel like an Indian summer. The sun accompanied me on my way to the interview, bathing in light the waterfront, avenues and remaining mansions of a city that continues to converse with its past. One of these, the famous Villa Bianca, now houses the city's Municipal Art Gallery. I met with Thessaloniki's Deputy Mayor for Culture, Vasilis Gakis, on the occasion of the Apostolos Kilessopoulos retrospective, Ever-shining Worlds. We spoke about the history of Thessaloniki, the human stories behind its elegant mansions, its artistic heritage, and the future of an Art Gallery that aspires to take art out of exhibition spaces and embed it in the daily life of the city.

The Municipal Art Gallery is celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of its inauguration this year. What historical circumstances brought it into being?

The Municipal Art Gallery was founded as an institution in 1961, but wasn't inaugurated until 1966, at which time it was housed on the third floor of the city's YMCA. Thessaloniki had experienced cataclysmic changes in the first half of the 20th century: liberation from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, two World Wars, the arrival of millions of refugees from Asia Minor in the population exchanges of the 1920s, the Civil War and the destruction it wrought. But the late 1950s saw the city embark on systematic efforts to bolster its cultural infrastructure.

The University was expanded, significant cultural institutions were created, the State Orchestra was founded, and in 1966 the first Dimitria festival was held. This was the climate that gave rise to the Art Gallery, which initially shared a space with the Municipal Library.

Today, the Art Gallery is housed in the iconic Villa Bianca. What's the secret history of this beautiful building?

Villa Bianca was built between 1911 and 1913, designed by the Italian architect Pietro Arigoni for Dino Fernandez-Diaz, a wealthy businessman and Italian citizen of Jewish descent who named it after his



On the left, Villa Bianca, home to the Municipal Art Gallery of the Municipality of Thessaloniki. On the right, artwork by A. Kilessopoulos.



# Kilessopoulos Painted The Universe Before We Knew What It Looked Like

Thessaloniki's Deputy Mayor for Culture speaks about the city's memory, the history of the Municipal Art Gallery, the plans for its future, and the major retrospective exhibition dedicated to the work of Apostolos Kilessopoulos

wife, Blanche. It was located in the famous Mansion District, where the affluent families of Thessaloniki built their magnificent homes.

Its history combines romance with tragedy. The daughter of the family, Alina, fell in love with a Christian army officer by the name of Spyros Aliberti, sparking a scandal among the high society of the time. The two were married in Athens, but would later return to the mansion. During World War II, however, Dino Fernandez-Diaz and his son fled to Italy, where they were murdered by the Germans in 1943. It is a history that encapsulates both the charm and the tragedies of Thessaloniki.

The building also experienced a long period of abandonment. How was it saved?

Villa Bianca suffered extensive damage. Architectural elements were removed, and

floors and sections of the roof were destroyed. Its restoration, which was led by Professor Nikolaos Moutsopoulos, was extremely demanding and took place in the context of Thessaloniki's tenure as European Capital of Culture for 1997. The project proved so successful it was honored with the European Europa Nostra award. What I find particularly charming today is the way the historic building converses with the contemporary art it houses. Installing a modern artwork beside an old plaster ornament or a light fixture from another era might seem incongruous at first. Ultimately, however, they both serve to shine a light on the other.

What do the artistic holdings of the Municipal Art Gallery mean for Thessaloniki?

The Municipality has approximately 3,000 works of art in its

holdings, dating from the late 19th century to the present day and including important collections of engraving and sculpture as well as Byzantine icons and heirlooms. The over 600 works donated by the family of Nikolaos Gyzis occupy a special place among its holdings. An Art Gallery is more than an exhibition space; it is also a historical archive. Every painting records aspects of its era and can become an object of research. I also consider it extremely important that we offer artists the opportunity to donate their works and thereby ensure they are conserved, digitized, and shown to the public.

What is your core philosophy when it comes to art's presence in the contemporary city?

This: we don't wait for the public to visit a cultural venue—we bring culture into

the city's public spaces. Take the new Glass Art Gallery, for instance. Located on the waterfront not far from the Makedonia Palace hotel, it is a 100-square-meter space where works from the municipal collection are put on display. Its unique feature is that the public doesn't even have to go inside to see the works—they can view the exhibition simply by walking around the building. You see, we want art to be part of the residents' daily lives, not an activity that only occurs behind closed doors.

Do you have any upcoming plans for the Art Gallery? Is a larger exhibition space in the cards for the future?

We are constantly seeking new ways to make the most of and present our collections. We are currently designing exhibitions to be shown at the Thessaloniki History Center,

which will include more historical content—in the form, for instance, of engravings and prints that depict the evolution of the city. At the same time, we are developing a large, versatile space at the Old Abattoir which will be suitable for both visual arts shows and musical events. We are hoping to inaugurate the new venue with a major exhibition. There is also a more far-reaching idea to stage temporary exhibitions focused on major bequests and artists' collections in specially designed spaces. We haven't yet reached the stage where we can announce anything, but we view it as a highly significant development.

Let's move on to Apostolos Kilessopoulos. What is it that makes his work so unique?

Apostolos Kilessopoulos is one of the most important artists associated with Thessaloniki. His visual idiom is instantly recognizable: when you see a painting of his, you immediately know who painted it. What astounds me is that so many of his works look like photographs of the universe. They are interstellar images, and yet he began his explorations back in the early 1970s, when our capacity for visualizing the universe was far more limited than it is today. Which is to say there is a profoundly visionary dimension to his painting.

Despite his significance, Kilessopoulos is not particularly well-known to the Athenian public. How do you explain that?

He is an introverted person who never sought the limelight or took part in the promotional mechanisms of the art market. He was also devoted to his educational work, in which role he influenced generations of emerging artists. But his introversion does not mean his work isn't outward-looking. On the contrary, it has a powerful emotional and conceptual resonance. This retrospective is also a tribute to his long-standing presence in, and contributions to, the city.

What would you like the visitor to take away from "Ever-shining Worlds"?

That's always subjective. I don't think we can dictate what visitors ought to feel when faced with a work of art. Personally, in Kilessopoulos's paintings, I see a unique relationship between color and space. His compositions often seem to levitate, to transcend the boundaries of the painted surface. Which is exactly where art's power lies: in creating a different world for each of us.

# Bartholomew's Overtures to Rome: Can East and West Meet?

The painstaking quest of Constantinople and Rome for the elusive 'Common Cup'

Continued from Page One

That dialogue began in earnest in 1980, but despite good will on both sides, it has not produced any substantial breakthroughs.

At 86, the patriarch appears intent upon pursuing a substantive step in the direction of complete communion with Rome (that despite good will on both sides would still certainly take decades), a step that would, if successful, define his historical legacy.

Bartholomew became intimately acquainted with the Catholic Church during his years in Rome, where in 1966 he completed his doctoral studies at Pontifical Oriental Institute, a historically Jesuit-run institution. His dissertation was on the codification of the Sacred Canons and canonical regulations in the Orthodox Church.

By all appearances, the Ecumenical Patriarch believes that the election of Pope Leo XIV opens new opportunities to step up the process of dialogue, as the pope has said boldly that he sees the "full visible communion" of the two Churches as an important goal, to be achieved through dialogue.

Bartholomew has taken palpable steps to externalise his desire to advance dialogue with greater determination. He attended the Funeral Mass for Pope Francis, with whom he had developed a close rapport, and the Inaugural Mass for Leo.

### 'Full visible communion of Churches'

Addressing a delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on 28 June, 2025 at the Vatican, Leo stated: "As I think back with gratitude on the progress made thus far, I assure you of my desire to persevere in the effort to restore full visible communion between our Churches. The attainment of this goal can only come about, with God's help, through a continued commitment to respectful listening and fraternal dialogue. For this reason, I am open to any suggestions that you may offer in this regard, always in consultation with my brother Bishops of the Catholic Church."

### Pope and Patriarch in Nicaea

The most visible of their common will was Leo's decision to celebrate with Bartholomew (keeping a commitment made by his predecessor Pope Francis) the 1,700th anniversary of



Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew officiates at the opening of the Church of The Three Hierarchs in Budapest, Hungary where he delivered a major address on the revival of the Pentarchy among the Western and Eastern Churches, September 5, 2026

the First Ecumenical Council (when the entire Christian Church was united), held in the city of Nicaea (present-day Iznik, Turkey).

There, together they recited together the Nicene Creed – the Council of Nicaea finalized the first eight clauses and the last four were agreed to at the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381) – the dogmatic profession of faith that has guided the two Churches through the centuries. Leo has said that the common Creed must be the compass on the road to Christian unity.

### Decades of dialogue, moderate progress

The explicit quest for Christian unity in substance emerged in the 20th century. A central dispute between East and West as far back as the Great Schism of 1054 has been the nature and content of papal primacy. The Eastern Orthodox Church has always accepted that the pope is the first-ranking bishop in Christianity, but has rejected the fundamental principle of Catholicism that he is entitled, as a successor of the Apostle Peter, to exercise his authority over the entire, universal Christian Church.

### Orthodox discussion of papal primacy

Papal primacy and its content was the core subject at the 27th International Congress of the Society for the Law of the Eastern Churches, held in Budapest and entitled The Bishop of Rome: Future Horizons from Ancient Traditions

for Catholics and Orthodox.

There, in a major address delivered on September 4, Bartholomew articulated the Eastern Orthodox interpretation of papal primacy, which harkens back to the ecclesiastical structure of a united Christendom: "A primacy of loving service, exercised within, and never above, the communion of sister Churches."

He stated that Rome's primacy is "inseparably linked to the ancient institution of the Pentarchy of the patriarchs, within which the Pope of Rome was recognized as "first among equals" — *primus inter pares* — precisely as the "Patriarch of the West."

For the Orthodox, this is a primacy of honor.

### Proposed visible revival of the 'Pentarchy'

Bartholomew argued, in this framework, that a formal, explicit revival of the pentarchy – the terms of which Rome and the remaining four Eastern Churches of the pentarchy would have to reconfirm – could contribute significantly to the goal of Christian unity.

The push toward and the terms of that unity, however, are not accepted by most of the autocephalous (self-governing) Orthodox Churches. It is indicative that the issue of the pentarchy was not even on the agenda of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church in Crete (2016).

### Pope as 'Patriarch of the West'

In a gesture of good will that indirectly harkens back to

the pentarchy, Pope Francis in 2024 restored one of the historical titles of the pope (that had been removed by his predecessor, Benedict XVI in 2006) – Patriarch of the West. Although this was welcomed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, it in no way altered the core of the Vatican's interpretation of primacy.

Francis described the pope as the one who "leads the Church of Rome [and] who presides in love over all the Churches."

The notion of the pope "presiding in love" is how Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras framed papal primacy when he addressed Pope Paul VI – at the patriarchate in July, 1967 – as "Successor to Peter, the first in honour among us, the one presiding in love."

### The 'Ratzinger formula'

Bartholomew's recent emphasis on the pentarchy is very much in line with one of the preeminent theologians of the Catholic Church of the 20th century, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI.

In what has become known as the "Ratzinger formula", he wrote in 1976: "Rome must not require more from the East with respect to the doctrine of primacy than had been formulated and was lived in the first millennium."

At the same time, he called upon the East to recognize the legitimacy and orthodoxy of the Western Church in its historical development, while the West would recognise the Eastern Church in its own tradition.

### Theological fault lines

The central difference in the theological traditions is the understanding of the nature of the Holy Trinity. The Orthodox stick to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed's formulation that the Holy Spirit descends only from the Father, while the Catholics in 1014 incorporated in their Mass the word *filioque* (first encountered in 8th century Spain), that it descends from the Father and the Son.

Though the dispute might baffle the layman, the issue is theologically important because it concerns the inter-relation of the three persons of the Trinity, and effectively defines who God is eternally. Over the centuries, all Orthodox Churches have viewed this departure from the original Creed as a heretical teaching.

Although over the last decades popes – John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis and Leo (at Nicaea) – have at times recited the Creed without the word *filioque*, the Catholic theological teaching remains unchanged.

### The conundrum of papal primacy

The content of papal primacy in the first millennium of Christianity and how it was exercised is not *prima facie* obvious. The Orthodox have historically viewed it as a primacy of honour, first among equals, without authority to intervene administratively or otherwise in the affairs of other Christian Churches.

The Catholics view it as authority over the entire universal Christian Church.

Another key issue that divides the Churches is the Catholic dogma (formally defined quite late, in 1870) that when the pope speaks *ex cathedra* (in his official pontifical capacity) he is infallible.

The Orthodox position is that this completely undermines the fundamental ecclesiastical concept of synodality (collective decision-making) and establishes a universal ecclesiastical imperium.

### The patriarch's speech

In his address in Budapest, Bartholomew argued essentially that the heritage of the Church Fathers of both the Orthodox and the Catholics is the natural point of convergence between the two Churches and their future dialogue. In this regard, the administrative structure of the first millennium can be a point of departure in the quest for a unified, universal Christian Church.

This *communio patriarcharum* (communion of the patriarchs), he noted, and Constantinople's place in it, constitute the Ecumenical Patriarchate's canonical inheritance.

### Primacy of patriarchs in their jurisdiction

A formal modern revival of the pentarchy would reaffirm the hierarchical structure of the unified Church, with Constantinople (the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, or "second Rome") directly following Rome, whose primacy remains undisputed. Third, fourth and fifth in the hierarchy are the "ancient and venerable" Eastern patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.

An important parameter of the ancient structure of the Christian Church that Bartholomew underlined is that each of the Eastern patriarchs enjoyed primacy within their own ecclesiastical jurisdiction, while remaining united with Rome "in the one faith and at the one Eucharistic chalice."

That effectively means that Rome's hierarchical primacy is not an administrative one in Orthodox patriarchal jurisdictions.

### Pentarchy as a lyre: The music of full communion

Bartholomew waxed lyrical about the institutional importance and interconnectedness of the pentarchy,

evoking the five chords of the ancient Greek lyre (mentioned in Homer), as we now know it can produce harmony.

“We await, by the grace and help of God, the restoration of full communion with the Church of Rome within the one Body of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church (articulated in the Creed), so that the Pentarchy may once again become complete and the ‘five-stringed lyre’ of the universal Church may resound anew with the fullness of its ancient harmony.”

Meeting of all four patriarchs of the East?

In this entire context, Bartholomew announced that he has issued an invitation to the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem to meet with him at his seat at the Phanar on November 30, for the celebration of the (thronal) feast of Saint Andrew. Patriarchs of Constantinople are successors to the Apostle Andrew just as popes are successors to the Apostle Peter.

At this writing, none of the patriarchs have publicly accepted the formal invitation. Bartholomew has not yet announced an agenda for such a meeting, which presumably aims above all to symbolise and display Orthodox unity, at the highest level of the hierarchy at least.

The last time patriarchs convened for a synod at the Ecumenical Patriarchate was 15 years ago, in September, 2011. However, Patriarch Ignatios of Antioch did not attend, but instead sent a representative.

The current patriarch, John X, may well follow suit.

In this regard, it should be noted that the Patriarchate of Moscow - which along with the Kremlin has declared war against Bartholomew over his decision to recognise an Autocephalous Church of Ukraine in 2019 - has historically exercised strong influence over the Antioch patriarchate. It has been known to exercise some influence in the patriarchate of Jerusalem as well.

The risk is that if one or more patriarchs are absent, the message conveyed will be one of disunity.

The proposed synod in November would presumably touch on key issues of the last one, including the severe persecution of Christians in the Middle East, inter-confessional dialogue (with Catholics and Protestants) and inter-faith (with Judaism and Islam) dialogue.

Dialogue: An arduous road with meagre results

Athens University School of Law Professor Emeritus of Ecclesiastical Law Ioannis Konidaris, the foremost expert in the field, outlined for *TO VIMA International* certain cen-



Pope Leo XIV and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I during an ecumenical blessing at the conclusion of a joint Christian prayer service, at the Patriarchal Church of St. George, during his first apostolic journey, in Istanbul, Turkey, November 30, 2025.

tral obstacles confronting the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue.

“Dialogue in general—whether inter-Orthodox, inter-confessional, inter-Christian, or interreligious—is seemingly endless. A characteristic example is the dialogue between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, which effectively began in 1960 and formally in 1980, and has now continued for several decades without tangible or concrete results,” he says.

“This is due among other things, to the fact that these dialogues take place between theologians, clergy, and laypeople who are constrained

by rigid doctrinal positions. Consequently, it is entirely different from, for example, a dialogue between politicians, or one between jurists,” Konidaris underlines.

Complexity of many national Orthodox Churches

A key obstacle is the different structures of the two Churches.

Whereas the Catholic Church has a pyramidal structure in which the pope has overwhelming authority over all of Catholicism, Konidaris stresses that the Orthodox Church is structured

with many local Churches – patriarchates and many national, self-governing Churches - that do not answer to the first-ranking Ecumenical Patriarchate.

“For definitive decisions to be taken on major theological or ecclesiastical issues, a consensus must first be forged,” the professor points out, adding that this has proved to be difficult. “This is because of the national basis on which these churches were built, mostly in the era of 19th century nationalism.”

This results in a core problem for ecclesiastical law. While the Catholics have codi-

fied their Canon Law for the entire Church (1917, revised in its current form 1983), the Eastern Orthodox Church has yet to do so.

Eastern Orthodox Canon law is differentiated in the 15 autocephalous (self-governing) Churches, in accordance with the legal order of the states in which they function, Konidaris notes.

He underlines that after nearly half a century of dialogue, the Catholics and the Orthodox have been unable to agree even on celebrating Easter on the same day. Though this is largely a calendar issue (conflict between

the Gregorian and Julian) that might have been resolved as such, many Orthodox faithful view it dogmatically as a theological issue.

Ecumenism as ‘heresy’

The burdens of a past tumultuous history of Orthodox-Catholic relations still weigh heavily and define the perspective of many of the autonomous Orthodox Churches toward Catholic-Orthodox dialogue.

“There are Orthodox Churches that consider any contact with Roman Catholics to constitute heresy—the heresy of Ecumenism. This creates divisions within the Orthodox Church and is directed primarily against the Ecumenical Patriarchate and its helmsman, who consistently serve the cause of inter-Christian dialogue,” Konidaris says.

Though the pursuit of unity between the Churches was initiated and has been led by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, most Orthodox faithful have historically viewed the Catholic Church with suspicion and animosity for what they view as heretical teachings and historic sins.

Rejection of Ecumenism

That mindset has led to their strong aversion to Ecumenism – Constantinople’s active reaching out to other Christian confessions as well as to the Muslim and Jewish faiths.

This is grounded on major, divisive issues of the past, ranging from the Great Schism of 1054 to the much more important and traumatic Sacking of Constantinople, the centre of Eastern Orthodoxy, with the great crimes committed against fellow Christians during the Fourth Crusade of 1204, by Latin Catholic Crusaders who were ostensibly en route to recapture Jerusalem.

The regret of John Paul II

In a historic statement delivered in Athens before Archbishop Christodoulos on May 4, 2001, Pope John Paul II expressed deep regret for the Fourth Crusade’s Sack of Constantinople.

“I am thinking of the disastrous sack of the imperial city of Constantinople, which was for so long the bastion of Christianity in the East. It is tragic that the assailants, who had set out to secure free access for Christians to the Holy Land, turned against their own brothers in the faith. The fact that they were Latin Christians fills Catholics with deep regret,” he said.

“For the occasions past and present, when sons and daughters of the Catholic Church have sinned by action or omission against their Orthodox brothers and sisters, may the Lord grant us the forgiveness we beg of Him.”



Pope Leo XIV and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the spiritual leader of the world's Eastern Orthodox Christians, waves to the crowd after delivering a joint Ecumenical blessing at the Patriarchal Church of Saint George, in Istanbul Turkey, Sunday, Nov. 30, 2025.

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“You should come,” he told them. “I think this could be the place for you.”

“We looked at each other and asked what was actually keeping us in Australia,” they recall. “The honest answer was: not much.”

At the time, the couple was living near Byron Bay, running two businesses, a coaching company and a small-business automation firm, both designed to run from anywhere. That flexibility was a lesson they’d learned the hard way.

A few years earlier, after the birth of their first child, they had faced a choice: go all in on their own businesses or follow the conventional “Australian Dream.” They decided to sleep on it. That night, their town flooded.

“By morning everything we owned was on the street: furniture, photos, all of it,” they say. “It felt like the answer had arrived before we had the chance to second-guess ourselves.”

They went all in. A second son followed the next year, along with the publication of Emma’s book, *Find Your Flow* (Affirm Press/Simon & Schuster). Then Tyson’s father died, and their perspective on what truly mattered shifted once again.

So when the call came from Greece, they were ready to listen. “We realized there’s never a right time, only now and not-now.”

They sold what was left, bought one-way tickets and told everyone they were going for three months, just to take a look. They never went back. From the phone call to landing in Greece took about a month. Their families were supportive, they say, and while the couple misses them, their relatives love visiting Crete and experiencing life on the island.

Following the breadcrumbs to Crete

Behind the move lay a vision the couple had shared for years: a life rooted in land, food, wine and community. Their first stop was Paros. “It’s beautiful, but like much of the Cyclades it’s stone, salt and wind,” they explain. “Not much grows there, and we’d come with land and food in mind.”

They admit they hadn’t done much research. Instead, they followed the breadcrumbs of local advice, which all pointed to one place: Crete. The food’s different, they were told, the land’s different; people still farm the old way and there are real mountains. “That mattered to us more than any postcard view,” they say. So they hopped on a ferry.

From Byron Bay to the Mountains of Crete: The Australian Couple Who Bet Everything on a Vineyard

A phone call, a flood and two one-way tickets: how Emma and Tyson left Byron Bay for an organic vineyard in Crete. “We thought, how hard can it be? Well, it’s significantly harder.”



PHOTOGRAPH BY CRISTINA NICOLE

The couple’s Kairos project on the vineyard is the first step in what will hopefully become a larger venture including a regenerative farm and village building restorations.

The vineyard they found sits in the Kedros Mountains south of Rethymno, near Spili, beneath Mount Soros, at an altitude of 600 to 700 meters. The elevation brings cooler nights than on the coast, which helps the grapes retain their freshness. The vines had been farmed organically since they were planted, something the couple describes as rare, and exactly what they wanted to build on.

The purchase happened faster than was sensible, they concede. The plan had been to settle in and learn about the place first. But the land came up while their visas were still pending and the paperwork was far from clear. “We’d just spent years learning what happens when you wait, so we bought it.”

‘How hard can it be?’

Neither had any background in winemaking or agriculture. “We thought, how hard can it be?” they say. “It is significantly harder than we thought.”

In truth, they didn’t so much choose wine as the vineyard chose them. Wine had always been part of the bigger picture, but when a small organic vineyard came up for sale on a mountain they loved, it became the foundation of their new life rather than just a piece of the puzzle.

They named the project Kairos. The ancient Greeks had two words for time: *chronos*, measured time, and *kairos*, the right or opportune moment that demands to be seized. “That’s how we ended up here, and it’s how a vineyard actually works,” they explain. “You prune, fertilize and pick when the vine, the weather and the moon tell you to, not when the calendar does.”

Their philosophy is low intervention. In the vineyard they follow organic and biodynamic practices: no tilling, cover crops, swales to capture rainwater, compost teas and biodynamic preparations. In the cellar, they use wild fermentation with native yeasts, very little sulfur, and no fining or filtering. “We try to get out of the way,” they say.

They inherited 240 vines across 12 rows, planted around 2014-2015, mostly Shiraz along with Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Their first vintage, in 2025, produced a rosé, a Shiraz and a Cabernet-Merlot blend.

Everything had to be learned from scratch: pruning; canopy, disease and soil management; fermentation, bottling. Their teachers have been local growers, books and above all their

own mistakes. They speak warmly of the team at Iliana Malihin, which has a winery and tasting space in a neighboring village. “They have been so generous with their help and guidance,” they say.

Tyson, a systems builder, logs every vine, sugar reading and plant check in an app they built themselves. “Writing everything down is how you avoid making the same mistake twice.”

Mildew, an injury and lessons learned

Setbacks followed. Tyson ruptured his Achilles tendon, mildew claimed half the first harvest, and in 2026 powdery mildew hit 95 percent of the vines, which yielded just 16 kilos of Shiraz. “That one’s on us,” they say. Both failures came from gaps in protection at budburst, so next season begins with a strict spray program and insights gleaned from new soil tests.

“In Crete the sun, wind and heat are generous, but the season punishes you for being a week late,” they say. “But doubt about the work isn’t doubt about the decision, and we’ve never really doubted the decision.”

Siga siga...

The couple is careful to stress that Kairos is not yet a business. “It’s a family project,” they explain. “We have a small vineyard, a first vintage made at home in tiny quantities, and a lot to learn.” Becoming a licensed wine producer is the goal, and when they get there, they want to do it properly rather than rush it. For now, they are documenting and sharing the journey as honestly as they can.

The hardest part has been buying land with unclear paperwork in an unfamiliar system, “and that feeling of signing something in a different language and hoping you got the translation right.”

They remember the notary’s office, folders stacked floor to ceiling. Changing a single date on one document took many visits and over a year, and nothing could speed it up.

“Learning to be patient is the only way to thrive here,” they say. “Things happen in their own time, which has been a challenging lesson to learn.”

Their advice to other foreigners considering a similar path is practical: find a good local lawyer and accountant early, and pay them, because “it’s the cheapest insurance you’ll buy.” Expect everything to take longer than planned, and budget both money and patience accordingly. And remember that relationships move things faster



The vines had been farmed organically since they were planted, something the couple wanted to build on.

than forms do. “Go in person, be friendly, come back with snacks.”

Pace, they say, has been the hardest cultural adjustment. “We come from a world of apps, deadlines and things arriving tomorrow. Here, things happen when they happen: when the right person is in, when the weather allows, when someone has finished their coffee.” Yet it is also what they have embraced most. *Si-ya si-ya*, slowly slowly, has become something of a family motto. “Farming here is tied to the seasons and the moon, and the culture still is too. Which is ultimately what makes it special.”

Lost in translation

When they arrived, their Greek began and ended with kalimera. They now take lessons and are learning... siga siga. In daily life,

most of the people they deal with speak English, but none of their neighbors do. “The more Greek words we have, the more we can converse,” they say.

The language barrier has produced at least one memorable adventure. Tyson asked the vineyard’s previous owner whether he knew anyone with organic sheep that could graze the land. Somewhere along the way, the request was understood as Tyson wanting organic lamb to eat.

“Tyson was taken deep into a mountain village to find a sheep farmer, and then to a local organic pig farmer deep in the bushland,” Emma recalls. “All the while he was sending me his location because he had no idea where he was being taken. He has a knack of finding himself on random adventures. In the end

we had zero sheep of any kind.”

Earning their place

The local community received them first with curiosity, then with warmth. “We think it helped that we turned up to work,” they say. “People see you on the mountain in the wind, with the kids, getting it wrong and coming back the next day.”

That warmth became unmistakable after Tyson’s injury. Neighbors delivered food, visited him in the hospital, and helped with paperwork and translation. “It really blew us away how willing the locals were to help us when we were in need.”

Since they began sharing their story, Tyson has connected with a host of farmers across Crete and Greece. Beyond the Iliana

Malihin team, which offered timely guidance on last year’s mildew, a biodynamic Merlot winemaker from northern Greece has advised him this season on what to look out for and which preparations can strengthen the whole system throughout the year. The local Asergrowth garden center, run by people who live near the vineyard, has also been a great help.

Not everyone is convinced, of course. “Lots of the locals think we are crazy, and we understand why,” they say. “Crete has made wine for around 4,000 years, and we’ve made it for two vintages. We’re not here to tell anyone how to do it.”

That humility is one reason they are turning to indigenous varieties. Next spring they plan to graft Kotsifali onto the Merlot rows and plant Liatiko for a

Shiraz-Liatiko rosé. “It feels right to grow what belongs here alongside what we inherited,” they say. It is also why they talk publicly about their mistakes as much as their successes. “We’d rather earn respect slowly than claim it.”

Roots in the ground

Their two boys, now 5 and 3, have adapted well. They have made friends, are slowly picking up the language and love playing with the village children, even if they can’t always understand each other. The vineyard has been central to how they’ve settled in. “They’re there with us pruning, picking and watering,” the couple says. “They are constantly asking when they can go up.”

What do they miss about Australia? Family, naturally, though relatives visit regularly and FaceTime keeps them close. And, more prosaically, “being able to walk into one store and have everything you need.” On Crete, a single day’s work can require trips to three hardware stores, a farm supply store and an online order.

For now, Crete is home. “The kids are thriving and we love the lifestyle,” they say. “We’ve put roots in the ground here, literally. You don’t graft vines and plant new rows somewhere you’re planning to leave in a hurry.”

The bigger picture

Kairos is only the first step in a larger venture the couple calls Crete Projects, which is still in its early stages: a regenerative farm, food and wine from the land, restored village buildings, and a place where people can come, stay and be part of it all. Wine tourism is built in from the start. “We want people to stand in the rows, taste the wine where it grew, and eat what the land produces.”

As for the wine, they want to grow carefully, with Kotsifali and Liatiko in the ground, a Shiraz-Liatiko rosé as a second label, “and a small range that sells out because people love it.”

The challenges ahead are real: water on a dry mountain, scaling up without abandoning the low-intervention approach, and doing all of it in a second language. But their definition of success is clear: “Wine we’re proud of, made the way we believe in, shared with good people,” they say. As a family, it is simpler still: “The boys growing up knowing where food comes from, and us building something we’d want them to inherit.”

Would they do it again? “Without hesitation,” they say. “It’s been harder, slower and more humbling than we imagined. But this was the answer to a question we’d been asking for years. We just didn’t know where to look.”



'We come from a world of apps and deadlines; here, things happen when they happen'

# China’s Export Boom Masks Deep Economic Problems at Home

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Much of the country’s economy is dragged down by gloomy consumer sentiment, real-estate slump

Continued from Page One

Some of her neighbors lost their jobs and have become drivers for DiDi, China’s main ride-hailing platform. Wei’s biggest concern now is whether her 12-year-old son will be able to get a job when he grows up.

“I don’t know what the future holds,” Wei said.

For people across China, economic worries are mounting. A multiyear real-estate slump has no end in sight, steady jobs are becoming rarer, especially for young people, and many people seem to be hoarding their money in preparation for worse times ahead.

That means China has to look abroad for economic growth, which is in turn raising tensions with trading partners. Exports surged 36% in September, putting China on track to surpass last year’s record \$1.2 trillion trade surplus, thanks to surging demand for goods like electric vehicles and machinery.

Exports have driven much of China’s economic growth this year. China’s gross domestic product expanded 4.5% in the third quarter compared with the same period last year, accord-



People cross the road next to taxis in Beijing, China, July 8, 2026.

ing to official data released Monday, up from the second quarter’s 4.3% growth and in line with Beijing’s target of 4.5% to 5% growth this year.

While China is making leaps in cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence and robotics, much of its domestic economy is struggling. Fixed-asset investment, which tracks spending on assets such as

homes, factories and roads, in the first three quarters of the year fell 7.2% compared with the same period in 2025, with property investment alone falling 21%.

Consumer spending remains muted. Retail sales, a gauge of household spending, rose 1.1% in September, up from 0.4% in August but down from 3% a year earlier. Li Yan, a clothing sell-

er at a wholesale market in Beijing, said she didn’t turn a profit last year, and sales are down even more this year. She sells sweaters for the equivalent of around \$15 each, earning only a few dollars of profit per item. To break even, she has to sell around 30 items a day. Most days, Li isn’t breaking even.

Though China’s official urban unemployment

rate has remained steady at around 5%, some economists believe the actual labor-market picture is hidden by a growing army of gig workers. The number of people in China with flexible employment—work without a permanent contract—is expected to grow to 320 million in 2026, accounting for more than 40% of urban employment, according to China

New Employment Forms Research Center, a think tank.

Even those with jobs and steady incomes are feeling the overall economic anxiety.

Economists at home and abroad have urged Beijing to implement policies to boost consumption and reduce reliance on exports. Recently, policymakers have rolled out measures such as mortgage subsidies and some new infrastructure investment, but have stopped short of the deep reforms and stimulus many economists believe are needed to rebalance the economy.

One of Beijing’s main efforts to perk up spending in the past couple of years has been a program offering subsidies for consumers to replace old household appliances and other products with new ones.

Wei, the headhunter, is renovating her apartment and is happy she got a 15% subsidy on new cabinets. But she said the subsidies alone wouldn’t have encouraged her to spend more if she hadn’t already been doing renovations.

“You have to boost employment so incomes rise,” Wei said. “You need to address the root problem.”

## Brace Yourself for the Priciest Holiday Travel Season in Years

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Jet-fuel expenses have surged by tens of billions of dollars, but carriers say households are absorbing the increase in airfares

By Rebecca Cadenhead and Alison Sider

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

When Ehren Minkema flew from Austin, Texas, to Minneapolis for Christmas last year, he paid \$424 round trip.

About a week ago, Minkema bought a nearly identical itinerary for this year’s trip. The new price: \$722.

“I had to think about what sacrifices I am willing to make to book my trip home,” said Minkema, a 35-year-old who lives in Austin. “While also knowing that the longer I wait, prices will just continue to get more expensive.”

Airfares this holiday season will be the highest they

have been in at least a decade, according to data compiled by Hopper, a travel-booking company. So far, the average domestic round-trip ticket this Thanksgiving travel period is 31% more expensive than last year, while the price of a ticket for Christmas is 23% higher.

The stakes are high for airlines in one of the year’s busiest air-travel windows. Carriers have had to find ways to boost revenue to deal with rising energy costs since the Iran War began to disrupt global crude oil flows and production in the Middle East.

Jet fuel is one of the biggest single expenses for carriers and they expect to pay tens of billions of dollars more for it than last year. The average monthly spot price of jet fuel is around \$4.50 a gallon,



Crowded Frankfurt Airport check-in counters in Germany, February 19, 2024.

up 91% since February, according to data from Argus.

Airlines have passed along some of the energy-cost burden to travelers. The airfare component of the consumer-price index rose to its highest level on record

in September on a seasonally adjusted basis, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics—edging up 1.2% from August and 22.4% from the same month a year earlier.

Consumers can avoid the most expensive airfares with

a little planning and flexibility, said Peer Bueller, CEO of Kayak, a travel-search platform. For example, they can be deliberate about when they buy their tickets—in previous years, it has been cheapest to book a Thanksgiving flight three to five weeks in advance.

The date of arrival and departure matters, too. Flyers can save more than \$250 on Thanksgiving travel by avoiding just one date, Hopper found: Nov. 29, the Sunday after the holiday and one of the busiest travel days of the year.

Still, many people don’t have the freedom to fly on the cheapest possible day, said Hayley Berg, Hopper’s lead economist. “Most Americans see their holiday travel as something essential,” she said.

Airlines are counting on

that. Delta Chief Executive Ed Bastian said earlier this month the top 40% of U.S. households—which make up the majority of Delta’s customers—are wealthier than they were a few years ago, and willing to absorb an increase in fares.

“Candidly, the limited amount of resistance that we see, the fact that our product continues to be seen in a consumer basket as reasonably affordable...I think that’s a very good sign for the future,” Bastian told analysts during a conference call.

Minkema, who considers himself a “Delta loyalist,” usually flies Delta from Austin, where he lives, to Minneapolis, where he grew up. He didn’t think his flight home for Christmas was affordable. He’s considering flying Southwest in the future.