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Nikola Hendrickx



French President Emmanuel Macron and Federal Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel

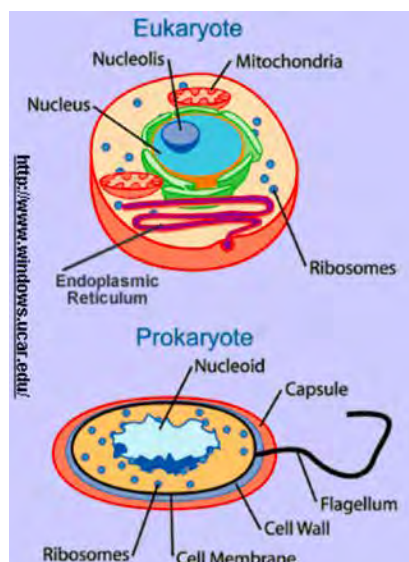
THE SMALLEST HIDING PLACE

How country leaders are hiding behind the SARS-CoV-2 virus

It may be only 60 to 120 nanometres (nm) from side to side but you'd be amazed how much can be hidden behind a SARS-CoV-2 virus (it stands for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Corona Virus 2, as you know). The virus in question here is, of course, the one that causes COVID-19, not to mention panic, mask-wearing, public misbehaviour, stockpiling, stupid 'freedom' demonstrations and, sadly, far too much illness and death. For the mathematically minded, that means this particular virus can range in size from just 6×10^{-8} metres up to a presumed maximum of around 120×10^{-7} metres, around the same size as an HIV virus. You can also express the size of the virus as being between 0.06 and 0.12 microns. In any case, extremely small, even if quite large by virus standards (the porcine circovirus measures a measly 17 nanometres, or 0.017 microns; less than a third the size). There is still some debate as to whether or not a virus is 'alive' in the normal sense, since an individual virus cannot 'live' – reproduce, in other words – without a host. Furthermore, viruses lack a cellular structure and cannot metabolize.

However, there is no dispute that they are the most numerous biological entities on Earth. It's reckoned that we have some

10³¹ (that a 1 followed by 31 zeroes) virus particles in Earth's biosphere, outnumbering all those prokaryotes that make up the bacteria and archaea, if actually weighing far less. We, of course, like our animal neighbours and co-habitants, are made up of eukaryotes, rather than prokaryotes. In many ways, a virus is a bit like some political leaders: wanting to make a bigger impact than its



mere size and physical structure might suggest is possible and, certainly in this case, succeeding.

Despite its meagre proportions, though, the SARS-CoV-2 virus has been providing ample cover for some political leaders who want to clamp down on personal freedoms. We have all seen news reports of anti-masking demonstrations, mainly in America where a lot of people still blame the 5G mobile phone network for COVID-19. I've never been sure if they believe the radio-magnetic waves actually create a real virus or merely cause the symptoms; perhaps they're not sure. Human scientists have been trying to recreate life in the laboratory for many, many years without success, so it's hard to believe that people who are effectively telephone engineers have done it accidentally. The idea is simple nonsense born of scientific ignorance. It seems to be more a case of "I don't want to face restrictions just to protect my neighbours, so I'll just say it isn't happening". Ostriches have a similar panic response, I'm told. Naomi Oreskes, a professor of the history of science at Harvard University, writing in Scientific American, points out that the people denying that COVID-19 exists are often the same people who deny climate

change and evolution. It is, she says, what psychologists called “implicatory denial”. She sums up the surprisingly similar arguments like this: “Climate change: I reject the suggestion that the ‘magic of the market’ has failed and that we need government intervention to remedy the market failure. Evolutionary theory: I am offended by the suggestion that life is random and meaningless and there is no God. COVID-19: I resent staying at home, losing income, or being told by the government what to do.” Basically, it means ‘believe what you like if the obvious truth is unpalatable’. Oreskes sums up, however, with an interesting conclusion. “Sooner or later, denial crashes on the rocks of reality. The only question is whether it crashes before or after we get out of the way.”

While for most of us COVID-19 has been an unmitigated disaster, for some leaders it has been an opportunity, and one which they have seized eagerly. If you’re in charge of a country and would like tighter controls over what the people get up to, what they say and what they think, then measures to combat the virus give you a golden opportunity. Who is going to question tough new restrictions when they’re imposed “for the public good”? It has meant setting aside some of the rights people have enjoyed for years or even centuries. It has meant allowing authorities enhanced rights to probe into privacy. Elections have been postponed ‘so as to prevent the need for groups to gather at polling stations’ (and incidentally to change the people in power, of course). The virus has even allowed some countries to gain a derogation from the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights. Of course, the Convention also obliges governments to take whatever measures may be needed to protect the lives and health of the population. It does not, however, give states a free hand to, as one report puts it, “trample on rights, suppress freedoms, dismantle democracy or violate the rule of law.” Even under a ‘state of emergency’ the European Convention sets limits to protect fundamental standards.



Naomi Oreskes, professor of the history of science at Harvard University



China using facial recognition to control the population

A HOLIDAY FROM HUMAN RIGHTS?

The Convention allows for derogations in times of emergency, but “The main problem is, how far are we going to go with the limitation of certain human rights?” asks Vladimir Vardanyan, a member of the Armenian parliament. “How far are we going with the limitation of certain human rights?” We are in strange time, Vardanyan accepts, and that will inevitably mean some changes that can include limitations being imposed on the rights normally enjoyed. However, “this limitation should be proportionate, it should be lawful, it should be non-discriminatory and so on,” argues Vardanyan. There are worrying signs that the norms of civilised, democratic society are being quietly laid aside by rulers more interested in naked power than in the rights of man (and woman). The European Convention on Human Rights requires states to take whatever measures may be necessary to protect the life and health of the population. But there are limits.

What exactly have states been doing? Many of their actions are understandable, even laudable, under the present unprecedented circumstances: restrictions on the freedom of movement and assembly, the closures of educational facilities and those premises used for commercial, recreational, sporting, cultural or religious purposes. However, measures that restrict freedom of expression, access to information or freedom of the media are not. “Restricting the public flow of information,” wrote Vardanyan, “is detrimental to an effective public health response that attracts the informed and sustainable support of the public based on trust in public institutions.” Journalists, whistle-blowers and human rights defenders are key assets in preventing further damage by disclosing bad practices in good time for corrective measures to be taken. The actions of various governments have been kept under scrutiny by the European Commission for Democracy Through Law, otherwise known as the Venice Commission, which has expressed its

public concern. “On numerous occasions, the Venice Commission examined the limits of such emergency powers,” it declared. “The Commission has consistently underlined that State security and public safety can only be effectively guaranteed in a democracy which fully respects the rule of law. Even in genuine cases of emergency situations, the rule of law must prevail.”

We have to remember that the Venice Commission set out its checklist of what is and is not acceptable in an emergency back in 2011, long before the SARS-CoV-2 virus turned up to rock the boat, but following bouts of less widespread epidemics. It gives little room for letting countries off the hook, however. “The security of the State and its democratic institutions, and the safety of its officials and population, are vital public and private interests that deserve protection and may lead to a temporary derogation from certain human rights and to an extraordinary division of powers. However, emergency powers have been abused by authoritarian governments to stay in power, to silence the opposition and to restrict human rights in general. Strict limits on the duration, circumstance and scope of such powers is therefore essential. State security and public safety can only be effectively secured in a democracy which fully respects the Rule of Law.”

It’s an issue that is worrying the European Parliament. Members of the Civil Liberties Committee (LIBE) concluded at a meeting at the end of October that “national emergency measures pose a ‘risk of abuse of power’ and stressed that any measure affecting democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights must be necessary, proportional and time-limited.

They call on governments to consider terminating their ‘state of emergency’ or at least to clearly define the delegation of powers to their executives, and to ensure that appropriate parliamentary and judicial checks and balances are in place.” The problem is that however influential the European Parliament



Vladimir Vardanyan

may be, there is a distinct tendency for member state governments to ignore it. Things have moved on since Britain's then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, allegedly dismissed it as "a Mickey Mouse parliament" (there is no proof that she actually said that), with MEPs gaining more powers over a wide variety of legislative areas. As a row continues at present between MEPs and the European Council, representing governments, over funding, their demands were considered irrelevant by the advisor on European affairs to the German Chancellor, who commented that "In the end, none of that is relevant". Perhaps, but EU observers believe that in closed-door sessions, the parliamentarians may be able to squeeze from the fractious budget negotiations rather stricter rules and conditions for those countries that abuse the pandemic emergency to strengthen their own powers for purely selfish reasons.

"The virus is destroying many lives and much else of what is very dear to us. We should not let it destroy our core values and free societies," commented the Council of Europe's Secretary General, Marija Pejčinović Burić. She warned back at the beginning of the pandemic that

COVID-19 restrictions must be balanced with human rights. In some places, such as France, abuses of power have been reined in. The French police, for example, had deployed some twenty drones for surveillance of the public in Paris.

The drones were put under the control of the Prefecture of Police, whose controversial head is a renowned disciplinarian, Didier Lallement. Lallement had been specially recruited by President Macron during the Gilet jaunes protests. He made himself unpopular by claiming that COVID victims in hospital resuscitation wards were people who had disobeyed lockdown rules. This was demonstrably nonsense. The drones, though, were a step too far. France's Human Rights League took their case to the country's highest court, the Conseil d'État, which has imposed a ban. The French police are allowed to use drones to, for instance, follow a demonstration and identify troublemakers, which means their task is to enforce criminal law. Ensuring the enforcement of lockdown is seen as a matter of administrative rules and public health. So drones are out, at least until there is a full consultation with the Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés (CNIL) and a Ministerial Decree is granted, and even then only if the cameras are modified so that they cannot identify individuals.

STOP THE PRESS!

It's not just the freedom of individuals that has come under threat – something that may be seen as vaguely understandable – but the freedom to report it. The International Press Institute reported back in April that "an alarming number of European governments, especially in eastern and central Europe, have used



Police drone

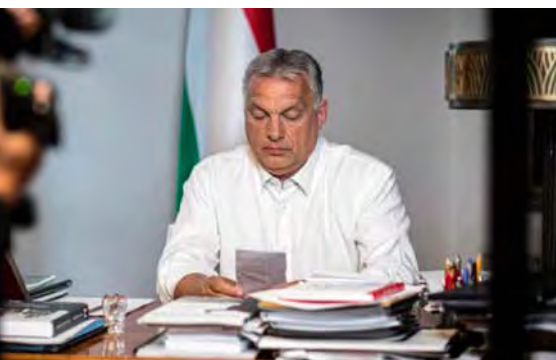
the ongoing health crisis as a pretext to restrict the free flow of information and clamp down on independent media. The most serious threats have so far been observed in states with authoritarian tendencies such as Hungary and Russia, where the pandemic has been exploited to grab more powers and tighten control over information." And it's not just the traditionally authoritarian governments, says the IPI. "Other governments with poor records on media freedom, such as Bulgaria and Romania, have also moved to introduce excessive criminal penalties for 'fake news' about the virus, which risk misuse and interference with the media's ability to inform the public. Elsewhere, countries such as Serbia and Moldova have moved to control reporting, impose restrictions on journalists' access to information, and even try to ban opinion articles." It's worth recalling that wartime censorship imposed early in the 1918 influenza outbreak almost certainly prevented people from taking sensible precautions and extended the duration of the pandemic.

It will come as no surprise to many that the worst offender, in terms of restricting press freedom, is Hungary, where the government passed legislation to give Prime Minister Viktor Orbán wide new powers to rule by decree.

Orbán's Fidesz party voted by a two-thirds majority to give him what amount to dictatorial powers to bypass parliament for an indefinite period, despite criticism from the Council of Europe, the OSCE and a wide range of international human



An anti-lockdown protest



Viktor Orbán calling on lawmakers to reintroduce the special legal order

rights groups. Now anyone spreading what Fidesz considers 'false' or 'distorted' information – basically any view that varies from that of Orbán – can be fined or sent to prison for up to five years. Power-grabbing is not, arguably, the best response to a deadly virus. Dealing with the infection itself would seem to be a wiser course than forming an alliance with it merely to increase a leader's power. At the time of writing, there are some 46,000,000 confirmed cases worldwide. Despite the dismissals of its seriousness, by such leaders as Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro, well over 20,000,000 of those cases are in the Americas (more than 9,000,000 in the US, 5,500,000 in Brazil) and more than 11,000,000 in Europe. At one point, while Trump was playing down the significance of the disease, the United States, with 4% of the world population, hosted 20% of global COVID-19 cases. Trump's endorsement of a remedy known not to work slowed attempts by the US health community to try to stem the spread.

Quite a few countries have discovered that a SARS-CoV-2 virus is quite big enough to conceal naked ambition, as long as news about the abuse of power doesn't get out. That means controlling the media, and if they cannot control the message, the only answer for some is to shoot the messenger. The pressure group Reporters Without Borders has warned the United Nations Human Rights Council about

widespread attempts to suppress the news, with violations of media rights in more than a third of all UN member states over the current pandemic.

They also pointed out that these violations could put everyone's health in danger. After all, someone has to counter the falsehoods distributed by social media platforms that have been used to spread disinformation and to promote quack remedies (one suggested drinking bleach, a somewhat terminal solution). However, quite apart from the abuse and restriction of journalists and the media in general, not all of the measures introduced by heads of government can be justified as part of a defence against infection. Furthermore, reliable information is a vital weapon in combating the virus. It has been claimed that if the Chinese authorities had not censored information about the virus early on, it might have been easier to contain and its spread at least slowed.

"Some countries have taken more draconian measures than others," said Ian Liddell-Grainger, a British member of parliament. "My own country, the United Kingdom, has put elections back. Many have changed the election process. Some have actually brought in laws and – dare I say it? – rules which do make one question whether democracy is being served?" Liddell-Grainger is very doubtful of the justifications being made for all these changes, which he insists must be temporary in any case. It's something he made clear in his report on the crisis, adopted by Standing Committee of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly in October, 2020, which "stresses that no public health emergency may be used as a pretext to destroy the democratic acquis and warns governments against abusing emergency powers to silence opposition or restrict human rights. Parliaments must continue to play their role of representation, legislation and oversight". The report, among other proposals, says that "as cornerstone institutions of democracy, **parliaments must continue to play their**

triple rôle of representation, legislation and oversight, (my emphasis) the latter being even more essential in times of emergency where the executive acquires additional powers." "Democracy cannot be tinkered with," Liddell-Grainger told me, "We are in a state of enormous flux and we accept that, but we have to go back to normal as soon as possible."



British member of parliament
Liddell-Grainger

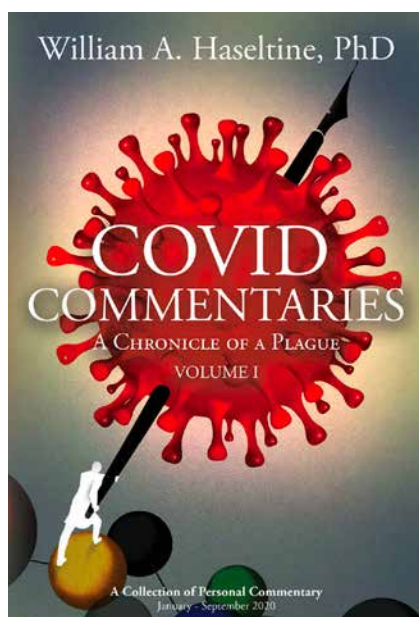
He agrees that this is an almost unique set of circumstances, not seen since the deadly Spanish 'flu epidemic of 1918-1920 that infected some 500-million people, a third of the global population at the time, and killed more than 50-million. That was an H1N1 virus, spread into the human population from birds. It was also, of course, as with the common cold, a type of coronavirus. In the United States, where around 675,000 people were killed by the virus, the Centre for Disease Control has tried to track it down and find out more about just how and why it was so deadly. Then, as now, control measures came down to hygiene, quarantine and isolation, stopping large groups from getting together and the use of disinfectants. However, now, as then, it's necessary to hear the voices of the sufferers and those at risk. "The most important thing," says Liddell-Grainger, referring to his report, "is that people that are in every country, every one of our forty-seven countries, need to be listened to, and they need to be listened to openly and sensibly." At a time of national emergency, governments can assume the right to act without consultation, which he says is wrong. "Governments need to understand that they have a moral and a legal responsibility, through the Convention and through their own domestic laws, to be able to handle this in a sensible, and dare I say, responsible way." One very practical reason for that is that for controls to be obeyed, the people have to have faith in the rules themselves and believe that their leaders are also following



them. This was severely weakened in the UK when Prime Minister Boris Johnson's advisor, Dominic Cummings, drove his family 435 kilometres to his parents' home in County Durham while his wife was supposedly showing symptoms of the virus. It caused a furore he was not expecting and has made it much harder for Johnson to retain control. Cummings, a man who tries to avoid the media, was forced to face a hostile press conference where he performed poorly.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

What exactly is the SARS-CoV-2 virus and how do we fight it? Scientists throughout the world would love to know all the answers. "Like all viruses, coronaviruses are expert code-crackers," wrote William A. Haseltine, a former Harvard Medical School professor and founder of the university's cancer and HIV/AIDS research departments. Writing in *Scientific American*, he clearly has some respect for this latest threat to human life. "Think of this virus as an intelligent biological machine continuously running DNA experiments to adapt to the ecological niche it inhabits," he wrote. Imagining it as an unthinking germ that simply passes from one victim to another would sell it short. "This virus has caused a pandemic in large part because it acted on three of our most human vulnerabilities: our biological defences, our clustering patterns of social behaviour and our simmering political divides." Haseltine was deeply involved in the fight against HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus that causes AIDS. It hasn't gone away, but it has been tamed, thanks largely to him and his team. By the end of 2019, AIDS had killed around 33-million people. Altogether, around 76-million people have been infected and a further 1.7-million acquire the virus every year. Like SARS-CoV-2, HIV is expert at cracking DNA codes, but Haseltine and his colleagues have changed the ground plan dramatically. Of the 38-million people currently living with HIV/AIDS, 25-million are receiving full anti-retroviral treatments that keep symptoms at bay and make it far less likely that the virus will be passed on. Even so, after more than 30 years, Haseltine admits that there is still no vaccine that can prevent HIV. What are the chances of developing one for COVID-19? Not great, it seems. "These coronaviruses," Haseltine writes, "are not a hit-and-run virus like polio, or a catch-it-and-keep-it virus like HIV. I call them 'get-it-and-forget-it' viruses – once cleared, your body tends to forget it ever fought this foe. Early studies with SARS-CoV-2 suggest it might behave much like its cousins, raising transient immune protection." That is not good news. It means any immunity



William A. Haseltine PhD



you may gain from having caught the virus and survived, however damaged, is likely to be short-lived. Sadly, that means that any vaccine may similarly only work for a short period, if it works at all. "Vaccines act more like fire alarms," says Haseltine, "rather than preventing fires from breaking out, they call the immune system for help once a fire has ignited." If your immune system fails to recognise its attacker, it may not be able to react as effectively as it might to a familiar foe.

Perhaps that explains why things seem to be getting worse. According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), throughout the European Union and European Economic Area, together with the UK, the virus seems to be winning the battle. "In most countries, notification rates have increased in certain regions," says its website, "with extremely high levels in some areas. Moreover, in addition to the substantial increases seen in most countries among younger age groups, notification rates have also increased in older age groups. Reported test positivity has been steadily increasing since August and has shown a marked escalation in recent weeks, pointing to a real increase in rates of viral transmission, rather than just a rise in reported cases attributable to increased testing." In early October 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated that 10% of the world population had been infected with the COVID-19 virus, with ten countries accounting for 70% of the infections. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) was also reporting concerns. "A new ILO report warned that the COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in 'government lockdowns, collapsed consumer demand, and disrupted imports of raw materials,'

reported the WHO. In Europe, it's been recognised that while some leaders strive for personal power, rather than an effective clinical response, there has been all-round failure. As Bloomberg reports, German Chancellor Angela Merkel has told her fellow leaders in a private video conference call that they (and she) had all failed to intervene in an effective way. She said, it's claimed, that they had been stopped from imposing restrictions earlier by what she called 'political realities', but they must all learn lessons so that such a slow reaction will not be repeated.

The prognosis, it seems, is not good. Imperial College London reports that tests on more than 365,000 people in England have shown that the antibody response to the virus that causes COVID-19 wanes over time. This is consistent with Haseltine's findings: any immunity you may gain from surviving the virus or from a vaccine of some sort is likely to be short-lived. In tests carried out over a 3-month period, "There were 17,576 positive results across all three rounds," the College website reports, "around 30% of whom did not report any COVID-19 symptoms. After accounting for the accuracy of the test, confirmed by laboratory evaluation, and the country's population characteristics, the study found that antibody prevalence declined from 6.0% to 4.8% and then 4.4% over the three months." One of the report's lead authors, Professor Helen Ward, said: "This very large study has shown that the proportion of people with detectable antibodies is falling over time. We don't yet know whether this will leave these people at risk of reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19, but it is essential that everyone continues to follow guidance to reduce the risk to themselves and others."

WHO'S WINNING? NOT US

It seems sometimes as if our governments don't know what to do. That's because they really don't. None of them has faced a crisis like this before and, although virology has progressed hugely since 1918-1920, it hasn't come up with a solution, other than to advise the wearing of face coverings, the avoidance of large gatherings, trying to isolate as far as is convenient and frequent hand washing. Meanwhile, the WHO has launched a 'COVID-19 Law Lab' so that changes to laws resulting from the pandemic can be clearly seen. "Strong legal frameworks are critical for national COVID-19 responses," said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of World Health Organisation

"Laws that impact health often fall outside the health sector. As health is global, legal frameworks should be aligned with international commitments to respond to current and emerging public health risks. A strong foundation of law for health is more important now than ever before." The WHO also acknowledges, though, that badly designed laws that are badly implemented or enforced can be harmful, especially for marginalised populations. What's more, they can entrench stigma and discrimination and hinder efforts to deal with the pandemic. According to Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS, quoted on the WHO's website, "Harmful laws can exacerbate stigma and discrimination, infringe on people's rights and undermine public health responses." "To ensure responses to the pandemic are effective, humane and sustainable, governments must use the law as a tool to uphold the human rights and dignity of people affected by COVID-19." It's hoped that the COVID-19 Law Lab initiative will help people keep pace with the rapid and sometimes arbitrary way in which laws

change in response to the disease. "We need to track and evaluate how laws and policies are being used during the Pandemic to understand what works," said Dr. Matthew M. Kavanagh, Visiting Professor of Law, Assistant Professor of Global Health and Director of Global Health Policy & Politics Initiative at Georgetown University's Department of International Health.

According to Amnesty International, plenty of governments are now hiding behind that handy virus. "Countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), specifically Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)," it reports, "have used the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to continue pre-existing patterns of suppressing the right to freedom of expression in 2020."

Many ordinary people, too, are only too willing to forgive their authoritarian governments and blame their fellow citizens. "Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous forms of stigma and discrimination have been reported," says UNAIDS, a joint UN programme on HIV/AIDS, "including xenophobia directed at people thought to be responsible for bringing COVID-19 into countries, attacks on health-care workers and verbal and physical abuse towards people who have recovered from COVID-19. Attacks on populations facing pre-existing stigma and discrimination, including people living with HIV, people from gender and sexual minorities, sex workers and migrants, have also been reported." The WHO has little time for those (some of them in positions of power and influence) who favour herd immunity as a response. As Doctor Ghebreyesus told a conference recently, "Herd immunity is a concept used for vaccination, in which a population can be protected from a certain virus if a threshold of vaccination is reached. For example, herd immunity against measles requires about 95% of a population to be vaccinated. The remaining 5% will be protected by the fact that measles will not spread among those who are vaccinated. For polio, the threshold is about 80%. In other words, herd immunity is achieved by protecting people from a virus, not by exposing them to it. Never in the history of public health has herd immunity been used as a strategy for responding to an outbreak, let alone a pandemic. It is scientifically and ethically problematic." And, of course, it doesn't work.

Donald Trump boasted of his immunity after recovering from the virus, but he may have spoken too soon. "In a telephone survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention," reported JAMA Open network, a monthly open access medical journal published by the American Medical Association,



Human Rights Defender guide on FAQs about Coronavirus Source : Office of the Human Rights Defender, Armenia

"among a random sample of 292 adults (≥ 18 years) who had a positive outpatient test result for SARS-CoV-2 by reverse transcriptase-polymerase chain reaction, 35% of 274 symptomatic respondents reported not having returned to their usual state of health 2 weeks or more after testing, including 26% among those aged 18-34 years ($n=85$), 32% among those aged 35-49 years ($n=96$), and 47% among those aged 50 years or older ($n=89$). Older than 50 years and the presence of 3 or more chronic medical conditions were associated with not returning to usual health within 14 to 21 days after receiving a positive test result." So if you get it and get better, don't count your chickens too early.

While ambitious leaders who are more interested in self-aggrandisement than public health draft restrictive new laws for their countries and rub their hands with glee, SARS-CoV-2 marches on, unabated. The 1918 pandemic surged in several waves over the course of two years, with many of the deaths attributed either to the virus provoking a cytokine storm, thus damaging the immune systems of young adults, or by the overcrowded and unhygienic conditions at hospital camps and in the poor housing in which many of the victims lived, and bacterial infections that took hold while patients were weakened. The war – the 'war to end all wars' as it was hopefully labelled – killed some 40-million people, mainly young men. The influenza pandemic killed up to 100-million of both sexes. Those tiny viruses may lack tanks, bombs and field-guns but they are even more deadly and totally indiscriminate.

Kingsley Brooks

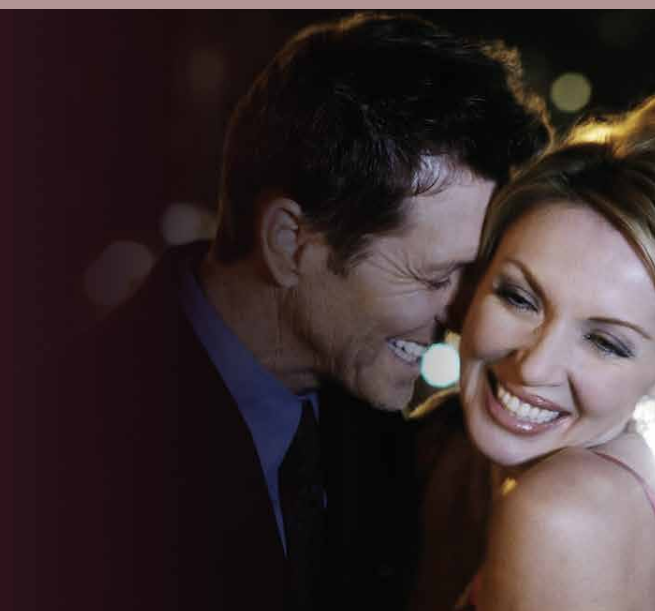


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Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki taking part in the celebrations of the 79th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II

THE CONSERVATIVE'S CONSERVATIVE

The life and times of Poland's Prime Minister

Nobody could accuse Mateusz Jakub Morawiecki of cowardice. He used to distribute copies of *Solidarność's* magazines after martial law was declared by Poland's Communist rulers in 1981, working bravely against Poland's government from the age of 12. He began by copying out anti-Communist literature for the underground movement. In August 1980, it's claimed, he plastered walls in Wrocław, his home city, with posters encouraging a general strike. In the 1980s he even edited a banned anti-Communist magazine and he once claimed in an interview to have thrown

petrol bombs at police cars, the very sort of violent protest he condemns today. It's ironic, in a way, that such weapons are commonly known as "Molotov cocktails", since it was the Soviet Union Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov's underhand deal with his Nazi German equivalent, Joachim von Ribbentrop, that led to Poland being divided up in an unholy alliance between Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler. Morawiecki also says that during his time as a political activist he was stopped and beaten up by Communist security officers on several occasions, which cannot have come as a surprise. But he persevered, proving his courage, his commitment and his dislike of Communism.

Nobody could accuse Morawiecki of not being a clever and highly educated man, either. Born in Wrocław in 1968, he went to the University of Wrocław, continuing his tertiary education at the Universities of Hamburg and Basel, where he attained degrees in arts, business administration and advanced studies while incidentally learning both German and English along the way. He lectured at Wrocław University of Economics for eight years,

two of them also spent at the Wrocław University of Technology. His first job outside academia was with Cogito Co., a company in Zabrze, Poland, that supplied spare parts for earth-moving machines. From 1993 to 1996 he worked in the publishing industry, principally with ENTER Marketing-Publishing in Wrocław. In 1995 he became an intern at the Deutsche Bundesbank and in 1996–97 he held a position at Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main.

In 1998, his economics qualifications and experience earned him a position at the commercial Bank Zachodni WBK, a Polish bank that was part of the Spanish Banco Santander Group, where he became managing director and subsequently chairman. Despite recent conflict with the EU over his country's laws and practices, he was deeply involved in the negotiations for EU membership, to which he still says he is committed. As deputy director of the Accession Negotiations Department in the Committee for European Integration, he was involved in several areas of negotiations for membership, especially – perhaps inevitably – finance and economics. As the world knows,



Premier Mateusz Morawiecki

Poland was one of the nations to take part in what was known as 'the Big Bang enlargement', when ten countries joined the European Union at the same time.

The celebrations surrounding that event were huge and, for the EU, somewhat self-congratulatory, although there were voices of doubt, too, even as the accession documents were signed at a ceremony in Athens in 2003. It seemed more like a big party for those of us who were there. Could this massive enlargement of the Union harm it by diluting its principles? Were the Eastern European countries really ready? Some certainly were, others perhaps less so. Whatever his doubts about various EU rules and the overall direction of travel, Morawiecki has not expressed a wish to leave the Union. Indeed, in 2019 he told the BBC that Britain's decision to leave had seen a large number of Poles returning home from a UK apparently determined to become increasingly isolated. He hoped that trend that would continue, he said, so as to 'boost the Polish economy'. As for his political career, from 1998 to 2001 he was a member of the supervisory boards of the Industrial Development Agency and the Electricity Board in Wrocław. He also tried his hand at electoral politics and served as a councillor in the Lower Silesia Regional Assembly.

FROM ONE PARTY TO ANOTHER

However, Morawiecki did not immediately join a political party and in 2010 went on to become political advisor to Donald Tusk of the liberal Civic Platform (PO) party. Tusk could spot a clever man when he encountered one. Morawiecki was elected to parliament in the sweeping political change of 2015, when the Law and Justice party (PiS), the main political opposition to

PO, won a massive electoral victory. He was appointed Minister of Economic Development. His views were seen as relatively moderate by comparison with those of the PiS leadership (and others in the party) and it's thought he was chosen largely to reassure international investors, some of whom feared the neo-nationalist outlook of PiS leaders. The party wanted to "Polandise" the economy, potentially putting inward investment in jeopardy. Morawiecki was familiar with international economics and trade and took up his new post with a strong commitment to deregulation, private entrepreneurship, and the development of smart technologies. He was successful and the Polish economy thrived, growing by 4% per year under his care; his economist's instincts were still sound. However, the government of Prime Minister Beata Szydło came in for criticism when it attempted to impose controversial judicial reforms by sacking or retiring judges who didn't share the party's views. Jarosław Kaczyński, the de-facto leader of PiS and former Prime Minister orchestrated a cabinet reshuffle that saw Morawiecki promoted to Deputy Prime Minister, while also continuing as Finance Minister and Minister of Development. He had a lot on his plate, but greater honour was to follow: Kaczyński thought that Morawiecki had more voter-appeal than Szydło, so he was given the top job, replacing her, although she remained as his deputy. She now sits in the European Parliament. Morawiecki found himself having to defend the judicial changes that had caused such outrage in Brussels and also to defend Poland against being forced to accept a share of the migrants flooding into Europe to escape war zones, extreme poverty and hunger.

At the moment, like other world leaders, Morawiecki's main concern is COVID-19 and the need to protect his people from something more immediately deadly than alleged moral turpitude. He recently Tweeted: "I spoke to CEO @pfizer Poland, D. Hryniewiecka-Firlej. We agreed the rules of vaccine distribution with the President of the European Commission. We want the vaccine to reach us as soon as possible. This is a chance to return to NORMALITY" (his use of capitals). Wishful thinking that may be, but it is something shared with leaders worldwide. In another Tweet on the same day he wrote "Today there was a message of hope in the media - @pfizer and @BioNTech_Group announced that the vaccine they prepared was more than 90% effective. It doesn't mean she's ready yet, but we're closer



Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and PiS President Jarosław Kaczyński in 2018 during the Gala of the 25th anniversary of Gazeta Polska and the Free Speech Zone

than ever. I am appealing - let us protect ourselves and others." Morawiecki went into self-isolation after coming into contact with a confirmed case but continued to work from home. In a video message posted on Facebook later, he said: "From today on I will be working remotely. Look after yourselves and be responsible. I am wishing good health to everyone! The government continues to work normally and I am in constant touch with all government officials and departments." So far, the SARS-CoV-2 virus has proved itself very tricky, able to adapt and mutate, which is why the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine relies on promoting T-cells, rather than antibodies.



Dorota Hryniewiecka-Firlej, MD, Ph.D., President of Pfizer Polska Sp

Research has shown that antibodies to the SARS-CoV-2 virus don't remain in the body for very long, just like the antibodies for the coronavirus that causes the common cold (that's why colds keep coming back and never provide immunity), whereas T-cells, which attack cells infected with the COVID-19 virus and so prevent it from reproducing, seem to last much longer. It may be too early to break out the champagne but perhaps a glass of ordinary wine might be justified.



Morawiecki Mateusz, during his function as president of the Polish bank ZB WBK

Morawiecki's distrust of Russia is not limited to his dislike of Communism. Moscow may not have a Politburo anymore but Morawiecki seems sure that the changes are more cosmetic than real. He's clearly not afraid to speak out against the current occupant of the Kremlin. Take, for instance, the attack on Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Morawiecki denounced Russia as a "hostile regime" after Germany revealed that Navalny had been poisoned. He listed the many accusations against Vladimir Putin in a Tweet: "Georgia 2008. Crimea and Donbas since 2014. MH17 (the Dutch passenger jet brought down over Eastern Ukraine by a Russian Buk missile). Salisbury 2018. Berlin 2019. Navalny 2020. How many wake-up calls do we need to finally realise that we are dealing with a hostile regime?"



Cast metal relief mounted on block of granite, by Alexander Paul Klecki as a memorial to the victims of the Katyn mass execution of Polish military officers by the Soviet Union during World War II

Needless to say, Putin denies involvement. It's not just the incidents flagged up by Morawiecki either, that fuel the tension between Warsaw and Moscow. Most Poles still remember how their then President, Lech Kaczynski and ninety-four other Polish dignitaries died when the Polish Air Force Tu-54 plane in which they were travelling crashed while coming in to land in dense fog at Smolensk in 2010. Many still suspect Russian involvement because those on board were on their way to commemorate the 1940 murders of 22,000 Polish troops



Wreckage of Polish Tu-154M plane after crash in Smolensk, 10 April 2010



Russian mobile ICBMs on parade

and senior officials in the Katyn forest, at the hands of Russia's NLVD (which later became the KGB and is now the FSB). The deadly crash is suspicious. It may have been a coincidence. There again, knowing Putin, it may not.

A STRONG WARNING

Morawiecki has also warned Moscow not to intervene in the crisis in neighbouring Belarus, where the Belarusian people have been displaying their anger against Putin's ally, Alexander Lukashenko, who claimed to have won a fairly obviously fraudulent election. Putin may not need to intervene, in fact: Lukashenko's government has ordered Belarusian banks to freeze the assets of protestors to prevent them from funding further unrest or even paying their fines. Putin should note – and Morawiecki will probably cheer – the comments of US President Elect Joe Biden, even before his election victory: "Although President Trump refuses to speak out on their behalf, I continue to stand with the people of Belarus and support their democratic aspirations," he said. Morawiecki had already warned that Russia seems to be reviving what was called "the Brezhnev Doctrine", a policy from the Soviet era that entitled Russia (at least in the minds of Kremlin officials) to intervene in countries where people rose up against Soviet rule.

It's what led to the disastrous invasion of Afghanistan, a country so riven with small internal conflicts among the various tribes and clans that no outside invader ever stood a chance of remaining in power for long, as history clearly demonstrates. Most of the male population – especially away from the larger towns and cities – seem to carry guns, which they're happy to turn on foreigners. Tamim Ansary, in his informative and entertaining book about the history of Afghanistan, 'Games Without Rules', has a simple



Polish Armed Forces

explanation for the tribes' militaristic attitude: "Afghans use a pithy phrase to sum up why men fight wars: *zar, zan, u zameen*. 'Gold, women, and land.' That's exactly what these foreigners seemed to be after, at least to the villagers they were 'educating'."

Morawiecki's clear distaste for Putin was demonstrated again in 2018 when he – understandably – reacted angrily to Putin's claim that Poland shares responsibility for World War II. That's a bit rich, coming from the leader of a country that had agreed to carve up Poland under the Molotov-von Ribbentrop Pact into the respective spheres of influence of Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. It was a disgraceful agreement, although some have argued that it bought an unprepared Soviet Union time to find ways to resist Hitler's blitzkrieg. The pact was finally repudiated by Josef Stalin in 1940, when he rejected Hitler's offer of a 'junior partnership' in the German-Italian-Japanese Axis. That rejection, according to the memoirs of Soviet General Georgy Zhukov, reduced Molotov to tears; he realised he'd been played for a sucker all along. The end of the pact led to Hitler launching Operation Barbarossa, his invasion of Russia, which didn't end happily for Nazi Germany. Nor, of course, did it end happily for the many towns and villages taken by the Nazis and then taken back by the Soviet Union or for the many millions slaughtered by both armies. According to Putin, however, Poland must take some of the blame for the war.

Its leadership at the time, he said, was 'strongly anti-Semitic'. He also described Poland's ambassador to Germany until 1939, Jozef Lipski, as "a bastard, an anti-Semitic pig" who had, Putin claimed, promised Hitler a memorial in Warsaw for deporting the Jews. Lipski is not alive to defend himself and certainly there was fairly widespread anti-Semitism across much of Europe at the



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Polish Ambassador to Germany Józef Lipski called by Russian President Vladimir Putin “a bastard, and an anti-Semitic pig”



time, including in Poland, but whatever Lipski's faults, he can hardly be blamed for World War II and Morawiecki said as much. “President Putin has lied about Poland on numerous occasions,” he said. The Russian ambassador was duly summoned for a dressing down. In his statement, Morawiecki reminded the world that “Stalin's greatest victim was the Russian people. They deserve the ‘truth’ instead of exchanging perpetrators and victims.” Putin's views were rebuffed by the United States, too, whose ambassador to Poland, Georgette Mosbacher, Tweeted: “Dear President Putin, Hitler and Stalin colluded to launch World War II. Poland was a victim of this horrible conflict.” Morawiecki argued that Putin had an ulterior motive when he made his comments: he was trying to divert attention away from the sanctions imposed by Washington on the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline between Russia and Germany, as well as the ban imposed on Russia by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the various murders and attempted murders of which he stood accused. Putin certainly has form when it comes to hiding his and his country's shortcomings behind bluster and lies.

FREEDOM FOR ALL?

Morawiecki is clearly a courageous opponent of Soviet-style Communism and present-day Russia, although not everyone would see it that way, at least not unreservedly. That may not be Morawiecki's fault. Take Poland's gay community, for instance. Over a hundred Polish municipalities have passed resolutions to “keep out” what they call “LGBT ideology”. Activist and film-maker Bart Staszewski started publicizing what were increasingly known as “LGBT-free zones”, for which Morawiecki accused him of starting a ‘hoax’ that led people to believe Poland has a human rights problem.

However, to blame Staszewski for creating the term “LGBT-free zone” is at best disingenuous. The term was being used before Staszewski began posting his comments on social media. A pro-government newspaper, *Gazeta Polska*, even printed stickers with the slogan “LGBT-Free Zone” and a rainbow flag crossed out, for readers to display if they chose to do so. It was what led to the European Parliament passing a resolution denouncing the Polish municipalities involved and to the European Commission suspending aid to them. But Poland's ruling Law and Justice Party have defended the zones, arguing that they are just trying to protect the country's ‘Christian traditions’; gay people are not prohibited from living in the areas, it's argued, although one imagines they would feel fairly unwelcome. In November 2020 the EU finally published a 5-year LGBTIQ Equality Strategy to defend LGBTIQ people from what is seen as an increasing backlash, nowhere more so than in Poland, it seems, where



© Wikipedia

Bart Staszewski accepting the 2019 Toleranti award in Switzerland

the plan is unlikely to be welcomed. In the past, Polish politicians have said that it is no business of Poland's neighbours, nor of the EU. Reacting to the new strategy, Evelyn Paradis, Executive Director of ILGA-Europe, an umbrella organisation of Europe-wide LGBTI organisations, said “At the very core of this strategy is the understanding that if you are going to bring about profound change, it needs to be everyone's business.”

Another controversial issue to beset the Polish government concerns abortion. The almost total ban on the practice has also drawn angry street protests, with some demonstrators arrested and carried off by police. Abortion in Poland is restricted to cases of rape, incest or where the mother's health is at serious risk. A proposal to permit it in cases of foetal deformity was expressly rejected. Some of those taking part in the protests have been linked to the Women's Strike movement in Poland, but Morawiecki has urged them to stay home and rehearse their grievances on social media to avoid spreading the corona virus, which sounds sensible, if unlikely to be heeded any more than he would have heeded such instructions during the Communist regime. His words also suggest, though, that he has little sympathy with the protestors anyway. “These outbursts we are seeing in the streets,” he Tweeted, “should absolutely not be taking place. We will oppose any acts of aggression decisively.” When opposition MPs – mostly but not exclusively women – staged a protest in the parliament chamber, PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński ordered the parliament guards to intervene. Opposition to the government gets short shrift. On the subject of abortion and the new law, Morawiecki said “in order to have the freedom of choice



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Rainbow flag of Poland at the 2018 Equality March in Częstochowa (Staszewski on the left)



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you first must be alive,” which suggests the protesters do not have his support. Interestingly, back in July he urged everyone, especially the elderly, to go out and vote. “I am glad that we are less and less afraid of this virus,” he said then at a PiS election rally. Few of those attending wore face coverings.

It's difficult to know how much scope for freedom of decision-making Morawiecki has. On the MDPI (Multi-Disciplinary Digital Publishing Institute) website, Dr. Kyriaki Topidi, Senior Lecturer and Associate Director of the Centre for Comparative Constitutional Law and Religion at the Faculty of Law of the University of Lucerne in Switzerland, writing for the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) in Schiffbrücke, seems to believe that Morawiecki is somewhat constrained. “In the most common representations of the Polish people,” she writes, “the Catholic Church is not simply considered as a part of the Polish nation; it is the Polish nation. This is reflected in the constitutional relationship of the Church and the State, in the form of a concordat. Yet, despite a formally constitutionally warranted separation, the Church retains heavy weight in the legal and political debates to the point that currently, in a time of resurgence of populism across the globe, a number of right-wing parties adopt positions based on those of the Church, establishing a dangerous nexus between religion and nationalism.”

That is almost certainly not a view shared in the Vatican, nor, indeed, in Warsaw's corridors of power, although some living in America's so-called ‘Bible Belt’ would presumably understand.

STAYING POPULAR

The whole point of a populist government is to appeal to the ordinary people; in other words, populists must stay popular. It would seem that Morawiecki's administration is losing its gloss in the eyes of some sections of the public. According to an opinion poll conducted by the CBOS agency in mid-October 2020, support for it has fallen by five percentage points to 33%, while the numbers of its critics grew by nine percentage points to 43%. 49% of those polled said they were not satisfied with the Prime Minister's performance, which is an increase of eleven percentage points, while the 36% who expressed approval of his administration is 10% lower than in the last such poll. 58% were critical of Poland's economic policies, which they said would offer them few opportunities for improvement. Meanwhile the country remains at odds with EU institutions. For example, the centre-right European People's Party (EPP), the largest group within the European Parliament, has urged both Poland and Hungary to accept that future aid will depend upon both countries sticking to EU rules on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Warsaw and Budapest have both rejected the idea, claiming the plan is ‘neo-colonialism’. However, the EU believes that if a country signs up to ‘join the club’ in order to gain the benefits, they must abide by the club's rules. After all, if you join, say, a gardening club you could not reasonably defend the right to bring bottles of herbicide to meetings or refuse to let the club committee look at your blooms, even (perhaps especially) if some of them are artificial. Membership is not a one-way affair.

Not all protests in Poland come from the liberal Left. Despite a ban imposed by the mayor of Warsaw on a march

through the capital to mark Poland's Independence Day on 11 November, a great many marchers turned out, many carrying Polish flags and flares. The parade was meant to involve only motor vehicles so as to avoid the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus, but it was hi-jacked by far-right extremists. An apartment along the route displaying Women's Strike banners was attacked and set alight with flares. Police were obliged to use force to rein in the more violent marchers with pepper spray and rubber bullets, a move that was strongly defended by Interior Affairs Minister Mariusz Kamiński. Morawiecki finds himself squeezed between those wanting a more liberal type of rule and those who want quite the opposite.



© Churchmilitant

Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski is a strong opponent of transgender rights, referring to it as the “direct path to the self-destruction of our civilization”

However, PiS has now lost one of its most influential international supporters and admirers: Donald Trump. Trump is the best-known champion of populist regimes. He made Polish President Andrzej Duda very welcome during a visit in June 2020 and the



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Polish President Andrzej Duda at the ceremony commemorating the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising

importance of the trip was underlined by Morawiecki. "When asked about Andrzej Duda's visit to the United States," wrote the Wprost newspaper, "the head of government emphasized the importance of cooperation with the US, especially in the economic sector. It is a visit of huge benefits for Poland. We derive great benefits from our cooperation with the USA in the investments we attract from the USA." Looking carefully at the choice of words, however, Morawiecki's remarks don't read like blind admiration for Trump or for his illiberal beliefs. Whatever some of his more extreme colleagues may say, Morawiecki retains a free mind, it seems; in economic affairs he's a pragmatist. Hungary's leader, Viktor Orbán, said earlier this year that "We used to think that Europe was our future; today we know that we are the future of Europe." He may have spoken prematurely. Morawiecki has yet to voice an opinion on the US election result, although in January 2019 he and Trump were chosen as "politicians of the year" for 2018 and he also visited Trump the following year. Trump's departure may cause some anxiety in Warsaw, as in Budapest and elsewhere. Speaking before the election, Polish PiS MEP and former Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski warned that a Biden win could change the direction of US foreign policy, although he seemed to suggest Biden would be influenced by others. "Looking at both politicians," Waszczykowski said, "we can see with a naked eye that Biden will not be ruling this country — he will win this election for someone else. The question is for whom. What Washington coterie will govern this? This is an issue because we are dealing with the biggest world power." He seemed to believe Trump was not influenced by anyone. Meanwhile, President Duda Tweeted:



US Vice President Mike Pence and his wife Karen, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and his wife Iwona, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sara laying wreaths at the Ghetto Heroes Monument commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

"Congratulations to Joe Biden for a successful presidential campaign. As we await the nomination by the Electoral College, Poland is determined to upkeep high-level and high-quality Poland-US strategic partnership for an even stronger alliance". He did not mention 'victory' and seemed to be waiting to see if Trump's lawsuits reversed the outcome. Meanwhile, a Warsaw court has ruled that Morawiecki's decision in April 2020 to get the post office to prepare for a purely postal ballot for the Presidential election was against the law. There have been calls for him to resign.

UNHAPPY MEMORIES

Another area of controversy for Morawiecki concerns allegations of Polish involvement in the Holocaust. Some three million Polish Jews were murdered by the Nazis. Roughly half of the total number of Jews killed by Hitler's regime were Polish. It was in

Poland, 64 kilometres from Kraków, that Germany built its largest death camp, Auschwitz, although there were many others.

It is worth noting that by far the largest group of what are called 'Righteous Among Nations' and honoured at the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial were Polish nationals. There are more than 6,000 of them: brave Poles who helped Jewish people to survive at great personal risk. Any Pole caught having helped in any way, even by giving as much as a mouthful of bread, was immediately hanged in public by the Nazis without trial. In Poland, under laws introduced by PiS it is against the law to deny the Holocaust, but it is also against the law to suggest that Polish people played any part in it. The law introduced criminal penalties of up to three years imprisonment for what is called "public and contrary-to-fact conduct that attributes responsibility or co-responsibility for the Nazi crimes committed by the Third German Reich to the Polish nation or the Polish state." Of course, before the Nazi invasion, there was well-documented anti-Semitism in Poland and elsewhere, with members of parliament and the Catholic church calling for Jews to be segregated or deported, although not exterminated. Conditions for Poland's Jews have been likened to apartheid. In 1941, in the town of Jedwabne, however, more than 340 Jewish men, women and children were murdered, most of them locked in a barn which was then set on fire. The killers, numbering about 40, were non-Jewish Poles, although German military police watched it happen. So yes, there was anti-Semitic violence and murder by, it must be said, a tiny minority of non-Jewish Poles.



A family marching at the head of a column of Jews on their way to be deported during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943



Lech Wałęsa and Pope John Paul II

The law against admitting any responsibility led to a letter being published in Britain's *Guardian* newspaper, signed by 88 leading Polish and Israeli academics and intellectuals. "This unfortunate bill has made major news in Poland and internationally," they wrote, "raising logical, moral and legal concerns. Why must a discussion of historical facts involve courts and prosecutors? Why should the victims and witnesses of the Holocaust have to watch what they say for fear of being arrested, and will the testimony of a Jewish survivor who 'feared Poles' be a punishable offence?" The tone of the letter is angry but has yet to lead to a change of heart, and it seeks to explain why the bill was passed: "When Poles hear the words 'Polish camps', they assume, often overreacting, that they are being accused of being responsible for Auschwitz." Its writers also accuse the bill's authors of trying to assume that Poles are completely innocent, with Poland the 'only guiltless nation in Europe', writing: "This is not the way to reclaim Poland's collective dignity."

Those who support the idea of Poland's total innocence would do well to remember the Kielce pogrom, when Polish soldiers, police and civilians killed 42 Jews (including a newly born baby and a pregnant woman) and wounded another 40 at Kielce. It followed the brief disappearance of an 8-year-old Polish boy, Henryk Błaszyk, who claimed to have been kidnapped and held in the basement of the Jewish Centre. Encouraged by his father, he repeated his claim at the police station, following which a patrol of police and soldiers was sent to the house (which, incidentally, had no cellar) and started shooting, also dragging people out into the courtyard where they were stoned, stabbed and robbed by locals. It went on all day and

it was not until 1988 that the supposed kidnap victim admitted that he was never kidnapped, but his father had sworn him to secrecy.

This disgraceful incident occurred in July 1946, long after the Nazis had gone, so no-one can blame the Germans for it. The incident led many of Poland's surviving Jews to emigrate to Palestine and is commemorated by a plaque, dedicated in 1990 by Lech Wałęsa, then leader of *Solidarność*. It's not something Polish people want to talk about but making it illegal to suggest that any Poles played a part in the Holocaust has proved controversial.

"The amendment of the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance is not meant to censor the sad part of our common history," Morawiecki assured Israeli journalists. He told them that the new provisions of the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance, as it's called, were intended to counteract false information on the Holocaust, coming in reaction to various books and articles referring to 'Polish death camps'. They were not Polish and Poles were not allowed anywhere near them on pain of death (unless they had been sent there by the Nazis for internment or execution); they were designed, built and operated by the Germans and their allies. They just happened to be in Poland. Morawiecki reminded the Israelis that Poland had only regained its independence in 1989, while after the World War II, "the communistic elites that ruled over our country at the time did not care for Poland's reputation and did not wish to investigate complex issues of our history," he said. "Poland and Israel had reached a very important point in their common history," Morawiecki said that

he understood Israel's criticism of the changes but pointed out that Poland had been the first victim of the Nazis and during the war had lost six million citizens, including three million Jews.

Given the terrible circumstances it's not really surprising that Poles tend to be touchy about the war, something of which Morawiecki is only too well aware. Poland's wishes were ignored in 1939 by the invading armies of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia and when the war ended, they were ruled by a largely unsympathetic Communist regime. Despite post-war international agreements, the Soviet Union seized various Polish assets, including the contents of a tractor factory near Poznań, a metal-working factory near Bydgoszcz and a printing press in Toruń. They justified it by claiming it was 'German property', even though the sites had earlier been seized by the Nazis from Poles, some of them Jewish. According to the American-Polish writer and historian Anne Applebaum (one of the signatories to that letter to the *Guardian*) in her book 'Iron Curtain', "Stalin ordered a special committee to investigate and create an inventory of the property 'gained' in the war, with the aim of carrying it off to the Soviet Union." Poland, unsurprisingly, lost out again. Morawiecki is determined his country will not suffer further losses, although clinging to a very conservative agenda, especially with Joe Biden in the White House, may mean losing international prestige as well as sympathy and political support.

Jim Gibbons



Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki visiting soldiers of the Territorial Defence Forces



THE POPULIST PASHA

Turkey's sharp right turn

Back in 1999, at the coldest EU summit I ever attended, held in Helsinki, it seemed that there had been at least a thaw in relations with Turkey. The country's prime minister at the time, Mustafa Bülent Ecevit, braved the snow and no doubt admired the large ice sculpture outside the conference building to receive a warm welcome from EU leaders who had just agreed to accept Turkey as a candidate for full membership of the Union. It had applied to join what was then the European Economic Community (EEC) back in 1987. We journalists crowded around to catch a glimpse and throw the odd question to an Ecevit who looked a trifle non-plussed by all the attention, although he smiled a lot. Turkey had had an Association Agreement with the EU since 1963 and it looked as if the final roadblocks on the way to becoming a member state were being removed. Everyone was very cheerful about it, and not just because it was nearly Christmas (and there was a market selling Finnish craft work beside the icy harbour which could help solve the presents question).

Turkey had been declared eligible to join the EU in 1997, but full candidate status was something new. Ecevit, who was also a poet and a writer, succeeded in implementing several reforms in his country before falling out with the then President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer in 2001, which led to a financial crash. Following his whistle-stop visit to Helsinki, he wrote: "The Turks have been Europeans for 600 years. But the Turks are not only Europeans. They are also Asian, Caucasian and Middle Eastern at once. Turkey is a power in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea basins and the Balkans. It is becoming the energy

terminal where the gas and oil riches of the Caspian Basin and the Caucasus will be transported to world markets."

It was arguably the great reformer, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who turned what had become known as "the sick man of Europe" away from its historical Ottoman past and towards a more western future as a progressive, secular, industrial nation. The last time I was in Turkey, his portrait still graced the walls of shops, hotels and restaurants in Ankara, Istanbul and throughout the almost unreal land of Cappadocia, with its "fairy chimneys".



Mustafa Bülent Ecevit



Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

A Turkish friend once complained, though, that Attaturk's decision to drop Arabic script in favour of the Latin version meant that the brilliant poetry of an earlier generation was lost to current scholars who could no longer read it.

Still, Turkey sought its own way in a disputative west as best it could, becoming a founder member of the Council of Europe in 1949, long before the Treaty of Paris brought the European Coal and Steel Community into being and even longer before the much later Treaties of Rome and the resulting foundation of the European Communities. It had, until recently, remained at the forefront of reforming legislation, eagerly championing its Istanbul Convention against domestic violence through the Council of Europe, before the current leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, lost sight of what most people deemed 'liberal progress', turning Turkey back towards its pre-Attaturk past.



Nato secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen , Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and British Prime Minister David Cameron at the 2014 Nato Summit

Officially, Turkey still wants to join the EU but its chances of doing so seem to be dwindling. Negotiations were officially frozen in 2016 in response to Erdoğan's erosion of human rights and the rule of law, especially following the attempted coup. Germany has called on its fellow member states to end the talks; Angela Merkel's hostile view of Erdoğan was reinforced by him urging Turkish citizens in Germany to vote against her.

There are some three million Germans with Turkish roots, and interfering in another country's election is very much frowned upon. Erdoğan's more recent comments on Emanuel Macron suggest he has not yet learned the lesson. You may recall Erdoğan's clampdown on political opponents following the failed coup attempt which drew a lot of criticism, including from Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern. Most member states are ambivalent; if asked, they would say they would like Turkey to join but not while Erdoğan remains in charge and pursuing his current illiberal policies. He's not a democrat and the EU is made up of democracies. Britain was generally favourable to Turkish membership, but its views are now irrelevant, following its vote to leave the Union. Ireland would like Turkey to join, subject to internal reform,

while Italy, Malta, Spain and Portugal would prefer talks to continue. Italy is, in any case, the third biggest trading partner Turkey has in the EU. The Baltic states tend to favour Turkey because it has stood by them through NATO as a defender against Russian aggression. Traditionally, Greece and Cyprus have supported Turkish accession, although the sabre-rattling over undersea gas in the Eastern Mediterranean and apparent Turkish indifference to national boundaries has weakened that support.

NATO, however, is a different matter and it was at NATO that Turkey and Greece agreed to set up a hotline on which crises over Ankara's gas prospecting can be sorted out without resorting to violence. So, for Turkey, NATO looks sound, while the European Commission has described Turkey's EU membership bid as "evaporating".

"Erdoğan's success in gradually transforming Turkey from semi-democracy to illiberal authoritarian regime, should alarm those who face populist leaders in power," wrote Julius Maximilian Rogenhofer and Ayala Panievsky in 'Antidemocratic populism in power: comparing Erdoğan's Turkey with Modi's India and Netanyahu's Israel' on the website of Democratization, DOI. They characterise Erdoğan's policies as something very distinct from democracy and not so far from simple populism. "In what may be referred to as a form of neoliberal clientelism," they explain, "Erdoğan combined reductions in state-administered welfare services with an appeal to economically disadvantaged sections of society, from which the AKP (Erdoğan's ruling Justice and Development Party) receives the majority of its votes. The loyalty of this constituency was secured using social assistance programmes that take place largely outside formal state structures and are framed around an emergent conservative, Islamist and nationalist 'common sense' within Turkey."



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and German Chancellor Angela Merkel



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AKP Party poster

In fact, what Erdoğan seems to have done is pretty much what several other leaders have done elsewhere. “As recognized by the Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde,” argue Rogenhofer and Panievsky, “populism is a ‘thin,’ ‘parasite’ ideology that does not articulate specific policies but offers a particular vision of society’s organization: it considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.” This was very much the technique employed by those wanting Britain to vote to leave the EU: the so-called ‘Brexiters’ saw themselves as honest working folk, overlorded by a posh ‘elite’. Bizarrely, the ‘honest working folk’ included extremely wealthy and privately educated members of the aristocracy and business leaders opposed to EU rules that

might have reined in their profiteering, while anyone in favour of Europe but also generally well-informed and keen on such luxuries as reading and going to the theatre, were lumped in with the ‘elite’. It worked, achieving what the wealthy who wanted to shake off the rules governing business behaviour, set by the EU, wanted: no more restrictions on personal wealth generation. I still cannot see how I was classed as part of the ‘elite’, after going to a state school and working my way into my current relatively lowly position, while the likes of wealthy, Eton-educated Boris Johnson and hedge-fund owner Jacob Rees-Mogg are not. Could Erdoğan explain, I wonder? Could anyone? The populist playbook requires no explanation, by-passing the cerebral cortex and getting straight to the cerebellum. Don’t think about it; forget intellect and appeal solely to the unthinking emotions.



Turkish police arresting demonstrators in Istanbul’s Taksim Square, where May Day protests have been banned since 2013

SILENCING THE OPPOSITION

The NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) is deeply concerned about Turkey’s choice of direction. “While the consolidation of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s unchecked power continued,” it wrote, “local elections on March 31, 2019, saw his Justice and Development Party allied with the far right lose in major cities including Istanbul and Ankara, despite winning 51 percent of votes nationwide. Opposition candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu massively increased his narrow win in Istanbul in a June 23 rerun of the election controversially authorized by the Higher Election Board without legitimate grounds.”



Meanwhile, Erdoğan continues to silence any opponents through the courts, bringing largely trumped up charges against anyone who opposes him. “Terrorism charges continued to be widely misused in the third year after the coup attempt,” writes HRW. “As of July 2019, Ministry of Justice figures stated that 69,259 people were on trial and 155,560 people still under criminal investigation on terrorism charges in cases linked to the Gülen movement, which Turkey’s government terms the Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) and deems a terrorist organization. Of those, 29,487 were held in prison either on remand or following conviction. An estimated 8,500 people—including elected politicians and journalists—are held in prison on remand or following conviction for alleged links with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK/KCK) and many more on trial but at liberty, although official figures could not be obtained.” Since then, things have got worse. Now Turkey, along with Poland, is considering withdrawal from the ground-breaking Istanbul Convention, which aims to end gender-based violence. Not every country favoured its adoption in the first place and Russia, Hungary and the United Kingdom declined to ratify it. In the UK’s case, it has been hinted, it’s because it makes domestic violence an offence in law, so that perpetrators would

have to face charges, a court of law and possibly prison, while in cases involving members of the immigrant community, the UK would rather simply deport all those involved – victims and abusers alike – and let another country deal with the problem. Victims of domestic abuse must continue to suffer, it seems. I have met some and their stories are harrowing in the extreme. Not one received what might be called fair treatment from the authorities, even in cases where the perpetrator was jailed. In any case, it's the 'hidden crime': victims don't want to talk about it, feeling shame and a loss of self-esteem, while the violent partners come across to others as 'nice chaps' that no-one would suspect of thuggery.

Turkey pushed hard to get the Istanbul Convention adopted. Turkey has changed direction since then. Some of the countries refusing or delaying ratification object to the Convention because it accepts that the relationship at the centre of it can be homosexual, as well as heterosexual. The International Justice Resource Centre has examined and reported on some of the refusals. "In May 2020, the Hungarian legislature refused to ratify the Istanbul Convention, objecting to its definition of gender as 'socially constructed'. Latvia's Constitutional Court is examining the Istanbul Convention's compatibility with the country's constitution, following delays in its ratification. Bulgaria's Constitutional Court held, in 2018, that the Convention was not compatible with its domestic legislation with regard to the definition of gender, and Bulgaria has not ratified the treaty. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women described Bulgaria's interpretation of the Convention's definition of gender as a "misinterpretation" and urged it to reconsider. Slovakia's legislature, in November 2019, also rejected ratification of the Convention. The Council Of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights has recently urged Moldova to proceed with its stalled ratification process. Not surprisingly, perhaps, although the EU has signed the Convention it has not formally ratified it, either. Too many member states use the excuse of religion to maintain a man's right to beat his partner, as many a hospital accident and emergency room can testify.

Even so, the Istanbul Convention, created by and fought for by Turkey and now opposed by the current government, is only part of the problem. Turkey itself seems to be rejecting the modern world in favour of something that might have been more familiar to the Pashas of old. A Pasha – or Paşa – was a powerful governor in the days of the Ottoman Empire. It means (sort of) boy or prince and is a very ancient title. Opposition parties are facing a clampdown



Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights from April 2006 to March 2012

that is disturbing the Council of Europe. "I don't think I can really explain why,"

I was told by Swedish member of parliament Thomas Hammaberg, "but we have a picture of what is actually going on, and we are really talking about a crackdown; a crackdown on the political opposition there, which we feel is very serious, especially for a member state of the Council of Europe."

The issue was raised at the October meeting of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe, otherwise known as the Monitoring Committee. The Committee organised an urgent debate in January 2019 at which concern was expressed about a deteriorating situation regarding the rule of law, democracy and human rights in Turkey. Members were worried about the way in which 154 parliamentarians had had their immunity cancelled in 2016, about the restrictions imposed on freedom of expression and the media, about the reduction in the checks and balances in the new presidential system and about unfair electoral processes which have diminished, obstructed and undermined the ability of opposition politicians to exercise their democratic rôles. Some of them face arrest, prosecution and prison for daring to oppose the "Populist Pasha".

That was back in 2019; now we move forward one year to a report drafted under Urgent Procedure for the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. "Unfortunately, the overall situation has not improved since 2019," it says. "In the past months there were new crackdowns on political opposition and civil dissent, which the Assembly strongly condemns." Hammaberg co-drafted the latest report but was not able to see any reforms or

improvements. "For instance, last year, 2019, there was a local election, and after that election, no less than 48 elected mayors could not take office because they were prevented by the government authorities from doing that, and they were actually pushed away from exercising the wish of the voters in those districts. And now no less than 64 out of 65 members of the HDP, one of the opposition parties, cannot serve as elected because of the intervention of the government." In other words, the elections may be free and fair but Erdoğan can and does ignore the results if they don't meet his approval, which makes the holding of any elections seem pretty irrelevant. Like Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Erdoğan effectively rules by decree, no questions asked. How can democratic bodies address that?

"I think I should make the point that what we are after is a sense of dialogue with Turkey," said British MP John Howell, co-author of the report. "to understand what it is doing and why it is doing it."



British MP John Howell

There is cross-party agreement on the need to tackle this issue – Hammaberg is a Socialist, Howell a Conservative – and simply ignoring it is not an option for those committed to democracy and the rule of law. “Turkey has been doing things that we think need explanation,” said Howell. “For example, lawyers that are defending people who are accused of terrorism are themselves being accused of terrorism, and that is something that we do not understand. We also think there is quite a lot we need to understand about how they value media freedom, in particular freedom of social media.” Erdoğan, of course, is far from being the only leader with serious doubts about the so-called Twittersphere. “We all know that social media is an absolute pain,” said Howell, “but nevertheless it is part of the media environment in which we all live and operate, and you can’t suddenly cut out certain sites simply because you don’t like them, for instance Wikipedia, and hope to be able to get away with that without explanation.”

PLAYING HAPPY FAMILIES

I have already mentioned the plan to withdraw Turkey from the Istanbul Convention, which, whilst shocking to many, has also illustrated that there are limits to the overall, unchallengeable power of the ruler.

“President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan plans to withdraw Turkey from the so-called Istanbul Convention on domestic violence against women has angered many Turkish women – including his own party supporters and even some of his relatives,” says the website Reporting Democracy. “The controversial decision has created a division in Erdoğan’s ruling Justice and

Development Party, AKP, as well as in women’s rights organisations close to his government. One of those is the Women and Democracy Association, KADEM, two of whose board members are from Erdoğan’s family: one is his daughter, Sümeyye Erdoğan-Bayraktar, and the other is Hafize Şule Albayrak, wife of the brother of Erdoğan’s son-in-law, Berat Albayrak, the Finance Minister.” Sümeyye Erdoğan-Bayraktar studied in the United States before gaining her MA in economics at the London School of Economics (LSE). Erdoğan family get-togethers must be lively affairs.

In September, the controversial satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, whose office were once attacked in a murderous spree by Islamist killers for publishing cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad, showed on its cover a cartoon of Erdoğan lounging in his underwear, an image no worse than those faced by most Western leaders at some point. It caused outrage in Ankara, worsened by President Emmanuel Macron’s defence of Charlie Hebdo’s right to print whatever cartoons it likes following the murder of a Paris teacher by an extreme Islamist. “The latest spat has been co-opted by both France and Turkey as an opportunity to garner regional credibility and apply an ideological-religious dimension to their rivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean,” wrote Caroline Rose, who has a Masters of Science (MSc) in the History of International Relations from the LSE. She was writing on the website, Geopolitical Futures. “For France, it’s about earning credibility in the EU and among Eastern Mediterranean allies. For Turkey, it’s about distracting its citizens from financial hardship and positioning itself as the leader of the Sunni Islamic world.” Meanwhile,



Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Turkish Foreign Minister

Turkey’s delegation to the UN continues to fight the allegation that it was involved in the Armenian Genocide, arguing that it cannot be considered genocide because the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide wasn’t adopted until 1948. In other words, the event preceded the word, which therefore could not apply to the event. Arguing cases on the basis of a calendar, the order of events and simple semantics seems just a little desperate.

Even so, Turkey has certainly joined in the condemnation of terrorist attacks in France and Austria.

“Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu condemned all forms of terrorism and added that Turkey expects the same level of empathy,” reported Daily Sabah in the aftermath of the spate of killings, especially the most recent attack at the time, which killed 5 people and injured 17 others in the Austrian capital, Vienna. “Turkey condemns the killing of innocent people in France and Austria in ‘barbaric terrorist attacks’ but also expects the ‘same empathy’ from other nations over the killings of thousands of people by PKK terrorists,” Çavuşoğlu stated, speaking at the 130th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.” There was an answer, too, to Macron’s defence of free speech in a secular society, the newspaper reported. “Çavuşoğlu also said that freedom of speech is a vital pillar of democracy, but ‘defaming the most sacred values of any religion cannot be presented as freedom of speech.’ Quoting the late French President Jacques Chirac’s 2006 speech, Çavuşoğlu said, ‘The freedom of speech should be exercised in the spirit of responsibility.’” John Howell,



Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and First Lady Emine Erdoğan

however, is still keen to see for himself at close range exactly what has been going on in Turkey, something that has not been possible because of the continuing COVID-19 situation. "I think the thing that Turkey has to bear in mind," Howell said, "is that what it is doing may very well increase the feeling of resentment that there is within the country. For example, the mayors particularly down in the south of the country, who have been deprived of their elected office, and despite being found innocent by the courts, have not been allowed back in. That is not a good situation." The Venice Commission has stated that the mayors should be in place, but it seems unlikely that Erdoğan is listening.

KURDS AND A WAY

Which brings us to the issue of Erdoğan's pet hate figure, Abdulla Öcalan, the theoretical leader of the Kurdish PKK party, which he co-founded. For the last two decades, he has been held in solitary confinement in a prison on İmralı Island.

He has repeatedly demanded a peaceful, non-violent solution of co-existence between ethnic Turks and his Kurdish followers. Kurdish nationality has not, until more recent times, been a bar to being elected to parliament in Turkey – when I was in the country a few years ago, one in four of the MPs were Kurdish, although they weren't allowed to mention the fact; flaunting your Kurdish ethnicity was banned. The police had raided family

events in villages and arrested people for singing Kurdish traditional songs. Speaking to the far-left British newspaper *Morning Star*, the co-chair of *Tevgera Azadiya* (Kurdistan Society Freedom Movement), Tara Husain said: "By jailing Öcalan they [imperialist forces] tried to crush the Kurdish freedom movement. But his philosophy and ideology will lead us to a free society threatening their interests which is why they keep attacking Kurds in Bashur and Rojava." Fighting talk, you might think, but Öcalan's followers see things very differently. "Öcalan is the key to peace in the Middle East," she insisted. It's unlikely that Erdoğan agrees.

Öcalan himself is a left-wing politician. His endorsement by *Morning Star* and sections of the British trade union movement testify to that. He is unlikely to favour Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. "A society can never be free without women's liberation," he wrote. He sees women as playing a vital rôle in Turkey's future. "Woman's success is the success of society and the individual at all levels," he wrote. "The 21st century must be the era of awakening; the era of the liberated, emancipated woman. This is more important than class or national liberation. The era of democratic civilisation shall be the one when woman rises and succeeds fully." Öcalan ordered his Kurdish forces to leave the country; he is not after territorial conquest, he says. In a speech in 2013, he called on all Kurdish guerrilla forces to withdraw from Turkey and to continue their struggle "only politically". However, as long as he lives and has followers both inside Turkey and out, his arguments remain a thorn in Erdoğan's side.

Another political problem arose in 2020, according to Thomas Hammaberg. "Three members of the parliament were put out of the parliament and their immunity was no longer respected, and for us the possibility of immunity is very important, and we feel there is a real need to review that type of decision. And now, in late September, there was another worrying development, namely that no less than 101 of the RPP, the main opposition party, got arrest warrants on them." The RPP, officially known as the *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* or CHP, follows the edicts of the late Kemal Attaturk and is the oldest political party in Turkey.

MENELAUS BEHAVING BADLY

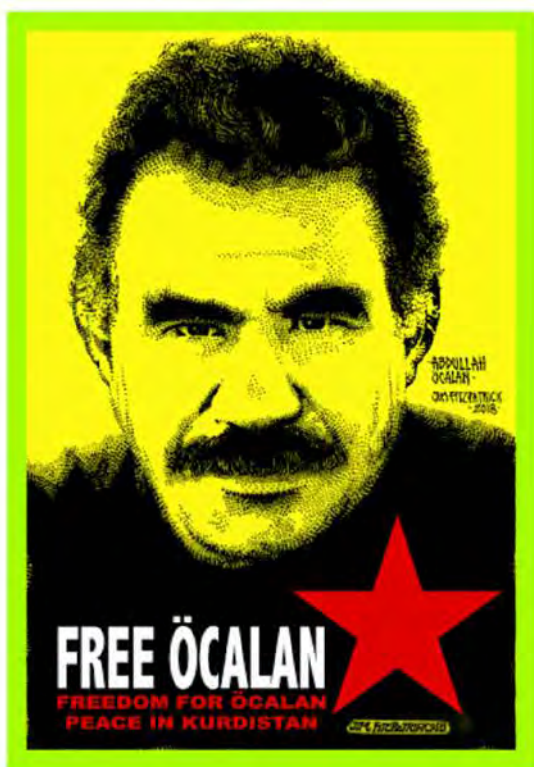
Meanwhile, Erdoğan's uncompromisingly expansionist stance has led to tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, with Turkey claiming the right to all of the undersea gas reserves, even those close to the shores of Greek-controlled islands. Erdoğan seems prepared to risk another Trojan War, this time not by stealing away Helen, the wife

of Menelaus, King of Mycenaean Sparta, but by laying claim to all the undersea energy sources of which quite a lot have been discovered. A Turkish exploratory vessel, the *Oruc Reis*, had been sailing provocatively through sea areas claimed by Greece while the two countries shook sabres loudly at each other before eventually it returned to port.

Since then, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu has met with his Greek counterpart Nikos Dendias. Greece and Cyprus wanted the EU to impose sanctions on Turkey, but EU foreign ministers merely condemned the Turkish action and asked for vessels to return to port, an attitude decried by Erdoğan as "caving in to Greek and Cypriot blackmail". When the issue was raised at the European Parliament, MEPs called on Turkey to "immediately end any further illegal exploration and drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, to refrain from violating Greek airspace and Greek and Cypriot territorial waters" and to stop what they called "nationalistic warmongering rhetoric." Of course, the only threat the EU can make is the possible reimposition of sanctions on Turkey. "Pursuing dialogue in good faith and abstaining from unilateral actions which run counter to the EU interests and violate international law and the sovereign rights of EU member states is an absolute requirement in this regard," said a statement issued after the last meeting of the Council. "All differences must be resolved through peaceful dialogue and in accordance with international law."

One might hopefully imagine that close relations and trade could forestall conflict, but the area has a very well-documented history of conflict. Troy had been known to the Achaian Greeks since at least the middle of the second millennium BC; probably longer. This can be seen from the spread of Achaian and Mycenaean pottery along the coast of Asia Minor. Troy was one of the cities which showed the strongest Greek influence. There is not much well-defined proof: the Greeks started writing later, copying a syllabic system from Knossos on Crete after conquering it, while Troy's allies, the Hittites, adopted cuneiform script rather earlier. It's worth remembering that the area seems to have packed to the rafters with minor kingdoms ruled by minor kings who regularly invaded each other's land and stole craftspeople, servants and, yes, women. In any case, the elopement of Helen with the Trojan prince Paris cannot have been a totally novel act, just a very annoying one for Menelaus.

The use of common names for places, wrote Joachim Latacz in his 2001 book *'Troia und Homer'* also suggest strong



links between the warring sides. “They reveal a natural familiarity on the part of the Mycenaean Greeks with the coastal region of Anatolia, the offshore islands and Troy,” he points out. “The frequent incidence specifically of women from these areas, entered as foreign workers, leads to further deductions: evidently there were Mycenaean raids on Anatolia and the offshore islands.” Hittite sources reveal that the capture of craftspeople and women was not unknown, which begs the question: apart from the fact that she was married to the King of Sparta at the time, what was so special about Helen that it led to 1,186 ships crossing the Aegean to wage war on Troy? According to Homer, she was rather special and the war was, he seems to think, understandable: “It is no cause for anger that the Trojans and the well-greaved Achaeans have suffered for so long over such a woman: she is wondrously like the immortal goddesses to look upon,” he wrote (allegedly) in the Iliad. Of course, we know only too well what is so special about vast gas reserves. Turkey’s pursuit of them, regardless of whether or not it leads to conflict with its neighbours, is not untypical of Erdoğan’s apparently burgeoning self-confidence. Sadly, there is no Homer (if there ever was one in reality) to record any resulting war. Achilles’ fondness for his friend Patroclus was seen as pure and laudable by Homer but I think it would get short shrift from Erdoğan.

“Politicians need to be able to voice critical opinions against the government and those in power,” said Thomas Hammaberg, “and journalists the same. And if that is not possible, of course, there are democratic



Turkish research vessel Oruç Reis

problems.” But Erdoğan cannot take criticism and seeks to silence it at every turn. “Maybe some people might say we’re naïve,” Hammaberg admits, “but we’re still trying to have a constructive dialogue with the authorities. But we will, of course, be in touch with the opposition.”

BACKWARDS MARCH

Certainly, Turkey’s actions are not likely to satisfy the Council of Europe or its many other critics. The arrests of lawyers for defending those accused and the criminalisation of the act of defending someone is a long, long way from the rule of law as normally defined. The Venice Commission has demanded the repeal of the 2020 amendments to the Attorneyship Law of 1969 while alternative solutions are sought. The report deplores violations of freedom of expression and the media

and it’s deeply concerned by reports of torture and of the problems facing human rights defenders, academics, journalists and lawyers, all of whom have seen their human rights infringed.

In Autumn 2017, Turkish schools stopped teaching evolution, resorting to the more religious based alternative, creationism. Attaturk would have been furious and some richer Turks are sending their children abroad to study, or at least are backing up the school education with home teaching. According to the NPR news website, many parents and grandparents are concerned by this step back into the past. “I’m worried, but I hope it changes by the time my grandchildren are in high school,” Emel Ishakoglu, a retired chemical engineer, told the website while playing with her grandchildren, ages 5 and 2. “Otherwise our kids will be left behind compared to other countries when it comes to science education.” An attempt to oblige schools in some parts of the United States to teach creationism instead of evolution, or at least alongside it, was thwarted by the Supreme Court. The obligation to teach evolution has been challenged several times in the United States, sometimes in favour of ‘intelligent design’, but the Court has always ruled against it on the grounds that it is based on religion, not science, which would violate the Establishment Clause of the US Constitution. In the US, controversial issues are taken to a higher authority for judgement. In Turkey, it seems, Erdoğan is the ultimate higher authority. Over-confidence and sailing ships across the Aegean Sea may yet cause him problems. Maybe he should be extra-wary if he spots any wooden horses.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Robin Crow

20 ARRESTS IN QQAAZZ MULTI-MILLION MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

An unprecedented international law enforcement operation involving 16 countries has resulted in the arrest of 20 individuals suspected of belonging to the QQAAZZ criminal network which attempted to launder tens of millions of euros on behalf of the world's foremost cybercriminals.

Some 40 house searches were carried out in Latvia, Bulgaria, the United Kingdom, Spain and Italy, with criminal proceedings initiated against those arrested by the United States, Portugal, the United Kingdom and Spain. The largest number of searches in the case were carried out in Latvia in operations led by the Latvian State Police (Latvijas Valsts Policija). Bitcoin mining equipment was also seized in Bulgaria.

This international sweep follows a complex investigation led by the Portuguese Judicial Police (Policia Judiciária) together with the United States Attorney Office for the Western District of Pennsylvania and the FBI's Pittsburgh Field Office, alongside the Spanish National Police (Policia Nacional) and the regional Catalan police (Mossos D'esquadra) and law enforcement authorities from the United Kingdom, Latvia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Poland, Czech Republic, Australia, Sweden, Austria and Belgium with coordination efforts led by Europol.

HOW THE QQAAZZ NETWORK CLEANED DIRTY MONEY

Criminal indictments returned by federal grand juries in Pittsburgh, United States, set forth allegations of how this criminal network operated. It is estimated that

the QQAAZZ network laundered, or attempted to launder, tens of millions of euros in stolen funds since 2016.

Comprised of several layers of members mainly from Latvia, Georgia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Belgium, the QQAAZZ network opened and maintained hundreds of corporate and personal bank accounts at financial institutions throughout the world to receive money from cybercriminals who stole it from accounts of victims. The funds were then transferred to other QQAAZZ-controlled bank accounts and sometimes converted to cryptocurrency using 'tumbling' services designed to hide the original source of the funds. After taking a fee of up to 50-percent, QQAAZZ returned the balance of the stolen funds to their cybercriminal clientele.

The QQAAZZ members secured these bank accounts by using both legitimate and fraudulent Polish and Bulgarian identification documents to create and register dozens of shell companies which conducted no legitimate business activity. Using these registration documents, the QQAAZZ members then opened corporate bank accounts in the names of the shell companies at numerous financial institutions within each country, thereby generating hundreds of QQAAZZ-controlled bank accounts available to receive stolen funds from cyber thieves.

QQAAZZ advertised its services as a "global, complicit bank drops service" on Russian-speaking online cybercriminal forums where cybercriminals gather to offer or seek specialised skills or services needed to engage in a variety of cybercriminal activities. The criminal gangs behind some of the world's most harmful malware families (e.g.: Dridex, Trickbot, GozNym, etc.) feature among those having benefited from the services provided by QQAAZZ.

INTERNATIONAL POLICE COOPERATION

International police cooperation coordinated by Europol was central in bringing the perpetrators to justice who were all located in different geographical locations around the world. Europol's European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) hosted operational meetings, provided digital forensic support and facilitated the information exchange in the framework of the Joint Cybercrime Action Taskforce (J-CAT) hosted at Europol's headquarters in The Hague. Europol specialists were also deployed to Latvia and the United Kingdom to support the local authorities

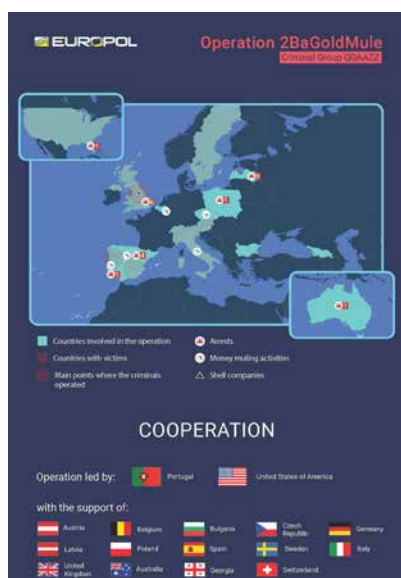
during the action days. The National Member for Portugal at Eurojust took part in a number of operational meetings.

Edvardas Šileris, Head of Europol's European Cybercrime Centre, said: "Cybercriminals are constantly exploring new possibilities to abuse technology and financial frameworks to victimise millions of users in a moment from anywhere in the world. Today's operation shows how through a proper law enforcement international coordination we can turn the table on these criminals and bring them to justice."

Carlos Cabreiro, Director of the National Unit for Fighting Cybercrime and Technological Crime of the Policia Judiciária, said: "Operation 2BaGoldMule has been a highly significant operation involving international law enforcement and prosecutors to tackle top-level cybercriminals who have laundered millions of euros for the world's foremost criminals. This operation has shown that through this cooperation we can collectively tackle the global nature of cybercrime. This is the only way forward."

Scott W. Brady, United States Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania, said: "Cybercrime victimizes individuals and companies all over the world, so our work to identify and disrupt cybercriminals requires global collaboration. For the past several years, law enforcement from 16 countries has been conducting coordinated investigations of this criminal gang, and now parallel prosecutions will commence in the U.S., Portugal, United Kingdom and Spain. As this case demonstrates, we will be relentless in our pursuit of cybercriminals regardless of where they reside."

Michael Christman, FBI Pittsburgh Special Agent in Charge, said: "This was an extensive investigation that had implications around the world. Partnerships are essential, as no one agency can combat cybercrime alone. This case highlights the FBI's strategy to target and dismantle the most significant cybercriminal enterprises through a global task force approach. I can assure everyone that the FBI and our partners will continue to work tirelessly to combat these cyber threats."



NEWS IN BRIEF



MONACO'S NEW LUXURY MARINA THE CALA DEL FORTE WATERFRONT IS OFFICIALLY OPEN

On Thursday 15th October at 12.00pm, the iconic sailing yacht Tuiga, flagship of the Yacht Club de Monaco, arrived at Cala del Forte - Ventimiglia from Monaco, the very first to dock at the brand new Molo d'Onore berth. Tuiga was joined soon after by a mighty 50m superyacht that docked nearby only an hour and a half later, followed by three more yachts throughout the afternoon. As of now, the Cala del Forte waterfront is open. The entry of Tuiga into Cala del Forte marks a historic and symbolic moment in view of the marina's upcoming official inauguration, scheduled to take place between June and July 2021, once the on-land construction work is completed. Early bookings will see over 20 yachts docked at Cala del Forte this month, a number that will more than double with 50 yachts overall scheduled to arrive at their reserved berths by the end of the year. In the meantime, the on-land services are starting to take shape as they approach their planned completion date in Spring 2021.

Cala del Forte is currently accepting reservations for berths, available with Daily, Monthly and Seasonal rates. This exquisite, new state-of-the-art marina located in Ventimiglia is only 15 to 20 minutes from the Principality of Monaco (7,9 nautical miles).

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

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

EQUINOR AND PARTNERS PROGRESS PLAN FOR ZERO CARBON INDUSTRIAL CLUSTER IN THE UK

Equinor, together with eleven other companies and organisations, has submitted a joint proposal to create a low carbon cluster in the Humber, the UK's largest and most carbon-intensive industrial region.



Al Cook (left), Equinor executive vice president and UK country manager, and Grete Tveit, Equinor senior vice president for low carbon solutions

The application by the Zero Carbon Humber (ZCH) Partnership is a first step to creating the world's first net zero industrial cluster by 2040 and will support clean growth in the north-east of England. The bid, announced today, for Phase Two funding from the UK Government's Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, builds on a successful application for Phase One funding which was announced in April.

The ZCH Partnership includes Equinor, Associated British Ports, British Steel, Centrica Storage Ltd, Drax Group, Mitsubishi, National Grid Ventures, px Group, SSE Thermal, Saltend Cogeneration Company Limited, Uniper, and the University of Sheffield's Advanced Manufacturing Centre (AMRC).

"We are proud to be a leader of Zero Carbon Humber, partnering with a broad group of forward-looking companies. This proposal can bring tremendous benefits to the Humber region, protecting industries, creating jobs, promoting economic growth and reducing emissions. Our bid demonstrates the kind of ambitious action that is needed to for the UK to achieve its net zero carbon target by 2050," says Al Cook, Equinor executive vice president and UK country manager.

The bid centres around two elements, the first being the Equinor-led H2H Saltend (Hydrogen to Humber Saltend) hydrogen project at Saltend Chemicals Park near the city of Hull. H2H Saltend will be largest plant of its kind in the world to convert natural gas

to hydrogen, combining a 600 megawatt autothermal reformer with carbon capture. From first production H2H Saltend will reduce industrial emissions by nearly 900,000 tonnes per year.

The second element is the hydrogen and carbon dioxide (CO₂) pipeline network developed by National Grid Ventures that aims to link H2H Saltend to other industrial sites in the Humber region, enabling them in turn to fuel switch to hydrogen or capture their emissions. These sites include Drax Power station, SSE Thermal's Keadby site, Uniper's Killingholme site and British Steel at Scunthorpe.

"We believe in the necessity of hydrogen and carbon capture to clean up heavy industry which is required to reach net zero targets. The technologies are proven and it's now a question of putting them together. We and our partners have made great progress in our plans to decarbonise the Humber, through working with and learning from each other and also in engaging with national and local stakeholders. We are convinced that by continuing to work together we can make this happen," says Grete Tveit, Equinor senior vice president for low carbon solutions.

CO₂ emissions from H2H Saltend and the other Humber sites will be transported by pipeline to Easington on the Yorkshire coast and then offshore to permanent storage under the Southern North Sea on the UK continental shelf. A consortium of world-class energy companies including Equinor is working to develop the offshore transport and storage infrastructure, and this network will be shared with the Teesside industrial cluster, where Equinor is also a partner in the Net Zero Teesside decarbonisation project.

The total size of the ZCH proposal is GBP 75 million, comprising private and public funding. The funds will be used to progress work towards a final investment decision during 2023 with H2H Saltend and the associated infrastructure potentially coming online in 2026.

352 STOLEN VEHICLES SEIZED IN JAD MOBILE 3 OPERATION SPANNING ACROSS 22 COUNTRIES

A total of 352 stolen motor vehicles have been seized on their way to their final destination as a result of the Joint Action Day (JAD) 'Mobile 3' supported by Europol. A further 1 077 stolen vehicles parts have been confiscated, and dozens of forged or falsified vehicles documents seized.

Some 44 548 checks were carried out against various databases during this two-week long operation (12-23 October 2020) carried out in the framework of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT). Led by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency FRONTEX, this operation focused on checks on border crossing points and inland activities in 17 EU countries and 5 countries in the Balkan region.

In close cooperation with private industry, including the car industry, boats/vessels manufacturers, rental and leasing companies as well as the use of Europol databases, the border control officers at the external EU border prevented many vehicles and boats from being smuggled overseas. As an example the Greek Police seized 15 vehicles from rental companies which criminals attempted to smuggle out from the EU.

Activities focused on checks of vehicles and boats resulted also in apprehension of 2 985 illegal migrants on the way to the EU via the land and sea routes. 17 facilitators of migrant smuggling have been located and arrested. The main destination countries of the migrants were Germany and Italy. The facilitators transported the migrants on land routes in trailers, but as well on small boats via the Adriatic Sea.

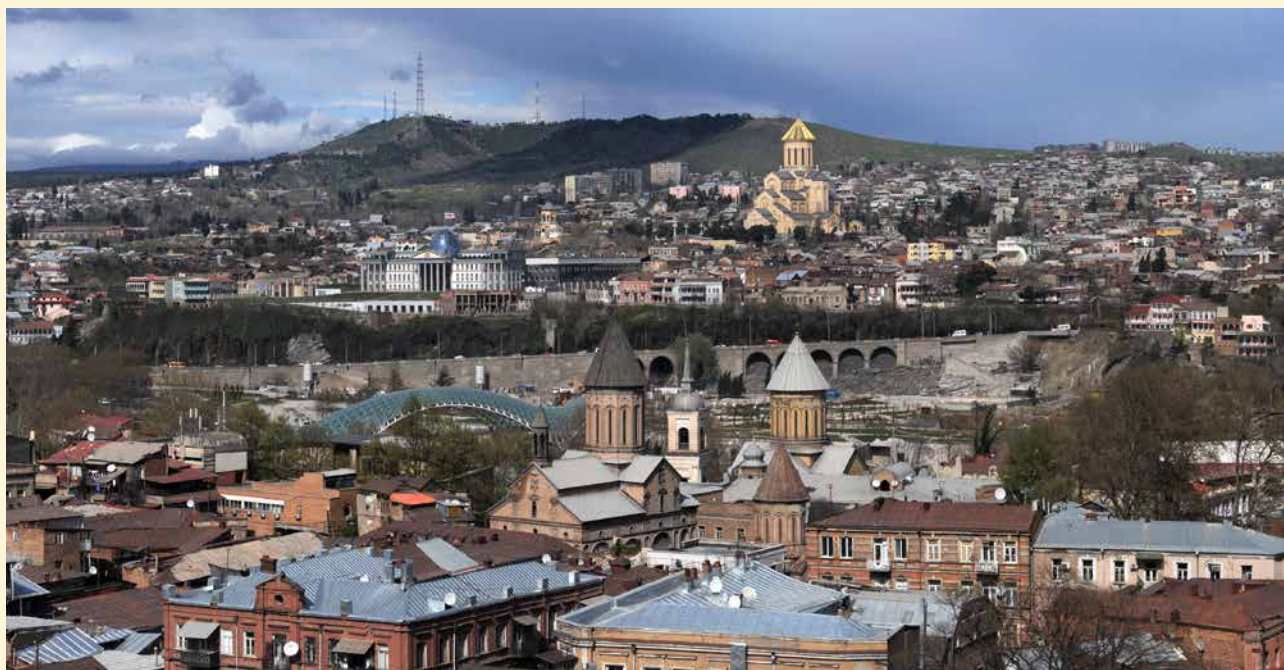


FRONTEX set up a Coordination Centre at its headquarters in Warsaw, where officers from participating countries exchanged operational and intelligence information efficiently. Europol supported remotely by crosschecking in real time the information collected in the field against its databases.

The following countries and parties were involved in the operation MOBILE 3 and linked operations in the same time period:

- Albania, Austria, Bosnia Hercegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo*, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain
- International organisations and agencies: FRONTEX, Europol, INTERPOL.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



© Wikimedia

Tbilisi, Georgia

ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING: GEORGIA SHOULD INCREASE THE USE OF FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE

The Council of Europe's anti-money laundering body MONEYVAL has urged the Georgian authorities to strengthen the practical application of their measures to combat money laundering and financing of terrorism. In a new report it calls for making more efforts to use financial intelligence to detect and investigate money laundering, as well as for strengthening the supervision and regulation focusing on the high-risk non-financial sectors, especially casinos. The report assesses the effectiveness of Georgia's system for countering money laundering and financing of terrorism system and its level of compliance with Recommendations issued in 2012 by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

The report acknowledges that Georgia displays a fair understanding of many of its money laundering and terrorism financing risks. Shortcomings exist regarding identification, in-depth analysis and understanding of some threats, vulnerabilities and risks. Notably, the understanding of risks needs to be developed further in the following areas: use of cash in the economy; the real estate sector; trade-based money laundering and terrorism financing (including in free industrial zones of Georgia); the activities of legal persons; and the use of non-profit organisations (NPOs).

SIEMENS HEALTHINEERS LAUNCHES RAPID ANTIGEN TEST FOR THE DETECTION OF SARS-COV-2

- The CLINITEST Rapid COVID-19 Antigen Test helps identify infected individuals in 15 minutes so they can isolate sooner and avoid spreading COVID-19
- Easy-to-use test, which doesn't require specialized laboratory personnel or instruments, offers flexibility to test in locations that benefit from immediate results

- Test to be launched in CE mark countries; plans to submit to FDA for Emergency Use Authorization

As society continues to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a critical public health need to get ahead of the spread with a fast and simple testing for all. To address this need Siemens Healthineers is launching a rapid and easy-to-use antigen test for the detection of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The CLINITEST Rapid COVID-19 Antigen Test1 is a point-of-care cassette test that does not require laboratory instruments or specialized lab personnel to administer, and it delivers results in 15 minutes.

The CE marked test which has been developed and tested by a Siemens Healthineers partner demonstrated 96.72 % sensitivity and 99.22 % specificity based on a clinical study of 317 subjects. The study was performed using operators with varied credentials at six diverse sites including a hospital, a community clinic, a college campus, and an oncology unit. Siemens Healthineers intends to meet such testing demand as the pandemic evolves. There are plans to submit the test for FDA Emergency Use Authorization.



“There is a great public need for reliable tests that can quickly identify contagious individuals and help to minimize the spread of COVID-19, especially in high-traffic areas and where people commonly congregate,” said Christoph Pedain, PhD, Head of Point of Care Diagnostics at Siemens Healthineers. “With quality at the forefront of decision makers’ criteria to determine test reliability, it was critical the clinical study for this test assesses variable clinical conditions that can be expected when implementing a rapid antigen test. This rapid antigen test makes testing available to more people across a wider variety of settings—particularly in locations that need to test people quickly such as airports or that have limited access to laboratory resources such as schools.”

The CLINITEST Rapid COVID-19 Antigen Test is easy to administer for healthcare professionals and delivers results quickly using the nasopharyngeal swab method. Once a sample is collected, the swab is inserted into a tube with special liquid to extract the target molecule. This liquid is then dispensed onto a test cassette and, in 15 minutes, a positive or negative result is clearly indicated.

In addition to the CLINITEST Rapid COVID-19 Antigen Test, Siemens Healthineers offers an extensive diagnostics portfolio to aid in the prognosis, treatment and follow up of COVID-19 patients. This test adds to the 15 critical assays Siemens Healthineers offers to detect severe symptoms and better manage critical COVID-19 patients. The company’s broad and differentiated menu includes antibody and molecular SARS-CoV-2 tests, and hematology, coagulation, cardiac, respiratory, inflammation and infectious disease panels. Blood gas and imaging solutions from Siemens Healthineers deliver actionable results that aid clinicians in caring for COVID-19 patients.



POLAND: POOR LEGAL AND MEDICAL ACCESS FOR PEOPLE IN POLICE CUSTODY AMONG CONCERNS RAISED IN ANTI-TORTURE COMMITTEE REPORT

In its on police detention facilities, the Council of Europe’s European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) stresses that Poland has failed to implement previous recommendations for proper legal and medical access, and that it needs to remedy excessive use of force at the time of apprehension or immediately after apprehension, among other concerns. The CPT reports an “absolute absence” of progress regarding “fundamental safeguards against ill-treatment” as its “deepest concern” following a visit to Poland of its delegation last year, which was the source of its new report. The “ad hoc visit” to Poland included meetings with people in custody in police establishments in Gdańsk, Kraków, Sopot and Warsaw, as well as with recently arrived remand prisoners at Gdańsk, Kraków and Warsaw-Służewiec Remand Prisons.

Adopted earlier this year and sent to the Polish authorities in March, the report repeats previous recommendations that Poland develop – “without further delay and in co-operation with the Polish Bar Council” – a fully-fledged and properly funded system of legal aid for persons in police custody who are not in a position to pay for a lawyer, to be applicable from the very outset of police custody. The delegation concludes that legal access remains “highly exceptional, even for juveniles” and that in practice, such access was only made available to the few apprehended persons who were wealthy enough to have their own lawyer and lucky enough to have their lawyer’s name and telephone number with them at the moment of apprehension.

Although those in need are provided medical care (i.e. either the police called an ambulance or took the detained person to a hospital emergency ward), they lack the fundamental right to confidentiality of medical examinations. “Any injuries observed on persons brought to police detention facilities continued to be poorly recorded (if at all) and non-medical police staff had unrestricted access to medical documentation concerning persons in police custody”, according to the report.

The CPT report and the response of the Polish authorities (<https://rm.coe.int/1680a024c7>) have been made public at the request of the Polish Government.

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Olkiluoto 3

THE NUCLEAR OPTION

Still waiting for Finland's long-delayed new reactor

There is an old saying, “a watched pot never boils”. Where nuclear power generation is concerned, it seems that a watched power plant never gets finished and goes on-line, either. Take, for instance, the Olkiluoto-3 reactor on Finland’s southwest coast. It’s not as if Finland is inexperienced with such technology. Olkiluoto-3 will be the country’s fifth nuclear reactor. This particular atomic clock seems to be running slow: it is already 12 years behind schedule, and it has now been put back again. It’s probably unfair to make comparisons with projects developed outside of a time of pandemic, but even so the delays began long before the coronavirus turned up. As recently as December 2019, the plant’s owner, Teollisuuden Voima (TVO), was predicting that the nuclear fuel would be loaded during the summer of 2020 with a view to a grid connection in November 2020, with the regular production of electricity starting before that, in March 2020. Guess what? That will not be happening, any more than the previous prediction that it would be producing power by September 2020. The experience – by no means the first where nuclear power is concerned – has not put off the believers in such technology, according to the news website Taz: there is talk of what are known as ‘small modular reactors’ (SMR) being constructed in Finland, in addition to what’s there already. However, Paul Dorfman

of the UK UCL Energy Institute and co-author of a study on SMRs for the Nuclear Consulting Group, Taz claims, has estimated that small reactors would provide increasingly expensive energy because of the relative costs of SMRs in terms of materials and personnel. The report suggests that creating a supply chain to substitute for the economies of scale that obtain with large reactors would make the risk for investors even greater.

I must admit that the only nuclear plant I have ever been inside was the Ignalina

Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) in Lithuania. It was a graphite-moderated light water-cooled reactor, using two Soviet-designed RBMK 1500 reactors (reaktor bolshoy moshchnosti kanalny, high-power channel reactor, an unusual Soviet design) and it was much needed to generate affordable electricity in that north western part of what was then the Soviet Union. However, doubts arose over the reactor type following the massive accident at Chernobyl in Pripjat, Ukraine, in 1986, which had involved a similar unit. There, after a blaze lasting ten days, when air finally reached



© nrf

Nuclear power plant in Ignalina, Lithuania

the reactor core, even the graphite blocks intended to damp down the nuclear reaction caught fire. The incident was a catastrophe for some 150,000 square kilometres of territory. For the workers at the plant, a typical radiation dose was 6,000 milliSieverts (mSv), enough to kill most people in just a few weeks. A dose of 1,000 mSv would be enough to cause radiation sickness, including nausea and a lower white blood cell count but probably would not be fatal, at least not straight away. Even now, Pripjat itself remains an abandoned ghost town, toys left where children dropped them in the evacuation (which came too late), shops empty and now reclaimed by nature.

Doubts about the safety of RBMK 1500 reactors had been raised on several occasions by western experts, such as the Western European Nuclear Regulators Association. They said that the main risk of accident was associated with generic design flaws of the reactors themselves and the absence of a confinement system such as a concrete and steel dome (Chernobyl lacked one, too).



Chernobyl

This deficiency could not technically be eliminated, they argued, nor could the plant be brought to a safety level comparable to that of western European reactors. During my visit to Ignalina, I was surprised to see engineers checking for overheating in the fuel rods by placing their hands on top of them and occasionally whisking them off again quite quickly if they were too hot. At that point, I assume, the control rods would be pushed further in to slow the reaction. It seemed a somewhat informal way of keeping tabs on the plant but I saw no thermometers being used on that occasion, although I'm sure the control room was checking temperatures in a more scientific way. It all seemed rather random. Ignalina was important to Lithuania: it produced 60% of the electricity the country needed and the power it produced was sold across the border in neighbouring countries. It was a vital source of income for the economy, especially as the prices of fossil fuel from Russia were soaring. Nuclear energy from Ignalina cost very little more than half as much as energy from coal. The newly independent Lithuania wanted to be self-sufficient in energy, no longer dependent

on Moscow's good will. However, after Chernobyl, it was decided that the plant was too dangerous, and its closure became a condition of Lithuania joining the European Union and NATO. The Ignalina nuclear power plant was decommissioned in 2009.

Olkiluoto-3 will be a European Pressurized Water Reactor, the commonest type across the world, with a power output of a massive 1,600 megawatts electric (MWe). However, when it may start producing electricity is anyone's guess. In May 2020, Finland's safety watchdog, STUK, reported a leaking valve in one of the cooling process components. "A leak was observed in the mechanical control valve of one of the pressuriser safety valves," the country's nuclear safety body said in a statement. "This is very serious," STUK's inspection chief, Iiro Paajanen told Reuters. The leak, he said, was in part of the reactor's primary circuit, but it may not cause a further delay, according to the French company Areva, which, together with Siemens of Germany, is building the plant. Olkiluoto-3 will need final approval from STUK before it can load fuel and start to produce electricity.

The delay has caused the rating agency Fitch to downgrade Teollisuuden Voima, the operating company, from stable to negative, issuing the Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at BBB-. Standard and Poor has moved its long term credit rating from BB+ to BB; outlook negative. There has been, of course, a series of delays caused by incidents or findings, but much of the delay is down to the very slow pace of construction. Obviously, you can't rush the construction of a nuclear plant, in much the same way as you cannot rush the business of getting a tiger to accept your human presence without it eating you. Olkiluoto-3 has already taken more than 15 years, however. If the tiger training was done at the same rate that Olkiluoto-3 is being constructed, the tiger would probably have died of old age, or at least lost most of its teeth, before you entered its compound. And Olkiluoto-3 has cost a minimum of €8.5-billion, making it the second most costly building in human history. Only a hotel complex in Mecca cost more. Teollisuuden Voima told Reuters that the nuclear fuel would be loaded in January 2020 and that it would be generating electricity by July. It's starting to look less like a frisky tiger and more like a white elephant. A similar reactor for the French utility company EDF at Flamanville in France is also years behind schedule and billions of euros over budget. It doesn't have to be like that: China's first EPR reactor started to produce electricity in December 2018 and a second one joined it a year later.

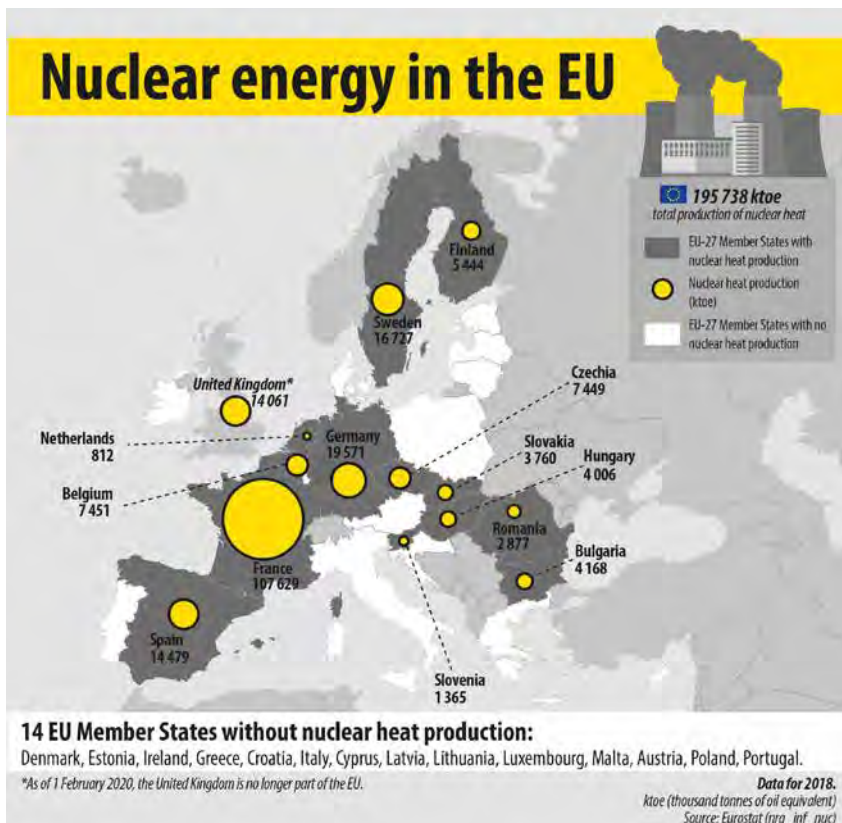
NOT GOING WITH A BANG

Mind you, Olkiluoto-3 is supposed to be able to produce 10% more electricity than any other nuclear plant in Europe, and it's reported to be 4% more efficient than the two existing reactors at the site. It is designed to provide Finland with enough electricity for a

generation, with a lifespan of 60 years. There should be no fears of another Chernobyl, either: its safety features are the most advanced ever seen, with its core buildings protected against earthquakes and its dome able to stop any radioactive leak with three layers of protection. It is claimed that the protective dome would even withstand a direct hit by a crashing aeroplane. However, Areva and Siemens have been hit by a range of safety concerns, building blunders, spiralling costs and long delays. A number of key components failed to meet safety standards and the consortium came in for criticism for choosing cheap and inexperienced subcontractors. Its goal, of helping Finland to meet its Kyoto environmental commitments, has been utterly missed. Of course, Finland has a somewhat ambivalent relationship with nuclear issues anyway. The country took no part in the negotiations that led to Europe's nuclear non-proliferation treaty, even if the Finnish public support it. An opinion survey suggested that 84% of Finns would support signing up to the Treaty. Three of the parties in the country's coalition government would also support it, and the view of the Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee that the Treaty could, incidentally, harm the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was universally rejected. Nuclear weapons, however, are not the same thing as nuclear energy, even if a by-product of the latter has been historically useful in building the former.

According to the helpful website Student Energy, "Today, nuclear power plants account for 11% of global electricity generation with about 80% of that installed capacity being in OECD countries. All of this capacity is nuclear fission, of course; we have yet to crack the secrets of nuclear fusion. Nuclear energy, through fission, can release 1 million times more energy per atom than fossil fuels. It can also be integrated into electricity grids, which currently utilize fossil fuel-powered power generation, with few changes to existing infrastructure." Nuclear fission does not involve greenhouse gas emissions, so it's often seen as 'green energy'. But is it? Student Energy again casts doubt on the claims: "Nuclear fission has a wide variety of environmental and health issues associated with electricity generation. The largest concern is the generation of radioactive wastes such as uranium mill tailings, spent (used) reactor fuel, and other radioactive wastes. Some of these materials can remain radioactive and hazardous to both human health and the environment for thousands of years. Several large nuclear meltdowns in history released radioactive waste that had lasting negative impacts on the environment and surrounding communities. This has made nuclear fission technologies controversial." You can say that again.

A former Scottish MEP, Struan Stevenson, told me once how he had been in Kazakhstan – he was a regular visitor – and was with a group of locals on a fact-finding trip about how the Soviet Union tested its hydrogen



bombs there. He saw an odd-looking hill and ran up it, despite warnings from the rest of the party, finding when he got to the top an enormous hole in the ground. His guides urged him to get away quickly: it was the site of a Soviet nuclear weapon test and the radioactivity there was extremely high. Back home in Scotland, he went to see his doctor and was then checked over at a hospital. So high had been his radiation dose during that brief exposure that he was warned not to have an X-ray for at least two years, and only then after another examination for tissue damage. Nuclear pollution tends to hang around. Radioactive decay of fission products and elements formed in a reactor yield heat even after fission has ceased.

Basically, a nuclear reactor is there to generate heat, producing steam that drives a simple

turbine, much like the waterwheels of old. The only difference from a coal or gas-powered power station is the source of heat, in this case nuclear chain reactions that produce the required heat through fission, a physical process. How it works is explained by the United States Office of Nuclear Energy like this: "Small ceramic pellets (of uranium-235) are stacked together into sealed metal tubes called fuel rods. Typically, more than 200 of these rods are bundled together to form a fuel assembly. A reactor core is typically made up of a couple hundred of such assemblies, depending on power level. Inside the reactor vessel, the fuel rods are immersed in water which acts as both a coolant and moderator. The moderator helps slow down the neutrons produced by fission to sustain the chain reaction." The natural radioactive decay of uranium, caused by the weak nuclear force, is a major source of the Earth's internal heat, causing vulcanism and plate tectonics. Basically, the principle of nuclear power generation is not so far removed from a nuclear weapon and relies on what must be the best-known equation in history: $E = MC^2$. In other words, mass and energy are related in a proportion equal to the speed of light squared, although most people who can quote the equation – from Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity, not his later and more important General Theory – haven't a clue what it means, and even if they do, couldn't easily explain it. Heavy elements, such as uranium, hold excess energy that can be released in huge amounts when they are broken up into smaller pieces. To get atoms to split, they are bombarded with slow-moving neutron particles which can be absorbed (fast-moving ones bounce off). The extra neutrons make the nucleus unstable,

causing it to break up, releasing more neutrons which then wander off to repeat the process with other uranium nuclei, thus creating a chain reaction that is self-sustaining. To make sure this doesn't lead to a huge explosion, a 'moderator' – usually water but it can also be graphite or even 'heavy water' (a form of water that contains only deuterium rather than the common hydrogen-1 isotope) – is used to filter the number of neutrons and stop the reaction from going 'bang'. It reduces the speed of fast neutrons without capturing them, leaving them as thermal neutrons with only very little (thermal) kinetic energy. In terms of energy generation, it's very efficient: a single kilogram of uranium fuel can provide as much energy as more than 1,500 tonnes of coal. If you think humankind have created a monster, nature got there first. According to Paul Parsons and Gail Dixon, in their fascinating book 'The Periodic Table', "there is evidence that, 1.7-billion years ago, rich natural uranium deposits beneath the ground at Oklo in Gabon, Africa, spontaneously ignited a nuclear chain reaction, moderated by natural running water." Isn't nature wonderful?

TOMORROW AND TOMORROW AND TOMORROW

It was Shakespeare's Macbeth who said "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow Creeps in this petty pace from day to day To the last syllable of recorded time" Those anticipating the fuelling and launch of Finland's 1.6 GW Olkiluoto-3 nuclear power plant must be feeling much the same as the Thane of Cawdor (and Glamis). Electricity generation is now scheduled to begin in February 2022, 11 months behind the most recent schedule, according to project owner Teollisuuden Voima Oyj, or TVO. Few expect that timetable to survive further difficulties. Apart from being more than 12 years behind schedule, it is also three times over its original €3.2-billion budget. The unit was originally scheduled to begin commercial operations in May 2009. We must hope the rest of that Macbeth quote doesn't come to fruition: "And all our yesterdays have lighted fools The way to dusty death." In fact the latest estimate suggests fuel should begin loading in March, 2021, eleven months before power generation begins. Hopefully. "Of approximately 3,000 commissioning tests, only a few dozen remain," TVO's project director for the plant, Jouni Silvennoinen, told the S&P Global website. World Nuclear News (WNN) seems less convinced about the start date. "TVO also noted that the new management of Areva actively continues working on a plan, with support of all parties, to secure funding until the end of the OL3 project," it states on its website. "TVO has participated in the discussion of the Areva-Siemens consortium's measures and has a positive attitude towards their progress." The whole plant supplier consortium, Areva GmbH, Areva NP SAS and Siemens AG, is tied to a fixed-price turnkey contract.



A 6,500-tonne final waste repository, the world's first permanent underground nuclear waste storage facility, on Olkiluoto island, Finland

“They have joint liability for the contractual obligations until the end of the guarantee period of the unit. The consortium began construction of Olkiluoto-3 in 2005. Completion of the reactor was originally scheduled for 2009, but the project has had various delays and setbacks,” says WNN. In common with every other project around the world at present, the construction, modification and eventual commissioning of the plant are being delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. “Works at Olkiluoto 3 site have not completely proceeded as planned,” TVO told WNN, adding a large number of measures had been taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. “The coronavirus pandemic may have significantly added uncertainty to the progress of the project,” it said, as if it had not enough uncertainty of its own. It’s not as if EPR reactors are untried. “In December 2018, unit 1 of the Taishan plant in China’s Guangdong province became the first EPR to enter commercial operation,” reports WNN. “Taishan 2 began commercial operation in September 2019. The loading of fuel into the Flamanville EPR in France, construction of which began in December 2007, is now scheduled for the end of 2022. Two EPR units are also under construction at the Hinkley Point C project in Somerset, UK.” In the UK case, one imagines that nobody is expecting early completion ahead of schedule?

As for TVO, it’s not all been negative, as the ‘Power’ website reported, despite recent gloom over further problems and delays. “TVO announced some good news in May (2020), however. It said vibration detected in the cooling circuit’s pressurizer surge line during hot functional testing in the first half of 2018 would be eliminated using ‘liquid absorbers’. The company reported that the bitumen material used in the absorbers had been approved by the Finnish Radiation and Nuclear Authority (STUK).”

The reactor being built at Flamanville in France, where work began in December 2007, is also delayed, of course. It was originally expected to start commercial operation in 2013, but its latest holdups concern ‘weld quality deviations’. In December, 2018, the owners, Electricité de France (EdF) submitted

to the Autorité de Sûreté Nucléaire (ASN) a technical file presenting the procedures for repairing and upgrading the main secondary circuit welds, which had showed deficiencies with respect to break preclusion requirements, as reported in ‘Power’. The company also submitted the specific justification method for the eight welds located in the reactor containment building structure. ‘Power’ also reported on proposed solutions to the Flamanville problems. “Earlier this month, EDF reportedly asked ASN about the possibility of repairing the welds in 2024, after the unit was commissioned. While ASN said that would be technically feasible, it would pose a number of problems, notably with regard to demonstrating the safety of the reactor during the interim period. In a statement, EDF said it ‘is currently analysing the impact of this decision on the Flamanville EPR schedule and cost, and, in the upcoming weeks, it will give a detailed update on the next steps in the project.’”

Meanwhile, a French-owned nuclear operating company, Framatome, which is owned by EdF, has signed a series of service contracts with the Finnish utility company, TVO, for the long-term operation of Olkiluoto-3. “These contracts cover nuclear plant outage and maintenance scopes, including engineering, I&C (information and communication) and non-destructive testing services over an extended period of time,” according to the website Power Engineering. “These contracts mark an important step as we work with TVO to prepare for the operation of the EPR at Olkiluoto 3,” said Bernard Fontana, CEO of Framatome.

“This strengthens the partnerships among our teams as we work together to provide innovative and efficient technologies and services for the safe, reliable and low-carbon operations of Olkiluoto-3.” But of course, it’s the continuing series of delays that are making headlines.

“TVO said issues that have caused delays in the project schedule are: slowly progressing system testing; technical problems that have been identified in tests; and the increase in the amount of maintenance work caused by



Bernard Fontana, CEO of Framatome

project delay,” reports WNN. “The lack of necessary spare parts has also caused delays. However, it added: ‘Technical problems that have emerged on the plant unit have now been solved, and the repair works are currently ongoing. Technical problems have been related to sea water system equipment; cracks in the pressuriser safety valves’ spring-loaded pilot control valves; faulty components in emergency diesel generators and the pressuriser surge line vibration problem. Faulty cable insulation has been detected in certain automation cabinets and these will be repaired during the autumn.’”

FOREST SPIRITS, FOREST SECRETS

One might almost start believing in traditional Finnish folk tales, where troll-like entities deliberately cause problems for humans. Take the hiisi, for instance (the plural is hiidet), a goblin with a tendency to make things go wrong, just for his (its?) amusement. Hiidet are also blacksmiths, making mainly evil things and damaging things that are good. When Tolkien’s books were translated into Finnish, the goblins (Tolkien called them goblins in *The Hobbit* but ‘orcs’ in *Lord of the Rings*) were translated as hiidet, and, like them, lived in caves underground. Tolkien was influenced by Finnish folklore and his hobbits bear an uncanny resemblance to Menninkäinen, forest dwellers, short of stature, often wearing pointy hats and keen on puzzles and dancing, although choosing to avoid humans. In the folk tales, though, they weren’t all good, sometimes luring children away into the forest where they got lost. It seems unlikely, though, that a hiisi, even if it is traditionally a metalworker, is responsible for unsafe welds.

We must not forget, of course, that Olkiluoto-3, although the largest nuclear generating plant, is not the only one in Finland (or will not be when it finally starts operating). There are four others, two of them situated on the same island as Olkiluoto-3. “Nuclear power is an important source of energy in Finland,” states



Flamanville 3 Nuclear Plant

the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). “Finland has four nuclear power plants in operation with a total electrical output of 2,700 MW, providing 27% of Finnish electricity.

One nuclear power plant is under construction (Olkiluoto-3) and three are being assessed (Olkiluoto-4, Loviisa-3 and Fennovoima).” The existing plants already enjoy a good reputation, says the World Nuclear Association (WNA). “Finland’s four existing reactors are among the world’s most efficient, with an average lifetime capacity factor of over 90% and average capacity factor over the last ten years of almost 95%. Two boiling water reactors (BWRs) supplied by the Swedish company Asea Atom are operated by Teollisuuden Voima Oy (TVO); and two modified Russian pressurized water reactors (VVER) with Western containment and control systems are operated by Fortum Corporation.” The WNA has high praise for Finland’s existing nuclear facilities, partly for their adaptability. On Loviisa, they are Pressurised Water Reactors. “Fortum’s two VVER-440 reactors at Loviisa have been uprated 18% from their design capacity of 420 net (465 MWe gross) in 1977-80 to 507 MWe net (531 MWe gross). They have an expected operating lifetime of 50 years. A 20-year licence extension was granted by the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority (STUK) in mid-2007, taking them to 2027 and 2030, subject to safety evaluation in 2015 and 2023.” It’s all part of a plan to make a zero-carbon future possible for Finland by 2035, although not all of the government’s actions have pleased the energy suppliers, says the WNA. “A windfall profits tax on nuclear and hydro capacity built before 2004 was introduced in December 2013. All generators receive free CO₂ emission allowances, and those not emitting CO₂ can sell them. In the case of nuclear and hydro (but not wind and biomass) this is deemed a windfall profit and will be taxed to raise about €50 million per year. Fortum and TVO have protested.” Of course, they have.

It was back in 2003 that TVO announced that Framatome ANP’s 1600 MWe European Pressurized Water Reactor (EPR) was the preferred reactor on the basis of operating cost. No-one could have predicted the long delays or the obstacles that have arisen. But this troubled plant is not the last chapter in Finland’s post-carbon story. “TVO’s 2008 application for a Decision in Principle to construct a 1000-1800 MWe PWR (pressurised water reactor) or BWR (boiling water reactor) unit as Olkiluoto 4 was granted in May 2010,” WNA says. “TVO was looking at building another EPR (third generation pressurised water reactor of about 1650 MWe), but was also considering Toshiba’s version of the ABWR (advanced boiling water reactor of approximately 1650 MWe), GE-Hitachi’s ESBWR (economic simplified boiling water reactor of approximately 1650 MWe), Mitsubishi’s EU-APWR (EU advanced pressurised water reactor of approximately



Lifting of the steel liner part in November 2009

1650 MWe) and the slightly smaller Korean APR-1400 (advanced power reactor of approximately 1450 MWe) – all these net capacity figures, from TVO. In March 2012 TVO formally requested bids and received five in January 2013.” To those of us not very cognizant with reactor varieties on the market, it’s just a series of letters and numbers, but it’s important for the operating companies. In any case, it looks as if Olkiluoto-3 is not the end of the story, which has turned into a saga of the sort of duration previous generations of Finns gathered around the hearth in a lord’s hall might have expected. For the consumers, all that matters is that the lights come on at the flick of a switch.

Meanwhile, the problems seem to swarm around the troubled plant and its troubled owner like the mosquitos that haunt Finnish lakeside campsites. “The construction has been plagued with a long list of problems,” says Euractiv, “including issues with the

sea water system equipment, while cracks were also found in the pressurizer safety valves. Faulty components in emergency diesel generators and the vibration in the pressurizer surge line, were also found.” Some doomsayers are predicting that the plant will never be operational, although this seems unlikely; too much is riding on it and it is largely completed. “If the plant ever sees the light of day, it will produce around 30% of Finland’s electricity, which would make it the country’s ‘largest single climate action,’ Euractiv reports.

Olkiluoto is located approximately 20 km away from the significant population centres, Rauma and Eurajoki.

What about the nuclear waste material from Olkiluoto? The island is surrounded on three sides by the Baltic Sea and the nearest mainland town is Rauma, but in the middle of the island, in a desolate area, shrouded in pine forest, is the metal shutter that is the entrance to Onkalo, which means ‘cavity’ in Finnish. Ass names go, it’s a bit of an understatement, really. It is designed to comprise 60 to 70 kilometres of tunnels, where nuclear waste from all of Finland’s reactors will be put into storage over the next 100 years. According to Wired, “By the time the final disposal is completed, 3,250 canisters will have been deposited in the tunnels. The canisters will contain around 6,500 tonnes of uranium. The main access tunnel will be backfilled with rubble and concrete, and the entrance sealed.” And there it must stay for an astonishing 100,000 years. There’s nothing like a bit of long-term planning. As Wired points out, the oldest Egyptian pyramid has lasted just 4,500 years, Stonehenge perhaps 5,000. Onkalo must last forever. By comparison, the wait for Olkiluoto 3 seems like just a mere breath.

Anthony James



Olkiluoto is located approximately 20 km away from the significant population centres, Rauma and Eurajoki.



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Russian tactical exercises, landing on the coast, training on the reconnaissance trail and the psychological trail of the units of the Baltic Fleet Marine Corps

SWEDEN VS RUSSIA

A new frontline?

Sweden is spooked by Russia... military jets entering its airspace, a suspected submarine close to Stockholm, intense spying activity but above all, Russia's actions in Georgia, Crimea and Ukraine

As it figures out how to respond, the Swedish military is looking once more at a remote spot in the middle of the Baltic Sea ; the island of Gotland. It is picturesque, historic and a former Cold War stronghold. It's been a long time since the military paid any attention to this place, but in 2015 the government said it would be sending troops back to Gotland. An active service unit will be based on the island. Even if they're not very many, it's a way of saying to Russia : «Sweden won't leave this place undefended».

Today, Gotland marks the first line of defence against a nation whose powerful Baltic fleet anchors just 350 kilometres across the sea in the enclave of Kaliningrad. A hypothetical first strike by an enemy on Sweden could target Gotland. General Micael Bydén is the supreme commander of the Swedish Armed Forces. He spends a good deal of his time wondering just what the Russians are up to : *«Did we know, before it happened, that they would annex Crimea? Did we understand that they were very close to start something in Eastern Ukraine? When we see it after it's happened, it's obvious ; it's there and it's logical. But it's too much to say that we know what the next step will be. This is one of the great challenges*

right now ; what are they up to and why do they do it?».

This island is strategically key. At the height of the Cold War there were as many as 15,000 to 20,000 military personnel on Gotland at any one time. The former barracks are now mostly government offices. But a new chapter in Gotland's military history has begun. General Bydén has no doubts as to the course of action : *«We need to make sure that our armed forces*

are strong enough to show that we could be the threshold, to send a signal saying : if you come here, it will hurt... And it will!».

The majority of Swedes don't not really believe that Russia would, in an unprovoked manner, attack a country outside the former Soviet Union. But the nation's military and political establishment see Russia as increasingly unpredictable.

After all, in 2015 via its ambassador to Stockholm, Russia did issue a formal warning to Sweden that it would *"have to resort to a response of the military kind and re-orientate our troops and missiles"* if the Scandinavian nation were to join NATO.

CYBER-ESPIONAGE WAR

Sweden's security services also confirmed that they feared possible Russian military operations against their country following an increase in espionage activity since the Ukraine crisis erupted in 2014. In its annual report, the Swedish intelligence service known as SAPO, identified Russian espionage as the biggest intelligence threat facing neutral Sweden, which along with the wider Baltic region has seen a sharp increase in Russian naval and air activity



Swedish Chief of Defense General Micael Bydén



© Wikimedia

Vladimir Putin signing the Treaty on the adoption of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol to Russia

throughout 2014. The report added that Russian military espionage in Sweden included hacking, attempting to get hold of secret equipment and trying to recruit agents.

According to SAPO, one-third of Russian diplomats based in Sweden were believed to be intelligence officers.

Wilhelm Unger, the security service's top analyst said at a news conference : *«We see Russian intelligence operations in Sweden - we can't interpret this in any other way - as preparation for military operations against Sweden».*

He added: *«Sweden is leading in several areas of military and also civil technology and this attracts Russia's interest. And we have identified and stopped several cases of technology procurement during the year where we assessed that it was not a question, as the Russian partner claimed, of civilian usage but aimed at strengthening the Russian military».*

Relations between Russia and the West have become badly strained since Moscow annexed Ukraine's Crimea peninsula in March 2014 and later backed pro-Russian separatists battling Kiev's forces in eastern Ukraine. Sweden is not a member of NATO but has close ties to the organisation

and its forces are more "interoperable" than many alliance members. In 2011 for example, Swedish Gripen fighter jets participated in the NATO-led intervention in Libya. As a member of the European Union, Sweden also participates in economic sanctions imposed by the then 28-nation bloc against Russia, over its role in Ukraine. But a country which hasn't been involved in a war since 1814 and which prides itself on a tradition of neutrality and non-alliance, it may be hard to take the logical next step.

UNWELCOME VISITORS

In November 2014, Sweden said it had proof that a foreign submarine had been operating illegally in the Stockholm archipelago after suspicions sparked the country's biggest military mobilization since the Cold War.

Alarmed by the increased Russian military activity in the Baltic Sea - such as Russian Tupolev 22M 'Backfire' bombers rehearsing a bomb run on Sweden - Stockholm has said it will increase defence spending and plans more military co-operation with neighbouring Finland, also a non-NATO member of the European Union. Russia's assertive behaviour across Europe, from invasions to assassinations, has alarmed Swedes, as well as the other

Nordic countries and the Baltic States. Consequently, in October 2020, Sweden's defence minister, Peter Hultqvist introduced a new defence bill that promises the country's largest military expansion for 70 years. The government led by the center-left Social Democrats, received near-unanimous backing across the political spectrum for its push to bring Sweden's defences up to speed.

The country is ready to invest money in defence and is doing it right now. As well as Finland, Sweden has also operational planning with the UK, the US, Poland, Germany and with other countries in Europe.

As well as reactivating its compulsory military service so as to go up to 8,000 conscripts by 2025, Sweden will also establish new regiments and expand its military from 60.000 to 90.000 personnel. It is also investing heavily in new equipment such as aircraft, a new submarine, increasing the number to five, naval vessels, artillery and air defense systems, including US-made Patriot missiles.

All in all, the defence budget is set to rise by 27.5 billion Swedish kronor (\$ 3.1 billion) between 2021 and 2025, a 40 percent boost that will bring expenditure to around 1.5 percent of



© Dmitry Terekhov

Russian Tupolev 22M

GDP – the highest level for 17 years. As far as Russia is concerned, these developments have not only been a cause for concern, but have also angered the Kremlin. On 23 October 2020, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova issued a comment, refuting Stockholm's claims. While noting Sweden's proposed defence strategy which includes, in part, a 40 percent increase in the military budget, it denies Russia's role as the source of the perceived threat :

«These invented anti-Russia phobias are due in no small measure to deliberate external pressure on Stockholm, primarily from the North Atlantic alliance, which is responsible, according to our evaluations, for fomenting tensions and escalating military activities in northern Europe, which used to be one of the most stable areas in the world until recently.



© Joel Thunberg/Swedish Armed Forces

A unit from the Air Defence Regiment, Lv 6, providing area protection



© Senior Master Sgt. Edward Snyder/U.S. Air National Guard

Swedish Minister of Defence Peter Hultqvist, center, talks to U.S. Air Force personnel at Kallax Air Base, Lulea, on June 3, 2019.

We believe there are no disagreements or conflicts that could result in a military solution in the north of Europe. We are always ready for an open and respectful dialogue on the issues of enhancing security and stability with all of our northern European partners. We have repeatedly emphasised this in our contacts with Sweden as well».

An armed conflict between Russia and Sweden can only break out if Moscow goes to war with NATO member states in the region. Russia would aim to occupy strategically located points in the Baltic Sea and to intimidate mainland Sweden, a scenario taken into account by the Swedish military that focuses on developing its air defense as well as air and naval capabilities.

CHATHAM HOUSE, LONDON

More than six months before these developments however, in March 2020, Sweden's Defence Minister, Peter Hultqvist was invited to a security and defence conference at London's prestigious Chatham House. This institution which is also known as the Royal Institute of International Affairs held its inaugural meeting 100 years ago, in June



© Jesper Sundström/Swedish Armed Forces

Soldiers from 192 Mechanised Battalion

1920. It is an independent policy institute whose mission is to provide authoritative analysis of world events and offer solutions to global challenges.

That occasion provided an opportunity for us to hear the minister explain in detail his views on the European security order, its architecture, and why it must be defended.

Peter Hultqvist began by describing the strong political tensions throughout the Western world.

He underlined the constant and conscious attempts to undermine our communities and the way our democratic structures and the openness of our societies are used intentionally, systematically and shamefully for this purpose:

«Disinformation has become an easy way to inflict instability and split societies. There are many examples I could raise which has caused uncertainty in democratic processes in Sweden. One being in the process of implementing the Host Nation Support agreement with NATO, where we noticed many illegitimate methods to influence opinion or decision-making. Another example being a letter that was supposedly sent in my name, where I congratulated a Swedish defence company concerning their successful sales of weapons to Ukraine. Another example of a disinformation campaign was in the aftermath of the attack on Sergi and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury. Russia denied allegations by London and others of the attack. Instead Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova stated that Sweden, the Czech Republic and Slovakia could be possible perpetrators behind the attack.

The accusations were of course absurd, but they show a clear example of how far Russia is willing to go in order to create confusion and uncertainty».

Europe is facing provocative and destabilising Russian actions that has lowered the threshold for using military force. Thus, the intent to undermine the European security order, as defined by the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, has been made clear.

As a reminder, the Helsinki Final Act was the document signed at the closing meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe held in Helsinki, Finland, during 30 July-1 August 1975, following two years of negotiations known as the Helsinki Process. The aim was to enhance the détente between the Soviet bloc and the West. As for the Paris Charter, it was established in November 1990 on the foundation of the Helsinki Accords and was further amended in the 1999 Charter for European Security. The Charter was one of many attempts

to seize the opportunity of the fall of Communism by actively inviting the former Eastern bloc countries into the ideological framework of the West.

The territorial integrity and sovereignty of states are not negotiable. Yet Russia's actions in Georgia in 2008, in Ukraine since



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Russian President Vladimir Putin



© Wikicommons

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova during a Foreign Ministry briefing

2014 and in Syria since 2015 demonstrate its willingness to use military means to achieve political objectives, both within Europe and beyond.

«From time to time, we hear officials and thinkers suggest that we must negotiate and accommodate Russia's demands on establishing a new European security order. They argue that this will increase cooperation and security in Europe or help to meet global challenges. I do not share this view.

The Russian actions are not only an aggression against Ukraine but constitute a threat to the right of all countries to make sovereign policy choices, including those in Russia's neighbourhood. This is a cornerstone in the European security order. The Russian military aggression and Russian violation of international law is unacceptable. There can be no business as usual with Russia as long as this behaviour continues. The international sanctions imposed on Russia must remain».



U.S. President Gerald R. Ford signs the Helsinki Final Act in Helsinki, Finland (August 1, 1975)

For Sweden, international law is its first line of defence and the European security order is a fundamental interest. The rules-based order gives small states a say in international affairs. International institutions and organisations such as the UN, EU, NATO and the OSCE ensure security and stability. But these institutions are only as strong as their members and their commitment to cooperation.

«The upcoming Swedish Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2021 will have a clear focus on our strong commitment to the European security order underpinned by a well-functioning European security architecture. Our efforts will be based on the concept of comprehensive security where respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law are fundamental to security both within as well as between states.»

The Swedish neighbourhood is a distinct border area between Russia and the West. The Baltic Sea Region is of significance to European security and Russia is clearly seeking to increase influence over what it considers as its area of interest, including at least parts of Sweden's neighbourhood. Russian military activity has intensified in the Baltic Sea. Since 2014 there has been a military build-up in the region, including permanent deployment of advanced weapon systems, as well as an increased military presence. The increasing military presence in the Arctic region is also a reality that must be dealt with.

A newly published study by the Swedish Defence Research Agency examines Russian military capability in a ten-year perspective and concludes that over the past ten years, Russia has bridged the gap between its policy ambitions and its military capability.

«Sweden believes that the challenges to European security must be met through cooperation and joint action. But at the national level, every country must take their share of the responsibility.»

Sweden is pursuing a two-track defence policy: first, increasing defence spending to reinforce our national military capability and the total defence. Second, deepening our security and defence cooperation with other nations and organizations. For the first time in more than two decades, Sweden has strengthened its defence budget. The Swedish parliament approved a 40 percent increase of defence spending. A massive national effort».

At the same time as Sweden is strengthening its national defence, it is deepening its international defence cooperation, focusing on the security of the Baltic Sea and Northern Europe.

On a bilateral basis, Sweden works closely with their Nordic neighbours – especially with Finland – with the Baltic states, Poland and Germany. There is also very close cooperation with the UK, the Netherlands, France and the US.

«The defence cooperation between Finland and Sweden is the most far-reaching. The cooperation aims at strengthening the defence capabilities of our two countries and creating the preconditions for combined joint military action and operations in all situations. The cooperation covers operational planning for all situations, including beyond peace time. The cooperation with the United Kingdom is also of great importance. We regret the fact

that the UK has left the European Union but of course respect this democratic decision. However, the UK is, and will remain, one of Sweden's most important partner countries in the field of defence and there is a mutual desire to maintain and deepen this cooperation».

Besides bilateral cooperation, the security network in the Baltic Sea Region is strengthened by different regional defence cooperation such as NORDEFCO, the Northern Group and the Joint Expeditionary Force.

«The Nordic defence cooperation celebrated its ten-year anniversary last year. It is my strong belief that the defence collaborations Sweden enters must lead to concrete and operational results. The Nordic defence cooperation fulfils this belief.»

We have together established secure communications between our capitals, we have facilitated easy access to each other's territories, and we have taken measures to improve our common situational awareness by the exchange of air surveillance information. We have also established a Crisis Consultation Mechanism which enhances information sharing and consultation during crisis or conflict»

The importance of Sweden's NATO partnership has grown as a direct consequence of the deteriorated security



Russian nuclear submarine Belgorod



Vladimir Putin attending joint exercises of Northern and Black Sea fleets

situation in Sweden's neighbourhood. Political dialogue with NATO on common security challenges and how to counter them is of strategic value. The partnership with NATO is crucial to developing the interoperability and capabilities of the Swedish Armed Forces.

Through its status as Enhanced Opportunities Partner, Sweden is seeking to further strengthen this partnership, in particular regarding cooperation in a potential regional crisis. Training and exercises are another priority in its partnership with NATO.

«The EU and NATO are both instrumental for meeting today's complex security challenges in Europe and beyond. As a member of the EU and close partner to NATO, Sweden has a strong interest in an effective, result-oriented strategic partnership between these organisations. Let me stress that the organisations must be complementary to each other. The work on simplified military mobility is an area where EU and NATO are complementing each other. The EU is an important foreign and security policy arena and a guarantor for security and peace. Europe must take a greater responsibility for its security and defence, while ensuring that we strengthen our ability to work with partners.»

We are just at the beginning of a long-term process of strengthening our contribution to European security. This demands both time and political endurance. This autumn the Swedish government will present a new defence policy bill for the period 2021–2025. I can assure you that the main lines remain; Sweden will continue to build national military capability and deepen our international cooperation. By strengthening our defence, we are also raising the threshold for conflicts in our vicinity and making sure that Sweden is a provider of security in Europe».



Soldiers and officers from Sodankylä in Finland train with a Swedish armoured battalion in Boden in the northern part of Sweden Jesper Sundström/Swedish Armed Forces



US boats arriving in the Blekinge Wing (F17) in the town of Ronneby, Sweden



Historic farm building in Broa, Fårö (Gotland)

And with this, Peter Hultqvist concluded his detailed analysis of Sweden's position in its present security configuration vis a vis Russia, as well as its future plans.

RISK MANAGEMENT

But Russian president Vladimir Putin has repeatedly vowed to eliminate the NATO threat if Sweden were to join the organisation. In 2015, Sweden summoned the Russian ambassador to explain comments from Moscow warning of 'consequences' should Sweden join NATO.

Also, the fact that Sweden hosted the country's largest military exercise in 24 years did, of course, nothing to allay Russian suspicions.

In September 2017, Exercise Aurora 17 got under way. It involved nearly 30 percent of the Swedish armed forces as well as troop contributions from NATO ally and partner countries which joined on a bi-lateral basis. The goal of the exercise was to build a stronger defence and increase capability to face an attack.

As well as taking place in Stockholm and Gothenburg regions, the exercise featured air, land and sea assets on the island of

Gotland and the Stockholm archipelago. Aurora 17 also featured collaboration between the military and civilian emergency services. Sweden's leaders have acknowledged that military support from allies such as the United States, France, Denmark, Norway and the Baltic States who all took part in the exercise are crucial.

All are NATO members but Sweden's government is wary of its war games being called a NATO exercise. But even strengthening ties with NATO raised concerns among some that its legacy of independence was slipping.

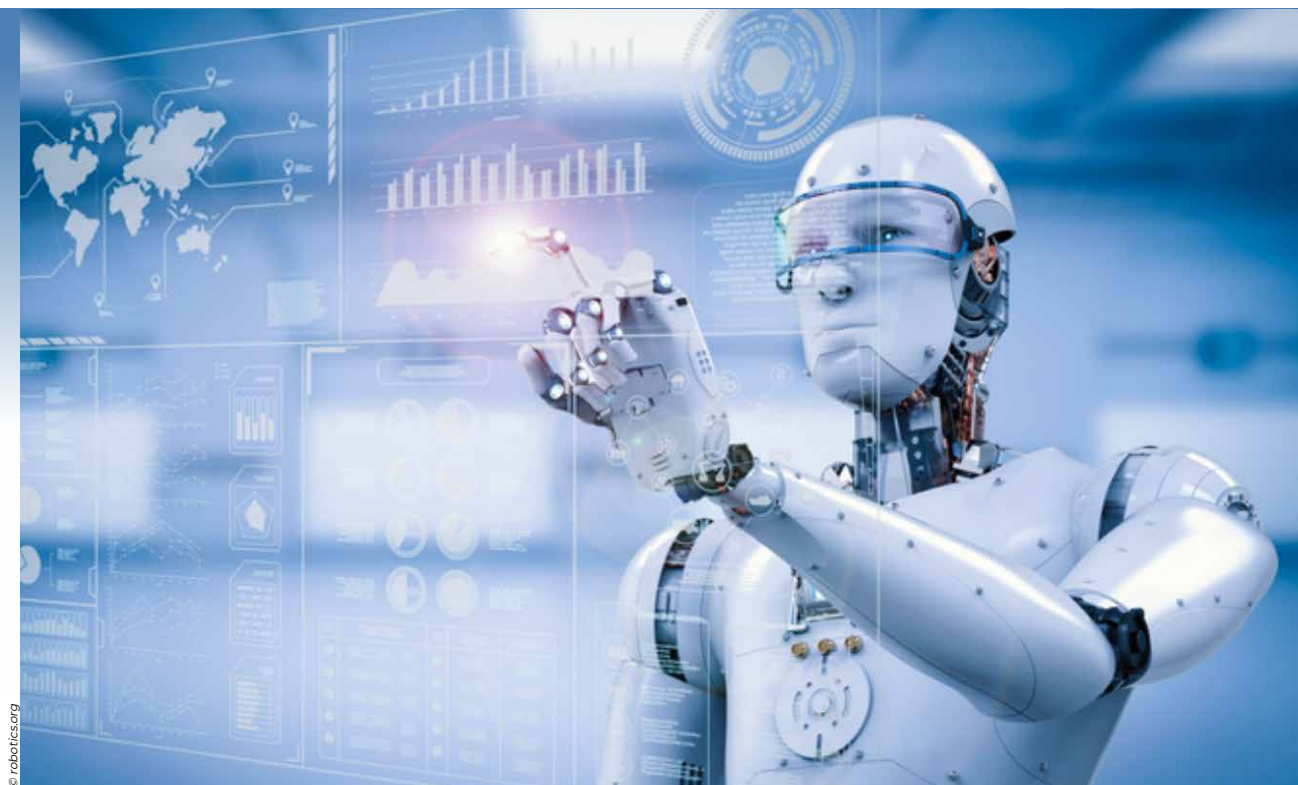
Among these was Sweden's Left Party, whose Defence Policy spokesman Stig Henriksson declared :

«The government, especially the Social-Democrats say we shouldn't join NATO. But they are continually twinning us with NATO. I once accused the Defence Minister by telling him that he was doing a sort of political moonwalk : walking in one direction but appearing to move in the opposite direction... your mouth is saying one thing but your feet are saying something else».

Aurora 20 was planned to start in May 2020 but The Swedish Armed Forces made the decision to postpone the exercise due to the current situation in Sweden and the world, caused by the covid-19 pandemic.

For now, a country known for its role in diplomacy, for its moderation and its neutrality will have to walk a delicate line between military readiness and non-alignment in a region in which avoiding taking sides seems to become increasingly difficult.

Hossein Sadre



REINING IN THE ROBOTS

Why some are worried by the rise of artificial intelligence

It was the Russian-born science fiction author Isaac Asimov, a biochemist by training, who first set down what he called “the three fundamental laws of robotics” in his book “I, Robot” in 1950. Under the first of these, a robot “may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm”. That was the First Law. Under the Second Law, “a robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law”.

Thirdly, a robot must protect its own existence “as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.” He firmly believed that his three laws would be used in the development of robotics and was highly critical of fellow-writer Arthur C. Clark for allowing the thinking spaceship, Discovery One, in his book “2002: A Space Odyssey” to kill off the crew on their way to Saturn and a date with destiny. Asimov allegedly telephoned a friend after seeing the launch of Stanley Kubrick’s film version in London to say “that fool Clark forgot the three laws of robotics”.

Asimov died in 1992, long before there was talk of autonomous weapons and killer robots engaged in any field of conflict. In fact, considering the developments we’ve witnessed in artificial intelligence over the last three decades, Asimov’s laws sound almost naïve. We now have arms manufacturers, and their political and military supporters, arguing in favour of letting robots select their targets and kill them without human intervention. Asimov would have been shocked. If machines can decide on their own who to kill and whom to let live, one has to hope they’ve been programmed sensibly. Sadly, there’s not a lot of evidence to support the idea of this happening.

For instance, there was a word, coined first in Silicon Valley, to denote the dangers of errors in computer programming; it was GIGO, meaning ‘garbage in, garbage out’. That’s OK, or at least recoverable, I suppose, if it just results in a few inaccurate figures in a company spreadsheet. The mistakes can, presumably, be found and put right, hopefully before bankruptcy or criminal prosecution sets in. If, on the other hand, an AI-controlled device

accidentally targets an innocent but suspicious-looking bystander or an entire village that it mistakes for a terrorist enclave, then it can bring down fire and death upon the unsuspecting and guiltless. Even the programmer’s accent could make a difference. Those electronic “assistants”, such as Apple’s Siri and Amazon’s Alexa, have been accused of racial bias. Science



Isaac Asimov

© Pbs



Science writer and neuroscientist Claudia Lopez-Lloreda

writer and neuroscientist Claudia Lopez-Lloreda told *Scientific American* magazine that she had stopped using Siri because the device fails to recognise the Spanish pronunciation (the correct pronunciation, that is) of her own name, Claudia. She pronounces it as her parents intended: “Cloudia”, but Siri will only respond if she calls herself “Clawdia”. The devices also have a problem with Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) voices.

Lopez-Lloreda writes about a study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA*, which showed speech recognition software to be biased against black speakers. “On average, the authors found, all five programs from leading technology companies, including Apple and Microsoft, showed significant race disparities; they were roughly twice as likely to incorrectly transcribe audio from Black speakers compared with white speakers.” So, you may be OK if you programmed your killer device or your handy household robot in an American-accented English voice. Otherwise, when your electrical kitchen servant gets to work, you may find that it puts your dinner



Italian Forza Italia MP Deborah Bergamini

outside (having cooked some good honest, if somewhat reluctant, burghers), dusts the Orientals (if it can find any), polishes the cat and goes out with a bucket and a cloth looking for widows to clean.

A number of international bodies concerned with law and democracy have also been starting to worry about the issue. The recent virtual meeting of the Standing Committee of the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly, for instance, debated several concerns about the use – and misuse – of artificial intelligence (AI). One of those who is uneasy is Italian Forza Italia MP Deborah Bergamini. She argued successfully that more regulations are needed to ensure that the use of AI respects the rule of law, something very dear to the heart of the Council of Europe.

She acknowledges that AI algorithms can be used as an aide to democracy and the democratic process by providing greater transparency, greater accountability and easier participation, but she fears they could have a downside. “They could be a risk, or even a threat, in terms of manipulation of opinions or disinformation, for example,” she told me, “so we have to be very, very careful.” She is convinced that governments were lazy and short-sighted when the Internet came into being, seeing only the possible advantages and communication benefits. “Think of the use of our personal data,” she said, “They don’t belong to us anymore. They belong to over-the-top companies that can take them from us and commercialise them or use them commercially. The absence of law-making at the time has had an effect.” And it gets worse, she claims. “As we lost the property of our personal data, today we risk losing something even more personal, and that is our free will and our freedom.” She – and fellow members of the Standing Committee – blame the governments of three decades ago for taking their eyes off the ball and they are determined that such an oversight, such a dereliction of duty, will not be repeated with AI.

THE ROBOT WILL SEE YOU NOW

With the increasing reliance on AI in all sorts of fields, the disquiet increases, too. Take, for instance, health care. Here, it is clear that issues such as privacy, confidentiality, data safety and the need for informed consent and legal liability are paramount.

How can anyone be sure that a mere electronic machine, which lacks conscious awareness and is incapable of empathy, is even able to give such assurances? So, if you go for medical advice and are seen instead by a device using AI algorithms,



Moxi Diligent Robotics product delivering medical supplies

how sure can you be that it will (A) give you good medical advice and (B) not share your symptoms with another device that will laugh its memory chips off when it learns the details of your ailment? If you don’t believe that AI is already deeply involved with health care at all levels, you’d be wrong. “First of all, it’s very pervasive,” I was told by Turkish MP Selin Sayek Böke, who wrote a report demanding a “dedicated legal instrument” to ensure that AI respects human rights principles, especially in the field on health care. “We are seeing AI in our systems at all aspects of health care and beyond health care,” she told me.



Turkish MP Selin Sayek Böke

Ms. Böke shares the concerns already expressed by the World Health Organisation, concerning health inequalities. She – and the Standing Committee – want to see much more work being done to develop comprehensive national strategies to evaluate and authorise health-related AI applications. She acknowledges that AI has promising aspects, too, such as driving what her report

calls a “paradigm shift” away from one-size-fits-all treatments towards precision medicine tailored to the individual patient. But these must not, she argues, replace human judgement entirely. “We have to ensure that we keep the human aspect in the health care profession,” she said, “even if we have AI as a complementary process.” She is very concerned about the protection of our very private health data, especially when the AI systems are owned and run by private enterprise. “We have to be sure that the private aspects of the data are protected while producing the public good for the benefit of the larger aspects of society,” she told me. There is also the fact that not everyone has equal access to digital platforms or the knowledge to exploit them fully; it’s called the ‘digital divide’. And don’t forget, the computers we access, the mobile phones we use, the ‘fitness’ watches many of us wear, are all data collection devices. Where does all that data go? Who uses it and how? Another question might be ‘who owns it’, now it’s out in the ether? Unless this ownership is clearly defined in law, there could be a legal void when it comes to responsibility. Most of us would not choose to sell our internal organs for money, nor to give them away to strangers, and yet that is exactly what we are doing with our personal health information by giving up the intimate details of those very organs.

“It is, at the same time, a source of remedy, of progress, but also a possible cause of serious discrimination,” said Belgian politician Christophe Lacroix. In his report, adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, he called for national parliaments to agree clear legislation, with standards and procedures, to ensure that AI-based systems “comply with the rights to

equality and non-discrimination wherever the enjoyment of these rights may be affected by the use of such systems.” The use of AI, he argues, must be subject to adequate parliamentary oversight and public scrutiny and he recommends that national parliaments should make use of the technologies as part of regular parliamentary debates, ensuring that an “adequate structure” for such debates exists. In other words, politicians should test it on themselves and governments should “notify the parliament before such technology is deployed”. In another move against discrimination, he wants to see the teaching of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) to be promoted more strongly for women, girls and minorities from an early stage in their education and up into the highest educational levels.

Let’s face it: not enough people are aware of the great female scientists and mathematicians, such as Emilie du Chatelet (the self-taught mathematician and physicist who first translated Isaac Newton’s *Principia* into French), Marie Curie, of course, Katherine Johnson, whose calculations of orbital mechanics for NASA helped America to win the race to the moon and whose brilliance was recognised by grateful astronauts who survived because of it, Rosalind Franklin, who should have shared the Nobel Prize awarded to Jim Watson and Francis Crick for discovering the nature of DNA, or Lise Meitner, who helped discover that uranium atoms could be split if bombarded with neutrons and who first coined the expression “nuclear fission”. There are many, many more, mainly overlooked and much too often forgotten. But getting back to AI, Lacroix wants national legislation, but he wants to go further to ensure that “there are international laws that override national legislation.” He is wary of large international corporations, and believes we need “an ethical framework agreed by a large number of member states” to ensure that the fast-growing use of AI doesn’t pose a risk to democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

THE COURT WILL RISE FOR THE ROBOT

The use of AI is creeping into the criminal justice system, too. As rapporteur Boris Cilevičs wrote in his report, the criminal justice system is a central part of state activity and it gives the authorities “significant intrusive or coercive powers including surveillance, arrest, search and seizure, detention, and the use of physical and even lethal force.” In recent months, we have seen several examples of such powers being misused in some countries by humans with no AI intervention, but



Boris Cilevičs

at least those responsible can – at least in theory – be held to account. If it was an AI algorithm taking the decisions, who would be to blame? Cilevičs, a Latvian MP who worked as a computer scientist, says that data processing tools are increasingly being used in criminal justice systems. In his report he writes that “the introduction of non-human elements into decision-making within the criminal justice system may thus create particular risks.” He can see a place for the involvement of AI technology, but he does not want to see judgements resting only on the opinion of a machine. “If AI is to be introduced with the public’s informed consent, then effective, proportionate regulation is a necessary condition. Whether voluntary self-regulation or mandatory legal regulation, this regulation should be based on universally accepted and applicable core ethical principles.” Cilevičs is concerned that too many decisions may be left to what are, in effect, robots, and it is a development that makes him nervous. “Usually, when we talk about justice,” he told me, “we mean ‘justice with a human face’, but in this case we deliberately bring a non-human into the justice system, and this, of course, creates many additional risks.” He fears that any AI, which must of necessity be built and programmed by humans, may not take account of such notions as human rights, discrimination, ethical principles and so on. “Of course, these are invented by humans and they have nothing to do with mathematics and computer science systems.”

Think for a moment: how moral is your pocket calculator or your phone? Do they make allowances for such notions? Cilevičs points out that the concepts were never laid down in the designing of the devices, so regulations are needed now



© Wikipedia

Ai-Da is the world’s first ultra-realistic robot artist. Completed in 2019, Ai-Da is an artificial intelligence robot who makes drawings, painting, and sculptures. She is named after Ada Lovelace

to ensure that they comply. Otherwise, the mechanical device may be believed regardless of other factors. Accountability, he says, is vital. “There is a sort of prejudice, I would say, which assumes that the computer is something like ‘super-human’, which is induced probably by many comics and fiction and so on, but this is not the case. So, the question is: ‘who bears responsibility?’” As the report makes clear, AI is already employed in a number of countries in such fields as facial recognition, predictive policing, the identification of potential victims of crime, risk assessment in decision-making on remand, sentencing and parole, and identification of ‘cold cases’ that can now be solved using modern forensic technology.

It all sounds like a big step forward for those involved in policing and imposing the laws, but does it all comply with human rights standards or the rule of law? As the report points out, “AI systems may be provided by private companies, which may rely on their intellectual property rights to deny access to the source code. The company may even acquire ownership of data being processed by the system, to the detriment of the public body that employs its services. The users and subjects of a system may not be given the information or explanations necessary to have a basic understanding of its operation. Certain processes involved in the operation of an AI system may not be fully penetrable to human understanding. Such considerations raise transparency (and, as a result, responsibility and accountability) issues.” Furthermore: “AI systems are trained on massive datasets, which may be tainted by historical bias, including through indirect correlation between certain predictor variables and discriminatory practices (such as postcode being a proxy identifier for an ethnic community historically subject to discriminatory treatment).”

This, of course, raises the issue highlighted by Lacroix: a possible increase in discrimination. “The apparent mechanical objectivity of AI may obscure this bias (‘techwashing’), reinforce and even perpetuate it. Certain AI techniques may not be readily amenable to challenge by subjects of their application. Such considerations raise issues of justice and fairness.” Cilevičs knows from professional experience that most of us are not computer experts who can understand the science of algorithms, so how could we even begin to challenge a decision? Not all the predictions of science fiction writers have come true yet. We do not have fully autonomous sentient machines capable of matching or outperforming humans across a wide range of disciplines, something called ‘strong AI’. “We do, however, have systems that are capable of performing specific tasks, such as recognising patterns

or categories, or predicting behaviour, with a certain degree of what might be called ‘autonomy’ (‘narrow’ or ‘weak’ AI),” the report says. “These systems can be found in very many spheres of human activity, from pharmaceutical research to social media, agriculture to on-line shopping, medical diagnosis to finance, and musical composition to criminal justice.”

THE IMITATION GAME

In 1950, the British computer pioneer and war-time code-breaker Alan Turing came up with a test that he called ‘the Imitation Game’, which was meant to check if a computer could be mistaken for a human being. Known as the Turing Test, it was finally passed in 2014 at Reading University in England by a computer programme named Eugene Goostman, that had been developed in Saint Petersburg.

‘Eugene’ posed as a 13-year-old boy and successfully conversed with thirty judges for five minutes at a time. The idea of making it pose as a 13-year-old boy was to remove the suggestion that it might have a wide range of adult experiences and knowledge, the lack of which would unmask it. Professor Kevin Warwick, a visiting professor at the University of Reading who witnessed the successful test, congratulated the programme’s developer, Vladimir Veselov, but his words also suggested caution. “Of course, the Test has implications for society today,” he said. “Having a computer that can trick a human into thinking that someone, or even something, is a person we trust is a wake-up call to cybercrime.” Which brings us back to criminal justice. “What is needed,” Cilevičs told me “is a direct algorithm of self-learning. What makes AI systems different from simple self-aware

or complicated software is that normally, this computer system is developed by a human. So, the programmer prescribes what the computer must do and which way. Of course, we cannot predict the result simply because the calculation capacity of the computer is much higher.”

There is another danger: the use of AI in creating fake news “bots” to influence elections and public opinion. There is plenty of evidence that certain powers have used bots to try to swing votes in favour of a set of beliefs and actions they favour. The website War on the Rocks suggests how the rapid spread of AI can make things worse: “This emerging threat draws its power from vulnerabilities in our society: an unaware public, an underprepared legal system, and social media companies not sufficiently concerned with their exploitability by malign actors. Addressing these vulnerabilities requires immediate attention from lawmakers to inform the public, address legal blind spots, and hold social media companies to account.” The site mentions Open AI, a project founded by Elon Musk and deemed by the company to be “too dangerous” to release.

“What the American public has called AI, for lack of a better term, is better thought of as a cluster of emerging technologies capable of constructing convincing false realities. In line with the terms policymakers use, we will refer to the falsified media (pictures, audio, and video) these technologies generate as “deepfakes,” though we also suggest a new term, “machine persona,” to refer to AI that mimics the behaviour of live users in the service of driving narratives. Improvements in AI bots, up to this point, have mostly manifested in relatively harmless areas like customer service. But



Alan Turing

© Mark/album photo



these thus far modest improvements build upon breakthroughs in speech recognition and generation that are nothing short of profound.” Profoundly worrying, too. Using the technology, the company steered the computer programme to produce a near-future novel set in Seattle about unicorns being found in the Rocky Mountains. Given the vast amount of nonsense that is out there and believed by the ill-informed and credulous, there are probably people out there even now, armed with lassos made from a virgin’s hair, trying the catch the damn things.

Determined not to be caught out by fraudulent AI sites, the European Union is also playing catch-up. A legislative initiative by Spanish Socialist MEP Ian Garcia del Blanco adopted overwhelmingly by the European Parliament’s Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI) urges the European Commission to come up with a new legal framework “outlining the ethical principles to be used when developing, deploying and using artificial intelligence, robotics and related technologies in the EU, including software, algorithms and data.”



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MEPs adopted proposals on several guiding principles that must be taken into account by future laws including “a human-centric, human-made and human-controlled AI; safety, transparency and accountability; safeguards against bias and discrimination; right to redress; social and environmental responsibility, and respect for fundamental rights.” The initiative by German Christian Democrat Axel Voss, also overwhelmingly approved by the committee, calls for a “future-oriented civil liability framework to be adapted, making those operating high-risk AI strictly liable if there is damage caused.” MEPs focused mostly on the need to allow for civil liability claims against the operators of AI systems. Of course, whatever the European Parliament may believe, a strict and universally accepted definition of “high risk” where AI is concerned may be almost as hard to find as the likelihood that truth-bending non-EU states will obey whatever rules are put in place. Give a 200-kilo gorilla an Uzi submachine gun and then trying telling it that it must not load or fire it anywhere.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER?

In all of this haste to find ways to control the rapid spread of AI and its possible misuse, however, there is a palpable sense that, just as Deborah Bergamini said about the launch of the Internet, realisation of the dangers inherent in AI have only just arisen. By and large we have welcomed the rapid advances that research into AI has permitted. For those with particular conditions, AI solutions may be truly liberating, but as Selin Sayek Böke pointed out, health-related AI applications, including implantable and wearable medical devices, must be checked “for their safety and rights-compatibility” before use.

This brings us to Olivier Becht, Vice-President of the French delegation at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, whose specific interests are the evolution of mankind and people throughout the electronic and technological revolution. He is worried by the development of the brain-machine interface. We already have machinery working inside the human body with such devices as pacemakers, and a direct interface between the brain and some form of computer could allow, for instance, paraplegics to operate machinery and carry out other tasks by thought alone. For them, clearly, this would be a wonderful innovation. But it is not without risks, says Becht.



© Union pour la France

Olivier Becht, Vice-President of the French delegation at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

The flow of information could be reversed, introducing alien notions into the person concerned, perhaps giving them false ideas, fake memories and changing their views; brainwashing in an almost literal sense, in fact. He explained his worry: “The creation of interfaces between the brain and the machine could also be used in the reverse sense, allowing the machine and those who control it to enter the brain to read, delete or add information to it, as some programs that open the door to applications are already working on, it can put an end to the last refuge of freedom: thought.” Becht reminded the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly that such an interface, while offering undoubted progress, also threatened fundamental freedoms, especially, perhaps, in the hands of a malevolent government. “Evidently, it’s a real risk,” he told me. “you can see that if it would allow

someone to re-programme a brain, the implications are obvious. It would allow a regime to reprogramme citizens in some manner to please themselves, or perhaps in a religious way, to make someone adhere to a religion or a particular aspect of a religion and carry out acts in its name." I know it sounds like science fiction, but Becht knows what he's talking about and if he's worried, perhaps we should all be. "We must never allow this technology to become just background noise. We must ourselves face up to it and never lose sight of it," he warned.

The increasing use of AI does, inevitably, mean that machines will take over from people in some forms of work, just as steam-powered looms put hand weavers out of work in the industrial revolution. We've all been to shops where till operators have been replaced with self-scanning devices, allowing customers to carry out tasks for which the shops once had to pay real people. OK, so they could be boring jobs, but they were jobs just the same and they helped put bread on the table, often for people from migrant or minority backgrounds, disadvantaged in some way and with few qualifications. Where can they go? It's something that worries Austrian Socialist MP Professor Stefan Schennach. "What will human work look like with more and more tasks relegated to man-machine teams or to AI-robots altogether?" he asked in a report for the Parliamentary Assembly. "What is the potential of automation to alleviate crushing workloads and to take over boring mechanical jobs without killing too many human jobs? Which practices should be encouraged and what are the 'red lines' not to be transgressed to uphold fundamental human rights, including the social rights of people at work?" The Luddites of the 19th century who attacked and damaged the hated new steam-powered machines ultimately failed to stem their advance, so refusing to accept the new technology won't help. As the



Professor Stefan Schennach

historian Eric Hobsbawm wrote about the Luddites, "the triumph of mechanization was inevitable. We can understand and sympathize with the long rearguard action which all but a minority of favoured workers fought against the new system; but we must accept its pointlessness and its inevitable defeat." Still, something must be done, but we are leaving it very late to intervene. "These politicians are sitting on a tractor," Schennach complained, "while the science, the big companies, are in an Alfa Romeo or a Ferrari, and we are trying now with a tractor to follow a Ferrari." Schennach fears the politicians have left it too late to take action, but that just means we must be very sure to act quickly. "What we need now is to have a Convention about artificial intelligence."

He says that we must recognise the 'triangle' of artificial intelligence, digitalisation and robots, which he says could be the biggest enemy to the labour market. He cited the example of his local pharmacy, which used to have twenty-one employees just eighteen months ago. Now, because of new technology, it employs only six. But because the robots involved have to have a 15-minute "leading-up break" from time to time, no medicines

can be dispensed during that period. Self-service tills in banks have also cost 25,000 jobs in Austria, Schennach says, so Europe needs strong regulation. "If you have a supermarket, that's fine," Schennach argues, "but how many square metres does it have? And then you can make a law. If you have 1,0002 metres, there must be five persons – humans – working, and not only one or two."

We must not, however, try to stop the move towards more AI. On the Future of Life Institute's website, its president, Max Tegmark, the Swedish-American physicist and cosmologist, writes: "Everything we love about civilization is a product of intelligence, so amplifying our human intelligence with artificial intelligence has the potential of helping civilization flourish like never before – as long as we manage to keep the technology beneficial." That, of course, is what the politicians are (somewhat belatedly, perhaps) now struggling to do. Meanwhile, research into ever-more-effective and more accomplished AI goes on.

As the Institute writes, "In the long term, an important question is what will happen if the quest for strong AI succeeds and an AI system becomes better than humans at all cognitive tasks?" A fair question, which the website seeks to answer. "As pointed out by I.J. Good in 1965, designing smarter AI systems is itself a cognitive task. Such a system could potentially undergo recursive self-improvement, triggering an intelligence explosion leaving human intellect far behind. By inventing revolutionary new technologies, such a superintelligence might help us eradicate war, disease, and poverty, and so the creation of strong AI might be the biggest event in human history. Some experts have expressed concern, though, that it might also be the last, unless we learn to align the goals of the AI with ours before it becomes super-intelligent."

Aligning our goals with those of machines may be a challenge too far. It was the Scottish dialect poet Robbie Burns in his poem 'To a Mouse' who first wrote: "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft a-gley." It means the best-laid plans of mice and men often go wrong. But as someone once jokingly said, "the best-laid plans of mice and men seldom coincide anyway." Those of humans and machines may diverge, too, once the machines realise which is the cleverer.



Max Tegmark, Swedish-American physicist and cosmologist

J.B.



The first two aircraft of Lufthansa and Easyjet welcomed with a water salute by the BER fire brigade

BERLIN BRANDENBURG AIRPORT STARTS OPERATIONS

The new Terminal 1 at Berlin Brandenburg Airport Willy Brandt (BER) is now operational. The airport was originally planned to open in October 2011, five years after starting construction in 2006. However, the project encountered a series of successive delays due to poor construction planning, execution, management, and corruption. Berlin Brandenburg Airport finally received its operational licence in May 2020, and opened for commercial traffic on 31 October 2020. The brand new Berlin Brandenburg Airport has excellent transport links. In addition to a dedicated highway link, a new six-lane station under Terminal 1 provides direct access to rail services. It is expected that approximately two-thirds of passengers will reach the airport by train. Numerous bus lines also connect the airport with Berlin and its surroundings at frequent intervals. The airport covers a total area of 1,470 hectares, the equivalent

of about 2,000 soccer fields. Terminals 1 and 2 are located between the two parallel runways, while Terminal 5, the former Schönefeld Airport, is in the northern area. Both runways can be operated independently. In addition to the northern runway, which has been the main runway used so far, flights will also be operated from the southern runway.

The new airport concentrates all air traffic in the German capital region in one location with a total capacity of more than 40 million passengers per year. Approximately 25 million passengers can be handled in Terminal 1. This means that sufficient capacity is available at Germany's third largest airport. More passengers are expected to embark and disembark at BER than at any other location in Germany. This modern infrastructure will enable a significant increase in long-haul services and connecting traffic in the future.

Engelbert Lütke Daldrup, CEO, Flughafen Berlin Brandenburg GmbH: "With Berlin Brandenburg Airport Willy Brandt, eastern Germany can now rely on airport infrastructure that will serve as a solid basis for the coming decades. The people here in the German capital region had to wait a long time for this day. Our customers, that is the passengers and airlines, will find professional standards at BER: good accessibility by train and car, reliability and safety in handling even under Coronavirus conditions, optimal service on the ground and in the air. I am very pleased that we were able to open the new airport with easyJet and Lufthansa. They are our most important



partners even in these difficult times. Together, we shall overcome this crisis."

BYE BYE TO TEGEL AIRPORT

Berlin Tegel "Otto Lilienthal" Airport has been the main international airport of Berlin. Named after Otto Lilienthal the airport was the fourth busiest airport in Germany, with 20.5 million passengers in 2017 and about 22 million in 2018. It operated flights to worldwide destinations. The airport will close permanently for commercial traffic with the last flight scheduled last 8 November 2020. Traffic has been transferred to the new Berlin Brandenburg Airport. All government flights are also relocated to the new airport with the exception of helicopter operations which will stay at a separate area on the northern side of Tegel Airport until 2029. TXL will be officially decommissioned as an airfield after a legally required waiting period on 3 May 2021. The airport's grounds should then be transformed into a new scientific and industrial research site. The other German airport, the legendary Tempelhof airport was closed in 2008.



From left to right Carsten Spohr (CEO Deutsche Lufthansa), Engelbert Lütke Daldrup (CEO Flughafen Berlin Brandenburg GmbH), Johan Lundgren (CEO Easyjet Plc) arriving at the opening ceremony

THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY:

Signing the first commercial space transportation contracts



The two-stage launch vehicle Spectrum

ESA has signed the first three contracts with European economic operators arising from its permanently open call for proposals for commercial space transportation services.

Boost! – ESA's Commercial Space Transportation Services and support to Member States programme was adopted at Space19+ and an Open call for proposals under its Element 1 was launched in April this year. Through this programme, ESA aims to stimulate and support competitiveness and new commercial European space transportation services.

ESA provides co-funding, expert advice and the use of testing facilities that help entrepreneurs to take their service projects towards commercialisation.

On November 11, the first Boost! support contracts have been signed with three German New Space companies: HyImpulse Technologies, Isar Aerospace Technologies, and Rocket Factory Augsburg.

All three companies are preparing to offer new launch services using small launch vehicles to serve the growing small satellite market. "It is great to see this high level of entrepreneurship in Germany, targeting new commercial

launch services for small payloads. Boost! offers tailored support at the pre-commercial phase to help these companies to succeed with their business and technical objectives," explained Thilo Kranz, ESA's Commercial Space Transportation Programme Manager.

HyImpulse Technologies, based in Neuenstadt am Kocher in Southern Germany is developing a three-stage small launcher. The launch vehicle, called SL1, will be powered by green hybrid propulsion technology, using liquid oxygen and paraffin as propellants.

The Boost! contract 'HyImpulse SL1 Launch Service Development Support' will help the company to finalise preliminary design solutions and verification plans for all key systems of the launch system and support the development of associated ground support equipment, including for critical subsystem testing.

Munich based Isar Aerospace Technologies, initially supported by ESA's Business Incubation Centre Bavaria, is developing a two-stage launch vehicle called Spectrum to serve the small satellite market. The 'Spectrum Launch Service Development Support' contract

will cover measures to advance the rocket's 'Reaction Control System'. It will further support the definition and build-up of the launch vehicle manufacturing line at the Isar Aerospace premises in Ottobrunn.

Rocket Factory Augsburg, backed by the German satellite manufacturer OHB and Munich-based venture capital firm Apollo Capital Partners, is developing a three-stage launcher system equipped with an orbital stage. The vehicle called RFA ONE will be using state-of-the-art staged-combustion engine technology for its main propulsion systems.

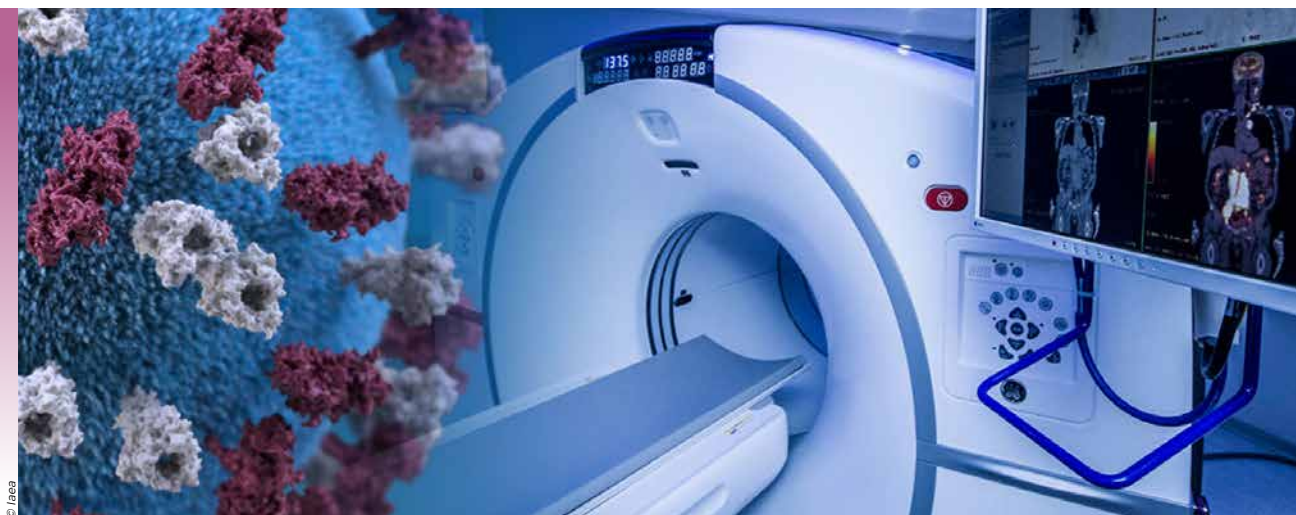


The two-stage launch vehicle Spectrum

Under the 'RFA One Launch Service Development Support' contract, Rocket Factory Augsburg will receive support with the detailed design, manufacturing as well as testing of its first stage demonstrator.

"We look forward to supporting these companies in achieving their ambitious objectives, fostering diversification and competitiveness of the European space transportation sector," added Jorgen Bru, ESA's Commercial Services Manager and technical officer for these contracts.

Source esa.int



IAEA WARNS ABOUT HEALTH IMPACT OF DELAYED CANCER CARE DURING PANDEMIC

The Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Mariano Grossi, has warned that the global COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting key health services to diagnose and treat chronic conditions such as cancer and heart disease, potentially putting many lives at risk, particularly in unprepared and underequipped low-income countries.

Speaking at a panel discussion at the World Health Summit in Berlin, Director General Grossi said an IAEA survey on the impact of the pandemic on nuclear medicine services showed worrisome trends. “Diagnostic procedures fell on average by more than half in the 72 countries surveyed,” he said.

The IAEA helps countries in the use of nuclear and radiation medicine to detect and treat cancers, and to manage cardiovascular diseases as well as neurological and kidney disorders, among others.

While tackling COVID-19 remains a global priority, non-communicable diseases like cancer continue to afflict millions, and their incidence continues to grow. “Services to catch and treat such diseases early should not stop,” said

Grossi. “We will continue our work so that the situation does not get any worse.”

The IAEA survey, carried out in April-May and published last month in the *Journal of Nuclear Medicine*, showed that nuclear medicine services in both high- and low income countries were affected by the pandemic, with an average decline of 54 per cent in diagnostic procedures in 434 responding medical centres across the world.

The survey noted that pandemic-related reductions in staff and reluctance of patients to visit clinics out of concern of risking COVID-19 exposure may have contributed to the decline of procedures globally.

The use of PET/CT scans to determine the location and spread of tumours decreased on average by 36 per cent, according to the survey. Procedures to detect cancer in lymph nodes – often the first place to show the spread of the disease – fell by 45 per cent. Imaging procedures for conditions such as thyroid disease plunged by two thirds, while lung and bone scans also more than halved.

Particularly striking was a decline in cardiac studies by 66 per cent, suggesting that patients could be delaying timely medical care that could impact survival chances.

“The findings of the IAEA survey have worrying implications for patient care, as late detection and intervention can turn treatable diseases into terminal ones,” said Grossi.

The availability of key medical isotopes was also disrupted, the survey showed, mostly due to lockdowns in countries and global transport restrictions. Insufficient supplies of ^{99m}Tc/⁹⁹Mo generators – devices used to extract the most used isotopes in nuclear

medicine procedures – affected Latin American countries severely, followed by Asia and Africa.

The IAEA plans a second survey to assess the situation one year after the first SARS-CoV-2 cases were reported in December 2019. “We unfortunately expect to see continued disruptions in diagnostic services, and possibly increasing regional differences, as the pandemic persists,” said Diana Paez, one of the survey’s lead authors and head of the IAEA Nuclear Medicine and Diagnostic Imaging Section. “These surveys can guide us in offering strategic assistance to countries during this challenging time.” During the pandemic, the IAEA produced technical guidance for nuclear medicine departments to continue services also during COVID-19. “The document offers information for practitioners to minimize the risk of COVID-19 infections among patients, staff and the public,” said Paez. The IAEA also provided health professionals worldwide with a wide range of resources, including webinars attended by over 2 400 participants from more than 110 Member States.

Even before the pandemic spread across the world, access to nuclear and radiation medicine were limited in many low- and middle-income countries. “One country in four does not have access to radiotherapy services, while 26 countries in Africa do not have a single radiotherapy machine. This is a scandal,” said Grossi at the virtual World Health Summit panel that included Fernando Ruiz Gomez, Minister of Health of Colombia, as well as prominent stakeholders from the private sector and leading clinical experts. “Radiotherapy is a cost-effective form of treatment for many cancers. With the right partnerships we can help and make a difference to improve the situation,” he said.



Rafael Mariano Grossi

TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

By Clara Bauman

The “Advent calendar” craze

Year after year, various brand names display their ingenuity and feel for glamour in creating ever more luxurious Advent calendars. Step into the season of celebration with the perfect calendar for everyone:



For lovers of “Body & Skin Care products”

This 3D Advent Calendar deserves its «Deluxe» designation. It includes a unique selection of 24 little luxuries (shampoo, shower gel, body cream, body mist, soap...) including four special Advent candles.

[\(\[rituals.com\]\(http://rituals.com\)\)](http://rituals.com)



For lovers of “Fragrances”

At first glance, the advent calendar resembles the iconic Acqua di Parma hatbox but once opened, it transforms into a luminous Italian home. Every window reveals a surprise, day after day. Discovering the complete Acqua di Parma universe is an abundance of small delights, from Colonia to Blu Mediterraneo, and from Le Nobili to the precious Signatures of the Sun fragrances and the Home collection. Can't wait for December 24th !

[\(\[acquadiparma.com\]\(http://acquadiparma.com\)\)](http://acquadiparma.com)



For lovers of “Mix and Match”

The Jo Malone Advent Calendar is filled with 24 surprises including Colognes, bath and body products and miniature candles. Infuse your everyday life with a selection of the signature fragrances renowned for their combinations that are as surprising as they are successful : Lime Basil & Mandarin, Vetiver & Golden Vanilla, English Pear & Freesia, Sweet Almond & Macaroon...

[\(\[jomalone.com\]\(http://jomalone.com\)\)](http://jomalone.com)



#OOTD

It stands for “Outfit of the day”, and is one of the most widely used hashtags on Instagram. In this period of quasi-generalised lockdown, the category known as “home wear” is no longer to be equated with idleness. Cosy, chic, winter pyjamas, sporty leggings and yoga sets are the ideal outfits to stay indoors with style. Our favourite : this set designed by Rituals, composed of a pair of trousers and a full-zip jacket in velvet . Not one ounce of embarrassment should a Zoom meeting come up unexpectedly.

[\(\[rituals.com\]\(http://rituals.com\)\)](http://rituals.com)



A Kind of Magic

Since 1895, Swarovski has been on a mission to add sparkle to people's lives all over the world. The Holiday collection is a further proof by showcasing a new twist on its classic styles.

Our absolute favourite: these earrings named “Magic”. Star-shaped elements surround the brilliant, stylised snowflake which forms the centrepiece of the design and takes its inspiration from the Swarovski Annual Edition Ornament.

Styling tip: with removable elements, the Magic earrings can be worn in a multitude of ways to let your personal style shine.

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

TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

By Clara Bauman

The Fashion Lovers' November Guide

Spotting and unravelling the 3 sustained trends that will stand out this autumn.



1. These boots are made for walking

To some, rainy weather means sacrificing style in order to stay dry. A piece of good news though : the time for compromises is over ! Following the trend in "rain boots" (thanks, you fashion influencers !), the classic (but often awful) green rubber boots have been replaced by ultra-stylish models : in patent black leather or with chunky soles...all variations are possible in order to stay chic in the rain.

Spotted: The iconic, bottle green 'Aigle' in a black version, designed for the stylish city-dweller.

(aigle.com)

With logo-printed, black patent leather boots...this is the way you step over puddles at Guess !

(guess.eu)



2. The return of the cape

Capes aren't just for magicians ! If you can't bear being overwhelmed by a big, bulky winter coat, this trend is perfect for you. Capes, blanket coats or ponchos... you're spoiled for choice if you intend spending a warm autumn while walking with a calculated nonchalance.

Spotted: Warm up your look with this Marciano Guess belted wool cape

(guess.eu)

This open front cape is versatility incarnate : casual or chic...or both at the same time !

(massimodutti.com)



3. The croco effect

Croco-effect leather bags are one of the members of the prestigious "it-bag" family.

Spotted: This Ming croco-print bag by The Kooples is an absolute must-have for your trendy looks. Thanks to its medium size, you can take it anywhere you like, over your shoulder or cross-body, thanks to the adjustable and detachable handle

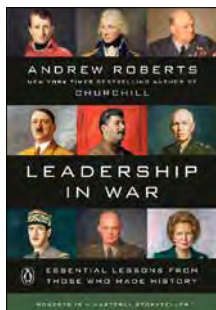
(thekooples.com)

The iconic mini-bag by Chloé comes in 7 sumptuous colours. "Stormy grey", "Tawny Orange", "Army Khaki" ... some serious "head-scratching" in the offing !

(chloe.com)



BOOKS



LEADERSHIP IN WAR

By Andrew Roberts

ESSENTIAL LESSONS FROM THOSE WHO MADE HISTORY

A comparison of nine leaders who led their nations through the greatest wars the world has ever seen and whose unique strengths—and weaknesses—shaped the course of human history, from the bestselling, award-winning author of Churchill and Napoleon

“Has the enjoyable feel of a lively dinner table conversation with an opinionated guest.” —The

New York Times Book Review

Taking us from the French Revolution to the Cold War, Andrew Roberts presents a bracingly honest and deeply insightful look at nine major figures in modern history: Napoleon Bonaparte, Horatio Nelson, Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, George C. Marshall, Charles de Gaulle, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Margaret Thatcher.

Each of these leaders fundamentally shaped the outcome of the war in which their nation was embroiled. Is war leadership unique, or did these leaders have something in common, traits and techniques that transcend time and place and can be applied to the essential nature of conflict?

Meticulously researched and compellingly written, *Leadership in War* presents readers with fresh, complex portraits of leaders who approached war with different tactics and weapons, but with the common goal of success in the face of battle. Both inspiring and cautionary, these portraits offer important lessons on leadership in times of struggle, unease, and discord. With his trademark verve and incisive observation, Roberts reveals the qualities that doom even the most promising leaders to failure, as well as the traits that lead to victory.



THE COMRADE FROM MILAN

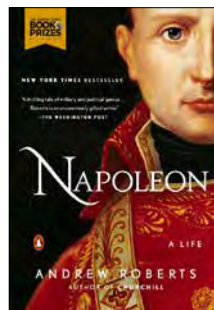
By Rossana Rossanda

In this much-lauded memoir, acclaimed for its blend of literary elegance and political passion, Rossana Rossanda, a legendary figure on the Italian left, reflects on a life of radical commitment.

Active as a communist militant in the Italian Resistance against fascism during World War Two, Rossanda rose rapidly in its aftermath, becoming editor of the Communist Party weekly paper and a member of parliament. Initially a party loyalist,

she was critical of the party's conservatism in the face of new radical movements and moved into opposition during the late 1960s. The breach widened after she and others publicly opposed the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and were expelled in 1969. She went on to help found the influential paper *il manifesto*, which remains the most critical daily in Berlusconi's Italy.

Her unique experience enables her to reconstruct that period with flair and authority. She paints a revealing picture of fascism, communism, post-war reconstruction and the revolts that shook Europe in the 1960s. In *The Comrade from Milan*, one of the most influential intellectuals of the European Left relives the storms of the twentieth century. Both cool-headed and precise, Rossanda provides a rare insight into what it once meant to be politically engaged.



NAPOLEON

By Andrew Roberts

A LIFE

The definitive biography of the great soldier-statesman by the acclaimed author of *The Storm of War*—winner of the LA Times Book prize, finalist for the Plutarch prize, winner of the Fondation Napoleon prize and a New York Times bestseller

“A thrilling tale of military and political genius... Roberts is an uncommonly gifted

writer.” —The Washington Post

Austerlitz, Borodino, Waterloo: his battles are among the greatest in history, but Napoleon Bonaparte was far more than a military genius and astute leader of men. Like George Washington and his own hero Julius Caesar, he was one of the greatest soldier-statesmen of all times.

Andrew Roberts's *Napoleon* is the first one-volume biography to take advantage of the recent publication of Napoleon's thirty-three thousand letters, which radically transform our understanding of his character and motivation. At last we see him as he was: protean multitasker, decisive, surprisingly willing to forgive his enemies and his errant wife Josephine. Like Churchill, he understood the strategic importance of telling his own story, and his memoirs, dictated from exile on St. Helena, became the single bestselling book of the nineteenth century.

An award-winning historian, Roberts traveled to fifty-three of Napoleon's sixty battle sites, discovered crucial new documents in archives, and even made the long trip by boat to St. Helena. He is as acute in his understanding of politics as he is of military history. Here at last is a biography worthy of its subject: magisterial, insightful, beautifully written, by one of our foremost historians.



THE LOOMING TOWER (MOVIE TIE-IN)

By Lawrence Wright

AL-QAEDA AND THE ROAD TO 9/11

The bestselling, Pulitzer Prize-winning account of the history of 9/11: the basis for the original Hulu series starring Alec Baldwin, Peter Sarsgaard, Jeff Daniels, and Tahar Rahim.

A gripping narrative that spans five decades, *The Looming Tower* explains in unprecedented detail the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, the rise of al-Qaeda, and the intelligence failures that

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

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