

EUROPE

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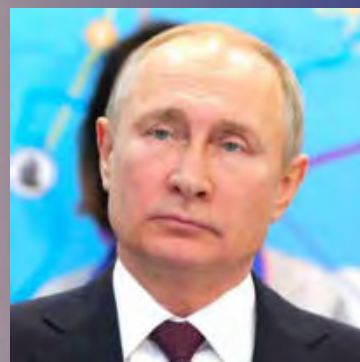
Diplomatic

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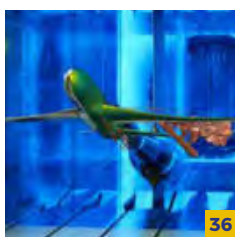
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EDITORIAL

WHAT DOES THE US-IRAN CRISIS MEAN FOR EUROPE ?

In the deepening conflict between Iran and the United States, the European Union seems well and truly caught in the middle. In Brussels, talks appear to be the only feasible option at the moment. But the European dilemma seems to be that while they want to put additional pressure on Iran, they don't want to side too openly with the US.

In other words, how to find the magic formula that keeps you in a position that satisfies both needs.

Until now, the EU was clinging on to the 2015 nuclear deal. The so-called JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) was supposed to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons in return for the lifting of UN sanctions.

But following the pull-out of the deal by President Trump in 2018 and the imposition of more sanctions, Iran has step by step, reduced its own commitments to the deal, further limiting the EU's ability to weigh in on the issue.

The JCPOA was in fact, the only stake Europeans had in the Iran issue, which made them important as far as contacts and negotiations were concerned. Since the demise of that deal, as well as the escalating military situation, the EU's influence has diminished dramatically.

Many in Brussels saw some hope in Iran's Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif. He was invited back to Brussels in January 2020, in an attempt to bring the Iranians back to the table and negotiate a way out of the crisis. However, the escalating tensions that soared following the killing of Iran's most senior commander, Qassem Soleimani on January 3, followed by Iran's retaliatory rocket attacks on US bases in Iraq stifled those hopes.

With each passing day, the EU countries involved in the nuclear deal – Britain, France and Germany – lost more patience with Iran's violations of its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal and despite repeated warnings, tensions and friction between Iran and the West increased even more.

TIME FOR ACTION

But now, the EU has called for a decisive solution. It has activated what is known as the Dispute Resolution Mechanism which is incorporated into the agreement. Under this mechanism, when there are disagreements, any party can refer the case to a joint committee from Iran, China, Russia, the EU and the three European states involved. If that commission fails to resolve the disagreement, it is then referred to the UN Security Council.

In turn, if the UN Security Council fails to vote to continue easing the sanctions within 30 days, then those sanctions will be re-imposed as they existed under previous UN resolutions, known as snapbacks.

This of course means that European sanctions against Iran will also become a real possibility. While the Trump administration has naturally welcomed this development, Iran has reacted with fury.

During a televised speech on 15 January 2020, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani angrily responded with an ominous warning addressed to the United States, as well as to Europe. He demanded that foreign powers withdraw their military forces from the Middle East or face danger.

The speech came at a very critical time for Iran. The country has been rocked by protests and street demonstrations over the accidental shooting down of a Ukrainian airliner just outside Tehran. Most of the 176 passengers on board were Iranian citizens and popular anger is at its height.

He said, in reference to the Western allies in the region: "Today, the American soldier is in danger; tomorrow, the European soldier could be in danger".

This is the first time that Rouhani has made a threat towards

European forces in the region.

Ironically, Germany, Britain and France have said that they are acting to de-escalate soaring tensions, following the January 6 declaration by Iran to the effect that the country is no longer bound by the uranium enrichment limits.

This itself was of course in response to Washington dramatically raising the stakes, with the assassination of General Soleimani in Iraq. However, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif charged that the EU's investigation into Iran's alleged non-compliance meant Europe is allowing itself to be bullied by the US. He told reporters: "They (the Europeans) say they are not responsible for what the US did, OK, but you are independent countries. The EU is the largest global economy, so why do you allow the US to bully you around?"

As for Rouhani's threat against US and European troops in the region, there has already been two rocket attacks against military bases in Iraq. In a slow and steady escalation expected to continue, Washington has pointed a finger at Iran-backed Shia militias despite no group claiming responsibility for the latest attacks.

A EUROPEAN BID

And as for the apparent breakdown in Iran-EU relations, Europeans appear more ready to reluctantly conform to the Trump administration's maximum pressure campaign, despite explicit denials that this is what the Dispute Resolution Mechanism is triggering.

It is perhaps confirmation for Tehran of its prior charge that the EU is too little, too late or have only half-hearted measures to provide relief to an Iranian economy that has been decimated by US sanctions. Tehran is of course referring to INSTEX, the European alternative to the SWIFT electronic, bank-to-bank payment messaging system that has been inoperative in Iran due to US sanctions.

EU businesses have not used INSTEX to engage in trade with Iran mainly because those European companies that do business with the US or that rely on the US dollar have generally decided not to risk their relations with American companies over opportunities in Iran. Foreign Minister Zarif has already emphasized that without the EU's implementation of its other commitments, INSTEX is quite meaningless.

As for Rouhani, he also strongly denounced the EU for having failed to keep its promises under the 2015 nuclear deal and accused the United States for making the Middle East insecure. Meanwhile, seizing on the nuclear deal's apparent unraveling, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said something that will certainly not be taken warmly by Tehran: "If we are going to get rid of it (JCPOA), let's replace it, and let's replace it with the Trump deal!"

The Iranian leadership is probably fuming over this. The situation may become even more tense or it may calm down; it is very difficult to predict.

Both Donald Trump and Ali Khamenei are determined to avoid war but at the same time, neither can afford to be seen as weak. So, there may be a viable approach by the US President to substitute the JCPOA which he has always loathed, with a new diplomatic engagement.

How far this can go remains to be seen but this approach is at least a new signal from Washington that is not only sticking to the policy of maximum pressure but also leaving the door open for negotiations and a renewed diplomatic offensive in which the EU will have to play a major role.

*Trajan Dereville
The Editor-in-Chief*



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CARLES PUIGDEMONT

A renegade in exile *The man who dared cross the 'red line'*

The year is 2017, and the place, the small town of Amer in the Province of Girona, some 120 kilometres north east of Barcelona. Far from the hustle and bustle of politics, Carles Puigdemont, the second of eight children was supposed to take over the family bakery and cake shop when he grew up. But he decided otherwise. His father still lives there. Even though he is over 80, he still comes every day to check everything is going well at the shop, which is now run by one of his daughters. But the family is going through some difficult times because not everyone likes Puigdemont's independence bid; it has its opponents in the village and the region at large. In June of that year, Puigdemont had announced that the independence referendum which he had promised the Catalans in his election campaign would be held the following October. This was the straw that broke the camel's back. Spain's Constitutional Court blocked the referendum by suspending the Catalan legislation and immediately put into effect a vast police operation to disrupt the voting process and to arrest the politicians behind the move. Despite this and the boycott organised by opponents of secession, the referendum went ahead. Turnout was only 43% but among those who voted, over 90% were in favour of independence. Carles Puigdemont had indeed kept his word.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS AND BEYOND

It was in that same town of Amer that Carles Puigdemont was born on 29 November, 1962.

He completed his elementary education there, before being sent to a boarding school in Girona, where Spanish was used as the official language.

Some of his old schoolmates became life-long friends; one of them is Salvador Clara Pons who became depu-

ty-mayor of Amer. He is now a member of the leftist Catalan Republican Party. His small office in the Town Hall is decorated with a Catalan flag and on the wall behind his desk, hangs a framed portrait of Carles Puigdemont.

There are no visible signs of anything related to the Spanish monarch, King Felipe VI.

During a brief interview in 2017, given to French news channel, 'France 24', Clara Pons quipped :

"The King?...no, not here ! This is the independent Catalan Republic...that's what the people wanted".

Clara Pons and Puigdemont have the same age; they spent practically all their summer holidays together. The deputy-mayor still remembers the emotion they felt following the attempted coup d'état in Spain, in February 1981.

"I remember Carles coming over to our house at around 5:30 in the morning to inform me that there had been a coup d'état. We switched on the radio and then we both went out. He wanted to plant a Catalan flag on top of the mountain...as an act of resistance !"

After that event, the two friends stayed in touch constantly. *"I think the year was 1985, and by then, we were grown-ups. Carles was already working as a journalist and we would both attend meetings and demonstrations where we demanded that all the street names and sign posts in our village to be spelt out the way we pronounced them...in Catalan".*

At the school that Puigdemont attended in Amer, his former history teacher, Mercè Vila Coll has kept the copies of the school news sheet where the young Puigdemont first tested out his political ideas, and she recalls his keen awareness of political realities.

"He disliked the way history was taught in school textbooks, especially the history of Spain. He believed it was a very limited vision of Catalonia's history. He said something else too; he couldn't understand why there were still books in Castilian Spanish".

However, Mercè Vila Coll is not at all surprised by the career path of her former pupil.

"Stubborn...he'd always been stubborn ! He'd always known what he wanted in life and in the end, he was offered the ideal position that would allow him to make Catalonia what he always wanted it to be...that is to say, an independent country".

During his teenage years, Puigdemont

showed a very keen interest in politics; he was already a reporter for a local newspaper in which he wrote articles on football, and other news.

But he also regularly attended political meetings and joined the *Crida Nacional per la República* or National Call for the Republic, a pro-independence movement created to defend Catalan culture. He continued taking part in marches and demonstrations with members of the Young Catalan Nationalists.

In 1980, at the age of 18, he joined a conservative Catalan nationalist party, the Democratic Convergence of Catalonia, which later changed its name to today's Catalan European Democratic Party (PDeCAT).

His strong interest in politics and in the written medium followed him all the way to the University College of Girona, where he enrolled on a course to study Catalan philology.

In 1983, the 21 year-old Puigdemont experienced an event that changed the course of his professional life : he was involved in a serious car accident that badly injured him and left a scar on his forehead.

Although his friends deny it, it is widely believed that he adopted his characteristic Beatle-style haircut in order to hide the scar.

Be that as it may, he eventually decided to drop out of university and to embark on a career in political journalism.

JOURNALISM LEADING TO POLITICS

His first stint in the profession was at *El Punt Avui*, a pro-independence Catalan newspaper. Here, he began as journalist and gradually rose up the ranks to become sub-editor and then the paper's editor-in-chief.



Later in his career, he became director of the *Catalan News Agency (ACN)* which he had founded, as well as *Catalonia Today*, a weekly publication in English whose editor is none other than Puigdemont's Romanian wife, Marcela Topor whom he had married in 2000.

Topor who is a professional journalist also hosts television shows that are broadcast on the *El Punt Avui* channel and are posted on the *Catalonia Today* website.

These programmes feature mainly interviews in English with foreign residents in Catalonia.

Puigdemont remained at the helm of ACN until 2002, when he was offered the position of director general of the Girona Cultural Centre; he held this position until 2004.

He left journalism for politics in 2006 when he was invited to be a candidate for the Catalan Parliament by the *Convergence and Union Party (CiU)*, a Catalan, nationalist alliance.

In 2007, Puigdemont ran for the local elections in Girona as CiU's candidate, but although he was elected, his party remained in opposition.

However, in 2011 he was elected Mayor of Girona after winning the municipal elections, in which the CiU managed to put an end to 32 years of rule by the Socialist Party in that city.

And four years later, in July 2015, he became the new president of the Association of Municipalities for Independence, an organisation of city councils created with the aim of achieving the independence of Catalonia.

The next stage in Puigdemont's meteoric political rise unfolded in September 2015 when he was elected as an MP for Girona's *'Junts pel Si'* (Together for Yes) candidature in the elections for the Parliament of Catalonia.

'Junts pel Si' (*JxSi*) was a Catalan parliamentary group and political alliance dedicated to achieving the independence of Catalonia.

Catalonia is a wealthy, semi-autonomous region in northeastern Spain with a distinct history that dates back to almost 1000 years. It consists of four provinces and its population is around 7.5 million. Catalonia has its own flag, anthem, parliament and language.

It also has its own police force and a number of public services are under the direct control of its government.

HEADING FOR CONFRONTATION

January 10, 2016 was a memorable date in Puigdemont's career; it was on this day that he was elected 130th President of the Government of Catalonia.

His predecessor Artur Mas had failed to secure enough support in Parliament in the 2015 general election and was forced to resign.

It was following a last-minute agreement reached between pro-independence parties *Junts pel Si* and Popular Unity Candidacy (*CUP*) that Carles Puigdemont was elected.

He promptly resigned as Mayor of Girona the day following his election and remaining true to his beliefs, he did not to take the official oath of allegiance to the Spanish constitution and monarch; instead he vowed loyalty to the people of Catalonia.

The head of the Catalan Parliament who presided the swearing in ceremony had in fact read :

“Do you promise to faithfully fulfill the obligations of the position of President of the Catalan Government faithfully, to the will of the people of Catalonia, represented by their parliament?”

Puigdemont had no qualms whatsoever when, in front of the official delegates of the central government in Madrid, declared :

“We are humiliated financially, neglected by state institutions, disregarded in the recognition of our identity and our language”.

Later in his speech, stressing that he had promised to be loyal to the Catalan people, he made a reference to the same idea :

“We cannot do this in any which way. I will not allow it. We will do it very well. I promise to work to calm down the atmosphere and explain; we need to tell more people and involve more people”.

The negative effects that these declarations produced in the Spanish Establishment didn't take long to manifest themselves.

Traditionally, the Presidents of the

Catalan, Basque, Balearic and Galician Parliaments – the four autonomous regions of Spain – personally travel to Madrid to inform the King of their respective governments' decisions in these matters.

When the President of the Catalan Government, Carme Forcadell asked for an official audience with King Felipe VI, the Royal Household refused her request. She was asked to communicate the investiture of the new Catalan President in writing.

She duly complied, and Parliament later confirmed that the official communication had been made by email.

THE PATH TO CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

Carles Puigdemont has always been a die-hard separatist, and he promised his electorate nothing less during the campaign that saw him become President of Catalonia in 2016.

However, his political party at the time, the Catalan European Democratic Party was not primarily and necessarily focused on independence from Spain.

Its members are mainly from middle-class, conservative and nationalist segments of Catalan society.

It had entered into negotiations and had even formed alliances with established political parties in Madrid in order to advance the cause of Catalan independence through gradual measures and steps that would grant more autonomy to the region.

But among its leaders, it was Puigdemont who was something of a fire-brand and a maverick who demanded that Catalonia become independent immediately, come what may.

However, as well as being a deft politician, he was also a man of compromise. After all, the coalition that he headed in the Catalan Parliament seemed stitched together and lumpy; on one side was the extreme left and on the other, the conservative elements of the right. And in between, were the moderate parties from the left, as well as other nationalists.

At first sight, it did not appear that these parties could reach a consensus. But they did... once. They joined forces for the regional election in Catalonia in 2015 and emerged as a pro-independence coalition, with an absolute majority of seats in the regional parliament.

In June 2017, Puigdemont announced that the referendum on Catalan independence would be held on Sunday, 1 October.

The Catalan Parliament duly passed legislation authorising the referendum which would not only be binding but would also be based on a simple majority without a minimum threshold.

The Spanish government promptly warned the Catalan Parliament that the planned referendum was illegal under the constitution, but to no avail.

And so, ahead of the vote, Spanish police seized control of ballots and fliers, raided the Catalan regional government's offices and shut down pro-independence websites.



Spanish King Felipe VI denounces the irresponsibility and disloyalty of Catalan separatists

On voting day, there were scenes of violence that resulted in an estimated 800 people being injured when police stormed polling stations and tried to prevent people from voting by firing tear gas into crowds of prospective voters.

Late on Sunday night, 1 October, the Catalan regional government confirmed that although turnout was only 43%, as many opposed to secession boycotted the poll, over 90% of those who voted chose independence. And then, it announced that it planned to unilaterally declare independence from Spain within 48 hours.

Madrid immediately replied that it would neither recognise the results of the referendum nor a declaration of independence.

King Felipe VI accused Catalan leaders of jeopardizing the stability of the country and urged the Spanish government to defend constitutional order.

The tumultuous referendum sparked an escalating conflict that was described as the biggest political and constitutional crisis in Spain since the end of the Franco dictatorship in the mid 1970's.

Catalan leaders claimed victory but the Spanish government remained in denial.

Carles Puigdemont was in a defiant mood when he addressed his supporters after voting was declared closed :

“We have won the right to be listened to, to be respected and to be recognised. Today, millions of people mobilised, facing all kinds of difficulties and threats. You have said loud and clear that you have a message for the world. We have the right to decide our future, we have the right to be free and we want to live in peace and apart from a state that is incapable of promoting one single thing rather than imposition and the use of brute force”.

In a television address, Spanish Prime Minister, Mariano Rajoy in turn expressed scathing criticism of the Catalan authorities and all other instigators of the crisis :

“ We saw behaviour and attitudes that would disgust any democrat and that should never be repeated. Indoctrination of children, harassment of judges and journalists, without going any further. I would like to clearly say that

the people responsible for these acts are only and exclusively those who have promoted the violation of the law and the rupture of social harmony”.

Thousands of protesters gathered in Barcelona the day after the violence and the mayhem that ensued. The Catalan government went into a huddle before joining protesters on the streets as the Spanish Prime minister met with his party colleagues in Madrid.



King of Spain Felipe VI with former Prime Minister Rajoy and Puigdemont

The big question at that moment in time was : What happens next ?

Options were somewhat limited for Mariano Rajoy. He could have moved to invoke Article 155 of the Spanish constitution which would have allowed Madrid to take control of Catalonia.

Carles Puigdemont on the other hand said that Catalonia would make a unilateral declaration of independence after it secured over 90% of the vote in favour of breaking away.

Ties between Catalonia's government and the centre were at an all-time low and the option to invoke Article 155 could have sparked a fresh wave of unrest.

Both leaders refused to blink and the likelihood of talks to resolve the dispute remained slim.

TESTING MADRID'S RESOLVE TO THE LIMIT

Ten days after the referendum, Carles Puigdemont made a move that sparked confusion in Barcelona as well as in Madrid.

Together with his separatist allies, he signed a declaration of independence but to the dismay of many of his supporters, he suspended its implementation to allegedly give Madrid time for negotiations.

Entering into negotiations with Spain's autonomous regions regarding revisions in their status is something that Madrid has always avoided in order not to set a precedent.

However, Prime Minister Rajoy duly acknowledged Puigdemont's request and gave the Catalan Parliament six days to clarify its position.

Puigdemont however refused to either confirm or deny the declaration and called for negotiations instead.

This was seen by many observers as a clever move; it put Madrid in an embarrassing situation in that it was obliged to acknowledge Catalonia's request, and what's more, was not in a position to implement Article 155, as long as long as Catalan intentions were not unequivocally stated.



Madrid again agreed to give Puigdemont and his allies an extended deadline to state clearly whether they intended to secede. But no definitive answer was forthcoming; calls for dialogue and negotiations had clearly failed.

With two pro-independence leaders in prison for sedition and the threat to suspend Catalonia's self-government on the table, President Carles Puigdemont left it up to Parliament to decide what would happen next...and it did.

After dramatic hours of negotiations between political parties and the government, a historic, plenary session of the Catalan Parliament started on 27 October 2017, with huge expectations.

Out of the 135-member Parliament, 70 voted in favour of independence, 10 MPs voted against and 2 abstained. Unionist MPs had left the Chamber in protest.

What followed was joy by the majority of MPs. They were fully aware of what they had just voted on because the President of the Chamber, Carme Forcadell had read the whole declaration before the vote :

"We hereby constitute the Catalan Republic as an independent, sovereign, legal, democratic and socially-conscious state".

Immediately after the historic declaration, the atmosphere in Parliament became pretty intense. Hundreds of mayors were in the building to express their support for independence while large crowds waited outside.

MPs and members of the government were cheered by their supporters as they left the plenary. However, they all had one eye on Madrid, awaiting the Spanish government's reaction.

Meanwhile city councils and official buildings began removing the Spanish flag, a state they no longer considered themselves part of.

Catalonia found itself in uncharted and potentially dangerous waters; while there were celebrations, there was also nervous anticipation...a knowledge that not every Catalan wants this rupture as well as fear about the immediate future.

Those fears proved justified. The Spanish government held an emergency cabinet meeting to respond to the declaration of independence. The Spanish senate green lighted the suspension of Catalonia's autonomy and Article 155 of the constitution was activated, allowing the dismissal of the full Catalan government and granting Madrid powers to impose direct rule on Catalonia.

Prime Minister Rajoy's statement was carried by Spanish television as well as world broadcasters :

"I dismiss the Catalan President, the Vice President as well as the rest of the ministers of the regional government. Catalan delegations abroad, and the so-called embassies, except the one in Brussels will be closed down. I dismiss the delegates of the Catalan government in Brussels and Madrid. I inform you that I have dissolved the Catalan Parliament and that snap elections will be held on 21 December 2017".

The prosecution also presented lawsuits against Catalan leaders for rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds; charges that carry sentences of 30, 15 and 6 years in prison respectively.

EXILE AND SHATTERED DREAMS

Shortly after charges were laid by the Spanish Attorney General, Puigdemont fled Barcelona. Together with five of his colleagues, he was driven to Marseille (France), where they boarded a flight to Brussels on 30 October 2017.

He claimed that in the 'capital of Europe', he could seek legal protection and could speak freely. He also declared he would



© Wikimedia

Spanish Supreme Court in Madrid



© Edm

Belgium's Palais de Justice

not be returning to Spain unless he was guaranteed a fair trial.

It is probably no coincidence that earlier, the then Belgian minister for Asylum and Migration, Theo Francken who is himself a die-hard nationalist and an advocate of Flemish independence, was quoted as saying that the prospect of Puigdemont being granted asylum was “*not unrealistic*”.

Also, Belgium and Spain had already been at loggerheads in the past over the extradition of members of the ETA, the Basque separatist organisation.

The Belgian lawyer who Puigdemont consulted, after Spain issued a European Arrest Warrant against him, was none other than Paul Bekaert.

In 2013, in a high-profile case, he had succeeded in blocking the extradition of Natividad Jáuregui, a member of the ETA, on the grounds that her fundamental rights could have been violated in Spain.

Meanwhile, Carles Puigdemont prepared to settle into a new home for a possibly long stay in Belgium. A large, six-bedroom, €4.400 per month villa was rented on his behalf by a close friend and advisor in the upmarket suburban town of Waterloo, just outside Brussels.

Since fleeing Spain, the former Catalan President had been able to travel relatively freely, thanks to Europe’s lack of internal borders.

But shortly after crossing the border from Denmark into Germany on a trip back from Finland in March 2018, he was identified by motorway police and detained.

It later emerged that the Spanish secret service had followed Puigdemont’s car from Finland to Germany, where they alerted police and urged them to arrest him following the reactivation of the European Arrest Warrant issued by the Spanish Supreme Court on the charge of rebellion.

A German judge decided to keep Puigdemont behind bars while the arduous judicial process

to decide his extradition was in progress.

His detention made headlines around the world and sparked tense protests in Catalonia. Puigdemont’s many crit-

ics have branded him a coward and a scoundrel who gambled and lost with an illegal and unconstitutional referendum.

But his supporters insist he is a democrat and a political hero, suffering for the cause of freedom.

This is an image he himself has cultivated throughout his exile. In Finland, where he had travelled for talks with local MPs he declared :

“I will continue my struggle in order to defend my rights as a citizen, as a member of the Catalan Parliament, as a President and to defend the rights of the people of Catalonia”.

In July 2018, the High Court in the German state of Schleswig-Holstein where Puigdemont had been detained decided that he could not be extradited for the crime of rebellion but that the charge of misuse of public funds levelled against him might still trigger the process.

But in the end, the extradition attempt came to an end when Spain dropped its arrest warrant.

Puigdemont was again free to travel and decided to return to Brussels.



Jaime Alonso-Cuevillas, Carles Puigdemont’s Spanish lawyer

In May 2019, despite an attempt by the Popular Party and Citizen’s Party in Spain to prevent Puigdemont running in the European Elections, by asking the central electoral committee to ban him, a Spanish court ruled that his political rights remained intact.

He was selected by his pro-independence party, *Junts per Catalunya* (*Together for Catalonia*) and was

elected member of the European Parliament.

However, he was not able to officially take up the position. Although his lawyers were convinced that he should have been able to, the legal services of the European Parliament confirmed he must personally go to Madrid and swear to the Spanish Constitution, before the central electoral board.

But if he did so, he risked being arrested, as he would have had no political immunity yet.

Puigdemont next sent a request to the General Court of the European Union for precautionary measures against the European Parliament’s decision. But his request was dismissed outright.

And to make matters even worse, in October 2019, the Spanish Supreme Court reactivated an international detention order for Puigdemont.

Even though he was officially accredited as an MEP in December 2019 following a ruling from the European Court of Justice, Puigdemont now seems to have suffered an unmistakable defeat on the political battlefield.

There is a glimmer of hope though for the Catalan pro-independence movement, following the November 2019 general election in Spain. The Socialist Party (PSOE), headed by Pedro Sanchez won the most seats but fell short of a majority in parliament.

However, Catalonia’s largest separatist party, the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (The Republican Left of Catalonia or ERC) has declared its willingness to enter into a coalition, along with other leftist and Basque parties to allow Pedro Sanchez to continue as Prime Minister.

The hope is that, as promised by the Socialist Party, negotiations between Madrid and Barcelona will unblock the political conflict over the future of Catalonia and pave the way for its resolution.

Carles Puigdemont on the other hand, faces a very uncertain future.

If he returns to Spain, he will possibly be charged with sedition, rebellion and misuse of public funds, and if he remains in Belgium, he ultimately risks political irrelevance and may gradually fade into oblivion.



A CATALÁN AMONG THE PIGEONS

Madrid defies EU law to punish separatists

Catalonia and the rest of Spain have seldom seen eye to eye. The hostility began long before the Spanish civil war. The 18th century War of the Spanish Succession saw Catalonia choose the losing side in a fight between Phillip V and the Habsburg pretender, Archduke Charles, and in 1714 Phillip took his revenge on Catalonia when his Bourbon troops blew up Barcelona and killed its soldiers. During the Spanish Civil War, Catalonia's problem - indeed, the problem of the Republican forces throughout Spain - was a shortage of weapons and equipment. And allies, of course. The Republicans could never understand why France, Britain and Russia failed to arm them when Franco's nationalists were well supplied by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, whose pilots bombed Republican positions with their Savoia-Marchetti aircraft (never very effectively, according to the British writer

Robert Payne, although one such attack left him permanently deaf in his right ear and with shrapnel in one buttock).

At one point, after a stunning Republican victory near Mora de Ebro, they believed they could actually win. The success, which surprised the Nationalist forces, came about because the Republican troops crossed the Ebro in fishing boats transported under cover of darkness from the coast. A group of five foreign correspondents invited to the front, including Payne, believed so, too. He related in his book, *Eyewitness*, how Juan Modesto, the Republican General in charge there, described to his front-line visitors how the odds were stacked. On a map in his underground bunker headquarters, situated in the middle of a vineyard, he pointed out the positions of the German guns and the line across the Republican-held Sierra de Pandols, which was holding despite some

losses. Payne wrote of the exchange and of Modesto's explanation: "They have tried hitting us for a week, but our lines have been maintained," he said. A young Spanish correspondent said "How many heavy guns have they got?" "Eighty-four," Modesto answered. "How many have we got?" "Three". Even so, Payne told me years later of the sense of euphoria he had shared that day at the possibility of victory. The shortage of *matériel* was also stressed by the author George Orwell, who joined the International Brigade of left-wing Republican sympathisers. In his book, *Homage to Catalonia*, he wrote: "Against machine guns and without artillery there are only three things you can do: dig yourself in at a safe distance - four hundred yards, say - advance across the open and be massacred, or make small-scale night-attacks that will not alter the general situation. Practically the alternatives are stagnation or suicide." Nor was

there much protection for the fighters. “We had no tin hats,” wrote Orwell, “no bayonets, hardly any revolvers or pistols, and not more than one bomb between five or ten men.” That’s no way to fight a war; as The Roman senator and historian Cornelius Tacitus wrote: “The gods are on the side of the stronger”.

Today, Catalonia’s strongest and most ardently voiced argument for independence is not its tangled history, but simple economics. It’s claimed that Cataláns pay about €10-billion more into Madrid’s coffers than they get back, pushing Catalonia into debt. It’s a debt that comes to €77-billion. The facts and figures are disputed by the Spanish government, however, and Catalonia has a record of high-level corruption going back years, with top officials siphoning off the tax take for personal gain under a system known as “el tres por ciento” - literally the 3%. The former president’s family, the Pujols, and a number of Catalanian politicians are currently under police investigation for allegedly embezzling more than €1-billion. Some have already been jailed. Furthermore, according to entrepreneur and podcaster Jean Galea, Madrid transfers more of its own GDP to less-developed regions of Spain than Catalonia does. However, Catalonia does impose the highest taxes on its citizens, including a wealth tax that Madrid has dropped. On the plus side, though, Catalonia benefits from billions of euros in EU structural funds.

IN, OUT, SHAKE IT ALL ABOUT

Cataláns often protest - sometimes quite loudly - that “Catalonia is not Spain”. When I filmed the annual ‘books and roses’ festival in Barcelona on 23 April 2015 - St George’s Day - there was strong nationalist fervour on display, which included an elderly man draped in the Catalán flag and playing patriotic Catalán tunes on his trumpet to the crowds. There were also anti-Spanish slogans and placards much in evidence. Even so, there was a jolly atmosphere in the hot sunshine of Barcelona’s very crowded streets, the sky a brilliant blue and everyone out to have a good time. It was a far cry from what the city witnessed last October, when riots and violence disturbed the normal tranquillity after nine separatist leaders were handed long prison sentences for organising a referendum on independence and briefly

declaring that Catalonia was breaking away from Spain as a result. The Barcelona civic authorities have since repaired the damage to road surfaces caused by the protesters’ bonfires.



Quim Torra, President of Catalonia in 2018

To anyone outside Spain, the sentences seemed draconian and out of all proportion: the separatists had organised a referendum, not a revolution. No guillotine was erected on the Plaça de Catalunya, no tumbrils carried terrified aristos (or centre party supporters) along Las Ramblas to be shortened by a head in front of cackling crowds. It all smacked more of reprisal than righteousness, more jealousy than justice. Quim Torra, Catalonia’s former President (since dismissed) described the savage sentences as “the inheritance of the dictatorship, not a trait of democracy”. Prime Minister Sánchez disagreed: “Nobody is above the law,” he said at the time, “and we must all comply with the law. In a democracy, no-one is judged for their ideas or for their political projects, but for crimes defined in Spanish law.” However, no-one ever successfully quelled the anger stirring a mob by being unfair to its leaders, at least not for long. Inspiring more anger to quell anger seems counter-productive. It’s true that England’s Peasants’ Revolt in 1381 came apart when the then mayor of London murdered their leader, Wat Tyler, in front of them, but it didn’t really resolve the underlying cause - the unpopular poll tax and a cap on wages - and the king, Richard II, who witnessed the killing eventually came to a rather nasty end. In the eyes of the world there is a big difference between criminal prisoners and political prisoners and the pro-independence politicians look suspiciously like the latter to many observers outside Spain.

As far as Catalonia is concerned, it’s a question of being in-and-out of Spain. For the pro-independence politicians elected to the European Parliament, it’s been more a case of in-or -out of the European Parliament. Support for independence has declined among Cataláns, according to Spain’s El País newspaper. Quoting the regional government’s official CEO research centre, the paper writes that only 41.9% of Cataláns favour going it alone while 48.8% are opposed to the idea, the highest percentage against Catalán independence since July 2017. It’s worth noting, though, that this survey - supposedly of 1,500 people - was carried out before the pro-democracy politicians were given such surprisingly severe sentences by Spain’s Supreme Court. Attitudes may have hardened in the face of what many see as intemperate justice. Or even no justice at all. The fact is that Catalonia is not, nor ever has been, an independent state absorbed against its will into the Kingdom of Spain. It results from the merger of three kingdoms: Castile, Aragon and Navarre (although Navarre was taken by force). The crowns of Castile and Aragon were merged in the 1480s without much controversy at the time. Incidentally, Aragon as an administrative entity includes Catalonia, Aragon itself, Valencia and the Balearic Islands.

Of the 54 members of the European Parliament Spain elected in May 2019, 11 were from Catalonia and within the region, pro-independence parties won 49.71% of the vote. It was a close-run thing but it was not a win for those favouring an independent state. Getting elected to the European Parliament has further muddied the water. It’s worth bearing in mind that neither the European Commission nor the European Parliament have ever shown much evidence of courage or conviction. They prefer to take the easy route. If they tried to organise a climb of Everest they’d stop at the first base camp and drink coffee until erosion wore the slopes down to a more reasonable flatness. In a thriller written by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s father, Stanley, a bold Commissioner stands up to villainous Swiss officials and even gets the IRA involved in bombing the enemy. The book is called *The Commissioner*. The story is based very loosely on an incident in which a Swiss whistle-blower alerted the Commission to a breach of international law by a Swiss company generating illegal pollution over EU territory. In reality, however, the Commission

of the time revealed all the details to the Swiss authorities and the whistle-blower ended up in jail. Not very heroic.

WAYS FORWARD AND OBSTACLES

So the Parliament's unwillingness to accept its (theoretically) dangerous new members was always likely happen. The Cataláns were disappointed and dismayed by the lack of international comment or outrage at the ludicrously severe prison sentences and they viewed the response of the Liberal group leader in the European Parliament, Belgium's Guy Verhofstadt, as nothing short of betrayal. Like many others, he saw it as an internal matter for Spain. The European Free Alliance group in the European Parliament, which sits with the Greens and is made up of regionalist politicians, was outraged. "The situation facing our group colleague Oriol Junqueras and his fellow Catalán politicians Carles Puigdemont and Toni Comin is appalling," said MEP Alyn Smith of the Scottish National Party, now an elected member of the British parliament, "I am always at pains to stress that Scotland is Scotland and Catalonia is Catalonia, but the EU is surely about democracy and dialogue, where the actions of Madrid are seeking to use ever more outrageous interpretations of the law to close dialogue down."



Prime Minister of Spain Pedro Sanchez

The fact is, EU leaders always start to twitch when any region begins to talk about seeking independence. France is nervous about Brittany and the Basque country (a worry shared with Spain, since the region traverses the frontier), Britain about Scotland, Belgium about Flanders and so on. Flag-waving is

almost always a provocative act, especially in these times when populism is on the rise. Spain's harsh reaction to the Catalán independence movement is rooted in the years of violence the country suffered over the Basque country and its ETA terrorist group. The Basque country is still part of Spain but enjoys more devolved powers than Catalonia; granting the Cataláns similar status may very well end the taste (limited though it is) for full independence. Now that Spain has a government again - after a year without one - it's possibly the simplest route forward for Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. After all, his coalition with the far-left Unidas Podemos depended upon him doing a deal with the strongest of the pro-independence Catalan parties, Esquerra, so that its thirteen members in the National Congress would abstain in the vote to choose Sánchez as prime minister and form a government, allowing the coalition to go ahead, although Sánchez had a cliff-hanger victory. The



Francisco Franco

final vote was 167 to 165, the slimmest margin for choosing a prime minister for decades. The very tight margin of victory is leading to speculation that the resulting coalition may not last long. During his four-year term Sánchez will face opposition from three right-wing parties. He met with the leaders of Esquerra in Barcelona just before Christmas to hammer out a deal. The separatists will have undoubtedly obtained some concessions in return for their support. The result is Spain's first coalition government since democracy was restored in 1978, three years after the death of Francisco Franco, who had ruled as dictator for 36 years.

Puigdemont and Comin were initially refused accreditation by the European Parliament because they had not been

sworn in at a ceremony in Spain. That is because they have been living in Belgium to avoid arrest. However, the Luxembourg-based European Court of Justice, which rules on EU law, took the view that both men became MEPs immediately upon the conclusion of the votes being counted and that they therefore enjoy parliamentary immunity from prosecution. If Madrid wants to arrest them, the judges decided, they would have to request the European Parliament to lift their immunity. MEPs are unlikely to support such a request.



Toni Comin

Meanwhile, the Catalonia row has reinvigorated Spain's far right. In Spain's most recent elections - and there have been four in as many years - the party that gained the most was the new hard right party, Vox, which took 15% of the vote. Up until five years ago, Spain had a two-party system, with power swapping between the Socialists and the centre-right Partido Popular, which in turn was derived from Alianza Popular, a party originally set up by people who had been officials under Franco. It did undergo some changes and the absorption of more moderate parties before emerging as PP, as it's most commonly known. However, the dispute over Catalonia and the calls for independence have led some Spaniards to look more favourably on Vox, which comes closest to holding the sort of extreme views that might have found favour with the Generalissimo himself. Its success derives in part from encouraging and exploiting public fears about illegal immigration. Vox, though the most extreme, is not the only new party to emerge: the new Congress contains members from no fewer than sixteen parties. The days of any party ruling alone with a healthy majority would seem to be over.

REMEMBERING THE PAST, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Vox is the only party to actively oppose Sánchez's plans to dig up the body of Franco in order to transfer it from the Valley of the Fallen, effectively a nationalist shrine, to a public cemetery near Madrid where his wife is also buried. The plan has majority support, it's claimed, but Franco's descendants wanted his body reburied in a prominent tomb in Madrid's cathedral. The plan went to the Supreme Court, which backed Sánchez. Vox has described the idea as a "profanation" of Franco's tomb. The Socialists want the Valley of the Fallen to become a kind of museum for those wishing to remember or commemorate the civil war and those who died on both sides. It's easy for us to dismiss the idea of a cathedral honouring a man many still see as a butcher but Leicester Cathedral in England proudly displays the tomb of King Richard III, whose body was found under a council car park in 2012, and he is reputed to have killed many people to take the throne. These include Prince Edward of Lancaster, possibly King Henry VI, Richard's own brother George, Duke of Clarence, (drowned in a vat of malmsey wine, according to Shakespeare), his two nephews, who were heirs to the throne, and perhaps his wife, Ann, too, among many others. Not a nice chap, by all accounts, although history is always written by the victors and the Tudor dynasty, derived from Henry VII, victor of the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, put an end to the last of the Plantagenets by killing Richard, who allegedly fought on bravely after being unhorsed several times. They may have had a hand in the subsequent character assassination, too,

although it was Shakespeare who set the seal on his supposed villainy.

So what happens now? Early in January, the Solicitor General of Spain, Rosa María Seoane, asked Pablo Larena, a High Court judge, to suspend the European Arrest Warrants issued for Carles Puigdemont and Toni Comín in respect of their part in the independence referendum in 2017. Seoane said that Larena must first apply to the European Parliament to withdraw their immunity before reissuing the warrants for those politicians who argued for independence. Spain accuses them of sedition, which my Oxford English Dictionary defines as "public speech or actions intended to promote disorder; vaguely any offence against the state short of treason; insurrection". Madrid seems to be stretching the definition somewhat. In the case of Puigdemont, the indictment accuses him of "crimes of sedition and embezzlement of public funds". In his case, the European Arrest Warrant had to be issued twice; the first one, issued in July 2018, was withdrawn when Germany refused to hand Puigdemont over; European Arrest Warrants can only apply where an alleged offence would also be against the law in the country where the fugitive has sought sanctuary. Now Belgium has followed suit, refusing to send Puigdemont back to Spain in the light of the Court of Justice ruling. Seoane has agreed that the ruling granting parliamentary immunity to Oriol Junqueras must also apply to Puigdemont and Comín. If the European Parliament votes to turn down the request and the politicians serve out their full five years, we must assume that arrest will follow the end of their terms of office. Unless they are re-elected, of course, but who knows what may be happening by 2024?

HISTORY OF A RECENT STRUGGLE

The story of Catalonia's bid for independence began to take shape properly in November 2014, when the then Catalán president, Artur Mas, reacted to Spain's continuing economic crisis by calling for a split from Madrid. His administration was unpopular because of its own austerity policies, and some accused Mas of opting for an independence campaign to divert public anger away from Barcelona and towards Madrid. In fact, there was already quite strong anti-Madrid feeling because the Spanish constitutional court has decided to annul or reinterpret parts of the 2006 Catalán statute of autonomy, thus considerably back-peddalling on an agreement to grant the region greater independence. So, in defiance of Spain's 1978 constitution, which is based on territorial integrity - "the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation" - Mas's government held a symbolic, non-binding referendum on Catalán independence, winning 80% of the vote. However, only 2.3-million of Catalonia's 5.4-million eligible voters - 43% - bothered to vote at all. As a consequence of this act of rebellion (if that's what it was) Mas was barred from public office for two years.

Three years later, ignoring warnings from the Spanish government and the constitutional court, Mas's successor as president, Carles Puigdemont, decided to hold a unilateral referendum. The outcome, for him and his associates, was easy to predict: the referendum was illegal and Puigdemont had been obliged to ignore angry opposition within the Catalán regional parliament, including claims that he had disregarded the usual procedures. The law authorising the referendum was struck down by the constitutional court, and Spain's then prime minister, the centre-right Mariano Rajoy, determined that the vote would simply not take place. To this end, he flooded Catalonia with police officers who tried to stop people voting, sometimes by violent means. If anything could have persuaded the Cataláns to opt for independence it was this violent repression of what - however illegal it may have been - was an act of peaceful democratic decision making. Despite the police, 42% turned out to vote and 90% of those who voted chose independence. The actions of the police were reported around the world and Spain's reputation was severely tarnished as a result. Puigdemont signed



Comandancia de Barcelona



© Wikimedia

Madrid Parliament

a declaration of independence nine days after the vote, suspending its effect for two months to allow for talks. But Madrid was in no mood for talking. The actual declaration itself, on 27 October, 2017, was boycotted by many opposition MPs, and less than an hour later, the Spanish Senate approved the use of Article 155 of the constitution, granting Rajoy's government the right to take over direct rule of Catalonia, to sack Puigdemont and his cabinet and call a regional election. In the resulting poll, almost 48% voted for three pro-independence parties, but the centre right Ciudadanos, a pro-unionist party, did best, winning 37 seats. Once this new parliament had been sworn in, in June 2018, direct rule was brought to an end.

The whole affair has not reflected favourably on Spain or Spanish democracy. The violence deployed during the referendum in a bid to halt it was repeated when Catalans protested at the severity of the sentences. In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Brutus, on finding the dead body of his co-conspirator, Cassius, says "O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet. Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords in our own proper entrails." Perhaps some will say the same about Franco. The fact that so many people voted to break away, even if it was not a majority, suggests something is wrong. Sánchez, with his tiny parliamentary majority, cannot afford to take chances: coalitions can be unstable, especially in a country not used to the idea. Spain has a long record of having its internal divisions misunderstood, misreported and exploited by those with other agendas. George Orwell cites examples of this deliberate (or, rarely, accidental) misinformation in his book, *Homage to Catalonia*. "The thing that happened in Spain was, in fact, not merely a civil war but the beginning of a revolution," he wrote. "It is this fact that the anti-Fascist press outside Spain had made its special business to obscure. The issue has been narrowed down to 'Fascism versus democracy' and the revolutionary aspect concealed as much as

possible." He goes on to describe how the world was largely misled by horrendous over-simplification of a complicated situation: "In England, where the press is more centralised and the public more easily deceived than elsewhere, only two versions of the Spanish war have had any publicity to speak of: the Right-wing version of Christian patriots versus Bolsheviks dripping with blood, and the Left-wing version of gentlemanly republicans quelling a military revolt. The central issue has been successfully covered up." Both sides fell to name-calling and the accusations were picked up or ignored, according to the political inclinations of the newspaper concerned.

Much the same happened with British reporting of the Troubles - the violence between Republicans and Unionists in Northern Ireland. The Derry politician John Hume, founder member of the Social Democratic and Labour Party in Northern Ireland, and architect of the Peace Process, used to complain that none of the correspondents covering the events there seemed fully to understand what was going on. If they did, then they either ignored it, or else their more accurate reports were simply rejected by news desks determined to pursue their own agendas. And yes, I've certainly had plenty of experience of that happening. The reality was both simpler and far more complicated than the news media bothered to explain. Few outside the north of Ireland had a clue as to the real events, few inside it (with the possible exception of faction leaders) were interested in opinions other than their own. Spain really doesn't want to go down that road. Anyone with any doubts need only visit Belfast, with its ugly "peace walls" between republican and loyalist areas, and the streets of unglamorous houses with gardens still protected with high metal barriers to prevent any thrown missiles from landing on the householders.

There are some uncomfortable parallels with the 1930s. Just as Fascism and

Nazism were on the rise at the time of the Spanish Civil War, and threatening to destabilise a continent, so we now have populism that shows no sign of weakening in the near future, despite some setbacks. The PIS in Poland and Hungary's Fidesz are not going away and enjoy huge public support, even if the far right in Italy and Austria have faced some recent challenges. Boris Johnson's anti-Europe Conservatives have won a huge majority in the UK, which will weaken the European Union and delight Vladimir Putin through Britain's now inevitable withdrawal from the Union. President Macron is on record as saying that the Europe we have known is in grave danger, now that the US president's vision for it differs so much from much of Europe's. He wants to develop a military aspect to the Union to back up its soft power with steel, but others can see danger in that, too. The United States, Russia and China will always be far more potent in military terms. Europe could never hope to match them. Meanwhile, more and more people displaced by war, hunger and extreme poverty are making for Europe in the hope of a better life. And, of course, the populists on the far right will exploit this fact by warning of terrorism, theft, rape and other crimes, as if Europeans never commit such acts.

Now Puigdemont's successor as President, Quim Torra, has been sacked by Spain's Central Electoral Board (CEB) for declining to take down from his office by a fixed deadline a variety of pro-independence symbols supporting the jailed independence leaders. He has been stripped of his position as a deputy when his 18-month ban from public office expires, too. It was a narrow vote, though: seven votes to six, despite the ban being urged by Partido Popular, the centre-right Ciudadanos party and by Vox. The Catalán parliament, which is controlled by pro-independence parties, rejected the CEB's decision. And so it goes on: an independence movement that has just less than majority support in Catalonia and virtually none anywhere else in Spain and a government hitherto determined to quash dissent by whatever means. Except that Sánchez may change that if his government can find a way forward that doesn't upset too many people. I wish him luck. It won't be easy. The history of the previous century is packed with horrible examples of where failure can lead.

T. Kingsley Brooks



CAN WE STILL BE FRIENDS (WITH BENEFITS)?

European Defence and Security after Brexit

In May 1993, when the Maastricht Treaty was put to the Danish people for a second time, British Europhobes got involved in campaigning for its rejection. Again. Indeed, it did seem somewhat indelicate, even for the supporters of the European Union, to be holding a second referendum on the same Treaty less than a year after it had been narrowly defeated, albeit by a tiny 50.7% - 49.3% margin. There had been some tinkering with the wording in the interim but most saw that as purely cosmetic. The rejection in June, 1992, so soon after the creation of the Single Market, was a major blow to European integration and took EU officials and other Europhiles by surprise. It might, with the benefit of hindsight, have been wiser to take a little longer, make more meaningful alterations and sell it more coaxingly before letting the Danes have another shot at it. But it was done in a rush and it succeeded.



© Wikipedia
Bill Cash British Eurosceptic member of parliament

In order to cover the event, I travelled across Denmark with a camera crew by road from Esbjerg on the west coast of the Jutland peninsula, making reports along the way, before arriving in the Danish capital. We had a few adventures, too, before arriving, like our encounter with the chainsaw-wielding pig farmer that forced us (two males, one female)

to share a bedroom whose door panel had been kicked in, but that's a story for another time. In Copenhagen there was a great deal of campaigning going on and a number of people drafted in to address crowds. I and my crew went to film one of the more bizarre: a punk event staged by a black-clad anarchist theatrical group which included impenetrably abstruse street theatre aimed at a young audience gathered around the podium and seated on the ground. One of the speakers was a leading British Eurosceptic member of parliament, Bill Cash (Sir William Cash since 2014), complete with tie, suit and smart shirt. He looked as out of place as a boiler suit at a society wedding or a dinner jacket down a coal mine, but when called upon he duly began to speak in strident criticism of the Maastricht Treaty and European integration in general. However, his words on such things as trade and immigration cut lit-

tle ice with the youngsters sitting around, some of whom started to seem bored and restless. They couldn't imagine why they should listen to a middle-class Englishman in a suit addressing them in English. Until, that is, he told them in a flash of inspiration that if Denmark approved the Treaty they'd all be called up to serve in a European Army. That worked, although it was, of course, utter tosh. There was not then, is not now nor is there ever likely to be a real European Army and conscription is unlikely to reappear anywhere in Europe unless there's a war.

Sir William, though, was never one to let facts get in the way of a sound argument (or even an unsound one). I was once seated near him at a formal dinner in London's Carlton Club, that bastion of British Conservatism that boasts huge portraits of Margaret Thatcher, Winston Churchill and other Tory notables and which even has Benjamin Disraeli's cabinet table in one of its downstairs rooms. The room (and table) can be hired by members; their dinner guests can now eat where Sir Stafford Northcote, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, once argued budgetary policy, while Richard Assheton Cross, 1st Viscount Cross, served as Home Secretary, should such an idea appeal. But I digress; the point is that the dinner table where I was sitting emptied of Tory worthies hurrying off the moment the food was over, leaving me, very much an outsider, stranded with Cash. His colleagues tended to desert him on these occasions because of his obsessive tendency to talk about his dislike of the European project. In fairness, however, I should mention that in Copenhagen he was the very picture of patience when we were stranded together outside the press centre for a live late-night TV interview which was cancelled without anyone telling us. We even managed to talk about other things during our half-hour wait, although I do not remember what.



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Ursula von der Leyen President of the European Commission

WHERE'S THE WAR?

So, no European Army, whatever Sir William may think, at least for now. The new President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, however, has spoken of her wish to see a European Defence Union within the next five years, despite her continuing support for NATO as the "cornerstone of Europe's collective defence". France's President Macron, too, has urged his fellow European leaders to get behind a plan for the EU to develop a military force of its own; he argues that the EU should start to see itself as a political force, not just a market. Indeed, Article 42 of the Treaty on European Union (the Maastricht Treaty) sets out a commitment towards "the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides."

Is there any place in there for the participation of a non-EU United Kingdom? As EU Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier told the annual conference of the European Defence Agency last November: "Brexit means Brexit – also when it comes to security and defence. Once the United Kingdom has left the Union, it will be a third country," he warned, "It wants and will pursue a foreign policy based on its own national interests." Barnier's message on Britain's imminent departure from the Union was bleak and full of regret, but it was not without some vestige of hope: "The United Kingdom leaves the Union. It does not leave Europe. We are bound by values, history and geography. We will continue to face major common challenges. In the face of threats to our shared security, we must continue to show unity and strategic solidarity. As European leaders did after the attack in Salisbury in 2018." A nifty reminder there to Britain's Eurosceptic government of how their EU neighbours supported them at a time of crisis and threat. We all need friends.

Although the European Union lacks a standing military force, there are a number of EU-led military operations, which have to achieve unanimous agreement by member states before being put into operation. Former and current examples include European Force Althea, implementing the Dayton Agreement in Bosnia Herzegovina, European Union Naval Force Atalanta, aimed at combatting piracy off the Horn of Africa, and Operation Sophia, which identifies and disposes of vessels used for people traf-

ficking in the Mediterranean. Britain has voluntarily given up command of the Atalanta operation in the light of its imminent departure from the EU.

According to a House of Commons Briefing Paper, "The UK currently contributes to seven out of 16 EU-led military operations. These operations involve approximately 200 British personnel and several military assets. The UK's principal contribution to EU-led operations has been at the strategic command level." Britain's contribution to the European Defence Agency has been minimal, however, with successive British governments regarding NATO as the principle bulwark against foreign adventurism. France and Germany have long favoured creating an EU military presence but the notion has always been opposed by the UK. Brexit may help the idea to come to fruition. But leaving the EU will make an inevitable difference to Britain, according to the Briefing Paper: "At the strategic level, following Brexit, the UK would no longer be involved in decision-making mechanisms for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The CFSP and CSDP are used to co-ordinate joint responses to foreign policy challenges across all EU Member States." It continues: "There are also questions around intelligence sharing among the EU Member States. In the event of a no-deal Brexit there might not be a legal mechanism in place to share classified information between the EU and the UK." This is potentially more worrying for Britain's former partners and for a Britain on its own, especially in a more volatile world in which both Russia and China are becoming increasingly assertive. To date, according to the Institute for Government, research by Britain's House of Lords EU Committee found that the UK has contributed just 2.3% of the personnel supplied by EU member states to CSDP missions.



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Military Committee, General Claudio Graziano, pays his first official visit to Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE)

That may seem a measly share of the burden but the UK remains (while it is still a member) the EU's strongest defence force. As the Institute for Government explains: "It is one of only two member states possessing 'full-spectrum' military capabilities (including a nuclear deterrent), and is one of only six member states meeting the NATO target of spending 2% of gross domestic product on defence. The UK also holds a permanent seat on the UN Security Council and has the largest military budget within the EU." That may change, however: UK military spending is under review by the new government and cuts to help fund election promises seem inevitable.

WE COME IN PEACE

The European Union has never sought to be a military power; the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was created by Britain and France at the 1998 summit in St. Malo following what was seen as Europe's failure to address the challenges of the Balkan Wars. It had held a lot of meetings of the various participants, where Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic used to entertain journalists with his impersonations of other participants, especially the then Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, for some reason. The EU's External Action Service, makes clear its purpose: "Diplomacy, humanitarian aid, development cooperation, climate action, human rights, economic support and trade policy are all part of the EU's toolbox for global security and peace. These different instruments are combined in a specific way fitting the particular circumstances of each crisis or situation." It all comes down to what Britain views as the EU's "soft power".

Most of the missions the CSDP undertakes involve civilian personnel, not military, and the EU has signed 18 Framework Participation agreements (FPAs)

allowing third countries to take part in CSDP operations and missions, including Norway, Canada, Turkey and the United States. None of these, however, has the sort of decision-making rôle that the British government has described as its 'preferred model'. Participating third countries get involved at later stages of the planning and must accept EU time-lines and procedures. However, the EU's new Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), set up to develop defence capabilities together and make them available for EU military operations, is being shunned not only by Britain but also by Denmark and Malta. The most Euro-sceptic nations retain their scepticism, it seems, although the UK's Defence Select Committee was told that the British government wants "to ensure that PESCO projects remain open to third parties, because there may well be some projects that we do want to participate in as a third party". Presumably that means that the UK will ask to participate; outside the EU it will no longer be able to take part as a matter of course. So far, 34 PESCO projects have been identified, including a medium altitude long-endurance drone, an upgrade to the Tiger attack helicopter and a 'high-altitude Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capability'. These would remain under the control of individual participating member states but it seems unlikely that after Brexit, especially a no-deal Brexit, Britain will be invited to take part in their development.

A no-deal Brexit - still a distinct possibility - would exclude the UK not only from CSDP decision making (that will happen even with a deal) but from participation in or command responsibility of any CSDP mission or battlegroup. Any UK military or civilian personnel deployed on EU missions would have to return home to Britain, along with all military and civilian staff seconded to the EU. But the EU states also cooperate on

non-military security issues, including policing and criminal justice. It is in this field that a question mark hangs over another project in which Britain has played an important rôle: "The EU also cooperates on wider security matters, including policing and criminal justice," says the Institute for Government. "It is also building a global satellite navigation system, known as Galileo, which provides services to individuals, businesses and public bodies, including on a secure platform used by policing and military authorities."



Galileo control center, oberpfaffhofen, Germany

The UK has contributed funding and expertise to the Galileo systems, and hosts key Galileo infrastructure on its south Atlantic territories." The issue of whether or not Britain will choose to or even be allowed to participate in the project post-Brexit has yet to be resolved, although in December 2018, the government said it was no longer seeking access to secure aspects of Galileo and that the UK would instead build its own Global Navigation Satellite system. That is like to come at a very steep price and it's hard to see how such spending could be squared with other ambitious and costly election promises. However, the power to develop and implement security and defence policies lies - as it always has - with individual member states, not the EU. The EU may yet exclude the UK, as a third country, from future projects with a security



The **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)** is the part of the European Union's (EU) security and defence policy (CSDP) in which 25 of the 28 national armed forces pursue structural integration. The British future involvement in EU-led initiatives such as the European Defence Fund and PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation) remains unclear

dimension, which would include Galileo, or the UK could try to go it alone in some way, as it has hinted.

THE INBALANCE OF POWER

In terms of military hardware, the UK supplies a considerable proportion of the necessary equipment. It provides 5% of main battle tanks, 50% of nuclear attack submarines which also have the capability to land special-operations forces and to launch land-attack cruise missiles (France possesses the other 50%), 18% of frigates, 44% of early-warning aircraft, 53% of heavy aerial attack drones, 49% of the heavy transport fixed-wing aircraft and 27% of heavy transport helicopters. The fact is that despite recent and on-going spending cuts, the UK has the largest defence budget in the EU and, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Britain alone accounts for around 25% of spending on defence equipment procurement among EU countries. Its spending on defence investment is echoed only by France. According to the Institute, "It is among the two largest R&D spenders, along with France. It is notable that the UK and France are also in a league of their own when it comes to defence-investment spending - procurement and R&D - both in terms of absolute spending levels and the average percentage of defence spending that goes towards these categories each year."

The British Army and Royal Navy rely mainly on equipment developed and made in Britain, such as the Challenger 2 main battle tank, the AS90 self-propelled artillery piece and, by and large, all naval vessels. It's different for aircraft and helicopters, however, where the UK mostly uses equipment developed within multinational European projects, such as the Eurofighter Typhoon and Airbus

A400M transport aircraft. It also buys from the United States. UK-made equipment, such as the Agusta Westland Lynx has also been sold to several other EU countries existing procurement. Britain also supplies parts, such as the power shafts, turbines and turret of the AS90 for the new Polish self-propelled artillery systems. It is hoped that Brexit will not impact on existing procurement projects, although it may affect supply-line issues. It's harder to predict how large a part the UK may be allowed or invited to play in future European military procurement projects. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, "The UK's defence-industrial competences are only partly integrated in the European defence sector; the relationship is immature and slightly asymmetric, with the UK somewhat more dependent on the continental defence-industrial base than vice versa." The report continues: "In particular, regulations and standards tied to the Single European Market (SEM) and their linkages to technology, R&D, the labour market, intellectual-property rights, all the way to transfers and tariffs, present a vulnerability."

But in terms of personnel commitment, the UK seems largely disinterested in EU missions. In 2017, the UK had more than 13,000 military personnel deployed on overseas missions or at overseas bases. It had less than 100 serving in EU operations, below what many small countries contribute. The Institute explains that: "The CSDP has never been central to the UK in operational terms because the remit of CSDP operations, essentially crisis management, has only ever reflected a limited part of the overall British level of ambition." Strangely, in February 2018, Earl Howe, Minister of State for Defence, told the UK Parliament's Defence Select Committee that: "the Government would like the EU to issue the UK with a standing invitation to contribute to

CSDP operations and missions, to be exempt from the common costs for civilian missions and non-executive military operations and to have an agreement that enabled UK contributions to the EU force catalogue." The exchange was reported in a House of Commons Briefing Paper. When asked whether the UK's entire force catalogue would be on offer to the EU for use in CSDP missions and operations, "the Minister accepted there would be an opportunity cost which would have to be reconciled as assets committed to a CSDP operation or mission would no longer be available to other missions. However, he also noted that CSDP operations and missions could be useful to UK foreign policy objectives, highlighting that in some cases EU-badged missions were considered to be acceptable in a way that NATO-badged missions were not."



The Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach and his military assistant Brigadier General Robbie Boyd at a Nato Saceur session

LEAVING THE DOOR UNLOCKED

Brexit, especially without a deal, may well impact on Britain's defence manufacturers, if not directly on its military, as a blog for the London School of Economics (LSE) points out: "a no deal Brexit will have negative consequences for British manufacturing, including the space, aerospace and defence industries. Delays and additional costs to exports may endanger British firms' participation in major international supply chains." But the report also highlights another and possibly greater threat in terms of civilian security: "a no deal Brexit would have considerable impact on the UK's internal security," the authors claim, "in particular on police and judicial authorities' capacity to address issues such as organised



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Eurofighter Typhoon FGR MK4

crime and terrorism, and on the UK's role as a leading country in the area of security, including its ability to propose new instruments and shape EU decisions so as to align them with its national interests. In fact, one could even go as far as to say that a no deal Brexit constitutes a substantial threat to UK security given the current critical and unprecedented levels of organised crime activities, as well as the continued severe level of international and domestic terrorism."

In terms of fighting crime and terrorism, Britain has benefited from its membership of Europol, the EU's police cooperation and coordination body, and from the use of European arrest warrants. That was how one of the four terrorists who set off bombs in London in July 2005 was brought back to face trial. Osman Hussein had escaped to Italy, apparently unaware that a simple European arrest warrant could be issued to bring him back to Britain without the rigmarole of extradition proceedings. Along with his fellow conspirators, Hussein faced a British court in 2007 and was given a life sentence with a minimum term of 40 years in prison. Without a Brexit deal, Britain will lose not only the use of the European Arrest Warrant but also access to the Schengen Information System, the European Criminal Record System and membership of Europol and Eurojust. The corollary is, of course, that other EU member states will lose access to British intelligence sources, said to be among the best.

It was only on 12 December 2019 that Eurojust became a fully-functioning EU agency. "Eurojust today heralds a new phase in its development, as it officially becomes the European Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation, with the application of the Eurojust Regulation as the new legal basis," said its website. Just as Europol involves police cooperation, Eurojust helps lawyers, courts, lawmakers and justice systems to work together. "The new Regulation will make Eurojust fit for the purpose of fighting increasing levels of cross-border crime, with an Executive Board dealing with administrative matters and giving the College of prosecutors from all Member States more leeway to focus on the continuously rising number of criminal cases." Britain will no longer play a part in these agencies, despite previously arguing that continued UK participation is "vital" and must not be weakened. The Defence Select Committee was assured that the



HMS Explorer with Danish Navy frigate Iver Huitfeldt during a Nato exercise

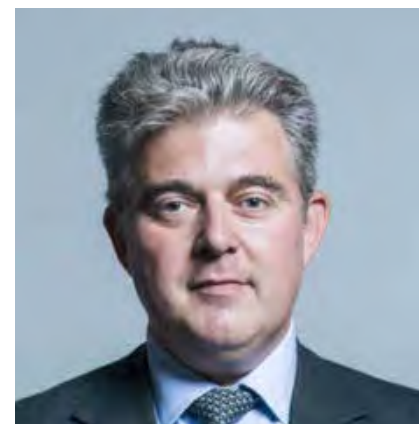
aim remains to find a "workable way of ensuring we do not see a major drop in interactions with Europol." The Britain who headed Europol, the urbane, calm and highly-effective Rob Wainwright, has already stepped down and future relations with Europol will be subject to negotiation.

STILL HOSTILE

The authors of the LSE blog express concern that Britain is cutting itself off from intelligence-sharing and police and judicial cooperation at a difficult time. "Against a background of wide-ranging police cuts (namely the loss of 44,000 police officer jobs since 2010) and the accumulation of austerity effects, the rapidly growing levels of insecurity are having a clear impact on the everyday safety of the UK population, with serious and organised crime currently endangering more lives than any other national security threat," they write. "Given that these problems are transnational in nature, the key to addressing them lies on intelligence and information exchange, rather than on the reinforcement of borders as has been occasionally expressed." But, as mentioned earlier, that cuts both ways: Britain's former partners will be more at risk too.

Some of the arguments put forward in favour of leaving the EU centred on the reinforcement of borders, or to put it another way, how to deter or expel illegal migrants. It struck a chord in areas suffering high unemployment following industrial decline. Immigration is a problem for all EU member states, especially Germany, but nobody has yet come up with a workable, humane response. At present, responsibility for where immigrants can apply for asylum is covered by

the Dublin III Regulation, under which an asylum-seeker can be sent back to wherever their arrival in the EU was first recorded. The aim is to deter and prevent immigrants from cherry-picking their preferred place of asylum, if it's granted, or making multiple applications. In effect, it means most asylum-seekers are returned to the places they managed to reach first, usually Greece, Italy or Spain. The fingerprints of asylum seekers are stored in the Eurodac database, another EU facility to which a post-Brexit Britain may lose access. The data record prevents applications from being submitted in different countries. However, if there is no deal the UK will no longer participate in Dublin III and instead the Immigration, Nationality and Asylum (EU Exit) Regulation 2019 will take its place, coming into force on the day Britain leaves. This will revoke the Dublin arrangements although the government claims that existing family reunion applications "will be processed".



UK Minister Brandon Lewis

Minister of State for Security at the Home Office, Brandon Lewis, said: "We want a close future partnership to tackle the shared challenges on asylum and illegal

migration. Section 17 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 commits the Government to seek to negotiate an agreement with the EU which allows for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the EU to join family members lawfully present in the UK, where it is in their best interests. This commitment stands whether we leave the EU with or without a deal. Effecting transfers relies on an agreement being in place and we endeavour to negotiate such an agreement as soon as possible.” Lewis also pointed out that a UK asylum application may still be considered inadmissible if the applicant had travelled through an EU country, although this will require changes to UK immigration rules, to “ensure continuity of approach by widening the scope of other third country rules to deal with these cases.” The previous prime minister, Theresa May, introduced a “hostile environment” for illegal immigrants (and effectively for all immigrants), with trucks driving around bearing large placards with a “go home” message. The policy involved legislative measures to make life difficult for anyone living in Britain without a provable right to remain which resulted, unintentionally, in 80 people from the Windrush generation - West Indians invited to Britain to increase the workforce in the aftermath of the Second World War - being deported incorrectly and many more being forced to leave, often because papers for certain years of their decades-long stay were missing. The Home Office refused to acknowledge that the 1971 Immigration Act had given these people indefinite right to remain, even after it emerged that it had destroyed the immigrants landing cards. Far from contrite, the Home Office set up an interim hardship scheme for those worst affected but as of May last year, only nine people had received any benefit. Based on the evidence to date, anyone hoping for a hint of regret or sympathy at ministerial level - or, indeed, the right to family reunion - may have a long wait.

THE LONG GOODBYE

It looks as if a post-Brexit Britain may plough a lonely furrow after Brexit, especially a no-deal Brexit, where security and defence are concerned, although it may, of course, be a successful and thriving furrow. The fact remains, though, that just as the EU begins to see a need for a defence strand to the Union and to fear that the United States is no longer inter-

ested in Europe, Britain is sailing off into the sunset. The UK’s military will see little effect, but its defence industry almost certainly will, excluded from research and development projects and cut off from EU funding for them, with the prospect of slower and more complicated import and export regimes for Europe. 11% of UK arms exports were to EU countries; in fact, Britain accounted for 4% of EU countries’ total arms imports. Arms made in the EU also accounted for 23% of Britain’s arms imports. There is more concern over the effects Brexit may have on police and judicial cooperation, however. If the UK is also excluded from security bodies and intelligence sharing, it could put British citizens’ lives at risk.



Michel Barnier EU Brexit negotiator

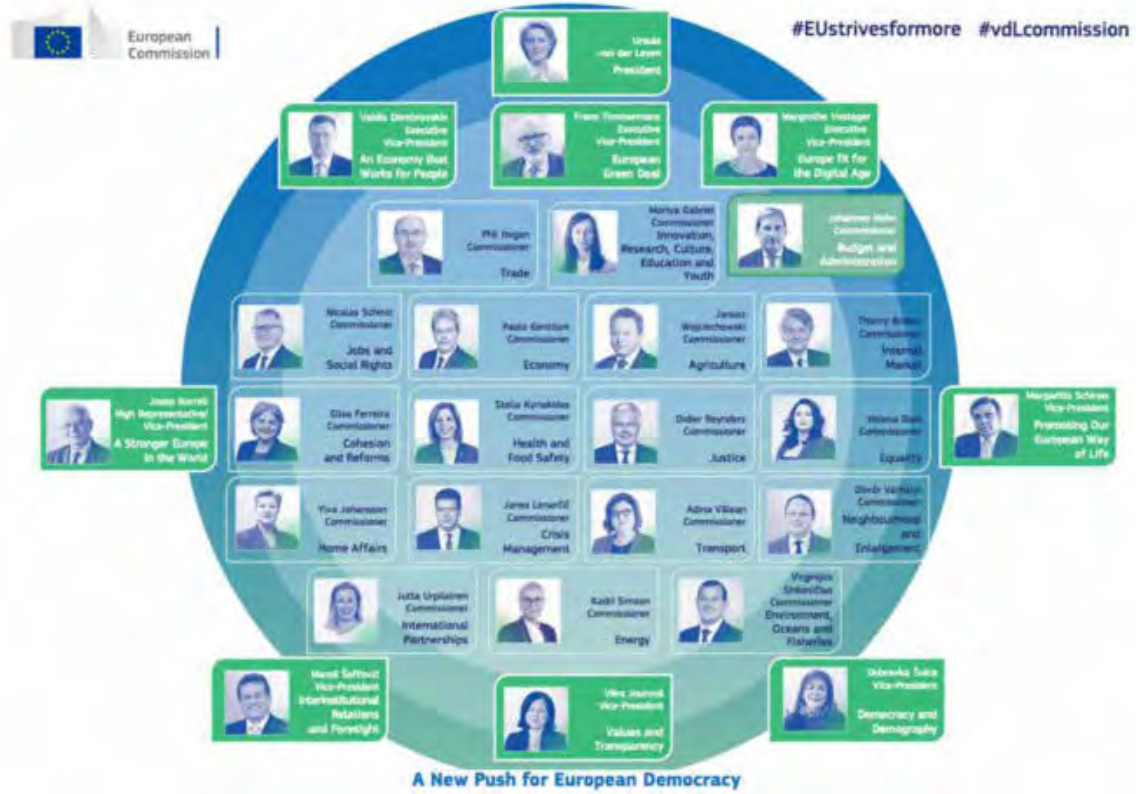
As the EU’s Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, pointed out to the European Defence Agency in November 2019: “The international context is more challenging than ever. Unpredictability and instability are the new normal,” he said, before listing the challenges. “Russia continues to assert its influence in the region and beyond, sometimes in contradiction with international law. China is engaging in strategic competition and promoting its alternative economic model around the world. The United States increasingly chooses the path of unilateralism to defend its interests. Trade tensions and technological competition are new drivers of international relations, not to mention the spread of terrorism and global instability. This global picture has informed our approach to Brexit since the very beginning.” And just in case any other member state may be thinking of following Britain out of the door, he added: “In the current volatile geopolitical context, we need to focus on the unity of the EU27; the solidarity between Member States. In the European Union, no Member State walks alone.”



French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron sign treaties during the UK-France summit at Lancaster House, in London

Britain, however, seems determined to stroll away, possibly with an eye on the United States as a partner, although that threatens to be a totally asymmetric relationship. Furthermore, the Trump administration seems uninterested in Europe (and Britain); Russia and China are not. Britain can continue to develop military matériel with France under the Lancaster House Treaties, signed in London in 2010 by David Cameron and Nicholas Sarkozy, but Brexit is straining cross-Channel relations. A former UK National Security Adviser, Lord Peter Ricketts, has warned that it “will change the context and create the risk of the two countries drifting apart.” The security risks don’t end when Britain leaves, nor does the fact change that an external threat to Paris, Berlin or Tallinn will also be an external threat to London. Britain and mainland Europe will continue to face the same threats in an unstable world. Michael Leigh, a Former European Commission director-general of enlargement, wrote in a blog for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, that the risks remain for every country in Europe, in or out of the EU. “These include the risk of war with Iran and the threat of secondary US sanctions on European companies; a tug of war between Beijing and Washington on trade and technology, with Europe, including Britain, in the middle; ineffectual US efforts to impose a skewed Middle East settlement in Europe’s backyard; continued Russian aggression in Ukraine; and Chinese, Russian, Turkish and Saudi intervention in the Balkans that could further destabilise a region often seen as Europe’s inner courtyard.” I’m reminded of comic actor Kenneth Williams’ remarks when playing Julius Caesar in the film *Carry On Cleo*: “Infamy! Infamy! They’ve all got it in for me!” It’s still true but it’s no longer funny, I’m afraid.

Jim Gibbons



THE EU'S NEW COHESION POLICY

Regional Development and Cohesion Policy beyond 2020: The New Framework at a glance

For the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027, the Commission proposes to modernise Cohesion Policy, the EU's main investment policy and one of its most concrete expressions of solidarity.

A FOCUS ON FIVE INVESTMENT PRIORITIES, WHERE THE EU IS BEST PLACED TO DELIVER

Five main objectives will drive EU investments in 2021-2027: Regional development investments will strongly focus on objectives 1 and 2. 65% to 85% of ERDF and Cohesion Fund resources will be allocated to these priorities, depending on Member States' relative wealth.

- Smarter Europe, through innovation, digitisation, economic transformation and support to small and medium-sized businesses
- a greener, carbon free Europe, implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewables and the fight against climate change

- a more connected Europe, with strategic transport and digital networks
- a more Social Europe, delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare
- a Europe closer to citizens, by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU.

A MORE TAILORED APPROACH TO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Cohesion Policy keeps on investing in all regions, still on the basis of 3 categories (less-developed; transition; more-developed).

The allocation method for the funds is still largely based on GDP per capita. New criteria are added (youth unemployment, low education level, climate change, and the reception and integration of migrants) to better reflect the reality on the ground. Outermost regions will continue to benefit from special EU support.

Cohesion Policy further supports locally-led development strategies and empowers local authorities in the management of the funds. The urban dimension of Cohesion Policy is strengthened, with 6% of the ERDF dedicated to sustainable urban development, and a new networking and capacity-building programme for urban authorities, the European Urban Initiative.

SIMPLIFICATION: SHORTER, FEWER, CLEARER RULES

80 simplification measures in cohesion policy 2021-27

For businesses and entrepreneurs benefiting from EU support, the new framework offers less red tape, with simpler ways to claim payments using simplified cost options. To facilitate synergies, a single rulebook now covers 7 EU funds implemented in partnership with Member States (“shared management”). The Commission also proposes lighter controls for programmes with good track record, with an increased reliance on national systems and the extension of the “single audit” principle, to avoid duplication of checks.



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A MORE FLEXIBLE FRAMEWORK

The new framework combines the necessary stability in investment planning with the appropriate level of budgetary flexibility to cope with unforeseen events. A mid-term review will determine if changes in the programmes are needed for the last two years of the funding period, based on emerging priorities, performance of the programmes and the most recent Country-Specific Recommendations.

Within certain limits, transfers of resources will be possible within programmes without the need for a formal Commission approval. A specific provision makes it easier to mobilise EU funding as of day one in the event of a natural disaster.

A STRENGTHENED LINK WITH THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER AND THE UNION'S ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

Cohesion Policy supports reforms for an investment-friendly environment, where businesses can thrive. Full complementarity and coordination with the new, enhanced Reform Support Programme will be ensured.

Country-specific recommendations formulated in the context of the European Semester will be taken into account twice over the budgetary period: in the beginning, for the design of Cohesion Policy programmes, and during the mid-term review. To further set the right conditions for growth and job creation, new “enabling” conditions will help remove barriers to investments. Their application will be monitored throughout the financial period.

MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SYNERGIES WITHIN THE EU BUDGET TOOLBOX

The single rulebook covering Cohesion Policy funds and the Asylum and Migration Fund will facilitate the setting up of local migrant integration strategies supported by EU resources used in synergy; the Asylum and Migration Fund will focus on migrants' short-term needs upon arrival while Cohesion Policy will support their social and professional integration. Outside of the single rulebook, synergies will be made easier with other EU instruments, like the Common Agricultural Policy, Horizon Europe, the LIFE programme or Erasmus+.

INTERREG: REMOVING CROSS BORDER OBSTACLES AND SUPPORTING INTERREGIONAL INNOVATION PROJECTS

Interregional and cross-border cooperation will be facilitated by the new possibility for a region to use parts of its own allocation to fund projects anywhere in Europe jointly with other regions.

The new generation of interregional and cross-border cooperation ("Interreg") programmes will help Member States overcome cross-border obstacles and develop joint services. The Commission proposes a new instrument for border regions and Member States eager to harmonise their legal frameworks, the European Cross-Border Mechanism.

Building on a successful pilot action from 2014-2020, the Commission proposes to create the Interregional Innovative Investments. Regions with matching 'smart specialisation' assets will be given more support to build pan-European clusters in priority sectors such as big data, circular economy, advanced manufacturing or cybersecurity.

REINFORCED RULES FOR BETTER PERFORMING EU INVESTMENTS

All programmes will still have a performance framework with quantifiable targets (number of jobs created or additional access to broadband). The new framework introduces an annual performance review, in the form of a policy dialogue between programme authorities and the Commission. Performance of the programmes will also be assessed during a mid-term review. For transparency reasons, and so citizens can follow the progress made, Member States will have to report all implementation data every two months and the Cohesion Open Data Platform will be automatically updated.

AN INCREASED USE OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

Grants alone cannot address the significant investment gaps. They can be efficiently complemented by financial instruments, which have a leverage effect and are closer to the market. On a voluntary basis, Member States will be able to transfer a part of their Cohesion Policy resources to the new, centrally managed InvestEU fund, to access the guarantee provided by the EU budget. Combining grants and financial instruments is made easier and the new framework also includes special provisions to attract more private capital.

More communication efforts to improve the visibility of Cohesion Policy

For a Europe ever closer to citizens, more emphasis is put on the need to better communicate the positive results of Cohesion Policy. Member States and regions have reinforced requirements in terms of communication, such as the organisation of events for the opening of big EU-funded projects and the development of social media outreach plans.

At the same time, communication on EU-funded projects is simplified, with a single branding covering all different EU funds, a single portal displaying all available funding for businesses and a single project database run by the Commission.



The European Commission headed by Ursula von der Leyen

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POLES APART

Putin's fury as Poles blame Russia for World War II

The Poles can never have had much doubt that blaming Russia for the Second World War would upset Vladimir Putin. It was rather like poking a tiger with a pointed stick: it could never end well. Putin has retaliated verbally, mentioning it five times during the run-up to Christmas, including at a Defence Ministry board meeting, in a meeting with leaders of the Duma and again while talking to important business people. He also said he would write an article about it. He seems very sensitive, but then, like most Russians, he sees any attack on the Soviet victory in what Russians call the Great Patriotic War as an attack on Russia itself. However, a newly-assertive Poland, with the right-wing nationalist Law and Justice Party (PIS) comfortably back in charge, felt it was safe to put a resolution before the European Parliament ascribing equal blame to Russia and Germany for the war which began 81 years ago (it was tabled to mark the 80th anniversary). The resolution, passed in September,

2019, after much reference to the notorious agreement between Vyacheslav Molotov for the Soviet Union and Joachim von Ribbentrop for Nazi Germany, “Stresses that the Second World War, the most devastating war in Europe’s history, was started as an immediate result of the notorious Nazi-Soviet Treaty on Non-Aggression of 23 August 1939, also known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and its secret protocols, whereby two totalitarian regimes that shared the goal of world conquest divided Europe into two zones of influence.”



© Tass
Stalin supervising the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on Aug 23, 1939

This reads at first glance like something of an over-simplification, and indeed it is, if not by much. Certainly, Josef Stalin was a monster who believed that the triumph of Communism was an historical inevitability. He believed, as Karl Marx had written in the Communist Manifesto, that the proletariat would overthrow the bourgeoisie. “What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers. It’s fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.” Except, of course, that they were not. Stalin had his sights set on expansion and the pact ascribed to Molotov and von Ribbentrop was really negotiated directly between Josef Stalin and Adolf Hitler.

Stalin received a personal letter from Hitler on 21 August, 1939, making clear Germany’s intentions towards Poland; some historians believe the two dictators were exploring a long-term alliance. Von Ribbentrop arrived in Moscow two days later and met both Stalin and Molotov. The deal that was

agreed contained a secret protocol, proposed by Stalin, which detailed ways in which the two powers would divide up Eastern Europe. In that respect the Polish-drafted European



Hitler with Foreign Minister Joachim Ribbentrop on his return from Moscow with the agreement in hand

Parliament resolution has a basis in fact: two ambitious dictators determined to rule the world. Stalin's latest biographer, Oleg V. Khlevniuk, wrote: "Stalin took total responsibility for the 'friendship' with Germany and doubtless had very specific motives for entering into the risky alliance." He goes on to examine those motives in more detail, because they are complex and hard to decipher. "Stalin, no doubt, was fully aware of the agreement's political and moral undesirability. We can infer this from the persistence with which the Soviet Union denied that a secret protocol existed."

It's worth remembering, however, that the "great terror" Stalin had imposed on the Soviet Union in the latter half of the 1930s had eroded a lot of sympathy and support from other countries, including those with theoretically left-leaning governments. Stalin was not keen on joining Britain and France in declaring war on Germany over its inevitable invasion of Poland. After negotiations for an anti-German alliance, Stalin believed the two western powers were trying to get Russia to do their fighting for them. By dealing directly with Hitler, not only could the Soviet Union could stay out of the war, Stalin's secret protocol would allow Poland and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland, to be divided up into Soviet and German territories. It was because of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact that the Red Army (eventually) joined in the German attack on Poland, recapturing western Belorussia and western Ukraine, both of which Russia had lost to Poland in the Russo-Polish War of 1919-20. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

were quickly compelled to allow Stalin to establish military bases there, especially at the ports.

KEEPING THE WOLF FROM THE DOOR

In appeasing Hitler, Stalin was not alone; Britain and France were also guilty of decisions they would later regret as they strove to avoid war. On the other hand, some of the reasons Stalin gave for signing the Pact seem dubious at best. In an unverified speech to the Politburo, quoted in a French journal in 1939, Stalin is supposed to have said: "We are absolutely convinced that if we conclude an agreement to ally with France and Great Britain, Germany would be forced to give up on Poland and seek a modus vivendi with the Western powers. War would be averted and the subsequent source of events would prove dangerous for us." With hindsight, it's difficult to believe he really thought that, or even said that, but perhaps he favoured a war because it would weaken the west and allow the Soviet Union to expand, as some historians have suggested. Unravelling Stalin's thinking processes was never an exact science; it's hard to second-guess a genocidal maniac. On the other hand, there is no other record of the speech having been made, nor of a Politburo meeting on the day claimed. According to Khlevniuk there is more definite evidence of his thinking in the diary of Georgy Dimitrov, then head of the Communist International, Comintern, who quotes a speech supposedly made by Stalin on 7 September, when he is claimed to have said: "We would rather have reached agreement with the so-called democratic countries, so we conducted negotiations. But the English and French wanted to use us as field hands and without paying us anything! We, of course, would not work as field hands, especially if we weren't getting paid." Khlevniuk says the 3-way negotiations failed because of faults on all sides; Stalin believed war between Germany and Poland was inevitable (he was right) which would bring Nazi forces to his borders. Better, then - at least in his view - to have an agreement to keep them at arm's length. Meanwhile, criticism of Germany or the Nazis became a punishable offence in the Soviet Union.

There was further pressure for a deal because of the fighting that erupted between Soviet and Japanese forces in

Mongolia, but the victory at Khalkin-Gol not only proved the military strength of the Red Army, but earned the man who would become Russia's top general, Georgy Zhukov, the title 'Hero of the Soviet Union'. It also strengthened Stalin's hand in his negotiations with Hitler. It is easy to see the deal as a most unsavoury agreement and, indeed, the existence of the protocol has long been denied, with copies of it being dismissed as forgeries whenever they turned up. But as a pragmatic way to buy time, the Pact was, perhaps, understandable, if reprehensible. Some have described it as being like "shaking hands with the devil", but since both men were devils, the agreement loses some of its shock value. Even so, Stalin played it safe: the Soviet invasion of Poland began seventeen days after the Nazis had swept through the country virtually unopposed. Then Russia invaded Finland only to meet fierce resistance.



Finnish soldiers raise the flag at the three-country cairn between Norway, Sweden and Finland on 27 April 1945, which marked the end of World War II in Finland

The Red Army had already won its concessions from the other Baltic states but ran into great difficulties from the Finns. Stalin wanted to place military bases in Finland to protect Leningrad, which was not only Russia's second-largest city but was also producing weapons and had access to the Baltic Sea. The Soviets wanted to trade less populated and less important land for strategically more important territory near to the city in order to defend it against German aggression. Even then he clearly realised that Hitler had his sights set on Moscow. The Finns refused to cooperate and the Red Army invaded. Despite a massive military imbalance - 26 Finnish tanks against 1,500 Soviet ones - the strong resistance of the Finns, plus worldwide condemnation from around the world, which included the Soviet Union's expulsion from the League of Nations, saw Stalin forced to withdraw, although not without some territorial

gains. However, France and the United Kingdom had expressed a willingness to come to Finland's aid and the Red Army lost some 130,000 troops. Losses on the Finnish side, although significant, were far fewer: 23,000 dead and 44,000 wounded.

Still licking his wounds from this so-called Winter War Stalin then faced a new and much greater problem: the rapid defeat of France left him insufficient room to manoeuvre, and his deal with Hitler began to look not only shabby but weak. He quickly set about the "sovietisation" of his new Baltic territories but was facing tension with Nazi Germany because both countries needed oil and their interests didn't coincide. Things got worse, however, when Germany, Italy and Japan signed their Tripartite Pact, agreeing to help each other divide up the entire world. The Pact was mainly aimed against the United States and Britain but Stalin could see the writing on the wall. Molotov was despatched to Berlin to negotiate with Hitler and there was even talk of the Soviet Union becoming a fourth partner, but in reality, Hitler was already planning Operation Barbarossa: German-led forces launched what they called a blitzkrieg attack on 22 June, 1941. Within just a few weeks, the Red Army had suffered the greatest series of defeats in military history, with millions dead or injured as the Russians retreated to the gates of Moscow and Leningrad.



Poland, Wartheland. Millions of Poles were deported, either to the East, or to Germany as slave labor

The attack was not something Stalin was expecting, even as he bulked up and re-equipped the Red Army in readiness for conflict. He had begun to see, as Neville Chamberlain had after meeting Hitler in Munich, that a piece of paper would never be enough to stop the Nazis. There is no doubt that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact facilitated the Second World War and made it possible but it only made it inevitable because

Hitler never doubted German superiority nor the inevitability of a Nazi victory. And he wanted to conquer the world by force to give the German people 'lebensraum' - living space, other people's territory to colonise.



British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain (left) and German Chancellor Adolf Hitler, leave their meeting at Bad Godesberg, 23 September 1938

The problem is that the Polish government of today sees itself as not just a defender of Polish laws, trade and defence but also of its morals, and it doesn't tolerate those who disagree with it or who publicise alternative views. Since taking power in the 2015 election, PIS has placed sections of the media in the hands of party sympathisers and tried to nobble the Supreme Court by forcing judges to retire early. It changed its mind on that one eventually and with great reluctance under pressure from the European Commission. On a very conservative TV channel owned by a Catholic priest, the leader of PIS, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, warned viewers that the opposition, if elected, would lead to the "radical destruction of the moral and cultural order". His interviewer was wearing full clerical garb, including a cassock.

Kaczynski sees gay people - all gay people - as representing an attack on the family. Not even his fiercest critics dare to promote the adoption of children by couples in a same-sex relationship because most Poles oppose the idea and the Catholic church agrees with that view. Homophobic rhetoric is common in political debate, much of it unpalatable to more liberal societies, although there is now a progressive political party, Wiosna, that was created by a gay-rights campaigner. Poland under PIS does not accept criticism; it is illegal there to suggest that Poles were complicit in Nazi anti-semitism. The Poles call such claims "false narratives", although Jewish survivors of the war have claimed it happened before the Germans got there.

INDUSTRIALISED EXTERMINATION

Before the Holocaust, Jews made up the largest minority in Poland, comprising some 25% of the population. In the shtetls, or market towns, Jews and Poles bought and sold from each other, living side-by-side and often speaking each other's languages. The Nazis, though, wanted the entire country for Germans to settle in. They closed all schools so that the new German masters of the country would gain an illiterate slave class to serve them. They also rounded up all of Poland's Jews, providing railway lines to convey them to the extermination camps they built, such as Auschwitz, not far from Krakow. By 1945, almost five million Poles had been murdered, three million of them Jewish. When I visited the place, my guide was a non-Jewish Pole who resents the way



The Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland

the slaughter has been claimed by only one set of victims, even though most of the victims were Jewish. The Nazis also slaughtered people with disabilities, gay people, Jehovah's Witnesses and Slavs opposed to Nazi rule, especially Communists. Also working at the camp was the utterly despicable Josef Mengele, the SS officer and doctor who performed terrible, painful and usually fatal experiments on inmates. The place is still terrifying, so long after it was in use, with an atmosphere that remains oppressive to this day. As they withdrew, the SS dynamited most of the gas chambers but not the first one, set inside the original camp, known as Auschwitz 1, with its twin crematoria.



© Wikipedia

Auschwitz

My Polish guide said that on arrival at the rail head, those who looked too frail were separated and taken for instant slaughter. Others were to face hardship, starvation, mistreatment, forced labour and death. "The camp commander spoke to us," he told me, "Pointing to the chimneys over the crematorium, he told us that the only way we would ever get out of Auschwitz was as smoke up those chimneys, when our bodies were burned." This particular Pole did survive, of course, but most of the internees did not, leaving behind their few possessions so that today's visitors can see the massive glass cases of battered suitcases, spectacles and hundreds upon hundreds of photographs: close-ups of faces showing terror and horror, faces of frightened people who know that all hope is gone.

With me on that visit was former Auschwitz inmate and French politician Simone Veil, a Jewish woman who survived to become the first elected president of the European Parliament following the introduction of direct elections. She explained what life had been like there for inmates, stripped of respect and dignity by an unthinking, inhuman machine that had industrialised mass

murder. She had been a child at the time. A German MEP on the same visit told me that it was not just the internees of Auschwitz who had been murdered there, but the soul of Germany itself. He was in tears at the time.

Although the Auschwitz extermination camp was based in Poland, it was not, of course, operated by Poles. It was a German institution. Initially, it had been just a disused army barracks. When it was converted into a place in which to slaughter large numbers of people, the infamous 'arbeit macht frei' sign over the entrance was erected. It was always a lie, but a lot of lies were told over how Germany and the Soviet Union divided Poland between themselves.

The german-soviet invasion of poland 1939 Polish soldiers marching out of the Warsaw garrison after it is taken by Germans on 28 September 1939

When the Nazis invaded, they put their own SS soldiers into Polish uniforms and launched an attack on a German radio station, thus justifying the invasion and the murders of real Poles, dressed up in German uniforms and then murdered, simply to be put on display to visiting American newspaper journalists. This plan was to provide Hitler with 'justification' for invading Poland: an 'unprovoked' attack on German facilities by 'those wicked Poles'. It didn't have to look convincing and it wasn't. For the Russians, the invasion was described as offering a helping hand to the 'workers of Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia freeing them forever from social and national bondage', as Anne Applebaum, senior fellow of the Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University, quotes from a contemporary article in the Red Army newspaper, Red Star.

HEROES OR VILLAINS

Applebaum, who is married to a Polish MEP and who wrote the book *Iron Curtain* about the Soviet takeover of Eastern and Central Europe, believes that Putin sees this as a good time to make a noise about the resolution. Poland's government is nationalist, even nativist, and is not only seeking judicial reform to create a form of justice that suits its ultra-conservative views but also plans to impose a law making it illegal for any judge to query the move. It will bring Poland once more into conflict with the European Union and also, most

probably, into conflict with the European Court of Human Rights, which is not part of the EU, of course, but overseen by the Strasbourg-based Council of Europe. Poland wants to project its image as victim - of both the Nazis and the Communists - and heroic fighter for freedom and democracy. That's not easy to do when you are in the process of attacking democracy and the independence of the judiciary.



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Historian and Washington Post columnist Anne Applebaum

Applebaum believes that some PIS politicians are now more anti-EU than anti-Russia. Writing in *The Atlantic*, she says that later in January, "Putin will be the main speaker at an Israeli event to mark the 75th anniversary of the Red Army's liberation on Auschwitz, and that will be another moment to make the same argument." She thinks Putin is also testing the waters to see which way public sympathy goes as Poland moves increasingly towards authoritarianism; will the world give credence to his suggestion that many Poles were complicit in Nazi atrocities? Previous testimony from Polish Jews suggests that at least some were, even allegedly rounding up Jewish neighbours ahead of the Germans' arrival so as to make a 'gift' to the invaders and showing them whose side they were on. Given what the Nazis then did to the Poles and their country, such an action seems somewhat unlikely and most certainly doomed to failure.



Photo from 1943 exhumation of mass grave of Polish officers killed by the Soviet NKVD in Katyn Forest in 1940

According to Applebaum, PIS routinely denounce immigrants and gay rights but may be frightened of Russia, while admiring its “open racism and aggressive nationalism”. At the same time, Putin’s plea of “not guilty” on Russia’s behalf to all charges doesn’t square with a known and documented atrocity perpetrated by Soviet forces. In April, 1943, the occupying German forces uncovered eight large burial sites in the Katyn Forest, not far from Smolensk, containing the remains of some 22,000 Polish Army officers and intellectual leaders who had been interned at the Soviet prisoner-of-war camp at Kozielsk. In addition, the bodies of prisoners who had been housed at Ostashkov and Starobielsk were discovered near Piatykhatky and Mednoye, respectively. The so-called Katyn Forest Massacre most certainly took place, although after the Soviets recaptured Smolensk they re-examined the corpses and claimed they were victims of mass killing by Nazi forces, carried out in 1941. There’s very little evidence to support that claim and in 1951, the US House of Representatives set up a Select Committee to look into the deaths under the chairmanship of Republican congressman Ray J. Madden of Indiana. The Committee decided unanimously that Russia’s NKVD secret service was responsible, which should settle the matter, although we must bear in mind that the Committee sat at the height of the Cold War and could have been influenced by strong anti-Soviet feeling. That possibility does seem, however, extremely remote. Meanwhile, seeking to be seen as on the side of the angels, Putin has condemned Poland’s pre-invasion ambassador to Berlin, who is claimed to have praised Hitler’s plan to deport Jews from Europe. Oh, and he also says Chamberlain’s Munich Agreement in 1938 was an example of ‘collusion’ with Hitler. Applebaum has even suggested that he is trying to portray Russia as a victim of the war, entitled to compensation. That would certainly stick in the craw of the Baltic states who were ruled by undemocratic Communist regimes for half a century because of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its secret protocol.



The wreckage at the site of the plane crash that killed Polish President Lech Kaczyński in Smolensk, western Russia

STICKS AND STONES

Why should Poland seek to discredit Russia at this time? And why, for that matter, should Putin seek to discredit Poland? For one thing, Poland has sought to blame Russia for the death of its then President, Lech Kaczyński, in 2010, whose plane crashed in the Katyn Forest. He, his wife and a number of Polish politicians and military personnel were on their way to a service of remembrance for the victims of the original massacre. The finger of suspicion pointed at Moscow because many of those killed had played leading parts in overturning Communism in Poland. Moscow hasn’t forgiven Warsaw for accusing it of involvement in the original deaths, either.



Lech Kaczyński

Furthermore, Russia has been engaged in rewriting history to rehabilitate the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and downplaying its rôle in World War II. It’s this tendency by the current Russian regime to rewrite history that inspired Oleg Khlevniuk to write his biography of Stalin. In his preface to the book he writes: “Lately, the paradoxical turns of recent Russian history, the large-scale poisoning of minds with myths of an ‘alternative’

Stalin - one whose effective stewardship is held up as a model worthy of emulation - have given my research more than scholarly relevance.” Khlevniuk writes that too many modern histories are little more than apologies, contributing to the Stalin myth. “The impact of this powerful ideological assault on readers’ minds is intensified by the circumstances of Russian life,” he says, “which include rampant corruption and outrageous social iniquities. When they reject the present, people are more likely to idealize the past.” Khlevniuk was determined to show just what a monster Stalin was and why he should most certainly not be emulated or admired, although there are still old people in Russia who hanker after the ‘good old days’ under Uncle Joe.



Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki pays tribute to the monument of the President of Poland, prof. Lech Kaczyński in Szczecin

There is another reason for Putin to discredit Poland, especially at the moment. Not only is Poland the largest and most important of the Eastern European NATO countries, but it has been trying to entice Donald Trump to place a US armoured division on its soil, offering \$2-billion (€1.8-billion) to set up what is being jokingly referred to as ‘Fort Trump’. America recently sent an extra 1,000 troops to join the 4,500 already there.

The Fort Trump plan, with its massive force of tanks and mobile artillery, seems to be a non-starter as yet - the troops will be spread across six locations in Poland - but it’s still a considerable presence right on Putin’s doorstep. Furthermore, there is still talk of agreeing a seventh site where the tanks could be based. Meanwhile, Poland has agreed to spend more than \$11-billion (almost €10-billion) on American armaments, including rocket launchers, air defence systems and war planes. More orders are said to be on the way, including anti-tank missiles. So far, Trump has said the military build-up in Poland is not intended as a warning to Russia but is simply because Trump likes

Kaczynski. There's nothing like demonstrating friendship with a bouquet of missiles.

And not only has Poland got a healthy economy, with 5.1% growth last year, it's also the country that proposed the EU trade treaty with Ukraine which ended with pro-Moscow president Viktor Yanukovich being forced to resign and flee the country. In fact, Poland has been a thorn in the side of Putin's foreign policy ambitions for a long time.

Putin is an ambitious man; he wants Russia to swallow Belarus, making it a province. Talks have been going on to achieve that, mainly through the pricing of the gas Belarus needs and Russia has in abundance, but Belarussian President Aleksandr Lukashenko is finding the going tough. With the wrangling on the point of collapse, Russia turned off the taps just a few hours before a US drone killed Iranian General Qassem Soleiman; nobody commented on this blatant act of blackmail at the time. As reported in Belarus News (eng.belta.by), Lukashenko has accused Russia of trying to squeeze his country, with Gazprom charging Minsk three times as much for gas as it charges Germany. It does seem an ironic state of affairs so close to the anniversary of the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany.

rials, we can buy them in any country." He cited Ukraine as an example of what can happen to any neighbour that dares to challenge Russia. He could have cited Moldova, too, now in the hands of a pro-Moscow government; Putin seems determined to re-establish the Soviet Union, albeit as an oligarchy, rather than a Communist entity.

REINTERPRETING THE PAST

Poland's motives for tabling that controversial European Parliament resolution are harder to understand. Was it just a fit of pique that made them want to tweak the tiger's tail? Or are they trying to rewrite their own history? Nobody doubts that Poland suffered greatly as a victim of two monolithic regimes run by blood-soaked tyrants. That is no longer the case, although its chosen government seems to favour autocracy. For Poland, more conflict lies ahead as its illiberal agenda clashes with its commitments under the EU treaty. Putin, no lover of the EU, might well have supported such a stance, but the Polish resolution has clearly angered him. The whole thing would have been better if the resolution hadn't played the blame game.



Vladimir Putin

particularly significant: "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing"

It wasn't Germany, despite its ghastly leader, that inserted the secret protocol into the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and there was no pressure from other western nations to make mere criticism of Nazism an offence under Soviet law. Stalin seems to have seen Hitler as something of a kindred spirit, despite holding views that even Stalin is said to have found repulsive. So now we come to marking the anniversary of the worst war in history and we seem no closer to agreeing on the narrative. Winston Churchill said that "history is written by the victors" but the problem here is that there were a lot of victors and a lot of losers. The defeat of the Nazis for Poland meant decades of rule by pro-Russian Communists, even if they did rebuild the historic parts of Warsaw the Nazis had blown up simply because they had lost. It meant much the same for other Baltic states and no-one is too keen on those 'wedding cake' buildings that were gifts from Stalin. We can't simply forget the war and the terrible things that were done on all sides. Nor should we. But today's leaders don't have personal memories of the conflict, so can pick and choose their versions of what happened from the available literature, whilst using the lessons they take from that to shape their excuses for making the same mistakes again. As the historian A.J.P. Taylor wrote about Napoleon III: "Like most of those who study history, he learned from the mistakes of the past how to make new ones." Some things never change.

Robin Crow



Vladimir Putin and Aleksandr Lukashenko

The problem is that Belarus is small and has few friends apart from Russia, which means Russia acts the bully. But any thought of total separation is unrealistic, according to Lukashenko. "If we did that, you and I wouldn't exist now," he told a press conference, according to Belarus News. "Russia is not just a huge country and a friendly nation. It is a country we bought raw materials from. And most importantly it is our common market. Since there is an abundance of raw mate-

Now we have Putin claiming that Russia was forced into agreeing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact by other European nations signing non-aggression agreements with Hitler. So, it was all Neville Chamberlain's fault. Except that it wasn't, of course: Stalin wanted to avoid a war with Germany and to annex the Baltic countries. Chamberlain wanted to avoid a war but also wanted time for Britain to re-arm. He didn't seem to see the surrender of Czechoslovakia to Hitler as



COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EU AND MOROCCO

The EU is boosting its support to Morocco with new programmes worth €389 million

The European Commission has adopted new cooperation programmes worth €389 million in support of the Kingdom of Morocco, in order to support reforms, inclusive development and border management and work towards developing a 'Euro-Moroccan partnership for shared prosperity'.

The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell, stated: 'Morocco has long been an essential partner of the European Union (EU), with which we share borders and aspirations. Under the leadership of His Majesty, King Mohammed VI, Morocco has achieved significant steps towards modernisation and has made closer ties with Europe a strategic choice. Faced with shared challenges, the time has come to give new impetus to our

relationship through deeper and more diversified cooperation, including towards Africa, in order to link our futures and bring our peoples closer together.

The Member of the European Commission in charge of Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi, said: 'Morocco plays a crucial role as a partner of the European Union. Together, we will contribute to the sustainable and inclusive



Olivér Várhelyi

growth of Morocco, we will fight smuggler networks which endanger the lives of vulnerable people and we will improve the protection of migrant victims from these criminal networks. Morocco can count on the EU, our partnership will continue uninterrupted during my term of office.'

As part of this strengthened cooperation, the new programmes include:

- **€289 million** financed from the bilateral cooperation envelope to support Morocco's reforms and inclusive development.
- the signing of a financing agreement with Morocco for a budget support programme of **€101.7 million** supporting border management. The programme was adopted last week as part of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.



EUROPOL

Crime gang makes over €2 million trafficking illegal steroids worldwide

On 16 December an investigation by the Financial Police Division of Hellenic Police (Διεύθυνση Οικονομικής Αστυνομίας της Ελληνικής Αστυνομίας), the Central Office for the fight against Environmental and Public Health Crime (OCLAESP) and French Customs (Direction Générale des Douanes et droits indirects) with the support of experts from Europol resulted in the arrest of nine members in Greece and one in France of an organised crime gang responsible for the production and trafficking of illegal anabolic substances and medicines around the world.

STERIOD SIDE EFFECTS ALSO A CRIMINAL MONEY-MAKING SCHEME

This particular organised criminal gang operated in several countries and had a meticulous internal structure. They produced, stored and trafficked illegal anabolic substances to improve athletic performance in competitions. The steroids were not without their side effects and the gang made a profit from this too: trafficking and illegally trading pharma-

ceutical substances to mitigate the side effects of the anabolic steroids.

One of the arrested individuals played an important role in importing the anabolic substances and raw material from China and France to produce illegal steroids, which were then smuggled by the other members of the network. The investigations revealed that this criminal gang not only were involved in illegal activities in Greece but also in Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany and the United Kingdom as well as Canada, China, India, Turkey and the USA. The gang used courier companies to traffic the illegal anabolic steroids and abused financial institutions to take payments in cryptocurrencies.

EUROPOL DEPLOYS A MOBILE OFFICE FOR ON-THE-SPOT SUPPORT

On the day of the arrests, investigators of the Financial Police Division of Hellenic Police, the French National Gendarmerie - OCLAESP, French Customs and experts from the Intellectual Property Crime Coordinated Coalition (IPC3) at Europol were deployed for on-the-spot support

with a mobile office. The police officers seized up to 500 000 pieces of anabolic substances and other illegal medicines for erectile dysfunction, alongside raw material for the production of the anabolic substances, packaging, over €10 500 in cash, 16 mobile phones, 6 computers and various digital files and documents.



Europol Liaison Bureau Office

Europol's Intellectual Property Crime – AP COPY supported this investigation since the beginning by providing analytical support and organizing several operational meetings at the Europol's headquarters in The Hague.



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EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Ruling condemns Lithuania for failing to act on online hate speech

In 2015, two Lithuanian young men, Pijus Beizaras and Mangirdas Levickas turned to a non-governmental organisation, the National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights Association, of which they are both members, asking it to complain to the prosecuting authorities and to request that they initiate criminal proceedings for incitement to hatred and violence against homosexuals.

In December 2014 Mr Beizaras had posted a photograph of them kissing, on his Facebook page. The photograph went “viral”, receiving hundreds of comments in Lithuania. The comments mostly included calls for the two men to be “castrated”, “killed”, “exterminated” and “burned” because of their homosexuality.

However, both the prosecuting authorities and the courts refused to launch a pre-trial investigation for incitement to hatred and violence against homosexuals, finding that the couple’s behaviour had been provocative and that the comments, although “unethical”, did not merit prosecution.

The domestic courts then fully endorsed the prosecutor’s

stance in a final ruling of February 2015, adding that the young men’s behaviour had been “eccentric” and deliberately provocative

However, such a discriminatory attitude had meant that they had not been protected, as was their right under the criminal law, from undisguised calls for an attack on their physical and mental integrity.

APPLICATION BEFORE THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The plaintiffs then applied to the ECHR which went on to examine the alleged failure of Lithuanian authorities to adequately investigate incitement to hatred and violence against LGBT people in general and against the applicants in particular.

In July 2017, the Fourth Section of the European Court of Human Rights communicated the case of *Beizaras and Levickas v Lithuania*.

The Court found it clear that the comments on Mr Beizaras' Facebook page had affected the applicants' psychological well-being and dignity, bringing the case within the scope of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and therefore Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination). It also argued that the Lithuanian authorities, by downgrading the danger of homophobic comments and threats, had at the very least tolerated them.

Moreover, reports by international bodies, including the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), confirmed that there was growing intolerance towards sexual minorities in Lithuania and that the authorities lacked a comprehensive

strategic approach to tackle racist and homophobic hate speech.

FINAL JUDGMENT

The Court found that the hate comments had been inspired by a bigoted attitude towards the homosexual community in general and that the same discriminatory state of mind had been at the core of the authorities' failure to comply with their duty to investigate in an effective manner whether those comments had constituted incitement to hatred and violence.

The Court held that Lithuania was to pay each applicant 5,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 5,000 in respect of costs and expenses.



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Pijus Beizaras and Mangirdas Levickas



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Pijus Beizaras and Mangirdas Levickas



GERMAN AEROSPACE

Germany invests 3.3 billion euro in European space exploration and becomes ESA's largest contributor

- Three years after the last ESA Council Meeting at Ministerial Level, held in Lucerne, Switzerland, government representatives from the 22 Member States met in Seville, Spain, and committed a total of almost 14.4 billion euro for space programmes over the next few years.
- Germany is contributing 3.3 billion euro to ESA programmes focusing on Earth observation, telecommunications, technological advancement and commercialisation / NewSpace.
- At 22.9 percent, Germany is now ESA's largest contributor, followed by France (18.5 percent, 2.66 billion euro), Italy (15.9 percent, 2.28 billion euro) and the United Kingdom (11.5 percent, 1.65 billion euro).
- The ESA Council Meeting at Ministerial Level is the highest political decision-making body, and it defines the content and financial framework for ESA's space programmes every two to three years.

The German delegation at the European Space Agency (ESA) Council Meeting at Ministerial Level, 'Space19+', was headed by the Federal Government Coordinator of German Aerospace Policy, Thomas Jarzombek, who is a member of the Federal Parliament. He was accompanied and supported by representatives from the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft

und Energie; BMWi) and the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (Bundesministerium für Verkehr und digitale Infrastruktur; BMVI). Walther Pelzer, German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt; DLR) Executive Board member responsible for the Space Administration, also participated in the negotiations. Together with his team from the Space Administration in Bonn, Pelzer pre-

pared working-level German position papers for the meeting in consultation with Federal Government officials.

At the end of the conference, Thomas Jarzombek stated that: "After two days of intensive negotiations, Germany has committed a total of 3.3 billion euro for European space programmes over the next three to five years. In setting out our priorities, we have shown that we are a reliable partner for ESA. To achieve our goal of strengthening

small and medium-sized German space companies, we have doubled our funding for the relevant programmes. To address the challenges of climate change, Germany has increased its investment in Earth observation to 720 million euro. We have also succeeded in enabling the European lunar mission with a high level of commitment – 55 million euro.”



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Thomas Jarzombek Federal Government Coordinator of German Aerospace Policy, Thomas Jarzombek in conversation with the press

At ‘Space 19+’, a total of 14.4 billion euro were committed. At 22.9 percent, Germany is now ESA’s largest contributor, ahead of France. Specifically, Germany has committed approximately one billion euro to the ESA mandatory programmes. In addition to the general budget, these include the science programme and the European Spaceport in French Guiana. Approximately 2.3 billion euro of the German contribution will go towards what are referred to as the optional programmes: ~720 million euro for Earth observation, ~330 million euro for telecommunications, ~160 million euro for technology programmes, 84 million euro for space situational awareness and security, ~490 million euro for space transport and operations, and ~550 million euro for human spaceflight, microgravity research and exploration.

THE GERMAN FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS IN DETAIL

Launch systems

From the end of 2020, Ariane 6 will be the new European launcher for carrying payloads into space, and Germany will contribute ~23 percent of the total development costs. The industrial prime contractors are ArianeGroup, with sites in Germany at Bremen and Ottobrunn, and MT Aerospace in Augsburg and Bremen. Germany is contributing a

total of ~90 million euro to the further development of Ariane 6, including the preparation of the future upper stage. Germany is investing ~230 million euro in the optional Launchers Exploitation and Accompaniment (LEAP) programme and will be investing ~95 million euro for the operation and modernisation of the European Spaceport in French Guiana up until the end of 2024.



Ariane 6

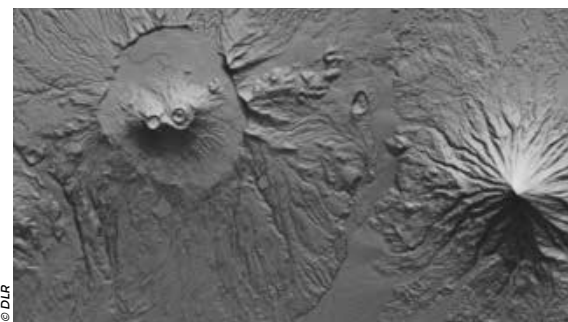
Germany is participating in the Future Launchers Preparatory Programme (FLPP) with ~137 million euro. The focus will be on the development of a cost-effective lightweight upper stage (for example, constructed using carbon-fibre reinforced composite materials), improving the performance of existing and new engines (Vulcain NEO, Vinci Evolution) and the implementation of new processes and methods (for example, additive manufacturing). Under the name ‘Commercial Space Transportation Services and Support’ (CSTS), ESA is taking forward a new optional programme in the context of NewSpace. Germany is contributing ~28 million euro to the ‘Commercial Space Transportation Services’ element, which broadly supports industry in the development of new space transport services, particularly in the field of microlauncher technology.

Science

The Science Programme makes a significant contribution to the development and maintenance of Europe’s space infrastructure. It finances research satellites and their launch and operation. The scientific instru-

ments are developed by the Member States themselves. By 2035, 11 new missions will have been launched to explore and analyse the Solar System and the Universe at large. With a budget contribution of 20.7 percent of the total, Germany is the largest contributor to this programme, committing ~578 million euro over five years. Large and medium-sized missions

with significant German participation are: Solar Orbiter (solar research, scheduled launch: 5 February 2020), JUICE (Jupiter mission, scheduled launch: 2022), EUCLID (dark energy/dark matter, planned launch: 2022), PLATO (exoplanet mission: 2026), ATHENA (X-ray telescope mission: 2031) and LISA (gravitational wave observatory: 2034).



Elevation models of the volcanoes on the Russian Kamchatka Peninsula

Earth observation for climate protection and collaborative development

Germany is a world leader in Earth observation – both in scientific and technological terms, and in the use and processing of data for the analysis of the Earth system. With ~520 million euro (30 percent of the budget), Germany will retain its leading role

in the currently operational Copernicus European Earth observation programme. This will involve the further development and expansion of the system to include new satellites (Sentinels 7-12) and services for climate monitoring and climate protection, agriculture, mobility, security and disaster prevention. German expertise could also be incorporated into the planned Copernicus hyperspectral mission. In addition, Germany is contributing ~170 million euro (~26 percent) to the 'FutureEO' scientific programme. Ten million (out of 50 million euro) has been allocated to the new 'Global Development Assistance' (GDA) programme. 'InCubed+' is aimed at short-duration commercial Earth observation activities with private sector backing – Germany is contributing 15 million euro. In addition, Germany is supporting a small Arctic satellite mission (Demonstrator, NewSpace approach) to improve short- and medium-term weather forecasts in the Arctic region with 7.5 million euro.

Telecommunications

In telecommunications (ARTES programmes), the aim is to support innovative technologies and products for the global commercial market. The main focus is on the Core Competitiveness (CC) programme, optical communications (ScyLight), commercial applications (Business Applications and Space Solutions; BASS), Secure Satcom for Safety and Security (4S) and the Partnership Programme.

With a financial contribution of 80 million euro for ScyLight and 60 million euro for 4S, Germany has secured a leading role. In the CC Programme, Germany increased its contribution to 67 million euro and doubled its BASS contribution to 37 million euro. Germany contributed 65 million euro to the Partnership Programme, including Electra with an in-orbit demonstration, and 13 million euro to the framework programme for the sup-

to integrate satellite technology and applications into the new 5G mobile networks and above all to continue technological and political leadership in optical laser communication," says Walther Pelzer. One example is the planned optical communication network Hydron, which is designed to provide fast connections for users with high data transfer requirements, supplementing and complementing the terrestrial fibre optic network.



Didymos asteroid system

port of satellites needed for the 5G mobile communications networks. "Germany is very well positioned in the satellite telecommunications sector. Our aim is to increase the competitiveness of components and support system capabilities with a focus on secure communications – the keyword here is quantum encryption –

Space security

Space weather, observations of near-Earth objects and space debris are as relevant to science as they are to society. Germany is therefore contributing some 12 million euro to the core element of this programme. In addition, Germany will provide 60 million euro for the Hera mission and assume responsibility for system management. Together with NASA's Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) mission, Hera will investigate how asteroids can be diverted from their trajectory where there is a risk of collision with Earth. HERA's target is the double asteroid Didymos / Didymoon. The craft will perform observations and analyses in connection with the impact of the NASA DART spacecraft on the smaller asteroid, Didymoon, planned for September 2022. The findings will be used for fundamental research as well as for the preparation of possible defence missions against asteroids. Germany is also contributing ~12 million euro to a mission for the active removal of space debris (ADRIOS).



The optical ground station in Oberpfaffenhofen



© DLR

DLR Columbus Control Center

Technology development

German participation in the General Support Technology Programme (GSTP) aims to maintain, expand and strengthen the industrial competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly start-ups. New priorities include the digitalisation of production cycles, technologies for the sustainable use of space, Industry 4.0 compatible production methods, robotics and modern sensor technologies, AI-supported applications on satellites, and the development and use of quantum technologies. Germany has increased its contribution by a factor of 2.5 to 160 million euro. The programme aims to close existing gaps in technological development and focuses on the maturation of core technologies and components for future missions.

E3P – the European Exploration Envelope Programme

All robotic and astronautic exploration activities will be brought together under the ‘European Exploration Envelope Programme’ (E3P). This combines the European science and technology programme for the use of near-Earth orbits for space research with the exploration of the Moon and Mars. Sub-programmes will be the operation of the ISS and its utilisation (German share: 416 million euro). As the principal constructor and funder of the European Service Modules (ESM 1-4), the supply component of the US Orion spacecraft, Germany is an indispensable part of NASA’s Artemis lunar programme. This is supported by a strong role for SMEs, which Germany is aiming for through its subscription of 25 million

euro for European gateway activities. In addition, Germany will play a leading role in the sustainable robotic exploration of the Moon with a contribution of 55 million euro. Germany is also contributing 20 million euro to the Exploration Preparation, Research and Technology (ExPeRT) programme, which will conduct mission studies and technology development for other exploration topics, including a commercial approach. For the consolidation of ExoMars (launch: July 2020) and selected technology elements of the ‘Mars Sample Return’ mission being planned in cooperation with NASA, Germany is providing ~37 million euro.

THE GERMAN AEROSPACE CENTER

The German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt; DLR) is the national aeronautics and space research centre of the Federal Republic of Germany. Its extensive research and development work in aeronautics, space, energy, transport, security and digitalisation is integrated into national and international cooperative ventures. DLR is also responsible for the planning and implementation of Germany’s space activities on behalf of the federal government. DLR is also the umbrella organisation for one of Germany’s largest project management agencies.

DLR’s mission comprises the exploration of Earth and the Solar System

and research for protecting the environment. This includes the development of environment-friendly technologies for energy supply and future mobility, as well as for communications and security. DLR’s research portfolio ranges from fundamental research to the development of products for tomorrow. In this way, DLR contributes the scientific and technical expertise that it has acquired to the enhancement of Germany as a location for industry and technology. DLR operates major research facilities for its own projects and as a service for clients and partners. It also fosters the development of the next generation of researchers, provides expert advisory services to government and is a driving force in the regions where its facilities are located.



© DLR

Cleaning solar panels



© ETW & IAC Universität Stuttgart

Aircraft model in the Transonic Wind Tunnel



© Wikimedia

Polish Air Force Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-29A Fulcrum

NATO

Poland takes charge of NATO high readiness force

On January 1, the Polish army took charge of NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) placing thousands of soldiers on standby and ready to deploy within days. Poland takes over from Germany, which provided the core of the VJTF's land forces in 2019.

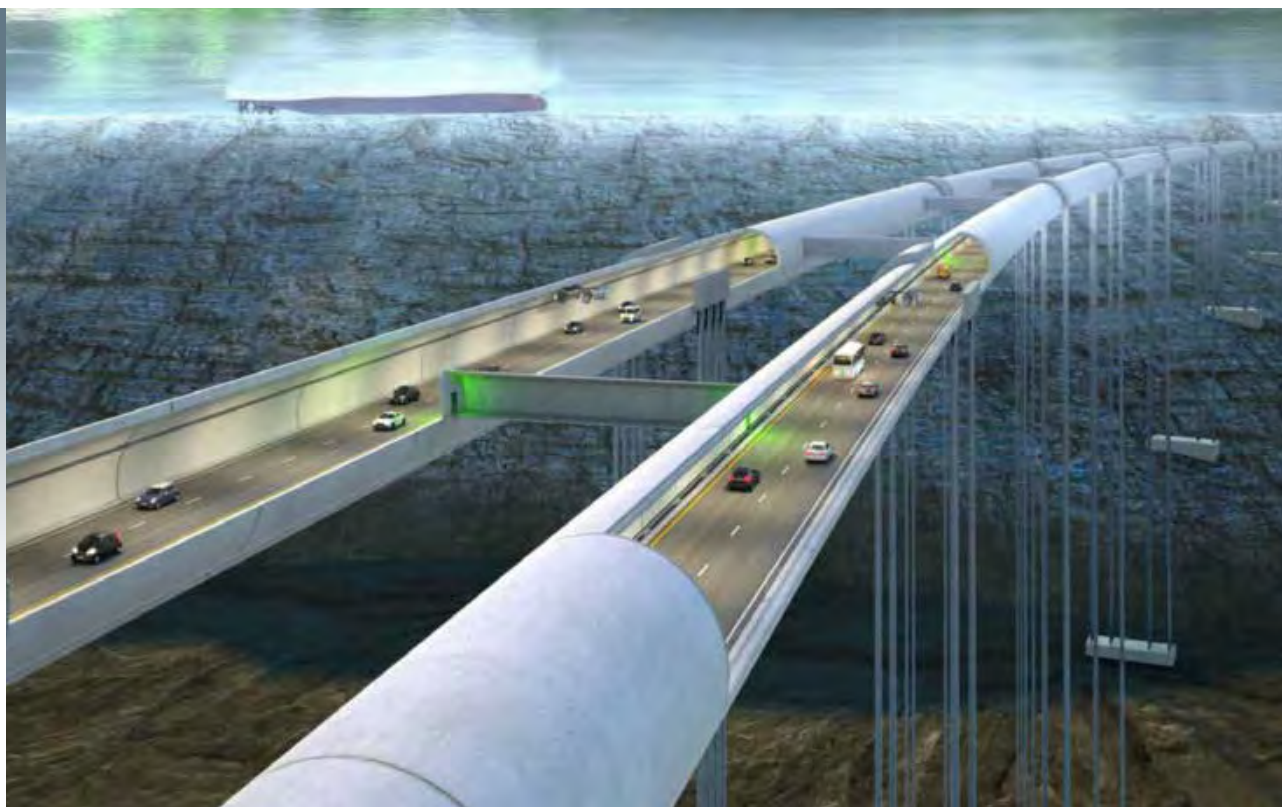
“I thank Poland for leading NATO’s high readiness forces this year”, said NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, *“The Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, our Spearhead Force, is a substantial contribution to our collective defence and a strong display of Poland’s capabilities. This force is available to move immediately to defend any Ally against any threat. At a time of unprecedented security challenges, it is more important than ever”*, the Secretary General added.

The core of the VJTF in 2020 will be Poland’s 21st Podhale Rifles Brigade, supported by units from

Poland’s 12th Mechanized Division, the 3rd Transport Aviation Wing, Military Police, as well as logistics experts and Counter-Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (C-CBRN) specialists. Around 6,000 soldiers will serve on the Spearhead Force, including around 3,000 from Poland. Units from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Slovakia, Turkey and the United Kingdom will also serve on the force. The United States stands ready to support the VJTF with airpower and other combat support.

The VJTF is made up of land, air,

maritime and special forces, and is part of the Alliance’s 40,000-strong NATO Response Force. Exercise Trident Jupiter 19, which took place in November 2019, certified the forces and commands for the 2020 NATO Response Force. NATO’s Joint Force Command in Brunssum has command of the NRF in 2020. NATO heads of state and government agreed to create the VJTF at the Wales Summit in 2014 in response to a changed security environment, including Russia’s illegal annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea and turmoil in the Middle East. Turkey will lead the VJTF’s land forces in 2021.



A ROAD TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Norway's ambitious west coast road scheme

By any definition, Norway's plan to develop a continuous Coastal Highway between Kristiansand in the south and Trondheim in the north is a massive undertaking. The route of the present E39 road is 1,100 kilometres long, and it currently uses seven different ferry connections. What the Stortinget - Norway's parliament - has decided is to cut the current 21-hour journey time substantially. The current road is about as far from being an autobahn as it's possible to be, running through several towns and cities, including Stavanger, Bergen, Ålesund and Molde. The goal is to cut journey time by half and to shave 50 kilometres off the distance. Norway's famous historical kings, Harald Fairhair and Harald Hardrada, would have been astounded.



Bjorn Grimsrud, Director General,
Norwegian Public Roads Administration

The plans to develop the route are part of the National Transport Plan for 2018-2029 - such an enormous project takes time - and should bring the people and businesses of Norway's rugged west coast closer together and closer to

the centres of manufacture, commerce and social infrastructure of the rest of the country. It's hoped the development will have a very positive impact on businesses, industries and the workforce. In order to achieve that, the route will replace ferries with bridges and tunnels. The first such project is at Rogfast, with the construction of a 26.7-kilometre subsea road tunnel - longest and deepest sub-sea road tunnel in the world - that will obviate the need for a ferry. It is a massive project, the tunnel reaching a depth of 392 metres, and it's cost-limited to NOK 16.8-billion (€1.7-billion). Work began in December 2017 and is scheduled for completion in 2025-2026. It should cut the journey time between Stavanger and Bergen by around 40 minutes. It's hoped it will also facilitate an expansion in both the housing and labour markets in the area. Meanwhile, a new

bridge that crosses the Hardangerfjord, south of Bergen, opened in 2013 and is already making journeys between Odda and Voss easier and faster, as well as between Bergen and Hardanger. It means journeying without the need for ferries over a popular and much-admired fjord; tourist coaches almost invariably stop near it to allow holiday-makers to take photographs. It is a photogenic bridge in a highly photogenic landscape and it has replaced the ferry on highway 7/13 between Bruravik and Brimnes. Meanwhile a new main road is to be built between Os and Bergen, starting in the south at Svegatjørn and continuing north to Rådal in Bergen. The overall project includes a new county road from the junction with the Endelausmarka to Lysekloster road.

Ja, vi elsker dette landet,
Yes, we love this country,

Som det stiger frem,
As it rises forth,

Furet, værbit over vannet,
Rugged, storm-scarred over the ocean,

Med de tusen hjem,
With her thousand homes,

Elsker, elsker det og tenker
Love her, in our hearts recalling,

På vår far og mor,
Those who gave us birth,

Og den saganatt som senker,
And old tales, which night recalling,

Drømmer på vår jord.
Brings as dreams to earth.



Artist's conception of underwater tunnel

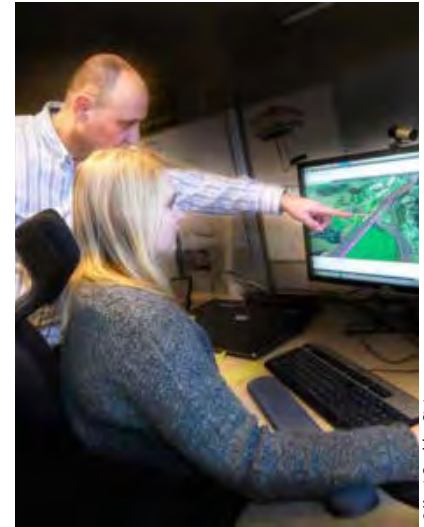
PATRIOTISM

Fjords, of course, are very picturesque, and draw a great many visitors. However, as any quick glance at a map of Norway would show, they make overland travel along the country's west coast time-consuming and, for those in a hurry, tedious. They are the reason that Norway's Norse warriors became such skilled and sometimes dangerous seafarers, feared throughout Europe, even though they were principally traders. They sailed quickly and with skill; if they hadn't been able to their world would have shrunk to just their own village or township. Learning how to navigate the fjords opened up the world to them. The ruggedness of that coastline is even celebrated in Norway's national anthem, "Ja, vi elsker dette landet" (Yes, we love this country):

The words come from a poem written by the great Norwegian Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson in the 1860s, and my English version here is supposedly an 'artistic' translation. It makes more sense in English that way, however, than does the literal translation. Bjørnson is generally regarded as one of Norway's four greatest-ever poets, the others being Henrik Ibsen, Jonas Lie and Alexander Kielland.

Needless to say, with so many fjords, great and small, to negotiate, developing the E39 is a long-term goal, engaging a lot of new technology to overcome the distance and the great many fjords. The Stortinget has organised research into technological solutions but also it has instigated detailed studies of the environmental aspects of construction, operation and maintenance. Norway is keen for the various parts of the construction to produce their own

energy if possible, as well as providing the means for electric vehicles to recharge their batteries. The project has also been designed to use a new type of contract for those working on the project to make the implementation effective and, in the Stortinget's words, to "exploit available competences".



© Knut Opsetide - Statens vegvesen

ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGE

In organisational terms, such a huge project would seem to present the scope for a very complicated administration, but Norway has streamlined that, too. A steering committee has been set up, chaired by the Director-General of the Norwegian Public Roads Administration. Also on the committee are the Director of Construction, the Director of Technology and Development and Director of Transport and Society, alongside the Head of the Director General's Staff and one more staff member in the Directorate of Public Roads. Planning and building of the various projects along the E39 is being managed by the regions through which the road passes. There is careful oversight, too, of such a long-running project, through a reference group, with the Norwegian Public Road Administration (NPRA) holding meetings once or twice each year with the County Mayors of Trøndelag, Agder and Vestland. This is seen as an information channel and an opportunity for local politicians to report to the NPRA and make observations and recommendations.



Tore Askeland will be the new program manager for the Coastal Highway Route E39. Kjersti Dunham will be working in Norconsult

Project manager Tore Askeland is in overall charge of seven sub-projects: Strategies; Implementation, Planning and Construction; Social Impact; Fjord Crossings; Risk Management and Technology Qualification; Sustainable Infrastructure; and Implementation Strategies and Contract Types. With a PhD in Risk Management and a Masters in Civil Engineering Technology, both from Stavanger University, he seems a sensible choice. He also has leadership experience with the Norwegian military. He will need it: the Coastal Highway Route E39 project is the largest infrastructure project in modern Norwegian history and could well be the largest ongoing road project in the world. It is such a huge project that the completion date may be as late as 2050. It pays to look ahead but in a realistic way. The great Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen wrote in *The Master Builder*: “Castles in the air - they are so easy to take refuge in. And easy to build, too.” Ibsen would have approved of the E39 project: it’s certainly not just a castle in the air.

Making the E39 a quicker, easier road to get along isn’t just a way of speeding things up. With the harsh weather conditions Norway often faces, the current route is unpredictable, too. Too often up until now the road and those linking to it have been closed and the ferries cancelled because of snow, strong winds or high waves. It’s seen as vital in a modern world for the E39 to be accessible every day of the year and at every hour of the day, with fixed links between islands and the mainland. When completed, it should make life much more comfortable, convenient and predictable for the

one third or so of Norway’s 5.3-million population who live along the western coast. It should also help to attract additional tourists and make it far easier to transport freight, an important consideration when up to 60% of Norway’s export goods are produced on the west coast. The planners believe that, when completed, the improved route may change patterns of habitation as what are currently hard-to-reach areas without easy access to hospitals and other vital infrastructure become more accessible. After all, the E39 continues to Denmark, so it is the country’s essential lifeline with southern Europe, too. The cost - NOK 340-billion (more than €34-billion) - is well justified.

New technology is being considered for the project as ferries give way to bridges and tunnels. One idea being examined is the use of what is called a “Submerged Floating Tube Bridge (SFTB)” for some of the deepest and longest fjords which are especially vulnerable to extreme weather conditions, and where suspension bridges or floating bridges would be difficult to build. When a fjord is more than a few hundred metres deep or wider than two or three kilometres, existing engineering solutions won’t work. In these cases, the seabed would be too deep for traditional rock-bored tunnels because the approach roads would take up too much land.

Floating bridges and other types resting on tension leg platforms can be

suitable for deep crossings but they are also worryingly susceptible to harsh weather, such as strong waves and currents. SFTBs get around these problems by reducing the main sea load: the tube would be placed under the water, sufficiently deep to avoid being a hazard to water-borne traffic - usually around 20 to 50 metres - but not so deep that it creates problems with water pressure. Vertical stability would be provided by anchoring the tube to the seabed or to floating pontoons. Tests are being carried out on the system, including on what sort of driver experience they provide, as well ensuring safety in the event of a fire or explosion. There is always the risk of a truck carrying explosive materials catching fire in a tunnel and an SFTB would be a world first: it’s very new technology, although the idea was first put forward in 1886 by the British naval architect, Sir James Edward Reed. Norwegian engineers have been studying the idea since 1923, and several other countries are now considering such structures because of difficulties with more traditional types of construction. The Norwegian Public Road Administration is in talks with some of them with a view more to collaboration than competition, although some of those involved with the E39 have admitted it would be a bit of a coup to be the first to build one. Some of the fjords currently being studied for the possible use of SFTBs are among the longest and deepest in Norway.



Graphic Crossing Sognefjorden



© Courtesy Norwegian Public Roads Administration, Vianova PT A/S and Baezeni Co., Ltd

A floating suspension bridge that has been proposed to cross Norway's Bjornafjord

This massive construction undertaking involves a number of research projects that could be very useful for other countries in different parts of the world. They include how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, wind measurements, electric infrastructure that reduces the use of fuels (Norway is the country with the world's highest rate of electric vehicle usage), intelligent transport systems, the use of solar technology to ensure ice-free road surfaces in winter, and protection against both corrosion and the micro-biological degradation of concrete, to name but a few. Three of the largest

and most prestigious universities in the Nordic region are involved: the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, the University of Stavanger and Chalmers University of Technology. Altogether, some fifty PhD candidates are engaged in solving the various engineering challenges that the upgrading of the E39 presents.

The Stortinget's aim is to have the E39 as a continuous Coastal Highway: no ferries, no interruptions, just one continuous road between the two ends, unaffected by having to get across the frequent inlets. Take a look at a map of Norway and see how rugged that west

coast is with over a thousand fjords. If you count the Svalbard Islands, the number climbs to around 1,190. And in addition to sorting out the fjord problem with innovative bridges and tunnels, urban roads along the route are being improved, too. It's all change in Norway: today's Norwegians will soon be able to get about their country in ways their Norse ancestors could not have dreamed of and the revamped E39 could find itself attracting tourists in much the same way as America's Route 66.

Anthony James

The E39 Coastal Highway Route Challenging fjord crossings

Fjord	Width (km)	Depth (m)
Halsafjorden	2	5-600
Julsundet	1.6	5-600
Romsdalsfjorden ★	16 km tunnel	330
Sulafjorden	3.8	500
Vartdalsfjorden	2.1	600
Nordfjorden	1.4	500
Sognefjorden	3.7	1250
Bjornafjorden	5	550
Langenuen	1.3	500
Boknafjorden ★	27 km tunnel	390





CALA DEL FORTE

Monaco Ports expands to Ventimiglia, Italy

Founded in 2002 by the city-state of Monaco, Monaco Ports (SEPM), manages the ports of the Principality (Hercule and Fontvieille) as well as the new floating breakwater.

In 2016, in response to the ever-increasing demand for yacht berths and saturation in the ports of the Principality, *Monaco Ports* decided to create *SMIP* (Société Monégasque Internationale Portuaire) and purchased the nearby port of Cala del Forte in Ventimiglia.

The project was born from a desire to expand the company, but also aimed to push cross-border collaboration, create new jobs and demonstrate the company's philosophy of sustainable port management, ecological responsibility, hospitality, service and security.

Cala del Forte, an exquisite, new state-of-the-art marina located in Ventimiglia, Italy is only 15 to 20 minutes from



H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco made a private visit to Cala del Forte, Ventimiglia's new, soon to be completed, Monaco Ports marina. The Prince, accompanied by his aide-de-camp and government, was welcomed by Aleco Keusseoglou, executive president of Monaco Ports and of Cala del Forte, alongside his management

the Principality of Monaco (7,9 nautical miles). Protected naturally from the elements with a highly controlled access from the land, it is a perfect sister marina to the neighbouring Port Hercule and Port of Fontvieille.

Cala del Forte will be among the most advanced, best-equipped and secure ports on the Mediterranean. It currently holds the title of the longest concession in the Mediterranean with a duration spanning until 2094.

Regular maritime transfers will allow owners and their guests swift and exclusive access to the Principality.

- Only 7.9 nautical miles from Monaco
- Operated entirely by Ports of Monaco
- 178 Berths from 6,5m up to 70+ meters
- Storage facilities adjacent to the berths
- 24/7 mooring assistance by professionally staff
- 24/7 safety and security
- Electric golf cart transportation and delivery service
- Service delivered to the Monaco standard
- Light-Service shipyard for yachts up to 30m
- 39 shops
- 577 parking auto
- 15,000 m² of promenades and gardens
- Longest concession in the Mediterranean (until 2094)
- Direct connection to the historical town of Ventimiglia Alta via cable car



Gian Battista Borea d'Olmo, Director General, Monaco Ports



From left to right: Jordan Waugh, Sales Director of Cala del Forte; Olivier Imperti, CFO of Ports of Monaco; Daniel Realini, Deputy General Manager of Ports of Monaco; Gian Battista Borea d'Olmo, General Manager of Ports of Monaco and CEO of Cala del Forte; Aleco Keuseoglu, executive chairman of Ports of Monaco and Cala del Forte; Max Procopio, press officer of Cala del Forte; Marco Cornacchia harbourmaster of Cala del Forte

During the last Monaco Yacht Show, Monaco Ports' Director General, **Gian Battista Borea d'Olmo** provided an update concerning the latest developments in Cala del Forte - Ventimiglia, the Monaco-based company's newest marina project: *"Construction in Cala del Forte continues in line with our objective as declared on multiple occasions: the maritime works shall be finished in the 4th quarter of this year. This summer, our teams worked practically non-stop, taking only four days off. The results achieved are notable. Currently, the control tower is being constructed, and this landmark edifice is a reference point for everyone in the marina.*

Looking back at past photographs it is easy to appreciate the constant progress we have made, and just how much we have already achieved with this project. The docks are paved, the bollards are in place and the electric connection boxes are installed, ready for future yachts.

The shops are close to completion: for the spaces in the eastern area, only interior finishing must be concluded. The lower level of our massive underground parking area is also approaching completion. I am certain that by the second quarter of 2020, it shall be visible to all why Cala del Forte is a reference for the entire coast, and our marina will act as a key point of connection between Italy, France and Monaco."

MARITIME WORKS

- Construction of the breakwater (1) and outer walls (2) has been fully completed since December 2018. The major storm that hit the Ligurian coast in October 2019 tested the strength of our infrastructure and we are happy to report that Cala del Forte suffered no damage whatsoever. To date installation of the piping,

cablings and technical infrastructure has been completed on the breakwater and the outer walls

- Construction of the Central Jetty (Molo d'Onore) (3), outer jetty (4) and "Pontile B" (5) is now complete. All of the bollards are on site and are currently being installed. The preparation of the underwater mooring infrastructure is currently underway.
- The central port office - Harbor-master office - Central Jetty (3) - is currently under construction and the foundation has been completed. Work shall be completed in 4th Quarter 2019.
- Shipyard: the piers and lifting basin have been completed (6) ready to accommodate the travel-lift capable of lifting yachts up to 30 meters. The 2,700 m² shipyard dock area is currently under construction.
- The fuel distribution dock (7) has been completed and four tanks (with a total of 150.000 liters of fuel capacity) have been installed inside bunker/isolation tanks;
- Dredging and leveling (8) to the final depth of the marina is underway.

To date 82% of the maritime works have been completed*.

(*on February 8th 2019, the Italian authorities issued full permission and documentation for Cala del Forte to be completed with an optimized mooring plan called 'Variante 3').

ON LAND WORKS

- The elements that shall constitute the shops (9) as well as the East underground parking area

are currently in an advanced status of construction (95%). The West shops and parking area (10) is currently under construction (25%). Work on these elements is scheduled to be completed in the 4th Quarter of 2019.

- **Slope consolidation:** Static testing of the structural works of the slope (11) have been carried out successfully. 100% of the slope consolidation is now completed.

To date, the 28% of the on-land works have been completed*

(*On February 8th 2019, the Italian authorities issued full permission and documentation for Cala del Forte to be completed with an optimized mooring plan called 'Variante 3').

All structural and civil works have been contracted and works relating to architectural and landscaping design have been tendered. Urban works in "lungomare Marconi" are well underway.



© caladelforte-ventimiglia.it

December 2016



© caladelforte-ventimiglia.it

December 2019

WOODEN BUILDING

*A 10 floors glued-laminated timber tower
to be built in Monaco!*



ABOUT UPBRELLA

Upbrella Construction markets the Upbrella patented high-rise construction system worldwide. The Upbrella construction system accelerates project deliveries, improves work quality, reduces site nuisance and offers the safest and most ergonomic work site environment in the industry.

Upbrella is an advantageous alternative to conventional methods. It offers the installation of the roof as soon as possible followed by a lift system featuring modern and safe handling tools. The work environment created benefits from all of the advantages of industrial production



Upbrella Construction will provide the patented Upbrella construction system for the construction of a glued-laminated timber residential building in Monaco.

The project's 10 floors will provide for 25 apartments to be built on a 400 m² lot on Boulevard d'Italie and is to be certified to the sustainable building norm BD2M (*Bâtiments Durables Méditerranéens de Monaco*).

The structure of the dwellings, entirely composed of timber including the inner core, is formed of an exoskeleton and stanchions / beams all sourced from local, specialist, sustainable timber material.

The development stands upon concrete foundations supporting an open con-

course, the entrance to the dwellings, a drop off point and a bike shelter, the building is crowned by an open air space set up by "Terre de Monaco" as an urban vegetable garden.

The Principality's Government ordered this project to increase the availability of dwellings in Monaco. As such the Carmelha tower will only be available to permanent residents of the Principality.

Upbrella was selected for its ability to significantly reduce site nuisances, such as noise and dust, and for providing the safest and most ergonomic sheltered environment in the industry. Upbrella's shelter protects from weather events and helps control the work site temperature and humidity to ensure the best conditions for the assembly of the glued-laminated components.

Site Quartier de La Rousse, Monaco (98)

Client Gouvernement Princier Principauté de Monaco

Architects studio BELLECOUR architectes, Gabriel Viora

Engineers Egis, Elioth

Program Construction of a 47 meters residential tower in a seismic zone, widespread use of timber in the structure and the inner core, Energy hub with reversible fuel cells

BIM Collaboration project from conception to delivery, level 3

Surface area 4130 sqm

Cost € 25 million

Delivery 2022

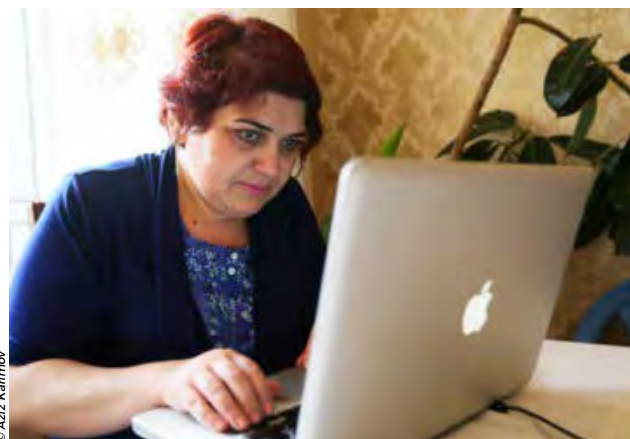
KHADIJA ISMAYILOVA

Index on Censorship, Reporters Without Borders UK and Transparency International UK urge Azerbaijan to lift journalist's travel ban

Azerbaijan authorities should lift a travel ban against award-winning investigative journalist Khadija Ismayilova, UK-based rights groups urged on 15 January.

Ismayilova was detained in December 2014 and sentenced in September 2015 to seven-and-a-half years in prison on trumped-up charges. She was conditionally released in May 2016, but three and a half years later, still remains subject to a travel ban and has been unable to leave the country despite numerous applications to do so.

Lawyers will be seeking permission for Ismayilova to travel to the UK to give evidence in the trial of Paul Radu, a Romanian journalist who is co-founder and executive director of investigative reporting group OCCRP (the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project). Radu is being sued for defamation in London by Azerbaijani MP, Javanshir Feyziyev, over two articles in OCCRP's award-winning Azerbaijan Laundromat series about money-laundering out of Azerbaijan.



© Aziz Kairimov

Khadija Ismayilova

Ismayilova, OCCRP's lead reporter in Azerbaijan, is a key witness in the case.

"Azerbaijan is unjustly and unfairly preventing Khadija Ismayilova from travelling internationally as a means to punish her and stifle the spread of her reporting," said Index on Censorship chief executive Jodie Ginsberg. "Given the UK's stated commitment to speak out more publicly on threats to media freedom, we urge Britain to join our calls for Ms Ismayilova to be released from her travel ban."

As UN special rapporteur David Kaye wrote in 2017, travel bans "deny the spread of information about the state of repression and corruption" in countries and act as a form of censorship. In 2017, Ms Ismayilova was prevented from travelling to receive the Right Livelihood Award, the alternative Nobel Prize, for her reporting in Azerbaijan.

"This travel ban is one of many examples of the Azerbaijani authorities' longstanding persecution of Khadija Ismayilova for her courageous investigative reporting, and she is one of dozens of journalists and activists currently subjected to such measures in Azerbaijan. The ban should be immediately lifted, she should be acquitted of the bogus charges it stemmed from, and she should be allowed to travel to give testimony in this alarming case against another investigative journalist," said Rebecca Vincent, UK Bureau Director for Reporters



© Photo: ocrp

Paul Radu, during an online investigative journalism training course for Azerbaijani journalists, Baku, 13 September 2011

The case against Paul Radu will commence on 20 January.

"Thanks to reporting by Khadija Ismayilova and her colleagues, we know more about how money stolen from the people of Azerbaijan has found its way into luxury London property," said Daniel Bruce, Chief Executive of Transparency International UK. "Preventing her from giving evidence is a clear attempt to bully and silence those who dare expose the truth. As a defender of free speech and the rule of law, the UK Government should call for her freedom to travel to Britain to provide evidence in this important libel case."

Issued by Transparency International UK



Culturespaces / Nuit de Chine

Simulation

MONET, RENOIR... CHAGALL. JOURNEYS AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN

A not to miss exhibition at the Atelier des Lumières in Paris

Monet, Renoir, and Chagall: 'Journeys around the Mediterranean' presents visitors with an itinerary that spans the period between Impressionism and Modernism. After the exhibition devoted to Van Gogh, the new digital exhibition will highlight the link between artistic creativity and the Mediterranean shores, as the principal centres of the modernist movement. The exhibition will immerse visitors in the masterpieces of twenty artists, including Renoir, Monet, Pissarro, Matisse, Signac, Derain, Vlaminck, Dufy, and Chagall, amongst others.

These artists saw Van Gogh as a genius of painting, who, after departing from Paris, used pure colour as his principal means of expression. In the 1880s, the Mediterranean attracted many artists: abandoning Paris and the northern regions, they flocked to the southern shores, between Collioure and Saint-Tropez. It was at this point that they developed a new approach to the representation of light and colour.

All these artists had links with the Mediterranean, either through their origins, or via their stays in the Midi. The digital exhibition will show how their artistic personalities were brought to the fore by these seascapes and how pictorial modernism was invented.

In seven sequences lasting forty minutes, visitors will be taken from one artistic movement to another: from

Impressionism, with Monet and Renoir, to Pointillism with Signac and Cross, and Fauvism with Camion, Derain, Vlaminck, and Marquet ... and, of course, Matisse. The immersive exhibition will also retrace the fascination of Bonnard and Dufy for the Mediterranean, and eventually focus on one of the greatest colourists of modern art—Chagall. The unique style of each painter will be illustrated: Matisse's colours, Bonnard's depth,

Dufy's insouciance, and Chagall's modernism.

More than 500 works, which are now held in collections around the globe, will fill the Atelier des Lumières with their bright colours and highlight the variations in the works of these great artists on the Mediterranean shores, which inspired them to take their work to its finest expression.

This visual and musical creation by Gianfranco Iannuzzi, Massimiliano Siccardi, and Renato Gatto, produced by Culturespaces, will cover the floors and walls to a height of ten metres: bright and powerful colours will fill the entire space, the works will come to life, and emerge line by line, creating the illusion of a mirror of the sea and the dazzling sun.

At the same time, an immersive exhibition will echo this tribute to the Mediterranean. Specially created for the Atelier des Lumières, 'Yves Klein, l'infini bleu' ('Yves Klein: infinite blue') will highlight the work of the famous twentieth-century artist, who set out to turn his life into a work of art.

Brought up in Nice, Yves Klein loved the Mediterranean sky and was inspired by it to create his first work. He believed that 'painting is COLOUR' and he sought to individualise, free, and magnify colour in its purest form. With Yves Klein, colour took on a spiritual and metaphysical dimension. This ten-minute long work will immerse visitors in the plurality of the artist's works, going beyond his famous International Klein Blue

(IKB). Amongst other works, visitors will discover the body prints with his *Anthropometries*, and nature with his *Cosmogonies* and his *Planetary Reliefs*.

Thanks to a selection of ninety works and sixty archive images, 'Yves Klein: Infinite Blue' will entirely immerse visitors in the subject matter and his artistic sensibility, accompanied by Vivaldi's stirring and vibrant music and Thylacine's electronic rhythms.

**28 february 2020 -
3 january 2021**

ATELIER DES LUMIERES

**38, Rue Saint-Maur
75011 Paris**

**Saturdays until 10 p.m.
and on Sundays until 7 p.m.**

Raoul Dufy, The Baie Des Anges In Nice, Art Painting



André Derain, The Turning Road, L'Estaque



© Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

By Clara Bauman

“Something blue”

As is the case each year, we await the designation of the trendiest colour, as determined by the famous Pantone colour chart (*). The nominee for 2020 is called Classic Blue.

Some decoding and a guide for inspirational shopping.

Following the ultra luminous and energising Living Coral of 2019, it's time for sobriety with Classic Blue, which Pantone has defined as ‘enduring and timeless’. Even better : for those who embrace and contemplate it, its virtues bring, according to Pantone ‘a sense of peace and tranquility to the human spirit, offering refuge. Aiding concentration and bringing laser like clarity, Classic Blue re-centers our thoughts.’

As for us, we'll adopt it and sprinkle sobriety and elegance into our wardrobe.

Here's a demonstration :

What to wear with it

Combined with white, it creates that infallibly chic effect.

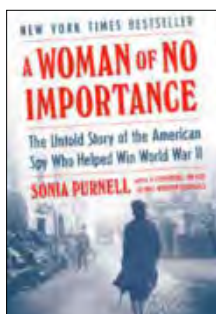
Different shades of blue for a graceful silhouette.

Combined with black for that daring, intense look.



(*) For over 20 years, Pantone's Colour of the Year has influenced product development and purchasing decisions in multiple industries, including fashion, home furnishings, and industrial design, as well as product packaging and graphic design.

BOOKS



A WOMAN OF NO IMPORTANCE

By *Sonia Purnell*

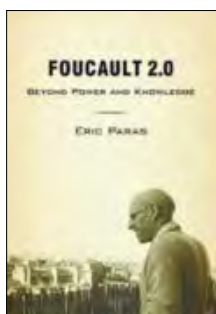
THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE AMERICAN SPY WHO HELPED WIN WORLD WAR II

Chosen as a BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR by NPR, the New York Public Library, the *Seattle Times*, the *Washington Independent Review of Books*, BookBrowse, the *Spectator*, and the *Times of London*

“Excellent... This book is as riveting as any thriller, and as hard to put down.” — *The New York Times Book Review*

“A compelling biography of a masterful spy, and a reminder of what can be done with a few brave people — and a little resistance.” — NPR

A never-before-told story of Virginia Hall, the American spy who changed the course of World War II, from the author of *Clementine*. In 1942, the Gestapo sent out an urgent transmission: “She is the most dangerous of all Allied spies. We must find and destroy her.” The target in their sights was Virginia Hall, a Baltimore socialite who talked her way into Special Operations Executive, the spy organization dubbed Winston Churchill’s “Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare.” She became the first Allied woman deployed behind enemy lines and—despite her prosthetic leg—helped to light the flame of the French Resistance, revolutionizing secret warfare as we know it. Virginia established vast spy networks throughout France, called weapons and explosives down from the skies, and became a linchpin for the Resistance. Even as her face covered wanted posters and a bounty was placed on her head, Virginia refused order after order to evacuate. She finally escaped through a death-defying hike over the Pyrenees into Spain, her cover blown. But she plunged back in, adamant that she had more lives to save, and led a victorious guerilla campaign, liberating swathes of France from the Nazis after D-Day. Based on new and extensive research, Sonia Purnell has for the first time uncovered the full secret life of Virginia Hall—an astounding and inspiring story of heroism, spy-craft, resistance, and personal triumph over shocking adversity. *A Woman of No Importance* is the breathtaking story of how one woman’s fierce persistence helped win the war.



WHO IS RUTH BADER GINSBURG?

By *Patricia Brennan Demuth and Who HQ*
Illustrated by *Jake Murray*

ABOUT WHO IS RUTH BADER GINSBURG?

A baton-twirling teenager who performed at school football games. The second woman appointed to the US Supreme Court. A tireless fighter for gender equality and civil rights. All of the above! Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg is famous for her stylish collars (called jabots) and her commanding dissents. This opera-loving New Yorker has always spoken her mind; as a young lawyer, RBG advocated for gender equality and women’s rights when few others did. She gained attention for the cases she won when arguing in front of the Supreme Court, before taking her place on the bench in 1993. Author Patricia Brennan Demuth answers all the questions about what makes RBG so notorious and irreplaceable.



FOUCAULT 2.0

By *Eric Paras*

BEYOND POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

A dramatically new interpretation of the development of the thought of Michel Foucault, one of the 20th century’s most influential thinkers. In this lucid and groundbreaking work, Eric Paras reveals that our understanding of the philosophy of Michel Foucault must be radically revised. Foucault’s critical

axes of power and knowledge -which purposefully eradicated the concept of free will- reappear as targets in his later work. Paras demonstrates the logic that led Foucault to move from a microphysics of power to an aesthetics of individual experience. He is the first to show a transformation that not only placed Foucault in opposition to the archaeological and genealogical positions for which he is renowned, but aligned him with some of his fiercest antagonists. *Foucault 2.0* draws on the full range of the philosopher’s writing and of the work of contemporaries who influenced, and sometimes vehemently opposed, his ideas. To fill the gaps in Foucault’s published writings that have so far limited our conception of the arc of his thought, Paras analyzes the largely untapped trove of lectures Foucault delivered to teeming Paris audiences as Professor of the College de France for more than a decade. At the same time, *Foucault 2.0* highlights the background against which Foucault carried out his most foundational work: the unrest of 1968, the prison reform movement of the early 1970s, and the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Carefully assembling the fragments of a thinker who remains but half-understood, Eric Paras has composed a seminal book, essential reading for novices and initiates alike.



THE LOOMING TOWER (MOVIE TIE-IN)

By *Lawrence Wright*

AL-QAEDA AND THE ROAD TO 9/11

The bestselling, Pulitzer Prize-winning account of the history of 9/11: the basis for the original Hulu series starring Alec Baldwin, Peter Sarsgaard, Jeff Daniels, and Tahar Rahim. A gripping narrative that spans five decades, *The Looming Tower* explains

in unprecedented detail the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, the rise of al-Qaeda, and the intelligence failures that culminated in the attacks on the World Trade Center. Lawrence Wright re-creates firsthand the transformation of Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri from incompetent and idealistic soldiers in Afghanistan to leaders of the most successful terrorist group in history. He follows FBI counterterrorism chief John O’Neill as he uncovers the emerging danger from al-Qaeda in the 1990s and struggles to track this new threat. Packed with detailed information and a deep historical perspective, *The Looming Tower* is the definitive history of the long road to September 11.

National Book Award Finalist
Updated and with a New Afterword

LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Your Excellency

I thank you for your letter of 6 January which I read with great attention and interest.

I quite understand your special interest and concern as expressed in your letter about articles that deal with various aspects of your own country.

However, I would like to stress that we at Europe Diplomatic Magazine, have always followed the path of rigorous research, and objectivity is precisely, of utmost importance to us.

Please find below the facsimile of the reply to your letter, sent to the magazine by the author of the article in question :

« I note the concerns expressed by Kristóf Altusz, the Hungarian Ambassador to Denmark, regarding my article about the establishment of Russia's International Investment Bank in Budapest. As an ambassador it is, of course, his right and duty to respond to anything that appears critical of his country's government.

I would point out, however, that I spoke to a number of Hungarians and that most of the people I quoted only differ from Mr. Altusz's position in that they do not agree with the government of Viktor Orbán on certain points. One of those points is, of course, the IIB, and the threat they fear it may pose to Hungary and to the EU and NATO, two bodies of which Hungary is, of course, a member. I'm sure Mr. Orbán sees the IIB as a great asset to Hungary and I sincerely hope that proves to be the case. I, for one, will be disappointed if this proves to turn out otherwise or if the fears of such Hungarians as Zita Gurmai or Marton Gyongyosi are realised.

Sincerely,

T. Kingsley Brooks «

Before concluding, I should like to thank you again for your interest in our publication.

Sincerely

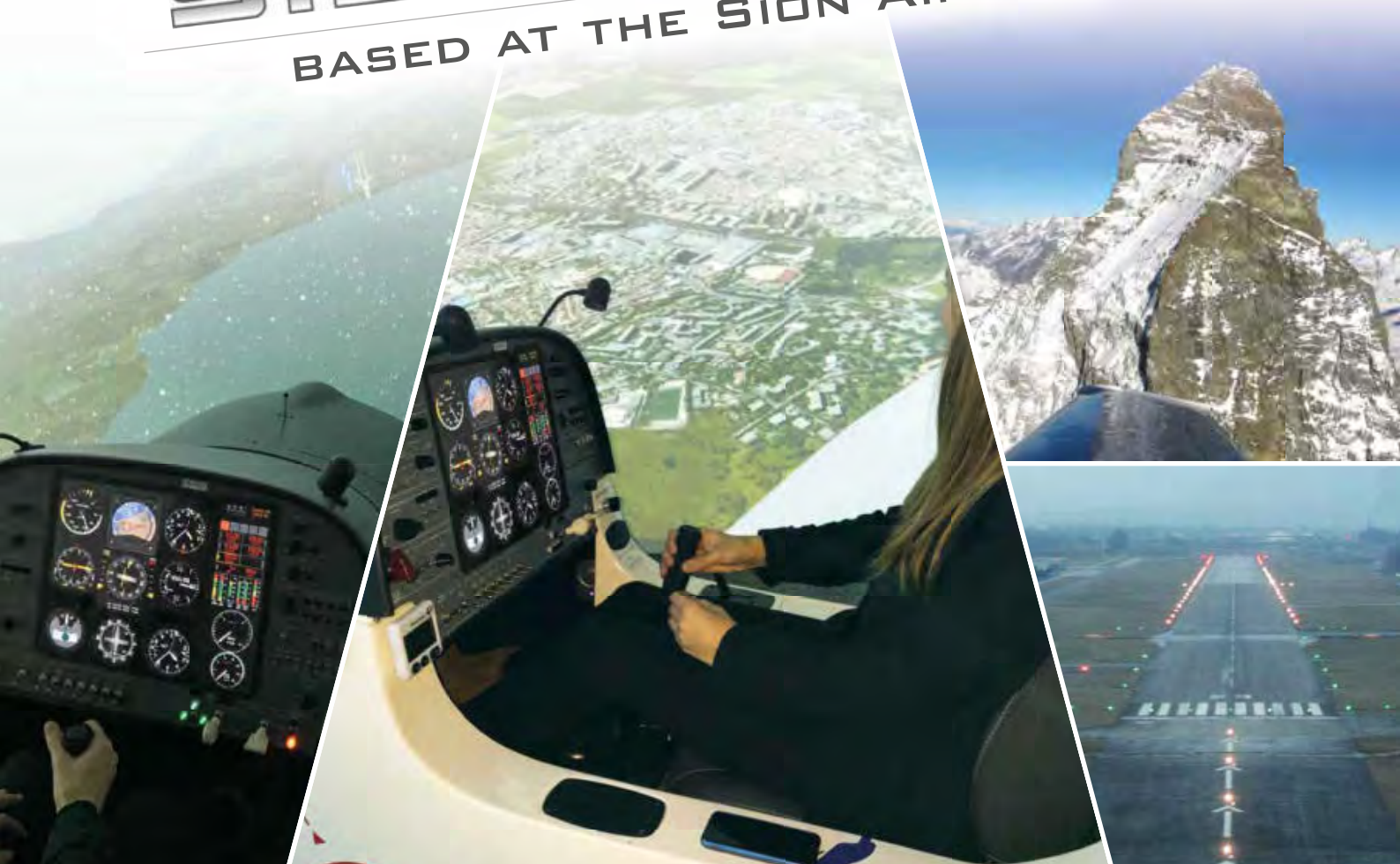
**Trajan Derville
Editor-in-Chief**

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