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2019

magazine

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## ALEXIS TSIPRAS

## *The man who wanted to change Europe*



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# IN THIS ISSUE



■ **Alexis Tsipras** The man who wanted to change Europe ..... p. **7**

■ **Balkan Cartel Trafficking Busted**

Operation Familia, coordinated by the US DEA and Europol..... p.**12**

■ **Troubled Waters over Oil** Russia's contaminated oil crisis ..... p.**14**

■ **Slovak Republic**

Greco urges the Slovak Republic to prevent corruption..... p.**19**

■ **Welcome (but leave your money by the door)**

European passports for sale ..... p.**21**

■ **Sweden's economy** More green bonds issued..... p.**26**

■ **Britain and France**

Joint action against small boats crossing in the Channel..... p.**27**

■ **From Greenland Icy Mountains**

The real estate bid that's all too real ..... p.**28**

■ **Extra Large Telescope**

Schott delivers world's largest convex mirror ..... p.**33**

■ **Galileo Technology** French railways embrace Galileo..... p.**36**

■ **Controlling Epidemics**

European region loses ground in effort to eliminate measles..... p.**40**

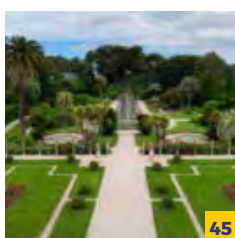
■ **Wadi Rum** The Valley of the Moon..... p.**42**

■ **A Place To Visit**

Villa et Jardins Ephrussi de Rothschild Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, France... p.**45**

■ **Timeless chic** Fashion and Beauty trends ..... p.**48**

■ **Books** Our selection ..... p.**50**



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Nikola Hendrickx

## BREXIT : THE IMPACT ON THE EUROPEAN UNION

In July 2019, Boris Johnson who replaced Theresa May as the U.K.'s Prime Minister, promised to execute Brexit by October 31 with or without a deal.

Britain's split from the EU is not only the first time a member state will leave the Union, but is also the most severe constitutional crisis the UK has known since 1973, when it joined the six-nation European Economic Community.

Initially, Britain's departure date had been set to March 29, 2019, but the government was twice forced to request an extension. The new date has been set to October 31. However, there may yet be further extensions or unexpected twists and turns.

Due to factors such as austerity and frustration with traditional politics, Brexit has often been described as a nationalist project on the part of the English electorate. But there is no doubt that wider questions regarding the role of the nation state, especially in an age of globalization also came into play.

Nevertheless, there are concerns that it has caused a shift of focus away from major global challenges, including the growing phenomenon of climate change.

For many Europeans, the prospect of the UK's split from the EU will come at a bad time...a time when the United States, Russia and China are increasingly asserting their powers.

### THE DIVERGENT TRAJECTORY

Arguably, the EU has never been more fragmented than it is today. Divisions over policy preferences have become bitter. European solidarity has been undermined as a consequence of both long-term problems and more recent crises.

Nationalist parties have exploited the ever-growing distrust of European elites, as well as anti-immigration sentiment, to propose populist solutions to Europe's problems.

The same arguments used to justify a 'Yes' vote in the UK referendum could also exert greater influence in other European states.

Anti-immigration and anti-globalisation political positions are hardly exclusive to the UK.

While there was no evidence of short-term contagion effects, in the sense of other member states planning on holding referendums, the British vote nonetheless poses a serious challenge to the political establishment across Europe, and that such effects might begin to be felt in the months and years ahead.

### THE CONVERGENT TRAJECTORY

However, without the UK, the EU might be better equipped to move into crisis resolution mode. The Brexit negotiations, if handled well, could help the process of

rebuilding solidarity among the remaining 27 member states.

In the weeks following the UK referendum, it was argued that EU member states should ensure the UK doesn't get 'too good a deal' so as to discourage Eurosceptic factions in other member states. In some quarters, the argument still carries some weight.

Of course, there has been a lack of solidarity among EU member states in recent years.

But this has not prevented the advent of new initiatives.

The eurozone crisis has already led to new institutional reforms, new legislation, a new treaty, and even new institutional mechanisms to deal with the sovereign debt crisis and to prevent further financial melt-down.

It can therefore be argued that one of the consequences of the eurozone crisis has been to open the door to further European integration.

Brexit may make further steps in this direction even more likely.

Brexit is one of several crises to have hit the EU in recent years. The implications of Brexit on European integration are, therefore, also the consequences of those other crises.

### THE UNCERTAINTIES

Crises, in general, can provide opportunities and act as sources of motivation for those who plan to use instability and uncertainty to their advantage in furthering particular agendas.

Those agendas may not be necessarily pro-integration, in the sense of unconditional transfer of national powers to supranational institutions, but they are associated with EU-level reform.

Alternatively, in times of political crisis, other agendas may seek to promote disintegration.

Political factions seeking the collapse of the EU and a return to exclusively national, or even nationalist politics will also see crises as an opportunity for them to push their own vision of the future.

Only the future will tell which of these competing plans will be successful. There are no clear indicators as to which agenda will win, as there is no mechanism that will at all times push forward the pro-cooperation agenda.

But the political winds that are blowing through the EU27 seem to have produced favourable conditions for another attempt at closer integration.

Provided that the EU ruling parties remain committed to European integration, Brexit may very well become the catalyst for another spell of intense activity, consolidating and bringing the remaining EU member states closer together.

*The Editor-in-Chief  
Trajan Dereville*



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# ALEXIS TSIPRAS

## *The man who wanted to change Europe*

Following the 2008 financial crisis, public debt in Greece entered a path of uncontrollable growth, far steeper than the rise experienced in other developed economies. The main culprit here was the scale of fiscal deficits. International markets rapidly branded Greek debt as unsustainable. But a country default was technically avoided by allowing the European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) - commonly known as The Troika - to step in and finance debt repayments in exchange for a harsh adjustment programme. The bailout agreement or the so-called 'Memorandum', aimed at restoring public finances, promoting reforms and stabilizing public debt which, at that time, stood at a staggering 127% of GDP. However, and contrary to official expectations, public debt continued to rise, while the economy was experiencing a deep and unprecedented recession. It was at around this time that a young civil engineer first made his mark not only in the turbulent world of Greek politics but all across Europe.

**A**lexis Tsipras was born in Athens on 28 July 1974, just after the fall of the Greek military junta that had ruled the country for seven years.

His father was a civil engineer, who provided enough for the family to live comfortably.

Young Alexis lived near the Apostolos Nikolaidis stadium of his beloved Panathinaikos football club, and he initially seemed more interested in sport than in politics.

But then everything changed at school when he joined the Young Communists Society; that's where he developed his talent for rhetoric.

When the government proposed a new privatisation bill for the education sector in 1990, the 16-year-old Tsipras organised an occupation of his school to oppose the reforms, locking teachers and other pupils out.

He was interviewed on television, and he immediately showed his aptitude for challenging authority. He declared: *"We want the right to judge for ourselves whether to skip class"*.

He remained active in student politics while training as a civil engineer at the National Technical University of Athens.

In 1999, he became the secretary of the youth branch of the leftist Synaspismos Party, which would later become part of SYRIZA.



SYRIZA is a Greek acronym for Coalition of the Radical Left, comprising socialists, Maoists, Trotskyists and Greens.

### LEARNING THE RULES

Synaspismos - the word means 'coalition' - commonly abbreviated to SYN, had always been a minor force in Greek politics. It was founded in 1991 and dissolved in 2013.

A Marxist-socialist party that was pro-Europe, it usually barely managed to scrape up enough votes to overcome the 3% barrier and elect a handful of MPs in parliament.

Promoting a platform that included environmental and welfare issues, as well as immigration reform, it was always considered a benign, non-threatening political entity.

This was the time of monolithic unilateral governments led by either the Social Democrats of PASOK or the conservatives of New Democracy, giant parties that usually swept a combined 80% of the popular vote.

Smaller parties like SYN or the Communists never had real power and were all but inconsequential compared to the behemoths that ruled Greece.

Alexis Tsipras rose quickly in those close ranks.

Then, in 2006, party leader Alekos Alavanos surprised many by selecting Tsipras to be SYN's candidate for the mayorship of Athens.

Coming up against a cadre of seasoned politicians, this fresh-faced 32

year old managed to get an amazing 10,5% of the vote that was only good for third place, but was considered a triumph for his tiny party.

Now everybody knew his name, and everyone recognized his face.

Two years later, Alavanos decided to step down as party leader, and promoted him as his successor.

Tsipras proceeded to dominate the internal election, obtaining 70% of the votes and thus becoming the youngest party leader in the history of the Greek republic.

At 34, he was in control of a small left-list party in a small country in Europe.

For people within his political spectrum, this was as far as one could conceivably get.

However, it became evident at the time that Tsipras was not above political machinations. SYN was by then the largest member of a broader coalition of about a dozen different leftist parties, SYRIZA.

This coalition participated in elections as a unit, led by SYN's leader.

By the time of the 2009 general election, Alekos Alavanos, Tsipras' predecessor, was cast aside and would not even be a candidate for a seat in parliament.

He would later leave the party altogether.

Immediately after the election, which gave SYRIZA a slightly disappointing 4.6% and 13 seats in parliament, Fotis Kouvelis, a founding member of the Greek Left Party and former Justice

Minister also departed, going on to create a new party called Democratic Left.

Within those few months Tsipras had managed to remove both conceivable internal opponents and consolidate his power within his small organization.

This would turn out to be key.

Because in the meantime, the Greek economy and the entire Greek political system was about to implode.

### THE WOMAN BEHIND THE MAN

Part of Tsipras' appeal was his informality - he said he spoke for working Greeks, frustrated by a corrupt establishment that has bled the country dry.

He was also seen as both approachable and rebellious, as his penchant for motorbikes and open-necked shirts suggested at the time.

He once said that he would wear a tie when Greece got its debts written off.

Tsipras is a self-avowed atheist. He broke with tradition and took a secular oath of office when he became Prime Minister. He lives with his long-time partner, computer engineer Peristera 'Betty' Batziana, but remains unmarried.

Apparently, she is even more radical than Tsipras, and he has hinted that she might have left him if he had yielded to Greece's creditors.

Even though Alexis Tsipras has been described as the 'Greek Che Guevara' it is believed that the strong-willed Peristera Batziana, who has been by his side for 30 years, is in fact the true radical and the power behind the throne.

Forty-four-year-old Peristera who comes from Thessaly, in central Greece and is the mother of his two children, encouraged Tsipras to enter politics rather than embark on a career in sports.

They first met in 1987 when they both attended secondary school.

Later, it was Miss Batziana, already a member herself, who convinced Tsipras to join the Communist Youth of Greece in 1990, despite his middle-class background.

In 1991, when students in Athens revolted against unpopular education



reforms, they both led protests at the Ampelokipoi Branch High School, as leaders of the student movement.

Later, they both went on to university and graduated as engineers.

Peristera Batziana graduated from the University of Patras in electrical engineering, and according to her friends, she is *'strong-willed, militant and dynamic'*.

She once took one of her professors to court when he tried to undermine her work on a doctoral thesis, according to the Greek Reporter, a leading international Greek news network.

She reportedly also hates spending hours shopping and doesn't like going for regular trips to the hairdresser.

Unlike the first ladies that have come before her, Miss Batziana has stayed away from the glamour that comes with the Maximos Mansion, the official seat of the Greek prime minister and has avoided the media spotlight.

The couple have in fact, made very few public appearances.

In his youth, Alexis Tsipras was a motorbike-riding Communist activist and rather than getting married in a civil or religious ceremony, preferred to take advantage of the cohabitation law that has been in effect since 2009.

Tsipras and Peristera Batziana are the first unmarried couple to occupy the Maximos Mansion. Before them, it was French president François Hollande and the German president, Joachim Gauck who had done the same.

These arrangements are signs of how European attitudes about families have changed over the years.

Alexis Tsipras, the unconventional political leader who is regarded as a true man of the people, used to take out the rubbish, is an avid football fan and put their boys, Phoebus and Orpheus, to bed. He also added the name Ernesto to his youngest son's middle name... a tribute to Che Guevara, one of his idols.

## A STEP BACK IN TIME

As we shall see shortly, in January 2015, SYRIZA became the first radical left party to form a government in Europe since WWII.

It plunged Europe into a four-month confrontation over Greece's €320 billion debt.

But what is SYRIZA and where did it come from ?

The far left in Greece has deep roots. The communist-led resistance beat the Wehrmacht, only to clash with the British army in 1944.

Then came a two-year civil war in which the Left was crushed.

Many of SYRIZA's leaders have grandfathers who were jailed, killed or tortured at that time.

And many of SYRIZA's older activists were here in the 1970s when students overthrew a military junta. It was out of the so-called New Left – communists who rejected Moscow – that SYRIZA emerged.

But for seventy years, Greece was ruled by political dynasties. One conservative, one socialist and both enmeshed in a system where the rich paid little tax and where corruption was rife.

In 2002, Greece joined the Eurozone. At this point SYRIZA, still a loose coalition of the radical left had less than 4% support.

As the Lehman Brothers crisis plunged Europe into recession, Greek debt spiralled out of control. In 2010, the socialist government of George Papandreou went cap-in-hand to Europe for a bail-out...and so, austerity began.

By now of course, SYRIZA had a new leader : Alexis Tsipras.

And soon, it had a whole new demographic from which to draw support.

The occupation of the squares in Athens in 2011 brought tens of thousands of young Greeks into political activism, and many joined SYRIZA.

Meanwhile, the socialist government fell, to be replaced by a conservative-led coalition and the harshest austerity programme in modern history.

Unemployment soared to 25%...family incomes fell by 40%...

In the 2012 election, SYRIZA lost by just 2 percentage points. Support for the old socialists collapsed and SYRIZA led the fight against austerity.

What tipped the balance ? Fascism and corruption.



© Kremlin

When the fascist Golden Dawn party began terrorizing immigrants, many saw the conservative-led government as colluding with them and the police as their allies.

While the 'Troika' imposed harsh austerity, it seemed unmoved by the rampant corruption in the main Greek parties.

So, by January 2015, Greeks who wanted an end to austerity, an end to corruption and a firm line against far-right violence swung towards SYRIZA. Many Greeks had high hopes.

Alexis Tsipras' first symbolic act was to visit the monument to resistance fighters murdered by the Germans. He has in fact, called for Germany to pay war reparations.

In the rest of Europe, such overt references to Germany's past are often seen as taboo.

But bold gestures like these go down well in Greece, where Berlin is regularly demonised for its austerity demands.

Such defiance helped Tsipras's ratings soar.

And while SYRIZA ruled in coalition with a small nationalist party, SYR-



Alexis Tsipras with EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, Corina Crețu

© Government of Greece

IZA's own willingness to combine left-wing politics with the defence of Greece's national interest attracted many voters from the right and centre.

So, SYRIZA is a hybrid... an old, disciplined Marxist party combined with a young generation from the Occupy Movement, the Greens and Feminists and later, thousands of ex-socialists.

But the key word was coalition.

As it struggled with debt, austerity and severe economic downturn, the question was: would it all hang together or split apart?

## IN THE THICK OF BATTLE

SYRIZA swept forward like an incredible wave when Tsipras became its leader.

In the 2004 elections, it won just 3.3 per cent of the vote but later, the party dominated Greek politics, coming first in the January 2015 elections, with 36.3 per cent.

In fact, that came on the back of a close second place in the 2012 elections, as well as a high-profile run to become president of the European Commission in 2014.

The 2015 election sent a wave of fear across Europe, as countries began preparing themselves for the EU's first radical left government.

Tsipras he fell short of an outright majority by just two seats, but he reached an agreement to form a coalition with the right-wing populist Independent Greeks.

He had an electrifying impact on Greek politics, but across Europe,

where his appeal was needed most, it fell flat; other European leaders distanced themselves from what they saw as a liability mainly because of his aggressive style, which was at odds with their methods.

Tsipras did not get much help either from his preening and flamboyant Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis, who proved so antagonistic that he had to be left out of the Euro negotiations.

There came a point when it looked as if the deadlock could have been resolved; the mood in the eurozone had turned against severe austerity.

For quite some time, it had been tacitly accepted that Greece's debts were so high that most would have to be written off. The IMF itself had said so at one point.

And it appeared that Tsipras could have come to some agreement with his creditors on reforms aimed at more effective tax collection, especially on Greece's super-rich.

There followed a number of one-on-one meetings with other leaders, including ECB head Mario Draghi and Pope Francis. But instead of reassuring them, Tsipras lost allies.

At that particular moment, Greece had potential friends in France, Italy, Spain and Portugal, who also suffered during the euro crisis, but launched much-needed reforms to turn their economies around. But due to his aggressive rhetoric, which did him few favours throughout his time in office, Tsipras alienated them instead.

And in June 2015, a time which may turn out to be one of the most critical periods in the EU's history, his impulsiveness was on display again.

He demanded a number of summits with his counterparts in Brussels, and actually obtained them. He came within reach of an agreement on extending the bailout, but instead, Tsipras walked out and announced a referendum to decide whether Greece should accept the bailout conditions proposed by the EC, the IMF and the ECB.

However, there was still hope, even in the hours before Greece defaulted, that he would show up in Brussels to accept a deal and cancel the referendum.

But this wasn't to be.

Tsipras recommended a "No" vote and on 3 July, during an address to some 25,000 people gathered in Syntagma square, in front of parliament, he rejected some leaders' warnings that a "No" result in the referendum could force Greece to leave the eurozone.

He declared *"On Sunday, we are not simply deciding to remain in Europe we are deciding to live with dignity in Europe"*. The result of the referendum was 61.3% for the "No" vote.

Tsipras received a letter from Fidel Castro, congratulating him for the victory of the "No" vote.

Castro also added that the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean were in admiration for the courage of the Greek people.

Much of Tsipras's strategy had been based on the assumption that his creditors would do all they could to keep Greece in the euro.

But patience was running out across Europe. German Chancellor Angela Merkel was ready to call his bluff, and together with almost all other euro-



© Wikimedia





© Government of Greece

zone leaders, she was prepared to cast aside Greece, if no solution was found.

## DECLINE AND FALL

It was in Athens' Syntagma Square that Alexis Tsipras and his finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis urged Greeks to reject ultimatums and blackmail, when the extremely severe terms of a third EC-IMF-ECB bail-out package were put to the electorate in a referendum in July 2015.

And it was also here that thousands later came to dance and rejoice when the result - an overwhelming 61.3% 'no' vote was announced.

It is interesting to note that this great populist experiment that began in Athens, reappeared years later in other EU capitals.

But it only took one week for the relentless leader to do a complete about turn. He approved a €100bn EU-funded bailout programme that demanded some of the deepest cuts any government had been asked to apply since the scale of Greece's insolvency first emerged in late 2009.

Varoufakis categorically refused to buy into this agreement and resigned. He went on to contest the July 2019 elections at the head of his MeRA25 party.

And again, thousands gathered in Syntagma Square for these elections.

Many waved the red, white and purple flags of SYRIZA, the once-radical leftist party whose leader they had come to hear.

And when Alexis Tsipras appeared on the platform in front of the parliament building, a great roar of approval went up...the countdown had begun.

The pugnacious prime minister delivered his main pre-election address in proved to be an unusually low-key campaign for the snap election in July 2019.

But for Tsipras, it was showtime, and as usual, he didn't disappoint.

He put forth as much effort as he could muster : *"They think they've got rid of SYRIZA, they think they've got rid of the left,"* he roared from the podium which was also encircled by gay supporters waving rainbow flags. *"Well, the battle is only beginning. We can do it! We can pull off the greatest reversal in history."*

So, four years after his brilliant victory in 2015, the charismatic tribune who held high the hopes of progressive factions in Greece and elsewhere had a real battle on his hands.

SYRIZA is today in a rather desperate position. The defeat it suffered in European parliamentary elections in May was seen as a precursor for a defeat likely to be comparable, if not bigger.

The party emerged 9.5 points behind the centre-right opposition in its first contest at the ballot box since 2015.

Polls in Greece have clearly shown SYRIZA's waning popularity and the party that stormed to power at the height of the country's financial crisis is now a shadow of its former self.

Surveys showed its rival, New Democracy, was between eight and 13 points ahead.

On the Monday following the voting, the Maximos Mansion - the ornate neoclassical building housing the prime minister's office and official residence - changed tenants and Kyriakos Mitzotakis, a former banker and leader of New Democracy moved in.

The 51-year-old could not be more different from his leftist opponent.

Mitzotakis is the son of a past prime minister, whose family has been compared to the Kennedys by the Greek press. He is himself Harvard-educated, his sister Dora was foreign minister, and his nephew Kostas is Athens's mayor-elect. The 51-year-old could not be more different to his leftist opponent.

For Tsipras this is probably his farewell appearance - the result of his failure to challenge the EU and deliver on



© Media Gallery SNFCC

Ms Betty Baziana and Ms Brigitte Macron at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center

his promise to eradicate austerity. But is very unlikely he will go down without a fight.

The threat of an exit from the euro-zone may have caused him to U-turn, and to adopt the neoliberal reforms he had once so forcefully denounced, but he is still in the ring and defending himself.

Many former SYRIZA ministers are dismayed that voters today seem determined to punish Greece's first leftist government that they insist, went out of its way to help the more vulnerable and poor.

But they also agree that a number of mistakes were made and can also understand the reasons why there is disappointment over the way the leftists behaved while in power.

For instance, Tsipras developed a taste for cigars and caused some embarrassment when he was seen enjoying his holidays with his family on a yacht belonging to a wealthy shipowner.

Charges were made that SYRIZA, while in power was opportunistic, acted with high-handedness, and ultimately, not any better than other parties. The reason of course is that it joined forces with the far-right Independent Greeks party.

Alexis Tsipras is now 45 years old and still quite young. He says : *"Whether we are in power, or not, we are here to stay"*.

Only the future will tell whether this will be the case. But whatever happens, for the young man who, 24 years earlier began to fight for his rights at school, this has been quite an achievement.

Hossein Sadre



# BALKAN CARTEL TRAFFICKING

*Balkan cartel trafficking cocaine from South America to Europe in private planes busted*

**Operation Familia coordinated by the US DEA and Europol has seen a total of 16 arrests, 11 in Europe and 5 in Asia, and the seizure of more than one tonne of cocaine and €2 million in cash.**

Law enforcement agencies from across the globe teamed up against a Balkan organised criminal network suspected of large-scale cocaine trafficking from South America to Europe using private planes. The investigation was launched and led by the Croatian Police (Policijski nacionalni ured za suzbijanje korupcije i organiziranog kriminala) and the Croatian Special Prosecutors' Office for Suppression of Corruption and Organised Crime in early 2018. It also involved authorities from Czechia, Serbia and Slovenia. The operation was carried out simultaneously by agencies from three different continents – Asia, Europe and South America.

- **Europe:** the Croatian Police were joined by the National Drug Headquarters and Criminal Police and Investigation Service from Czechia (Policie České republiky), the Criminal Police from Serbia, Slovenian National Police (Policija), the French Gendarmerie (Gendarmerie Nationale) the Swiss Federal Police, Federal Police from Belgium (Federale Politie/Police Fédérale) and the Italian Finance Corps (Guardia di Finanza);
- **Asia:** customs authorities from Hong Kong, Judicial Police from Macao and the Malaysian Judicial Police;
- **South America:** the Department for the Suppression of Illegal Drugs

from Uruguay and the Paraguayan National Police, SIU and the National Anti-Drug Secretariat;

- **US:** US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) (country offices in Europe, Asia and South America);
- **EU agencies:** Europol and Frontex.

## How the operation needed global cooperation

The investigation revealed that the Balkan traffickers were not only operating in Europe and South America, where they prepared several flights from one continent to another between 2018 and 2019 but also in Asia, where they facilitated and coor-



minated the maritime trafficking of multi-kilogram quantities of cocaine, mostly in Hong Kong and Macao.

Law enforcement agencies implemented taskforces to identify and target suspects based in Europe, Asia and South America involved in cocaine trafficking. Parallel investigations carried out under the umbrella of operation Familia revealed that the organised criminal network had close ties to many criminal associates and contacts operating out of various EU and non-EU countries (primarily Australia, Belgium, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czechia, France, Hong Kong, Italy, Macao, Malaysia, Paraguay, Serbia, Slovenia and Uruguay).

Real-time cooperation of the agencies mentioned led to identifying criminal activities in Europe, where the authorities from Croatia, Czechia and Serbia took the first steps to dismantle this network and the source in South America. The joint collaboration of all agencies resulted in seizing cocaine in May 2019 in Switzerland, after observation operations led by France.

In parallel with the activities in Europe and South America and thanks to the investigation carried out by the Serbian authorities, another line of criminal activity of the targeted Balkan organised crime group was identified in Asia. The coordination of several US DEA country offices in Asia and Europe led the investigator to identify the Balkan criminal cell that operated out of Asia. The cell received cocaine shipments trafficked by sea. The investigation ultimately resulted in a

multi-kilogram cocaine seizure carried out by Hong Kong Customs and Macanese Judicial Police.

### Final results: €2 million in cash and more than a tonne of cocaine seized

Operation Familia resulted in the arrest of a total of 16 individuals, 11 in Europe (Croatia, Czechia, Serbia and Switzerland) and 5 in Hong Kong. One of the ringleaders, considered as a high-value target, was arrested in Switzerland, in close cooperation with France, while coordinating a 600 kg cocaine shipment importation using a private plane. The suspect has an international criminal background in Europe and beyond. Another high-value target was arrested in Croatia which was the final hit to the core of the targeted criminal group.

Officers seized more than one tonne of cocaine: 600 kg in Switzerland and 421 kg in Hong Kong. In Croatia, Czechia, Serbia, Slovenia and Switzerland, €2 million in cash was seized and more than €1 million in luxury goods, such as high-quality watches and vehicles were confiscated.

### Action coordinated by the Europol's Drugs Unit

Under the coordination and lead of Europol's Drugs Unit, several other Europol teams were involved in providing the support of this international investigation. AP Sustans



(Europol's analysis project involved in cases related to organised crime networks involved in money laundering) and Europol's EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU) developed intelligence for the field investigative teams. Support was primarily given by setting-up several European and multi-continental coordination meetings, financial support of the deployment of three investigators during the action day in Switzerland and France, continuous analysis, cross-checks and other intelligence development provided in real-time.

Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, provided technical and operational assistance.

This operation was a part of a broader European strategy against the Western Balkan organised crime network known as the Balkan Cartel and its top targets, which was coordinated by Croatia and supported by many EU and Western Balkan law enforcement authorities, the US DEA and Europol.



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# TROUBLED WATERS OVER OIL

*Russia's contaminated oil crisis*

Aleksandr Lukashenko

**Y**ou may never have given much thought to organic chlorides - unless you're interested in chemistry, of course - but you have almost certainly owned or used items in whose manufacture organic chlorides played a vital part. There are many uses, you will discover, to which organic chlorides can be put. They are essential in the manufacture of PVC, for instance, and in some pesticides. They are used in the manufacture of Teflon and in insulators. They used to be used to make chloroform, the anaesthetic of choice for moustache-twirling villains in old black-and-white movies, and from chloroform they have been turned into solvents until it was found that they were carcinogenic. Where you most definitely do not want organic chlorides is in crude oil, although very low levels of little more than one part per million is virtually unnoticeable and therefore tolerable. There are several ways of detecting the presence of organic chlorides, and oil producers really need to. Because one of the processes used in converting crude oil into its various valuable products, such as petroleum (gasoline), diesel and jet fuel, is called hydroheating, and if organic chlorides are present it can cause the formation of hydrochloric acid which can eat through pipelines and containers, seriously corrode and degrade valuable oil processing

equipment and also, in a worst case, cause explosions. It also gives off the poisonous gas, chlorine.

The presence of organic chlorides in Russian crude oil bound for export is currently causing something of a diplomatic explosion for Russia, President Vladimir Putin admitting it caused "very serious damage" economically and in public image terms. Moscow eased the regulations on just how much organic chloride could exist in crude oil in 2018 and the Eurasian Economic Union set the new upper limit in July this year at six parts per million. However, since the 2018 relaxation of the rules, organic chloride levels in oil coming from the Druzhba pipeline (somewhat ironically, Druzhba means friendship in Russian) have been shown to contain levels of organic chlorides that are well above accepted limits: up to one hundred times higher than permitted. The effect has been to shake faith in Russia's oil industry while vast quantities of contaminated oil ended up lying fairly uselessly in storage facilities following a long journey to whichever country may have been obliged to store them. Russia has been engaged in a damage limitation exercise which includes trying to normalise the oil and make it useable. Russia is also offering to compensate financially any damage to plant and equipment caused by the polluted crude.

## MOPPING UP THE MESS

The task has fallen to Transneft, the massive Russian conglomerate that runs a network of pipelines to Europe and China totalling some 69,000 kilometres in length. For them, it could have been worse: there are few signs so far of many European buyers rejecting future deals and looking elsewhere to buy their crude, although one Polish refiner, Grupa Lotos SA, is known to have been looking into ways to diversify its sources. That should ease the worries a little, despite the fact that Transneft must be anticipating some hefty claims for compensation. Certainly, the company was severely rattled as the Druzhba pipeline was forced to close (it has reopened since). Transneft spokesperson Igor Dyomin told Bloomberg: "It's the first time we are facing such a situation," adding that "it's still too early to make any wrap-up analysis but we'll definitely do it." The out-turn cost of compensation is likely to be astronomical. Russia paid Kazakhstan \$15 per barrel and Transneft estimates that it pumped more than 22-million barrels of contaminated oil overall. The company's initial response when the alarm was raised, however, left much to be desired. Oil companies in Poland, Germany, Ukraine, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic received the



warning from Belarus refinery company Belneftekhim but found they were unable to contact Transneft for several days, despite the company transporting some ten million barrels a day through Russia, four million of them for export.

While Moscow tries diplomatic means to mend its commercial ties with its unfortunate customers, the existence of organic chlorides in crude oil is not new or even entirely surprising, even if the quantity was. A number of cargoes from Texas have been rejected by European and Asian buyers over the last year because of poor quality. Although crude oil is mainly made up of hydrocarbons, there is also water present, along with chloride salts and other impurities. It normally undergoes a desalting process to get rid of the impurities, using more water to dissolve the salts before the cleaned petroleum is separated and piped off to the next part of the refinement process. The cleaning removes most chloride salts but not organic chlorides, which form what's called a covalent bond with carbon, meaning that the atoms share some of their electrons and are therefore very tightly bound and much, much harder to get rid of. Unlike other chloride salts, they do not come from sea or ground water. They are more likely to have originated through cleaning products used on pipelines and in storage facilities, normally to clean oil wells to speed up the flow of crude. The pollution is thought to have entered the pipeline somewhere in central Russia where a number of private oil companies have access so that they can

pump their own output into the pipe. That arrangement may change in the light of what happened, with Transneft probably taking over operational responsibility.

## CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Things have been getting back to normal. Ust-Luga, in the oblast of Leningrad, has the largest and deepest port in the Baltic Sea and is used for the export by sea of Russian oil. In fact, it handles almost 90-million tonnes of cargo through its twelve terminals. It, too, was affected when it became known that the crude oil arriving along the Druzhba pipeline was contaminated. Several tankers sailed from Ust-Luga carrying oil that was sold to traders and major oil companies before the contamination was spotted. By August, however, Russia's Energy Ministry put out a statement to the effect that organic chloride content there had been reduced to 2.6 parts-per-million, with the additional claim that it will not exceed 3.5 parts-per-million. The Energy Ministry's statement then went on to say: "The expected oil quality in the port of Ust-Luga will be within the range of 1.6 to 3.5 parts-per-million for this indicator in the period from August 20 to 26, 2019. The Energy Ministry will continue oil quality monitoring in the port of Ust-Luga with the weekly update on the official website." Oil being transported along the southern leg of the pipeline, through Ukraine to the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary was not affected.

How did the pollution occur? That has not yet been established, but Transneft and the Russian government say they suspect sabotage. Transneft claims the deliberate contamination was intended to "conceal multiple oil thefts" along the Samara-Unecha section. At a news briefing, Igor Dyomin, a spokesperson for Nikolay Tokarev, President of Transneft, told the media "the contamination was intentional." Four people suspected of involvement in the pollution have been jailed by the Samara District Court in Samara City, including the general directors of the companies PetroNefte Aktiv and Neftepererevalka. "Currently, in respect of four suspects by the court at the request of the investigation, a preventive measure in the form of detention for two months was chosen," according to a representative of the Investigation Committee in the Samara region, but adding that "two suspects are wanted." Clearly, the investigation continues but the court named the four convicted so far. They are Svetlana Balabay, general director of Neftepererevalka LLC, Rustam Khusnutdinov, her deputy, Vladimir Zhogolev, general director of Petroneft Active, and Sergei Balandin, deputy head of Magistral LLC. The pollution was found at the privately-owned Samara Transneft-terminal, where several small-scale producers pump oil into the Transneft network, according to Dyomin. The first deputy director at the Samara Transneft-terminal told reporters that his company had sold the terminal in 2017 and he didn't know who the current owners are. In a meeting with Putin, Tokarev reportedly said the oil had been deliberately contaminated by a private company, which he claimed "has deliberately injected oil that was not properly prepared." It's hard to see what the motive could have been.

Belarus's Belneftekhim refinery company issued its warning about the quality of Russian oil on 19 April, saying that according to their research, the content of organic chloride compounds in the Druzhba oil pipeline exceeded the agreed limits by a factor of ten. The Russian Ministry of Energy later confirmed that Russian oil was contaminated with dichloroethane (C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>4</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>). Used in the production of vinyl chloride, dichloroethane can cause severe renal failure if ingested by humans and other animals. Apart from the manufacture of vinyl chloride,



© Transneft

Transneft Pipeline



Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, Vladimir Makei and Boris Johnson

© Belarus Foreign Affairs

dichloroethane is also used in solvents and for cleaning purposes, such as in refineries and storage facilities, which may rather explain its purely accidental presence in the Druzhba oil pipeline. Russia is also seeking to extradite Roman Ruzhechko, Chief Executive of a small oil transportation company, Samartransneft-Terminal, from Lithuania, where he has asked for political asylum but is being held on an Interpol warrant. Russia believes 40-year-old Ruzhechko was involved in the deliberate contamination of the Druzhba pipeline. A warrant has also been issued for the arrest of Roman Trushev, founder of the oil company Petroneft. Trushev told Deutsche Welle in April that Russia is “looking for scapegoats” and that the amount of oil delivered by his company was too small to cause so much damage. “I don’t understand what this has to do with me,” he said, whilst carefully withholding his location. Despite attempts to restore confidence after the April contamination scandal, Poland’s biggest refinery, PKN Orlen, told Reuters that the quality of Russian crude has been steadily declining for several years and continues to do so.

## HARD TO IGNORE

The crisis certainly had an impact, although oil prices are subject to volatility, largely because of oil’s geopolitical importance and the places in which it is mainly found. The spot price for Brent crude, the international benchmark for oil prices, was at \$59.41 (€52.04) in January 2019 but in May, after news of Russia’s pipeline contamination broke, it had soared to \$71.13 (€63.38), peaking up more than 1.2% at \$75.47 (€66.50). The oil market

has started pricing in a risk premium, which helps to iron out the bumps a little, but it inevitably reacts to international events. Prices rose sharply after a drone attack this August by Yemen’s Houthi rebels on an oilfield in eastern Saudi Arabia, which caused a fire at a gas plant. There was also inevitable market reaction to the seizing of an Iranian oil tanker suspected of carrying fuel to Syria in the waters off Gibraltar and to Iran’s unsurprising retaliation in seizing a British-registered ship in the Gulf of Hormuz. More recently, as part of the on-going trade spat between Washington and Beijing, China has placed a tariff on American oil, while within the United States the Plains All American Pipeline (PAA) is imposing a surcharge on oil producers using the new Cactus II pipeline to offset the increased cost of steel resulting from tariffs imposed by the US. The surcharge is being challenged but it all makes oil more expensive. But oil prices overall tend to follow stock performances around the world, so prices recovered in the belief that governments globally would take action to counteract slow growth. However, the prospects for the oil market generally are beginning to look a little gloomy in the medium to long term, with the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) cutting its forecast for 2019 by 40,000 barrels per day, down to 1.1-million barrels per day, as well as predicting there would be a slight surplus in the market in 2020. This isn’t helped by China’s plan to increase its own output by ten-million tonnes of paraxylene capacity by March 2020, which could oblige oil producers in Japan and South Korea to cut their production.

Acts of war can affect oil prices dramatically, too. They are certain to rise following the recent attack on the world’s largest oil processing plant at Abqaiq in Saudi Arabia. Ten explosive drones caused massive damage to the plant and to the oil field at Hijra Khurais, forcing the kingdom to cut output by five million barrels a day, almost half its overall output. Abqaiq, owned by the state oil company Aramco, is responsible for some 5% of global oil production. The Saudis have promised to make up some of any shortfall from reserves and engineers soon started repairs, but the work is unlikely to be quick: smoke from the fires raging there was seen on NASA satellite images, demonstrating

the scale of the blaze. The attack was claimed by Houthi rebels as retaliation for Saudi attacks on the parts of Yemen they hold and for the continuing blockade, although many experts believe the drones were launched from Iran, which supports the Houthis and is geographically closer. Whoever is to blame, though, there will be a price to be paid around the world, with market experts predicting oil price rises of between \$5 and \$10 (€4.48 and €8.96) a barrel, which would mean a substantial price hike when you next fill up your car at the pumps. It would mean higher prices, too, for goods that make part of their journey to the shops by road. More expensive diesel will be reflected in a great many things - including food - costing more.

Concern over the pollution of oil in Russia makes a change from the more usual concern over pollution OF Russia BY oil. In Soviet times, Russia disregarded the environmental impact of its oil and gas extraction industries, but the inaccessibility of the regions where much of it was to be found tended to dissuade foreign investment following the collapse of Communism. However, with some 32% of the world’s natural gas deposits being in Russia, that is changing. Large deposits of oil and gas have recently been discovered in Sakhalin, an island off the Pacific coast of Siberia, and now some of the most ambitious projects in the history of the oil industry are under way there, with a consortium headed by Royal Dutch Shell building platforms, pipelines and processing plants in the area. It is already allegedly damaging the quality of water in Sakhalin’s rivers, a rich breeding ground for salmon and a vital food source for local people. The rapid development could be dangerous in other ways: according to Worldwatch Institute, the island lies in an area of strong seismic activity and nobody can be sure the platforms and pipelines could withstand a major eruption. That fear is unlikely to discourage Transneft from its intention to build what will be the world’s longest pipeline to transport oil from western and central Siberia to the Pacific coast. The pipeline will run through untouched taiga forests, severely endangering the extremely rare Amur leopard (only 35 are known to survive), as well as passing close to the Unesco World Heritage Site of Lake Baikal, which would be in breach of international law.



## THERE'S POLLUTION AND POLLUTION...

All of this may well be of little interest to the handful of state-run monopolies that profit from Russia's oil wealth. And it's true to say that the world still needs oil and looks likely to do so far into the future. However green you are, you need oil. You will continue to need oil. "There is little reason to believe that once it does peak, that oil demand will fall sharply," wrote Spencer Dale, BP's Group chief economist, and Bassam Fattouh, Director of The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, in a report published on-line by BP, "The world is likely to demand large quantities of oil for many decades to come." The report suggests a gradual change in oil markets to a state of over-abundance which is likely to affect prices over the next two to three decades. "More generally, it seems unlikely that oil prices will stabilise around a level in which many of the world's major oil producing economies are running large and persistent fiscal deficits. As such, the average level of oil prices over the next few decades is likely to depend more on developments in the social cost of production across the major oil producing economies than on the physical cost of extraction." The change in demand will depend on geographical and economic factors, with demand falling in advanced economies but still rising in developing countries. "Demand for oil in developed countries will revert to structural decline by 2020, wiping out about four million barrels per day by 2035," according to Wood Mackenzie, the global energy, chemicals, renewables, metals and mining research and consultancy group, "In contrast, developing economies will increase their demand for oil by nearly 16 million barrels per day by 2035." But as most analysts are quick to point out, the oil industry, being such a vital part of the global economy, has ridden out plenty of crises in the past.

Even so, a crisis such as the contamination of Russia's principal oil pipeline, has inevitable consequences. "It will leave refiners like PKN Orlen, Total, Shell, BP and Rosneft scrambling for supply," Phil Flynn, senior market analyst at the PRICE Futures Group in Chicago, told Deutsche Welle, "While Russia says the prob-

lem will be fixed quickly, the impact on consumers will last longer." German refineries that rely on crude from the Druzhba pipeline had adequate stocks to cope in the short to medium term, meaning there was no need to tap into Germany's strategic reserves. The same *sang-froid* is notable by its absence in Belarus. Belarusian refineries have been complaining for several years about the declining quality of Russian crude, although the sudden deterioration resulting from organic chloride pollution is something new. It was the Belarussian State Concern for Oil and Chemistry, Belneftekhim, that raised the alarm this time, but only after accusing Moscow for some time of dragging its feet over a worsening situation that it had pledged to rectify. About 25% of Russia's oil output passes through Belarus and Belneftekhim claims the dirty oil has already cost it \$100-million (€90-million) in losses. It deepens an ongoing dispute between Moscow and Minsk over Russian oil. Belarus has accused Russia of a high-handed attitude to its neighbour and of poor maintenance of its facilities. "If you need to repair the oil pipelines and oil pipelines that go through Belarus, suspend [the flows] and repair it," Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko said of Russia during a government meeting, according to Belarus' BelTa new service. "They have become arrogant to such an extent that they begin to twist our arms." Belarus has said it will start to look for alternative sources of crude oil by the end of this year, although that is unlikely to happen.

It's been claimed that the polluted oil has damaged processing plant and equipment in Belarus. Flynn warned Deutsche Welle that the dispute could be a sign of things to come: "We know that Russia in the past has had many issues with former satellite states," he said, "and they may use an incident like this to perhaps exploit the issue for larger political gain." It's well documented that Lukashenko and Putin do not like each other but both men inevitably try to wrest some benefit from any unexpected eventuality. As it is, Russia exports around 360,000 barrels of crude a day to Belarus and is easily the country's largest supplier. Furthermore, it has been supplying the oil tax free at a cost of \$5-billion to the Russian economy. Russia now plans to cancel its export duty for crude and



© Lithuanian Police

oil products by 2025, when the Eurasian single energy market comes into effect, meaning boundary-free movement of oil.

The problem for Belarus is that it is a debtor nation and it is to Russia that it owes the money. According to the Ministry of Finance, as of June 1, Belarus's foreign debt amounted to \$7.82-billion (€7.06-billion), most of it - \$7.55-billion (€6.82-billion) - to Russia, which means Russia is Belarus's main creditor and Belarus is Russia's biggest debtor. Minsk owes Moscow twice as much as Ukraine (\$3.7-billion or €3.49-billion), Venezuela (\$3.5-billion or € 3.16-billion) or Cuba (\$3.2-billion or € 2.89-billion). It means in effect that every individual citizen of Belarus owes Moscow \$794 (€717). This summer, for the first time in recent years, Moscow refused a request from Minsk for a loan of \$630-million (€569-million) intended to refinance its current debt unless Belarus takes steps towards economic integration with Russia. Minsk has since borrowed \$500-million (€451-million) from China. Belarus and Russia are already united in what's called the Union State, but each of them retains its own sovereignty and international existence. They are both still fully responsible for their own internal affairs and external relations. Attitudes towards each other remain unsurprisingly prickly. Russia seems determined to regain control over as much of the territory of the old Soviet Union as it can, and Belarus's Lukashenko is painfully aware of what happened to Crimea. The leaders of the Baltic states, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia share his concern. For Putin, it looks like a sound move, arguably extending his power beyond



Mikhail Babich was appointed the head of the diplomatic mission in Minsk in August 2018

the end of his presidency in 2024. It would also lock Belarus into Russia's sphere of influence far into the future and prevent a possible escape.

### SOUND ECONOMICS OR A LAND GRAB?

It all fits together with changes to Russia's oil tax regime that would benefit the Russian economy but cause extensive economic damage elsewhere, especially for Belarus. In order to boost its revenue, over the period 2019–24 Russia will cut the export tax on oil (from which Belarus has been exempt) from 30% to zero and while raising the tax on oil production. Up until now, Belarus had been able to import Russian oil at below-market prices, either to refine it or else to sell it on, mainly to the European Union. In this way, Belarus has been able to undercut Russia in selling Russia's own oil, all at the expense of the Russian taxpayer. The problem for Belarus is that 'mineral products', like crude oil and its refined products, account for around one-quarter of its exports. The Belarusian government says the cost to the country's economy of the tax reform could be as high as \$2-billion (€1.8-billion) by 2024, equivalent to 4% of the country's GDP.

Altogether, seventeen countries owe Russia a total of \$27-billion (€24.34-billion), with most of the country's lending made through arms deals or unreported political loans, according to Russia's RBC news website. It was reported in the Moscow Times that 25 countries and other legal entities owe Russia a total of \$39.4-billion (€35.52-billion), including through government bonds. The estimate, which is for this year alone, comes from Russia's Finance Ministry, although Russia classifies data from its export finance and loans programme as a state secret.

In diplomatic terms, the stakes have been raised by Russia's appointment of Mikhail Babich as its ambassador in Minsk. The Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has accused Babich of making up false figures in his media interviews and of confusing an independent state with a federal district of Russia. Unsurprisingly, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has reacted furiously to the claim. Minsk was immediately wary when Babich, a former member of Russia's security services, was appointed. He had been a presidential plenipotentiary to Russia's Volga federal district before being appointed ambassador to Belarus last year, and had been Chechnya's head of government during the second Chechen war. He was previously appointed as Russia's ambassador to Ukraine in 2016, but Kiev rejected his appointment. Putin has also named the ambassador as his plenipotentiary, while there are those in Belarus who see Babich as a governor-general and part of the Russian threat. He certainly seems to be deliberately stirring up tensions between Minsk and Moscow, the very opposite of what most people would expect a diplomat to do. According to the Carnegie Moscow Centre, Babich made several fairly undiplomatic statements during a recent interview with Russia's state-run news outlet RIA Novosti. His comments were what prompted the Belarusian Foreign Ministry's complaints. Babich allegedly found six different ways to say that Russia was proping up Belarus economically (which, given its indebtedness may be at least partially true), and even accused President Lukashenko of using what he dismissed as "laughable examples" when making his own points. He also accused Lukashenko of attempting to whip up the support of his electorate by demonising Russia. The war of words has been heating up, with Moscow apparently determined to reduce its spending on Belarus, as well as replacing Belarusian imports with Russian products, from food items to trucks and ballistic missile transporters. Babich is not concerned about upsetting Minsk (which presumably reflects the views of Putin) because Lukashenko has nowhere else to go. His autocratic style of government would exclude him from any prospect of joining the European Union, and his country desperately needs the economic support of Moscow.

### MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE OR SHOTGUN WEDDING?

Despite the angry exchanges, it seems inevitable that Belarus will merge with Russia, sooner rather than later; Lukashenko said as much in February after a long meeting with Putin. "The two of us could unite tomorrow, no problem," Lukashenko said in a video shared by a Komsomolskaya Pravda tabloid Kremlin reporter on Twitter. "But are you – Russians and Belarusians – ready for it?" Lukashenko was quoted by Interfax as saying, "We're ready to unite and consolidate our efforts, states and peoples as far as we're ready." Citing the interdependence of European Union member states as an example, Putin said that "fully independent states simply do not exist in the world," according to The Moscow Times. Read the words of Babich or Lukashenko and it would seem that Belarus and Russia are on the brink of war. They are not, of course, as Putin's more conciliatory statements confirm. "For us Belarus is the closest ally and a strategic partner," he told a plenary session of the Forum of Regions of Belarus and Russia on 18 July, according to the Belarus news agency, BelTA (eng.belta.by). He went on to claim that relations are built on good neighbourliness and with regard to each other's interests. "Our countries step up political and economic interaction within the framework of the Union State of Belarus and Russia, whose 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary is marked this year."

The row over polluted oil has highlighted and drawn to the world's attention the fractious friendship depicted so differently by the parties involved. But the problems of dealing with the contamination and the costs involved in solving the problem could point the way towards a merger that would suit Putin admirably. He has to stand down definitively as President of Russia in 2024, allowing him, some say, to stand as a candidate to become President of the Russian-Belarusian Union State. If the path towards that goal seems tricky, a little oil should lubricate it nicely. As long as it's clean, of course. And he could always try silencing Lukashenko with chloroform (CHCl<sub>3</sub>).

*Jim Gibbons*





# SLOVAK REPUBLIC

*“Determined action needed to fight corruption in executive government posts and in the police force”*

*says GRECO*

In its evaluation report published last August, GRECO urges the Slovak Republic to strengthen the effectiveness of its legal framework and policies to prevent corruption amongst persons with top executive functions (ministers and other senior government officials) and the police force.

The report was prepared against the backdrop of repeated mass demonstrations demanding stronger integrity of politicians and the police in the wake of the murder of a journalist who was investigating corruption links between the political world and criminal networks.

According to GRECO, there are currently a number of systemic weaknesses that need urgent attention to bolster corruption prevention in Government. An important quali-

tative step would be the adoption of an action plan targeting corruption risks specific to government work. This should go hand in hand with laying down clear integrity standards and rules for ministers, state secretaries, political advisers and senior officials, in the form of an enforceable, well-publicised code of conduct.

GRECO also puts strong emphasis on the crying need for increased transparency concerning top persons in government in order to significantly improve accountability to the people. That is particularly true in several respects: contacts with lobbyists should be put on record and published; all gifts should be duly registered and made public; and more detailed information should be made available to the public concerning asset and interest declarations.

In order to address effectively highly latent corruption problems within the police, GRECO stresses that prevention efforts must truly be stepped up, starting with the drafting of an operational action plan, identifying risk-prone areas and emerging trends. Another key aspect is the revision of the existing Code of Ethics for the Police Force, to go beyond a catalogue of principles and to supplement it with a practical manual providing real-life examples, forming the foundation of police training. Decisive steps must also be taken to ensure that the protection of whistleblowers from within the police becomes really effective in practice so as encourage the reporting of corrupt misconduct, currently inexistent.

GRECO also considers that a number of areas require more stringent rules to



**The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO)** was established in 1999 by the Council of Europe to monitor States' compliance with the organisation's anti-corruption standards.

GRECO's **objective** is to improve the capacity of its members to fight corruption by monitoring their compliance with Council of Europe anti-corruption standards through a dynamic process of mutual evaluation and peer pressure. It helps to identify deficiencies in national anti-corruption policies, prompting the necessary legislative, institutional and practical reforms. GRECO also provides a platform for the sharing of best practice in the prevention and detection of corruption.

**Membership** in GRECO, which is an enlarged agreement, is not limited to Council of Europe member States. Any State which took part in the elaboration of the enlarged partial agreement, may join by notifying the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. Moreover, any State which becomes Party to the Criminal or Civil Law Conventions on Corruption automatically accedes to GRECO and its evaluation procedures. **Currently, GRECO comprises 49 member States** (48 European States and the United States of America).

The **functioning** of GRECO is governed by its Statute and Rules of Procedure. Each member State appoints up to two representatives who participate in GRECO plenary meetings with a right to vote; each member also provides GRECO with a list of experts available for taking part in GRECO's evaluations. Other Council of Europe bodies may also appoint representatives (e.g. the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe). GRECO has granted observer status to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations – represented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). GRECO elects its President, Vice-President and members of its Bureau who play an important role in designing GRECO's work programme and supervising the evaluation procedures.

GRECO's Statutory Committee is composed of representatives on the Committee of Ministers of member States which have joined GRECO and of representatives specifically designated by other members of GRECO. It is competent for adopting GRECO's **budget**. It is also empowered to issue a public statement if it considers that a member takes insufficient action in respect of the recommendations addressed to it.

GRECO's Statute defines a **master-type procedure**, which can be adapted to the different legal instruments under review (see "How does GRECO work").

GRECO, which has its seat in Strasbourg, is assisted by a **Secretariat**, headed by an Executive Secretary, provided by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

boost prevention within the police. This includes stronger security vetting of police members not only upon recruitment but also crucially throughout their career. Further safeguards should also be in place to guarantee that police misconduct is properly investigated, with a sufficient level of transparency so as to gain public trust.

*One excerpt of the August 19th evaluation :*

*« Slovakia has reportedly the highest irregularity and fraud detection rates of EU Member States regarding the use of EU funds.<sup>12</sup> By way of example, two former ministers were convicted in a final judgment for having wilfully disrespected rules on calls for tenders for the attribution of EU funds (see para.146).<sup>13</sup> In another case dating back to 2017, the then Minister of Education resigned owing to suspicion of bribery at the ministry in connection with the allocation of EU funds for research and development, owing to non-transparent procedures resulting in funds being attributed to companies with no records in the field of research or education. This led to the minister having to step down and the allocations of funds being nullified. »*

## EU BECOMES OBSERVER TO ANTI-CORRUPTION BODY GRECO

**T**he Committee of Ministers representing the 47 member states of the Council of Europe has adopted a decision accepting a request by the European Union to become an observer with the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO).

Welcoming this decision, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, said: "This is another example of good co-operation between the European Union and the Council of Europe. Working together to protect the rule of law and to prevent corruption, our actions will be more effective and we will have a greater impact."

The First Vice-President of the European Commission, Frans Timmermans, said: "The European Union's participation in the GRECO as an observer brings the European Union and the Council of Europe closer and reinforces our joint efforts to strengthen the rule of law and fight against corruption across Europe. It is very fitting for this to happen in the year in which GRECO celebrates its 20th anniversary".

The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) is the Council of Europe anti-corruption body. It aims to improve the capacity of its members to fight corruption by monitoring their compliance with anti-corruption standards. GRECO helps states to identify deficiencies in national anti-corruption policies, prompting the necessary legislative, institutional and practical reforms. It comprises the 47 Council of Europe member states, Belarus and the United States of America.

Source: GRECO





# WELCOME!

*(but leave your money by the door)*

According to an old British nursery rhyme:

*“There was a crooked man and he walked a crooked mile,  
He found a crooked sixpence against a crooked style.  
He bought a crooked cat which caught a crooked mouse  
And they all lived together in a crooked little house.”*

These days many crooked men and women (and some who may be merely more astute, I suppose, rather than entirely crooked) have found it necessary to go quite a lot further than a mile to find a crooked little (luxury) house in a far-flung country (possibly also crooked) that is willing to give them citizenship and a passport in return for money. But it will cost them much more than sixpence. Much, much more. However, there is a growing demand for citizenship in a foreign land and a passport that permits visa-free travel. In fact, the world's super-rich spent some \$2-billion (€1.8-billion) a year on acquiring an alternative nationality. Look on any Internet search engine and you will find options by the score. One I found on Google suggests temptingly: “a second passport can be your key to reduced taxes and increased asset protection as well as it is the best to protect your life.” This assumes that for many of those seeking such an outcome, their lives are or will be threatened in some way, either through arrest by the local financial authority or termination by a rival with a somewhat direct approach to competition. Welcome to the wonderful world of citizenship for sale.

Prices vary hugely, but nowhere are they cheap. To become a citizen of Greece or Hungary, for instance, you'll have to fork out just €250,000. How about Latvia? That'll set you back a measly €35,000. But if you want to be welcomed into the United Kingdom as a non-European, be prepared to invest £2-million (€2.19-million) in British companies under the UK's “Tier 1” scheme. It sounds a bit steep but as long as you can prove it's been your money for two years - a UK requirement aimed, albeit somewhat limply,

at discouraging money laundering - then you can sit back for the five years needed to acquire “leave to remain” status, and then cream off any profits your investments have made in order to transfer them to a jurisdiction with lower tax rates, or maybe none at all. The scheme was introduced in 2008, since when, according to Money Week, more than 11,000 people have decided to become expensively British. The irony is that it comes at a time when the government of Boris Johnson and his Home Secretary, Priti Patel, have announced that freedom of movement for Britain's three million resident EU citizens - promised the right to remain by Johnson's predecessor, Theresa May - will cease on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2019. Those still living and working in the United Kingdom are being urged to apply for “settled status” before Britain leaves the EU, assuming the paperwork can

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be processed in time. Businesses are worried about losing vital workers and nobody is talking about what happens to the million or more British citizens resident and settled in other EU countries, as Johnson was himself during his time as a lobby journalist in Brussels. However, doubts have been expressed by experts over the viability of the plan because there is currently no way for an employer in Britain to know if an EU citizen working for them has the required status or not.

### WE LIKE YOU, WE LOVE YOUR MONEY

The difference, of course, in terms of “golden visas” and “residency rights” is that ordinary EU citizens living and working in Britain are unlikely to have the necessary €2.19-million required to obtain that “leave to remain” that is reserved for the super-rich. It’s not the sort of sum you would find you’d forgotten in the pocket of an old suit or down the back of the sofa. “Unbidden guests are often welcomest when they are gone,” wrote William Shakespeare in *Henry VI Part 1*, and such seems to be the sentiment of the British government, promising a much tougher new immigration regime for those arriving in the UK. The British Home Office’s recent record in dealing with people who have travelled from overseas to settle and to work is far from impressive. West Indians who arrived in the post-war years aboard the HMT *Empire Windrush* to rebuild Britain and to replace the men lost in the fighting, were faced decades later with arrests, loss of social security benefits and deportations. They were not made welcome by many at the time and their treatment by the British govern-

ment is nothing short of shameful. The so-called *Windrush* affair suggests the paper-processing capabilities needed to deal with three million EU nationals is unlikely to be adequate and that further scandals await.

Not that these are matters of concern to those seeking an alternative citizenship and the right to live in another country as one of its natives, or at least *among* its natives. One of the many, many companies offering their services in this regard offers a choice: “citizenship by investment, residency by investment, immigration by investment”. In today’s world money not only talks; it shouts, it wheedles and it demands, whilst ordering the construction of impregnable walls around those who own it, regardless of how it was acquired.

And it’s not just the United Kingdom, of course; far from it. According to Transparency International, the EU has “welcomed more than 6,000 new citizens and nearly 100,000 new residents” over the last ten years. It has been good for the economies of the countries involved, generating around €25-billion in direct foreign investment. It’s a very lucrative business for countries that see the prospect of welcoming in more people from foreign shores as a way to make money and, of course, for the companies helping these global travellers to acquire a right to live, work and even to become a citizen of a country other than their own, whilst nevertheless retaining the citizenship of their country of origin.

So, who are these international nomads? They certainly need - and certainly have - more than a string of camels and a tent or two. “Golden visas”, as they are called, live up to their name. You may be surprised to discover that the nationality most commonly represented among those granted Tier 1 status in the UK is the Chinese. The British Home Office says that nearly 4,000 Chinese nationals have entered the UK on Tier 1 visas since 2008.

Money Week reports that Paul Williams, of *La Vida Golden Visas*, told *Worklife* programme’s reporter, Katie Beck, in a BBC interview that people living in countries where the rule of law is weak see overseas investments as “an insurance policy”. Or, as Ben Cowdock of Transparency International puts it, well-connected people in countries with unstable regimes often regard sec-

ond passports as a way to “escape and enjoy the proceeds of their corruption should they find themselves out of favour”.

### RIVER DEEP, MOUNTAIN HIGH, COST OF STAYING HIGHER

The Transparency International report states that within the European Union, Spain, Hungary, Latvia, Portugal and the UK have granted the highest number of golden visas to investors and their families, followed by Greece, Cyprus and Malta. The UK is not even the most expensive once you start to look at the figures (and the small print). To get an Austrian passport might require you to invest up to €10-million before you’ve finished. There must be a few people, I suppose, who are incredibly keen to run up a mountain wearing a *dirndl* and singing about goatherds. The hills may not be alive but they’re certainly expensive.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has produced a number of reports expressing concern about the ease with which dubious individuals have been able to buy residency and/or citizenship in supposedly “respectable” countries as long as they have the money. The organisation, set up in 1961 to encourage economic growth and global trade, is especially concerned that identity cards, residency permits and other such documentation obtained under various global visa schemes can be abused in order to misrepresent someone’s tax jurisdiction, so as to sidestep the OECD’s Common Reporting Standard (CRS) procedures of “due diligence”. Tax dodging, in other words, and possibly worse. There is no requirement for the authorities in a country of which someone is legally a citizen, or at least a resident, automatically to exchange information with another country where that person enjoys a similar status. In these cases, due diligence doesn’t happen.

The organisation points out that Citizenship by Investment (CBI) and Residency by Investment (RBI) represent a high level of risk if they give access to a low personal tax rate on income from foreign investment assets, and which do not require beneficiaries to





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Security camera photo of Finish Police raiding one of Pavel Melnikov's property

spend a significant amount of time within the jurisdiction offering the scheme. According to the OECD such advantages are readily available to the extremely wealthy in far too many places. They can be obtained, for instance, in Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Colombia, Cyprus, Dominica, Grenada, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Monaco, Montserrat, Panama, Qatar, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, the Seychelles, the Turks and Caicos Islands, the United Arab Emirates and Vanuatu. The spread is worldwide and a clear temptation to those wishing to avoid not only tax, but easy identification. Or arrest. Which is why the OECD advises financial institutions around the world to check very carefully the tax residence status of CBI or RBI users. Not all of them do. In fact, the OECD itself has been accused by the Tax Justice Network of “sitting on its hands” over the sale of passports. In Cyprus, two Ukrainian business people were able to obtain citizenship shortly before allegations surfaced that they had embezzled €4.8-billion from the bank they had founded in their home country.

With so much money entering the countries that grant golden visas, one might imagine that the checks to prevent money laundering would need to be especially rigorous, but according to Transparency International and Global Witness they are not. In the case of the United Kingdom, for instance, between 2008 and 2015 there was a period of “blind faith” during which some 3,000 very wealthy individuals brought £3.15-billion (€3.6-billion) in investment money of rather questionable legitimacy into Britain. Since then the scheme has been revised and some of the CBI and RBI acceptances are being re-examined.

## SECURITY CONCERNS

The report by Transparency International and Global Witness also highlights Malta's record, in which passports have been granted to three Russian investors whose names appear on the “Kremlin List”, drawn up by the United States, of businesspeople close to Vladimir Putin and who may have become rich by corrupt means. Transparency International in Russia has published the names of other Russians who are now also Maltese citizens, despite very questionable backgrounds, and a real estate company chaired by a Russian citizen, who also holds a Maltese passport, was raided last year in Finland after suspicions of financial irregularity were raised. The company concerned, Airiston Helmi, is chaired by Pavel Melnikov, a Russian who has held a Maltese passport since 2015. Finland's National Bureau of Investigation told Swedish language broadcaster YLE that it had raided several properties suspected of involvement with financial crime and YLE talked to a number of witnesses who reported that Airiston Helmi had been involved in various multi-million-euro property deals. However, when YLE sent a drone to take aerial pictures of one of the company's premises, it was brought down and the built-in camera removed, although YLE got back the drone. Three people were arrested following the raid by Finnish investigators and four others were questioned. Airiston Helmi reportedly acquired a number of properties on the Turku archipelago, an important shipping corridor with maritime connections to Årland, a Norwegian island by the north-eastern shore of Samnangerfjorden and important in the management of the Baltic Sea. A Finnish daily paper, Hel-

singin Sanomat, quoted a military source as saying that Airiston Helmi's operations had long been of interest to Finland's defence forces. The paper also reported that the company had applied for a helicopter landing site for Russian nationals whilst also buying properties on major marine traffic routes.

Maltese citizenship has long been attractive to Russians, to the point that Věra Jourová, EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, said to the Financial Times in an interview that she cannot understand how so many low-and middle-ranking Russian managers could afford the €650,000 contribution required, plus the necessary property purchase and further investments in stocks and bonds. As the famous Russian Fedor Dostoevsky wrote in *The Brothers Karamazov*: “Too high a price is asked for harmony; it's beyond our means to pay so much to enter.” Or so one would think. Apart from trying to work out where the money comes from, one has to wonder why so many non-wealthy Russian workers need easy and unobtrusive access to vessels plying the Baltic Sea, too.

Affairs in Cyprus have also raised eyebrows. When Cypriot banks found themselves in trouble in 2012-2013, it took a €10-billion bail-out by the Eurogroup, the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The bailout came in return for Cyprus agreeing to close its second-largest bank, the Laiki Bank and imposing a one-off bank deposit levy on all uninsured deposits there, as well as almost half of the uninsured deposits in the island's largest commercial bank, the Bank of Cyprus. Cypriot banks were popular with overseas

investors because of their high interest rates, relatively low corporate tax, and easy access to the rest of the European banking network. A minority of the money held there belonged to citizens of other countries, many of them Russian. The EU's bank deposit guarantee was applied, however, and funds below €100,000 were left untouched, much to the relief of locals, although that didn't help the overseas investors who had been stashing large sums there.

### NOMADIC DREAMS - AT A PRICE

People seek citizenship or residency in other countries for a number of reasons, not all of them dishonest. For example, they may want to migrate to the other country or merely work or study there for a time, setting down a marker, so to speak, in case they opt for permanent migration, perhaps for the sake of their children's futures. It may be that their chosen country allows better visa-free travel to other countries. But it can also be a way of evading prosecution or to avoid international sanctions or - and this is perhaps the commonest - to avoid the OECD's common reporting standards (CRS), the automatic exchange of information between the country of choice and the country of origin. The problem is that to obtain citizenship or residency involves paying more money than most people can afford, making the innocent purposes I've listed relatively unlikely, or at least restricted to the champagne-and-yacht brigade. And before you ask, the United States does not take part in the CRS scheme and it offers green cards - the right to reside and work there - in return for \$500,000. In fact, anyone holding a green card would be subject to reporting under the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, FATCA, which is a US version of CRS, but for new green card holders it can be circumvented by the simple expedient of putting their money in US banks, thus avoiding CRS altogether, especially if it is in the name of an entity and not in their own name. The United States will not exchange information with other countries under the CRS scheme.

Interestingly, the Tax Justice Network lists 56 tax jurisdictions offering passports and residency in exchange for money. The OECD's list contains just 21 jurisdictions it considers too

shady, and that was shortened to 17 just a few days later following successful appeals. The European Union is now tackling the golden visa issue, some would say somewhat belatedly. The Commission made clear that it is deeply suspicious of member states that offer third-country nationals the right to live in an EU state with passport-free access to any country in the Schengen area. A new report promises tougher action. The countries doing so are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and, for the moment, at least, the United Kingdom. "We speak about opening (a) golden gate to Europe for some privileged people who have the



Věra Jourová, EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality

money to pay for citizenship or residence," EU justice commissioner Věra Jourová said, launching the report at a news conference in Brussels, "We are looking at it with concern." The Commission warned that issuing golden visas and passports - often to Chinese, Russian and American investors - can bring corruption and money laundering in its wake. "When it comes to the golden passport schemes we have identified risks related to security, money-laundering, corruption and tax evasion," Jourová said, "and we have concerns regarding the governance and lack of transparency in these schemes." Bulgaria immediately promised to abandon the scheme but is itself gripped by a scandal involving state officials issuing passports to tens of thousands of foreigners in return for simple bribes. The issue is not new and neither is it going away. In October last year, Berlin-based Transparency Inter-

national and London-based Global Witness described EU citizenship and residency as "just like a luxury good" which "can be bought", adding that "By their very nature, golden visa schemes are an attractive prospect for the criminal and the corrupt." The countries that have benefited most financially from the practice are Spain, Cyprus, Portugal and Britain, which gives them little incentive to clean up their acts.

### NEVER MIND THE QUALITY, FEEL THE WIDTH

Indeed, an investigation by Finance Uncovered and The Independent revealed that Britain's Home Office has contracted out its visa service to a company originally incorporated in Mauritius, a known tax haven, but now registered in the United Arab Emirates. VF Global began as a subsidiary of the Swiss travel group, Kuoni, but is now worth some \$2.5-billion (€2.26-billion) and is owned by a Swedish private equity fund. Despite this insecure-sounding existence, it handles some of the most sensitive personal information held by a lot of governments around the world about their citizens. And from the UK Home Office's point of view, this was not just a labour-saving move: it has pocketed \$1.6-billion (€1.45-billion) in profits from the deal. VFS, as its known, stands accused of pressurising applicants into paying extra, unnecessary money they can scarcely afford for so-called "luxury services". Even so, applications from known investigative journalists for visas are often refused. Don't look too closely. The company is doing very well but as its headquarters are in Dubai, it is impossible to obtain copies of its accounts or to look into its financial affairs.

Finance Uncovered investigator Margot Gibbs says the company has offices in 147 countries and that last year alone it processed more than 25 million visa applications, often containing passport details and financial histories, on behalf of the British Home Office and 61 other governments. But although clearly profitable for Britain and for VFS, and although many of the applicants may have ended up paying for premium-price extras they didn't want, these are the small fry. The real money is to be made from those with enough





cash to persuade those in power to open their arms and turn a blind eye.

According to the Tax Justice Network, bought citizenship and residency schemes can be employed as a way of tricking banks into believing that someone lives in a tax haven far away, although they may not have ever left their native country. The bank would then - if it bothered to report banking information about that person at all - report it to whichever country sold them their residency or citizenship. And, of course, some such tax havens choose not to receive information under the OECD's Common Reporting Standard for the automatic exchange of information, so the money, however obtained, simply slips under the radar undetected.

Those in government and authority seem willing to ignore the dangers posed by the notion of citizenship or residency for sale. The EU's record in this respect is hardly spotless: it has blacklisted just 1% of the tax havens available to dishonest EU citizens. The Tax Justice Network believes the OECD is sitting on its hands over golden visas but that the EU's approach is far worse and much too lax. To quote from a recent report: "The largest supplier of financial secrecy to EU member states is the US (4.7 per cent). This is five times the financial secrecy supplied altogether by the seven tax havens blacklisted by the EU - American Samoa, Guam, Namibia, Palau, Samoa, Trinidad and Tobago, and the US Virgin Islands. Four of the top 10 suppliers of financial secrecy services to the EU are EU member states: the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany and France. The Netherlands is the second largest supplier (4 per cent); Luxembourg is third (3.8 per cent); Germany, the sixth largest supplier, is responsible for 3.3 per cent; France, the eighth largest supplier, is responsible

for 2.3 per cent." Some of the findings may come as a surprise, but unscrupulous firms of high-fee accountants and lawyers are always looking for ways to help the super-rich (and the super-crooked) to avoid paying their taxes.

As the report shows, mutual back-scratching and blind-eye-turning is extremely profitable: "Germany supplies more than twice as much financial secrecy services to the Netherlands as the infamous Panama does. Meanwhile, the Netherlands supplies more than three times as much financial secrecy services to Germany as does Panama. Just over 4 per cent of financial secrecy facing Sweden is supplied by the Cayman Islands, where Swedish residents have stored \$11-billion (€9.95-billion) in assets. In comparison, nearly 6 per cent of financial secrecy facing Sweden is supplied by the US, where Swedish residents have stored a whopping \$144-billion (over €130-billion) in assets."

EU member states have managed to block some of the illegal financial activity through the use of the OECD's Common Reporting Standards, requiring an automatic exchange of banking information. But neither the EU itself nor any of its member states has succeeded in getting a CRS-type of deal with the United States. The Tax Justice Network again: "The US alone is responsible for 22 per cent of the financial secrecy targeting the EU that is not covered by an automatic exchange of information treaty, making the US the EU's greatest enabler of financial secrecy, which in turn enables tax abuse, corruption, money-laundering and the financing of terrorism." It's not the sort of behaviour one might imagine Washington would wish to encourage, but the report shows that the United States seems unconcerned about the dangers, even to itself. "The US, which is the largest individual sup-

plier of financial secrecy to 29 countries and among the top 10 suppliers of financial secrecy to 83 countries, does not have any sufficiently reciprocal automatic information exchange treaties in place with most countries."

The rapid growth in the sale and purchase of golden visas has been flagged up by the International Monetary Fund. In most cases, even the massive investment required doesn't entitle the investor to instant citizenship; they have to wait for periods ranging from one year, in the case of Malta, to twelve years for Switzerland. But instant citizenship is there for the asking (and the paying) in Antigua and Barbuda, Cyprus, Dominica, Granada and St. Kitts and Nevis. In only one of those - Antigua and Barbuda - is there any requirement to live in the country for a minimum length of time. Antigua and Barbuda demands that its new citizens or resident spend just 5 days there within a 5-year period. Cyprus is reviewing its rules on instant citizenship.

According to Business Insider, the super-rich want more than the traditional private jets, yachts, and luxury hotels; they're also splashing out on second passports. A survey carried out by GS Global Partners in 2017 found that 89% of people would like to own a second passport, and over 34% said they had looked into investing in a second citizenship.

80% of them also said they would be willing to invest or donate 5% of their annual salary for a second citizenship, more than they spend on monthly rent, in many cases. Of course, quite a lot of countries are prepared to offer Citizenship by Investment or Residency by Investment programmes under which money - a lot of money - invested in real estate and probably also in stocks and bonds gets the rich person a second passport and possibly exemption from paying their taxes or possibly from prosecution, whilst facilitating further criminal activities far from home. But anyone engaging in this sort of activity, becoming in legal terms two separate people, should perhaps recall the words of Oscar Wilde in *The Ballad of Reading Jail*:

"For he who lives more lives than one  
More deaths than one must die."

*Robin Crow*

# MORE GREEN BONDS ISSUED BY SWEDEN

© Kristian Pohl/Government Offices of Sweden



Per Bolund

The Government has decided to task the Swedish National Debt Office with issuing green bonds by 2020. These are bonds that are used to fund budget expenditure on sustainable investments and projects. This bond issue will promote the Swedish market for green bonds and is part of the Government's action to transition to sustainable development.

Green bonds have previously been issued in Sweden by both private and public entities. By 2020, the State will also issue green bonds. The Swedish National Debt Office, responsible for government debt management, has therefore been instructed to analyse how the issue should be carried out.

"The decision that the State will now issue green bonds is an important part of the transition to sustainable development. The financial market plays a key role in this transition, and the Government wants to improve the opportunities for sustainable investments by promoting the market for green bonds," says Minister for Financial Markets Per Bolund.

The Swedish National Debt Office has also been instructed to work with the Government Offices to develop the 'green framework', which will distinguish green bonds from conventional ones. The expenditure items in the central government budget that will be funded by the green bonds will be defined and selected in the framework. They will subsequently be monitored through a reporting requirement.

According to the assignment, the selection of appropriate green expenditures should be based on the climate policy framework and the Government's climate and environmental policy, which is monitored through national work on the environmental objectives that is reported to the Riksdag.

"This assignment marks the start of the preparations needed for the bond issue, such as the selection of which budget expenditures should be included and appropriate maturity," says Mr Bolund.

The assignment is part of the January Agreement, which is a policy agree-

ment between the Swedish Social Democratic Party, the Centre Party, the Liberal Party and the Swedish Green Party.

## BACKGROUND

The Riksdag has decided that the financial system must contribute to sustainable development. The Government is working to make it easier for investors and private individuals to take well-informed and sustainable investment decisions, and to improve information concerning risks associated with climate change and sustainability.

Efforts to promote the development of a sustainable financial market included instructing an Inquiry Chair to analyse the market for green bonds and present proposals on how it could be developed. The report 'Promoting the market for green bonds' was presented on 10 January 2018. The Inquiry's assessment was that the single most important promotion measure would be the issuance of green bonds by the Swedish State.



# BRITAIN AND FRANCE TO STRENGTHEN JOINT ACTION AGAINST SMALL BOATS

**Home Secretary Priti Patel met French Interior Minister to discuss illegal Channel crossings**



Home Secretary Priti Patel and French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner in Paris

**T**he Home Secretary and her French counterpart have agreed to intensify joint action to tackle small boat crossings in the Channel.

Priti Patel met French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner in Paris yesterday evening to discuss what more can be done to deter migrants making the perilous journey across one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.

The pair acknowledged the extensive joint cooperation already taken to tackle the issue of small boats crossing the Channel – but agreed tougher action was needed following the concerning rise in incidents over the summer months.

They also discussed how more resources to intercept and stop cross-

ings along the French coast were crucial – and agreed to immediately draw-up an enhanced action plan to deliver this.

The ministers also agreed that UK teams will work with their French colleagues to increase intelligence gathering in the fight against the organised people-smuggling gangs responsible for driving illegal crossings.

The Home Secretary, Priti Patel, said: I will not let the ruthless gangs of criminal people smugglers continue to put lives in danger – which is why I'm doing everything in my power as Home Secretary to put a stop to these illegal crossings.

We've been working extremely closely with our French colleagues to tackle

the use of small boats but we both agreed more needs to be done.

It's vital we ensure our collective expertise is used to stop the boats from leaving French shores and dismantle the criminal networks driving this activity.

Today's meeting follows the introduction of the joint action plan agreed by the UK and France in January. The plan included over £6 million (£7 million) investment in new security equipment, increased CCTV coverage of beaches and ports and a mutual commitment to conduct returns of migrants under international and domestic laws.

Since January, the UK has returned over 65 migrants who arrived illegally in small boats to countries across Europe.



# FROM GREELAND'S ICY MOUNTAINS

*The real estate bid that's all too real*

When I was small, my mother used to play the piano and sing an old song to me that I never liked. She wasn't being cruel; she genuinely liked it herself. (Some of the others she sang to me I found scary, like *The Erl King*, or *"Erlkönig"* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, set to music by Franz Schubert and utterly terrifying to a small child). At least this one, "I don't want to play in your yard" is merely miserable. First published in Chicago in 1894, it told of a dispute between two children who had fallen out with one another and were no longer on speaking terms. It upset me because as a small boy I knew only too well what it was like to be out of friendship with someone I had liked and with whom I had played. One chorus (there were several) went like this:

"You can't holler down our rain barrel,  
You can't climb our apple tree,  
I don't want to play in your yard,  
If you won't be good to me."

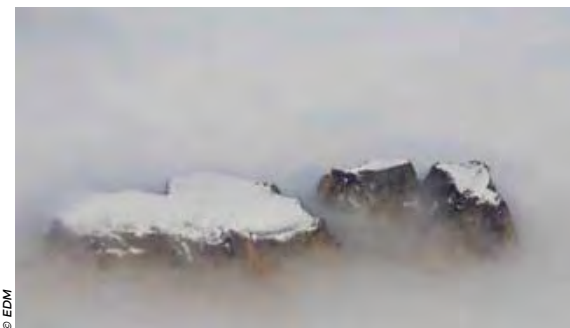
(composer: H.W.Petri; lyricist: Philip Wingate. National Museum of American History)

I was reminded of this old song by the huffy response of Donald Trump to the

reaction to his doomed attempt to buy Greenland from the islanders themselves and from Denmark.

Most of the world's media were amused, possibly even bemused, by President Donald Trump's announcement that he wants to buy the world's largest island. It was a bit like hearing that someone with a lot of cash had walked up to Buckingham Palace and told the Queen he wanted to buy it, complete with its occupants. Greenland clearly isn't for sale, any more than is Buckingham Palace. Trump's tetchiness at the reaction is, perhaps, just par for the course. But while we were all sniggering about this cack-handed bid to enlarge his country, we should take notice of the story's more sinister side. Everyone wants a bit of the Arctic at the moment and we have global warming to blame for it.

The fact is that the retreat of the ice has exposed to potential exploitation some of the world's richest sources of oil, gas and valuable minerals. It's been estimated that the hitherto inaccessible Arctic holds around 13% of the world's yet-to-be-discovered oil reserves and 30% of its natural gas,



not to mention valuable minerals like rare earth metals, zinc, copper, uranium and iron. Large deposits of oil and gas have recently been discovered in the Siberian island of Sakhalin, and now some massive extraction projects are under way there, with Royal Dutch Shell heading a consortium that is building platforms, pipelines and processing plants in the area. The Arctic holds another potential advantage, too: it is becoming increasingly possible to sail from Eastern Siberia to the North Atlantic along what's called the North Sea Route (NSR). For a cargo vessel from China, for instance, that would mean cutting ten days off the sailing time to northern Europe, compared with going via the Indian Ocean and the Suez Canal.



## FROZEN CONFLICTS

Before global warming started to shrink the ice, the eight so-called Arctic nations, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russia and the United States, followed a policy of co-operation. There was no real reason not to co-operate; small disputes like that between the US and Canada over the Northwest Passage got nowhere and were largely ignored, as was Russia's claim to the underwater Lomonosov Ridge that extends to the North Pole. If it served little purpose there was no point in arguing about it. But that has now changed. Seeing the commercial and strategic implications of the retreating ice, Russia has started to build military bases and power plants along its stretch of the Arctic and Trump's clumsy bid to buy Greenland was undoubtedly a response to that. Certainly, it's a cause of concern in Washington. And more and more countries are trying to get in on the Arctic act.

Greenland is an interesting case study. As part of the Kingdom of Denmark, it joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 and remained a part of it until 1985. It left following a referendum in 1982 and three years of often difficult negotiations. It remains, however, associated with the EU under an Overseas Association Decision. One of the negotiators for the European Parliament over Greenland's withdrawal was presented with a dried whale's penis afterwards as a thank-you gift. An odd present, indeed, although some of us tapped our noses knowingly. Greenland is eligible for funding from the EU's general budget through the EU-Greenland Partnership. For the period 2014-2020, an overall amount of €217.8-million is foreseen for cooperation projects with Greenland. The Programming Document defining the cooperation priorities for this period was signed on 28th October 2014. The education, vocational training and post-elementary school system have been chosen as the main priorities for cooperation between the EU and Greenland for the period 2014-2020. A Financing Agreement for €32.11-million for 2018-2019 to support the education sector in Greenland was signed in Brussels between the European Commission and the Government of Greenland in November, 2018.



## GOOD NEIGHBOURS

Earlier in 2018, the European Commissioner for International Co-operation and Development, Neven Mimica, held talks with Greenland's Minister of Education, Culture, Church and Foreign Affairs, Vivian Motzfeldt, to examine the state of relations in the light of the next long-term EU budget. Under the proposed Multi-annual Financial Framework, a new Overseas Association Decision will be applied to the EU's relations with its overseas countries and territories, of which Greenland is one. "Greenland highly values the special partnership with the EU," Minister Motzfeldt said, "It is a political priority for the new government to further our relations. We look forward to working together to confirm and strengthen this important partnership." It's the sort of thing ministers say in such circumstances, of course, and the sentiment was echoed by Commissioner Mimica: "The European Union remains fully committed to continuing and further enhancing our close partnership with Greenland, as defined by our long-lasting historical, political and cultural ties. Our relations remain very strong. Greenland is our key partner in the Arctic, and supporting its sustainable development remains a high priority, as demonstrated through the increase in funding that we recently proposed for the period 2021-2027." Perhaps the most important phrase there is: "Greenland is our key partner in the Arctic." In a warmer world, everyone needs a partner in the Arctic. The Commissioner also spoke of an increased financial allocation for Greenland from €217.8-million to €

225-million for the period 2021-2027.

Greenland's relationship with what was the EEC and is now the EU sounds something like that popular dance, the hokey-cokey: you take one step in, one step out, one step in and you shake it all about. So how did that happen? Greenland is part of the Kingdom of Denmark but it is autonomous. It has a population of roughly 56,700 inhabitants of whom around 88% are of Inuit origin. Its capital city is Nuuk. Denmark has two such independent territories, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, but the Faroe Islands opted for home rule in 1948 and used their independence to remain outside the EEC when Denmark joined. They have since established their own fisheries agreements with what is now the EU. Greenland was granted home rule status in 1979, six years after Denmark signed up, and in a referendum in 1982 its people voted by 53% to 47% to leave the Community, mainly because of its fisheries and their vital rôle in Greenland's economy. The process took three years, despite Greenland never having been fully integrated, a fact that the United Kingdom's Brexiters failed to take into account.

Greenland is not the only overseas country or territory associated with the European Union. In fact, there are twenty-five OCTs, as they're called, spread around the globe from the Poles to the Tropics. All of them are islands and three of them are uninhabited, at least on a permanent basis. Their historic (and colonial) ties are with Denmark, France, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom. They're all important to the politics and economics of the European



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Union without being a part of it, nor part of the EU's Single Market. Their association with the EU is, according to the Treaties, "to promote the economic and social development of the countries and territories and to establish close economic relations between them and the Union as a whole".

In case you're interested, the OCT countries are: Anguilla (UK), Aruba (NL), Bermuda (UK), Bonaire (NL), British Antarctic Territory (UK)\*, British Indian Ocean Territory (UK)\*, British Virgin Islands (UK), Cayman Islands (UK), Curaçao (NL), Falkland Islands (UK), French Polynesia (FR), French Southern and Antarctic Territories (FR)\*, Greenland (DK), Montserrat (UK), New Caledonia and Dependencies (FR), Pitcairn (UK), Saba (NL), Saint Barthelemy (FR), Sint Eustatius (NL), Sint Maarten (NL), South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands (UK)\*, Saint Helena, Ascension Island, Tristan da Cunha (UK), St. Pierre and Miquelon (FR), Turks and Caicos Islands (UK) and Wallis and Futuna Islands (FR). (\* = no permanent population). These are not to be confused with France's Terres d'Outre Mer (TOMs). Unlike the British Overseas Territories, which are not constitutionally part of the United Kingdom or its national territory, the TOMs are integral parts of the French Republic.

Anyone who has ever visited, say, Guadeloupe or Martinique, will know that an item of mail trusted to La Poste there will arrive at its destination in Europe as quickly as if it had been posted in Lyon or Bordeaux, unlike mail posted anywhere in the United States, which can take weeks to arrive. Very efficient people, the French.

## IS HE JOKING?

As for Trump's intended purchase of Greenland, the idea was at first regarded as a joke; but it wasn't. Denmark's prime minister Mette Frederiksen quickly called his idea of buying the island "absurd". A reasonable enough response, one might think - most of the media believed he wasn't serious - but Trump promptly cancelled a state visit to Denmark planned for 2 September, accusing Ms Frederiksen of being "nasty". But he was serious about the proposed purchase, and with reason.

The United States has retained a military presence in Greenland since World War 2, with a number of military bases scattered across the island, including a secret Cold War-era nuclear base called Camp Century. This presence has not been without controversy; almost all the old bases are abandoned in remote locations and, in the case of Camp Century, there are fears that the rapidly melting ice on which it was built will expose the environment to nuclear waste within decades, although it may not, of course.

The only remaining operational base is Thule, sited at a location of strategic importance. But for Greenlanders, it is remembered for the displacement of the indigenous Inughuit community who, in 1953, were given just four days to move away in order to facilitate the expansion of the US military facilities. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen refuses to consider selling Greenland to the United States and it was when she used the word "absurd" that he took umbrage and decided to scrap his acceptance of an invitation from Denmark's Queen Margrethe II to go on an official visit. He considered the word to be an insult, while apparently stating an intention to buy a large part of another country's territory (which is not, incidentally, for sale) is perfectly acceptable, in his view.

In a slightly disturbing way, as noted by the New York Times, the episode displays a very weak grasp of world affairs by the current occupant of the White House. In the last century-but-one, purchasing land was considered normal, whatever the indigenous people living there might think. There was the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and later the Philippine annexation in 1899. But these sorts of acquisitions date back to

the days of empire and colonialism and have no part to play in modern politics. The United States exercises its considerable global power by other means. It gains access to the commodities it needs by the more normal method of trade. As the New York Times points out, "It does so with confidence, because many of its trading partners are connected to it via an intricate system of trade pacts and military alliances. Those alliances are backstopped by hundreds of American military bases around the world. The Pentagon lists 514 overseas bases, though there are surely more." So why on earth does Trump feel he needs to buy Greenland? And why does he get shirty when he's told he can't have it? To that latter question, I have no sensible answer. We're back with the "I don't want to play in your yard," scenario of hurt feelings and playground grouches.

## GOING 'BANG' FAR FROM HOME

According to the New York Times again, as far as Greenland is concerned, Trump shares the widespread lack of knowledge about the scope and nature of American influence. "The result is that most American citizens have only the vaguest sense of the extent and character of the security system that makes their country so powerful. It seems Mr. Trump can be counted among them," the paper says. It reports Trump as saying 'Strategically, it's interesting,' concluding that the United States should therefore buy it. The newspaper feels that Trump knows too little about his country's existing relationship with Greenland. "What he misses is the fact that, strategically, the United States already has use of Greenland. After failing to acquire the territory in 1946, Washington cut a deal with Denmark that allowed it to operate bases in Greenland, the most important of which was Thule Air Base on the northwest coast," says the New York Times, "Over the objection of the Danish government, the United States military stored nuclear weapons in Greenland and flew nuclear-armed B-52s over the country — part of a secret airborne alert program targeting the Soviet Union. Stanley Kubrick's 1963 film 'Dr. Strangelove,' filmed partly over Greenland, depicts this program."



In 1968, a US B-52 bomber carrying four nuclear weapons crashed near Thule, hitting the ice at some 500 miles per hour. The bombs didn't detonate but they did spread nuclear debris over a wide area. The Greenlanders, not surprisingly, saw this as a terrifying near-disaster, and a very serious and worrying incident. Not so Washington, which sees it as proof that distant foreign bases are invaluable. The US military can fly potentially hazardous loads without any risk to American citizens or property.

Denmark is, of course, a member of NATO and in 2013, Greenland lifted its ban on mining radioactive materials there. The United States can simply purchase whatever it needs. As the New York Times reported, Greenland's foreign affairs ministry reassured Mr. Trump "We're open for business," in response to his talk of annexing the territory. In fact, Greenland and Denmark are so closely tied to the United States in both trade and defence terms that the bond makes them virtually inseparable anyway. It's the cost of securing trade and maintaining bases, however, that Trump dislikes. He has threatened to pull the United States out of many existing treaties and trade agreements on the basis of their cost to the US taxpayer. Though Mr. Trump celebrates American military might with parades and tanks, his 2017 budget proposed closing bases, and he has called for troops to be brought home from host countries that, he feels, pay too little towards their upkeep. Mr. Trump wants power over the world, but not presence in it, says the NYT.

## LET'S SEE FOR OURSELVES

Like it or not, Trump is likely to see a significant increase in US presence, however, especially in Greenland. The tourism company Nordic Travel says a lot of Americans have been looking at holidays there since Trump said he wants to buy it. "[T]raffic to our Greenland site increased by more than 2,800%, compared to the same date in 2018," the travel agency said in a statement to CNN Travel. "Ongoing traffic has been up by more than 600% on last year since last Friday." It is an extraordinary boost for an understandably nervous (and rather chilly) country.

"Nordic said 69% of this week's visits to its Greenland site have been from the US, which is a 31% increase from the 2018 equivalent weekly share of 38%.

And when the President tweeted an image of Trump Tower on Greenland, traffic spiked again. This time, it was more than 1,200% compared with last year." Trump did put out a Tweet stating that the composite image had been a joke but with Trump no-one is ever quite sure. Another tour operator, Intrepid Travel, has also seen a dramatic change in interest from visitors eyeing its Greenland offerings, according to CNN, seeing a 237% spike in traffic to its Greenland pages over the weekend, after the frenzy around Trump's comments. Intrepid told CNN it did not have any firm bookings yet, but it had only just begun to offer Greenland trips in the last few weeks. Trump may not like this, being sceptical about climate change, but any of his citizens vacationing there may be able to see for themselves that it's true. Greenland's ice sheet recently lost 11-billion tonnes of ice in a single day. According to CNN, that's equivalent to 4.4 million Olympic swimming pools. Maybe a bit too cold to swim in, though.

## COLD WAR GETTING CHILLIER

But this is only peripherally about climate change; primarily - however clumsily Trump addressed the issue - it's about global power and security. The New York Post pulls no punches. "Trump's approach may be wacky but it does send a serious message to Russia and China — don't mess with us on Greenland," Rear Admiral Nils Wang, a former head of the Danish navy, told London's Sunday Times. "This is a complete game-changer." As Britain's Guardian newspaper pointed out, this is a kind of rerun of the dash for Africa by the imperial nations in the 19th century. They could see the rich resources - a young Winston Churchill described Uganda, for instance, as "the pearl of Africa" (and it is still a stunningly beautiful and fertile country) - so today the big powers are eyeing the riches of the Arctic with a lustful gaze and wondering how best to secure their share (or more than their share) - by military might.

At least one can admire Trump for his direct approach to acquisition. In



April, Norwegian fisherman apprehended a mysterious beluga whale off the arctic coast — and it was equipped with Russian surveillance equipment, according to the Times. China, too, says the New York Post, has designs on Greenland, having purchased a fleet of commercial ice-breakers to help carve out new routes for its silk trade, according to the BBC. The New York Post believes it understands the interest of China, despite it not being an Arctic power. "They're looking for alternate routes of shipping in case they face future problems in the South China Sea or the Malacca Strait," John Dotson, who edits the Jamestown Foundation's China Brief, told The Post. "The Chinese are certainly showing greater interest in the potential shipping lanes through the arctic region, particularly as the climate warms and the ice is melting and those northern sea lanes are becoming more open." Indeed, for China, as we noted earlier, the melting ice offers a faster freight route for its huge container ships.

The New York Post says not all Greenlanders are appalled by Trump's bid to buy their country out from under them. "Hopefully this whole Trump thing makes the Danes wake up and show Greenland some respect," Hanna Jensen, a 52-year-old English teacher in Nuuk, told the Times. "A lot of Danes think everyone here is just a drunk Inuit. But now that America wants to buy us, maybe they can see there is much of value here". And as to any lingering bad feelings over the ill-tempered exchanges when Trump first suggested the purchase, well, they have subsided, says the Post. "Mette Frederiksen and Trump patched things up, Trump revealed. 'She called me, a wonderful woman, we had a great conversation, we have a very good rela-



tionship with Denmark, and we agreed to speak later,' he said of their conversation. 'But she was very nice. She put a call in, and I appreciated it very much.'" The State Department has now declared it will reopen its consulate in Nuuk for the first time in decades. The US opened a consulate there in 1940 in response to the Nazi takeover of Denmark, but closed it again in 1953. Greenland may not be for sale but it still holds promise for Washington, it seems. In a letter sent to Congress and seen by the Associated Press, the State Department says that the US has a "strategic interest in enhancing political, economic and commercial relationships across the Arctic region", according to Britain's Independent. It said a permanent US presence would allow it to "protect essential equities in Greenland while developing deeper relationships with Greenlandic officials and society", and said the consulate would be "a critical component of our efforts to increase US presence in the Arctic and would serve as an effective platform to advance US interests in Greenland". Trump is not the first US president to try to buy Greenland; it was revealed in 1991 that Harry S. Truman, US president from 1945 to 1953, had secretly offered to buy Greenland, although he too was turned down.

## THE FROZEN ISLAND EVERYONE WANTS

So, what about Greenland itself? What makes it so special? It is, in many ways, more closely linked historically to the American continent than to Europe. Its first settlers, in around 2,500 BCE, are thought to have been from northern Canada but their descendants died out, as did the descendants of subsequent waves of settlers, also from the American landmass. Europeans knew

nothing about the place until Icelandic Vikings landed on the south-western coast of the island in the 10th century, apparently finding it uninhabited. They were led by Eric the Red, who had been exiled from Iceland for manslaughter, accompanied by his family, servants and slaves. The ancestors of the Inuit people who make up the majority today are believed to have come from north-western Greenland in around 1200. They survived the "Little Ice Age", from around 1300 to the mid-19th century, but the Norse settlers either died out or moved away. The rulers of both Denmark and Norway were unaware that they had gone and continued to claim the island as their territory. During the Second World War, after the German invasion of Denmark, the Greenlanders increasingly turned towards the United States and Canada.

There are certainly voices within Greenland urging the country (and Denmark) not to be too hasty in rebuffing Trump's advances. They see closer ties as a possible counter to Russia, with its growing military bases, and to China, which announced plans to finance and build three airports on Greenland. The idea was shelved after Denmark agreed to provide low-cost loans for the projects. A former official in another Republican administration, told the Politico website, that the Greenland purchase is a serious geopolitical issue for Washington. "Trump's been asking his government for some matter of months what can we do to make sure that China doesn't get Greenland," said the former official, who has experience in the Arctic. "When China did that, I think that put it on the radar screen of the president." Both the Pentagon and the State Department have expressed alarm about China's growing interest in the Arctic, and have grappled to various degrees with policies designed to reassert an American presence in the region, Politico said. Part of the president's rationale for offering to buy Greenland is that US businesses could profit from the island. Wall Street is certainly keen on the idea of much closer ties, and Wall Street very much has the ear of the President. While American companies would need to invest quite a bit up front, it may take a while before investors see a return on investment. "It will be very profitable," said Walter Berbrick, founding direc-

tor of the Arctic Studies Group at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

Greenland, known to its native inhabitants as Kalaallit Nunaat, is not only the world's largest island (Australia and Antarctica are seen as continental landmasses) but 75% of it is permanently covered by ice, leaving only its south-western fringes as wholly inhabitable. It is the only permanent ice sheet outside Antarctica. At 2.166-million square kilometres, it is the least densely populated country in the world. In 2008, Greenland assumed more power from the Danish government when Greenlanders voted for the Self-Government Act, which transferred power to the Greenland government. Under the new arrangement, Greenland will gradually assume responsibility for policing, the judicial system, company law, accounting, and auditing; mineral resource activities; aviation; law of legal capacity, family law and succession law; aliens and border controls; the working environment; and financial regulation and supervision. Denmark retains control of foreign affairs and defence.

The Greenlanders, with their own language, their own culture and with increasing power over the governance of their island, seem unlikely to want hegemony with the United States, especially if it means having Washington in charge. After all, they preferred the freedom to decide fisheries policy to being inside the European Economic Community. It would take a lot to get them to accept the suzerainty of another nation. The somewhat snuffy imperialist words of the hymn "From Greenland's Icy Mountains" contains the lines:

"They call us to deliver  
Their land from error's chain."

But nobody in Greenland thinks they're in error, nor are they in chains, and they're not about to become pawns in a struggle for arctic dominance among the big powers: the United States, Russia and China. The frozen wastes may be thawing but relations among the three superpowers are not and nobody in Greenland wants frostbite as a result. But neither do they want Trump to say to their government:

"I don't want to play in your yard,  
If you won't be good to me."

*T. Kingsley Brooks*





# TELESCOPE

## *SCHOTT Delivers World's Largest Convex Mirror Substrate for the European Southern Observatory's Extremely Large Telescope*

**In the ELT, M2 will reflect the light from the 39-m main mirror extremely precisely onto the downstream mirror.**

SCHOTT recently announced that it has manufactured a curved secondary mirror substrate made of ZERODUR® glass-ceramic in Mainz, Germany, for the European Southern Observatory's (ESO) Extremely Large Telescope (ELT). The substrate is 10 cm thin, with an extreme curvature, a diameter of 4.25 m and a weight of 3 tons. The substrate was manufactured for the ELT's secondary mirror (Mirror 2, or M2).

In France it will receive its "final touch" there, comprising fine polishing at REOSC, a SAFRAN Group company. The actual mirror layer made of silver with a wafer-thin layer of silicon oxide as a protective film

will be applied at the coating facility of the Paranal Observatory in Chile before it is mounted in the telescope.

The requirements for the casting of the 4.25 m mirror substrate were extremely high due to very narrow specifications for the glass quality. Last year, a highly convex mirror substrate 10 cm thin was ground from the blank weighing more than 10 tons on state-of-the-art CNC machines.

"It was a great challenge for our melting team and the experts running the CNC machines," said Thomas Westenhoff, Ph.D., head of the strategic business field for ZERODUR at SCHOTT. "A workpiece with this geometry had never been manufactured before: The M2 will be the largest convex mirror ever made."

In the ELT, M2 will reflect the light from the 39-m main mirror extremely precisely onto the downstream mirror. After the "First Light," the commissioning of the ELT in 2025 on the

mountain Cerro Armazones in Chile, its performance will provide the sharpest view into space compared to previous telescopes.

SCHOTT is manufacturing the substrate material for four of the five mirror components of the ELT optics: for the ESO's ELT 39-m primary mirror with 798 hexagons (plus 131 replacement segments), the 4.25-m secondary mirror that is now being delivered, the 4-m tertiary mirror, and the segmented fourth mirror (M4).

The first set of 18 blanks for the primary mirror of ESO's Extremely Large Telescope have arrived safely at Safran Reosc in Poitiers, France. The contracts for casting the blanks of the mirror segments, as well as polishing, mounting and testing them, were signed in 2017 with respectively the German company SCHOTT and the French company Safran Reosc, a subsidiary of Safran Electronics & Defense.



© ESO

This is the first segment blank for mirror 1 (M1) of the ELT. Manufactured by SCHOTT, it was completed at the end of August 2018. M1 is the primary mirror of the ELT and, when completed, will be 39 metres in diameter and consist of 798 segments. The ELT is a revolutionary project that will allow astronomers to obtain images of larger planets and characterise their atmospheres, possibly enabling detection of biomarkers that could indicate life on other planets.

Mirror blanks are packed by six into a special wooden transport crate and six of these crates can fit inside a regular shipping container. Sophisticated shock sensors travel with the blanks to measure any sudden acceleration or shock that could affect the blanks.

The shipping container with the first 18 blanks was sent from SCHOTT in Mainz, Germany, and arrived at Safran Reosc the following day. The ELT mirror blanks are made of the low-expansion glass-ceramic Zerodur® and are circular, measuring 1.5 metres across and about 5 centimetres thick. The back of each blank is flat and the front surface is concave. The blanks come in three types with slightly differently shaped front surfaces, depending on the planned location of the segment in the primary mirror. The first primary mirror segments were cast by SCHOTT in 2018.

SCHOTT manufactures the blanks to approximate shape so that Safran Reosc does not need to remove too much material during the polishing process. Safran Reosc will polish the blanks before they are cut into hexagons and receive a final precise polishing using Ion Beam Figuring.

When it is completed, the primary mirror will comprise 798 hexagonal segments and will have a total light-collecting area of 978 m<sup>2</sup>. In total, more than 900 segments will

need to be cast and polished (including a spare set of 133 segments).

Once built the ELT will be the largest ground-based telescope in operation. The telescope is being built at Cerro Armazones in the Atacama Desert of northern Chile. With a primary mirror almost 40 metres in diameter, the ELT will gather almost 100 million times more light than the human eye, which will allow scientists to tackle some of the biggest challenges in current astrophysics, such as the formation of the first stars, the assembly of the first galaxies, the characterisation of the atmospheres of Earth-like exoplanets, or the nature of dark matter and dark energy, among many other questions.

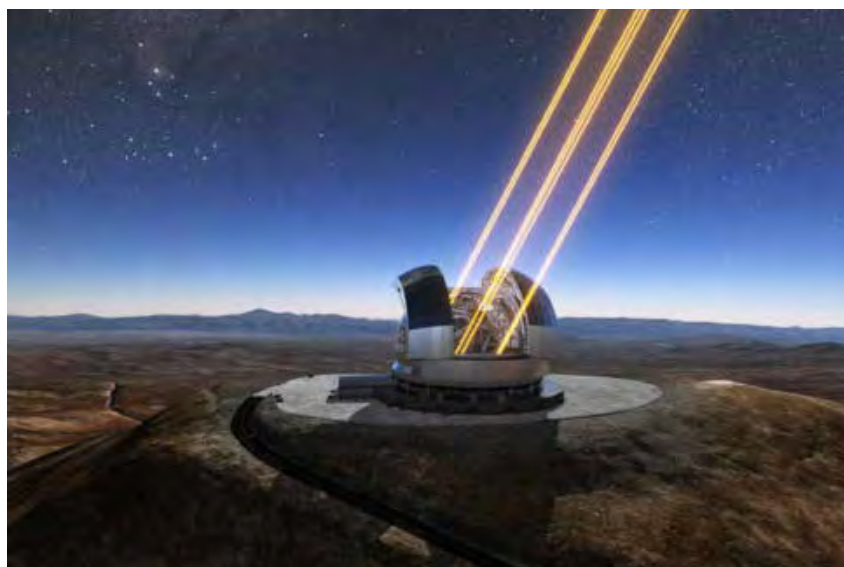
## AN EXTRAORDINARY TELESCOPE CALLS FOR AN EXCEPTIONAL SITE

Great care was therefore taken to ensure that the home of the ELT was the best possible. This required a high, dry site — perfect for observations.

On 2–3 March 2010, the ELT Site Selection Advisory Committee presented a report to the ESO Council concluding that Cerro Armazones, near Paranal, stood out as the clearly preferred site, because it has the best balance of sky quality across all aspects and it can be integrated with the existing ESO Paranal Observatory. Several possible sites in Argentina, Chile, Morocco and Spain were tested.

Cerro Armazones is a mountain at an altitude of 3046 metres in the central part of Chile's Atacama Desert, some 130 kilometres south of the town of Antofagasta and about 20 kilometres from Cerro Paranal, home of ESO's Very Large Telescope (travel info here).

On 13 October 2011, an agreement was signed between ESO and the Chilean government, including the donation of 189 km<sup>2</sup> of land around Cerro Armazones for the installation of the ELT, as well as a concession for 50 years relating to the surrounding area.



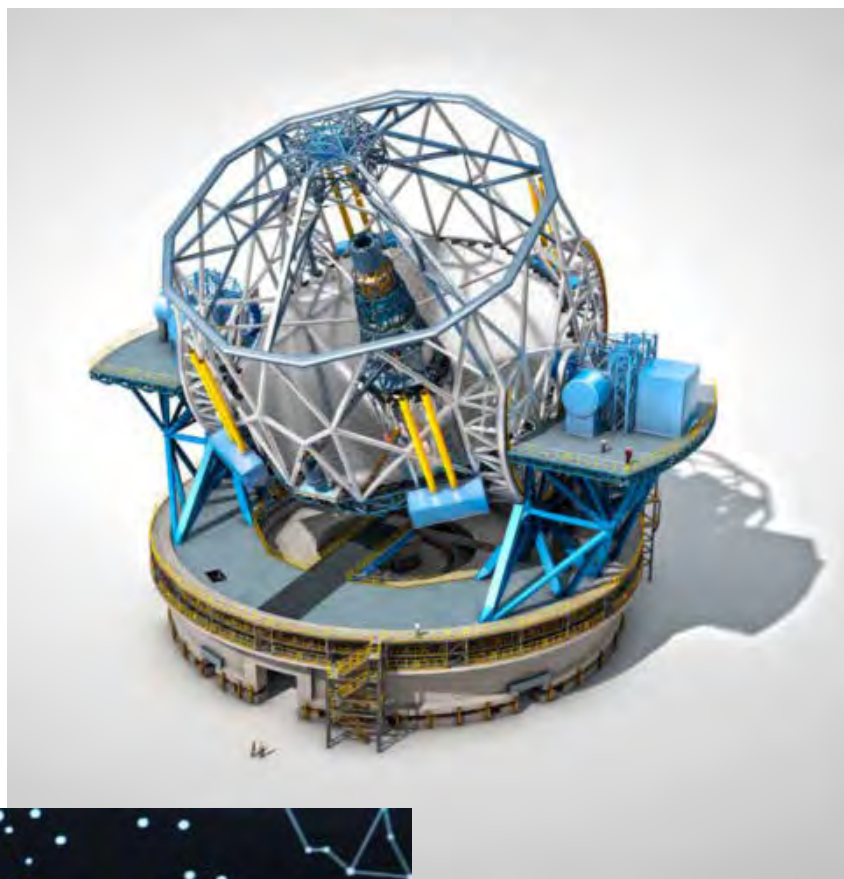
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Artist's rendering of the ELT in operation



## THE EXTREMELY LARGE TELESCOPE

The ELT has a main mirror 39 metres in diameter, covering a field of view on the sky about a tenth of the size of the full Moon. The telescope's "eye" will be almost half the length of a soccer pitch in diameter and will gather 15 times more light than the largest optical telescopes operating today. The mirror design itself is revolutionary, and is based on a novel five-mirror scheme which results in exceptional image quality. The primary mirror consists of 798 segments, each 1.4 metres wide and only 50 mm thick. The optical design calls for a secondary mirror four metres in diameter — the largest secondary mirror ever employed on a telescope, and the largest convex mirror ever produced.



© ESO

The very detailed design for the ELT shown here is preliminary.



On 27 October 2013, the President of Chile, Sebastián Piñera, handed over the signed legal documents by which the Chilean government transferred this land around Cerro Armazones to ESO.

© ESO

Adaptive mirrors are incorporated into the optics of the telescope to compensate for the twinkling of astronomical sources caused by atmospheric turbulence. One of these mirrors, M4, is supported by more than 5000 actuators that can correct its shape a thousand times per second.

The telescope will have several science instruments, and it will be possible to switch quickly from one instrument to another. The telescope and dome — which together will weigh more than 8000 tonnes — will also be able to change positions on the sky and start a new observation within minutes.

The ability to observe over a wide range of wavelengths from the optical to the mid-infrared will allow scientists to exploit the telescope's size to the fullest extent, allowing astronomers to tackle the biggest scientific challenges of our time.

(ELT) is currently under construction in the remote Chilean Atacama Desert.

Source: ESO



© ESO

ELT Foundation Work In 2018



© ESA / CNES / Arianespace / Optique vidéo du CSG - S. Martin

# FRENCH RAILWAYS EMBRACE GALILEO

**The French national rail company SNCF is taking a lead in adopting Galileo technology to boost customer services, in particular in its high-speed TGV network. With almost 50% of TGV trains already equipped with Galileo receivers, European GNSS is enabling improved customer information and traffic management. GNSS is a crucial technology for the digitalisation of infrastructure and autonomous train developments thanks to accurate and safe localisation of trains. Solutions are currently developed through partnerships between space and railway sectors.**

Satellite positioning and geolocation technologies, like Galileo, are among the main technology building blocks that can precisely and safely locate trains and contribute to the future evolution of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS). Implementation of the ERTMS aims to harmonise signalling systems across Europe and European GNSS can help to reduce its costs.

French national rail company SNCF is already embracing GNSS-based systems, in particular for passenger information, and fleet and traffic management. “At the beginning of 2019, some 250 high-speed trains were already equipped with Galileo-ready receivers. This represents nearly 50% of SNCF’s TGV fleet. Some 320 trains are expected to be Galileo-ready by the end of 2019” said Antoine Barre, Head of Train localisation projects from SNCF.

## 70 MILLION PASSENGERS TO BENEFIT

The aim is to deliver Galileo-enabled services along the entire train journey and customer experience. During 2019, more than 70 million passengers will benefit from the improved accuracy and positioning availability delivered to French TGV trains by Galileo. SNCF aims to equip its



entire train fleet with Galileo receivers to assist non-safety relevant train localisation and also plans to further investigate the future contribution of European GNSS within ERTMS. “Having Galileo on the iconic TGV trains is a major milestone for us, confirming that European GNSS is delivering a clear value added to one of the main EU Railway undertakings. It is also good to see that SNCF is further progressing towards GNSS adoption on the regional fleet on the basis of the GSA position paper delivered earlier to the Community of European Railways (CER), explaining the benefits of Galileo for such applications” comments Daniel Lopour, Market Development officer from GSA.

Currently, signalling is enabled by equipment installed along rail tracks that requires regular inspection and maintenance. Accurate and reliable geolocation using GNSS will enable rail networks to reduce the cost related to the infrastructure. Receivers installed in the train and connected via wireless networks should considerably reduce the costs of operation, maintenance and renewal of the network.

SNCF has identified three main themes of work for future rail technologies: geolocation, telecommunication and the use of satellite images for infrastructure monitoring.

## TECHNOLOGY FORWARD

Speaking at the recent Space for Innovation in Rail event in Vienna Corinne Talotte, Director of Innovative Technologies at SNCF, described SNCF’s Technology Forward programme that is looking to build the ‘Railway for the Future’ – a railway that is “autonomous, connected, and zero emission”.

This spirit of innovation at SNCF aims to accelerate the implementation of new technologies. “First, this involves keeping an open mind on innovation and learning from other transport sectors,” says Talotte. “And our second important principle is to move to demonstrate innovative technologies as soon as possible in real operational situations to prepare the future deployment of innovations.”



Highly precise geolocation is a key element to enable autonomy in all modes of transport and future mobility systems. For trains, autonomous operation can increase the density of trains operating in the network while at the same time improving safety and reliability of customer services.

“We need to know accurately the position, velocity and attitude in real time to enable autonomous train systems,” explains Talotte. “We are developing a multi-sensor system for localisation based on GNSS but combined with other inertial sensors. This hybrid approach is inspired by the approach already adopted in the aviation sector. SNCF is undertaking a number of demonstrations with several partners, including the ERTMS user group and the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking.”

## HYBRID ARCHITECTURE

At the Space for Innovation in Rail event Corinne Talotte said that SNCF

was working on the remote operation of trains for use cases like shunting yards and the development of fully autonomous train prototypes.

The hybrid architecture makes it possible to take advantage of the benefits offered by both technologies: the GNSS corrects the natural drift of the inertial unit, and when the GNSS is not available, for example in tunnels or in dense urban environments, the inertial unit can take over to ensure continuity of location data. The inertial unit also protects the system from any possible disturbances in the GNSS signal, such as jamming or spoofing, as well as environmental factors.

The use of autonomous trains with innovative network control systems should enable SNCF to increase throughput on its lines. The objective is to carry more people and more goods, with greater regularity, improved energy efficiency and better economic performance, while ensuring continuing high levels of safety.



© ESA - Pierre Camil

SNCF believes that the autonomous train is no longer science fiction, but the immediate future. A first prototype remote-controlled freight train should be tested during 2019, and the first prototypes of freight and passenger trains with autonomous driving capability are predicted from 2023, with gradual implementation. (source : European GNSS Agency)

## The second Galileo satellite EDRS-C successfully launched

The second satellite to join the constellation that forms the European Data Relay System (EDRS) was launched by Arianespace on 06 August, 21:30 CEST (19:30 UTC). The satellite was launched on board an Ariane 5, together with a second passenger, Intelsat 39, from Europe's Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana.

EDRS enables people to observe Earth almost live, accelerating responses to emergency situations and spurring the development of new services and products, to create jobs and increase prosperity.

EDRS – dubbed the 'SpaceDataHighway' by its private operator, Airbus – uses innovative laser technology to dramatically cut the time needed for Earth observation satellites, to deliver information to the ground.

The latest satellite, called EDRS-C, will operate in geostationary orbit, at 31 degrees East longitude. It will join its sister EDRS-A, launched in January 2016. The satellites can transmit data at a rate of up to 1.8 Gbit/s.

The geostationary position, higher than typical low-Earth orbiting observation satellites, will enable the constellation to maintain an almost constant connection with the low-Earth orbiting satellites that could otherwise only transmit their information when in direct line-of-sight

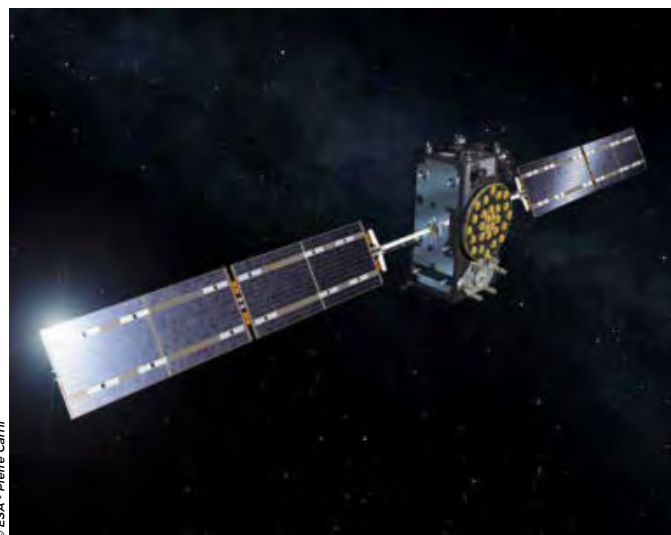
## GALILEO

Galileo is Europe's programme for a global navigation satellite system, providing a highly accurate, guaranteed global positioning service, interoperable with the US GPS and Russian Glonass systems. Galileo's modern and efficient design will increase Europe's technological independence, and help to set international standards for Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS). Galileo is developed in collaboration between the European Union and the European Space Agency (ESA). The complete Galileo constellation will consist of 24 satellites plus spares. With the satellites taking about 14 hours to orbit Earth at altitudes of 23 222 km, there will always be at least four satellites visible anywhere in the world. The satellites will be positioned on three orbital planes at an angle of 56 degrees to the equator, which will provide coverage right up to the polar regions. Galileo also depends on an extensive ground infrastructure, which will have to make sure that time and positioning data are extremely accurate – a single second's clock error means a positioning error up to a range of 300 000 km. This ground infrastructure includes sensor stations worldwide, two control centres, Mission Uplink stations, and Telemetry, Tracking and Command (TT&C) stations.





© ESA - European GNSS Agency



© ESA - Pierre Carril



© OHB System AG

with their ground stations, which introduces delays of up to 90 minutes.

The EDRS satellites can then beam the information back to Earth in almost real time. Since the end of 2016, EDRS has, on a daily basis, been transmitting images of Earth acquired by the Copernicus programme's four Sentinel observation satellites. It is also due to relay information from the International Space Station once a new antenna is installed on the outside of Europe's Columbus laboratory.

The EDRS-C satellite has been manufactured by OHB System AG based on a SmallGEO Platform. EDRS-C also hosts a Ka-band payload called HYLAS 3, which is designed to provide satellite communications services over Africa and the Middle-East. HYLAS 3 is owned by Avanti Communications.

EDRS is a new, independent European satellite system, and is a public-private partnership between ESA and Airbus as part of ESA's efforts to federate industry around large-scale programmes, stimulating technology developments to achieve economic benefits.



## EUROPEAN REGION LOSES GROUND IN EFFORT TO ELIMINATE MEASLES

Following several years of steady progress toward elimination of measles in the WHO European Region, the number of countries having achieved or sustained elimination of the disease has declined. This was the conclusion of the European Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella Elimination (RVC) based on an assessment of annual status updates for 2018 submitted by the 53 Member States of the Region.

The RVC determined that for the first time since the verification process began in the Region in 2012, 4 countries (Albania, Czechia, Greece and the United Kingdom) lost their measles elimination status.

“Re-establishment of measles transmission is concerning. If high immunization coverage is not achieved and sustained in every community, both children and adults will suffer unnecessarily and some will tragically die,”

says Dr Günter Pfaff, Chair of the RVC.

The RVC was, on the other hand, pleased to conclude that Austria and Switzerland attained elimination status, having demonstrated the interruption of endemic transmission for at least 36 months.

For the Region as a whole, as of the end of 2018, 35 countries are considered to have achieved or sustained measles elimination (compared to 37 for 2017), 2 have interrupted the endemic transmission of measles (for 12–35 months), 12 remain endemic for measles and 4 that had previously eliminated the disease have re-established measles transmission.

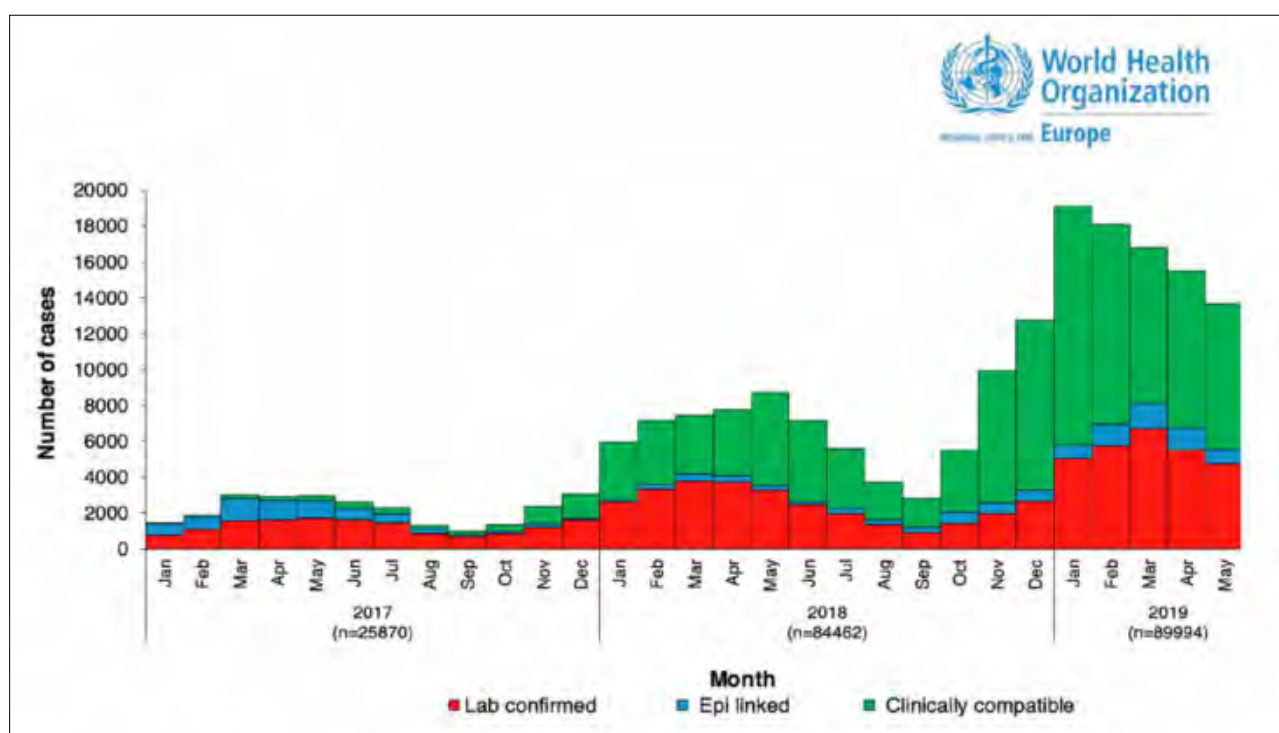
The surge in cases that began in 2018 has continued into 2019, with approximately 90 000 cases reported for the first half of the year. This is already more than that recorded for the whole of 2018 (84 462).

### EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO MEASLES CIRCULATION IN THE EUROPE REGION

The ongoing circulation of measles in the Region continues to be internally classified within WHO as a Grade 2 emergency. This designation allows the Organization to mobilize the technical, financial and human resources needed to support the affected countries.

“Great efforts to control this highly contagious disease have brought us a long way towards regional elimination. However, ongoing measles outbreaks demonstrate that more is needed. Through activation of the emergency response, WHO has increased its focus on measles elimination and upgraded its action. This is the time and opportunity to address any underlying health system, social determinants and societal challenges that may have





Reported measles cases in the WHO European Region, January 2017–June 2019. Source: Monthly aggregated case-based data reported by Member States to WHO/Europe, directly or via ECDC/TESSy, data as of 30 July 2019.

allowed this deadly virus to persist in this Region,” says Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe.

A detailed epidemiological analysis of the measles situation in the Region as of mid-2019 is available in the most recent issue of WHO EpiBrief.

## ELIMINATION VERIFICATION PROCESS

The RVC is an independent panel of experts that meets annually to assess measles elimination status in the Region based on extensive annual reports submitted by each country. It met on 12–14 June 2019 in Warsaw, Poland to evaluate reports for 2018 and based its conclusion on several factors including measles surveillance data, routine immunization coverage, outbreak response, and the reach of supplemental immunization campaigns and other activities.

The RVC also concluded that the situation for rubella has improved. 39 countries achieved or sustained elimination status (compared to 37 in 2017), 3 interrupted endemic transmission (compared to 5 in 2017) and 11 countries continue to be considered endemic for rubella.

## REGIONAL OVERVIEW

A dramatic resurgence of measles continues to threaten the health of susceptible individuals in the European Region. As measles typically peaks in the spring, the number of reported cases declined in June. However, approximately 90 000 children and adults in the Region were infected with measles in the first half of 2019. This is double the number of cases reported for the same period in 2018 (44175) and exceeds the total for 2018 (84462). For the 18-month period of 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2019, 49 of the 53 countries of the Region together reported over 174 000 measles cases and over 100 measles-related deaths. On 6 May 2019, WHO activated a Grade 2 emergency response to measles circulation in the European Region. This allows WHO to mobilize the needed human and financial resources to support the affected countries. Based on the continued need for an enhanced tailored response to the spread of measles, on 5 August 2019 the emergency activation was extended for another 3-month period when it will be reassessed.

## Risk assessment and emergency grading

The assessment of the measles situation in the Region considered number of cases, pockets of vulnerability within countries and the need for accelerated action to stop circulation and prevent future outbreaks. Grading the measles emergency triggered the activation of WHO’s Incident Management System (IMS), which provides a standardized yet flexible approach to managing WHO’s response to the emergency. Since the Grade 2 response activation, WHO has reviewed the situation in all 53 Member States and grouped them based on the needs to contain the ongoing measles outbreak and their health system characteristics. A strategic response plan (SRP) for the entire Region is being prepared and WHO is supporting health authorities in Israel, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine in preparing/activating plans for outbreak response and identifying and addressing any underlying health system challenges that may have contributed to the measles outbreaks.



© EDM

# WADI RUM, THE VALLEY OF THE MOON

**A journey to Wadi Rum is a journey to another world**



© EDM

**A**vast, silent place, timeless and starkly beautiful.. Wadi Rum is one of Jordan's main tourist attractions and one of the most stunning desert landscapes in the world.

It lies some 320 km southwest of Jordan's capital Amman, 120 km south of Petra, and just 68 km north of the port city of Aqaba on the Red Sea.

Uniquely shaped massive mountains rise vertically out of the pink desert sand, which separate one dark mass from another in a magnificent desert scenery of strange, breathtaking

beauty with towering cliffs of weathered stone..

The faces of the sheer rock cliffs have been eroded by the wind into faces of men, animals and monsters.

Everywhere in this extraordinary landscape are indications of man's presence since the earliest known times. Scattered around are flint hand axes, while on the rocks at the feet of the mountains are scratched the names of ancient travelers. The inscriptions of Anfaishiyya reveal a series of etchings depicting camels, warriors, and animals that cover a stretch of the huge rock face.

The ancient Nabatean peoples, who first emerged in the 4th century BC and who inhabited these regions until 106 AD have also left their mark in the form of rock paintings, carvings, water systems in key areas, and of course temples and other architectural marvels, especially around Petra.

But today, all around, there is emptiness and silence...in this immense space, man is dwarfed into insignificance.

The valley floors are some 900-1000 meters above sea level, and the great sandstone crags rise sheer, a further 500-550 meters. Jabal Rum is the highest peak in the area and the second highest in Jordan.

The highest elevation in Jordan is, in fact, Jamal Umm al Dami, culminating at 1,840 metres and located 30 kilometres south of Wadi Rum village. On a clear day, it is possible to see the Red Sea and the Saudi border from its peak.

Others are some 27 km north of Wadi Rum village, such as Jabal Kharaz and Jabal Burdah with its Rock Bridge, a spectacular 260-foot-high natural bridge that is truly breathtaking. It is one of Wadi Rum's most popular attractions.



There are many ways to explore this fragile, unspoiled desert retreat. Serious trekkers will be drawn to Wadi Rum, with challenging climbs some 1750m high, while casual hikers can enjoy an easy course through the colourful hills and canyons.

Naturalists will be drawn to the desert in springtime, when rains bring the greening of the hills and an explosion of 2000 species of wildflowers. Red anemones, poppies and the striking black iris, Jordan's national flower, all grow by the roadside and in more quiet reaches.

Visitors to Wadi Rum usually see very few animals because most desert creatures are nocturnal, to avoid the daytime sun, and many of the larger ones are now reduced to very low numbers.

However, if you take the time to look carefully, you are likely to encounter a number of interesting birds, insects and reptiles – and some desert plants.

Trees are rare in Wadi Rum and restricted to three types: Acacias, False Figs and Tamarisks. The Acacias, with their flat tops and spiny, sparse branches, are the most typically desert-looking tree.

The plants you will see most often are the short, woody shrubs scattered across the desert, which consist of three main species: White Saxaul, Jointed Anabasis and Hammada salicornica.

These provide an important food source for Bedouin goats and camels, especially in the summer months, when the smaller succulent desert plants have all dried up.

The sparse desert scrub harbors a surprising variety of small birds, of which the most common is the buff colored Desert Lark. Other common but more distinctive birds are the black and white Mourning Wheatear and the White Crowned Black Wheatear, whose name gives away its striking color pattern.

You are also likely to see African Rock Martins wheeling across the scrub and along the cliffs during the summer months, as well as passing flocks

of Tristram's Grackle, showing their orange wing flashes.

In early spring and autumn, Wadi Rum becomes an important flyway for birds migrating between Africa and Eastern Europe, especially for birds of prey, like Steppe Buzzards, Honey Buzzards and Steppe Eagles. It is possible to see hundreds of these birds on a single day.

Reptiles are widespread in Wadi Rum, but do not exist in high numbers. This may be considered fortunate by some visitors, since there are ten species of snake, of which two are very poisonous vipers: *Cerastes gasperettii* and *Echis coloratus*.

The *Cerastes* has the classic 'side-winder' movement and leaves indented 'S' shaped tracks in the sand. It should be stressed, however, that bites from these snakes are extremely rare; the vast majority of visitors never see them.

Down on the sand, one common small creature is a black beetle with very long legs called a Blaps beetle. It is frequently seen crossing areas of open sand during the daytime, where it tiptoes to keep its body off the hot ground.

Other kinds of invertebrates (insects, spiders and their allies) have different strategies for keeping cool, such as making burrows and hiding under stones.

One group of renowned animals that can be found frequently under stones in Wadi Rum are scorpions.

A total of eight kinds have been recorded so far, from large brown ones to small yellow ones. It is the small, yellow ones that give the most painful sting, although like snakes, few visitors see them and very few ever get stung.

Stunning in its natural beauty, Wadi Rum epitomizes the romance of the desert. Now the home of several Bedouin tribes, Wadi Rum has been inhabited for generations. These hospitable and friendly desert people are settled in Wadi Rum in scattered nomadic camps throughout the area.

Visitors who are invited to share mint



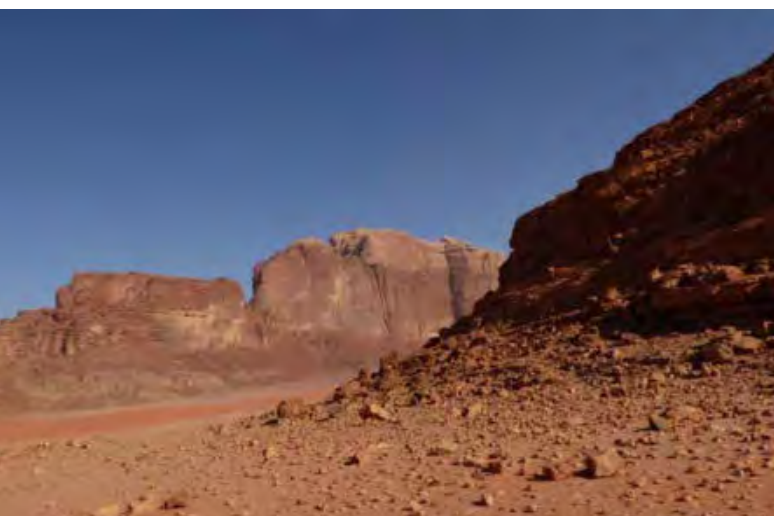
tea or cardamom coffee in their black tents, perhaps sitting by the fire under a starry desert sky, will have an experience not to be forgotten.

Wadi Rum is home to the Zalabia Bedouin who have made a success of developing eco-adventure tourism as their main source of income. The area is one of Jordan's important tourist destinations, and attracts an increasing number of foreign tourists, particularly trekkers and climbers, but also for camel and horse safaris or simply day-trippers from Aqaba or Petra.

Its luxury camping retreats have also spurred more tourism to the area. Popular activities in this desert environment include camping under the stars, riding Arabian horses, hiking and rock-climbing among the massive rock formations. All terrain vehicles (ATVs) and Jeeps, as well as excursions in hot air balloons are also available.

But for the ultimate adventure, there are the Microlight Flights, offered by The Royal Aero Sports Club of Jordan. Experienced ultralight aviation pilots take one passenger at a time for a cruise at speeds of 90 to 100 km/hour at altitudes of 1000 to 1200 metres, which are ideal for photography and filming of the rock formations and sand dunes.

Wadi Rum is probably best known because of its connection with the enigmatic British officer T.E. Lawrence, who was based here during the Great Arab Revolt of 1917-18, and as the setting for the film about his exploits in the region, "Lawrence of Arabia", shot in 1962.



© Photos: EDW

One of the area's main attractions is the ruins of a house, erected on the Nabatean ruins of a water cistern where, according to legend, "Lawrence of Arabia" lived during the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans.

There is also the Lawrence Spring: Marked by a water tank near the entrance of Wadi Shallalah, this spring is named after T.E. Lawrence who famously made the area his military base and home.

The official name of the small spring is Ain Abu Aineh, and views are spectacular from the top. This spring, on the edge of the open sands, is a regular stop on the 4WD circuit.

Another important historical aspect of Wadi Rum is on display at the Hejaz Railway desert stop.

The refurbished locomotive sitting at this desert station invokes the memory of the century-old conflict that helped shape the modern Middle East.

In 1916, when the world was at war, and much of the Arabic-speaking world was controlled by the Ottoman Turkish Empire, the Allied leadership - Britain, France and Russia - sought to force the Turks out of the region; they urged Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Mecca, to join them and take up arms against the Ottomans in return for Arab independence.

Under the leadership of Hussein's son, Prince Faisal—and with assistance from the illustrious T.E. Lawrence "of Ara-

bia"—the Arabs fought a guerilla-style war by interrupting train passages on the Hejaz Railway.

In the first three weeks of May 1918 alone, the Arabs destroyed railway tracks on 25 separate occasions. These attacks on transportation systems wreaked havoc on Turkish lines of communication and were instrumental in defeating the Turks and ending the Great War.

The origins of the modern Middle East thus trace their way back to the attacks on the trains of the Hejaz Railway. The refurbished steam locomotive at the Hejaz Wadi Rum stop puts that history on display for today's audiences.

Visitors can walk the perimeter of the train and take pictures, or step inside to observe the compartments.

On certain occasions, visitors can even pay to board the train and partake in a mock battle during a show put on by the Jordan Heritage Revival Company.

Wadi Rum may be on your travel list for its visual parallels to the arid, crimson landscapes of Mars and the mysterious, barren spaces on the Moon, but a stop at historical attractions such as the desert's Hejaz Railway station is well worth the time.

Because finding unique, historical gems within famous destinations is often one of the most rewarding parts of travel.





## *Villa et Jardins Ephrussi de Rothschild Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, France*

**V**illa Ephrussi de Rothschild, also called **Villa Île-de-France**, is a French seaside villa located at Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat on the French Riviera.

The villa was designed by the French architect Aaron Messiah, and constructed between 1905 and 1912 by Baroness Béatrice de Rothschild (1864–1934).

A member of the Rothschild banking family and the wife of the banker Baron Maurice de Ephrussi, Béatrice de Rothschild built her rose-colored villa on a promontory on the isthmus of Cap Ferrat, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. The Baroness filled the mansion with antique furniture, paintings by Old Master, sculptures, *objets d'art*, and assembled an extensive collection of rare porcelain.

The gardens are classified by the French Ministry of Culture as one of the Notable Gardens of France.

On her death in 1934, the Baroness

donated the property and its collections to the Académie des Beaux Arts division of the Institut de France and it is now open to the public.

The villa is surrounded by nine gardens, each on a different theme: Florentine, Spanish, « à la française », exotic, a stone garden, a Japanese garden, a rose garden, Provençal and a garden de Sèvres. They were created between 1905 and 1912 under the direction of landscape architect Achille Duchêne.

The garden was conceived in the form of a ship, to be viewed from the loggia of the house, which was like the bridge of a vessel, with the sea visible on all sides. It was inspired by a voyage she made on the liner *Île de France*, and the villa was given that name. The thirty gardeners who maintained the garden were dressed as sailors, with berets with red pom-poms.

The Garden à la française is the largest garden and occupies the area behind

the villa. Next to the villa there is a terrace with a formal French garden and topiaries. Beyond the terrace is a park with palm trees and a long basin, ornamented with fountains, statues, and basins with water lilies and other aquatic plants. On the far end of the park is a hill covered with cypress trees, surrounding a replica garden of the Temple of Love at the Petit Trianon palace. The slope below the temple has a cascade of water in the form of a stairway, which feeds into the large basin.

A stairway from the French garden descends to the circle of gardens on the lower level. The Spanish garden features a shaded courtyard and fountain, with aromatic plants, Catalan amphorae, and a Gallo-Roman bench. The Florentine garden, facing the harbour of Villefranche-sur-Mer, has a grand stairway, an artificial grotto, and a marble statue of an ephebe. Beyond the Florentine garden is the lapidary, or stone garden, with



1905, Work begins on the gardens



an assortment of gargoyles, columns, and other architectural elements from ancient and medieval buildings. The Japanese garden has a wooden pavilion, a bridge, and lanterns. The exotic garden features giant cactus and other rare plants. A rose garden with a statue surrounded by columns adjoins it, where pink, the favourite colour of the owner, is predominant. On the east side of the villa is a garden of native plants of Provence and a garden with decorations of Sèvres porcelain.

The villa was registered as a historical monument in 1996.

## THE VILLA : PAST AND PRESENT

### 1864

#### Béatrice de Rothschild is born

Béatrice was the daughter of the baron Alphonse de Rothschild, a banker and renowned art collector. At the age of 19, she married Maurice Ephrussi, a Parisian banker of Russian origin, 15 years her senior, and a friend of her parents. The marriage quickly turned sour for Béatrice. She contracted a serious illness from Maurice, which prevented her from having children. Maurice was a gambler and in 1904, his debts totalled over 12 million gold francs, the equivalent of 30 million euros today.

### 1904

#### Maurice and Béatrice divorce

Worried about the future, the Rothschild family decided to bring Maurice to court in order to file for a divorce. They won the case and in June 1904, after 21 years of marriage, the divorce of Béatrice de Rothschild

and Maurice Ephrussi was officially pronounced. Béatrice then turned her attention to one of her great passions: collecting art. Béatrice had inherited her keen eye and her taste for beautiful objects from her family, renowned for the remarkable collections built up by several of her relatives over the years. Her motto was '*Ars Patriae Decus*': '*Art is the honour of the fatherland*'. She acquired many items—a Tiepolo ceiling, eighteenth-century furniture, a games table that had once belonged to Marie Antoinette, and a rug commissioned by Louis XIV—to furnish the future villa.

### 1905

#### Beatrice discovers Cap Ferrat

Béatrice's father died in 1905 and the Baroness inherited his immense fortune. That same year, she decided to construct her dream home in Cap Ferrat. When she first discovered this plot of land, she was immediately seduced by the beauty of the surroundings. However at the time, the site was rather inaccessible—it was little more than a barren rocky area traversed by a mule track. When she learned of the sale of the terrain and that the Belgian King, Léopold II, was also interested in it, she purchased it without hesitation.

### 1905

#### Work begins on the gardens

Work on the gardens began immediately and took seven years to complete. The Baroness called upon the talents of several renowned personalities such as Harold Peto and Achille Duchêne, highly prized landscape architects in Europe and the United States at the time. The site chosen for the Villa was not particularly con-

ducive to the creation of a garden. Indeed, creating a park on a rocky promontory covered with trees and exposed to strong winds was quite a tour de force. The Baroness had the ground dynamited and large quantities of earth were brought in to relevel the surface. Hundreds of Italian workers were hired for these large-scale levelling works.

### 1907

#### Work begins on the Villa

Béatrice Ephrussi was especially fastidious when it came to the choice of an architect. She refused projects submitted by a dozen or so leading architects, considering them as 'idiotic'. The projects proposed by Claude Girault, architect of the Petit Palais and Henri-Paul Nénot, recipient of the Grand Prix de Rome and designer of the new Sorbonne, were also rejected. Architect Jacques-Marcel Auburtin was eventually entrusted with the design of the Villa, having scrupulously met all of Béatrice Ephrussi's requirements. He was assisted by Aaron Messiah, an architect from Nice who would go on to build several villas for the aristocracy.

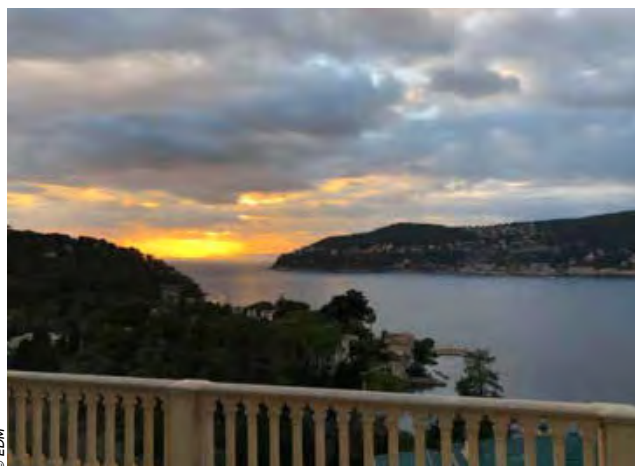
### 1912

#### Landscaping the gardens

When the Baroness moved into the Villa, four hectares of the gardens were still to be landscaped. The Baroness had given priority to those areas of the grounds visible from the house, i.e. the French formal garden.

She spared no expense or effort when it came to landscaping the grounds of the Villa, and even created a veritable mobile and living decor in her





endeavour to design the French formal garden. It was not uncommon to see her employees hidden in pyramids of green cardboard, representing cypress trees, or manoeuvring long strips of silver, grey and green fabric in an attempt to determine the exact location of the ponds, driveways and flower beds...

## 1912

### The Baroness moves into the Villa

Béatrice made the Villa her winter residence and came here regularly for a period of ten or so years, dividing her time between Paris, Monaco and Deauville.

The Baroness Ephrussi de Rothschild made her Villa a true haven for art collectors with porcelain, furniture and paintings by the Great Masters. The Villa was decorated in the Rothschild style, i.e., with the best from each era, resulting in a somewhat eclectic mix!

The Baroness furnished her Villa directly at the Gare de Beaulieu. A train would arrive from Paris, loaded with furniture and works of art. The Baroness would select the artworks for her Villa on the platform of the train station! Those works not selected for the Villa Ephrussi would furnish her villa in Monaco.

## 1933

### Béatrice bequeaths her collection to the Académie des Beaux-Arts

A year before her death, Béatrice bequeathed her Villa and the entirety of its collections to the Académie des Beaux-Arts. The Académie also received the 7 hectares of land and some 5,000 works of art.

## 1934

### Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild passes away

Suffering from tuberculosis, Béatrice retired to Davos in Switzerland where she passed away. One of her relatives would describe Béatrice on her deathbed in the following words: *'she was still beautiful, with the snowy halo of her hair surrounding the deathly pallor of her face'*.

That same year, the landscape architect Louis Marchand was entrusted with designing the themed gardens of the estate: a Spanish, Florentine, Japanese, and Mexican garden. Such variety would surely have pleased the first occupant of the premises. He also had water put in the fountains and renovated the French formal gardens.

## 1945

### Following the Second World War

During the war, Cap Ferrat was deserted by its inhabitants and the area was mined. The Villa remained unattended and the gardens abandoned for two years. When Louis Marchand returned to the Villa after the war, he quickly began work on the badly neglected gardens, soon restoring them to their pre-war splendour. The building was also renovated, and a new colour scheme chosen for the facades: once ochre yellow, the Villa was painted in reddish-pink hues, providing it with a Venetian air.

## 1985

### A harsh winter

This year was marked by a particularly harsh winter. As the Villa's lavish gardens are more exposed to the cold wind than other gardens on the cape,

the estate lost many of its tall, beautiful trees and almost all of the Mexican garden.

The Marnier Lapostolle family, who lived in the neighbouring villa and were friends of the former head gardener and the owners of a remarkable collection of cacti and rare plants, offered many of the plants from their own collection to the Villa Ephrussi in an effort to restore the devastated Mexican garden, today referred to as the 'exotic garden'.

## 1991

### Culturespaces named delegatee

The Académie des Beaux-Arts entrusted the management of the site to Culturespaces. The latter has overseen the renovation of the Villa's interior, and the restoration of the gardens, respecting the original plan designed by Louis Marchand. Culturespaces is responsible for organizing several events at the site, including the Fête des Roses et des Plantes (Rose and Plant Festival) showcasing the Villa's splendid gardens.

**The Villa is open 365 days a year from 10 a.m to 6 p.m, except:**

July and August: from 10 a.m to 7 p.m

From November to January: Monday to Friday from 2 p.m to 6 p.m. / weekends and holidays from 10 a.m to 6 p.m.

*Last admission 30 minutes before closing.*

**The cultural gift shop is open during the Villa's opening times.**

**The tea room is open only on weekends from November to January.**

06230 Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat

Tél : 04 93 01 33 09

Fax : 04 93 01 31 10

# TIMELESS CHIC

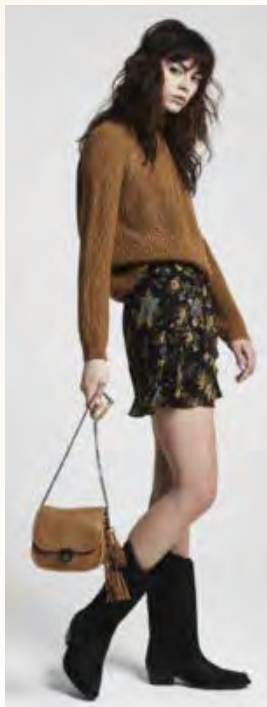
## Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

By Clara Bauman

### *We all want a handbag in camel !*

It is small, because ever since Jacquemus launched the Chiquito at the last Fashion Week event, and which was so small that it could only hold a lipstick or a credit card, micro bags are the trend now. And camel, because this warm and natural tone evokes the colours of the Indian summer.

Our selection has taken inspiration from these trends, except that these models, fortunately, can also hold at least a smartphone and a key ring as well. At the very least !



© IKKS



Suede bag  
with shoulder strap  
([ikks.com](http://ikks.com))



Leather bag with shoulder  
strap and studded trim  
([lilu.be](http://lilu.be))



Twin-textured leather shoulder  
bag with studded trim  
([michaelkors.com](http://michaelkors.com))



([longines.fr](http://longines.fr))

### *It's time to be on time !*

During this month of good resolutions, Longines makes us feel like being punctual with its "Conquest Classic" quartz watch.

What are the selling points ?

- Round, stainless steel case (34 mm in diameter) set with 11 diamonds (0,074 carats)
- Clock face in sublime, white mother-of-pearl.
- EOL function (indicates the end of life of the battery)
- Bracelet with a triple security lock.

### *To the « Moonsun » and back*

It's when the brand with the world's most famous crystals teams up with the actress Penelope Cruz that a most desirable collection is born : "Moonsun".

On the agenda : rings, necklaces, brooches and ear rings, all inspired by Penelope's fascination with the stars and space.

Stars and crescent moons are to be found among the guest appearances in a collection that will make you sparkle at all times of day and night.



([swarovski.com](http://swarovski.com))



© SWAROVSKI



# TIMELESS CHIC

## Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

By Clara Bauman

### *Dress code : Everyone in blazers !*

More elegant than a denim jacket and lighter than an overcoat, come autumn, the blazer reclaims its rightful place as an indispensable item in our wardrobes. As for the fabrics, textures range from the opulent to the enfolding (wool, tweed but also corduroy and velvet which are making a strong come-back).

### *Fashion inspiration*

So, how will the blazer be worn in 2019-2020 ?



Glam rock, with hot pants... it's a knockout !  
([sarahdesainthubert.be](http://sarahdesainthubert.be))



With that androgynous allure  
([lesvraiesfilles.com](http://lesvraiesfilles.com))



Subdued in tone but very stylish in its  
"skirt suit" version  
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## Must haves



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# BOOKS

## CALL SIGN CHAOS

By: *Jim Mattis and Bing West*

LEARNING TO LEAD



A clear-eyed account of learning how to lead in a chaotic world, by General Jim Mattis—the former Secretary of Defense and one of the most formidable strategic thinkers of our time—and Bing West, a former assistant secretary of defense and combat Marine. *Call Sign Chaos* is the account of Jim Mattis's storied career, from wide-ranging leadership roles in three wars to ultimately commanding a quarter of a million troops across the Middle East. Along the way, Mattis recounts his foundational experiences as a leader, extracting the lessons he has learned about the nature of warfighting and peacemaking, the importance of allies, and the strategic dilemmas—and short-sighted thinking—now facing our nation. He makes it clear why America must return to a strategic footing so as not to continue winning battles but fighting inconclusive wars. Mattis divides his book into three parts: Direct Leadership, Executive Leadership, and Strategic Leadership. In the first part, Mattis recalls his early experiences leading Marines into battle, when he knew his troops as well as his own brothers. In the second part, he explores what it means to command thousands of troops and how to adapt your leadership style to ensure your intent is understood by your most junior troops so that they can own their mission. In the third part, Mattis describes the challenges and techniques of leadership at the strategic level, where military leaders reconcile war's grim realities with political leaders' human aspirations, where complexity reigns and the consequences of imprudence are severe, even catastrophic. *Call Sign Chaos* is a memoir of a life of warfighting and lifelong learning, following along as Mattis rises from Marine recruit to four-star general. It is a journey about learning to lead and a story about how he, through constant study and action, developed a unique leadership philosophy, one relevant to us all.

## TRIPLE-AXIS

By: *Ariane Tabatabai, Dina Esfandiary*

IRAN'S RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA AND CHINA

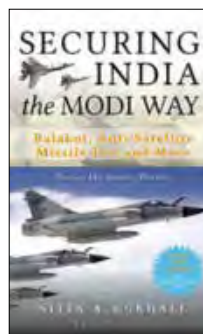


The most significant challenge to the post-Cold War international order is the growing power of ambitious states opposed to the West. Iran, Russia and China each view the global structure through the prism of historical experience. Rejecting the universality of Western liberal values, these states and their governments each consider the relative decline of Western economic hegemony as an opportunity. Yet cooperation between them remains fragmentary. The end of Western sanctions and the Iranian nuclear deal; the Syrian conflict; new institutions in Central and East Asia: in all these areas and beyond, the potential for unity or divergence is striking. In this new and comprehensive study, Ariane Tabatabai and Dina Esfandiary address the substance of this 'triple axis' in the realms of energy, trade, and military security. In particular they scrutinise Iran-Russia and the often overlooked field of Iran-China relations. Their argument - that interactions between the three will shape the world stage for decades to come - will be of interest to anyone looking to understand the contemporary international security puzzle.

## SECURING INDIA THE MODI WAY

By: *Nitin A Gokhale*

BALAKOT, ANTI SATELLITE MISSILE TEST AND MORE



The Narendra Modi government, ever since it came to power in May 2014, has made several departures from the past in India's foreign and national security policies. The Prime Minister's personal attention to these two aspects of governance has set new benchmarks. These decisions have made the world sit up and take notice of a more confident and assured Indian government, not afraid to take potentially risky decisions. In *Securing India the Modi Way: Pathankot, Surgical Strikes and More*, released in September 2017, Nitin A. Gokhale provided the most intimate and sweeping account of Team Narendra Modi's approach to national security and foreign policy initiatives. This revised and updated edition includes details of how the unprecedented decisions to strike a Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorist camp at Balakot inside Pakistan and to carry out a test to acquire the capability to destroy a satellite in space, were taken. Drawing on internal discussions, as yet unknown information, meeting notes and hours of interviews with key players in the national security team, Gokhale brings alive inside stories of policy formulation at the highest levels in the government. Painstakingly researched, the book details hitherto unknown aspects of the planning and execution of the Balakot strike, the aerial dogfight between Indian and Pakistani air forces and India's quiet diplomacy in turning the situation around in Maldives. The earlier edition had details surgical strikes, revamping of New Delhi's policy towards China and Pakistan, India's renewed outreach to the Middle East, Prime Minister Modi's attempt to leverage the Indian diaspora worldwide and his attention to smallest of details besides focusing on some small but far-reaching steps taken to secure India in every possible way-on land, in space, cyber and maritime domains. The book in many ways is the first authentic account of the Modi government's decision making process on vital issues.

## THE TESTAMENTS

By: *Margaret Atwood*

THE SEQUEL TO THE HANDMAID'S TALE



Margaret Atwood's dystopian masterpiece, *The Handmaid's Tale*, has become a modern classic—and now she brings the iconic story to a dramatic conclusion in this riveting sequel. More than fifteen years after the events of *The Handmaid's Tale*, the theocratic regime of the Republic of Gilead maintains its grip on power, but there are signs it is beginning to rot from within. At this crucial moment, the lives of three radically different women converge, with potentially explosive results. Two have grown up as part of the first generation to come of age in the new order. The testimonies of these two young women are joined by a third voice: a woman who wields power through the ruthless accumulation and deployment of secrets. As Atwood unfolds *The Testaments*, she opens up the innermost workings of Gilead as each woman is forced to come to terms with who she is, and how far she will go for what she believes.



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