

EUROPE

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Diplomatic

magazine



PAYING THE PIPER:
Nord Stream 2
The pipeline Europe
may need but many fear



IMMIGRATION:
The solvable problem
no-one will solve



**OMNIPOTENCE V.
INCOMPETENCE:**
The catastrophic
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under Kim Jung Un



BORIS JOHNSON

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who went on to run a country*

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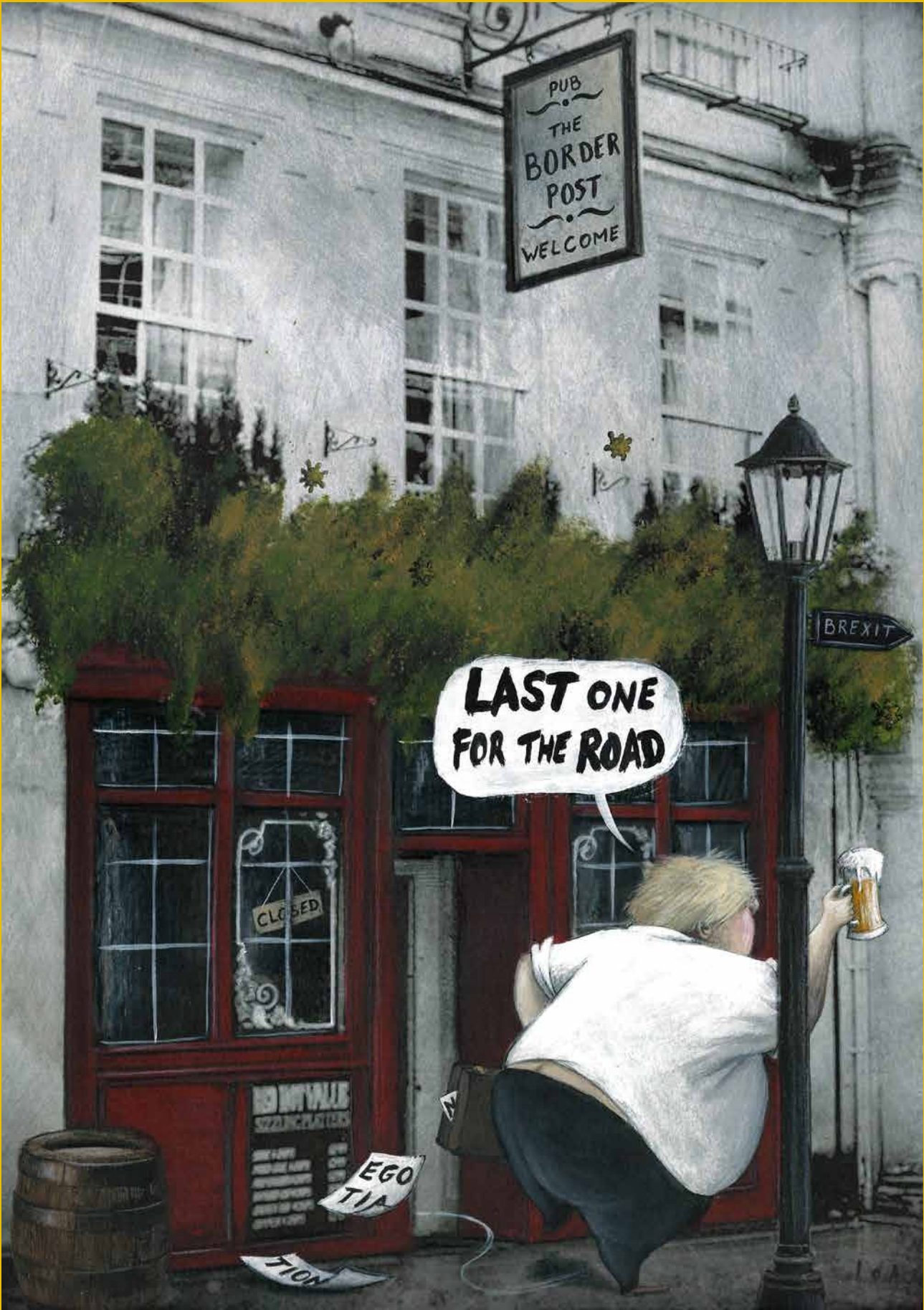
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Boris Johnson's chief political adviser, Dominic Cummings

LOOK OVER YOUR SHOULDER, BORIS

*The newspaper columnist who went on to run a country
(no, not Benito Mussolini)*

"The first method for estimating the intelligence of a ruler is to look at the men he has around him." So wrote the 15th to 16th century Florentine diplomat and political philosopher, Niccolò Machiavelli in his famous guidebook for would-be rulers, *The Prince* (1513, although not published until after his death in 1527). If he was right, then Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, has a problem. So keen was he on getting rid of all those who didn't wholeheartedly support his prime ministerial determination to leave the European Union that he sacked all dissenting ministers who had supported moves to make it illegal to leave the EU without a deal. He then withdrew the whip and expelled from the party any doubters, which incidentally included old war horses like Kenneth Clarke and even Nicholas Soames. Soames is the grandson of Johnson's hero, Winston Churchill, a biography of whom he wrote in homage. He replaced them with ardent Brexiteers, but the problem is that, by and large, they were never the sharpest knives in the drawer.

Machiavelli, like Johnson and his political guru, Dominic Cummings, was not interested in preserving the status quo; he wanted to overthrow it. They are disruptors. Johnson himself has a fierce temper when roused – usually by anyone who disagrees with him (the House of Commons has witnessed some embarrassing tantrums by Johnson) – but he prefers to keep it in check, at least publicly, and to be seen as 'everyone's pal'. He "elbow-bumps" strangers in the conviction that this makes him seem like "just one of the chaps", but in reality, he is snobbish and tends to look down on those

not blessed with his costly education and sense of privilege.

All this bonhomie is a false impression, part of the act he puts on in public, but he leaves the anger part to Cummings, by and large, who rules the team of political advisors based at Number 10 Downing Street, with a rod of iron, and through them, the ministers too. They seldom take much ruling.

Former Prime Minister David Cameron once described Cummings as "a career psychopath"; whatever he may be, Cummings is not now nor ever was a



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Former UK Prime Minister David Cameron

Conservative. Political columnist and journalist Steve Richards, in his book *The Prime Ministers*, describes Johnson's team as "largely unproven lightweights." "There were few brilliant economists as powerful advisors, or weighty policy specialists," he writes. "Instead there were those who met with Cummings' approval – the main qualification for survival. They were mostly timid figures willing to echo Cummings' sometimes insightful, but often eccentric, thoughts. He was fuelled by restless and impatient anger." One Conservative politician told me that because Johnson had restricted his team to those who'd signed up for a hard Brexit: "nobody else could get a job," which meant that he had saddled himself with a cabinet "of the lowest quality in modern history". Some have accused Johnson, renowned for preferring inactivity to action, of being little more than Cummings' amanuensis, dancing to his tune because it's easier than thinking for himself. That way, at arm's length, Johnson can adhere to another element of advice from Machiavelli: "Is it better to be loved or feared, or the reverse? The answer is that it is desirable to be both, but because it is difficult to join them together, it is much safer for a prince to be feared than loved, if he is to fail in one of the two." Machiavelli also wrote that fear is better than love in other ways: "Love is preserved by the link of obligation which, owing to the baseness of men, is broken at every opportunity for their advantage; but fear preserves you by a dread of punishment which never fails." Machiavelli knew what he was talking about, having been accused of conspiracy and tortured by the Medici he had served when they returned to power. Do Johnson's team love him? They're politicians, so presumably not, or at least not reliably; constancy is not a political survival trait.

Johnson also found himself having to defend his controversial advisor after Cummings defied the lockdown over the coronavirus in May to drive 400 kilometres from London to his father's farmhouse in County Durham. He also managed to take his wife and children to Barnard Castle and to see her family at Chillingham Castle on her birthday.



Barnard Castle



Oxford University's Bullingdon Club. Standing L-R Sebastian Grigg, David Cameron, Ralph Perry-Robinson, Ewen Ferguson, Harry Eastwood. Sitting L-R Sebastian James, Jonathan Ford, Boris Johnson

It infuriated the former Labour MP for nearby Bishop Auckland, Helen Goodman, because she was barred from visiting her dying father in a care home just 200 metres from where she lived because of the virus rules which Cummings seems to have overlooked. He claims he drove to Barnard Castle "to test his eyes", although surely, if he was concerned about his eyesight, going for a drive with his wife and children in the car would have been at least inadvisable, if not illegal. The government rushed to Cummings' defence and ministers were ordered to Tweet their confidence in him on pain of losing their jobs. It is believed that three of them – rather bravely – refused. Defying Johnson and Cummings can have, one Tory told me, some very unpleasant consequences. Cummings claimed he made the trip because he needed childcare facilities, although these could have been provided in London, where he would have been told not to embark upon such a reckless trip. The entire incident has made it hard to enforce COVID-19 rules, with those caught breaching them arguing that they were doing no more than Cummings had done. They have a point, but the knee-jerk defence of Cummings shows how indispensable he is to Johnson and his mainly low-grade team. Cummings was obliged to give a press conference, very reluctantly, but he has never apologised and still claims he did nothing wrong, which has encouraged a great many others to ignore restrictions.

ENJOYING EXCLUSIVITY

Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson was born in Manhattan and educated at the very exclusive (and costly) Eton College, going on to read classics at Balliol College, Oxford. He was not universally admired for his scholarship while at Eton, according to a letter sent to his father, Stanley Johnson, by his House

Master, Martin Hammond, who taught him classics. According to The London Economic website, Hammond had noted that the young Johnson displayed "a certain irresponsibility and inattention to facts". The website explains that in a school report in April 1982, Hammond wrote: "Boris really has adopted a disgracefully cavalier attitude to his classical studies . . . Boris sometimes seems affronted when criticised for what amounts to a gross failure of responsibility (and surprised at the same time that he was not appointed Captain of the School for next half): I think he honestly believes that it is churlish of us not to regard him as an exception, one who should be free of the network of obligation which binds everyone else." He really hasn't changed much.

Before Eton, he went to Ashdown House preparatory school, a similarly expensive choice. His sister Rachel was also sent there – the school's first female pupil – and has admitted in an article for Britain's Daily Mail newspaper that "not everyone has fond recollections" of the place, although in the same article she wrote that "we all loved it". Odd, since she had once described the school as "Pederasty Towers". Certainly, there was a lot of physical activity there: "During the mid-1970s, more than half the teachers at any one time were accused of sexual abuse," according to the satirical magazine *Private Eye*. A large number of former pupils have mounted a legal case against the school's owners for compensation. *Private Eye* reports that one master, given a glowing reference by the headmaster, despite allegations of paedophilia from parents, is now serving a 12-year sentence for sex offences against Ashdown pupils. What effect, if any, all this had on Boris Johnson is unknown.

Oxford University's Bullingdon Club. Standing L-R Sebastian Grigg, David Cameron, Ralph Perry-Robinson, Ewen Ferguson, Harry Eastwood. Sitting L-R Sebastian James, Jonathan Ford, Boris Johnson

At Oxford, Johnson joined the Bullingdon Club, an exclusive all-male dining club founded some two centuries ago and notorious for the riotous and anti-social activities of its members. Membership is restricted to the seriously rich, often the sons of titled aristocrats, and the uniform members are required to wear at its dinners has been estimated to cost around £3,500 (£3,818), even though it's quite unsuitable to wear anywhere else. It was, however, compulsory at the dinners that were held in various locations, albeit never in or near the university. The club had been ordered by university authorities not to meet within 24 kilometres of the colleges for fear of bad behaviour. The diners often vandalised restaurants and sometimes the buildings around one of the university quads. Waiters were insulted and abused, too, as were any students they met that they deemed to be 'artistic'; some of them were 'debagged' (had their trousers forcibly removed) and were thrown into a college fountain. Basically, it was an excuse for rich, over-indulged and over-privileged young men to mock with impunity those who lacked their wealth and advantages of birth. In 2005, it was reported that Bullingdon diners had smashed 17 bottles of wine, all the crockery and a window at a 15th century pub near Oxford. Compensation was always paid promptly and in cash, although the owners of the trashed premises were left to clear up the mess and arrange repairs. The members were all potential Conservatives – former British Prime Minister David Cameron was one, as was his Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborn, and former foreign minister Jeremy Hunt – but in 2018 the Oxford University Conservative Association banned Bullingdon members from holding any of its offices. Flouting one's wealth is all very well but denigrating the less wealthy and ruining the reputation of the university is not. Even the future King Edward VIII had a difficult time persuading his parents to let him join, such was the club's reputation. The fact that he wanted to speak volumes; his reign was extremely short, after all, ended by his infatuation with and marriage to the American divorcee, Wallace Simpson. The mother of Britain's present Queen loathed him. He was friendly with Adolf Hitler and black-and-white home movies show him teaching the young princesses the Nazi salute.

Enthusiastic membership of a club based on exploiting unearned privilege is hard to square with Johnson's "just one of the chaps" persona, even though a lot of people in working class areas saw him as their defender against what they considered "the elite". It's strange to think of someone from such a wealthy background being seen as ordinary while the middle classes (who lacked Johnson's advantages) were seen as "elite". It was a clever trick to play, with Dominic Cummings usually being behind these sleights of hand as part of his plan to leave the European Union. Cummings is opposed to bureaucracy and at the Department of Education under Michael Gove was instrumental in weakening the council-run bodies in charge of schools, although he favoured strict rules on what was taught and when by teachers. In other words, he didn't want elected councillors or their officials taking decisions on education, but freedom for teachers meant – to him – freedom to do exactly what Cummings told them. Johnson was happy to go along with this when he took him on as his advisor. One observer noted that just as a blind person needs a 'seeing-eye' dog, Johnson needs a 'thinking-brain' person to guide him.

I met Johnson's father, Stanley, before I met Boris. It was in Strasbourg. Stanley Johnson, animal rights campaigner and writer of what many would dismiss as somewhat pedestrian pulp fiction, had been a member of the European Parliament before the introduction of direct elections in 1979, and stayed on as an EEC official. I interviewed him about his attempts to get a ban on the import of skins from Canada's annual seal cull, which was his main preoccupation at the



Boris Johnson's father Stanley Johnson

time. That was before I moved to Brussels. Johnson senior told a reality TV show in which he was participating that his son would make a splendid prime minister "because he went to Eton, you know". The Duke of Wellington is alleged to have said (there is no written source) that the Battle of Waterloo was won "on the playing fields of Eton", but he was hopelessly arrogant, dismissing his victorious and courageous soldiers as "the scum of the Earth". But the battles of the two World Wars of the last century were mainly won, not at Eton but in the coal mining towns of County Durham, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and South Wales, or in the shipyards of the Tyne, the Clyde and the Mersey. The German soldier Max Hoffman remarked that the British forces in the First World War were like "lions led by donkeys"; the poor working-class areas of the north of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland supplied the lions; Eton College and other expensive schools for the rich (albeit with some notable exemptions) supplied most of the donkeys.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

When I approached a former Conservative MEP to ask about his memories of Johnson, his response was brief and to the point. "I think you had better get your copy in quickly," said Brendan Donnelly, who now runs the London-based Federal Trust, "otherwise you may be penning the portrait of an ex-Prime Minister! The way the Conservative press has turned against Johnson in the past week is quite extraordinary." It was only last December (2019) that Johnson won a landslide election victory, using the slogan "get Brexit done", which proves that most voters still want to leave the EU.

By the end of August 2020, a YouGov poll said that only 39% believed he was doing a good job, while 54% thought he was doing badly, with only 7% undecided. The media likes winners; Johnson looked like one not so long ago, but as the COVID-19 pandemic has dragged on and the British government Johnson heads has looked increasingly lost and indecisive (not to mention given to nepotism), fear for the future makes the media look for scapegoats. Johnson's advantage – and his curse – is that he has star quality. People remember him and like what they see, but star quality is like sequins stuck onto an otherwise unprepossessing item of clothing: they tend to fall off, leaving the wearer looking rather shabby. Yet back when he was a regular performer on the satirical TV news quiz, *Have I Got News for You*, he seemed to radiate charisma, at least for some. In a bookshop once, as I was browsing, a young woman asked an assistant if he could recommend a book



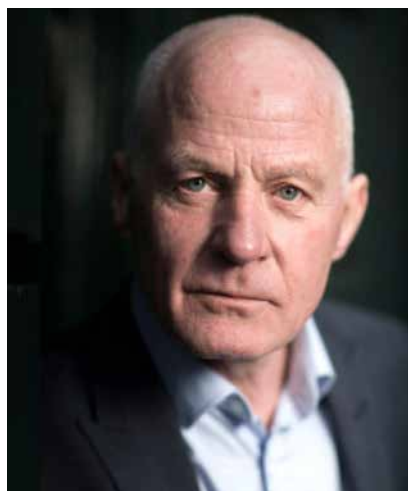
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Boris Johnson campaigning for Brexit

about Winston Churchill. He mentioned that there was a new one, just published, written by Boris Johnson. “Oh!” she exclaimed, “BoJo!” in an excited voice (BoJo was a nickname that did not survive his elevation to high office) and was clearly attracted to the book because of the writer. In fact, quite a lot of women have been attracted to Boris Johnson, it seems, and it’s alleged that he has fathered several children with them, although he won’t reveal how many. In 2003, he was appointed vice-chair of the Conservative Party and Shadow Arts Minister under Michael Howard’s leadership. That ended the following year after he claimed that an alleged affair with Spectator columnist Petronella Wyatt was “piffle”, only for it to emerge that it was true.

During the referendum campaign, Johnson continued his misleading work, co-signing a letter that claimed that David Cameron wanted Turkey to join the EU, which would, Johnson claimed, mean that Britain’s National Health Service would be obliged to treat 76-million Turks (in the unlikely event that they all fell ill at the same time and travelled to the UK for treatment, rather than going to a local doctor). He later claimed he’d never mentioned Turkey during the referendum campaign. Lies come easily to him.

He has relatively little sympathy for the gay community, it seems, according to a former Labour MEP, now member of the House of Lords, Michael Cashman. “Boris Johnson’s greatest asset is that he only believes in Boris Johnson,” he told me. “That will also be his greatest downfall.” Lord Cashman went on to recall a story that he included in his autobiography. “When Paul, my late partner, lobbied him about a gay vote coming up in the Commons and pointed out the Johnson had said and voted previously in a negative way, Johnson’s response, as I recorded in my memoir ‘One of Them’, was that Paul should not take any notice because he didn’t believe in anything!” Apart from himself, that is. By and large, that seems



© lordmichaelcashman

Michael Cashman, former Labour MEP, now member of the House of Lords

to have been true. Writing his articles that poked fun at the EU were, he once said, the most fun he’d had as a journalist. He knew they were fiction. Getting sacked from The Times for allegedly making up a quote by his own godfather, the historian Colin Lucas, that was not only incorrect but historically impossible and potentially

damaging to Lucas’s academic reputation, may have been a schoolboy error. Or it may have been laziness, another quality for which he was noted while in Brussels.

But his lies about the EU just grew and grew: The Daily Telegraph liked them and seemed careless of their accuracy. They played well with Telegraph readers, some of whom presumably still hankered after the glorious days of empire. Not only were they picked up by other Eurosceptic papers, such as the Daily Mail and the Sun, but they started a fashion for similarly misleading fiction posing as fact. Among Johnson’s flights of fancy were the alleged creation of a European police force to check on the curvature of bananas, a demand that UK trawlermen would be forced to wear hairnets and the supposed introduction of standardised, one-size-fits-all ‘Euro-coffins’ for the dead.

All of these were totally untrue. Accused of lying in the House of Commons, he denied it, even though the stories were demonstrably untrue, accusing his accusers of attacking him for being anti-EU. John Major’s government, while he was Prime Minister, even arranged a media conference at the offices of the UK Permanent Representation in Brussels to point out how untruthful the articles had been, distributing a UK-produced book of ‘Euromyths’, many of which had originated with Johnson. One journalist friend from a notoriously anti-European newspaper, muttered “I wish I’d thought of that one,” when reading one of Johnson’s creations. Johnson found his cavalier approach to accuracy could get him into more serious trouble when he wrote that ‘drunken Liverpool fans’ had caused the Hillsborough disaster in 1989, in which 96 soccer fans were killed and a further 766 injured by crushing because the event was so mishandled by the police and officials at the ground. He was not alone in making that unfounded accusation but none-the-less was obliged to apologise. As for the so-called Euromyths, he was unapologetic when explaining his untruths during a BBC interview: “I was sort of chucking these rocks over the garden wall and I listened to this amazing crash from the greenhouse next door over in England,” he said, as if it was just a bit of fun and not at all important.

An Irish MEP, Seán Kelly of Fina Gael, summed up the reality of Johnson to me quite succinctly: “Boris is an enigma who seems to change his mind with the wind. As a result, he often blows up a storm, leaving a trail of destruction in his wake. But it doesn’t seem to bother him in the least, making it very difficult for negotiators to decide whether to take what he says seriously or just wait for a wind from a different direction to blow, and with it a different stance from Boris on the same issues.”



Boris Johnson visiting the Jenner Institute in Oxford



© Boris Johnson

Boris Johnson visiting a police station in Northampton

LOVE STORIES (BRIEF AND TROUBLED)

Johnson could be kind, even if he preferred the company of those with a public-school education to products of state grammar schools, like me. At one time, while I was freelancing for regional independent television stations in the UK, I was being plagued by a young journalist who would ask, in a friendly way, what stories I was hoping to cover that day. Naïvely, I would tell him, only to find out that he had called the same TV station and offered to cover that story for less. Later, he took to watching over my shoulder and reading notes on my desk to find out what stories he could snatch from me. I bumped into Johnson in a bar near the Commission in Brussels and mentioned this problem. Johnson offered to telephone him, claiming to be from ITN in London, and telling him to go to Moscow and await further instructions. I suppose it

was meant kindly, but I could not let this young interloper, however annoying, go off on a wild goose chase that would leave him stranded in Moscow, severely out of pocket and without the means of getting back. I have wondered since if Johnson finds it hard to imagine being as short of funds as many of us Brussels freelance correspondents (and a lot of other working people) were.

He may get some notion of that following a costly divorce from his second wife, Marina Wheeler. His first marriage, to Allegra Mostyn-Owen, whom he met at Oxford University, only lasted six years. His marriage to Ms. Wheeler lasted from 1993 to 2018, producing four children. However, he now lives with Carrie Symonds, who has also produced a child, while back in 2013 a judge refused him the right to keep quiet about fathering a daughter through an adulterous affair conducted while he was Mayor of London. His divorce from Marina Wheeler came a year after her battle with cancer. In his divorce settlement, it's understood his ex-wife was awarded around £4-million (€4.36-million). Marina Johnson's sister, Shirin, was a Brussels-based BBC journalist but is now a spokesperson for the European Commission. A few years ago, while Boris Johnson was still Mayor of London, he paid a visit to the European Parliament. Crossing the passerelle – the broad footbridge linking two parts of the building – he passed Shirin as she was in the middle of shooting a TV interview. “Good morning, Shirin,” he boomed at her, interrupting the recording. Instead of replying instantly, she turned and looked out of the window and then up at the sky. “Just checking if it is,” she said to him. “You’re such a liar, Boris.” Not much love lost there, I think.

“There seemed to be a real contradiction between the writing he was doing and the type of life he was living,” says Sajjad Karim, formerly a Conservative MEP

and now a consultant for companies seeking to do business in Europe. “He was living a very full liberal sort of mindset European lifestyle, while at the same time criticising everything he could about it.” Johnson was already Mayor of London by the time Karim was elected, so their paths never crossed professionally. But like most politicians working in Brussels, he heard stories. Johnson, for instance, could never take criticism. “He’s rather like Nigel Farage, as well,” Karim told me. “Boris has managed to paint himself as a certain type of individual in the eyes of the public. You know, people call him ‘Boris,’ they relate to him as ‘Boris.’ Not many politicians are able to achieve that. And look at Nigel Farage, he’s the ‘cheeky chappy,’ leaning against the bar with a cigarette and a pint in his hand and people sort of relate to that. They don’t understand and realise actually how vindictive these people are as individuals; how very thin-skinned they are. They’re very good at dishing it out but not at all good when it comes back the other way.” A former editor of the Daily Telegraph, Sir Max Hastings, has described Johnson as “a cavorting charlatan”. That’s a bit rich: it was in part the appeal of Johnson’s ‘Little Englander’ articles, largely untrue though they were, that was boosting circulation. Hastings had warned Johnson about his pursuit of women and his tendency to father illegitimate children, yet still appointed him his Brussels correspondent. In that rôle, he earned a reputation as the invisible man: seldom at his desk, never explaining his absences, seldom attending official press conferences and locking his office desk and door to keep Daily Telegraph colleagues away, while they were left to do the serious reporting.



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Irish MEP Seán Kelly of Fina Gael



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Sajjad Karim, former Conservative MEP



Palace of Westminster London

BREXIT? MOI?

He gets a similarly rough ride in Anne Applebaum's latest book, *Twilight of Democracy*. She describes Boris Johnson as "an all-consuming narcissist" who – at least when she spoke to him for her book, before he became leader of the Conservative party – did not want Brexit at all, despite consequently lying heavily to achieve it. "Nobody serious wants to leave the EU," he told her in 2014. "Business doesn't want it."

The City doesn't want it. It won't happen." And yet here we are, with Britain outside the EU and unlikely to get a meaningful trade deal, if it gets one at all. Indeed, Britain's chief negotiator, David Frost, seems to have been appointed to ensure that trade between the UK and the EU happens only on WTO terms. This would undoubtedly please some of the more nationalist newspapers which will then, one assumes, blame the EU for the inevitable shortages and price rises. Another observer of the Johnson style was the one-time press officer for the Conservative group in the European Parliament, Ed Steen. "He's an after-dinner speaker," said Steen, "he's clever, witty, he's amusing, but absolutely untrustworthy." The inner circle of the Conservative Party must have known all that when they chose him as leader, presumably on the principle that despite being another Old Etonian who went to Oxford and joined the snobbish and rather unpleasant Bullingdon Club (just like his predecessor, David Cameron) he had more public appeal among ordinary citizens: a clown but a popular one.

"He hasn't got a mind that can concentrate on anything for very long," I was told by one serving Conservative politician who preferred to remain anonymous (fear of Cummings and his minions is very real – he said he didn't want Cummings' people coming round to his flat with pitchforks, and seemed to mean it), "and he doesn't seem to have any kind of moral compass, that you might expect somebody in that position to have." According to another anonymous Conservative MP, "he deals with things on a sort of polarised basis, so that either you are with him, even if he is on a sort of 'nonsense' story, or you're against him. And if you're against him, he'll use every device he can to do you in."

This doesn't sit well with the 'loveable mop-headed rogue' image, does it? His determination to break international law with his Internal Market bill has aroused massive criticism, not only from the EU, especially Ireland, but around the world and from sitting Conservative members of parliament. The bill, which would tear up a treaty Johnson signed only ten months earlier, would destroy the Good Friday Agreement that brought peace to Northern Ireland. Former British Prime Minister John Major is among many critics of the plan. He said Britain's signature on a treaty should be sacrosanct. "If we lose our reputation for honouring the promises we make, we will have lost something beyond price that may never be regained," he said in a statement. Another MP described Johnson as "almost Trump without the skill", which is a very damning statement. Meanwhile, Iain Martin, writing on the Conservative website *Reaction*, of which he is both editor and publisher, doesn't seem impressed by Johnson's recent activities. "What matters is that the elders of the Tory tribe – in the parliamentary party and in the Lords – are savaging Boris for his general hopelessness, which is the first step to imagining life after Boris. His performance in front of the Commons Liaison Committee this week was atrocious, the worst kind of 'dog ate my homework' drivel." Remember, the writer is a faithful Conservative who



President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and Boris Johnson

also warns that "Lord Howard, Michael Howard, is a fearsome opponent and he's on Boris's tail on that Internal Market Bill."

"There may well have been a decision to leave the European Union," I was told by Lord Kirkhope, the former Conservative MEP Timothy Kirkhope, "but I think it is completely unacceptable for the government, or, indeed, any of the government's supporters, to take that further into a nasty sort of enmity towards our European neighbours." Enmity towards Europe is not really what Johnson feels, but it matches Cummings' attitude and therefore it has become Johnson's. "My view is that the way they've been behaving recently," Lord Kirkhope continued, "and how it looks as if it will go in the next few months, is that not only are we going to be out of the EU institutions, but we're going to be demonstrating quite clearly a loathing and an enmity towards our European neighbours which is not only dangerous but which doesn't serve the interests of this country." The Machiavellian idea that *rex non potest pecare* – the ruler can do no wrong – has taken a bit of a battering. Gradually – because many of the new parliamentary intake that make up Johnson's huge majority were elected for being opposed to immigrants and, by extension, foreigners in general – the Conservative back bench MPs are beginning to spot the flaws in Johnson's largely artificial gloss. They may blame Cummings, at least partially, but they can only get rid of him by getting rid of Johnson. "A political leader must keep looking over his shoulder all the time to see if the boys are still there," advised Bernard Baruch, the US financier and presidential advisor in the *New York Times* in 1965. "If they aren't still there, he's no longer a political leader."



President Donald J. Trump with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City in 2019

Jim Gibbons

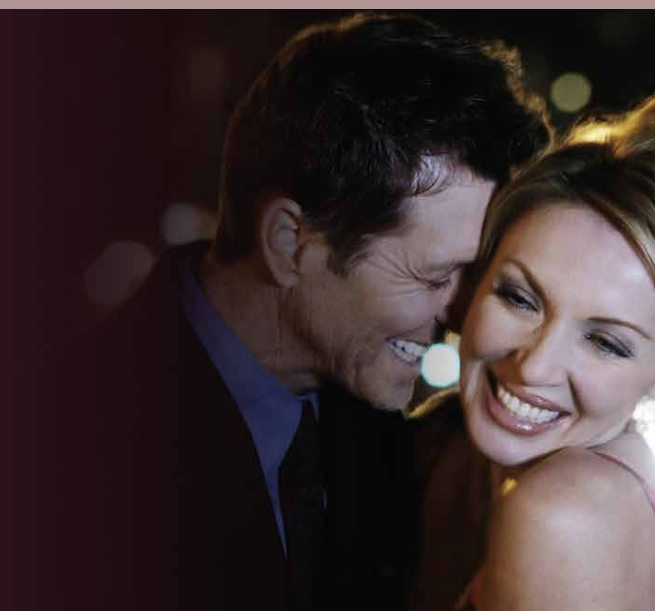


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Kim Jung Un

OMNIPOTENCE V. INCOMPETENCE

The catastrophic economy of North Korea under Kim Jong Un

“The blame is his who chooses,” wrote Plato in *The Republic*, “God is blameless.” History certainly provides plenty of examples of authoritarian leaders (some with god delusions) blaming everyone but themselves for their leadership failures, especially in the realm of economics. Take Kim Jong Un, leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), or North Korea, if you prefer, who certainly fits this pattern and keeps providing examples of a despotic strongman hiding his incompetence behind the very accusations he throws at others.

The North Korean economy has struggled for decades under the consequences of Kim's provocative foreign policy and widespread corruption. Of course, he inherited an economic disaster area from his father and grandfather, so one could charitably say it's not all his fault. But Kim's bellicose and somewhat superfluous weapons programmes, decried as illicit and worthy of severe economic sanctions by the international community, consumes an extraordinary amount of resources. What's more, the resources are used up at the expense of traditional economic pillars like domestic infrastructure, such as public health, and civic improvement programs. Kim funnels whatever scarce resources are left over or can be squeezed from somewhere into procuring exorbitant luxury goods for his family and most favoured advisors, leaving far too little to fund basic necessities for his people.

It's worth noting, however, that education and health care (such as they are) are free (children there must attend school for 11 years) and income tax was abolished in 1974. What's more, North Korea boasts the

highest percentage of doctors for the size of population of any developing country: 3.7 per 1,000 citizens. Another plus is that most people living there are literate. It sounds idyllic. It isn't.

The ongoing global coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has also exposed the inadequacies of Kim's leadership. His "military first" policies directly contribute to the misery of the North Korean people,

who desperately need better domestic programs such as improved public health care and disease prevention measures. Yet this summer, Kim, in the long tradition of dictators, blamed the disastrous state of the economy on North Korea's mid-level elites: those individuals – you might call them ‘middle management’ – with a limited amount of power and influence who also happen to be relatively well-off financially as a result of interpreting and putting into



Temperature checks at some school entrances



North Korean ICBM

practice Kim's corrupt and ineffectual policies. Effectively, they are North Korea's 'middle-class'. Kim says these cabinet and provincial party officials failed to prevent corruption in the free hospitals and free schools and financially mismanaged public budgets. Of course, the individuals singled out for his criticism had no authority to stop, let alone reverse, the very corruption in which Kim engages; nor can they – or anyone else – magically conjure up successful outcomes based on meagre or non-existent budgets.

At an October 2020 rally to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the ruling Workers Party of Korea, which he has theoretically led since 2011, He showed his 'softer' side, if somewhat unconvincingly. The event was not only to mark the party anniversary, but also to unveil his latest acquisition, a seemingly new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

While addressing the crowd during the event, Kim even managed to burst into tears while apologising for his failure to "rid people of the difficulties in their lives". He claims to feel deeply the hardship facing his people but acknowledges only that he failed to prevent it, not that he is in any way to blame for it. Certainly, the people of North Korea are not rich. In 2012, the gross national income per capita was just over US\$1,500, compared with almost US\$28,500 in South Korea, on the other side of the demilitarised zone dividing the peninsula. The national currency, by the way, is called the 'won'. Kim realises, however, that he and his country are not 'winning', at least not in economic terms.

THE NAME IS BOND, DUBIOUS BOND

Kim has issued the DPRK's first public bonds since 2003 and he is requiring the mid-level elites of which he was so critical to purchase them with foreign hard currency. These bond purchases are really poorly disguised 'loyalty payments' that Kim uses to abstract money from others during crises that he himself has created. The DPRK economy continues to suffer from the consequences of Kim's pet military projects and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These are not problems that mid-level party and provincial elites can change without Kim's support.

Pyongyang's higher level elite might be excused for feeling alarmed by Kim's extortion of funds from their slightly less well-favoured comrades and must surely understand they are in a no-win situation. History shows Kim's approach is a time-tested tactic and increased displays of abject loyalty to the dictator will never be enough. It's the weakness of all dictators: Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin and Mao demanded huge shows of adoration from their people. Neither history nor Kim's character can provide North Korean elites with any comfort, nor any faith that Kim will not eventually target them, too. Arguably, the North Korean elite should resist buying bonds (which serve as tiny bandages for the gaping economic wounds of Kim's disastrous policies). They should simultaneously pressure Kim to divert resources from his voracious but failing weapons programs to domestic investments, such as health care, infrastructure, and other civic improvement projects that would increase the prosperity and well-being of all. Only changes to these underlying failed policies will protect the North Korean elites from being scapegoated and pillaged by Kim over and over again, but there is little sign of that happening.

Some argue that European governments should continue to provide leadership with regards to UN sanctions, as well as to civic groups to continue monitoring human rights abuses in DPRK. They believe that governments and civic groups should remain realistic when evaluating how European food aid to DPRK might be misused. How else can anyone outside this secretive country know what's going on there. "The authorities continue to impose severe restrictions on freedom of movement and access to information," reported Amnesty International in 2019. "Widespread and systematic controls over the daily lives of people and frequent pressing of the public into labour mobilisations severely affected the enjoyment of human rights." And it gets worse. "Foreign media reported several public executions. People in detention experienced torture and other ill-treatment and harsh conditions," the report says. You might imagine that people would want to leave the country. Perhaps they would like to, but it remains illegal to do so without prior consent. Even moving to another province involves paying bribes to government



North Korean bonds

officials and even to policemen. Those living close to any borders, to the demilitarised zone or to any major military facilities are kept under close surveillance.

Kim has, like his father and grandfather before him, stressed the importance of self-reliance for his people. The policy is called Juche and it involves North Korea trying to provide everything its citizens need without having to import anything. It sounds like a fine idea, except that it means many people have to go without because, to be blunt, North Korea cannot supply all of its citizens' needs (and certainly not all of its citizens' wants). And Kim seems not to have learned that if you invest in an arsenal of massive ICBMs, rather than, say, better housing or more advanced medical equipment, something has to give. Even so, in his tear-filled speech, Kim blamed his country's economic hardships on international sanctions, the COVID-19 pandemic and an unfortunate bout of typhoons and floods.

His tears may have been genuine; Kim sees himself as a more 'touchy-feely' kind of leader than his remote and unemotional father and less militaristic (theoretically) than his grandfather, who took charge of the country in 1948. This Kim stops to pick up babies and children in the crowds that gather to see him. Denied access to overseas media, his people seem to genuinely admire and like him. Of course, they never hear other points of view or read reports by non-DPRK journalists. It's impossible for anyone to criticise him at home, so the North Korean public cannot make comparisons.



BUY SOME – OR ELSE...

Kim announced the new bond issue on 11 April, 2020 and the relevant cabinet committee was informed that they were printed and ready four days later. According to the Seoul-based Korean journal Daily NK, the country's officials have ordered organisations in need of state funds to purchase raw materials or supplies to pay for them with bonds, rather than cash. The bonds will then be used by organisations to purchase manufactured goods from those same factories, also by using bonds. What goes around, comes around, as the saying goes. The journal reports that such organisations as Construction Bureau 8, which is the lead contractor in building Pyongyang General Hospital would be obliged to use public bonds, rather than cash, to buy cement from a cement factory. It seems that some 60% of public bonds are allotted to organisations like Construction Bureau 8 but a further 40% are being (or have been) sold to well-off individuals, which means that the country's wealthy entrepreneurial class, known as donju, who require funds in order to operate their businesses, will be able to buy the required bonds directly from the central bank.



Pyongyang

It sounds like a plan that might work, but members of the donju are not happy about it. They see it as a clumsy attempt at a temporary fix for the country's struggling economic system. "The government failed to raise the funds it needed when it last floated bonds back in 2003," Daily NK reports another source as saying, "the government is returning to this already failed way of doing things and only factories and business people will suffer." The newspaper also told its readers that the Ministry of State Security (MSS), the country's feared security agency, reportedly sent out teams on April 17 to crack down on anyone they found exchanging North Korean won for foreign currency. "Money dealers have disappeared after it was made known that the MSS would arrest them for peddling dollars," the Daily NK reported. "Donju in Pyongyang are desperate to buy up dollars but there's nowhere to buy them," the newspaper's source added. Factories are being pressured to purchase the bonds and donju may

face legal punishment or damage to their businesses if they fail to buy the bonds, Daily NK sources warned.

In response to the plan to float public bonds, high-level regime officials are reportedly starting to hoard US dollars, but they're very hard to find and dangerous to hold. The Diplomat magazine finds it hard to credit that anyone outside of North Korea would consider the country's bonds as a serious investment. "North Korea's economy collapsed decades ago," it writes. "Its credit rating has become meaningless due to extended sanctions by the international community. Moreover, capital and financial transactions with North Korea, as well as financial transactions through third countries, have been virtually impossible from the early 2000s until now. Put simply, there are no reasons to even consider North Korean bonds as an investment tool." But of course, if you're a donju you don't get much choice.

The bond issue comes as cross-border and internal travel restrictions, put in place to halt the spread of the coronavirus, have severely disrupted domestic commerce and also cut critical trade links along North Korea's 1,420 kilometre border with China. "Suddenly issuing that amount of debt, in one year, is a big deal," says the Financial Times. "I think this is the first real sign that they are under very significant financial stress as a result of sanctions and result of the virus," the paper was told by Peter Ward, a Seoul-based researcher into North Korea with the University of Vienna. The donju (and anyone else seen as relatively well-off) have been strongly urged to ensure they pay their full amount of taxes. According to the FP (Foreign Policy) website, "The Minju Chosun, a powerful government-run newspaper in North Korea, called on factories and businesses to fulfill their tax obligations so that the state could meet its plans to grow the budget 4.2 percent this year. That seems an impossibility at this point." Apparent impossibilities have seldom deterred Kim. "The aim of the debt issuance," reports FP, "is to collect as much foreign currency circulating in the country as possible."

The issuance will be massive, reportedly covering 60 percent of the budget. (In comparison, South Korea's deficit financing will rise to only 16 percent of its expenditure in 2020.) It is not stated, but is clearly indicated, that anyone not subscribing to this bond issuance will not be popular in Pyongyang. Indeed, the donju will have to buy up the 40% available to them if they want the required paperwork to run their businesses.

NON-INVESTORS IN TROUBLE

The risks may be greater than not being able to operate their businesses. According to Amnesty International, the North Korean government continue to operate four known political prison camps, although they deny

they exist. "Up to 120,000 detainees in the camps were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, forced labour, and harsh conditions including inadequate food," Amnesty claims. "Many of them had not been convicted of any internationally recognisable criminal offence and were arbitrarily detained without fair trial just for exercising their rights, such as the freedom to leave their own country. They had no access to lawyers and family. Others faced forced seclusion in remote mountainous areas solely for being related to prisoners deemed a threat to the state or for 'guilt-by-association'."

As outsiders, we are not allowed to buy the new bonds, but North Korea's unfortunate businesses and middle-class citizens are not allowed not to. According to the American website Nasdaq.com, "The last time the government issued bonds, it was alleged that they essentially coerced individuals and businesses to purchase these and they eventually became a vehicle for transaction," wrote Fitch Solutions, the credit and country research unit of Fitch Group, in a report on May 22. "It is not known whether that is the case this time, although some Western commentators have pointed to the likelihood that it is. In any case, investing in North Korea's debt is not for the fainthearted, since it has never repaid any of its offshore borrowings." Not a tempting offer, then. The website reports that "Pyongyang's loans from Western governments were repackaged into zero-coupon bonds after it stopped servicing the debt in the 1980s, and turned into a €163-million (US\$183-million) piece denominated in Deutschmarks and a 240m Swiss franc (US\$250-million) tranche, both of which were supposed to mature in March this year but are believed to be outstanding." If you were tempted to invest, the advice is 'don't', even if you could. After the bond issue was announced, the black-market value of the North Korean won went down, which could mean that foreign currency savings were involved, according to some experts.

The Nasdaq website warns that: "Another Seoul-based researcher estimated that North Korea's commodity trade deficit was US\$2.3-billion last year and would have worsened this year. He believes that North Korea is currently suffering from deflation, because both supply and demand are down after it closed its border with China in January to limit the spread of coronavirus." Given its dire economic circumstances, then, how on Earth does North Korea afford the research and construction of massive nuclear weapons? Al Jazeera believes it knows: "The answer is through Bureau 39, a secretive organisation hidden deep inside the government apparatus," it reports. "Its aim is to procure foreign exchange, by any means possible, to fund Kim Jong Un's regime. From printing counterfeit dollars and profiting from slave labour sent overseas, to illegally selling arms, committing insurance fraud and widespread computer hacking, the inventiveness of North Korea's sanction busters knows no bounds."



Pyongyang



Do we need to be afraid? Well, possibly. Most of Pyongyang's missile research has been into weapons that could be used against North Korea's neighbours. But there have been scarier test flights that suggest that North Korea could put a missile into space and bring it down on a chosen target, presumably a United States interest. And Kim has the theoretical support of China, the news agency Reuters reports. "In a congratulatory message to Kim Jong Un for the founding anniversary of North Korea's ruling party," it says, "Chinese President Xi Jinping said he intends to deepen relations with Pyongyang, North Korean state media reported on Saturday. 'We have an intent to successfully defend, consolidate and develop the China-Korea relations together with Korean comrades and propel the long-lasting and stable development of the socialist cause of the two countries,' North Korean state news agency KCNA quoted Xi as saying."

Certainly, Kim's latest ICBM proves something. He seems to believe it proves that he is a force in the world, a global superpower, even though he is not, and his country is broke. Australia's 9 News argued that it proves something else, even if its arrival at the parade was impressive. "The massive weapon was carried by an 11-axle truck during a military parade in the capital of Pyongyang to mark the 75th birthday of the isolated state's ruling

party on the weekend," the news channel reported. "Malcolm Davis, senior analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, told Nine.com.au the display of the new ICBM shows that the Trump Administration's talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un had failed." Kim might take some comfort from the fact that he has embarrassed President Donald Trump. It's a small victory but still a victory of sorts.

9 News points out that the new weapon is proof of Trump's failure to denuclearise the Korean peninsula. "Kim and Donald Trump have met three times since 2018 for talks about North Korea's nuclear weapons without concrete results. 'Trump has to recognise he has failed ... Kim has basically played him for a sucker,' Dr Davis said." Within 24 hours, the government of South Korea held an emergency meeting to discuss this worrying development. It's probably true to say that Seoul has little to fear from the ICBM; its intended targets lie further afield, probably across the Pacific Ocean. But ISBMs are notoriously difficult to defend against. "like trying to stop a bullet that's heading for you by firing another bullet at it," is how one experts described it. More worrying, perhaps, is Russia's successful testing of its new Zircon hypersonic cruise missile, launched from a warship in the White Sea, to the north of Russia and – with present technology – impossible to detect or deter once it's in the air. There is no guarantee that President Vladimir Putin will be any more responsible in his deployment of missiles than Kim. Both like to surprise people.

Does any of this matter in Europe? After all, Pyongyang is 8,500 kilometres away from Brussels and it's unlikely that even Kim's latest ICBM could reach that far.

But Europe could help, according to Doctor Eric J. Ballbach, director of the North Korea and International Security research unit at the Institute of Korean Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin, writing for the Real Instituto Elcano. He argues that the EU can make valuable contributions in the field of the economy, which would make all the difference in providing inducements that will lead to more successful outcomes in

negotiations over the nuclear issue. "The high priority now being given to economic development by the Kim Jong-un leadership provides a number of potentially attractive opportunities and measures to encourage and support a new nuclear negotiation," he argues. "Critical Engagement has been the EU's official North-Korea policy for well over two decades now." He believes, however, that Critical Engagement did not promote mutual understanding and proposes academic exchanges as a way to lift the curtain on this secretive state.

"This paper has aimed at critically reflecting on the strategy and argued that Critical Engagement did not promote a comprehensive European strategy for the Korean peninsula in general and North Korea in particular," writes Dr. Ballbach. "The strategy has proved to be highly dependent on political circumstances and has failed both on the level of its strategic objectives and of its strategic calculation, thereby further weakening Europe's role in East-Asian security affairs. Against this background it is imperative to initiate a sober debate on the outlines of a new strategic approach, one that puts the EU in a stronger position to proactively contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability on the Korean peninsula."



Dr. Eric J. Ballbach

NBC News reminded readers that North Korea and the United States are technically still at war. The Korean War of 1950-53 ended in a truce, not in peace. Shortly before the 75th anniversary parade, a South Korean fisheries official was killed by North Korean troops, causing fury in Seoul. It's supposedly linked with spying but, worryingly for South Korea, suggests their northern neighbour knows about their intelligence-gathering techniques. Kim himself, of course, is quite unfathomable. How much of his new ICBM was paid for by extracting funds from companies and from the donju is something we may never know. But unless you were hoping to buy any North Korean bonds it probably doesn't matter. I wouldn't bother, if I were you.

Henry Carruthers



Kim Jong-Un during the launch of the medium-and-long range strategic ballistic rocket Hwasong-12 at an undisclosed location



© Wikimedia

Bernard Kouchner former French Minister of Foreign Affairs

IMMIGRATION: THE SOLVABLE PROBLEM NO-ONE WILL SOLVE

Many years ago, when he was a Socialist member of the European Parliament, Bernard Kouchner, co-founder of Médecins Sans Frontières, told me that the best way to solve the problem of immigration is to improve living conditions in what are now poor countries so much that nobody will want to leave them in favour of an uncertain welcome in Europe. Alright, so you'd also have to settle the problems in conflict zone countries, too, but surely that's not impossible?

Sounds like simple common sense. So why isn't it happening? Public indifference, perhaps? There is the thirst for power of would-be leaders, the dishonesty of many existing leaders, international criminal gangs, and western governments too nervous to intervene in case migrants turn up on their doorsteps and they get the blame. Oh, and an overtimid European Union.

This latest row concerns a plan announced by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and her team in September 2020. Its aim was to end the overcrowded refugee camps with their appalling sanitary and security conditions. The announcement came only a couple of weeks after a devastating fire tore through the Moria camp on the Greek island of Lesbos.

That camp, which was intended to hold 3,000 migrants in fact housed some 13,000 migrants, mostly from Afghanistan. Part of the new plan is intended to strengthen the EU's external borders and also to persuade

reluctant anti-immigrant countries – mainly but not exclusively in Eastern Europe – to bear their share of the burden. “We are proposing today a European solution, to rebuild trust between Member



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Woman carrying her child in Moria camp, Greece



© Image Eurokinesi via ZUMA Wire

Refugees arrive on the Island of Lesbos, Greece, March 2 2020



© UNHCR/Holland

A family of refugees walk along the beach after landing on the Greek island of Lesbos in January 2016

States and to restore citizens' confidence in our capacity to manage migration as a Union," President von der Leyen told MEPs. "The EU has already proven in other areas that it can take extraordinary steps to reconcile diverging perspectives. We have created a complex internal market, a common currency and an unprecedented recovery plan to rebuild our economies. It is now time to rise to the challenge to manage migration jointly, with the right balance between solidarity and responsibility." It was always going to be a hard sell. Furthermore, the plan, which involves more than 500 pages of documents (no EU plan is ever economical with words or paper) may not survive the complicated procedures needed to bring it into law. It includes, as it has to, financial inducements to countries to accept asylum seekers. Bribing recalcitrant governments has been shown to work in the past. In this case, it's the old 'do-what-we-want-and-we'll-pay-you-for-it' approach: cash to convince a country to take some migrants, together with a more rapid deportation system for those whose applications are turned down.

The proposal, made to the European Parliament, drew criticism from both sides of the political divide: rejection by right-wing members from anti-immigrant countries that espouse rigid Christianity but seem to think that a need for Christian charity doesn't apply to them in dealing with people of other faiths, even Abrahamic faiths, while the left accused the Commission of cynicism. "This proposal runs contrary to the letter and spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Convention and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights," said Cornelia Ernst of the European United Left (GUE) political group. "Today's proposal effectively renders the EU's obligation to help those seeking asylum meaningless and pushes the EU further down the destructive path

of deterrence and derogation of duty. At the same time, it ignores the fact that the majority of the returns would violate the people's fundamental rights, or that it is simply unworkable." The group fears that increased efficiency at sending back failed asylum seekers is a euphemism for simply deporting more people. It seems an understandable conclusion to draw.

The Moria fire has certainly drawn attention to the problem. As Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas told MEPs, "Moria is a stark reminder that the clock has run out on how long we can live in a house half-built. The time has come to rally around a common, European migration policy." She also sought to reassure doubters on both sides of the political divide. "The Pact provides the missing pieces of the puzzle for a comprehensive approach to migration. No one Member State experiences migration in the same way and the different and unique challenges faced by all deserve to be recognised, acknowledged and addressed." The Moria fire was certainly strange. It happened on a Tuesday, flaring up again the following day and wiping out most of the surviving tents. It led to some 400 children

and adolescents being transferred to the mainland, which inevitably meant that the refugees themselves would be blamed.

Nicolaus Fest, an *Alternativ für Deutschland* member of the right-wing Identity and Democracy group, felt it did not even deserve discussion. "Why are we putting ourselves at the mercy of events like this by putting on the Parliament's agenda anything that is to do with refugees?" he asked. "We should wait for the criminal investigation into this incident to be concluded. It is too early to start a debate now." Other members, like Dutch Greens MEP Tineke Strik and Birgit Sippel, Socialist group spokesperson on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, disagreed, calling on member states to fulfil their promises. "Since March, ten EU countries have agreed to accept at least 1,600 refugee children from overcrowded camps on the Greek islands," Ms. Sippel pointed out, "but only a fraction of this number have actually been relocated." According to Human Rights Watch, the people affected by the fire have had limited access to shelter, food, water, sanitation facilities, and health care. That includes those who have contracted Covid-19. It's further alleged that Greek security forces have used teargas and stun grenades on the displaced people who have protested against the dire living conditions since the fires.

Tensions between the asylum seekers and the local population are said to be high and the Commission's new pact is no solution, according to Amnesty International's EU Advocacy Director, Eve Geddie: "Pitched as a fresh start, this pact is, in reality, designed to heighten walls and strengthen fences," he wrote. "Rather than offering any new approach to facilitate bringing people to safety, this appears to be an attempt to rebrand a system which has been failing for years, with dire consequences."



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Nicolaus Fest

Dutch Greens MEP Tineke Strik
groenlinks.nl

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Birgit Sippel, Socialist group
spokesperson on Civil Liberties,
Justice and Home Affairs

HUDDLED MASSES, GO AWAY

Many MEPs are deeply concerned about severe overcrowding in the Greek refugee camps. The Commission wants all twenty-seven member states to share the burden by taking in refugees but there is a problem with that idea: some countries resolutely refuse to countenance the idea while inevitably – for geographical reasons – the burden will fall disproportionately on Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain. Previous threats of penalties for uncooperative member states have been ignored by Hungary for a long time without any repercussions, other than a vague “tut, tut” from its neighbours. The European Commission plan would offer countries like Denmark, Austria, Poland and Hungary €10,000 for each refugee they accept, ostensibly to cover early costs of travel and housing. The Commission proposal also insists on rapid processing of asylum applications and a fast repatriation of those whose applications fail. Unfortunately for the Commission, if not for the failed asylum seekers, their home countries often refuse to accept them back. That’s something against which the EU cannot legislate.

It’s worth remembering here the words of the 19th century American poet, Emma Lazarus, whose poem, ‘The New Colossus’, is inscribed at the base of the Statue of Liberty: “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore, Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me: I lift my lamp beside the golden door.” It’s clearly not a sentiment shared by US President Donald Trump. When an all-out war on drugs gangs was launched in El Salvador in 2014, quite a few of those caught in the crossfire, including children, tried to get to the border with the United States on foot to escape the violence.



Esmeralda* with her daughter Sara* in Chiapas, Mexico. Along with her husband and three other children, she escaped increasing gang violence in El Salvador and obtained refugee status in Mexico.

*Names changed for protection reasons



Migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea are rescued by a Belgian ship

Trump falsely claimed that many of them were members of gangs, and it’s certainly true that El Salvador is not short of very violent and murderous gangs. It helped Trump to sell the idea of building a wall along the Mexican border. I can’t see him lifting a lamp beside a golden door. But Europe is far from innocent here, either. The Commission proposal is basically saying “give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free” and we’ll try to bribe some country into accepting them. If we can’t find one, we’ll send them back again. It’s not quite the sentiment Emma Lazarus was trying to encourage.

Germany reported the largest influx of immigrants in 2018, according to the EU’s statistical office, Eurostat. Almost 894,000 people arrived, with the next most popular destination being Spain, with almost 644,000. The United Kingdom, no longer an EU state, of course, would have come third, with 604,000, although a number of British newspapers have claimed that Britain attracted the highest number of illegal immigrants, even though that is not true. Furthermore, most of the UK’s immigrants came from non-EU countries, despite political claims to the reverse: 202,000 (33.4%) from EU countries, 325,000 (53.8%) from outside the EU. Eurostat writes that 22 of the EU’s 27 member states reported more immigrants arriving than citizens leaving, but in Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania the number of emigrants outstripped the new arrivals. For its size, Malta recorded the highest rate of immigration, with 55 immigrants for every one thousand of its population. A slight majority of would-be immigrants were male: 54% to 46% female, but it varied from country to country. In Croatia, 75% of immigrants were male, while in Portugal’s case, women immigrants outnumbered men, making up 53%.

Strangers have seldom been welcomed. In the British humorous magazine, Punch, a supposed joke in 1854 ran the following dialogue: “Who’s ‘im, Bill? A stranger! ‘Eave ‘arf a brick at ‘im.” (Translation: “Who is that, Bill? A stranger? Throw a half-brick at him.”) OK, so it was meant as a joke, even if it’s not funny, but jokes must

start somewhere, and Punch tended to reflect popular sentiment, even if it didn’t necessarily approve of it. The European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), says that there has been an unprecedented increase in the numbers of refugees and other migrants entering Europe. Many of them were fleeing not only poverty but long-running conflicts, especially the war in Syria, where Russia and Iran were fighting Syrian opposition forces in a bid to keep the corrupt and murderous government of Bashar al-Assad in power, because it was in their national interests. It’s not because they like al-Assad. The peak came in 2015, when more than a million people arrived in Europe. According to the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), most had travelled the eastern route, through Turkey, Greece and the Balkans. The number has fallen since 2016 but an average year still sees some 160,000 hopefuls turning up on Europe’s borders.

IN DUBLIN’S (UN)FAIR CITY

It would also be fair to say that in a strange and very bureaucratic way they also pass through Dublin. But it’s not the love of sweet Molly Malone with her cockles and mussels that proves an obstacle, it’s the latest iteration of the EU’s Dublin Regulation, which sets out the rules and procedures for dealing with asylum applications. It is far from faultless and remains highly controversial, dealing more with the legality of the process than with individual asylum seekers. In theory, it allocates responsibility for an asylum seeker to the country in which they were first registered. This is backed up by another EU body, EURODAC, which fingerprints all incoming immigrants or asylum seekers so that it’s easy to ascribe them to a particular country. This is, of course, not only an onerous system but it is also unfair to countries where most immigrants first arrive, such as Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain. They obviously cannot be held responsible for housing all those who seek a new life in Europe, most of whom would far rather reach Germany anyway. Of course, the system is very unfair to immigrants, too, but politicians often forget that. The aim of the Dublin



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In a bid to fight the spread of COVID-19, the EU Delegation to Ghana joined the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) and artists from the Ghana Graffiti Collective, to launch an initiative to use street art and graffiti to create awareness about coronavirus and migration

Regulation was laudable, establishing which country should be responsible for processing applications. It is now in its third iteration as Dublin III and widely regarded as failing. It is extremely slow: the entire procedure can take more than eleven months, and nine months or more even if the applicant is sent back. Legal advice to applicants is free upon request, however, and decisions can be appealed.

In a bid to fight the spread of COVID-19, the EU Delegation to Ghana joined the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) and artists from the Ghana Graffiti Collective, to launch an initiative to use street art and graffiti to create awareness about coronavirus and migration © Eeas.europa.eu

It has a few other factors in its favour, too, such as guaranteeing a personal interview for every applicant, further guarantees for minors which consider the child's best interests and it gives the possibility of reuniting them with relatives who are already settled. However, the big influx in 2015 put a huge strain on the asylum systems of member states and even on the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) itself. In May 2016, as part of a reform of the CEAS, the European Commission proposed an updated system, replacing Dublin, which promised to be more transparent and effective. In theory, the new system would automatically establish if any member state is having to handle a disproportionately large number of cases by comparing the number of applications with the size of the population and relative wealth of the country concerned. If a certain reference figure is exceeded, the applicants will be transferred to a different location to apply for asylum. Countries wanting to be excused from this process would be allowed to do so upon making what's

called a "solidarity contribution" for every applicant for whom it would otherwise have been responsible under the 'fairness' mechanism, the payment going to the country that has taken over their responsibility. The new Pact would also establish a new European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) for the first time.

Certainly, the existing system and its predecessors are not without critics. The United Nations refugee agency, the UNHCR, is not alone in finding fault. "The 'Dublin' system operates," says its website, "on the assumption that, as the asylum laws and practices of the EU States are based on the same common standards, they allow asylum seekers to enjoy similar levels of protection in all EU Member States. In reality, however, asylum legislation and practice still vary widely from country to country, causing asylum-seekers to receive different treatment across Europe." What's more, the UNHCR makes it clear that it is by no means alone in disliking the way Dublin has worked. "In its 2008 evaluation," the agency states on its website, "the European Parliament noted that, in the absence of harmonisation, 'the Dublin system will continue to be unfair both to asylum seekers and to certain Member States'. The Dublin system increases pressures on the external border regions of the EU and harshly disrupts the lives of those fleeing to Europe for protection." Hardly a ringing endorsement. This, however, was the Dublin II system, introduced in 2003. Later came the current system, Dublin III, which came into force in January 2014, which drew further negative comments. Now it's to disappear altogether. Reforms to Dublin III were proposed in 2016 and 2018, but the new pact builds on and extends them, largely to win over member states reluctant to participate.

MOVING NORTH

Another UNHCR report focused on the operation of Dublin III from its inception up to 2016 and it does not make for cheerful reading. "This study was conducted at a time when some national asylum systems in Europe faced significant increases in applications for international protection, during 2015 and 2016," it explains. "Against this backdrop, the findings reflect, at times, insufficient implementation of elements of the Dublin Regulation due to constraints on certain Member States' asylum systems. This includes significant delays in conducting Dublin procedures and suspension of, or delays in, conducting personal interviews. However, the findings also demonstrate that Member States can, even when experiencing significant pressure, apply Dublin Regulation procedures in an efficient manner and in the best interests of applicants. Examples include the proactive use of the family reunion provisions (Articles 8, 9 and 10 of the Dublin III Regulation) and the 'humanitarian' clause (Article 17(2) of the Dublin III Regulation), where appropriate."



© UNHCR/Paolo Bondi

Refugees and migrants rescued in the Central Mediterranean disembark in Malta, 30 September, 2018

It's also true that most Europeans do not know where migrants come from or why. They do not know how difficult it is for them to get as far as Europe's border. Perhaps they don't care, although they may 'tut-tut' after watching a short television news report about the dreadful conditions migrants face. As the ECFR reports, "Many Europeans are unaware of the challenges migrants face before reaching the coast of Libya and crossing the Mediterranean. A large proportion of migrants, most of them from sub-Saharan African countries, endure a long journey in extreme conditions during which some of them die. Niger is the main hub on the route to North Africa." The European Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

allows migrants free movement within West Africa itself, but once they reach Niger, they are classed as 'illegals' if they travel further north, which means they have to rely on the smugglers and traffickers of Libya and Algeria. It makes no difference if the migrants are poor families trying to escape starvation or if they have been forcibly displaced by armed conflicts in such places as Syria, Yemen and northern Nigeria. They are seen as nothing more than a source of income for the people smugglers.

Furthermore, the UNHCR explains, Africa is undergoing a population boom. The entire continent's population is expected to double over the next three decades because of very high fertility rates. "Niger has the highest fertility rate in the world: 7.3 children per woman," the report explains. This is the exact opposite of Europe, with its ageing population and falling birth rate. In Europe, many couples marry much later in life than they did twenty or thirty years ago, and they delay having a family for the sake of their careers. They may decide to forego a family altogether. Just like Africa's poor, they want to enjoy a wealthier lifestyle than their parents or grandparents, and the demands of many career structures mean that progress is more likely without children to worry about. Of course, it may seem obvious that Europe's human shortfall, caused by job considerations and a reluctance to take on family ties, could be easily made up by the large numbers seeking to head to Europe, largely in pursuit of the sorts of jobs many Europeans are reluctant to do. That's not an idea that finds much support in countries of a more conservative persuasion, like, say, Hungary, which seems unlikely ever to agree to pay €10,000 to have an asylum applicant taken off its hands. The upsurge in migration resulting from the Syrian conflict, rather than inspiring sympathy and brotherly love actually sparked a wave of anti-immigrant policies that show no signs of going away.



© Wikipedia

Ylva Johansson EU Commissioner for Home Affairs



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« The fire that destroyed most of the Registration and Identification Centre of Moria and the informal settlements surrounding it, on the Greek island of Lesbos on Tuesday night has dramatically worsened the living conditions of more than 12 000 asylum seekers and migrants, including more than 4,000 children, who are held in a centre whose capacity is less than 2,800 people," said Dunja Mijatović Commissioner for Human Rights"

The European Commission finds itself trying to come up with policies that meet the urgent need without driving away the less sympathetic countries into ever-more xenophobic rhetoric. It's perhaps to satisfy those doubters that Ylva Johansson, the EU Commissioner for migration, told a Brussels news conference that asylum seekers under the proposed new system "have the same rights for their application to be processed in a proper and fair way, but it has to be done very quickly.

This is an important message that you will be returned if you come to the EU and you don't have the right to stay." She also admitted, however, that no-one will like the new pact. Meanwhile, Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis Schinas, said of the Moria fire that it was: "a stark reminder that the clock has run out on how long we can live in a house half-built. The time has come to rally around a common, European migration policy." Good luck with persuading the more anti-immigrant member states to agree.

SEA FEVER

Pity poor Greece, first port of call for many. When Kyriakos Mitsotakis was elected Prime Minister in July 2019, he promised reforms and a fairer way to deal with the countries' migrants.

It didn't really work out, according to the Migration Policy Institute. "Over its first year, Greece's new government sought to calibrate a response addressing migration fatigue among Aegean island host communities taxed by the arrival

of tens of thousands of asylum seekers over the past several years, pressure from the European Union to prevent onward movement, and tensions with Turkey." Of course, the tensions with Turkey have worsened, and not just because of asylum seekers; Turkey's determination to exploit undersea gas deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean have stretched tensions to breaking point. The reforms of Mitsotakis have shown few benefits. "Asylum proceedings remained painfully slow, EU burden-sharing was conspicuous in its absence, and repatriations of rejected asylum seekers had stalled," reports the Migration Policy Institute.



© Wikimedia

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis

"These results prompted protests in the North Aegean in early 2020. As the government tried to reckon with these tensions, Turkish authorities unilaterally opened their western borders to asylum seekers, triggering sudden, large-scale movements toward Greece. While Turkey's brinkmanship played out, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the region." It could be called the perfect storm, except that it's far from perfect for anyone.

Meanwhile, there are signs of an increasing number of attempts to cross the Mediterranean by organised groups of migrants without the aid of people smugglers. This has been characterised by the arrival of small inflatables with only a few people on each. Partly it's because of COVID-19 and the resulting lockdown. Italy's far-right opposition politicians have been blaming the new migrants for an upsurge in COVID-19 cases in Italy. Matteo Salvini, leader of the right-wing Northern League, has claimed that infected migrants on Lampedusa mix with tourists and thus spread the disease worldwide. According to The Economist, Giorgia Meloni, whose Brothers of Italy party has its roots among Mussolini's Fascists, wrote on Facebook that "the link between clandestine immigration and increases in infection cannot be ignored". By parties such as his, of course, you may be sure it won't be.



OM Director General, António Vitorino

The European Commission's new initiative has mainly been welcomed by organisations responsible for migrants and asylum seekers, including the International Organisation for Migration: "The IOM is pleased to see affirmation in the package that migration and mobility can be manageable under a comprehensive, rights-based, whole-of-route approach grounded in partnerships and cooperation," says the IOM website. "While we have yet to assess it in detail, the proposal is a notable starting point that covers many dimensions of a complex, broad and often divisive issue," according to Director General António Vitorino.

"It clearly recognizes that no one country can manage migration and mobility alone or in isolation. We remain optimistic that an international approach can become a positive reality for both migrants and societies." The organisation points out that "most migration – including to the EU – happens in a safe and regular way, contributing to growth and dynamism when well managed. We have seen repeatedly how people on the move, when integrated and their rights are upheld, can be part of the solutions needed in our societies." That may not be a widespread view, however.

In compiling its new pact on migration and asylum, the European Commission held consultations and examined data and statistics from such bodies as Eurostat, the frontier agency Frontex, as well as EASO (the European Asylum Support Office) and eu-LISA, the clumsily-named European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. The resulting document outlined the situation facing the Commission. "Since the migration crisis of 2015, the number of arrivals and composition of flows have changed significantly, both between and along the different migratory routes.

Additionally, there is significant variation of migratory pressure across countries and in terms of the tools applied to address it," said the document. "The number of irregular arrivals to the EU dropped by 92% between 2015 and 2019, with Afghan (24% of the total), Syrian (17%), unspecified sub-Saharan nationals (10%) and Turkish (6%) as the most prominent nationalities." The document also pointed out a strange anomaly: "Asylum applications have not followed the decreasing trend in irregular arrivals, meaning the ratio of asylum applications to irregular arrivals is higher today than it was in 2015." This is what really lies behind proposals for a new pact, coupled with the stubborn resistance of some countries to the idea of admitting any more refugees. "While there were 1.2-million first-time asylum seekers applying for international protection in the EU and 374,314 registered irregular border crossings on the three main routes in 2016," the report explains, "there were 612,685 first-time asylum seekers applying for international protection and 124,023 registered irregular border crossings in 2019."

UPHOLDING THE LAW

The European Commission's proposed pact would bring in integrated procedures, starting at the EU's borders, comprising pre-entry screening of applicants, a single asylum procedure and also a quick way of effecting returns of those rejected. The EU has to be cautious here, of course, because sending an applicant back into danger would count as refoulement, which would be against international law. It is a principle of what is called 'customary international law', based as it is on customs that would be taken into account by any court, including the International Criminal Court, the EU's Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights, among several others. It applies even to states that are not parties to the 1951 Geneva Convention

relating to the status of refugees, or its 1967 protocol, which extended it to cover those affected by events that had happened after 1951. Trucial laws, as they are sometimes known, are those that affect all aspects of international relations and are based on laws first formulated in Ancient Rome. However, Rome was not much troubled by migration or asylum seekers, and the EU seeks to keep its new pact within the law: "All necessary guarantees will be put in place to ensure that every person has an individual assessment that takes account of the vulnerabilities of certain applicants, in full respect of their fundamental rights, including the principle of non-refoulement," it says.

However, the Visegrád group – Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia – have rejected the pact. The first three want nothing to do with helping migrants; Slovakia is still considering it.

However, for EU lawmakers, there is another problem. "Migrants disembarked following search and rescue (SAR) operations represent a significant share of arrivals, reaching 50% of total arrivals by sea in 2019," explains the Commission proposal. "These arrivals have a direct impact on the EU's migration and asylum systems, as well as on the effectiveness of integrated border management, due to the fact that Member States cannot apply the same tools that are applied for irregular crossings by land or by air. For instance, there are no official border checks for SAR arrivals, which not only means that points of entry are more difficult to define, but also that third-country nationals have no pointers where to officially seek entry." Neither are those who have taken risks and spent money to reach Europe likely just to pack up and go home willingly if their applications are rejected. So, apart from the SAR arrivals, whose justifications for seeking asylum are hard to assess, there are also people who, while not fulfilling the



The Visegrád Group (Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovak prime ministers)

conditions required for entry, request international protection during border checks. There are also those who slipped through any border controls but were later apprehended within the country they were seeking to settle in. Can these people, off the scale as far as normal asylum applications are concerned, win citizenship or at least the right to remain in their country of choice?

The Pact also contains a 'solidarity mechanism', offering new forms of mutual support among member states. The Commission document says that "The new Pact recognises that no Member State should shoulder a disproportionate responsibility and that all Member States should constantly contribute top solidarity." It sounds like a very good idea, based on the assumption that all member states share an equal sense of responsibility where migrants and asylum seekers are concerned. They don't, of course, but it's a nice idea. It's a bit vague in places, however, to be honest. Take, for example, the very well-intentioned solidarity mechanism for countries under unfair pressure. "The mechanism is intended to be triggered when the asylum and return capacities of a Member State are no longer able or risk not being able to cope with the number of migrants on the territory," says the Commission. "There will be no quantitative threshold for defining this, but instead a holistic assessment by the Commission based on all the information at its disposal, including for example the number of asylum applications, search and rescue cases, irregular border crossings and returns." I can see problems ahead, but there always will be where immigration is concerned. The plain fact is that a lot of people would like to creep under the protective wing of the European Union, like chicks with a mother hen. But too many in Europe oppose migration in any form for a single neat solution to work without opposition. Perhaps people should be aware of words written by the English philosopher and statesman Francis Bacon (1561-1626), who wrote that "If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world." As the outcome of Britain's Brexit referendum showed, not everyone, it seems, wants to be a citizen of the world. Some prefer to lock the doors, draw the curtains and hope the rest of the world simply goes away.

T. Kingsley Brooks



Migrants who have been returned to shore in Libya after attempting to cross the sea to Europe are supported by aid workers from the the International Organization for Migration

THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OHCHR, IS CALLING FOR URGENT ACTION TO ADDRESS THE "UNIMAGINABLE HORRORS" FACED BY MIGRANTS ATTEMPTING TO CROSS THE CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SEA IN SEARCH OF SAFETY IN EUROPE.

OHCHR highlighted what it called a "cycle of violence" whereby people faced deprivation and abuse in Libya, only to be left to drift "for days at sea". Often, their boats were intercepted dangerously by the authorities and returned to Libya, the UN rights office said, noting that migrants then faced arbitrary detention, torture and other serious human rights violations.

And the situation has become even more acute amid the COVID-19 pandemic, OHCHR continued in its statement, as humanitarian search and rescue vessels have been prevented from heading out to sea, while there is also a lack of access by civil society groups that help migrants.

"What is happening to migrants...is the result of a failed system of migration governance...marked by a lack of solidarity forcing frontline States...to bear the brunt of the responsibility", said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet.

Fleeing Libya

Despite the lack of sufficient safe and regular migration channels, migrants continue to take the precarious sea journey, often multiple times – encountering danger and suffering.

Arbitrary detention, torture, trafficking, sexual abuse, forced labour and other serious human rights violations were some of the horrors that migrants in Libya described.

And many reported being intercepted by the Libyan Coast Guard, including having their

boats rammed or shot at, causing vessels to capsize or people to desperately jump into the water.

While some reports reflected that commercial vessels did not come to their assistance, others affirmed that commercial ships picked them up only to return the individuals to detention centres in Libya.

OHCHR pointed out that if true, "these are serious allegations of failure to assist people in distress at sea and possible coordinated push-backs that should be duly investigated".

Mission to Malta

The call followed a week-long UN rights mission to Malta that engaged Government officials, UN partners, migrant community leaders, civil society organizations, speaking to 76 migrants from 25 different countries.

Some migrants there explained that they had been detained for several months, with only one change of clothing and little access to daylight, clean water and sanitation.

They also reported severe overcrowding, poor living conditions and limited contact with the outside world, including lawyers and civil society organizations.

"You're in jail in Libya and now you come to Europe and prison again", one migrant testified.

"The pressures on the reception system in Malta have long been known but the pandemic has clearly made an already difficult situation worse", said Ms. Bachelet.

Despite COVID-19 challenges, "human rights must always be upheld and those who are confined, out of sight as it were, must not be forgotten", she continued, appealing for European Union States to adopt "a principled approach to migration" and tackle "the shocking conditions" faced by migrants in Libya, at sea, and often when they finally reach Europe, and supposed safety.

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A NEW EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA:

Commission sets new plan to support green and digital transition and EU recovery

The European Commission has adopted a Communication on a new European Research Area for Research and Innovation. Based on excellence, competitive, open and talent-driven, the new European Research Area will improve Europe's research and innovation landscape, accelerate the EU's transition towards climate neutrality and digital leadership, support its recovery from the societal and economic impact of the coronavirus crisis, and strengthen its resilience against future crises. The Commission set out strategic objectives and actions to be

implemented in close cooperation with the Member States, in order to prioritise investments and reforms in research and innovation, improve access to excellence for researchers across the EU and enable research results to reach the market and the real economy. Additionally, the Communication will further promote researchers' mobility, skills and career development opportunities within the EU, gender equality, as well as better access to publicly funded peer-reviewed science. Executive Vice-President for A Europe Fit for the Digital Age, Margrethe Vestager, said: "The EU is already leading

innovation through its research and scientific excellence. We want to build on that and step up our efforts towards achieving breakthrough market-driven innovations that will contribute to a green digital Europe and will boost growth, job creation and our competitiveness in the global scene. Today we are setting a new ambition for a European Research Area to facilitate cooperation and contribute to a more competitive European industry." Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, said: "We live in times when scientific activities require faster and

effective collaborations. We need to strengthen the European Research Area.

An area embracing all of Europe, because knowledge has no territorial boundaries, because scientific knowledge grows with collaborations, because knowledge is trusted if there is open scrutiny of its quality. It has also more chances to achieve peaks of excellence and support an innovative and risk taking industry to shape a resilient, green and digital future.” Launched in 2000, the European Research Area has made major achievements over the past years –yet, today's context prompts us to rethink how to strengthen its role, better define and implement its key objectives, as well as make it more attractive as a common space for creating valuable research and innovation. Moreover, Europe is currently facing significant societal, ecological and economic challenges that are aggravated by the coronavirus crisis. Research and innovation is therefore crucial in addressing these challenges, delivering on Europe's recovery and speeding up the twin green and digital transitions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE NEW EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA

Building on Europe's innovation leadership and scientific excellence, the new European Research Area aims to incentivise better coordination and cooperation among the EU, its Member States and the private sector; lead to more investments in research and innovation; strengthen mobility of researchers, their expertise, and the flow of knowledge; The Communication defines four strategic objectives:

1. Prioritise investments and reforms in research and innovation towards the green and digital transition,



Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth

to support Europe's recovery and increase competitiveness. EU support towards research and innovation is foreseen through various programmes, such as the Horizon Europe, the Cohesion policy, and the Next Generation EU. To bring about the required positive change and ensure quality of results, EU support must be complemented by investments from Member States and the private sector. The Communication reaffirms the target of 3% of GDP to be invested on EU research and innovation and prompts further cooperation among Member states, and alignment of national efforts, by setting a target of 5% of national public funding to joint research and development programmes and European partnerships, by 2030.

The principle of excellence, which entails that the best researchers with the best ideas can obtain funding, remains the cornerstone for all investments under the European Research area.



Margrethe Vestager, Executive Vice-President for A Europe Fit for the Digital Age

2. Improve access to excellent facilities and infrastructures for researchers across the EU. Member States' research and innovation investment remains uneven, which translates into gaps in scientific excellence and innovation output that need to be bridged. The EU already supports lagging countries, including with tailor-made support on the ground, and Horizon Europe will further ensure so, through enhanced collaborations with more experienced counterparts, in order to improve access to excellence. The Commission proposes that Member States, lagging behind the EU average research and innovation investment over GDP, direct their efforts to increase their investments by 50% in the next 5 years. To this end, mobility opportunities for researchers to access excellence and expand their experience will be created through dedicated training and mobility schemes between industry and academia. In order to reflect the progress towards research based on excellence, Member States lagging behind

the EU average on highly cited publications should reduce the gap to the EU average by at least one third in the next 5 years.

3. Transfer results to the economy to boost business investments and market uptake of research output, as well as foster EU competitiveness and leadership in the global technological setting. In view of speeding up the transfer of research results into the real economy and supporting the implementation of the new Industrial Strategy, the Commission will encourage and guide the development of common technology plans with industry that will allow crowding in more private investments in key international projects. This will foster the development of competitive technologies in key strategic areas, while securing a stronger European presence in the global scene. In parallel, following a detailed monitoring exercise, the Commission will explore the possibility of developing a networking framework that will build on existing entities and capacities, such as centres of excellence or Digital Innovation Hubs, to facilitate collaboration and exchange of best practices by 2022. Still in this two-year framework, the Commission will update and develop guiding principles, which will ensure that innovation can be valorised and rewarded, as well as a code of practice for the smart use of intellectual property, to ensure access to effective and affordable intellectual property protection.

4. Strengthen mobility of researchers and free flow of knowledge and technology, through greater cooperation among Member States, to ensure that everyone benefits from research and its results. The EU will aim to improve career development opportunities to attract and retain the best

researchers in Europe as well as incentivise researchers to pursue a career outside academia. To this end, it will also deliver, by the end of 2024, in partnership with Member States and research organisations, a toolbox of support for researchers' careers. The toolbox will consist of the following elements: a Researchers Competence Framework to identify key skills and mismatches; a mobility scheme to support exchange and mobility of researchers across industry and academia; targeted training and professional development opportunities under Horizon Europe; and, a one-stop shop portal for people to more easily find information and manage their learning and careers. The EU will work towards accomplishing the above strategic objectives, in close cooperation with the Member States, through 14 actions that are linked to each other and will be instrumental in realising the European Research Area. Furthermore, the Commission will drive a European Forum for Transition, a strategic discussion forum with Member States that will support them in the coherent implementation of these four objectives. The Commission will also propose, by the first half of 2021, that Member States adopt a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe, which will reinforce their commitment to shared policies and principles and indicate the areas where they will jointly develop priority actions. As part of its initiatives to support the recovery and build a green and digital Europe, the Commission, in addition to the new European Research Area, adopted today a new Digital Education Action Plan, to adapt education and training systems to the digital age, as well as a Communication on the European Education Area as a driver for job creation and growth.

BACKGROUND

The European Research Area was launched in 2000 with the aim of better organising and integrating Europe's research and innovation systems and enhancing cooperation between the EU, the Member

States, their regions and their stakeholders. It also aimed for the free circulation of researchers, scientific knowledge and technology throughout the EU and focused on stimulating cross-border cooperation and on improving and coordinating the research and innovation policies and programmes of the Member States. In 2018, the Council of the European Union made a call to revamp the European Research Area in 2020 with a new Commission Communication. In December 2019, Member States advised on the future of the European Research Area through an opinion of the European Research and Innovation Committee. As part of the EU response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Commission introduced the ERA vs Corona Action Plan in April of this year. Building on the overall objectives and the tools of the European Research Area, the action plan is a working document developed jointly by the Commission and national governments. It covers short-term actions based on close coordination, cooperation, data sharing and shared funding efforts.

Video pour site <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-195567>

Photos <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/creativepics/726>

<https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/album/M-004727>



A Nord Stream 2 pipe

PAYING THE PIPER: NORD STREAM 2

the pipeline Europe may need but many fear

It's planned to be big; very big. In fact, Nord Stream 2 is set to be 1,230 kilometres long when completed and it will be capable of carrying 55-billion cubic metres of gas from Ust-Luga in the Leningrad region (the original Nord Stream runs from Vyborg). It will run side-by-side with its older cousin for most of its length – Nord Stream and Nord Stream 2 each involve two adjacent pipes – to an exit point near Greifswald in Germany. Nord Stream 2 will pass beneath the Baltic sea, an area of relatively brackish water bordered by nine countries and surprisingly rich in underwater wildlife, plus aquatic species like grey seals, harbour seals, ringed seals and the harbour porpoise. The pipeline will enter the Baltic via the Gulf of Finland. The sea itself is fed with waters from some fourteen countries in all, in a catchment area four times greater than the Sea itself. Brackish means it has relatively low salinity, but the water gets saltier where it joins the North Sea and, ultimately, the north Atlantic, which is extremely salty. These variations are

important for the climate, especially in the Northern Hemisphere.

LOCATION OF NORD STREAM WIKIPEDIA

As research by NASA has shown: "Surface winds drive currents in the upper ocean. Deep below the surface, however, ocean circulation is primarily driven by changes in seawater density, which is determined

by salinity and temperature." According to NASA, in some regions such as the North Atlantic near Greenland, "cooled high-salinity surface waters can become dense enough to sink to great depths." This feeds into the great "Global Conveyor Belt", as it's known, controlling the movement of weather systems around the world, which makes the low-salinity Baltic an important part of a wider pattern.



Location of Nord Stream

The Baltic is Earth's youngest sea, emerging from its Ice Age covering of ice and snow only some 10,000 to 15,000 years ago. According to the ecological movement, Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Baltic is a vital resource. "Not only does the Baltic Sea host several WWF priority species, including the harbour porpoise, cod, salmon and sturgeon," its website explains, "it's also surrounded by nine countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden) that are home to more than 85 million people and diverse political, social and economic realities." Add to this the fact that the Baltic is one of the most intensively used seas on the planet and you have the makings of a problem.



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Eutrophication

It is also suffering from eutrophication, which means that run-off from agricultural nutrients is feeding massive algae blooms. Despite its first syllable, eutrophication has nothing to do with the EU, at least not directly, although the Common Agricultural Policy has encouraged farmers to increase agricultural output through the use of fertilisers, which is what causes the problem. When these algae die, they sink to the sea floor and their decomposition further depletes oxygen levels at the greatest depths. The use of fertilisers has been reduced over recent years but around 97% of the Baltic is still affected by eutrophication. The Helsinki Commission is seeking to reduce the use of fertilisers by 2021 but it's unlikely to meet its target.

At this point, enter Russia's energy giant Gazprom, which wants to add a second pipeline alongside the original Nord Stream, widely considered a great success. Why does a new pipeline matter? There's one there already; what difference

would an extra one make? It's a fair question. Incidentally, gas, sometimes called fossil gas, is a naturally occurring hydrocarbon mixture made up mainly of methane with one carbon atom and four hydrogen atoms (CH₄) but also commonly including varying amounts of other higher alkanes, and sometimes a small percentage of carbon dioxide, nitrogen, hydrogen sulphide, or helium. It originates from thermogenic, biogenic, or abiogenic processes. After all, Europe needs gas supplies and – unfortunately for the governments of north European countries – most of it is being sought for and exploited by vaguely unfriendly countries, like Russia and Turkey. Russian President Vladimir Putin is no admirer of Europe and nor is the Turkish leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, whose ships have been exploring for gas in the East Mediterranean, which seems to have a lot. It has annoyed Greece (exploring up to the coast of Greek islands, for instance) and other countries and has led to representatives of Egypt, Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Jordan and Israel concluding an agreement in Cairo to officially convert the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum into a regional organisation. The European Commission has also warned Turkey of unspecified action to deter such cavalier activity. But the gas Turkey is seeking is far from the Baltic, which has none of its own (not even oxygen in its depths, if eutrophication continues) but which Gazprom wants to use as a conduit. Again.

It would be a real nightmare if Putin and Erdoğan joined forces, but they are on opposing sides in the reawakened conflict over Nagorno Karabakh, a region within Azerbaijan but ethnically Armenian and with an Armenian administration. While both were just parts of the Soviet Union, such divisions didn't matter much.

Now they do. Azerbaijan is supported by Erdoğan's Turkey, but Armenia traditionally has the support of Putin's Russia. As long as they're on opposing sides they're unlikely to get into any sort of alliance over gas, although nobody wants this hitherto frozen conflict to boil over again for long. In fact, both Putin and French President Emmanuel Macron have called on the two sides to calm down and take a step back. Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev, however, has said that Azeri forces will continue to fight until all Armenian troops are withdrawn, while Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan warned that negotiations are not appropriate while the fighting goes on. Meanwhile, ordinary Armenians have been queueing outside recruitment offices in the Armenia capital, Yerevan.

PUT THAT IN YOUR PIPE (BUT DON'T SMOKE IT)

The original Nord Stream is viewed as a success, providing a route for 55-billion cubic metres of gas annually.

Indeed, Nord Stream has been such a success that in October 2012 its shareholders looked at the preliminary results of a feasibility study for the third and fourth versions of the pipeline and came to the conclusion that they would be economically and technically feasible. In April 2017, Nord Stream 2 AG signed financing agreements with ENGIE (a French multinational utility company), OMV (an Austrian oil and gas company), Royal Dutch Shell, Uniper (pronounced Juniper, a German-Finnish energy company based in Düsseldorf, Germany) and Wintershall Dea (Europe's leading independent gas and oil company). Together they would provide long-term financing for 50% of the project. Work on the project began in September 2018. Not



© Kremlin.ru

President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Russian President Vladimir Putin



French Prime Minister François Fillon, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in 2011 at the launch ceremony in Lubmin, Germany, for the first leg of the Nord Stream gas pipeline

surprisingly, the initial idea had German support. But Berlin is having second thoughts.

In fact, Germany has always argued that pumping an extra 55-billion cubic metres of gas per year under the Baltic Sea is a commercial venture and not a political one, but German Chancellor Angela Merkel has recently been talking about trying to halt the project. Why? Because of Russia's irresponsible actions towards anyone who opposes, or any way threatens the leadership, of the Russian President. Most recently, of course, it was the poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny with a military-grade nerve agent, but there had been previous signs of Putin's bid for world domination with the murder of Alexander Litvinenko using a tea poisoned with polonium in 2006. Then came the clumsy attempts on the lives of former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, in Salisbury in the UK, this time using, again, the military nerve agent Novichok. They survived – just – but the attack killed an innocent woman and caused chaos in the town of Salisbury. The killers were caught on street security cameras and were identified as members of the Russian secret service, the FSB, although they claimed to be tourists who wanted to visit Salisbury Cathedral. They failed to complete their tourist jaunt because, they said, they were deterred by the forecast of a light snowfall; odd, for men who came from Siberia. Should Germany step back, then? “I have not yet made a final judgement,” said Merkel. However, her options are rather limited because although the Nord Stream 2

company is wholly owned by Gazprom, a Russian company, its headquarters are in Switzerland.

Switzerland, of course, is famously NOT an EU member state but anything done to hold up the pipeline could breach EU law or attract massive compensation claims for damages. Merkel has another problem: the German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is very keen to get the pipeline completed and has issued all the necessary permits.

Germany is the biggest buyer of Russian gas in the world and a large number of German companies work with Gazprom to implement projects related to the existing and future Nord Stream pipelines. In 2018, Germany set a new record for Russian gas purchases at 58.5-billion cubic metres. Nord Stream (the original one) is not the only route into Germany. Gas also arrives along the Yamal-Europe pipeline, which crosses four countries: Russia (of course), Belarus, Poland and, naturally, Germany. Gazprom works closely with a number



Two pipes are welded together on the Castoro Sei pipelaying vessel

of German companies already, including in the extraction of natural gas from the Achimov deposits of the Urengoykoye field, a source in Russia's Yamal-Nenets Autonomous area that has been exploited since its discovery in 1966. Gazprom is also involved in underground gas storage facilities in Germany at Rehden, Etzel, Jemgum (all in Lower Saxony) and at UGS Katharina, where it's stored at between 500 and 700 metres underground.

There is widespread acknowledgement within the European Union of the importance of the Baltic to Europe's energy needs and also the importance of Europe overcoming its reliance on an unpredictable Russia. In early October, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met with the leaders of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland with a bid to linking up energy networks. Emerging from the meeting, von der Leyen told the media: “Last night, we awarded €720-million from the Connecting Europe Facility to link the Baltic energy grid with the rest of the Europe. This project is a landmark moment. It is a landmark moment in ending the isolation of the Baltic energy market. Most of the funding will go to a new interconnector in the Baltic Sea. And I cannot think of a better name than ‘Harmony Link.’” She described it as showing European solidarity in action. “It will reduce the region's over-dependence and over-reliance on a single source of energy imports by connecting it in full harmony to the rest of the European Union.” The single source referred to here is, of course, Russia. Nobody in Europe is very comfortable with having to rely on Moscow's good will.

HAMMER, SICKLE AND GAS PIPE

The history of Russian gas supplies to Europe goes back a long way. Back in 1968, of course, the agreement was between the USSR and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Two years later, the USSR signed agreements on gas supplies to what was then West Germany, together with deliveries of German large-diameter pipes to the Soviet Union. Agreements to increase supplies of Soviet gas to West Germany were signed in 1972, 1974 and again in 1979. Meanwhile in 1973 the first supplies of natural gas from Russia started arriving in the GDR. In the same year, the USSR started deliveries to Ruhrgas in West Germany. And so it went on, with the West buying more and more



Russian President Vladimir Putin and French President Emmanuel Macron



German Chancellor Angela Merkel with Russian President Vladimir Putin

Russian gas. In 1990, following the fall of Communism, Gazprom and Wintershall set up the WIEH joint venture (more formally known as WIEH GmbH & Co. KG) to focus on natural gas trading, transmission, storage and marketing in a number of European countries. In 2017, Russia provided 39% of the gas consumed in Europe.

So, it's all going swimmingly; what's to object to? I mentioned the importance of the Baltic in climate and environmental terms so it should come as no great surprise that an environmental NGO, in this case Deutsche Umwelthilfe (German Environmental Aid), has taken legal action to have the operating permit for Nord Stream 2 reviewed on climate grounds. The organisation claims that new scientific research has revealed leaks of methane from the pipe and that the scale of those leaks could contribute to global warming. It says that completion of Nord Stream 2 would go against Germany's climate targets, although the mining authority that issued the permit has so far disagreed. On a more political basis, Germany could halt the construction for security reasons: the attempted murder of Alexey Navalny suggests Russia may still be prepared to ignore international norms, not for the sake of Russia itself but to protect its leader. However, EU law may prevent Germany from taking unilateral action that should be the prerogative of the EU itself. After all, no other EU country is taking action against Russia and Macron seems quite friendly with Putin.

The United States is also unhappy about Nord Stream 2. It doesn't much like the original Nord Stream, either, and has applied sanctions. They change from time to time, but the international law firm Norton Rose Fulbright explains.

"Section 232 of CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, signed into law by President Trump in 2017) targets those who (i) make investments that directly and significantly contribute to the enhancement of the ability of Russia to construct energy export pipelines; or (ii) sell, lease or provide goods, services, technology, information or support to the Russian Federation for the construction of Russian energy export pipelines. The investment threshold for Section 232 of CAATSA is set at \$1-million, or \$5-million over a twelve-month period." That looks pretty comprehensive, although the US isn't so short of locally acquired energy supplies as Europe. Certainly, the German government doesn't like CAATSA and has said so. German politicians swamped the media with their objections to American interference. It does, however, provide an escape route if Germany feels too isolated over its cosyng-up to Moscow. All it has to do is sit back and let CAATSA stop the pipeline, having washed its hands of responsibility. But then, from where would it get its energy supplies, having also taken the decision to put an end to nuclear power? Washington decided to add Nord Stream 2 to its targeted sanctions list after two ships linked to Gazprom sailed into the German port of Mukran.

US sanctions are certainly slowing construction of the project, with companies nervous about incurring Washington's wrath and thereby attracting sanctions on further work. For example, in the event of Nord Stream 2 being completed, what company would risk accepting the inspection work if it meant being blacklisted by the US? And the groundswell of concern about Russia's aggressive behaviour is growing. Recently a group of acting and former diplomats wrote a letter that was printed in the magazine Newsweek, calling for Europe to stop Nord Stream 2. They cite what they describe as "a litany of malign activities aimed at upending liberal democratic norms across Europe and North America". The attempted murder of Navalny is mentioned as an example of what they call "destabilizing political adventurism at home and abroad." They point out that the project has nothing to do with ensuring Europe's future energy supplies. "Nord Stream 2 is not a European Project," they point out. "This project was not designed to serve Europeans. From Conception to implementation, the project has stood in stark contradiction to Europe's interests. It is 100% owned by Kremlin-controlled Gazprom." They argue that the whole idea behind it is to undermine the economic and strategic security of Ukraine, while Russia continues to wage what they call "a hybrid war" there in their bid to regain it. "If Nord Stream 2 were to come into operation," they write, "it would provide the Kremlin the technical capability to end or significantly diminish gas transit via the Ukrainian pipeline network, harming the Ukrainian economy overnight while removing a lever of deterrence against further Russian aggression to destabilize that nation."

CLOSING THE PIPE?

Gazprom claims that the decision to build Nord Stream 2 "was based on the successful experience in building and



Russian President Vladimir Putin and French President Emmanuel Macron

operating the Nord Stream gas pipeline. The new pipeline, similar to the one in operation, will establish a direct link between Gazprom and the European consumers. It will also ensure a highly reliable supply of Russian gas to Europe.” The serving and former diplomats who wrote the letter in Newsweek see things rather differently. “Nord Stream 2,” they write, “is not being developed to bring significant new gas volumes to Germany and Western Europe, as project promoters falsely claim, but is being developed to simply reroute existing gas transit to avoid Ukraine.” They believe it’s seen by Putin as a way to enrich contractors with close ties to the Kremlin, including some owned by oligarchs who are already targeted by western sanctions, and also as a vehicle for the capture and corruption of western officials. There’s no shortage of those already, they say: people who were employed in the west in influential positions but are now employed directly by Russian state-owned enterprises and are energetically pursuing Moscow’s overseas policy goals. The writers of that Newsweek letter urge the Transatlantic community to use every legal tool they can to ensure that Nord Stream 2 never comes into operation.

It’s not only the United States that has serious concerns about the new pipeline; a number of Central and East European countries do, too, having had first-hand experience of what Russia can do. One thing it has proved itself very capable of doing is providing natural gas. Most of what goes into the Nord Stream pipeline, after undergoing treatment at the Vyborg compressor plant, comes from Russia’s Yuzhno-Russkoye gas field in the oblast of Tyumen, although it also takes a feed from fields in the Yamal Peninsula. Nord Stream 2 has mainly been laid by the Swiss-Dutch company Allseas, but they stopped before completing the last 150 kilometres because of sanction threats from Washington. Similar threats may also dissuade the 120 or so companies scattered around the EU that were hoping to do business with Nord Stream 2.

If Germany decided to bite the bullet and withdraw permits from Nord Stream 2, the Switzerland-based (but Russian-owned) company could sue, with costs reaching the construction cost of the actual pipeline, thought to be around €9.5-billion. A country has got to be really convinced of the rightness of its actions before risking that amount of money in litigation. In fact, it looks unlikely (but not

impossible) that anyone will succeed in stopping the construction. On 1 October, Denmark removed the final obstacle when its energy agency announced that it had granted Nord Stream 2 an operations permit for pipelines on the country’s continental shelf, subject to conditions. Mind you, those conditions may not be easy to satisfy.

According to the Oil Price.com website, commissioning “can only take place when at least one of the pipelines has been tested, verified and when relevant conditions in the construction permit have been met.” The website also mentions the fact that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had told the German daily Bild that the US is building a coalition aimed at preventing the completion. “From the US point of view,” he told the paper, “Nord Stream 2 endangers Europe because it makes it dependent on Russian gas and endangers Ukraine – which in my opinion worries many Germans.” It may do, but does it worry them enough to risk losing €9.5-billion? Watch this space.

Trump has warned companies that have helped Russia with the pipeline that they should “get out now or face the consequences”. Angela Merkel has come under pressure from some of her EU neighbours to drop her support for Nord Stream 2 following the poisoning of Alexey Navalny. If she does, it will please the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) who see the pipeline as a possible environmental disaster.

Needless to say, however, Russia is delighted that what looks to be the last legal obstacle to progress has been removed. As the Russian news agency TASS reported: “To date, 93.5% of Nord Stream 2 has been finished. The construction was suspended at the end of 2019 when the Swiss pipe-laying company Allseas stopped work due to US sanctions.” On the other hand, TASS also reports Moscow’s anger with the Americans. “Russia rejects US attempts to oppose the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project by forging a coalition of project opponents,” a spokeswoman of the Foreign Ministry, Maria Zakharova, is reported as saying. “We condemn calls for forging a certain coalition against the pipeline, wherein German and other companies have already made multi-billion investments,” the diplomat said. And, somewhat strangely, TASS claims that Russia sees Western annoyance over the poisoning of Alexey Navalny as



President Trump, Secretary of State Pompeo and Treasury Secretary Mnuchin

being linked to their disquiet over Nord Stream 2. “Russia’s foreign intelligence service SVR has exposed some Western countries’ involvement in fuelling the Alexey Navalny case,” reports TASS (what’s to fuel? Someone tried to kill him, which is enough to raise concern), “with the Nord Stream 2 project being the main target.” This somewhat bizarre statement was credited to Sergei Naryshkin, Director of Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR).

Russia has also attacked the German government for allegedly trying to forge alliances with the pipeline’s opponents.

Certainly, Berlin’s opinion of the pipeline is inevitably coloured by the strong but unproven possibility that Putin ordered the murder of a political opponent, something Russia seems to find hard to understand. And Angela Merkel appears to be doing her best to appease Washington and soften its stance. Again according to TASS, the German government offered a billion-euro deal to the US in exchange for Washington’s rejection of sanctions against the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project. It was citing a report in Germany’s Die Zeit newspaper. According to the newspaper’s sources, Berlin said it was ready to invest €1-billion in the construction of two LNG terminals for handling American liquefied natural gas. “In exchange, the US will allow unobstructed finalization and use of Nord Stream 2,” German Vice Chancellor and Finance Minister Olaf Scholz is reported to have said in a letter to US Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin. In the letter, Germany noted that “the existing legal options for sanctions have not been exhausted yet.”

Austria has already indicated that it would not allow the attempted murder of Navalny to lead to sanctions against Russia

without proof, TASS reports Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexander Schallenberg, as saying. “All measures are possible,” he continued. “There is an EU sanctions procedure against chemical weapon proliferation. Depending on the investigation’s outcome, we will discuss possible sanctions. But they must not be announced arbitrarily without proof. We must know who is responsible. The European Union should not lump together the decision on the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline with the incident with blogger Alexei Navalny,” said the Austrian foreign minister. “Incident” seems an odd choice of word. It’s unclear who else Austria believes might have wanted Navalny dead or could have gained from his removal, nor what other person or group would have had access to a Russian military-grade nerve agent in order to do the deed. The spirit of Harry Lime lives on.

AS GREEN AS YOU LIKE?

Nord Stream 2 could still prove a political disaster. Critics point out that the pipeline would bypass not only Ukraine but also Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Belarus and Poland, and there are fears that it could all be part of a Russian plot to exert influence by threatening to cut off their gas supplies. They did it before in 2005, when Russia claimed that instead of paying for gas, Ukraine was diverting gas intended for the rest of Europe, something Ukraine later admitted but explained that with temperatures lower than -30° Celsius it had little choice; it had no money. In January 2006, Russia turned off the taps. Things were restored later the same month but in 2007 there were fresh disputes over Ukrainian debts, which led to supplies being reduced in March 2008. Later that same year, Russia and Ukraine again fell out over what was owed, leading in January 2009 to severe disruptions of supply across much of Europe. Eighteen European countries complained of drops in gas pressure or to losses of supply in gas transported across Ukraine. The two countries fell out again later because Russia refused to accept Ukraine’s reduction in demand, brought about by an economic recession. The saga continued but legally Russia was in the right. In June 2010, a Stockholm court of arbitration ruled that Ukraine’s Naftohaz must return over 12 billion cubic metres of gas to RosUkrEnergo, a company based in Switzerland in which Gazprom held a 50% stake.

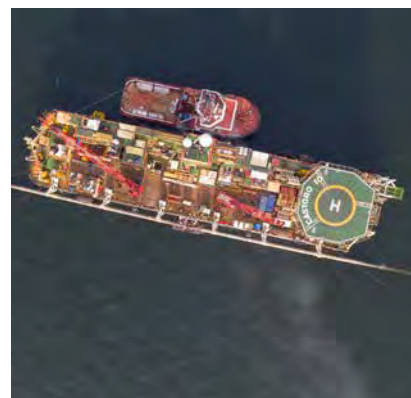


Poisoned Russian dissident Alexei Navalny

This is another of those modern-day stories in which politics plays a part but where many of the decisions are being based on financial considerations.

You can almost imagine hearing in the corridors of European power some high official, in referring to Navalny, saying the equivalent of “Murder? Schmurder!” In other words, who cares as long as we get our expected kick-back? Meanwhile Nord Stream 2’s website is resplendent with pictures of beautiful, pristine nature, undisturbed by the laying of the pipeline: pine forests trailing down to the sea on the coast of Sweden, a basking ringed seal (presumably in Russia, since that is where most of them live), a kittiwake catching a fish off Finland, anglers wading in shallow seas by the Russian coast. Idyllic doesn’t do it justice. But then, the company is keen to highlight the project’s environmental credentials. “As a project in the transboundary context, the pipeline is subject to international conventions and national legislation in each of the countries through whose waters it passes,” its website says. “The pipeline route, construction plan and environmental monitoring programmes were also developed in close consultation with the competent environmental authorities in each country.” Apparently this is known as ‘green-washing’. The company has also been careful to comply with individual national rules and to involve the official bodies that help to enforce them. “Additionally, Nord Stream 2 selected independent

contractors to monitor and verify the actual impacts of construction to the environment and marine life,” the site says. “The environmental monitoring programme includes 17 receptors that collect information about abiotic, biotic and socio-economic parameters across in all five countries. It takes place before, during, and after construction and addresses 12 main categories: water quality, seabed sediments, underwater noise, bird populations, marine mammals, flora and fauna, fish and fisheries, cultural heritage, munitions, maritime traffic, onshore environment, and Natura 2000 areas.” It’s a little like those disclaimers that are sometimes shown among the closing credits of a movie: ‘no animals were harmed in the making of this motion picture’.



Connecting pipe sections above water

If so, then everything is hunky-dory – except, perhaps, for Ukraine. There are those in Kyiv who must feel uncomfortable with the rerouting of Europe’s gas supply in a way that bypasses them. They already know that Russia is not a trustworthy partner; the on-going war by separatists in the East has already seen interference by Russia and Russia took the Crimean Peninsula away from it. It is in an uncomfortable position geographically, too, with Russia to its east and north-east, Belarus to the north, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary to the west and Moldova and Romania to the south. None of them, of course, anywhere near the Baltic Sea and certainly nowhere near the planned outlet of Nord Stream 2. Assuming American objections are swept aside or ignored, or Joe Biden wins the US election and is less concerned than Trump, Russian influence looks set to increase and that is unlikely to be good news for most Ukrainians. They’re probably hoping for a mild winter.

Anthony James

NEWS IN BRIEF

THE LATEST COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S ANTI-CORRUPTION BODY RECOMMENDATIONS

Preventing corruption of parliamentarians, judges and prosecutors: France can do better.



French Senate

In a report the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) notes that some progress has been made regarding members of parliament, such as oversight of senators' operational expenses, the system for dealing with conflicts of interest and the two Houses' regulations on receiving gifts, and the publication online of gifts and invitations declared by National Assembly members. It calls on the authorities to continue making headway in this field, in particular as concerns oversight of Assembly members' operational expenses and the publication online of the Assembly members' and senators' declarations of assets.

GRECO finds it a matter of regret, however, that the progress noted in its previous reports regarding the judiciary has not been maintained. Several recommendations on the Judicial Service Commission (Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature (CSM)) have still not been implemented or have been only partially so more than six years after the adoption of the first report on this issue in 2013. The recommendations call for disciplinary authority over judges to be concentrated in the hands of the CSM and for the appointment of and disciplinary regime for prosecutors to be brought into line with those applicable to judges.

In the light of these conclusions, the non-compliance procedure comes to an end and GRECO will therefore continue its regular monitoring procedure with regard to France, which is required to submit by September 2021 a report on the progress made in implementing the six (out of eleven) recommendations still pending.

San Marino: Council of Europe anti-corruption body calls for a structural reform of the judiciary

The Council of Europe's anti-corruption body (GRECO) recommends that the composition of the Judicial Council be changed to limit political influence. In a new report it also calls for a reappraisal of the workload, internal procedures and resources of the court to improve and streamline its operation. Transparency and accessibility of public information on judicial activity must also be stepped up.

More can also be done regarding judicial accountability, including by developing a comprehensive approach to judicial integrity and better regulation of disciplinary action to improve its objectivity, proportionality and effectiveness. GRECO also called for ensuring consistency, objectivity, transparency and fairness of case allocation, including by strengthening assignment criteria.

The report also looks at corruption prevention mechanisms in the Great and General Council and recommends the adoption of a code of conduct for parliamentarians, as well as the introduction of a system of public declaration of assets and interests. The implementation of the 14 recommendations addressed to San Marino will be assessed by GRECO through its compliance procedure, during the second semester of 2022.

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



San Marino

UN AND EU SIGN AGREEMENT TO ENHANCE COOPERATION AND STRENGTHEN RESPONSE IN PEACE OPERATIONS

The United Nations and the European Union signed an agreement in the margins of the 75th session of the General Assembly to enhance cooperation and strengthen collective response in peace operations and crisis management.

The “Framework Agreement Between the United Nations and the European Union for the Provision of Mutual Support in the context of their respective missions and operations in the field” was signed by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support, Atul Khare, and the Head of EU Delegation to the United Nations, Ambassador Olof Skoog. Building on the success of our joint achievements, this Agreement reaffirms that partnerships are essential to address the growing scale and complexity of challenges to international peace and security.

The Agreement will facilitate operational alignment and enhance complementarity between EU and UN field missions in the areas of logistics, medical, and security support. In particular, this Agreement will enable the UN and EU to expand co-operation in operational support services by building mutual understanding of our respective procedures and structures for the planning and execution of logistics support in missions and operations in the field.

This is also a concrete step forward in advancing the UN’s Action for Peacekeeping Initiative (A4P) and the Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations, reinforcing the principle that strengthened partnerships are vital to effective and efficient mandate delivery.

The Framework Agreement complements existing cooperation arrangements between the two organisations

and reflects the mutual commitment of the EU and the UN to multilateralism and a rules-based order. Our joint resolve serves to strengthen strategic and operational collaboration in response to global crises, threats, and challenges that cannot be addressed by individual nations acting alone. Furthermore, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the importance of multilateral action, and how this maximises impact on the ground.

The United Nations and the European Union have progressively increased collaboration in peacekeeping and crisis management and fostered innovative approaches to co-operation. Initiated in the Western Balkans in 2003, co-operation has since expanded to include a number of theatres in Africa and the Middle East. Today, we closely coordinate our activities i.e. in Somalia, Central African Republic, Libya and Kosovo, and work side-by-side in support of the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

INDUSTRY GETS WORKING ON EUROPE’S PLANETARY DEFENCE MISSION

- ESA has awarded a €129.4 million contract covering the detailed design, manufacturing and testing of Hera, the Agency’s first mission for planetary defence. This ambitious mission will be Europe’s contribution to an international asteroid deflection effort, set to perform sustained exploration of a double asteroid system.
- Hera – named after the Greek goddess of marriage – will be, along with NASA’s Double Asteroid Redirect Test (DART) spacecraft, humankind’s first probe to rendezvous with a binary asteroid system, a little understood class making up around 15% of all known asteroids.

The contract was signed by Franco Ongaro, ESA Director of Technology, Engineering and Quality, and Marco Fuchs, CEO of Germany space company OHB, prime contractor of the Hera consortium. The signing took place at ESA’s ESOC centre in Germany, which will serve as mission control for the 2024-launched Hera.

Hera is the European contribution to an international planetary defence collaboration among European and US scientists called the Asteroid Impact & Deflection Assessment, AIDA. The DART spacecraft – due for launch in July 2021 – will first perform a kinetic impact on the smaller of the two bodies. Hera will follow-up with a detailed post-impact survey to turn this grand-scale experiment into a well-understood and repeatable asteroid deflection technique.

While doing so, the desk-sized Hera will also demonstrate multiple novel technologies, such as autonomous navigation around the asteroid – like modern driverless cars on Earth – while gathering crucial scientific data, to help scientists and future mission planners better understand asteroid compositions and structures.

Hera will also deploy Europe’s first ‘CubeSats’ (miniature satellites built up from 10 cm boxes) into deep space for close-up asteroid surveying, including the very first radar probe of an asteroid’s interior – using an updated version of the radar system carried on ESA’s Rosetta comet mission.



Atul Khare (right), Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support, and Olof Skoog, Head of EU Delegation to the United Nations, present the “Framework agreement between the United Nations and the European Union for the provision of mutual support in the context of their respective missions and operations in the field”



Hera and its asteroid target

Due to launch in October 2024, Hera will travel to a binary asteroid system – the Didymos pair of near-Earth asteroids. The 780 m-diameter mountain-sized main body is orbited by a 160 m moon, formally christened 'Dimorphos' in June 2020, about the same size as the Great Pyramid of Giza.

DART's kinetic impact into Dimorphos in September 2022 is expected to alter its orbit around Didymos as well as create a substantial crater. This moonlet asteroid will become unique, as the first celestial body to have its orbital and physical characteristics intentionally altered by human intervention. Hera will arrive at the Didymos system at the end of 2026, to perform at least six months of close-up study.

Hera's mission control will be based at ESA's ESOC centre in Darmstadt, Germany, also the home of ESA's new Space Safety and Security programme, of which Hera is a part.

This contract signing covers the full Hera satellite development, integration and test, including its advanced guidance, navigation and control (GNC) system. Contracts for Hera's two hosted CubeSats and relevant technology developments are already ongoing.

NIST SCIENTISTS GET SOFT ON 3D PRINTING

New method could jump-start creation of tiny medical devices for the body

Researchers at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) have developed a new method of 3D-printing gels and other soft materials. Published in a new paper, it has the potential to create complex structures with nanometer-scale precision. Because many gels are compatible with living cells, the new method could jump-start the production of soft tiny medical devices such as drug delivery systems or flexible electrodes that can be inserted into the human body.

A standard 3D printer makes solid structures by creating sheets of material — typically plastic or rubber — and building them up layer by layer, like a lasagna, until the entire object is created.

Using a 3D printer to fabricate an object made of gel

is a “bit more of a delicate cooking process,” said NIST researcher Andrei Kolmakov. In the standard method, the 3D printer chamber is filled with a soup of long-chain polymers — long groups of molecules bonded together — dissolved in water. Then “spices” are added — special molecules that are sensitive to light. When light from the 3D printer activates those special molecules, they stitch together the chains of polymers so that they form a fluffy weblike structure. This scaffolding, still surrounded by liquid water, is the gel.

Typically, modern 3D gel printers have used ultraviolet or visible laser light to initiate formation of the gel scaffolding. However, Kolmakov and his colleagues have focused their attention on a different 3D-printing technique to fabricate gels, using beams of electrons or X-rays. Because these types of radiation have a higher energy, or shorter wavelength, than ultraviolet and visible light, these beams can be more tightly focused and therefore produce gels with finer structural detail. Such detail is exactly what is needed for tissue engineering and many other medical and biological applications. Electrons and X-rays offer a second advantage: They do not require a special set of molecules to initiate the formation of gels.

But at present, the sources of this tightly focused, short-wavelength radiation — scanning electron microscopes and X-ray microscopes — can only operate in a vacuum. That's a problem because in a vacuum the liquid in each chamber evaporates instead of forming a gel.

Kolmakov and his colleagues at NIST and at the Elettra Sincrotrone Trieste in Italy, solved the issue and demonstrated 3D gel printing in liquids by placing an ultrathin barrier — a thin sheet of silicon nitride — between the vacuum and the liquid chamber. The thin sheet protects the liquid from evaporating (as it would ordinarily do in vacuum) but allows X-rays and electrons to penetrate into the liquid. The method enabled the team to use the 3D-printing approach to create gels with structures as small as 100 nanometers (nm) — about 1,000 times thinner than a human hair. By refining their method, the researchers expect to imprint structures on the gels as small as 50 nm, the size of a small virus.

Some future structures made with this approach could include flexible injectable electrodes to monitor brain activity, biosensors for virus detection, soft micro-robots, and structures that can emulate and interact with living cells and provide a medium for their growth.

“We’re bringing new tools — electron beams and X-rays operating in liquids — into 3D printing of soft materials,” said Kolmakov. He and his collaborators described their work in an article posted online Sept. 16 in ACS Nano

Paper: Tanya Gupta, Evgheni Strelcov, Glenn Holland, Joshua Schumacher, Yang Yang, Mandy Esch, Vladimir Aksyuk, Patrick Zeller, Matteo Amati, Luca Gregoratti and Andrei Kolmakov. Electron and X-ray Focus Beam Induced Crosslinking in Liquids: Toward Rapid Continuous 3D Nanoprinting of Soft Materials. ACS Nano. Published online September 16, 2020. DOI: 10.1021/acsnano.0c04266

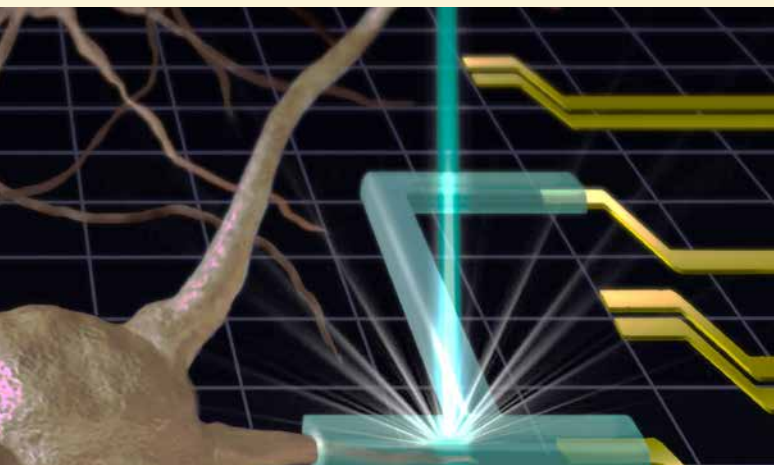


Illustration of a prospective biocompatible interface shows that hydrogels (green tubing), which can be generated by an electron or X-ray beam 3D printing process, act as artificial synapses or junctions, connecting neurons (brown) to electrodes (yellow)

SUSTAINING PEACE IN THE TIME OF COVID-19—NEW SIPRI FILM

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has launched a new film capturing insights from global actors on efforts to sustain peace during the crisis caused by coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Global challenges are compounded by COVID-19

The film is based on discussions recorded during the 2020 Virtual Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development which brings together a range of viewpoints from different stakeholders in the development, humanitarian, peacebuilding and security spheres.

The 2020 Stockholm Forum took stock of the progress made in advancing peacebuilding as the world commemorates 75 years since the founding of the United Nations. The discussions highlighted the growing variety of global risks which are further perpetuated by COVID-19. These pre-existing challenges include, but are not limited to: climate change, loss of biodiversity, widening inequality, violence, the proliferation of disinformation, and vulnerability in the face of ever-growing globalization.

The pandemic has also underscored that international institutions focused on crisis response are being challenged in a world in which global risks and threats directly affect national security, governance and international cooperation.

Knowledge and cooperation are key to building resilience

While international cooperation is confronted by a potentially prolonged period of contested multilateralism and geopolitical competition, the crisis caused by COVID-19 can be an opportunity in shaping how the world recovers. Through promoting wider generational collaboration, further inclusivity in peace processes, reinforcing shared institutions, the pandemic can be an accelerating force for positive change. The film emphasizes the need for multilateralism and cooperation, now more than ever, in order to find good international solutions to shared challenges.

About the Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development

Held annually, the Stockholm Forum is a dialogue-driven event that provides a neutral platform for interdisciplinary exchange among members of international communities in the development, humanitarian, peacebuilding and security spheres. The discussion-led roundtable sessions—which the Stockholm Forum is well-known for—are developed in collaboration with partner organizations and invite active participation from stakeholders at all levels. The theme of the 2020 Virtual Stockholm Forum was ‘Sustaining Peace in the Time of COVID-19’.

About SIPRI's films

SIPRI produces a variety of videos to cater for different viewing preferences and serve as an alternative platform for providing insights on peace and security. Events are a core component of SIPRI's outreach, and livestreams and recordings of SIPRI's conferences and seminars are produced on a regular basis. Watch the film at SIPRI's YouTube channel.

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Christopher Lee in the 1958 film "Dracula"

THE ROMA RIDDLE

Celebrated in verse and song, why are they so often treated with contempt?

I can remember reading to my daughter from Hilda Boswell's Treasuries of Poetry. They were children's poems, and most are credited to particular writers, but not 'The Wrangle-Taggle Gypsies', which is clearly meant to be a song, although I don't know the tune. It's all about a high-born lady in a castle who, her new husband being absent, falls for the music of a group of gypsies. So entranced is she that she takes off her costly clothes and jewels and, barefoot, goes to join the gypsies. When hubby returns, he rides off in pursuit, but meets with no success. She replies to his entreaties:

What care I for my house and land?

What care I for money, O?

What care I for my new-wedded lord?

I'm off with the wrangle-taggle gypsies, O!"

The accompanying illustration shows the runaway bride among happy groups of rustically dressed people, smiling and dancing in what seems to be perpetual sunshine. If only that were the case.

The children's rhymes never touch on the reality of life for Roma people. Poetry and song make them romantic figures, living on the fringe of society and off the fruit of the land. In other words, songs and poems

celebrate the sort of way of life that in reality leads to violence and the tendency to drive gypsies from their property. But even when they are gone from the land, they remain in the public imagination through popular songs like "Gypsy Queen" and "It's just the Gypsy in my soul". Reality for most Roma people is far from idyllic or romantic. Perhaps Cher's song, 'Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves' comes closest to reality, but then Cher claims to be descended from Roma people. The people themselves are often despised but it doesn't stop the local men from turning up to watch a woman dance, and maybe, it's darkly hinted, a little more. In that song, the family are running a travelling show, living in a wagon or caravan, and it comes as no surprise that at the 1971 World Romani Congress it was agreed to adopt a flag designed in 1933: a stylised red wagon-wheel on a background of blue over green – the sky and the grass.

Kenneth Grahame's 'Wind in the Willows', a children's book, also looks romantically at the Romani caravan: it's the second obsession of the foolish but likeable Toad of Toad Hall (we are told his first passion was boating) who takes Ratty and Mole for a ride in one

but, dislikes the work involved in camp life and so becomes obsessed with cars instead. Again, though, in this idealised view of life in Edwardian England, the Roma caravan and its associated lifestyle are seen as romantic. Incidentally, the actor Sir Christopher Lee, most famous, perhaps, for playing Dracula in the eponymous Hammer horror film, claims a Roma ancestry, too; he says 'Lee' is a Roma surname.

The word 'Gypsy' is seen as pejorative and therefore an insult; they are the Roma people, or Romani, if you (or they) prefer. Ironically, although already rejected by settled populations, the Nazis further saw them as an 'inferior race' and murdered them in their thousands in their extermination camps.

The Live Science website numbers the Nazis' Roma victims at around two million. If you think such numbers could be an exaggeration, I recommend a visit to Auschwitz; it is still a ghastly place today. We tend to imagine that Jews were the only victims of Nazi hatred (and they certainly were the main target) but there were many others: the Roma, of course, but also people with physical disabilities, gay people, even



Gypsy prisoners at the Belzec extermination camp. US Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Archiwum Dokumentacji Mechanicznej

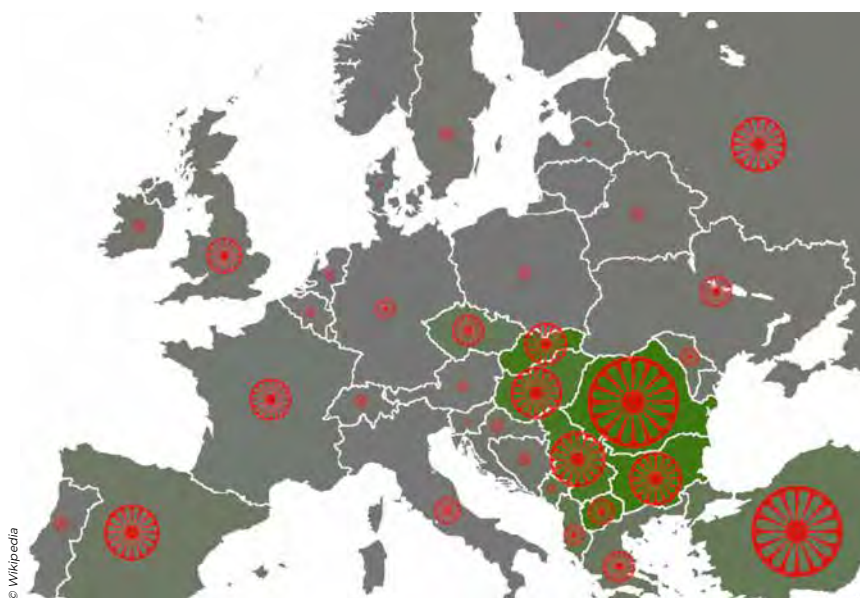
Jehovah's Witnesses, who were compelled to wear purple triangles instead of yellow Stars of David to mark them out as 'different' before being condemned to the camps. For the Roma, who had been mistreated and enslaved in Europe and generally kept out of life's mainstream for centuries, it was one more intolerable burden to bear.

TRAVELLING MUST START SOMEWHERE

The Roma people are thought to have come originally from northern India around the 5th century, spreading across Europe from the 9th century onwards. Linguistic analysis suggests they were a Hindi people. They were seldom given much of a welcome in Europe. "There is no official or reliable count of Romani populations worldwide," says Amnesty International. "In Europe, there are between 10 and 12 million Roma. Most of them – around two thirds – live in central and eastern European countries, where they make up between 5 and 10 per cent of the population. There are also sizeable Romani

minorities in western Europe, especially in Italy (around 150,000 Roma and Travellers), Spain (600,000-800,000), France and the UK (up to 300,000 in each country)." Some estimates are far lower, anything from four to seven million in total, and one of them suggests there are only 12 million worldwide, but they are likely to be incorrect.

If the higher estimate is right, it means they number roughly the same as the population of Belgium and more than the populations of the Czech Republic or Greece or Portugal or Sweden. The populations of Hungary, Belarus, Austria, Serbia, Denmark, Finland and so on are also lower in number. They are by far and away Europe's largest minority. In other words, in the European population league table, the Roma would come 11th or 12th out of 48. We don't think of them like that because they have no country of their own. They've never been given the chance. It's believed that there are about a million Roma in the United States, too, and almost as many in Brazil.



Distribution of the Romani people in Europe (2007 Council of Europe "average estimates", totalling 9.8 million) * The size of the wheel symbols reflects absolute population size * The gradient reflects the percent in the country's population:

0% 10%

A Roma Project has been started at Columbia University in New York, where most American Roma live. On the project's website, its founder, Cristiana Grigore, writes: "Even after generations-long residence, Roma are almost never considered true citizens of their countries. Regardless of their professional or economic status, Roma are often treated as the 'unwelcome guests' in someone else's country. Although Roma have made significant cultural contributions to world music, dance, and literature, they remain largely under-recognized for these achievements. Moreover, Roma professionals, who practice in fields such as arts, science, medicine, mathematics, and engineering, often prefer to keep their ethnic identity hidden for fear of discrimination." I first met Cristiana Grigore in Romania, where I was making a video report about Roma people. She was a Romanian who gained a Fulbright



Cristiana Grigore

Scholarship to study in the US where she graduated from Vanderbilt University with an MA in International Education Policy and Management in December 2012. I had met her on a rare visit home from the States where she was studying. She had earned her BA in Psychology from the University of Bucharest in 2007 but she told me that at school she had hidden her ethnicity, fearing the reaction of her fellow students if they discovered she was Roma. Now she celebrates it and helps others to do the same. But her precocious intelligence at school earned her few friends, and angered other parents and grandparents, who complained to the teachers about her success. "How can you give the highest award to a Gypsy girl?" one mother demanded.

The history of the Roma people is not an enviable one, however romantically they are depicted in poetry and song. In Mediaeval England, Switzerland and Denmark they could be put to death, in other countries their children were often taken from them, and adults could have their ears cut off or be branded. Whatever gave Mr. Toad the idea that the travellers' life could be fun? I have seen for myself the often-appalling conditions in which the Roma are expected to live in parts of Europe. In Romania, I



Roma street



In one camp, set up in a disused army barracks near the Romanian town of Craiova, only three outside toilets had been provided for 700 people; they had to dig new facilities. Houses looked temporary, many had leaking roofs and garbage was piled up in alleyways. The water supply, from a standpipe near the toilets, was believed to be contaminated.

Many non-Roma want the Roma people to effectively stop being Roma, to assimilate, and in Romania many of them have become one with the ethnic Romanians. But that way the Roma themselves get lost, according to Vassily Velcu, the closest thing to a leader the Roma have around the Romanian town of Craiova. Some call him the 'King of the Gypsies', and despite the pejorative nature of the word 'Gypsy' he doesn't seem to mind. In his large house he is still amassing a vast collection of Romani memorabilia and teaching local children the Romani tongue. That can't be easy: there are at least five distinct dialects. He believes preserving his people's traditions and culture is important. "I was born into a family of thieves," he told me. "I swear it's true.

My mother was one of the best thieves. I'm not ashamed about it. You never know what might happen. From the best you get the worst and from the worst you can get the best. It's nothing to be ashamed of. If we lose our identity, we are nothing." The most successful way out – apart from the thieving of people like Velcu's mother – is through education, and there are several examples of Roma children winning scholarships and studying abroad. However, in the case of the old army barracks, Roma Children were barred from the nearest school. If they wanted an education, the nearest school that would accept them was ten kilometres away: a long walk, especially during sub-zero winters through deep snow. The European Parliament resolution is determined to put an end to discriminatory practices such as that. "Providing Romani children with an equal start in life is essential to breaking the poverty cycle, say MEPs," according to press release following the vote, "who want to end all forms of school or class segregation experienced by these pupils.

TOO MANY PROBLEMS

The plight of the Romani people has also been drawn to the attention of the Council of Europe, and over many years it has tried to take action against the injustice and mistreatment they suffer. "The results of the monitoring activities of the Council of Europe, in particular those of the Commissioner for Human Rights and the European Committee against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), and evidence from other sources, show that Roma and Travellers in Europe still suffer from widespread and persisting anti-Gypsyism – recognized as a specific form of racism fuelled by prejudice and stereotypes – and they are still the victims of various forms of discrimination, including school segregation and forced sedentarisation, hate speech and, sometimes, hate crimes in many Council of Europe member states." One young mother in a Bulgarian ghetto told me how she had taken her small child to see a doctor. Lacking national insurance documents, she was asked for cash and rather more than she could afford. She explained that she could not pay and was ordered (she said very rudely) out of the surgery, still carrying her untreated sick child. I thought the oath devised by Hippocrates was supposed to prevent such things, but there again the doctor didn't actually damage the child, thus not offending against the principal "primum non nocere": first, do no harm. Maybe she thought it meant "first, do nothing at all." Things are much the same in Romania.

visited a married couple – Eugene, his wife and two small children – who were being thrown out of their fourth-floor slum flat in the most broken-down high-rise block you can imagine. The handrails guarding its stairs were unsafe, the concrete walls were cracked and broken, the stolen electricity was arriving along bare wires dangling down the stairwell, held together with electrician's tape. The view from the window was of more such decrepit blocks and a large area covered in foul garbage which at night became a playground for thousands of rats, moving like waves over the stinking rubbish. It was awful, but the couple couldn't pay the rent. Yes, even such a disgusting hovel cost money.

This was not in some remote backwater, either. This was in Bucharest, the capital city of Romania, a European Union member state. In another part of the city I saw Roma people living in what would count as a slum in any language: ramshackle shacks, stretched along unmade roads with children playing in the muddy puddles.

I was told by one resident that the only future for teenage Roma girls is prostitution; a bus collected the girls from the various Roma communities around the city and took them to their 'pitches' on the ring road. The 17-year-old daughter of one Roma woman had been murdered, presumably by a client; her mother told me the police seemed reluctant to investigate, saying they lacked the resources to bother with the murder of a prostitute. The mother was living in a tarpaper shack, condemned to be bulldozed by police within days (they had the resources for that, at least). It was clean and immaculate, however, despite being sited under a flyover. "The EU has to do more to ensure the social inclusion of Romani people," said Romeo Franz, the German Green Party rapporteur for a new European Parliament report aimed at improving the lives of the Roma in Europe. "For too many years, policies regarding Romani people were not binding and this has to change. We call on EU member states to officially recognise anti-gypsyism, which is the main cause of social exclusion of Romani people, and take legislative measures to combat it."



Slum Craiova



View from the window of the Roma family facing eviction



© Cuorg

Children gather in Podari, a village outside of Craiova, Romania. Most Gypsy children don't have birth certificates and can't register to attend school

They condemn the discriminatory practice of placing them in schools for children with mental disabilities, still in place in some EU countries, and call on the Commission to continue pressing member states to desegregate, taking cases to the European Court of Justice if needed." The latest report shows that the situation with regard to education is little changed. "Only two out of three Roma and Traveller children between the age of four and the start of compulsory schooling participate in early childhood education, the results of the survey show" it reads, rather depressingly. "School attendance for compulsory schooling reaches on average 91 %, without gender differences. However, two thirds of Roma and Travellers aged 18–24 years have completed only lower secondary education. The number of Roma and Travellers surveyed who completed tertiary education is extremely small and statistically invisible." Grigore is not convinced the new approach will make much difference, either. "Policies for Roma regarding education, housing and health can say all the right things and have all the best intentions on paper," she told me, "but very rarely translate into good results on the ground."

I have to say I get a sense of déjà-vu about this: I have made so many media reports and written so many articles over the last four decades or so about the mistreatment of the Roma, the expulsions, the relegating of Roma people to unsanitary ghettos among the poorest parts of towns and cities. I have welcomed the angry-sounding reports full of good intentions and well-meaning promises. And then I have returned to a Roma ghetto and witnessed open sewers where children play, dilapidated slum buildings, food



© EP

A European Parliament session in Brussels

shortages, a lack of proper documentation, children denied education, leaking roofs, the assumption that all Roma girls must become prostitutes and that all Roma men are crooks. Good intentions only get you so far; good deeds get you further.

SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE

A report for the European Parliament by Professor Michael O'Flaherty, Director of the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), paints a grim picture of reality for Europe's Roma people.

In a report prepared in 2016, he wrote that: "Some 80% of Roma surveyed live below their country's at-risk-of-poverty threshold; every third Roma lives in housing without



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Professor Michael O'Flaherty Director of the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)

tap water; every third Roma child lives in a household where someone went to bed hungry at least once in the previous month; and 50% of Roma between the ages of 6 and 24 do not attend school." Bearing in mind the difficulties put in place by various local authorities (including in one case building a wall around a Roma ghetto to keep them in) the lack of schooling is not entirely their fault. A European Commission report claimed that one in four Europeans would not want a Roma neighbour. Forced to the edges of society, their sometime lack of social graces is not surprising. If a people are

hated, they are inclined to hate right back. The foreword to O'Flaherty's report also mentions that four out of ten Roma surveyed had felt discriminated against at least once in the last five years, yet only a fraction pursued the incident. "With most Roma unaware of laws prohibiting discrimination, or of organisations that could offer support, such realities are hardly surprising. But they do raise serious questions about the fulfilment of the right to non-discrimination guaranteed by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the Racial Equality Directive." O'Flaherty's researchers, from the research company Ipsos MORI, carried out a comprehensive survey, collecting information from almost 34,000 people living in Roma households in nine European Union member states, and carrying out almost 8,000 face-to-face interviews.

The Roma are not a single group but comprise people of different ethnicity. As the report explains: "Roma' and 'Travellers' are used as umbrella terms according to the definition of the Council of Europe. They encompass Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari, Balkan Egyptians, Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal) and groups such as Travellers, Yenish and the populations designated under the administrative term Gens du voyage, as well as people who identify themselves as Gypsies. The agency, like the Council of Europe, adds the term 'Travellers' as necessary to highlight actions that specifically include them." In the United Kingdom, there is also a group of travellers known, somewhat derisively, as Tinkers, who are generally Irish Travellers and may be unrelated to the Roma but who live a peripatetic life in much the same way. I once visited a Roma marketplace in Craiova, together with Valeriu Nicolae, who was at that time an advisor to the European Commission on Roma issues, based at the Roma and Minorities Center in Bucharest. He pointed out various small groups and identified their ethnicity by the clothes and other adornments they were wearing, although they looked very similar to my untutored eye. He also told me not to delve into where the vegetables on sale came from. He hinted that many would have been 'liberated' from fields the vendors had passed on their way into town. I bought a very nice cheese there which could hardly have been stolen from the roadside, but the majority of Roma have skills and try to earn their livings honestly, if they're allowed to, even if too many only earn €2 a day. "We as Roma have a huge responsibility," said Nicolae, "but the majority in the European Union also have a huge responsibility. At this moment we don't have any coherent strategy towards solving Roma inclusion."

Despite the attempts of some people who are genuinely concerned, the saga drags on: there was the European Commission's 2011 'EU Framework for National Integration



Toolkit for Police Officers which focuses on Council of Europe standards on racially motivated crimes and non-discrimination of Roma and Travellers

Strategies up to 2020'. Two years later came the Council of Europe's 'Recommendation on Effective Roma Integration Measures in the Member States'.

Two years later still, the United Nations produced a programme 'Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', which included an end to segregation for the Roma people. There will be many more, roughly every two years and accompanied by the normal publicity fanfare. And Roma children will still struggle to get educated while their parents struggle to earn enough to feed them. Discrimination against Roma people has been illegal in EU countries since the Racial Equality Directive of 2000, but the latest FRA report says it still goes on, at least in the countries surveyed: "In these six western current and former EU Member States, discrimination against Roma and Travellers is widespread, the survey results suggest. Almost half of the respondents (45 %) felt discriminated against in at least one area of life in the previous 12 months. Most frequently, respondents felt discriminated against in accessing goods and services – for example, when entering a shop (33 %) or a restaurant, night club or hotel (27 %) or when looking for a job (23 %)."

Perhaps the Roma seem so different, act so differently, because that's the way the rest of us see them and treat them.

It's our apparent indifference to Roma issues that is singled out in the European Parliament report. "Parliament stresses that, due to persistent anti-gypsyism, Romani people in Europe suffer the highest rates of poverty and social exclusion," runs the press release. "MEPs therefore call for inclusive education, early childhood development and an end to discrimination and segregation." The Parliament blames a "lack of political will", pointing out that "a significant number of Romani people in Europe live in 'extremely precarious' conditions, with most deprived of their fundamental human rights." Grigore explains it slightly differently: "Among other things, even in the case of the most assimilated and educated Roma families, the racism in society is so deep,

the need to keep Roma people in low-status positions, at the margins is so high... that it's incredibly hard to break that cycle." Things have got worse during the pandemic because the most vulnerable Roma families are even more scapegoated and excluded. The lack of access to basic care and services makes Roma people even more vulnerable to COVID-19 and other complications.

THE SEMANTICS OF RACISM

The European Commission in its latest report "Combatting Antigypsyism" makes the point that countries that are aware of their obligations not to espouse racist and segregationist policies don't realise that the laws cover Roma people, as well as immigrants and asylum-seekers. "The first chapter notes that antigypsyism/anti-Roma racism is sometimes misunderstood," it says, "and not well integrated into domestic legal systems and national policies of Member States despite its recognition in the 2013 Council Recommendation. Ensuring a shared common understanding of the content of antigypsyism/anti-Roma racism appears vital." It does seem quite likely that in countries where the Roma have lived, even if outside mainstream society for centuries, the issue is not recognised as one of race. "We also propose that Member States could opt for an alternative terminology of antigypsyism/anti-Roma racism to suit diverse contexts, but clearly stipulate that diverse groups, including Travellers, Fairground people, Egyptians, Sinti or Manouches are covered by policies tackling this specific form of racism."

It has cropped up during discussion of the plans that terms such as "Roma" and "anti-gypsyism" are seen by other groups, such as the Sinti and Travellers, as not applying to them. The choice of words has proved important. "In the focus group discussion, most of the participants agreed with the compromise term: anti-Roma racism/

antigypsyism, also giving an option for a more liberal usage at Member State level that would reflect diversity of contexts.

Germany, argued 'I would also go for a liberal way of using different terms at the same time. Because I see Romaphobia, anti-Roma racism and antigypsyism as terms that belong to the same so-called language game. They all in different ways address the similar phenomena. I think we should be liberal when we use the term, or both or three terms and do not exclusively deal with one of these terms,' to ensure that we cover the experience of all diverse groups in different contexts."

Of course, the European Commission's 2011 'EU Framework for National Integration Strategies up to 2020' is drawing to a close and attention is focusing on what will replace it. There must be something and it must never again permit the expulsions of Roma people as carried out by France and Italy in 2010. I was in Strasbourg at the time and Roma groups were being rounded up and expelled, but there was one small group of them living beside a backwater of the River Ile. I had arranged a studio interview with a local politician and MEP who was all in favour of the expulsions but before that, I went with a camera crew to visit the Roma, all of whom spoke French, to canvas their views. They were interesting people and tired of being constantly moved on. A couple of hours later I gathered that they had all been expelled at the express request of the woman I was due to interview, who turned up looking surprisingly smug. I hope their removal was not down to me and my camera team. The whole affair did, however, energise the European Commission to take action. "The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) was adopted as the European Commission's main response to the controversial and unlawful 2010 evictions and expulsions by France and Italy of EU Roma citizens originally from Bulgaria and Romania," says the Commission's website.



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© Wikipedia

Stolipinovo district, in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, is one of the largest Roma communities in Europe

If you want a definition of anti-gypsyism, look no further than the Council of Europe. “The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe defined antigypsyism in 2011 as ‘a specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kind of discrimination’”. Whatever comes next must be legally binding; the latest report makes for depressing reading. “Three major large-scale surveys conducted by the EU’s Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) between 2008 and 2016 – EU MIDIS I, 2008; Roma survey, 2012 and EU-MIDIS II, 2016 – confirm that levels of Roma discrimination in different areas of life remain worryingly high across the EU. This study calls for the post-2020 period to tackle barriers such as antigypsyism discrimination and the lack of Roma political participation.” That is certainly a major issue. Who represents the Roma? They are not concentrated in one place, so they do not form a constituency that elects representatives. Without political representation, how can the Roma fight for their rights to be respected?

In Bulgaria, I suddenly became unpopular because officials from the local authority (or from a particular political party, I wasn’t sure which) were gathering the men of the ghetto together to see how much it would cost to buy all their votes in a block. Whoever got elected was unlikely to champion the cause of the Roma, I fear. But the EU’s latest document on scaling up Roma inclusion strategies argues that this is something that must change. “Political participation and the right to participate in the political life of a country is not only a very important component of active citizenship, but also essential for enabling Roma civil societies to tackle antigypsyism and to build capacity and ownership of transitional justice-like tools aiming at building mutual trust.

Particularly for minority communities, such as the Roma, ensuring effective and equal access to participation in political and public life is an essential stepping-stone towards trust state institutions.” In fact, Roma people have voted in local elections but less so in national ones, not really seeing any party as being ‘on their side’, perhaps. “Political participation has risen in the past in both formal political fora and civil society participation,” says the report, “including protests and demonstrations. As shown in the survey run by FRA in 2011, more than 70 % of Roma respondents from Bulgaria, Greece, Slovakia and Hungary, and over 80 % in Romania stated that they voted in previous elections. However, the data for western Member States shows much lower levels of participation, with for instance only 9 % having voted in the latest French national election.”

The latest proposal acknowledges that previous plans have failed and it blames that failure on the EU. “The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies was a ‘soft’ policy instrument shifting the responsibility to Roma for their lack of integration. This limited approach has not captured institutional, systemic and historically rooted antigypsyism as a specific form of racism. Despite the efforts, policy tools and funding directed to integrating Roma, this socio-economic approach therefore had very little positive impact on housing, employment, education and health.” ‘Must do better’ is what the teacher writes in the end of term report of a disappointing student. The question is, will the new approach be an improvement? I would really love to go back to the Roma ghettos I’ve seen and find clean, metalled streets, busy schools, local shops open to all and clean, properly built houses. I have a fear, however, that very little will have changed. But it is not in the Roma psyche to give up. Cristiana Grigore’s Roma Project in America has high ambitions: “The Roma Peoples Project at Columbia University envisions a world where the

Roma cultures have visibility and accurate representation in academia, the media, and society at large, and that acknowledges Roma contributions to the cultural heritage of the world, while providing Roma with the opportunity to expand and flourish; a world where the human rights of Roma people are acknowledged and respected, and where Roma peoples can fulfil their full potential and speak freely about their heritage without fearing social repercussions.” It must also overcome a sense of insecurity, even inferiority, brought about by a lifetime of bad treatment. “In addition to all the external barriers Roma people face in society,” Grigore told me, “the Roma also deal with enormous internalized invisible barriers when they think they are not good enough, worthy enough, beautiful and worthy of respect and dignity enough. This is the result of centuries of bullying, belittling and treating Roma as if their role is only at the bottom. It takes enormous work to undo that in an ethically responsible way and not use the tools of the dominant group, such as exploiting others who are more vulnerable.”



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Věra Jourová (Czech Republic) European Commission Vice President for Values and Transparency

The latest European Commission proposal is a good start. It acknowledges that previous efforts have failed. Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Věra Jourová, said: “Simply put, over the last ten years we have not done enough to support the Roma population in the EU. This is inexcusable.” At the same press conference, Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli, said: “For the European Union to become a true Union of Equality we need to ensure that millions of Roma are treated equally, socially included and able to participate in social and political life without exception.” It’s a 10-year plan, focusing on equality, inclusion, participation, education, employment, health, and housing. I would love it to work, but based on past experience I’m not holding my breath.

J.G.

COVID-19 SPARKS UPWARD TREND IN CYBERCRIME

Europol's 2020 cybercrime report updates on the latest trends and the current impact of cybercrime within the EU and beyond.



So much has changed since Europol published last year's Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (IOCTA). The global COVID-19 pandemic that hit every corner of the world forced us to reimagine our societies and reinvent the way we work and live. During the lockdown, we turned to the internet for a sense of normality: shopping, working and learning online at a scale never seen before. It is in this new normal that Europol publishes its 7th annual IOCTA. The IOCTA seeks to map the cybercrime threat landscape and understand how law enforcement responds to it. Although the COVID-19 crisis showed us how criminals actively take advantage of society at its most vulnerable, this opportunistic behaviour of criminals should not overshadow the overall threat landscape. In many cases, COVID-19 has enhanced existing problems.

CROSS-CUTTING CRIME

Social engineering and phishing remain an effective threat to enable other types of cybercrime. Criminals use innovative methods to increase the volume and sophistication of their attacks, and inexperienced cybercriminals can carry out phishing campaigns more easily through crime as-a-service. Criminals quickly exploited the pandemic to attack vulnerable people; phishing, online scams and the spread of fake news became an ideal strategy for cybercriminals seeking to sell items they claim will prevent or cure COVID-19.

Encryption continues to be a clear feature of an increasing number of services and tools. One of the principal challenges for law enforcement is how to access and gather relevant data for criminal investigations. The value of being able to access data of criminal communication on an encrypted network is perhaps the most effective illustration of how encrypted data can provide law enforcement with crucial leads beyond the area of cybercrime.

MALWARE REIGNS SUPREME

Ransomware attacks have become more sophisticated, targeting specific organisations in the public and private sector through victim reconnaissance. While the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered an increase in cybercrime, ransomware attacks were targeting the healthcare industry long before the crisis. Moreover, criminals have included another layer to their ransomware attacks by threatening to auction off the comprised data, increasing the pressure on the victims to pay the ransom. Advanced forms of malware are a top threat in the EU: criminals have transformed some traditional banking Trojans into modular malware to cover more PC digital fingerprints, which are later sold for different needs.



CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL CONTINUES TO INCREASE

The main threats related to online child abuse exploitation have remained stable in recent years, however detection of online child sexual abuse material saw a sharp spike at the peak of the COVID-19 crisis. Offenders keep using a number of ways to hide this horrifying crime, such as P2P networks, social networking platforms and using encrypted communications applications. Dark web communities and forums are meeting places where participation is structured with affiliation rules to promote individuals based on their contribution to the community, which they do by recording and posting their abuse of children, encouraging others to do the same. Livestream of child abuse continues to increase, becoming even more popular than usual during the COVID-19 crisis when travel restrictions prevented offenders from physically abusing children. In some cases, video chat applications in payment systems are used which becomes one of the key challenges for law enforcement as this material is not recorded.

PAYMENT FRAUD: SIM SWAPPING A NEW TREND

SIM swapping, which allows perpetrators to take over accounts, is one of the new trends in this year's IOCTA.

As a type of account takeover, SIM swapping provides criminals access to sensitive user accounts. Criminals fraudulently swap or port victims' SIMs to one in the criminals' possession in order to intercept the one-time password step of the authentication process.



CRIMINAL ABUSE OF THE DARK WEB

In 2019 and early 2020 there was a high level of volatility on the dark web. The lifecycle of dark web market places has shortened and there is no clear dominant market that has risen over the past year. Tor remains the preferred infrastructure, however criminals have started to use other privacy-focused, decentralised marketplace platforms to sell their illegal goods. Although this is not a new phenomenon, these sorts of platforms have started to increase over the last year. OpenBazaar is noteworthy, as certain threats have emerged on the platform over the past year such as COVID-19-related items during the pandemic.

Catherine De Bolle, Europol's Executive Director commented: "Cybercrime affects citizens, businesses and organisations across the EU. Europol plays a key role in countering cybercrime by working with our many partners in law enforcement and the private sector and by offering innovative solutions and effective, comprehensive support to investigations.



Catherine De Bolle, Europol's Executive Director

I hope this analysis can inform effective responses to these evolving threats and make Europe safer".

Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis Schinas, who is leading the European Commission's work on the European Security Union, said: "Cybercrime is a hard reality. While the digital transformation of our societies evolves, so does cybercrime which is becoming more present and sophisticated.



Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis Schinas



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EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson

We will spare no efforts to further enhance our cybersecurity and step up law enforcement capabilities to fight against these evolving threats. Europol has a major role to play».

EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, said: “The Coronavirus Pandemic has slowed many aspects of our normal lives. But it has unfortunately accelerated online criminal activity.

Organised Crime exploits the vulnerable, be it the newly unemployed, exposed businesses, or, worst of all, children. This report shows the urgent need for the EU to step up the fight against organised crime [online] and confirms the essential role of Europol in that fight”.

Edvardas Šileris, Head of European Cybercrime Centre said: “I am pleased to welcome the 2020 edition of the IOCTA – our flagship document, an essential resource for EU’s law enforcement and policy makers.



© EC3Europol

Edvardas Šileris, Head of European Cybercrime Centre

I am very thankful to all the partners who have contributed to this year’s assessment and have helped us identify the key theme defining the current landscape: cybercrime is an evolution, not a revolution”.

The 2020 IOCTA contributes to setting priorities for the 2021 EMPACT operational plans, which follow the priorities defined as: disruption criminal activities, combating child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation and targeting criminals involved in fraud and counterfeiting of non-cash means of payment.

4 HACKERS ARRESTED IN POLAND IN NATION-WIDE ACTION AGAINST CYBERCRIME

The Polish authorities are announcing the arrest of 4 suspected hackers as part of a coordinated strike against cybercrime. Those arrested are believed to be among the most active cybercriminals in the country.

This operation was carried out by the Polish Police Centre Bureau of Investigation (Centralne Biuro Śledcze Policji) under the supervision of the Regional Prosecutor’s Office in Warsaw (Prokuratura Regionalna w Warszawie), together with the cybercrime departments of provincial police headquarters and Europol.

These 4 suspects are believed to be involved in a wide variety of cybercrimes, including:

- **Malware distribution:** investigators established that two of the suspects were involved in the distribution of malware, such as Remote Access Tools (RAT) and mobile malware. The malware was distributed through phishing emails impersonating government institutions. Over 1 000 people across Poland are believed to have fallen victim to this particular scam.
- **SIM swapping:** The criminals stole personal data, including bank account credentials, from computers and phones infected with malware previously deployed on victims’ devices. They would then use the stolen data to dupe the victims’ mobile phone operators into porting the victims’ phone numbers to other SIM cards in the possession of these individuals. From that moment on, the criminals would receive all incoming calls and text messages, including one-time banking passwords which they used to transfer money out of the victims’ bank accounts into the accounts of money mules or cryptocurrency exchange platforms. Using such a technique, the criminals were able to steal over €147 000 (PLN 662 000) from their victims’ bank accounts.
- **E-commerce fraud:** one of the criminals under investigation was also running 50 fake online shops and is believed to have defrauded approximately 10,000 people. A number of these fake e-commerce websites were also used to distribute malware.

Two of those arrested were also behind a series of bomb threats sent to kindergartens across the country, prompting the evacuation of 13 350 people.

Europol’s **European Cybercrime Centre (EC3)** supported the Polish authorities with operational analysis in order to identify the main targets and inform the overall strategy.

OSM-1 CICERO, first satellite made in Monaco

Launched September 2, 2020



© Osm

The nanosatellite « OSM-1 CICERO » in orbit

THE FIRST MONEGASQUE NANOSATELLITE IN ORBIT

A small step for man, but a big step for the Principality. Monaco has finally found its rightful place in the very exclusive club of countries aiming to “conquer space”.

And despite very high ambitions, the size of the first Monegasque nanosatellite is proportional to the scale of the third smallest country in the world. It measures only ten centimetres wide, twenty centimetres long and thirty centimetres high.

The OSM-1 CICERO nanosatellite is a technological feat and the brainchild of Francesco Bongiovanni, founder and director of Orbital Solutions Monaco and its teams of scientists. Placed in an orbit 540 kilometres from Earth, it is able to complete a full revolution around the globe in just 90 minutes. This is equivalent

to 28,000 kilometres per hour ; an absolute world record.

LAUNCH POSTPONED

Yann Gouy is an engineer specialising in embedded computers. Today, he has found his smile again but he has had his share of cold sweats due to the many postponed launches, first following the Covid 19 pandemic and then because of dangerous weather conditions. The teams of scientists faced no less than four consecutive postponements between March 18 and June 28, 2020. A period of 3 months that may seem relatively short in one's life span, but which is considerable compared to the age of the company. Orbital Solutions was created only one year ago via Monaco Tech, a hotbed of high-tech start ups. It was not until September 2, 2020 at 22: 51 local time (3: 51 Monaco time

on September 3) that the nanosatellite reached its orbit in space. It was successfully launched from the Guiana Space Centre in Kourou (French Guiana) by the Vega VV16 rocket, property of Arianespace.

REDUCED COST

The praise that the Principality of Monaco has piled on Francesco Bongiovanni is first of all, for the reduction in costs. The budget allocated by Monegasque investors for the study of weather conditions is far smaller than those that would have been granted in the past to organisations such as NASA, ESA or the Thales Group. Here, these cutting edge technologies allow only three engineers to build a nanosatellite, with a budget of 1 million euros in a small locale of 300 square metres, near the Port of Fontvieille.



Launching of the Vega rocket at the Spatial Centre of Kourou Guyana on September 2 2019

With a smile on his face, Professor Bongiovanni admits to having had recourse to a certain amount of resourcefulness. Some components are bought inexpensively in Europe and the USA and are then subjected to some "patching" and upgrading. We are worlds away from penny-wise and pound-foolish economies, when considering that in the past, a satellite could cost up to 700 million euros, excluding the launch into space.

This economic policy requires engineers to show a certain practical sense and to reevaluate their capacities. By dint of racking their brains, the most clever idea they came up with was to allow the nanosatellite to collect information already gathered by older and larger satellites. However, this information will not only benefit Monaco but also the United States which, after having supplied the US Weather Agency with data, will sell its information on the climate to parts of Europe, India and Singapore.

COLLECTING WEATHER/CLIMATE DATA

Although 90 % of the data collected today comes from very large weather satellites owned by meteorological

agencies, the miniature satellites allow a wider coverage of the Earth.

"Right now, there are parts of the globe with very little coverage such as the oceans, Africa, Asia, and even some countries in Europe. Now, if we can obtain much cheaper systems, we can manage to cover a larger area of the Earth and therefore provide better climatic forecasting".

"The climate data market is worth \$ 13 billion, and it is a booming market because some areas of the earth are poorly covered, due to the historically high cost of this technology. Today, it is possible to have more global, more complete data that can help in forecasting. All weather data are collected from different sensors (radio occultations, infra-red radiation, microwave...) and the more data from different sensors, the larger geographical areas are covered, allowing for better forecasts. Imagine knowing exactly where a hurricane is heading or where there will be rain at a precise time etc. The weather concerns us all, every day. All activities in the world depend on the weather. If you have outdoor facilities, you are not going to have clients if it is raining. This is something very, very important. There is a definite impact. What's more, weather events are more and more violent and closer to us, and it is with better data that we can improve our chances, or prevent such situations".

STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF OSM-1 CICERO

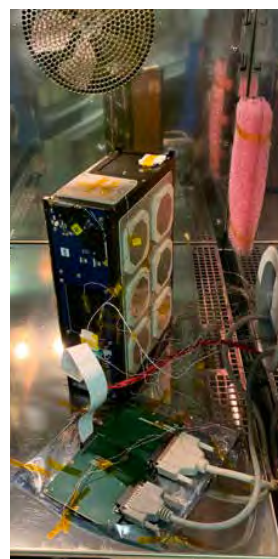
Yann Gouy likes to pretend that he attends only to those parts of the computer "that are invisible". "I did all the software tests on the satellite... the embedded software was already in place, but all the different modules had to be tested separately and then together, to make sure everything was working properly".

Once the satellite is launched, it becomes difficult for engineers to make modifications. Even if some changes are possible when the craft is in orbit, this can lead to problems that can cause a chain reaction. "It is preferable to have everything working properly before the launch".

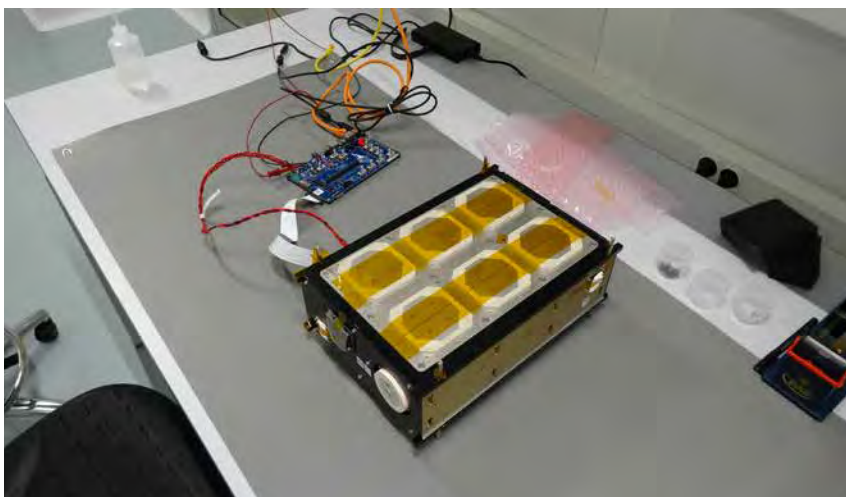
"Assembly and testing took about 3 months. The first stage consisted of an exclusively mechanical part, together with some assemblies of the structure and components. There is a cold assembly phase, called "Dry Build" and a hot assembly phase, known as "White Build".

The nanosatellite is then pushed to the limit in order to check its resistance. It is made to go through rapid 'hot/cold' cycles, very similar to the thermal conditions it will encounter once in weightlessness.

"On this nanosatellite, there was some difficulty with a solar panel that proved fragile and did not withstand



The nanosatellite assembly and testing at the Orbital Solutions laboratory in Monaco



Experimentation of the OSM-1 CICERO

thermal changes. It is very difficult to revert to the hot assembly phase that resulted in the bonding of the structure”.

"The satellites are composed of a platform that serves as a mechanical structure, with an on-board computer and numerous components that calculate its position. Some sensors can change the altitude of the satellite, and provided it is relatively close to Earth, the so-called "magnetic bars" allow for movement, thanks to the magnetic fields. The distance to Earth plays an important role in the maneuverability of the craft. Then, there is the payload, which makes it possible to take measurements of the Earth's atmosphere. This is known as radio occultation. The satellite picks up other satellites' signals thanks to a powerful antenna and calculates the extent of cloud cover, atmospheric composition and rainfall levels when the signals have passed through space. The information is very different from that of a satellite in a stationary position, above a fixed point. The combination of a so-called 'traditional' satellite and a nanosatellite such as this one allows for additional and above all, more accurate weather forecasts ".

COMMITTED TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Taking into account all the debris, as well as operational satellites, the European Space Agency estimates that there are more than 34,000 objects larger than 10 cm in orbit, many of which are thought to be

technological waste from previous space launches.

Concerned about the environment that surrounds the Earth, Orbital Solutions Monaco has thought of everything, including the potential risk of pollution that its miniature model may pose in space:

"The satellite has an expected lifespan of about 3 to 5 years. It will automatically self - destruct and disintegrate into small pieces so as not to contribute to the pollution of the solar system. Five years is five times less than the time limit imposed by the United Nations ".

For the CEO, this new approach is an important plus factor which is perfectly viable, profitable and which corresponds to this willingness to persevere in the protection of the environment.

NEW SPACE

New aerospace technologies are resolutely at odds with past ideals. Gone are the days when Americans and Russians spied on each other to build the most innovative technology, keeping themselves to themselves. This new era is conducive to the exchange of data and knowledge.

Orbital Solutions is composed of only one embedded electronics engineer, one thermal mechanics engineer, and one CEO, who is also its founder. But in this new high-tech sector, it is customary today to outsource some tasks to small companies abroad and to forge a system of partnerships and collaboration.

"New Space is truly a new sector that has just sprung up and which requires collaboration. Generally, it is made up of small companies, each specialising in their field of competence, because no one can have expertise in everything ".

The CEO of Orbital Solutions has remarked that: "Today we talk about democratisation of space. This is a radical and ideal change for Monaco, because it is an activity with a lot of prestige and high added value, in a somewhat restricted place ".

Regarding future projects, the CEO of Orbital Solutions is optimistic but prefers to remain discreet. Even though Monaco has made big strides to catch up in terms of space conquest, isn't there a saying that goes... "heaven can wait" ?

Caroline Fayolle



SAS Prince Albert of Monaco visiting Orbital Solutions in October 2019



© Imperial College London/PA

The COVID Nudge

REVOLUTIONARY COVID 19 TESTING GIVES RESULTS IN 90 MINUTES

*DnaNudge CEO and Co-Founder Regius Professor Chris Toumazou
Awarded Royal Academy of Engineering
Special Award for Pandemic Service*

Professor Toumazou FRS, FREng, FMedSci honoured for exceptional engineering innovation for his role in the conception and development of the COVID Nudge rapid, lab-free test – now in UK NHS roll-out.

DnaNudge CEO and co-founder Regius Professor Chris Toumazou FRS, FREng, FMedSci has been named as a winner of the Royal Academy of Engineering's Special Award for Pandemic Service, in recognition of his and his team's major role in the development of the COVID Nudge rapid, lab-free RT-PCR test – delivering accurate sample-to-result in just over an hour without the need

for a laboratory. Earlier this month, the UK government announced an order for 5.8 million rapid COVID Nudge test kits, to be rolled out in NHS hospitals across the UK from September in urgent patient care and elective surgery settings, plus further deployments in out-of-hospital locations.

The Royal Academy of Engineering President's Special Awards for Pandemic Service honour 19 key individuals and teams of engineers for exceptional engineering achievements in tackling COVID-19 throughout the UK, spanning the whole field of engineering from ventilators and vaccines to hospital

building and infection tracking. The awards – which are overseen by the Academy's Awards Committee – have been made to teams, organisations, individuals, collaborations and projects across all technical specialities, disciplines and career stages within the UK engineering community who have contributed to addressing the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specially commissioned silver medals will be presented to all 19 winners later this year.

Professor Toumazou and the DnaNudge team, together with TTP in Cambridge, began adapting the COVID Nudge test from DnaNudge's

ground-breaking in-store DNA testing service at the start of the pandemic, as the need for increased testing capacity and rapid testing solutions became clear. COVID Nudge is a rapid, accurate, portable, out-of-laboratory, sample-to-answer RT-PCR test that delivers results on the spot, at the point of need and in just over an hour. This transformative, single-chip multiplex test enables a comparison of a sample against both the WHO and CDC assays, and could also test for FluA, FluB and RSV – a crucial capability for clinicians ahead of the winter flu season. In addition, the chip includes a control assay for human RNA, which eliminates “false negative” results by testing for inadequate swabbing.

Working with DHSC, and with the authorisation of the MHRA, DnaNudge validated its adapted technology in April and began an initial deployment of the COVID Nudge test in eight London hospitals – including cancer wards, A&E and maternity departments at St Mary’s Hospital in Paddington, Charing Cross Hospital, West Middlesex University Hospital, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, Royal Hospital Chelsea (home of the Chelsea Pensioners), Queen Charlotte’s and Chelsea Maternity Hospital, the Renal Transplant Centre at Hammersmith Hospital and the Tower Hamlets Centre for Mental Health at Mile End Hospital. The test, which is now being rolled out nationally, is authorised for clinical use by the MHRA and has obtained a CE mark. An average sensitivity of the COVID Nudge test – compared against numerous NHS lab-based tests – is around 95% and specificity around 100%. A paper has been accepted for publication by a peer-reviewed journal and will be published shortly, and a pre-print is publicly available.

Professor Sir Jim McDonald FREng FRSE, President of the Royal Academy of Engineering, says: “The COVID-19 pandemic is the biggest public health crisis of our time and has presented society with multiple challenges. Engineering expertise and innovation has been central to the global fight to save lives and protect livelihoods.

“I am also incredibly proud of engineers everywhere who

have worked round the clock to maintain essential services, critical supply chains and infrastructure in unprecedented circumstances, using their training and skills to find innovative solutions to a host of problems and to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on our daily lives.”

Professor Raffaella Ocone OBE FREng FRSE, Chair of the Academy’s Awards Committee, says: “Engineering skills—including innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration—have proved to be of vital importance during the current pandemic. We were delighted that the breadth of nominations for these awards reflected so much of the extraordinary work engineers have been doing.

“While I am delighted that we are able to recognise some of these outstanding achievements with these awards I am mindful that the important work of the vast majority of engineers will remain largely outside the public’s consciousness. They are all deserving of our thanks and admiration for their continuing positive contribution to society.”

Commenting on the award, Professor Chris Toumazou FRS, FREng, FMedSci, CEO and co-founder of DnaNudge and founder of the Institute of Biomedical Engineering at Imperial College London said: “In April, as the COVID-19 pandemic began to peak, the UK government issued an urgent call to the most innovative minds in academia and industry to help increase the country’s testing capacity. I am delighted that the DnaNudge team, together with The Technology Partnership (TTP) in Cambridge, was able to answer that call. I couldn’t be prouder of the part that DnaNudge and our technology has played in delivering rapid testing for the NHS and for the country. I am deeply honoured and grateful to the Royal Academy of Engineering for this special and meaningful award.”

ABOUT PROFESSOR CHRIS TOUMAZOU

Professor Chris Toumazou is a multi-award-winning inventor, innovator and tech entrepreneur with over 80 granted patents in the field of

consumer healthcare and microchip technology. He is London’s first Regius (Royal) Professor of Engineering and founder of the Institute of Biomedical Engineering at Imperial College London.

ABOUT DNANUDGE

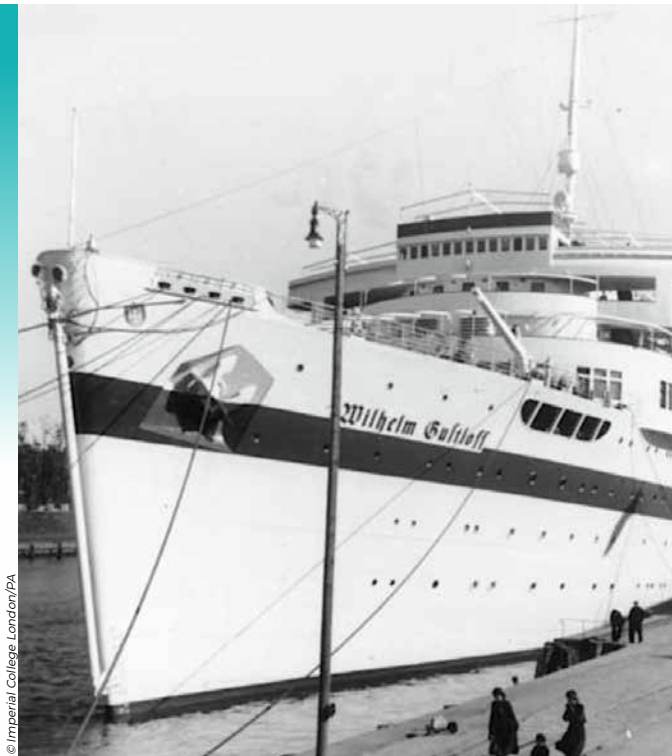
DnaNudge is the world’s first service to use consumers’ own DNA plus lifestyle to nudge us towards healthier choices each time we shop.

Following a quick and simple DNA test at DnaNudge’s flagship store in London’s Covent Garden, users can start using their wrist-worn DnaBand to scan product barcodes and discover whether a food product is “red” or “green” for them. If the product is indicated as “green”, it’s good to go. If the product is “red”, the DnaNudge App will display a range of personalised recommended alternatives generated by DnaNudge’s science-led analytics based on world-class research. The DnaBand also incorporates a physical inactivity monitor, enabling the App to adapt its recommended product choices based on inactivity levels, helping to keep DNA healthy. With NudgeMatch, users can even tap DnaBands with friends and see which DNA traits they have in common.

Everyday, small product swaps can lead to big, positive changes to health over the long term. No more impossible diets or best intentions – just realistic, actionable, personal DNA and lifestyle-based recommendations when shopping.



Professor Christofer Toumazou



© Imperial College London/PA

The « Wilhelm Gustloff »



THE AMBER ROOM

The search for the lost 'eighth wonder of the world'

Divers from the Baltictech Diving Group in Poland have recently found a shipwreck they believe may still contain the legendary treasures of the Amber Room. The sunken remains of what is thought to be the 'Wilhelm Gustloff', a German military cruiser that went down in April 1945, were located by divers in the Baltic Sea at a depth of some 88 metres north of the Polish port city of Ustka. In its holds, they discovered military vehicles, porcelain and numerous crates with as yet unknown contents.

Valued today in excess of \$500 million, this stunning treasure disappeared in the dying days of WWII on the Eastern Front. Ever since 1945, treasure hunters and historians from many nations have searched for what has been dubbed the 'Eighth Wonder of the World'.

A LEGEND IS BORN

The Amber Room was designed by the German baroque sculptor, Andreas Schütler and put together by Danish craftsmen, under the supervision of Gottfried Wolfram, a German master craftsman working in Denmark. Construction of the room began



© Wikimedia

The Amber Room in the Catherine Palace near Saint Petersburg, in 1917

in 1701 and was made to be installed at Charlottenburg Palace in Berlin, then the home of King Frederick I of Prussia. It was at the request of his wife, Sophie Charlotte that the room was created. The mosaics that adorned the walls and ceiling took eight years to complete and the room was installed in 1709. Made up of several tonnes of amber set into gold-leaf panels, the intricate mosaics were topped off with many other semi-precious stones. The room of gold and amber glowed magically against the light of 565 candles.

In 1716, Russian emperor Peter the Great visited Prussia and saw the Amber Room; he told his host Frederick I how bedazzled he had been by its beauty.

The Prussian king gifted the room to Peter the Great as a token of friendship, as well as to cement a Russo-Prussian alliance against Sweden. And so, the Amber Room was shipped to Russia.

Eighteen large crates arrived at the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg to become part of Russia's European art collection. But it wasn't to stay there...

After she came to power following a bloodless coup in 1741, Tsarina Elizabeth asked for the Amber Room to be moved to Catherine Palace in Tsarskoye Selo, renamed Pushkin in the 20th century. It lies some 25 km south of St. Petersburg and was the summer residence of Russian emperors for over 200 years.

But the Amber Room's new home was larger than its original size. So, Francesco Rastrelli, an Italian architect who worked mainly in Russia was hired to redesign the room to fit. More amber was shipped from Berlin and after its installation, the walls of the room covered 55 square metres and held 6 tonnes of amber as well as other semi-precious stones.

The Amber Room was used by the royal family as a venue for lavish receptions and to entertain noble and high-ranking guests. Tsarina Elizabeth also used it as her private meditation room. And there it remained quite happily until late 1941.

THE PLAGUE OF WAR

In June of that year, Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa which saw millions of German troops cross into the Soviet Union. The Wehrmacht's Army Group North was rapidly approaching Saint Petersburg. Curators at the palace worked feverishly to remove the art treasures to prevent them from falling into German hands. But the amber panels proved difficult to move in a hurry; the amber had become brittle over the decades. The curators had no choice but to leave the priceless room in situ. Instead, the Soviets tried to disguise it with wallpaper.

German forces rapidly captured the Catherine Palace, largely empty of its contents and experts soon arrived to locate the amber panels. It took the Germans just two days to strip the panels from the walls and to pack it into 27 large crates, ready to be shipped west to Königsberg - today's Kaliningrad. They believed that the room was made by Germans for Germans; they wanted it back.

On 14 October 1941 the Amber Room reached Königsberg Castle where it was stored, and one month later, a local newspaper reported that the castle would feature the Amber Room as an exhibit. The curator of Königsberg Castle Museum, Alfred Rhode was a renowned amber expert and while the panels were on display, he spent time studying them as well as their history for two years.

But by January 1945, Königsberg was on the front line, under heavy Royal Air Force bombing raids and now threatened by the fast moving Red Army. Adolf Hitler ordered that cultural artefacts of priority, including the Amber Room be moved out of Königsberg. Albert Speer, Reich Minister of Armaments and his teams began packing and moving thousands of pieces of priceless art, including paintings, sculptures, precious stones, gold and silver.

Hossein Sadre



Albert Speer and Adolf Hitler



Adolf Hitler passes Wilhelm Gustloff crew lined up on the lower promenade deck while touring the ship on March 29, 1938. (Courtesy of the Wilhelm Gustloff Museum)

It is known that between the 21st and 24th of January 1945, several caches of looted valuables were shipped west... but was the Amber Room among them?

Things became complicated when the Gauleiter Erich Koch who was in charge of the civil administration, abandoned Königsberg, leaving the army in charge, under the command of General Otto Lasch. It remains unclear as to whether the Amber Room was packed and moved out of the museum during this period.

Koch fled, first to Pilau and then by evacuation ship to Flensburg, before being captured by the British in Hamburg in April 1949. We will return to Koch as he is an important character in this story.



Soviet soldiers fighting in Koenigsberg

The Red Army captured Königsberg on 9 April, 1945 but the Amber Room was nowhere to be found. So what became of the priceless panels? In January 1945, everything looked very bleak for Germany. Other than the fact that in the west, the Allies had pushed back the German offensive in the Ardennes and in the south the Italian campaign had failed, Hitler's real worry was the outcome of events on the Eastern Front. The Red Army had made rapid progress on their campaign towards reaching the German heartlands. They had not only entered East Prussia but had also liberated Warsaw. Their aim was to reach Berlin as rapidly as possible.

LIFE LOST, TREASURES LOOTED

It was in the face of this surge that Admiral Karl Doenitz organised the largest ever evacuation by sea: 'Operation Hannibal'.

Within 15 weeks, from January to May 1945, around 1000 ships and vessels of various types, including fishing boats

and cruise ships evacuated around 2 million people, including military personnel and civilians across the Baltic Sea to Germany and German-occupied Denmark. This was more than three times the number of people evacuated in the nine day operation at Dunkirk.

One of the cruise liners involved was the 'Wilhelm Gustloff' which had already been used as a hospital ship. Although it was designed to carry 2000 people, during the evacuation some 11,000 people were packed onto it.

Many believe that the room was loaded aboard in large crates, perhaps on the orders of Gauleiter Koch himself. On 30 January 1945, the ship was torpedoed and sunk by a Soviet submarine in the Baltic, killing 9,500 passengers and crew. It was the biggest maritime disaster in history.

It appears that the Soviets kept Koch alive after the British handed him over to the Poles in the 1950s. However, salvage attempts in the 50s turned up nothing and Koch died in prison in 1986 at the age of 90, without elaborating on the issue.

Another theory that has proved quite popular summarises that the Amber Room was destroyed along with Königsberg Castle. Already badly damaged by RAF bombs in August 1944, the Soviets smashed the castle with artillery during the battle to capture the city. It has been stated by Soviet investigators that the Room was destroyed between the 9th and 11th of April 1945 in fires.

However, a variation of this story suggests that a part of the Amber



Gauleiter Erich Koch

Room was discovered intact in the castle's cellars but kept secret by the Soviets. It was thought that the theft and destruction of the Amber Room would be a useful Cold War propaganda tool, blaming the West for its loss.

It was strange that Königsberg Castle was placed off-limits during the Soviet occupation and in 1968, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev ordered its ruins levelled, preventing any proper investigation of the site.

On the same site today stands the 'House of the Soviets', an unfinished building that was intended to house the central administration of the Kaliningrad Oblast. Construction had started in 1970 but soon ran into technical problems. In 1985, development was definitively halted when funding ran out and the regional Party Committee lost interest in the project.

But there is a third theory! In 1997, a set of four amber stones from the famous room were discovered in Germany. They were in the possession of a soldier who had helped pack up the room for shipment. So important were they that they had been returned to Russia and were used in the Amber Room's reconstruction at the Catherine Palace. Perhaps the Germans did manage to spirit the panels out of East Prussia and they lie hidden in a salt mine or a lake somewhere in Germany.

Regardless of which theory one subscribes to, the search for over half a billion dollars' worth of treasure will probably continue until someone finally discovers the true fate of the Amber Room.



Admiral Karl Doenitz



Operation Hannibal



Excavations at Königsberg castle site, January 2018

TREASURE HUNTERS ON THE TRAIL

In 1997, a group of German art detectives received a tip-off that a piece of the Amber Room was being sold. They contacted the seller's lawyer and found out that the seller was the son of a dead soldier and had no idea of how or where his father had obtained the piece. So it is possible that the piece was stolen at some point during the dismantling and removal of the room by German soldiers.

In 2017, three German treasure hunters, Peter Lohre, a geo-radar specialist, Gunther Eckhardt, a scientist and Leonhard Blume, a homeopath believed that they had found the long lost treasure. According to them, it is concealed inside a network of tunnels, beneath a cave in eastern Germany. In fact, Nazi scientists once used the tunnels but no records of their activities have been found.

Using ground-penetrating radar, the team was able to locate and examine a subterranean complex beneath Prince's Cave, near the town of Partenstein, not far from the border with the Czech Republic.

Leonhard Blume told Britain's Times newspaper: "We discovered a very deep and long tunnel system and we detected something that we think could be a booby trap".

"Above the hideout is a railway line, where in April 1945 a train from Königsberg was stopped", radar expert Peter Lohre told the UK's Daily Express, implying that the room may have been transported on it.

Indeed, marks on trees seemed to indicate that crates were moved at the site, using steel cables. As such, something does

appear to be stashed in the tunnels near Hartenstein in Saxony. But no one knows what.

"We want to go on but it's all very complicated and we need a sponsor", Blume told British newspaper, The Independent.

Hopeful treasure hunters have been seeking the room for decades, including the Soviet secret services who failed to find it after ten years of searching. The conventional theory which is supported by the 2004 investigation of British journalists Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark is that the room was never moved from Königsberg Castle; in fact, it was probably destroyed during British or Soviet attacks on the city.

The same conclusion was reached independently by Soviet investigators after the war. According to a post-war report by the lead Soviet investigator Alexander Bruzov which was retrieved from the Russian national archive, the Amber Room was destroyed between 9th and 11th April 1945. These dates refer to the Battle of Königsberg which concluded with the Soviet occupation of the city.

Of course, there are other theories claiming that the Amber Room was never destroyed.

For example, according to a documentary broadcast in Germany in 2003, a brigadier by the name of Albert Pomp had the room quietly dismantled at the request of his uncle, Martin Mutschmann who was the Nazi regional leader of the state of Saxony.

It is, according to the documentary, hidden in an old mine in Nordhausen, in northern Thuringia.

The most unlikely theory is that the room that the Germans dismantled and transported out of the Catherine Palace was in fact a fake replica ordered by Joseph Stalin.

But the room seems to also have a curse associated with it. Aptly named the Amber Room curse, it claims the lives of those that become too closely connected to it. These people meet untimely deaths, starting with Alfred Rhode, the former curator of Königsberg Castle Museum and his wife. They died of typhus while the KGB was searching for the room.

General Gusev, a Russian intelligence officer was killed in a horrible car crash shortly after speaking with a journalist about the supposed whereabouts of the Amber Room, and in 1987, Georg Stein, a former soldier and Amber Room hunter was viciously murdered in a Bavarian forest while searching for the missing room. Are all these mysterious deaths just coincidences or are there other forces at work?

Ultimately, the fate of the Amber Room may never be known and it remains one of the most fascinating mysteries of lost treasure in modern times. But anyone who wishes to witness its sublime beauty, can visit a replica inaugurated in 2003, in the Catherine Palace Museum in Pushkin, Russia. It was constructed over a period of 24 years with the expertise of some 70 Russian and German amber craftsmen and scholars.

The room may not be an original but it glows like an authentic treasure.



Old baryte mine, Partenstein/Spessart

TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

By Clara Bauman

Coats to cozy up in this autumn

After many years when the puffy jacket reigned supreme, the overcoat is making a comeback. But make no mistake: it is anything but uptight or boring... Here are the 3 coat trends to watch out for this autumn.

1. The minimalist belted coat

It constitutes the key pillar of the “less is more” look... This season, the preferred colours are beige, brown or black but also pastel shades such as powder pink, lavender, pale blue...

© & Other Stories



Woven wool blend coat accentuated by a self-tie belt at the waistline ([stories.com](https://www.stories.com))

© Arket



This alpaca and wool coat features a concealed, single-button closure and adjusts with a belt at the waist ([arket.com](https://www.arket.com))

Calf-length coat in a recycled Italian wool blend with notch lapels and a detachable tie belt at the waist ([hm.com](https://www.hm.com))



© H&M



TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

By Clara Bauman

2. The check coat

Tartan, Prince of Wales Check, Houndstooth... check coats (and jackets) are everywhere this autumn. You can count on these patterns to spice up your most formal outfit.

© Tommy Hilfiger



Cashmere wool coat featuring a tartan print and smart notched lapels (uk.tommy.com)

© Liu Jo



Overcoat in Prince of Wales check with belt and fringe (liujo.com)

© Twinset Milano



Check or houndstooth? No need to choose with this reversible belted coat (twinset.com)

3. The leather coat

Whether in real or 'faux' leather, colourful as well as black coats such as those with the "Matrix" look are trending.

© Marciano Guess



'Faux' leather coat with "vinyl" effect (marciano.guess.eu)

© Arket



Belted coat in black leather (arket.com)

3 tips to help you choose the right coat

- Take your time and don't hesitate to try on several cuts to find what works for you
- Leave room for layers: for instance, wear a thick hoodie before trying on a coat.
- Think about the right "balance": if you're of small build (no taller than 1m 60) and/if you're on the slim side, you'd look better in a mid-length coat with small patterns ; otherwise you may appear even slimmer. Inversely, if you're tall and/or have an athletic body shape, go for models that are longer, with larger checks for instance.

BOOKS



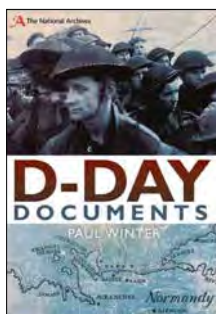
BEHIND THE ENIGMA

By John Ferris

The Authorised History of GCHQ, Britain's Secret Cyber-Intelligence Agency

For a hundred years, GCHQ – Government Communications Headquarters – has been at the forefront of innovation in national security and British secret statecraft. Famed for its codebreaking achievements during the Second World War, and essential to the Allied victory, GCHQ also held a critical role in both the Falklands War and Cold War. Today, amidst the growing threats of terrorism and online crime, GCHQ continues to be the UK's leading intelligence, security and cyber agency, and a powerful tool of the British state.

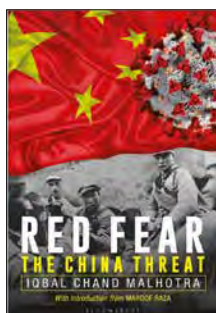
Based on unprecedented access to classified archives, *Behind the Enigma* is the first book to authoritatively tell the entire history of this most unique and enigmatic of organisations – and peer into its future at the heart of the nation's security.



D-DAY DOCUMENTS

By Paul Winter

Published in partnership with the National Archives, *D-Day Documents* is a commemorative collection of previously unpublished documents marking the 70th anniversary of the Normandy landings. This unprecedented book contains not only 21st Army Group intelligence reports on 'Omaha' Beach, RAF Photographic Reconnaissance prints and the ship's log of HMS Warspite but various other important official documents covering different aspects of Operations Neptune and Overlord. Crucially, this single volume brings together for the first time the war diary entries of all Anglo-Canadian 'spear-head' units and regiments who landed in France on 6 June 1944. A unique publication, which celebrates one of the most momentous days in modern military history, *D-Day Documents* will fascinate anyone with an interest in the Second World War, as well as offering an invaluable primary source for military historians.



RED FEAR

By Iqbal Chand Malhotra

The China Threat

What was the reason for the first real armed encounter between Indian and Chinese troops on Chinese soil in the town of Dinghai on Chusan Island in July 1840?

Were the orders for the invasion of Aksai Chin issued by Mao from Moscow in December 1949, at Stalin's behest?

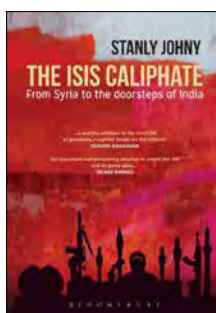
Was the pluck and raw courage of Lt. Gen. Sagat Singh to hold Nathu La first in 1965 and then again in 1967 the basis for General K. Sundarji's bold moves at Sumdorong Chu in 1986 and 1987?

Red Fear: The China Threat catalogues, evaluates and infers the consequences of the political and military confrontations between India and China from the 15th to the 21st century.

Contrary to the glowing accounts in popular imagination of a congruence of values and interests between these two nations, the relationship has been confrontational and antagonistic at many levels throughout these last six centuries.

The lessons of history are hard to learn. Nevertheless, China seems to have learnt them better than India. It bided its time well and positioned itself to humiliate and denigrate India whenever possible as retribution for the perceived harm India and Indians did to its society and economy during the infamous Chinese century of humiliation between 1839 to 1940.

For India, today's post-Galwan situation is reminiscent of the challenge India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru faced in 1962 and the identical challenge India's 14th Prime Minister Narendra Modi faces in 2020. Vedic philosophy argues that time is cyclical, and not linear, and by this argument, the year 2020 completes a 60-year cycle that began in 1960. How Modi responds to this challenge will define India's relationship with China as well as its position in the world through the rest of the 21st century.



THE ISIS CALIPHATE

By Stanley Johny

FROM SYRIA TO THE DOORSTEPS OF INDIA

The rapid rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria was almost like a fairy tale. A group that was unheard of in early 2013 captured territories as big as Great Britain by 2014 June, effectively erasing the border between Iraq and Syria. It announced a Caliphate, drew in thousands of fighters and supporters from across the world, including India, launched attacks in nations from Brussels to Bangladesh and earned loyalties of local militant groups in conflict-ridden states such as Nigeria, Libya, Afghanistan and Pakistan. By the end of 2014, ISIS had transformed itself into a global force of terror. *ISIS Caliphate* tells the story of this phenomenon. Based on primary sources and interviews, the book explores the geopolitical, organisational and ideological roots of ISIS and narrates how the group has spread its wings from its core in Iraq and Syria to the peripheries of India and Pakistan.

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