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Putin shows off
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remain part of the
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VADIM KRASNOSELSKY

President of a Republic in Limbo

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Nikola Hendrickx

EDITORIAL

EUROPE FACES THE CHALLENGE OF MASS VACCINATION

The year 2020 ended on a note of some optimism and hope with the expected arrival of vaccines as the only effective weapon against Covid-19. However, the new year began in confusion in several European countries, where vaccination campaigns have been launched under particularly difficult logistical as well as, in many cases, psychological conditions.

Yet, the fact that there are any vaccines at all is quite an achievement. It is first of all, a scientific and industrial feat: we must surely acknowledge the extraordinary human effort made by researchers, the pharmaceutical industry and the authorities of many developed countries, that have provided the necessary funding to allow laboratories to carry out in record time and without cutting corners, as well as the extensive research, whose profitability was far from being guaranteed.

And then, the political and diplomatic feat of the European Union that brought about the conditions that would prevent a race for vaccines developing between member states. Such a competition would have had even more disastrous consequences than those caused by shortages of masks in the spring of 2020. The supply in vaccines for the 27 Member States was centralised by the European Commission which also took charge of distributing the doses in proportion to the population of each country. The European Union ordered some 2 billion doses from six pharmaceutical companies, for a total population of 450 million without prior knowledge as to which vaccine would become available first.

Critical voices

It is not difficult to imagine the inequalities and the impact on prices that unregulated competition between member states would have generated. Together with the massive stimulus plan to support European economies, this is undoubtedly the most positive decision taken by the EU in 2020. Even Hungary, which had challenged Brussels by welcoming the Russian Sputnik vaccine to great fanfare in November 2020, finally opted for vaccines licensed and distributed by the EU. The implementation of vaccination campaigns whose operating procedures are set by each member state as it sees fit, is however a complex undertaking. National governments are dependent on directives from the European Medicines Agency (EMA) which is responsible for approving the availability of the vaccine on the market.

The United Kingdom, which left the EU, was able to begin vaccinating its population in early December under the threat of an uncontrolled outbreak of the pandemic. Germany asked the EMA to speed up the roll-out and even began vaccinations on 26 December, twenty-four hours before the scheduled date set by the EU. This was due to the growing impatience of German public opinion since it is one of its own firms, BioNTech, which co-produced the first vaccine with the American company Pfizer. However, after inoculating the first dose to 238,000 people - primarily medical staff - the German authorities seem to be marking time, just like the British who vaccinated 1 million people. "These difficulties, for the moment, are not due to the volume of orders, but to the global insufficiency of production capacities", said European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella Kyriakides, in the face of mounting criticism in Germany. On 6 January 2021, the EMA approved a second vaccine, manufactured by the American firm Moderna, which is expected to boost existing stocks.

The Netherlands decided to begin vaccinations as late as 8 January, 2021. Consequently, the Dutch government has come in for some severe criticism for its "shameful" vaccination strategy. Opposition voices in parliament called the approach "chaotic and confusing". Other than Netherlands' rather inflexible, bureaucratic health system, one of the reasons for the delay was reportedly due to the internet. An IT system had to be upgraded in order to allow doctors to track appointments and check which vaccine individual patients had received.

Criticism also ran high in France. After the first week, when neighbouring Germany had inoculated around 250,000 people, France was on a mere 530. The problem doesn't seem to be due to shortages but rather to slowness and lack of preparation. But the most important reason is the cumbersome and over-centralised nature of France's health bureaucracy. For example, a 45-page dossier of instructions issued by the ministry of health in Paris had to be read and understood by staff at old people's homes.

There is also the high level of skepticism towards vaccination in France where, according to polls, some 55% of the public are against the injection. This has caused the government to be over-cautious and therefore slower to act. But politically, this has had harmful effects. The French government has already come under severe criticism for shortcomings in providing masks and tests. Now, opposition voices are calling the delay in vaccinations a "state scandal".

As is the case for the other stages of the pandemic, the vaccination phase requires flexibility, humility and organisation. Some have them more than others.

However, the French vaccination rates gradually picked up and up to January 8, 2021 a total of more than 80,000 medical staff and vulnerable people among the population had received the injection.

New concerns

Many countries fear another resurgence after the end of year holiday season. The concern is even greater as the SARS-CoV-2 variant seen in the UK continues to spread around the world. The new strain is considered by British authorities to be 50 to 74% more contagious than other mutations in the new coronavirus. In Denmark, 86 cases of the new variant were recorded at the beginning of 2021. The Danish Infectious Disease Control Agency (SSI) has warned that the spread of a more contagious variant of the virus can lead to a steeper epidemic curve, which means that infection prevention measures will have to be strengthened or at least, maintained for longer so as to keep the epidemic under control.

The virus VoC 202012/01 has been detected in Turkey in fifteen people who recently traveled to the UK; flights to and from the two countries have been suspended until further notice. The British territory of Gibraltar announced a new two-week lockdown due to a sharp increase in cases, for which authorities suspect the new variant identified in the United Kingdom. Italy postponed the opening of its ski resorts as regional authorities consider that the conditions have not been met for an immediate opening. The Principality of Andorra has opted for opening its ski resorts, but only for residents.

Europe lagging behind

France produces only 5% of the biological drugs it needs. These are drugs derived from biotechnology, which is booming, especially in the fight against cancer.

But why are these quantities so low? Well, the answer is that it's not about technology but more to do with the depletion of the industrial sites that produce them. Ten years ago, France was the leading manufacturer of medicines in Europe, all types of medicines combined. Today, they are in fourth position. But more broadly, it is all of Europe that produces less and imports more. This dependence results from the absence of a coherent industrial policy, while the United States, China and to a lesser extent Russia are much more proactive. If the Covid crisis were to initiate a sort of kick-start to the European life sciences industry, then it will have been beneficial, at least to that extent.

Trajan Dereville



THE PRINCE OF NEPHELOKOKKYGIA

The man leading one of the world's least-known (and even less well understood) countries

Literature and musical comedy (plus a few movies and computer games) have given us a wealth of fictional place names. There's Ruritania, for instance, first created in Anthony Hope's 19th century novel, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, and still often bandied about as a name for a Middle or East European country that doesn't exist. Or how about Bordaria – familiar to fans of Belgium's *TinTin*? There's Lichtenburg, where Ethel Merman supposedly was in the musical, *Call Me Madam*; the aptly-named *Vulgaria* of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* fame or Sir Winston Churchill's *Laurania*. And, of course, there's always the kingdom in Aristophanes' comedy, *The Birds*, known as *Nephelokokkygia* (Νεφέλοκοκκυγία) which literally means the rather more familiar-sounding *Cloud Cuckoo Land*. *Cloud Cuckoo Land* is a name often used, in a somewhat derogatory way, for fantasy places or situations, without

knowing that Aristophanes created it in 414 BCE for his kingdom of birds, led by a Hoopoe who has, it seems, been transformed from Tereus, the legendary king of Thrace (and, incidentally, the son of Mars and Bistonis, who is, in fact, a lake. Those Ancient Greeks got up to some very strange acts). Among this plethora of fictional kingdoms, one might be tempted to place Transnistria, which is almost equally unfamiliar to (and unvisited by) most people. But the difference, of course – and it's a very important one – is that Transnistria actually exists. Officially, it's called the *Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic* (PMR) and it occupies the narrow strip of land between the river Dniester and the Ukrainian border and is internationally recognized as part of Moldova, although its citizens deny this.

Wired.com describes Transnistria as a "thin strip of land wedged between Moldova and Ukraine. It is home to

more than 500,000 people and has a parliamentary government, a standing army, and its own currency. It has all the trappings of an independent nation but isn't." In fact, it is only recognised at all by three similarly disputed "countries" that are similarly not recognised by the majority of countries. Where does that leave its leader, Vadim Krasnoselsky? He was elected in 2016 as the President of Transnistria after serving as Speaker of the Transnistrian Supreme Council (effectively the Parliament) with more than 62% of the votes. It was quite an impressive victory, given that there were six candidates. But Transnistria is an odd place, where voters hold the local justice system in low regard: two candidates with roots in the judiciary did especially badly: Aleksandr Deli, the Prosecutor General, got just over 0.5% of the vote, while Vladimir Grigorev, the former head of the Constitutional Court, did little better, with 0.7%.



One of the founding fathers of Tiraspol Alexander Suvorov (1730-1800)

What do we know about Krasnoselsky? Apparently, he believes in constitutional monarchy, which is in itself strange for a man whose country (if it really is a country) still follows the style of the old Soviet Union. He was born in the Zabaykalsky District of what was then the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. According to Wikipedia, the Zabaykalsky District “is an administrative and municipal district or ‘raion’, one of the thirty-one in Zabaykalsky Krai, Russia. It is located in the southeast of the krai and borders with Borzinsky District in the north (and) Krasnokamensky District in the east.” Krasnoselsky graduated from the Military Aviation Engineer Higher School in Kharkiv in 1993 and joined the Transnistrian Security Service, rising to become a high ranking official in the Ministry of the Interior. Rather oddly, then, he says he favours the idea of constitutional kings (and, presumably, queens). He has already reinstituted the traditional New Year balls, where he has been seen dancing with his wife, Svetlana Krasnoselskaya, a philologist and teacher of Russian.

During his campaign to become Transnistria’s third president, he is claimed to have said: “I am a monarchist by nature. From my youth I had strictly built monarchical views. I am a supporter of monarchism, limited constitutional monarchism, and take the experience of the Russian Empire as a basis.” He would presumably get on well with all those strange British people who drape themselves with Union flags and sit out on wet pavements in the rain for days on end, just to get a glimpse of some royal person who is due to pass that way.



Generalissimo Alexander Suvorov



Kharkiv University of Air Force

He has even suggested raising statues of famous Tsarist-era Russian heroes, such as Generalissimo Alexander Suvorov and one-time Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin. Do they deserve such honour? No, this is not a quiz question; few people other than Krasnoselskaya are likely to know the answers. Suvorov was a commander during the Russo-Turkish war of 1787-1792, winning several notable victories for Tsarist Russia. He also put down a Polish uprising in 1794, so he’s unlikely to have been popular in Warsaw, which he stormed, but he was undoubtedly a hero in Russian royal circles.

Stolypin was born in Dresden, Germany, to a high-ranking Russian family of aristocrats. He granted peasants the right to own land – an unpopular move with his reactionary colleagues although welcomed by peasants, of course – but was suspected by the Bolsheviks of being a German agent. He imposed martial law in response to revolutionary unrest and was shot in Kyiv by Dmitry Bogrov, a former secret member of the Tsar’s secret police, the Okhrana, who had seemingly (if unconvincingly) embraced revolutionary Socialism. However, according to the author Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn, he killed Stolypin at the behest of Russia’s extreme reactionaries and landowners as a punishment for his agrarian reforms. Even so, he had changed the way the Duma operated in order to favour the nobility and weaken the power of the lower classes, so he’s an odd hero for a supposed Socialist. He was shot while attending a performance of Rimsky-Korsakov’s opera, *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*, at the Opera House in Kyiv (still a splendid edifice that’s well worth visiting), despite having been warned not to attend. For all his record of very limited reforms, he still seems a strange choice for a statue in a country (sort of) that still includes the hammer and sickle on a red background as part of its flag.

RAISE THE FLAG! (NO, NOT THAT ONE)

Krasnoselsky certainly seems to be an odd mixture. He eagerly took part in National Unity Day, even though it commemorates an event that happened while Russia was still ruled by a Tsar. Indeed, it was celebrated nationally across Russia before the October revolution. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin would have hated it. Krasnoselsky told journalists “The roots of the tradition of



© Wikipedia

Dmitry Pozharsky (left) and Kuzma Minin

celebrating the Day of National Unity go back to the distant past. The year 1612. The people's militia led by Pozharsky and Minin liberated the capital of Russia, Moscow, from the Polish invaders. It was then, with victory, that Pozharsky entered the liberated Kitai-Gorod with the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God. None of those remarks could have come from Lenin, Leon Trotsky, or even Joseph Stalin, who had attended the Tiflis Theological Seminary and whose mother had wanted him to become a priest. Krasnoselsky is clearly cut from very different cloth. But so is Transnistria, of course. Despite it clinging to the old ideas of the Soviet Union in many ways, its independence isn't even recognised by Moscow, let alone other members of the United Nations. There are still elderly people in Russia who raise the old Soviet flag in Moscow and long for a return to the old days – I stood and watched them gather outside a metro station there once – but most people seemed to ignore them. Meanwhile Transnistria waves its own version of the hammer and sickle while its president looks to the days of tsarism for inspiration. That did not stop him, during his inauguration speech, from promising to integrate Transnistria into the Eurasian Economic Union, a free trade zone created by Russia whose member states include Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. It could not easily be confused with the European Union.

According to the agency Novosti Pridnestrovyia, Krasnoselsky's speech, back in April 2020, was mainly concerned with the Russia that existed before Lenin made his historic train journey from Zurich to what was Petrograd's (now St. Petersburg's)

Finland Station and ultimate control of the world's first Communist state. Indeed, the speech referred back to a much more ancient past. "If we take the history of Pridnestrovie," he said, "then it – the history of our land, our cities and regions – is inextricably linked with the history of Russia – the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union." It's clearly the earlier history, however, that was in his mind when he spoke about the region's capital. "Tiraspol owes its appearance on the map to Catherine II and then Field Marshall Suvorov," he told journalists. "The city was created as a military garrison; the construction of the Middle Fortress began. All these have become symbols of Tiraspol."

And this is where it begins to get rather strange for a Socialist republic. "It is enough to look at the monument to Catherine," he said. "In the arch there are eternal sentries, the eternal guard of Catherine Park – the Suvorov Grenadiers, who are also the first residents of Tiraspol." Catherine the Great is currently the subject of a dramatized biographical movie on British television, in which it is claimed

that she was deeply involved in the death of her husband, Peter, although that was already well known. Politics could be fatal back then.

Peter was neurotic, cruel, probably alcoholic, possibly impotent and incredibly stupid. He was also German by birth and hated Prussia's long-term enemy, Russia, which meant he was not the best person to be Tsar. On the other hand, Catherine, although also German by birth, was devoted to her adopted country, learning its language and converting to Eastern Orthodoxy, and firmly committed to improving the Russian way of life. She had first met Peter when she was ten and hated him on sight. He was ten years old at the time, already a heavy drinker and he played with toy soldiers, rather than with her. During Peter's lifetime Catherine had the first of at least three lovers, one of whom (not the first) fathered the child who would become the heir to the throne.

Catherine's mother, Johanna Elisabeth von Holstein-Gottorp, was banned from Russia for spying on behalf of Prussia's King Frederick II. In fact, Catherine's sharing of the throne with her husband lasted only for half a year. On a night in July 1762, Catherine was informed that one of her co-conspirators had been arrested by her husband, who was residing in a neighbouring palace at the time, and that all their plans to displace him must be brought forward dramatically. The following day, she delivered a speech to the Ismailovsky Regiment, asking them to protect her from her husband. She and the regiment then went to the Semenovskiy Barracks where a well-briefed clergy were waiting to ordain her as sole Empress. She had Peter arrested and forced him to abdicate. Eight days later he died, allegedly of an



President Vadim Krasnoselsky ordered the creation of a Monument of Catherine the Great in Tiraspol in remembrance of her key role in the history of the city



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Vadim Krasnoselsky and his wife Svetlana

illness but almost certainly assassinated by one of Catherine's court favourites. Politics was a rather forceful occupation in those days. Even so and despite her reforms, Catherine the Great seems an odd heroine for a man who is supposed to admire the Soviet way of doing things.

GLORIOUS PAST; FOGGY FUTURE

In case you think this means that Krasnoselsky lacks devotion to Russia's Soviet past, you would be wrong. He has praised Russia's role in defeating Hitler's Nazis, for instance. "It is the Russian world that has defeated, overthrown the fascist plague. Therefore, the Russian world has always been the saviour; it enables all nations to live safely in any historical space," he told a television programme. The history of Pridnestrovie (Transnistria), he told the studio audience, is inextricably linked to the history of Russia. "We have experienced together both tragedies and victories. And so it will be in the future." Georgy Zhukov would have been proud of such a comment; he was often angered

by the memoirs of Wehrmacht generals who blamed Germany's defeat on errors by Hitler, Russian weather or the Red Army's weight of numbers. In his book 'Stalin's General', Geoffrey Roberts was on Zhukov's side. "What none of them would admit, according to Zhukov," he wrote, "was that superior Soviet generalship was the primary reason they had lost the war." That is clearly a view that Krasnoselsky would share.

Krasnoselsky served as a member of the Supreme Council of Transnistria, as its sixth Speaker and then as the seventh Minister of the Interior. Leaving school in 1987 he began to study in Odessa but gave it up after a year in favour of the Military Aviation Engineer Higher School in Kharkiv, graduating in 1993. He took a degree in law in 2002. As leader of a pro-Russian country whose independence isn't even recognised by Russia, he made his first major state visit to Sukhumi for the Independence Day celebrations in Abkhazia, a partially recognised state in the South Caucasus which is generally seen as part of Georgia, albeit a breakaway part,

much as Transnistria is seen as a part of Moldova. Unlike, Transnistria, however, which is only recognised as independent by Abkhazia, the Republic of Artsakh and South Ossetia (none of them recognised themselves by the UN) the independence of Abkhazia is recognised in a few places: Russia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Nauru and Syria. I'm sure you will begin to detect a pattern here.

During a visit to Russia in December 2020, Krasnoselsky held talks with Konstantin Kosachev, a Russian politician and diplomat who is a senator at the Federation Council, the Duma's Upper House, and who chairs its Foreign Affairs Committee.

During their discussion, Kosachev noted that on the eve of 2021, the geopolitical situation demands "closer interaction with the Pridnestrovian side". Music to the ears of Krasnoselsky, I should imagine, whatever Kosachev may think of Catherine the Great.



© Wikipedia

Konstantin Kosachev senator at the Federation Council (Russian parliament's upper house) chairman of its Foreign Affairs Committee.



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Vadim Krasnoselsky presiding a plenary meeting of the PMR Supreme Council



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President Vadim Krasnoselsky with deputies of the State Duma of the Russian Federation at the Official Representation of Pridnestrovie in Moscow in December 2020

He also met with Dmitry Kozak, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation. Krasnoselsky assured Kozak that he “appreciated the existing systemic nature of Russian-Pridnestrovian interaction and expressed special gratitude to the leadership of the Russian Federation for the long-term successful peacekeeping operation that has maintained peace and stability on the Dniester for more than 28 years”. Don’t worry, Mr. Krasnoselsky: they’re not going to go away any time soon.



President Vadim Krasnoselsky and Dmitry Kozak Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation

The President took the opportunity to meet with members of the Duma’s lower house, where discussions touched upon such issues as providing Russian compatriots who live in the PMR with various forms of social and humanitarian support and the possibility of making it easier for Pridnestrovians to obtain Russian citizenship, among other things. Krasnoselsky made the most of his visit to Moscow, taking the opportunity to hold discussions with Farit Mukhametshin, who is Deputy Chair of the Federation Council’s Committee on International Affairs. Much of the discussion centred on relations with Moldova and the tensions that remain between Tiraspol and the Moldovan capital, Chişinău, which Krasnoselsky accuses of not fulfilling its obligations to Transnistria. Russia, of course, enjoys stoking up resentment all round because it strengthens Moscow’s hand in future negotiations and because it helps to polish up Vladimir Putin’s image as an international peacemaker.



Transnistrian President Vadim Krasnoselsky (left) with Moldovan President Igor Dodon in 2019

That is not how he is seen by Maia Sandu, the new President of Moldova, who defeated the pro-Russian incumbent in November’s election (her predecessor stood accused of embezzlement and her opponents made accusations against her, too. It’s how elections are conducted there). Her election platform called for a balancing of the ex-Soviet country’s ties with Moscow and said the Russian troops should be replaced by civilian observers from Europe. Russia has some 1,500 troops in Transnistria. On a Russian news site, RBC, Sandu told viewers that those troops should leave. “Russia says that the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF) guards ammunition depots here,” she said, “but there are no bilateral agreements on the OGRF and on the weapons depots. These weapons depots are a big problem for us. It’s dangerous. These weapons need to be removed and the OGRF needs to be withdrawn.” Sandu is more dynamic and less pro-Moscow than her predecessor but it’s unlikely that Putin is listening. Indeed, the Kremlin has said that any change to the OGRF would “destabilize” Transnistria. RBC has estimated that around 1,000 of the Russian troops are guarding more than

20,000 metric tonnes of ammunition at a decommissioned depot in Transnistria.

Additionally, there are around 400 “peacekeepers” deployed in a demilitarised zone as part of a Moldovan-Transnistrian-Russian monitoring commission. “There’s a 1992 agreement on peacekeepers,” Sandu said. “We believe that there’s no threat of renewed military operations on our territory. We believe that this mission should be transformed into an OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) civilian observer mission”.

GETTING A PART IN ‘THE GODFATHER’?

Sandu is not the only leader to emerge from an election in which both sides had been accused of financial impropriety. Before the vote, Krasnoselski faced the then incumbent, Yevgeny Shevchuk, across a TV studio and instead of debating, delivered a monologue before walking out of the studio. He told his opponent on this very public platform “Your suggestion to have a private conversation between us loses any sense, until you, Mr President, reveal the activities of your business ventures; until you return to the state coffers all the gas money stolen through off-shore companies; until you reveal the names of all those who are guilty.” Dynamic stuff, to which he added this parting line: “A thief should be in prison.”

However, Shevchuk avoided prosecution and took up residence in, of all places, Moldova. The Jamestown Foundation, in an on-line report, explained Transnistria’s ongoing political upheavals like this: “As the new leadership in Transnistria consolidates power in what is an intra-elite power struggle, the Russian State



Vadim Krasnoselsky- “I am sure that only together with Russia will our country live in peace and prosperity”



© Wikipedia

Yevgeny Shevchuk and Igor Nikolaevich Smirnov who served as presidents of the internationally unrecognized Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic

Duma approved a declaration on what it views as negative developments around Transnistria. Specifically, the Duma resolution blames Moldova and Ukraine for allegedly jeopardizing the security and stability of the region by introducing joint checkpoints on the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian border and by obstructing Russia's regional military presence." This was stated in the Russian State Duma. In the Foundation's Eurasia Daily Monitor, it continues: "After winning the "presidential" race in Transnistria last December Vadim Krasnoselski—who is backed by the most powerful local oligarch, the head of Sheriff

Company, Victor Gusan—has been seeking to do away with any potential challengers. Despite losing the election to Krasnoselski, former 'president' Shevchuk has retained some popular support and remains the leader of the weak but vocal political opposition in Transnistria." In other words it's all a bit of a mess, so watch this space. The fact that Shevchuk was able to escape from Transnistria without prosecution suggests the involvement of Russia, still pulling the strings (or at least quite a few of them) behind the scenes. But there again, some of the charges against Shevchuk would also cast a shadow over Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry

Rogozin, who serves as Putin's special envoy for Transnistria. Furthermore, it's widely believed that Transnistria's leaders have only been able to get their hands in the till with the help of Moldova and/or Ukraine. As the poet Robbie Burns said of the Scottish aristocracy when the country became united with England, "Such a parcel of rogues in one nation." Or in this case, three nations. OK; two and a half, then.

The whole sorry affair falls into the same unhappy category as Russia's annexation of Crimea and its creation of the supposed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) in eastern Ukraine. Incidentally, the DPR is not only not recognised in Kyiv but even Russia sees it as part of Ukraine. In reality, it comes down to pinching sympathetic bits of countries that are unsympathetic to Russia and making them Moscow proxies. Russia certainly plays a big part in Transnistria and Krasnoselsky has promised to integrate it into the Eurasian Economic Union, even though most of Transnistria's exports go to the EU and the fact that it has no border in common with Russia. His promise has been compared with Sandu's promise to integrate Moldova into the EU: effectively undeliverable. Russia remains the bastion against westernisation for former Soviet states. Whatever sort of regime Putin is now running, it is a very far cry from the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" described by Lenin in "The State and Revolution" in 1917. That, he wrote, could only be achieved through violent revolution and Russia's current oligarchy is nothing like he imagined for Communist Russia. It seems unlikely to emerge in Transnistria, either, under a president who idolises Catherine the Great. But there again, Krasnoselski had had the backing of Transnistria's biggest company, Sheriff, which has fingers in a great many pies, albeit those on the relatively small shelf of Transnistria. And Sheriff also supported his predecessor at one time. Since the governance of Transnistria seems to run rather like events in the 1972 film, *The Godfather*, it would be as well to recall the words of Don Vito Corleone, played by the inimitable Marlon Brando: "A friend should always underestimate your virtues and an enemy overestimate your faults." That could apply to Putin as well as to Krasnoselski.

Robin Crow



© Gaspmt

The PMR President and his wife casting his vote on amendments to the Constitution of Russia in July 2020 declaring that Pridnestrovians always take part in the electoral processes of the Russian Federation, demonstrating active citizenship and unity with the Russians



A military parade at the main square of Tiraspol, the capital of Transnistria

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE PAST

Transnistria: the happy little country that doesn't exist

Officially, it doesn't really exist in the normal sense, yet half a million people live there. In documents, it calls itself the 'Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic' (or 'PMR'), but most people know it as Transnistria, a 400-kilometre-long but narrow remnant of the Soviet Union wedged between Moldova and Ukraine. Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin and Josef Stalin could stroll there unconcerned, surrounded by statues of themselves and hammer-and-sickle flags flying in the breeze, the only such place in the world. It's as if the intervening years never happened. And yet Transnistria's young people seem happy and somehow less concerned about how best to seek success and how to get their hands on the latest mobile phone than their western counterparts. Street crime is relatively rare, but large-scale corruption is not. It wasn't always so tranquil. Between 1990 and 1992, Transnistrian troops fought a bloody battle for separation from the newly independent state of Moldova. It was Russia that brokered a ceasefire and remains a 'guarantor' of peaceful co-existence, which means it has stationed

troops there which are proving very difficult to get rid of. Geographically, Transnistria is still part of Moldova, although sited on the other side of the Dniester river, hence the name. It is even recognised as part of Moldova by the European Union, some of whose goods are available there.

The issue of Transnistria arose when the Soviet Union collapsed and its mainly Russian-speaking inhabitants refused to become part of Moldova, at least in the political sense. The current situation seems unlikely to change any time soon, despite Moldova's newly-elected President, Maia Sandu, calling for Russian troops to leave.

In a press conference, Sandu pointed out that Moldova had never been a party to any agreement for Russian troops to be stationed there. She reminded the media that Moldova had for a long time insisted that the troops should be replaced by civilian monitors under the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The idea of withdrawal was dismissed as



Maia Sandu,



Russian peacekeeping forces in Transnistria



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov

“irresponsible” by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in December 2020, which hardly came as a surprise. He may have had ulterior motives, after all: when Russia unilaterally annexed Crimea, Transnistria asked to become part of Russia, too. So far, it remains “the invisible state”. Sandu won the Moldovan presidency despite Moscow’s open backing for her rival and sitting president, Igor Dodon, with the declared aim of balancing relations with East and West.

If I have given the impression that everything in Transnistria is hunky-dory, although locked in the Soviet past, that would be wrong. The territory is still subject to the “restrictive measures” imposed by the European Union. Under the restrictions, “member states of the EU shall take necessary measures to prevent the entry into, or transit through, their territories of persons responsible for obstructing the political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, and campaigns of intimidation and closure of schools using the Latin script in the breakaway territory.” The restrictions were again extended in 2020 to the following year. The Transnistrian authorities labelled the latest extension

“inappropriate” and said: “This is an unfortunate misunderstanding and we call on the Council of the European Union to abandon the fixed approach that hampers the consolidation of constructive practices in the process of regulating Moldovan-Transnistrian relations and undermines the authority of the EU as an observer in the 5+2 consultative format.” Most of the people I have met and spoken to in Moldova have expressed very little sympathy with the breakaway region and quite a lot of fear of Russia.

That’s why many of them have taken advantage of Romania’s offer to obtain a Romanian passport, making them de facto EU citizens. They were genuinely, openly fearful of a Russian invasion and takeover.

The Council of the European Union first imposed travel restrictions on members of the Transnistrian leadership in February 2003. The European Court of Human Rights, in a number of cases, most notably *Catan and Others v. Republic of Moldova and Russia*, has ruled that the language policy of the breakaway territory, which forbids the use of the Latin alphabet in schools, violates the right to education. Article 14 of the European Convention provides that: “The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in [the] Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status.” The applicants in this case complained that they had been discriminated against on grounds of their ethnicity and language. Requiring Moldovans to study in an “artificial language” (they presumably

mean Transnistrian-accented Russian), unrecognised outside Transnistria, caused them educational, private and family life disadvantages not experienced by the members of the other main communities in Transnistria, namely Russians and Ukrainians. The Court ruled in the applicants’ favour by 16 votes to 1, rejecting an objection from the Russian judge and awarded them more than €6,000 each in compensation, which Russia refused to pay.

FROZEN CONFLICTS



Political map of Transnistria with the differences between the Autonomous Dniestrian Territory de jure and the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic de facto

Transnistria had since 1924, together with a number of other territories which are now part of Ukraine, been part of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The population of Transnistria was originally composed principally of Ukrainians and Moldovans/Romanians, but from the 1920s onwards it was subject to significant immigration by industrial workers from elsewhere in the Soviet Union, particularly Russians and Ukrainians. In a census organised by the Soviet Union in 1989, the population of Transnistria was assessed at 679,000, composed ethnically and linguistically of 40% Moldovan, 28% Ukrainian, 24% Russian and 8% others. Politically, though, most seem to identify as followers of Moscow rather than the Moldovan capital, Chişinău. The Council of Europe is still actively engaged in what are called “confidence building measures” (CBMs) in the fields of human and social rights, media, education, civil society, children’s rights,



Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, Army General Sergey Shoygu and PMR President Vadim Krasnoselsky during a visit in Pristina

the rights of people with disabilities, cultural heritage, health within prisons and drug control. Where prison health is concerned, the issue is mainly about the treatment of prisoners suffering from infectious diseases.

The Council also wants prison staff and inmates to be made more aware of how to prevent, control and care for such illnesses as TB, HIV and Hepatitis. It also seeks closer cooperation between Chişinău and Tiraspol (the capital of Transnistria) in the field of deinstitutionalisation of children with disabilities. In addition, the Council wants to see greater respect for human rights “in line with the standards of the European Social Charter and other international instruments”. So basically life is OK in Transnistria, as long as your horizons don’t stretch further than Russia.

No United Nations member recognises the independence of Transnistria, which it declared in 1990. The only ‘countries’ that do (although they’re not ‘real’ countries) are Abkhazia (an area of the South Caucasus that most other countries see as part of Georgia), the Republic of Artsakh (more commonly known as the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and really part of Armenia, which considers it a breakaway territory) and South Ossetia (another self-declared state that is geographically part of Georgia), all of which are struggling for recognition themselves. These are in a state of what is called “frozen conflict”: the bullets aren’t flying but there’s no love lost between the opposing sides. Thus we have one unreal state only recognised by three others; the break-up of the Soviet Union did leave an almighty mess. However, it seems that Transnistria is viewed in Moscow as a model for how to handle Ukraine’s recalcitrant region around Donbass.



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visiting the 169th training center “Desna” of the Ground Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine

The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, was only a teenager when Russian troops entered the region in the early 1990s ‘to keep the peace’. They’re still there, of course. That’s why Zelensky is, he says, “very cautious” about deploying his own peacekeeping forces to police the ceasefire in the Donbass area, where Ukrainian troops are still facing pro-Russian separatists. “I am cautious,” he said at a press conference in Kyiv, “because I do not want a scenario similar to Abkhazia or Transnistria to be applied in Donbass.” It seems, however, that Moscow sees Transnistria as a model for other rebel regions like Donbass: areas with limited independence, backed with Russian military might and looking to Russia for leadership and support.

Could this be the favoured forerunner for frozen conflicts in what Russia sees as its post-Soviet ‘sphere of influence’? We must remember, however, that despite having troops stationed there, not even Russia recognises Transnistria as an independent country. Transnistrians can obtain Transnistrian passports but they are only valid in Abkhazia, the Republic of Artsakh and South Ossetia, which is somewhat limiting. There are no flights in or out of Transnistria, either.

If you are interested in the folklore of Transnistria, try looking up “Transnistria fairy stories” on-line. What you get are articles about the Transnistrian currency: the Transnistrian ruble, which is not convertible into any other currency. It’s a bit of a message, really, although one of the coins does feature the famous firebird. The firebird is part of a popular Russian folk tale, in which a huntsman ends up seeking the bird on behalf of a heartless tsar. He finds it in the end, marries the magic princess (naturally) and the wicked tsar ends up dying, in this case in a cauldron of boiling water.

Cheery tales for little ones! It’s a popular emblem on Transnistrian coinage, it seems, (the bird, not the boiled tsar) although I cannot find any reason to link the story with Transnistria. Having once been part of Moldova, which had itself once been a part of Romania, perhaps we should take note of some Romanian folk tales, of which there are many, mainly miserable. For example there is one about the childless royal pair promised a child as long as it could be granted eternal youth (something we would all



Transnistrian passport

like to have, after all). When the young prince reaches the age of 15 he is sent off to seek the gift he was promised. Instead, he finds a happy kingdom with a beautiful princess, whom he marries, of course. However, he gets homesick and on returning finds that thousands of years have passed, his parents’ palace is now a ruin and, in a dusty cellar there, he finds an old chest in which, he discovers, lies the bony, rotting figure of Death, who reaches out and turns him to dust.

That must have helped many a Romanian child to sleep more soundly. “Goodnight, sleep tight, beware of magic kingdoms in your dreams and avoid Death”. Incidentally, on entering Transnistria you will find booths very willing to change your euros, dollars or anything (except Moldovan lei) into rubles, but they’ll be far less keen to change them back. Transnistria needs foreign currency.

How did Transnistria come to exist, if it can truly be said to do so? Reggie Kramer, a Research Intern with the Eurasia Program at the Foreign Policy Institute explains it rather well: “During the 19th century, present-day Moldova was part of the Russian Empire, which the Ottoman Empire had ceded to Russia. Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Moldovan Parliament quickly formed and, in 1918, voted to join the Kingdom of Romania. The newly-formed Soviet Union (USSR) did not recognize Romania’s political control of what it considered Russian territory. In 1924, the USSR created the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic out of the territory that it still controlled: the land east of the Dniester, modern Transnistria. During and after the Second World War, the USSR

regained control of all of present-day Moldova; it maintained control over this area until 1990. That was when the trouble started and a disagreement over nationality erupted into a civil war. It mainly affected the leaders and the military; many citizens claim they were fairly indifferent as to the final outcome.

HOLIDAYS IN THE 1980^s AND EARLIER

But if Transnistrian currency is listed under “folk stories and fairy tales”, can you actually visit Transnistria? It is, apparently, the least visited part of what is the least visited country in Europe, Moldova, but if you’re feeling adventurous and want something unusual, you can certainly go there. The Young Pioneers website says that “the Russian-backed rebel republic offers a whole host of opportunities for the most adventurous travellers.” Tempted? The website continues: “A part of the brotherhood of breakaway nations, it is one of the few places in the world to see the embassies of Caucasus breakaway states South Ossetia and Abkhazia. From a vast amount of Communist relics and a Soviet way of life, there is arguably nowhere else like Transnistria on earth.” Yes, I really think that’s probably true. It goes on to list other not-to-be-missed items on the tourist trail. “Join us,” it urges, “in the last stronghold of the USSR, the land of bullet riddled Lenin statues and abandoned Soviet nuclear bunkers.” I must admit, I actually find the idea quite appealing, in an odd sort of way, although I can understand why many would not find it quite so irresistible.

As for accommodation, Tiraspol offers one allegedly overpriced luxury hotel (Transnistria needs foreign currency, so don’t be surprised) and, as an alternative, “the classic Soviet relic, Aist, which

is not for the faint hearted but is also an experience you will never forget.” Having stayed in run-down Soviet-era hotels in the past, none of which I shall identify here, I can agree that they are, in the main, unforgettable, however much you may try. (I recall one where the balcony doors from the bedroom, which would have led onto a balcony that apparently not been swept or cleaned for years, were sealed with peeling sticky tape through whose several gaps an icy draught blew (it was December). The carpets throughout turned up in the corners to reveal dirty floors and were in other places pockmarked with old cigarette burns. Naturally, there were large, noisy Russian refrigerators in which to store one’s vodka in a bedroom whose pillows reeked of stale cigarette smoke. It provided very good coffee, though, which I certainly didn’t find in Kyrgyzstan.) For your Transnistria holiday there is a fascinating day-by-day itinerary proposed, which includes a visit to see “one of the largest Lenins in the world and a perfectly intact giant Soviet Emblem”.

That would be something to show the folks back home! The trip includes a visit to a Soviet nuclear bunker with thirteen underground floors and – arguably more appealing – a convenience store where you can buy what used to be the Soviet Union leadership’s favourite brandy (they call it Cognac, which must annoy the French) for just \$3 (€2.45) a bottle. In one place, it even mentions “hidden wineries”. I didn’t know that Transnistria produced wine but it seems that it does, hidden or not.

The website Dark Tourism warns, however, that Transnistria is, compared with what most of us are used to, a fairly lawless and potentially dangerous place. “Crucially, one has to avoid getting into any sort of trouble while in the



Statue of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin outside the Supreme Soviet building in Tiraspol

PMR,” it warns, “also given that you’re pretty much out of reach of embassy or consular help there. (Embassies based in Moldova are de facto unable to exert any influence on Transnistrian territory, and as it’s a non-recognized state there are naturally no consular representations of other countries within the PMR.) So tread carefully. If you do go, though, the exoticness of the place can be very rewarding indeed for the traveller with a taste for such things.” EU citizens can enter without a full registration process, as long as their stay is shorter than ten hours, which Dark Tourism regards as quite long enough to see most things of interest. You will still have to complete a form in duplicate, keeping one half to give back on your departure. Border guards may hassle you a bit, it’s said, mainly in the hope of a bribe. Wine is said to be of good quality and very cheap. The wine may prove to be Moldovan, but where brandy is concerned, Transnistria produces the best.

It has also produced a problem that simply won’t go away. The OSCE is still trying to settle the differences between Tiraspol and Chişinău. “The OSCE Mission to Moldova facilitates a comprehensive and lasting political settlement of the Transdnistrian conflict in all its aspects, strengthening the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders with a special status for Transdnistria.” I should point out that “Transdnistria” is an acceptable alternative spelling for Transnistria. There’s still a lot to do to normalize things: until 2018, vehicles bearing Transnistrian licence plates were not allowed to enter EU countries. From that year on, vehicle owners were allowed to go to specially designated offices and change their Transnistrian



Statue of Alexander Suvorov in Tiraspol

plates for special Moldovan plates that comply with the Vienna Convention. Qualification documents from universities in Transnistria can now also be recognised by EU higher education facilities once they have been “apostilled” by the Moldovan Ministry of Justice, again thanks to the OSCE.



Secretary-General of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Thomas Greminger greeted by President of the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic

The problems in Transnistria are not, despite claims in some quarters, an ethnic conflict between Transnistrians and Moldova. In 1989, Moldovans made up around 65% of the population, with Ukrainians next at 14% and Russians not far behind with 13%. Even today, Moldovans remain a minority, albeit the largest minority, with around 40%. As before, Ukrainians are next with 28%, just ahead of Russians at 26%. However, they communicate with each other in Russian, so Moldova's language law of 1989, effectively outlawing Russian in favour of Romanian, is partly to blame for what happened next. Russian speakers did not favour the use of the Latin alphabet, nor did they want compulsory language proficiency in Moldovan Romanian to be enforced, even if it did permit the “local use” of Russian. Apart from language, there was an ideological split, too. Moldova's stated economic and political aims clashed with deep-seated Soviet ideology and would have disadvantaged local leaders in Transnistria. Most of the Moldovan industry was built in Transnistria and it was therefore more profitable for its leaders to attempt secession in order to retain full control of their economic assets. The Marshall Center has this explanation of how the conflict started: “In June 1990 the Supreme Soviet of Moldova adopted a declaration on sovereignty. In September, the reaction of Transnistrians was to proclaim the Dniester Moldovan Autonomous Republic (RMN). The

Supreme Soviet declared this act void and null, but could not enforce this on the ground.” And so Transnistria declared independence. No-one has found a solution satisfactory to both sides in some thirty years, so prospects for early resolution are not good. Or to put it another way, перспективы скорейшего разрешения не очень хороши. Transnistrian residents had been promised “a little Switzerland” and they believed it because before its secession, it was the most prosperous region of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, an industrial powerhouse that supplied the rest of the territory with electricity and generated around 40% of Moldova's total GDP. It's not much like Switzerland now.

Education remains a major issue. Eight of Transnistria's schools still answer to the Moldovan Ministry of Education in Chişinău and they continue to educate in Romanian, using the Latin alphabet. The Transnistrian government has been trying to take them over ever since the year 2000. In 2004, Transnistrian police surrounded the schools and it was left to the OSCE to provide emergency food supplies for the students. Later, the parents, teachers and schoolchildren appealed to the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that their right to education had been violated.

The court agreed and ordered Russia, which had supported the clamp-down, to pay compensation. That, however, did not bring the matter to a close, with the teachers regularly called in for questioning by the Transnistrian Ministry of State Security (still referred to as the KGB) even today. Before term starts, head teachers are warned not to fly Moldovan flags and police attend in an attempt to ensure the school follows the self-proclaimed state's laws. The intimidation, backed by Russia, seems to be working, with the number of children in Romanian language schools falling from 6,000 in 2004 to just 1,600 or fewer. One father, who drives 50 kilometres to get his daughter to a Romanian language school has been detained by police three times, according to Deutsche Welle. In 2004, the EU added a number of Transnistrians who were involved in provoking the “school crisis” on its visa-ban list of Transnistrian representatives responsible for the deadlock in trying to settle the conflict. According to Balkan Insight, “Free access to education in the Romanian language was one of the

conditions in the recent ‘Berlin Plus’ package negotiated in 2017 and 2018 by Chişinău and Tiraspol under the OSCE's patronage.

Over the past six years, the number of pupils studying at Romanian-language schools in the breakaway region has diminished by 35 per cent as a result of Transnistria's policies.”

GUNS GALORE

Russia deploys around 1,500 troops in Transnistria, mainly to guard the World War II era weapons dump, and Moldova's new president, along with many of her fellow Moldovans, thinks it's time for them to go. “Russia says that the Operational Group of Russian Forces (OGRF) guards ammunition depots here,” Sandu told the Russian RBC news website, “but there are no bilateral agreements on the OGRF and on the weapons depots.” Clearly, Sandu would like to be remembered as the president who brought Transnistria back into the Moldovan fold, perhaps on a federal basis, and the OGRF's arms are the most convincing argument for getting rid of the Russian forces, even if it falls well short of convincing Moscow. “These weapons depots are a big problem for us. It's dangerous,” she said in her sit-down interview with RBC. “These weapons need to be removed and the OGRF needs to be withdrawn.”

In a press conference in mid-December 2020 Putin told the BBC's Moscow correspondent, Steve Rosenberg, that East-West tensions are the fault of NATO expanding eastwards, despite promising not to. Russia, under his leadership, was, he said, “white and fluffy” by comparison, freeing countries to go their own way after Soviet rule. Would the people of Eastern Ukraine and especially the Tartars of Crimea share that view, I wonder?



Poisoning victim Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny

Putin also dismissed Russian involvement in the attempted poisoning of opposition politician Alexei Navalny (whom he referred to as “our blogger”), demanding sight of the evidence that Novichoc was used. He told journalists that if he had ordered Navalny’s death he would, indeed, be dead, and dismissed claims of scientific proof as “western propaganda”. If Russia is true to Putin’s word, why not withdraw its troops from Transnistria and replace them with unarmed OSCE monitors, even Russian ones? In what way, exactly, would that be ‘irresponsible’, as Lavrov has claimed? Russia’s world view is clearly very different from the West’s. In any case, the presence of large quantities of weapons and ammunition provides Russia with an excellent excuse for staying where they are, “just to guard them”. Incidentally, the border between Transnistria and Moldova is patrolled and policed by Russian soldiers.

The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) has even mused in an LSE Online article in 2016 that Transnistria could turn out to be ‘the next Crimea’. It seems an extreme idea but in an unstable region not entirely without credibility. “The Russian government has vocally protested against measures such as the fortification of the Transnistrian-Ukrainian border by the new Ukrainian authorities and Ukraine’s ban on Russian servicemen stationed in Transnistria from transiting Ukrainian territory, but has shown no inclination to either recognise or annex Transnistria, instead calling for a ‘special status’ for the region within Moldova and even reducing its financial support for the separatist regime.” Transnistria was, prior to 1940, an autonomous region of Ukraine, when the Soviet Union combined it with Bessarabia to form the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. Back then, the idea that Moldova might become a fully independent country and that the USSR would cease to exist never entered into anyone’s calculations. As Balkan Insight reports, “Russia sees its control of the strip as a useful bargaining chip with Moldova and Ukraine and has made no real effort to persuade its client regime in Tiraspol to reunite with Moldova. The first ‘frozen’ conflict in the region set a pattern for similar armed conflicts in Georgia in 2008 and eastern Ukraine after 2013.”

For those now living in Transnistria, life is not without its day-to-day

problems, some of which have been highlighted by the Council of Europe, as it reported following a visit in 2015 by the Conference of International NGOs. “Some NGOs based in Chişinău conduct activities in that self-proclaimed republic (Transnistria), the independence of which has not been recognised by any state to date. Several cases already ruled on by, or pending before, the European Court of Human Rights demonstrate that violations of human rights in the region are frequent and states’ efforts to implement relevant judgments are very limited. INGOs have protested about illegal arrests of human rights defenders, harassment of NGOs and cases of torture in the region.” But, as always, it is the unpredictable ambitions of Putin’s Russia that cause the most alarm. He has supported Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which makes Russia a real threat to Georgia. “Further cementing ties, Russia signed the Treaty of Alliance and Integration with South Ossetia in 2015,” reports the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “There were similar concerns in Moldova, where Russia’s military presence in the breakaway Transnistria region is seen as a potential lever the Kremlin could use to destabilize the rest of the country. Russian support also facilitated the victory of the pro-Russia Igor Dodon in Moldova’s 2016 presidential election. He has since emerged as a leading EU-skeptic and advocate of closer ties with Russia.” But he has now been replaced in the presidency by Maia Sandu, of course, a far more pro-EU figure who has promised to redress the balance Dodon had tilted towards Moscow. No wonder the Kremlin favoured her opponent.

Putin has his Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which is his response to the EU and which he took under his control in 2012. He persuaded (bullied, in fact) Belarus and Kazakhstan to sign up to the EAEU and although Armenia initially declined, it nevertheless provided the pressure to stop Yerevan from signing a previously agreed Association Agreement with the EU. It later caved in and signed up to the EAEU along with Kyrgyzstan. Moldova has signed an Association Agreement with the EU and even Uzbekistan, Central Asia’s most populous state, continues to resist Russian pressure to join, remaining instead an EAEU “observer.” Russia and Kazakhstan, Eurasia’s two economic heavyweights, have derived some



Transnistrian Russian tank



Transnistrian Russian Mi-8 helicopter

economic benefits from preferential trade agreements. But the much poorer members, such as Armenia, Belarus, and Kyrgyzstan, have less to show for it. Moscow offered discounted energy prices, access to labour markets, and other economic enticements to join the EAEU, but the benefits have often been lost to corruption, however, which has made the public doubt the advantages of EAEU membership. The EAEU is also often wracked with disagreements among members over trade and regulatory regimes, which Russia inevitably often seeks to exploit. The more heavy-handed Russia becomes as it attempts to get closer integration, the more other members resist and drag their feet. As the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace puts it, “while the EAEU has become an established actor in the region, it is far from a happy union.” Perhaps Putin is learning what the EU learned long ago: if you bully people into submission or descend to using coercion you end up with a union that simply isn’t sufficiently unified to work. Transnistria is too small, perhaps, to matter much in the great scheme of things except as a constant irritant to Moldova and a reminder that Russian troops are never far from Chişinău. Sandu may find that, like many of life’s irritants, they’re very hard to get rid of, even if they offer precious little advantage to Putin. Troops on the doorstep doesn’t look very “white and fluffy”, whatever he says.

Anthony James



INTERPOL WARNS OF ORGANIZED CRIME THREAT TO COVID-19 VACCINES

INTERPOL has issued a global alert to law enforcement across its 194 member countries warning them to prepare for organized crime networks targeting COVID-19 vaccines, both physically and online.

The INTERPOL Orange Notice outlines potential criminal activity in relation to the falsification, theft and illegal advertising of COVID-19 and flu vaccines, with the pandemic having already triggered unprecedented opportunistic and predatory criminal behaviour.

It also includes examples of crimes where individuals have been advertising, selling and administering fake vaccines.

As a number of COVID-19 vaccines come closer to approval and global distribution, ensuring the safety of the supply chain and identifying illicit websites selling fake products will be essential.

The need for coordination between law enforcement and health regulatory bodies will also play a vital role to ensure the safety of individuals and wellbeing of communities are protected. Vaccines prime target of organized crime

“As governments are preparing to roll out vaccines, criminal organizations are planning to infiltrate or disrupt supply chains.” Says Jürgen Stock, INTERPOL Secretary General.

“Criminal networks will also be targeting unsuspecting members of the public via fake websites and false cures, which could pose a significant risk to their health, even their lives.

“It is essential that law enforcement is as prepared as possible for what will be an onslaught of all types of criminal activity linked to the COVID-19 vaccine, which is why INTERPOL has issued this global warning,” concluded Secretary General Stock.

As well as targeting COVID-19 vaccines, as international travel gradually resumes it is likely that testing for the virus will become of greater importance, resulting in a parallel production and distribution of unauthorized and falsified testing kits. Online dangers

With an increasing amount of COVID-related frauds, INTERPOL is also advising members of the public to take special care when going online to search for medical equipment or medicines.

In addition to the dangers of ordering potentially life-threatening products, an analysis by the INTERPOL's Cybercrime Unit revealed that of 3,000 websites



Jürgen Stock Secretary General of Interpol

associated with online pharmacies suspected of selling illicit medicines and medical devices, around 1,700 contained cyber threats, especially phishing and spamming malware.

To avoid falling victim to online scams, it is important to be vigilant, be skeptical and be safe, as offers which appear too good to be true usually are. Always check with your national health authorities or the World Health Organization for the latest health advice in relation to COVID-19.

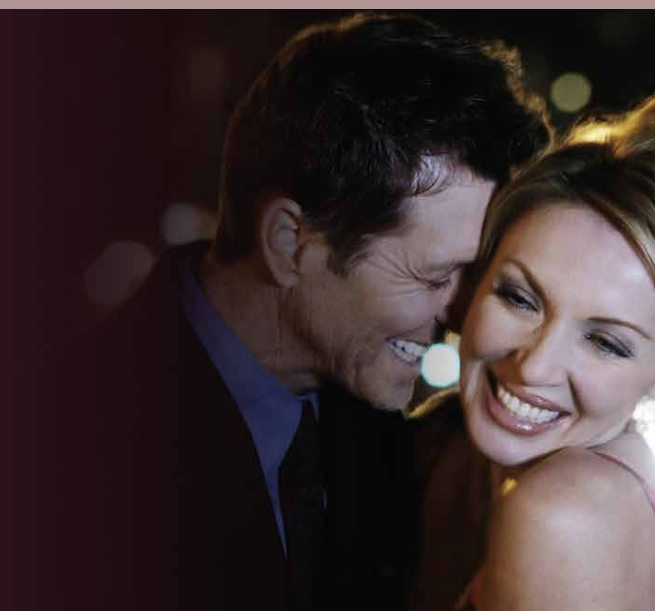


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Russian 3M22 Zircon Hypersonic Cruise Missile; Land-, Air-, and Submarine-Mobile

PLAYING BRAG WITH MISSILES

Putin shows off in the playground

When I was at primary school, some of the boys in my class used to play a fairly disgusting game in our roofless and chilly outside toilet block. It involved seeing who could reach the highest; I'll let you work out with what. I must apologise here to any ladies reading this; little boys always were and always will be revolting creatures. Many ladies would say that we don't change much as we grow older, either. In many ways this game of pointless boasting was simply a continuation, but without the aid of playing cards, of a game that had been played in the 16th century and even earlier, and is most often referred to as *primero*, *primiero* or *primo visto*. Something very similar was probably played in palaeolithic times with rocks and mammoth bones. The playing card version was included in a number of paintings, such as *The Card Players* by Lucas van Leyden, in 1510, and also it's claimed to be featured in an Elizabethan card party painted by Federico Zuccari, in which Lord Burleigh can be seen playing against

three other "gentlemen of distinction", although all except he remain unidentified. The cards are slightly different in surviving paintings, being longer and narrower than the type we use today, but the jack of hearts and the ace can clearly be seen, as well as the 6 and 7 of clubs. Even earlier, England's King Henry VII (reigned 1485-1509 and appears as the heroic Richmond in Shakespeare's *Richard III*) seems to have lost quite a lot of money at it, according to Treasury records. It was, of course, a gambling game and

may even be an ancestor of poker. It was certainly an ancestor of the game identified by the writer on the rules of card games, Edmond Hoyle, as *brag*.

As schoolboys, we may have played brag in a rather vulgar way (we were caned for such naughty behaviour in those days if we were caught), whereas the Elizabethan card players played it with cards. Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, now plays brag with intercontinental ballistic missiles. That's a REAL boast, but it has



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US President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev



President Barack Obama signing of documents for a nuclear arms treaty with Russia in 2011

its roots in similar games of showing off and proving oneself the biggest kid in the playground. In three-card brag, the commonest form of the card game and described by the 18th century English writer on card game rules that I mentioned earlier, Edmond Hoyle, everyone must put money into the pot right at the start. It's called the "ante" and can be increased by a player who thinks he (or she) has got good cards. That's known as "upping the ante", which is what Putin has clearly done. He has test-launched two different types of new missile, in addition to one already capable of taking out Western satellites. The largest missile, the hypersonic Tsirkon (or Zircon), is the fastest cruise missile in the world, capable of reaching Mach 8 (more than 9,600 kilometres per hour) and also, most importantly, of targeting cities anywhere in the United States and, of course, western Europe. Indeed, this missile has already been identified on state-controlled Russian TV as Putin's "weapon of choice" for attacking the US. That's in addition to the submarine launched Bulava, of which more later.

It means that President-Elect Joe Biden will have an urgent task ahead (once he's been allowed to move into the White House) to get a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) signed without delay.

The existing Treaty comes up for renewal in early February 2021, just sixteen days after Biden's planned inauguration. It won't be easy: both George W. Bush and Donald Trump, during their presidencies, withdrew from nuclear arms agreements with Russia. Only what's known as New START survives as a means of limiting nuclear arsenals. At one point, under Trump, the US insisted that China should be included in the

negotiations, an idea that did not meet with Moscow's approval. It wasn't liked by Beijing, either, because China has only a tiny number of missiles compared with the US and Russia. In any case, Trump's former advisor on national security, the hawkish John Bolton, was opposed to limitations of any kind on the numbers or types of missiles. As it is, Biden won't have time to negotiate for anything other than an extension to New START, if he's lucky, although Putin has indicated a willingness to extend the deal without preconditions. He has also – albeit not until 15 December – congratulated Biden on his win and stated that he 'looked forward' to dealing with him. Trump's attempts to retain the White House after losing the election haven't improved the chances of a deal being done in time. It's claimed that Trump was reluctant to agree to New START simply because the existing version had been signed by his predecessor, Barack Obama. Clearly, we're back to the playground again.

Not surprisingly, Putin wants to prove he can shoot higher and more forcefully than anyone else (which was very much the intention of my

schoolboy colleagues, in fact), and that is why he recently ordered the Vladimir Monomakh submarine of the Pacific Fleet to launch four Bulava cruise missiles, one after another in quick succession.

They were fired from underwater in the Sea of Okhotsk, close to Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula, according to Russia's Defence Ministry. That's not very far from Japan, or even Alaska, of course. The missiles, which had dummy warheads, hit their targets in the Arkhangelsk region of north-western Russia, 5,500 kilometres away. That's fairly convincing shooting. The Vladimir Monomakh is one of the new Borei-class of nuclear submarines, each of which carries 16 Bulava missiles. They will represent the naval component of Russia's nuclear forces for the decades ahead. The SS-N-30 Bulava, which means "mace" in Russian, has an operational range of 8,000, possibly even 9,000 kilometres and is the cornerstone of Russia's nuclear arsenal. It is a 2-stage rocket with two solid fuel boosters and a liquid-fuelled top stage. It can carry 10 warheads, each with a payload of 150 kilotons, making the overall missile



ICBM's launched by the Russian nuclear Vladimir Monomakh Submarine



Russian nuclear submarine Vladimir Monomakh

50 or 60 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. The Bulava and the Borei-class submarines are the most expensive element of Russia's nuclear forces. According to the Missile Defence Advocacy Alliance (MDAA), "the boost phase has an accelerated ascent as a countermeasure to protect against potential anti-missile systems," making it hard to take out before it delivers its deadly load. And as if that were not enough, the missile can also come equipped with targeting decoys and is capable of evasive manoeuvres during the terminal phase to avoid missile intercept." Once you see one coming, in other words, it's too late to duck.



Tsirkon missile launched from Admiral Gorshkov frigate

The Tsirkon, on the other hand, is launched from surface vessels. In the latest test, it was launched at night from the Northern Fleet's Admiral Gorshkov frigate in the White Sea. It successfully hit a ground target in the northern Urals more than 500 kilometers to the east. That's a thinly-populated area but the target cannot have been very far from Yekaterinburg and Perm. The Moscow Times reports that "Putin has warned that Russia would be forced to deploy hypersonic nuclear missiles on submarines near U.S. waters in response to arms-control tensions. Washington waved off Putin's warnings as disingenuous propaganda." Still, it might mean Biden has a better chance of getting a New START deal.

MINE ARE BIGGER THAN YOURS

On its website, the Defense Intelligence Ballistic Missile Analysis Committee warns that Russia is not the West's only concern. "Over

20 countries have ballistic missile systems, and missiles likely will be a threat in future conflicts involving US forces," it claims, reminding readers that "ballistic missiles have been used in several conflicts over the last 30 years, including the Iran-Iraq war, the Afghan civil war, the war in Yemen, the 1991 and 2003 Persian Gulf conflicts, the Russian military actions in Chechnya and Georgia, and most recently in the conflicts in Syria and the Ukraine. Russia used cruise missiles for the first time during the conflict in Syria."

The New START treaty puts restrictions on missile and nuclear arsenals, "limiting each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers, and it envisages sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance". To be quite honest, that's still an awful lot of missiles and warheads to have pointed at you, especially as they are getting ever-more powerful. The Bulava itself is seen as the pinnacle of Russian missile development (even more than the Tzirkon, it seems, in terms of bragging rights). It combines the devastating firepower of the SS-27 Topol-M land-based missile with the manoeuvrability of being launched from a submarine. Its range is slightly less than that of the land-based version but it makes up for that by being capable of being launched from anywhere in the world. Naval Technology.com reports that "the missile is 12.1m long and has a diameter of 2.1m (including the launch container). It weighs a total of 36.8 metric tonnes and is capable of carrying six to ten re-entry vehicles with a yield of 100kt-150kt each."

The Borei-class nuclear-powered submarines are smaller than the Typhoon submarines they replace and have a smaller complement of crew, 107 instead of 130.

They are said to be much quieter than either Russia's own Akula class submarines or America's Virginia class submarines. The final built design of the Borei-A has a normal displacement of 13,000 tons, a length of 160 meters, a beam of 12 meters and a draft of 8 meters. Its top speed while submerged is 20 knots (37 kilometres per hour), with a maximum operating depth of 300 meters.

Russia intends to honour two of its World War II heroes later in the decade by naming one Borei submarine Marshall Zhukov in 2026 and giving another one the name Marshal Rokossovsky the following year. Both men were committed Communists, with Rokossovsky recorded as being the more benign of the two, so I'm not sure they would have approved of today's more capitalist and right-wing Russia, however unswervingly patriotic they both were.

But the Bulava and the Borei, these two formidable weapons, are not the end of Russia's new missile story. Russia has also been looking closely at combat by attacking and destroying the west's satellites. Two Direct Ascent Anti Satellite (DA-ASAT) missiles have been tested during 2020, apparently designed to attack satellites in low-Earth orbit. This follows an incident in which Russian satellites were observed 'following' a US satellite and edging closer to it, likened to 'stalking' at the time, as if with intent to attack it in some way. In fact Russia's



© H I Sutton



USAF Major Jeffrey L. Caton : "An assault on U.S. military space systems is a force multiplier for an enemy." So we need to think hard about the testing of anti-satellite missiles and also of 'stalking' by Russian satellites (and mysterious 'objects').

Cosmos 2543, a supposed "inspection" satellite, was said to be "loitering" around USA 245, an American spy satellite, getting to between 150 and 200 kilometres from it. The orbit of the American satellite was adjusted to increase the distance but Cosmos 2543 adjusted its own orbit to match. Cosmos 2543 was injected into orbit from another satellite, Cosmos 2542, launched in November 2019 aboard a Soyuz-2.1 v launcher from the Plesetsk Cosmodrome. Russia stated that Cosmos 2542 could monitor other satellites and take images of the Earth. But Cosmos 2543, which was launched from Cosmos 2542, itself released something that the Americans dubbed Object 45915 and which looked to them like an anti-satellite weapon, being fast enough to destroy a satellite through kinetic impact. In other words, by bumping into it at high speed.

Not very sophisticated, perhaps, but remarkably effective. Confusing, isn't it? Of course, it was back in 2014 that Russia designated space as a future "war fighting domain". What was it NASA wrote on the Apollo 11 lander that was left on the Moon? Oh, yes: "we came in peace for all mankind". Perhaps, back then in the late 1960s, we really did? Or hoped we did.

The actions of Cosmos 2542, Cosmos 2543 and Object 45915 were described by US Space Force commander General John "Jay" Raymond as "unusual and disturbing." The wandering satellite and "object" did eventually move to other orbits but left a worry for Washington. "Russia's DA-ASAT test provides yet another example that

the threats to U.S. and allied space systems are real, serious and growing," said Raymond in a statement. "The United States is ready and committed to deterring aggression and defending the nation, our allies and U.S. interests from hostile acts in space."

Of course, several nations, not just Russia, have looked with interest at the possibility of putting weapons in space. As the Space.com website points out: "With so many satellites orbiting the Earth, how hard would it be to outfit one with a weapon ready to fire at the Earth, or other satellites, as needs dictated?" Would anyone do that? Of course they would. "While such a concept would go against agreements such as the Outer Space Treaty, which bans weapons of mass destruction in orbit, a few military organizations have discussed it in recent years by." Again, of course they have.

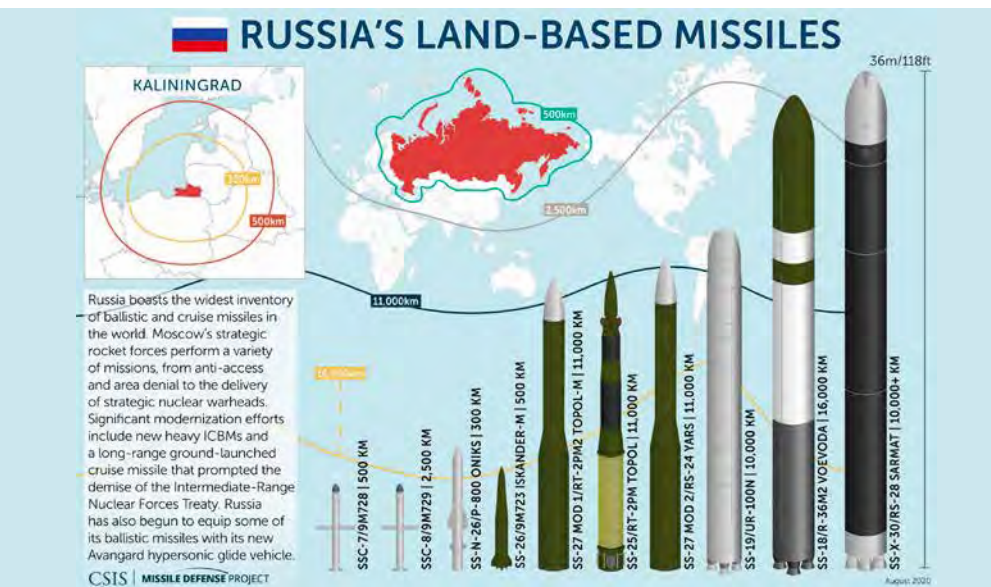
Satellites with peaceful purposes are more important to the West than to Russia or China. We have allowed ourselves in Europe and the United States to develop a dependency that must make them tempting targets not just for the West's obvious rivals but also for smaller states with big ambitions, although their ability to disrupt may be limited and would come at a very high cost in terms of the inevitable retaliation. The West needs satellites for relaying television signals, live news reports, traffic news, telephones, navigation, credit card payments, banking services, financial markets, weather reports, climate and environmental monitoring, and a host of other activities connected with safety, land stewardship, development

and scientific research. We all rely on them every day without giving them a second thought.

As USAF Major Jeffrey L. Caton, who worked at the Space Standardization and Evaluation Division, Cheyenne Mountain Operations Center, U.S. Space Command warned several years ago: "An attack on our space assets could impact every element of national power political, diplomatic, economic, and military. During conflict, a priority of any commander is to prepare the battlespace for combat operations that is, to 'stack the deck' to his advantage. An enemy has much to gain by exploiting the dependency link between our terrestrial forces and force-enhancing space systems. An assault on U.S. military space systems is a force multiplier for an enemy." So we need to think hard about the testing of anti-satellite missiles and also of 'stalking' by Russian satellites (and mysterious 'objects'). Of course, it's arguable that not many nations have the capability to knock out satellite systems. Major Caton was concerned that they could still do a lot of damage, given our dependence on space. "The permanent damage to satellites may introduce secondary damage mechanisms that would benefit an enemy," he wrote. "Even though space is vast, many of the useful orbits to support given areas on earth are heavily populated by satellites. This 'bunching' could allow secondary satellite kills through debris fratricide. This could have a cascading effect as new collisions create more debris. The bottom line is that an enemy need not possess space forces to be a space threat."



US Space Force commander General John "Jay" Raymond



KEEP TALKING, NOT FEUDING

It was the Russians who launched the very first satellite, Sputnik, in 1957. The Americans tried and failed to follow suit immediately afterwards. At my primary school (again) I remember a joke song being passed around based on the 1957 Perry Como hit, 'Catch a Falling Star', which had been written by Paul Vance and Lee Pockriss (obviously not including the last two lines shown here). Our version went like this:

"Catch a falling star and put it in your pocket,
Never let it fade away.
If you catch a Sputnik put it in a matchbox,
Send it to the USA."

The Americans more than caught up, though, with the first telecommunications satellite, Telstar, in 1962, also made famous in a hit recording by the Tornadoes. It caused a lot of excitement at the time. I can remember the first live broadcast of a short burst of a baseball game from New York, shown on UK television.

It had to be a short burst because Telstar was not in a geostationary orbit that allowed it to stay in one place relative to the Earth. Viewers heard New York spectators being told over the public address system that the game was being watched in France and the UK (it was claimed that the Queen was watching, too, and being the novelty it was that may have been true) and the crowd cheered enthusiastically, I recall. I rather wished I could have

been there. That, somehow, seemed more significant than Sputnik, which orbited the Earth going "bleep" for three weeks until its batteries ran out and it sank slowly, only to burn up in the atmosphere two months later. The first television pictures sent via Telstar were much more clearly received in France than in the UK, where Post Office engineers had fitted a component at the Goonhilly Downs receiving station the wrong way round. The second attempt was much more successful, once the error had been put right. Telstar itself failed the following year, a victim possibly of the charged particles in the Van Allen belt (although atmospheric tests of an American nuclear device may also have played a part).

Western satellites far outnumber Russia's meagre tally. The US depends on its satellites for a host of everyday things, but it depends more than any other country on its military satellites. Circling the earth as they do in predictable orbits, very often

visible from Earth through moderate telescopes, these vital assets have been described as 'sitting ducks'. Almost impossible to defend, it means that a space war, if it came, would be "offense-dominant", to use the military jargon. No-one in the West is privy to the intentions of Cosmos 2542 and its kin, although most observers think it was doing what Russian jets do when they infringe territorial airspace, or what Russian trawlers do when they sit near Western military ships. They are just watching, checking responses and trying to be as annoying as possible. Laura Grego, an astrophysicist who studies space technology, is at the Union of Concerned Scientists, a non-profit organisation, and she wants an international agreement to prevent war in space. "So far negotiations are stalled in international politics," reports Scientific American on Grego's aims and ambitions. "Diplomats never work fast," Grego says, "but right now they are 'splashing around in a puddle of diplomacy' without getting much done." I'm sure diplomats can work quickly when they have to.



Laura Grego



Telstar and Sputnik

GOING UP

Perhaps the inexplicable behaviour of Cosmos 2542, Cosmos 2543 and Object 45915 may give those diplomats a prod towards a more focused approach. War in space is no longer something to talk about and plan for in the private conviction that it won't happen, or at least that it won't happen any time soon, like arguing over how many angels can dance on the head of a pin (assuming they wanted to, were incredibly small and – in contradiction to what ancient religious texts suggest – actually enjoy dancing). Now war in space IS happening, so get on with it. As of early November there were very nearly 3,000 active satellites of various types circling the Earth at various altitudes, depending on type. By far the greatest majority of them were American, mostly in low Earth orbit, which means below 2,000 kilometres, and including satellite X-37B, a smaller, unmanned version of the Space Shuttle which, according to Scientific American, “does generally secret things, including emitting subsatellites”, a bit like Cosmos 2542 and Cosmos 2543. It all gets very mysterious at this point, the article continues. “What these subsatellites can do that parent satellites cannot is also secret and therefore unclear.” The real Space Station and the Hubble Space Telescope are in low Earth orbit. At the next distance up is what's called Medium Earth Orbit, stretching from 2,000 to 35,786 kilometres. There are not as many satellites in this range but most of them are involved in defence activities, whoever owns



© North American Aerospace Defense Command

In this image taken June 16, 2020, and released by the North American Aerospace Defense Command, a Russian Tu-95 bomber (top) is intercepted by a U.S. F-22 Raptor fighter off the coast of Alaska. Russian nuclear-capable strategic bombers have flown near Alaska on a mission demonstrating the military's long-range strike capability

them. The US, Russia and China hold the lion's share. The upper limit of this range – 35,786 kilometres – is the geosynchronous (or geostationary, if you prefer) orbit. This is a much busier range, containing mainly (but far from exclusively) communications satellite, some of them military. There are just a few navigation satellites there, all of them defence-related and all of them apparently Chinese.

Above the geosynchronous orbit are a range of other satellites, some in highly elliptical orbits that allow them to concentrate their attention on a single hemisphere. The US and Russia each have a few, mainly military. In addition to Earth orbits, there are the so-called Lagrange Points. These are known as L1, L2, L3, L4 and L5, where the gravitational pulls of small objects are balanced between those of the Earth and the Sun. The L1, L2 and L3 points are not permanently stable but L1 and L2 can be used by space scientists. L3 is permanently behind the sun, so not very useful. L1, for instance, is home to the European Space Agency's Planck satellite and it's where NASA will put the James Webb Space Telescope.

As the Goddard Space Flight Centre assures us, “it will be the largest, most powerful and complex space telescope ever built and launched into space. It will fundamentally alter our understanding of the universe.” L2 was home to the WMAP satellite (NASA's Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe) that successfully helped to map the Cosmic Background Radiation and is currently home to ESA's Gaia probe. There are no defence-related instruments anywhere nearby as far as we know.

With so much technology flying around up there it's surprising there are not more accidents, but space is, of course, vast, so there is less chance of a collision, even if the satellites themselves are travelling quite fast. It can happen, however, and the consequences of a collision are worrying: debris flies at eye-watering speeds and can inflict enormous damage in the event of a collision. Something the size of a pinhead could inflict terrible damage, with or without a complement of dancing angels. Timothy Wright, Programme Administrator for Defence and



© Dominique A. Pinerol/US Defense Department

A US ground-based interceptor missile is shown at Fort Greeley, Alaska

Military Analysis at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) points out that China's 2007 anti-satellite test resulted in around 3,000 trackable pieces of orbital debris. There are official designations that suggest a certain degree of cynicism about things that go wrong, such as RUD (rapid unplanned disassembly) and IOBM, which stands for In Oceans by Mistake.

It would clearly be wrong to believe that only one participant is engaged in space research for military ends, but certainly Russia's latest efforts in the eternal game of shoot-'em-up brag are impressive.

Russia is slightly more cagey about its DA-ASAT missiles, or extra-terrestrial interceptor missiles than it is about its ICBMs and cruise missiles. John Raymond, Commander of the United States Space Command, said that such weapons pose a challenge to US interests in space, being capable of destroying satellites in low earth orbit. Russia is developing a mobile long-range extra-terrestrial interceptor missile called the 14Ts033 Nudol (also as the PL-19 Nudol system). On Euroweeklynews.com's website, the successful test launch was reported as follows: “Defence Ministry reports from The Kremlin are claiming Russia has successfully launched a new ‘Star Wars’ style ballistic missile, from their Sary-Shagan test site in Kazakhstan, capable of a speed of 9000mph (14,500 kph) and can easily blast other satellites out of space.” Ostensibly developed to protect Moscow from missile attack, the 14Ts033 Nudol is capable of Mach 12 speeds, and has a range of 620 miles (1,000 kilometres), as part of Moscow's A-235 missile defence system.



Russian Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)



Russia's test launch of an ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile) from Plesetsk base in the Arkhangelsk region

Nudol, however, is a two-stage solid fuel rocket which is stored in a sealed transport-launch container, and in a combat position located in a special silo. They are capable of intercepting nuclear warheads and advanced hypersonic aircraft in the near space and the stratosphere, but their primary aim is to knock out satellites.

The Russian spacecraft named Kosmos 2542 that has been stalking the United States spy satellite USA 245 in the Earth's orbit

This is in addition to what it did with Cosmos 2542 did and clearly can do again. "At Russia's Sary-Shagan training ground in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the combat crew of the air and anti-missile defence forces of the Aerospace Forces successfully carried out the next test launch of a new missile of the Russian anti-missile defence system," the Russian Defence Ministry said on its website. The actual type of missile involved was not named but is assumed to have been the 14Ts033 Nudol. As reported on the Defense World Net website, the Defence Ministry statement continued: "After a series of tests, the new anti-missile missile system of the ABM system has reliably confirmed the inherent characteristics, and the combat crews successfully completed the task, hitting the conditional target with the specified accuracy," said Major General Sergei Grabchuk, commander of the anti-missile defence of the Aerospace Forces. The Irish web news service Nova reported: "Andrey Dyomin, Commander of the 1st Air and Missile Defence Army of the Russian aerospace forces has claimed that the new missile 'has reliably confirmed its characteristics in a series of tests.'"

HOLDING A PRIAL

Russia has now joined China as the only nations with strategic space warfare weapons – at least, that we know about. China has also conducted a test flight of its anti-satellite missile, the Dong Neng-3 direct ascent

missile. According to GlobalSecurity.org, "Analysts said anti-satellite missiles could cripple US intelligence, navigation, and communications capabilities that are critical for both military operations and civilian infrastructure." Star Wars doesn't seem so glamorous up close and personal, especially without Luke Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi and Yoda. Whether you prefer Putin to Darth Vader is a matter of personal choice; just don't try to attack him with a light sabre.

Of course, in addition to this new potential Russian satellite-killer missile, there are also the missiles that Putin showed off more publicly: the hypersonic Tzircon cruise missile and the multi-warhead submarine-launched Bulava. The launches of the two large missiles "wrapped up" the large-scale drills of Russia's strategic nuclear forces, Putin was told. We do know that all the missiles are claimed to have hit their targets and that they have made Washington nervous. The game of brag, of course, grows as other players "up the ante" and boast of their latest advances. One rather over-the-top report on Putin's latest missiles suggested that he is "ready to trigger Armageddon". This seems unlikely. In a game of brag, the other players also have their cards. And when you're playing with missiles instead, it seems probable that no-one wants to win just so that they can rule over a radioactive wasteland without a surviving and mainly healthy and productive population. The winner has to win in a way that means they have power over the enemy, not that the enemy and his or her land has been obliterated and wiped from the map. No-one ever really won those playground games that I can recall, at least, not for long. It was just showing off and suggesting that one or other little boy had defeated the others on that day. Effectively, whether he realises it or not, that's what Putin is doing. In the game of brag, a winning hand is the prial, or 'pair royal', which, for the moment, would seem to be the hand Putin is holding. He is doing what Hoyle recommended as a tactic in the game of brag all those many years ago: "When in doubt, win the trick". For the moment, it looks as if he has.

T. Kingsley Brooks



The Russian spacecraft named Kosmos 2542 that has been stalking the United States spy satellite USA 245 in the Earth's orbit



ALEXA, TURN DOWN THE TECH GIANTS

EU acts to stop abuse of digital services

OK, I confess: I'm a Luddite. In case you're unfamiliar with the term, it refers to someone opposed to machines taking away jobs that had been traditionally done by hand, undermining and undervaluing the skills of time-served craftspeople. I don't mean that I want to go back to the bad old days of horse-drawn taxis, coal fires and candlelight, but I'm concerned about the unrestrained spread of new technology. Some of it, of course, is invaluable to today's connected world and extremely useful. Some of it is rather less so. I was never keen on the idea of the Internet of Things (IoT), despite a long TV interview I conducted a few years ago with one of its chief advocates, Jeremy Rifkin, the American economic and social theorist and writer of several books on the subject. Streetlights that come on only when a vehicle or pedestrian is approaching? Washing machines that can be turned on remotely from your mobile phone?

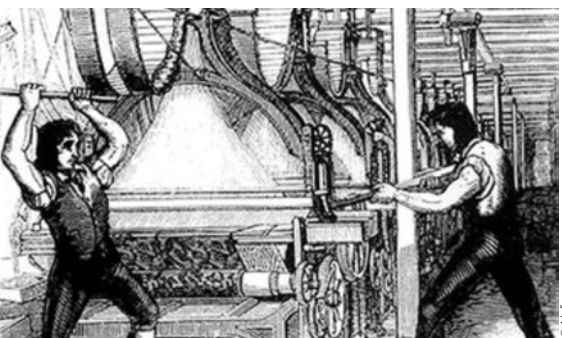
No, thanks. What's wrong with turning a knob? Why on Earth would anyone

want to switch a washing machine on remotely unless another robot of some sort was able to gather up the clothes to put in it and add the washing powder, not to mention unloading it afterwards? I don't mean that I want to see the back of washing machines altogether, of course. I can still remember my mother, grandmother and aunt all working together at the big washtub in the kitchen, complete with scrubbing boards (later adopted by skiffle groups as musical instruments), a heavy mangle and bars of hard soap and then having to use buckets to empty the tub. I was only a small boy at the time but I could see it was hard work.

The original Luddites were a group of 19th century English textile workers, sworn to support one another by oath, who deliberately smashed up mechanised textile mills. The wool and cotton industries were vital parts of the English economy, and mechanised mills were becoming essential, so the owners were naturally a bit upset. The machines threatened the jobs of hand weavers,

however; Charles Mason of Mason and Dixon fame was a Gloucestershire man who had seen and was distressed by the effects of mechanisation in the textile industry and the harsh repression of protestors. The Luddites were supposedly named after Ned Ludd, allegedly a weaver from Anstey, near Leicester in the English Midlands, who, it's claimed, smashed two weaving frames either for revenge after being whipped for idleness or after being taunted by local youths. He may not even have existed, however. Whether he did or not, there is a street named after him in his supposed home town. Experts say the Luddites were not against all kinds of machinery, only the kind that was used in what they called "a fraudulent and deceitful manner" to get around standard labour practices. Furthermore, they wanted to ensure that the machines were operated by skilled workers who had served apprenticeships and who were paid proper wages.

In many ways the Luddites had it easy. The machines were large, hard to hide and, however complicated and inventive,



Luddites destroying machines

they carried out relatively simple and easy-to-understand tasks. Now we have the Internet and the capacity it offers to do all sorts of things. The tech giants have promised in the past to clean up their acts, but their owners, investors and managers have seemed unable to see past their balance sheets. We are left with the merry free-for-all that provides advantages for all, but which also poses dangers for the honest and law-abiding while offering endless opportunities to the criminally inclined and for those spreading malicious and dangerous propaganda. Without the Internet would the anti-vax movement even exist? An American woman who became infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus apologised to her on-line followers for her temporary disappearance from her usual site and blamed the pandemic, only to be inundated with posts calling her a liar, a stooge and worse for claiming that COVID-19 exists when so many conspiracy theorists insist that it doesn't. At the risk of upsetting them further, it does; just ask the relatives of those it has killed. Conspiracy theories, indeed, thrive in the nasty nonsense-land of the Internet, alongside paedophilia and "revenge porn". It seems to have opened the way for the truly wicked to behave in horrible ways, safe in the knowledge that IP addresses are not easy to trace and law enforcement agencies generally don't have the technical resources nor the money to pursue wrongdoers.

A ROBOT VACCUUM CLEANER FOR THE AUGEAN STABLE?

The European Commission, long a supporter of the Internet of Things, now seems to be growing increasingly alarmed about the Internet of the 'things-we'd-rather-weren't-there'. There is no doubt that the IoT itself offers a number of potential advantages in striving towards a more eco-friendly and less polluting future.

Jeremy Rifkin talked to me about what he called the "collaborative commons". "What's happening," he told me, "is that capitalism is giving birth to a new economic system, its progeny, and this is the sharing economy of the collaborative commons." He predicted that capitalism, undergoing its first major evolution since the early 19th century, will be totally transformed by 2050. He insisted that people will start to make use of objects only for as long as they need them but without actually ever owning them outright, while systems will talk to each other with no need for us humans to get involved. "We have to begin to create common regulation standards for inter-operability across the EU so we can create an integrated technological platform for the integrated single market," he said. EU member states find it hard to agree to common standards on most things, but when they do, they tend to stick to them, a fact the British government's Brexit-obsessed ministers failed to grasp, apparently believing they could divide them.

Rifkin believes the days of the private car are coming to an end and the Internet of Things will help that to happen. "Young people don't seem to want to own automobiles anymore," he assured me. I'm not sure I see much convincing evidence of that just yet, but he's clearly done his research and undoubtedly knows much more than I do. "Automobile ownership is grandma and grandpa. The whole millennial generation want access to mobility, not car ownership. They want car sharing. They're moving from ownership to access." OK, so he's looking into a future thirty years from now, in which a mobile phone can bring a shared vehicle to your door. Probably. Of course, it can only function with an Internet of Things, but will the better-off kids settle for the same kind of shared or borrowed vehicle as the

less wealthy? I think the problem here is that it fails to take account of pride and the urge to show off. Even if Rifkin sees the looming end of car ownership, I don't see the looming end of snobbery; far from it. I hope Rifkin is right, for the sake of the planet, but there will have to be some pretty drastic housekeeping for the technology thus employed before it fulfils all its promises.

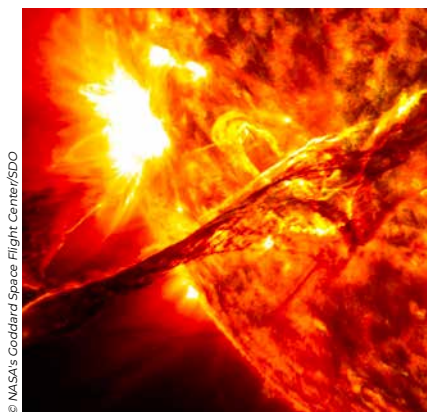


60 Starlink satellites stacked together before deployment on 24 May 2019

The problem is that we in the West already depend too dangerously much on digital technology and all those satellites out there that it requires in order to function. With Russia and China (neither of which is as dependent on the technology) developing and testing anti-satellite weapons there is a real risk of severe disruption. What's more, there is always the possibility of a big solar Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) such as the famous Carrington event of 1859, which blacked out large parts of North America and caused the telegraph system to fail. If something similar happened today we'd be left with no navigational aids, radio or Internet communication, no weather forecasts and possibly no electricity. Large areas of the planet could be plunged back into



Jeremy Rifkin speaking about "Zero Marginal Cost Society"



© NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center/SDO

A coronal mass ejection

the stone age in the blink of an eye. And yet the big tech companies stand accused of abusing their dominant positions.

Cleaning up these Augean stables of the big tech companies won't be easy, used as the technology is by political extremists, hostile foreign powers, trolls, hate merchants, racists, sexists, supporters of gender violence, purveyors of sex and pornography, paedophiles, those with inflexible religious views and so on. Even Hercules might have considered the task too difficult; the stench from a mountain of stinking animal droppings would be the sweetest perfume by comparison with some of that all-too-human filth. The big tech companies have known about it for years but have brushed off responsibility, claiming they are merely providing a shop window and not its content, for which they cannot be held responsible. The European Commission has had enough of lame excuses and have introduced the Digital Services Act (DSA). Its aims are covered in the text of the proposal: "The resolution on 'Digital Services Act: adapting commercial and civil law rules for commercial entities operating online' calls for more fairness, transparency and accountability for digital services' content moderation processes, ensuring that fundamental rights are respected, and guaranteeing independent recourse to judicial redress. The resolution also includes the request for a detailed 'notice-and-action' mechanism addressing illegal content, comprehensive rules about online advertising, including targeted advertising, and enabling the development and use of smart contracts." Coincidentally (or perhaps not) the UK government published its own new regulations for tech companies, rather oddly working as what has been called an "ex-ante" set of rules, telling companies how they should conduct themselves,

rather than calling for penalties for them if they fail to do so. In the UK, it will be in force by April 2021, according to the government, and in charge of making firms comply will be the Digital Markets Unit, overseen by the Competition and Markets Authority.

THE TOOL TO DO THE JOB

The EU's DSA is a wide-ranging tool to tackle a variety of perceived issues, including ensuring that content is safe and harmless, as Commissioner Margarethe Vestager, Executive Vice-President for a Europe fit for the Digital Age, explained.

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Executive Vice President of the European Commission for A Europe Fit for the Digital Age Margarethe Vestager

"Digital platforms will be required to swiftly remove illegal content," she told a press conference at the European Commission, "but in parallel to explain to the user why the content was removed and give him or her a chance to complain about it. Also, the new obligations to know your customer will require online marketplaces to check their sellers' identity before they are allowed to use the platform, which will make it so much difficult for dodgy traders to do

business." She also told the media that the tech giants will have to come clear on why a search puts a particular product, service or piece of information higher than others in terms of relevance and importance. Any favouritism must be for a reason that demands explanation. "So the Digital Services Act will also require platforms to tell us how their algorithms work. How their recommender systems select the content that they show us, but not require platforms to reveal their algorithms. It will give us a better idea of who is trying to influence us and how, choice as to whether we want to trust this or not."

In addition to the DSA, the Commission has proposed the Digital Markets Act (DMA), which serves a slightly different purpose, aimed more at bad practice among operators than at directly helping consumers. Firstly, it considers the way in which big tech, through acting as a 'gatekeeper to services', is able to garner information about preferences from the way consumers behave with their competitors. It's a goldmine of data that can be turned to advantage. Unfair advantage, in the eyes of the Commission. "With the Digital Markets Act," Vestager explained, "gatekeepers shall no longer use the data they collect from all the businesses that they host when competing against them. They will have to create data silos that allow for separation of the data generated in their different business lines." The DMA will also prevent tech companies from effectively shutting out their competitors through unfair payment systems to which they alone have access. "For instance, let's say a gatekeeper develops a new payment solution. It works with a piece of software or hardware that is only available to its own payment solution. To address this issue, we have introduced a new interoperability obligation.

© Edm
GAFAM, the Big Five, or FAAMG, defines Alphabet (GOOG), Amazon (AMZN), Facebook (FB), and Apple (AAPL), and Microsoft (MSFT) as the tech giants

Anytime a platform offers such a service, it needs to make sure that competing providers are not shut out from the platform.” Furthermore, ‘gatekeepers’ will not be allowed to gain advantage by artificially ranking their chosen product above the equivalent products of their rivals. “To end this practice, the Digital Markets Act will oblige the gatekeeper to adjust its search algorithm to make sure rival offers receive the same level of prominence as its own offers.” It goes without saying that these changes will not be welcomed by some of the big tech companies. Failure to comply, however, could lead to fines of up to 6% of a company’s annual revenue, which in the case of Facebook, for instance, would come to \$4.2-billion (€3.44-billion).

The Commission clearly doesn’t trust the tech giants. Under the new rules, the companies will be obliged to reveal to regulators how their algorithms work, with the threat of fines of up to 1% of annual revenue if platforms supply incorrect, incomplete or misleading information to the regulators, or if they refuse to permit an on-site inspection. Misleading advertisements – so-called ‘dark ads’ – were widely used on social media platforms during the UK’s Brexit referendum campaign and in recent US elections without explaining who was funding them or where the information they contained came from.

Under the DSA they will be obliged to retain libraries of past advertisements and provide users with information about who supplied the ads, who paid for them and why particular users were targeted. The Commission says it consulted a wide range of stakeholders before unveiling this legislative package, including the private sector, users of digital services, civil society



Tobias "Tobi" Lütke German-Canadian billionaire entrepreneur, and founder and CEO of Shopify

organisations, national authorities, academia, the technical community, international organisations and the general public. Commissioner for Internal Market Thierry Breton told the media: “Many online platforms have come to play a central role in the lives of our citizens and businesses, and even our society and democracy at large. With today’s proposals, we are organising our digital space for the next decades. With harmonised rules, ex ante obligations, better oversight, speedy enforcement, and deterrent sanctions, we will ensure that anyone offering and using digital services in Europe benefits from security, trust, innovation and business opportunities.”

Quoted on the 20 iapp website, Shopify Associate General Counsel and Data Protection Officer Vivek Narayanas said: “The DSA is, I think, one of the most important proposals being discussed at the Commission right now. It’s an incredibly promising opportunity to address a range of really difficult and important issues to make sure the Internet remains a safe place for users and a competitive space for businesses.”

Shopify, incidentally, is a multinational e-commerce company based in Ottawa, Canada. Platforms that reach more than 10% of the EU’s population (45 million users) are considered by the Commission to be ‘systemic in nature’ and are subject not only to specific obligations to control their own risks, but also to a new oversight structure.

This new accountability framework will comprise a board of national Digital Services Coordinators with special powers for the Commission in supervising very large platforms, including the ability to sanction them directly.

This is not the European Commission’s first attempt to rein in the powers of the big tech companies. In 2018, Twitter was fined €450,000 by the Irish data regulator for breaching Europe’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). It was the first time a financial penalty had been issued to a US tech firm under the GDPR, which was the EU’s 2018 attempt to achieve what it now hopes the 2020 proposals will.

In this case, Twitter had failed to notify Ireland’s Data Protection Commission of a privacy breach within the statutory 72-hour period. At the time Twitter owned up and accepted its punishment without demur, while other tech companies by and large accepted the 2018 regulations, although Google was concerned that it could prevent it from carrying an advert for, say, a restaurant, alongside its menu and the ability to reserve a table. That was then and this is now: the new 2020 regulations are a lot tougher. The 2018 legislation was part of the ‘Digital Single Market Strategy’, based on the belief that there was “an asymmetry between the market power of the platforms and the large number of (especially small) businesses that use them.” The Commission recognised the importance of platforms for entrepreneurship, trade and innovation, but was concerned with the dependence of businesses on those platforms. In particular, the Commission pointed to abrupt changes to terms of use, delisting or suspending accounts without clear reasons, lack of transparency regarding rankings on platforms, and ‘most favoured nation’ clauses.

THE BIGGER THEY COME, THE HARDER THEY.... FIGHT BACK?

In the EU, concern was mainly over how powerful the large tech companies have become, partly because they are making life much harder for smaller start-ups in the same field. Google’s original motto was “Don’t be evil”, but it’s something the current directors seem to have forgotten or at least to be ignoring. In any case, it was never “don’t be greedy”. One way of tackling that, believes the Commission, is to put an end to the practice of “self-preferencing”. This is when, for instance, someone makes an on-line search using an Apple on-line tool and the first options it suggests (and the most numerous) are for other Apple products.



© Wikipedia

EU Commissioner for Internal Market Thierry Breton



© Wikipedia

Googleplex Headquarters, Mountain View, US



© Aine Muegler

Apple's headquarters Apple Park, Cupertino, California

This leaves alternative app developers struggling for the oxygen of publicity: people won't select or buy what they don't know about, even if it's better. Another change the Commission wants is for companies like Apple and Google to give users the chance to uninstall apps that came ready-installed in the product they've bought. This reflects action in the United States by the Department of Justice, which took action in October against Google, claiming that the company ties up phone makers, networks and browsers in deals that oblige them to make it their default search engine. Google already has something like 90% of global market share, so there seems to be little excuse for such restrictive marketing practices. Advertising on Google pays for everything. Evil? Well, you'd have to make up your own mind. But restrictive and extremely profitable it certainly is.

The other part of the plan is to force digital companies to take down offensive or harmful content without delay, with big fines being imposed if they fail to do so. Commissioner Vestager, in announcing the new rules, said "The two proposals serve one purpose: to make sure that we, as users, have access to a wide choice of safe products and services online. And that businesses operating in Europe can freely and fairly compete online just as they do offline. This is one world. We should be able to do our shopping in a safe manner and trust the news we read. Because what is illegal offline is equally illegal online."

True, but much harder to call to account, given that much of the most offensive content originates abroad. Russia's famous St. Petersburg troll factory is still active, disseminating untruthful and misleading material, even suggesting that a COVID-19 infection is not dangerous

and also some proposing deadly ways to self-medicate (swallowing bleach is not a great idea).

Anyone who has bought a computer from one of those out-of-town retailers (and often if they have bought on-line) will have experienced what is called 'bloatware'. Bloatware is to your mobile phone or computer what junk mail is to your mailbox, except that it's harder to spot and more difficult to get rid of. It means software programmes and apps installed in your new device without prior permission that may make it harder to install the apps you actually need and want whilst clogging up your new device's memory. The vendors clearly get a kickback for putting the stuff there and will tell you that the apps are all helpful and useful and that you'll get great service from them. You may even find the occasional one helpful, although you might have preferred an alternative supplier. Some kinds of bloatware contain games which the new owners of the equipment are lured into playing, only to discover that to progress beyond a certain point costs money. In fact it's sometimes a deliberate lure intended to encourage people to take up gambling, which makes it pretty nasty stuff. What bloatware also does, of course, (apart from boosting the vendor's profits) is to take up so much memory that everything else operates more slowly. Uninstalling it all is probably a job you won't fancy, being needlessly time consuming for those who are tech-savvy and a worrying chore for the rest of us. Sadly, as far as I can see, neither the DSA nor the DMA directly targets this issue, although both should help to clamp down on the practice. "The business and political interests of a handful of companies should not dictate our future," said Vestager and Breton

in a written statement, "Europe has to set its own terms and conditions." Let us hope those conditions exclude dangerous bloatware.

MOVING WITH THE TIMES

Technology, of course, has moved on apace. When I started working for the BBC, initially as a freelance technical operator (we were called 'station assistants' in local radio) and occasional presenter, our various channels were controlled by knobs that turned. These "faders" were called 'pots' (potentiometers) and were not smart quadrant faders. We checked our output levels on a peak programme meter (PPM) to ensure they were correct. That was analogue, of course, not digital, and levels were, in fact, much easier to control. We had to set things to 'zero' level, but these days the level in decibels, when reckoned digitally, involves logarithms, so zero dB in analogue terms comes out at something like -10 dB or even -12dB in digital. I know it's harder to get levels exactly even these days and electronic circuits designed to achieve that end seldom do, in my experience. That could be why different programmes on your television are broadcast at different volume levels, although control by a sloppy audio engineer is more likely to be the cause. After all, the official advice is to record at the highest level possible until you start to get what's called 'clipping' – a form of audio distortion. These days, with people listening to compressed audio on tiny devices, the words "high fidelity" seem a bit irrelevant.

I was recently sent a photograph by a near-contemporary of mine who still presents radio programmes. His control





Zoom headquarters in San Jose, California

desk was quite unrecognisable to me, with a computer screen controlling every action, including the music being played, and no sign of record turntables, open-reel tape recorders or jingle-playing machines. Even the faders were virtual. I was not tempted to return to working in radio. When I started, BBC local radio had just started to use portable Uher reel-to-reel tape recorders for interviews. Being a freelance, I bought one of my own (second hand and from someone who had to leave the country hurriedly, so was selling it cheaply) which I still have. I haven't used it for years, relying now on a digital sound recording device which, unlike the Uher, I can no longer repair in the field with a screwdriver, a dollop of solder and a box of matches. These days I record Zoom interviews for clients from the safety of my own home, using two separate video cameras to shoot 'cutaways' – alternative angles with which to liven up the finished product when I edit the thing together. It's a world away from what I first trained to do.

Zoom interviews, of course, rely on the Internet and are widely used in the audio-visual media these days. Zoom is the media-saving device of the age, without which, in the current pandemic, news reporting on TV and Internet platforms would simply cease. I would not like to see it being restrained by any new regulations but that really doesn't seem very likely. My only fear is that contacting people by Zoom will become so familiar and ubiquitous that journalists and others will no longer bother to travel at all. That would be a great loss for humankind. Indeed, if I had my way, I would like to persuade everyone, everywhere, to spend some time living in another country, preferably

while they're young and adventurous. It helps to break down barriers and it broadens horizons.

Perhaps the same applies to legislation. It's certainly being predicted that the EU's strict new regulations for the tech giants will have an impact far beyond Europe. The companies themselves may not want that, but the EU is a massive market and if the large operators have to modify the way they conduct themselves to suit it, it may prove more cost effective to apply the rules everywhere. That way, the DSA and DMA may end up affecting how business is carried out not only in the EU but also in the United States and elsewhere. Vestager, when presenting the two proposed pieces of legislation, admitted that they were complicated and very different from each other, but she used an interesting metaphor. She reminded journalists that the world's first traffic lights were installed in Cleveland, Ohio, to address a growing problem brought about by new technology: the invention of the motor car or automobile. That momentous moment in history took place on 5th August 1914, at the corner of Euclid Avenue and East 105th Street. It was based on the 'Municipal Traffic Control System' design by James Hoge which was later patented in 1918 and was worked using electricity. Vestager said it was a fair analogy because at the time traffic was increasing rapidly, just as Internet traffic is today. She said it was necessary to create rules "to put order in the chaos". The traffic light made the streets of Cleveland safer, which is what she is doing for digital services. "That is what the Digital Services Act is all about," she said, "creating the rules, making the online world as safe, reliable and secure for all users of the digital roads. Because we should all be able to trust what we do online. To navigate the web without being confronted with terrorist propaganda. And feeling certain that the toy we buy online is just as safe as the toy that we buy in a bricks-and-mortar shop." Vestager made it clear that she will not hesitate to come down hard on those who break the new legislation, even down to breaking up the companies.

It is not yet a done deal, although it almost certainly will be. First, it has to be gone through by European Parliamentary committees, which will undoubtedly propose changes. They will be lobbied, too, by 'interested parties' that can foresee it impinging

on their bottom lines and making life more difficult. While Vestager, in her rôle as Hercules, is busy diverting the river Alpheus, the longest river in the Peloponnese, through the stables of Augeas, you can bet that many a latter-day Augeas is dreaming up ways of not paying the promised percentage and getting out of having to pay. Hercules agreed to clean out the stables of Augeas, you may recall, befouled with years of muck from his vast herds of oxen and goats, on condition that if successful he would receive one tenth part of the livestock as his reward. Augeas, who had been one of Jason's Argonauts and therefore a hero is his own right, reneged on the deal, claiming Hercules had used artifice which had not involved any personal cleaning work, although Augeas' son, Phyleus, supported the



Executive Vice President of the European Commission for A Europe Fit for the Digital Age Margarethe Vestager and Commissioner Thierry BRETON, during a press conference on the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act in Brussels, Belgium on Dec. 15, 2020

hero's claim. Augeas foolishly stood firm: it was a declaration of war. According to my 1827 copy of Lemprière's Classical Dictionary, Hercules won, deposed Augeas and elevated Phyleus to his throne, although the book suggests Augeas was spared at the request of Phyleus himself. Interestingly, after his death Augeas received all the honours due to a hero. So the big tech companies may yet emerge from this intact, or sufficiently intact, and you can bet they will still find ways to minimise the impact of legislation and make a profit. Believing one can subdue them for long is probably a myth.

Jim Gibbons

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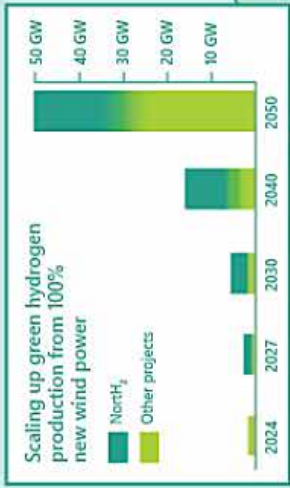
North₂

Kickstarting the green hydrogen economy

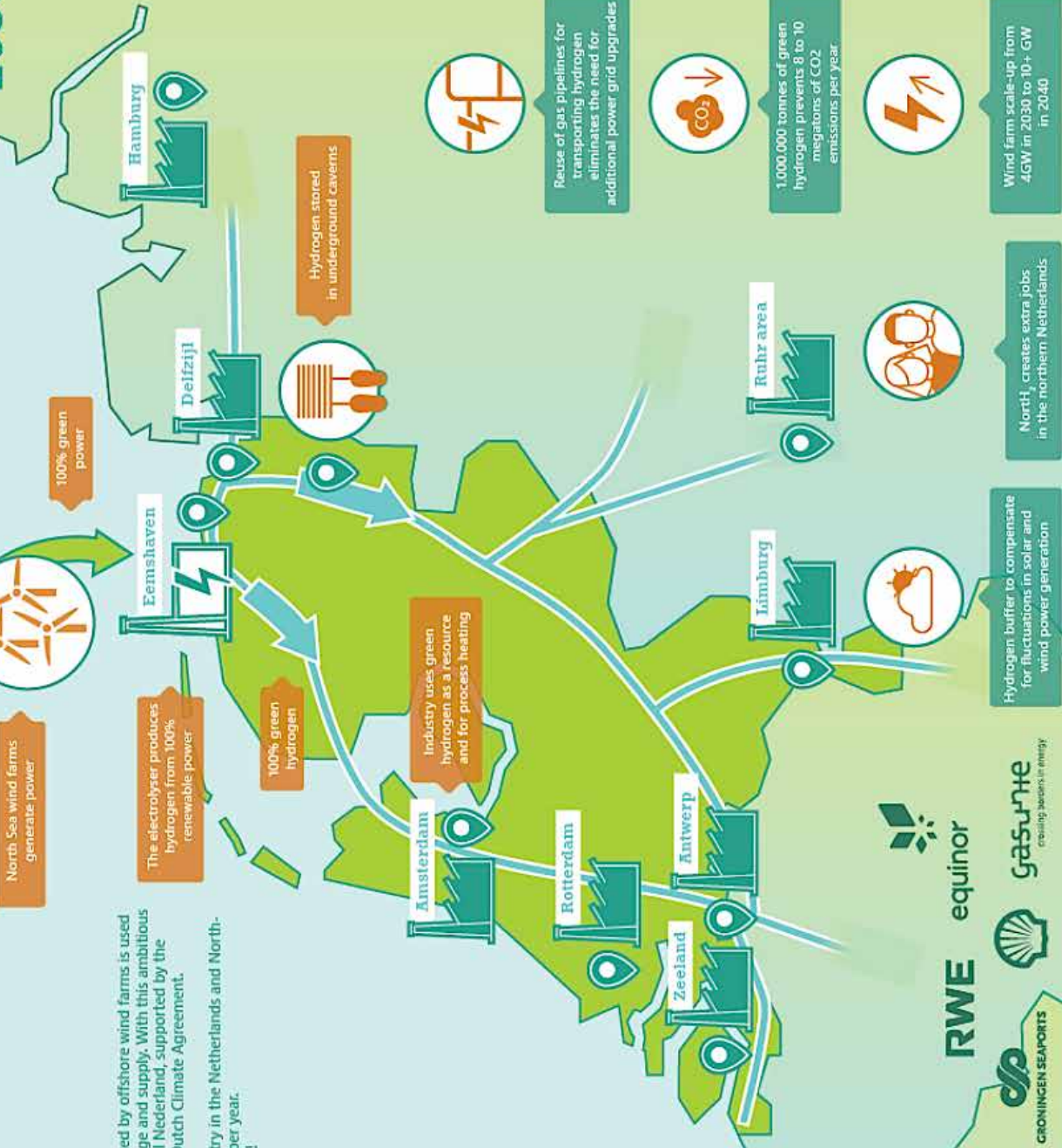
One single integrated chain in which renewable power generated by offshore wind farms is used for large-scale green hydrogen production, transmission, storage and supply. With this ambitious initiative, Equinor, Gasunie, Groningen Seaports, RWE and Shell Nederland, supported by the Province of Groningen, will help achieve the targets from the Dutch Climate Agreement.

We will be supplying large quantities green hydrogen to industry in the Netherlands and North-western Europe, reducing CO₂ emissions by 8 to 10 megatons per year. This initiative will give the green hydrogen market a real boost!

Scale-up in 2040:
More offshore wind farms and electrolysis



2030



EQUINOR JOINS EUROPE'S BIGGEST GREEN HYDROGEN PROJECT

The North2-project

The project aims to produce green hydrogen using renewable electricity from offshore wind off the coast of Netherlands of about 4 gigawatts by 2030, and 10+ gigawatts by 2040, kickstarting the hydrogen economy in Northwest Europe.

“

This is a groundbreaking project that Equinor is looking forward to contribute to. The project can be an important part in our efforts to build a competitive position in hydrogen, creating future value and industrial possibilities. Our aim is to be a net-zero energy company by 2050 and developing a profitable low carbon value chain for hydrogen will be an essential part of our transition to become a broad energy company. Hydrogen will be key to decarbonization and net zero efforts for the energy market, especially in otherwise hard to abate sectors which cannot be served by electricity,” says Equinor CEO, Anders Opedal.

NorthH2 was launched in February 2020, with Shell, Groningen Seaports Gasunie and the province of Groningen. Equinor joins RWE as new partners to the project. The project will complete a feasibility study by 2021, with the aim to start project development activities in the second half of 2021.

The project will have a capacity of 1 GW in 2027, 4 GW by 2030 and 10+ GW by 2040 for electrolysis. This equates to 0.4 million tonnes of green hydrogen production in 2030 and 1 million tonnes green hydrogen production by 2040. This can abate 8 to 10 million tonnes of CO2 emissions. This is equivalent to the yearly emissions from road traffic in Norway. The rapid growth in offshore wind is well suited to developing a green hydrogen value chain.

“NorthH2 fits well with Equinor's experience and position as a leading offshore wind operator. Hydrogen will add to the competitiveness of renewables



Pål Eitrheim (left). Executive Vice President for New Energy Solutions in Equinor, and CEO Anders Opedal



in the years to come, by adding value and an alternative route to market for renewables. The development of viable large-scale clean hydrogen value chains will help meet the Paris agreement targets, says Pål Eitrheim, executive vice president New Energy Solutions in Equinor.

Northwest Europe is wellpositioned to develop an integrated hydrogen value chain – from offshore wind development and renewable power generation to production, storage, transport and the sale of green hydrogen.

The North Sea has a great potential for large-scale wind development, there is extensive existing natural gas infrastructure that is suitable for storage and large-scale transport of hydrogen, and there are large industrial clusters in the Netherlands and Germany as well as heavy-duty vehicle OEMs that could economically benefit from a 'first mover' advantage.

NorthH2 expands the energy transition agenda for Equinor by adding a significant green hydrogen value chain.

This complements already existing renewable and low-carbon world-class projects like Dogger Bank (offshore wind), Northern Lights (CCS) and H2H Saltend (Blue hydrogen).

NorthH2 sets a vision for 4 GW integrated offshore-wind-to-green-hydrogen value chain by 2030, and for 10+ GW by 2040. Through the parallel development of the required hydrogen infrastructure by repurposing existing natural gas infrastructure, the project could supply major Northwest European clusters.

By doing so the NorthH2 project will make an important domestic contribution to meet expected quickly growing hydrogen demand and thereby to meet Dutch as well as EU climate targets for 2030. It also ensures long term decarbonisation in line with the Paris Agreement. The project fits well with the agenda of the Northern Netherlands to become a leading region for green hydrogen, supporting economic development and the creation of high-skilled jobs.

NEWS IN BRIEF

DXTERITY OFFERS COVID-19 TESTS FOR SALE ON AMAZON



DxTernity announcing the sale of COVID-19 diagnostic tests on Amazon available to U.S. businesses and customers at home. The self-administered, non-invasive saliva kits are FDA authorized for use by both individuals with and without symptoms of COVID-19. The kits are now available in individual and 10-pack kits on Amazon.

DxTernity's SARS-CoV-2 PCR-based test is the first at-home saliva test to receive Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the FDA for symptomatic and asymptomatic testing. Asymptomatic testing is essential in limiting viral spread because a person can have COVID-19 without exhibiting any symptoms of the illness. The test detects the presence of viral genetic material but will not confirm immunity or detect antibodies.

"We have demonstrated the reliability and quality of our COVID-19 testing solution with big business and now we want to expand access to customers at home and small businesses," says Bob Terbruggen, Ph.D., Founder and CEO of DxTernity. "Amazon is the perfect partner for expanding access to millions of U.S. customers."

DxTernity's COVID-19 testing solution are deployed by over 130 U.S. corporate partners, including numerous Fortune 500 companies, global pharmaceutical organizations and entertainment groups.

Single test kits are available for \$110 and 10-pack kits are available for \$1000 on Amazon. Testing does not require supervised sample collection, and prescription authorization is included as part of test registration. The price includes pre-paid overnight return shipment and testing in DxTernity's CLIA licensed and accredited laboratory.

About DxTernity

DxTernity is an ISO 13485-certified genomics company with a CLIA-licensed, CAP-accredited laboratory based near Los Angeles, CA. DxTernity develops highly accurate, fast, and affordable genomic tests for disease diagnosis and monitoring.

ALBANIA ANNOUNCES PLANS TO LAUNCH TENDER FOR FIRST WIND POWER PLANTS

- First wind power plants tender in Albania to be launched
- EBRD and Swiss SECO support preparation of groundbreaking move
- Albania to diversify energy supply, attract investment and increase resilience to climate change

The government of Albania has announced plans for launching the first tender for the construction of utility-scale on-shore wind power plants, which will make a major contribution to improve the country's future energy supply and significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The tender, expected to be launched early in 2021, will be the first in a planned series of investments in wind energy projects and was supported by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) with additional financial grant support of €650,000 provided by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

Matteo Colangeli, EBRD Head of Albania, said: "We are delighted to expand our partnership with the Albanian authorities to start up the wind power sector, building on the successful experience with solar. We are confident that transparent and well prepared tenders for wind can deliver attractive energy prices and quality investors for Albania".

Patrik Meier, Deputy Head of Mission at the Swiss Embassy in Albania, added: "I am happy that this innovative energy auction in Albania will contribute to improve sustainable energy supply, enhance resilience to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is an inspiring model for promoting transparency, competitiveness and participation of private sector which will trigger new initiatives for scaling-up renewable energy investments in the country."

The EBRD has been a leading force in promoting renewable solar and wind power in Albania through a combination of policy engagement, technical assistance and investments. Earlier this year the Bank supported Albania's Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy in launching tenders for the 140 MW Karavasta and the 100 MW Spitallë solar photovoltaic projects.



Prospective bidders can propose projects with a minimum capacity of 30 MW and a maximum capacity of 75 MW. Through this tender process, the ministry will select projects totaling 150 MW that will receive support measures.

The first wind power plants tender will diversify the country's energy sources, increase its resilience to climate change and is expected to attract foreign investment.

The EBRD is a leading institutional investor in Albania. To date, the Bank has invested more than €1.4 billion in 104 projects in the country.

The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) is the Swiss government's leading office for economic affairs, including international economic development cooperation. It promotes sound framework conditions and governance principles for economic and trade development in partner countries by sharing its expertise and financing projects. In the last two decades, Switzerland has provided CHF 38 million grant funding for Albania's energy sector. Source: EBRD



EUROPOL AND EUROJUST SIGN NEW CONTRIBUTION AGREEMENT EXPANDING COOPERATION ON THE SIRIUS PROJECT



Europol and Eurojust have signed a contribution agreement that will expand their partnership in supporting law enforcement and judicial authorities with cross-border access to electronic evidence. This new agreement, in place from January 2021 to June 2024, reinforces the success of the SIRIUS project and sets about its second phase of development and enhancement.

Launched by Europol in 2017, the SIRIUS project aims to foster the co-development of practical and innovative tools and solutions for EU law enforcement and judicial authorities that can support internet-based investigations. Eurojust has made a significant contribution to the SIRIUS project by providing the perspective of EU judicial authorities. Under this new agreement, Eurojust becomes a full partner of the project.

The practical measures outlined in the new agreement are:

- strengthen and speed up direct cooperation between law enforcement authorities and online service providers to access e-evidence by exchanging experiences;
- exchange best practices and training for EU practitioners on applicable rules in the US related to the mutual legal agreement procedure;
- expand the geographical focus of SIRIUS to develop collaboration on existing initiatives and projects with selected non-EU countries based on the interest of EU Member States.

About SIRIUS

Created by Europol in October 2017, the SIRIUS Project is a central reference point in the European Union for knowledge sharing on digital cross-border investigations for law enforcement and judicial authorities. SIRIUS products and services are currently available to more than 5 000 practitioners, representing all EU Member States and 17 non-EU countries. Eurojust, a partner in the project since early 2018, has become a full co-beneficiary of the funded action. Moreover, the European Judicial Network also closely collaborates with the project. The SIRIUS project has received funding from the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments.

UKRAINE'S SECURITY SERVICES BLOCKS LARGE-SCALE HEROIN SMUGGLING TO EU



The SBU prevented smuggling of a large batch of heroin to the EU countries.

As a result of a special operation, the SBU documented the illegal activities of a transnational organized criminal group consisting of the Turkish citizens.

In particular, the suspects smuggled heroin to Ukraine on a ship that arrived at the Odesa Commercial Sea Port in December 2020. The narcotics were hidden in a food container.

SBU officers decided to monitor the supply of heroin in order to expose and document the unlawful activities of all members of the criminal group.

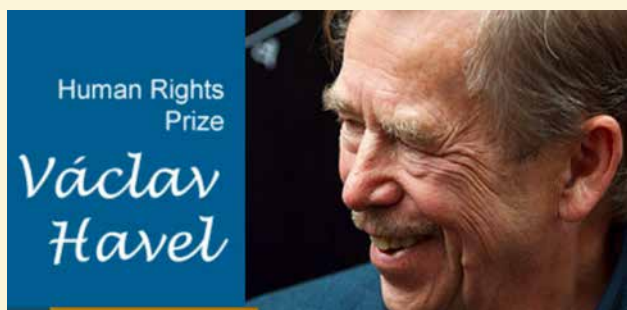
As a result, the SBU operatives detained three foreigners in the city of Lviv while packing narcotics in rented warehouses, in accordance with the Art. 208 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine. Allegedly, the drug traffickers planned to smuggle heroin to the EU under the guise of diplomatic cargo. On the same day, the SBU detained the organizer of the criminal group, a citizen of Turkey, in the regional center.

During the searches, the law enforcement officers found 1,035 kilos of the substance prepared for shipment. The rapid drug tests showed that it was heroin. The “black market” cost of the seized narcotics tops UAH 2,3 billion (USD 80,766,770). Also, the SBU officers are currently conducting searches of the smugglers’ temporary homes.

The criminal proceedings were initiated upon the fact of smuggling of narcotic and psychotropic drugs, its analogues or precursors. The investigation is ongoing to identify and prosecute all those involved in the illegal activity. The issue of serving the detainees suspicion notices is being resolved.

The operation was conducted by the Security Service of Ukraine with the assistance of the State Customs Service of Ukraine under the supervision of the Lviv Region Prosecutor's Office.

THE SELECTION PANEL OF THE VÁCLAV HAVEL HUMAN RIGHTS PRIZE

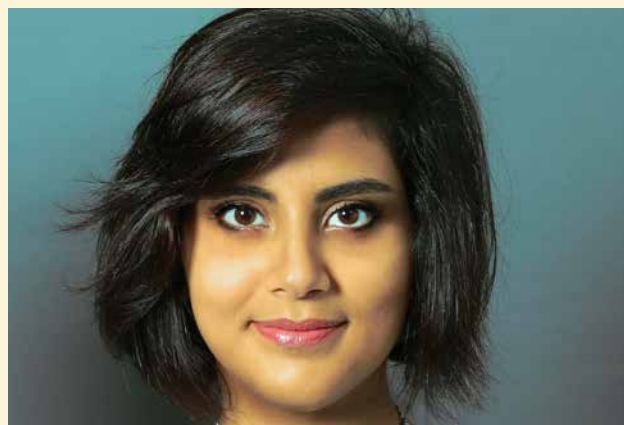


The selection panel of the **Václav Havel Human Rights Prize**, which rewards outstanding civil society action in the defence of human rights in Europe and beyond, has announced the shortlist for the **2020 Prize**, with all three nominees involved in promoting **women's rights** or **gender equality**.

Meeting by teleconference, the panel – made up of independent figures from the world of human rights and chaired by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Rik Daems – decided to shortlist the following three nominees, in alphabetical order:

- **Loujain Alhathloul** (Saudi Arabia) :

The nominee is one of the leaders of the Saudi feminist movement. Ms Alhathloul is a prominent women's rights activist known for defying the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia and for opposing the Saudi male guardianship system. She has been detained on several occasions, sentenced and has been in prison since 2018.



Loujain Hathloul AlHathloul

- **Nuns of the Drukpa Order** (Nepal):

The nominee is a group of young Buddhist nuns, promoting gender equality, environmental sustainability and intercultural tolerance in their home villages in the Himalayas. They are known for their delivery of supplies to hard-to-reach villages after an earthquake struck Kathmandu in 2015. The Nuns of the Drukpa Order have also taught self-defence classes for women and biked over 20,000 kilometres to protest against the trafficking of women and girls.



A group of Drukpa nuns carry supplies to villages affected by the 2015 Nepal earthquakes.

- **Julienne Lusenge** (Democratic Republic of Congo):

The nominee is a Congolese human rights activist who has been documenting sexual abuse and acts of violence against women in Congo. She was instrumental in obtaining the conviction by the ICC of Thomas Lubanga for enlisting child soldiers and collected evidence of sexual slavery in the trial of German Katanga, as well as obtaining the convictions of hundreds of perpetrators of sexual violence against women at national level. She has been threatened for her work on several occasions.





GIBRALTAR GETS A DEAL – OF SORTS

Gibraltarians remain part of the Schengen group the UK never joined

Given its location, an outcrop at the tip of the Iberian Peninsula, just where the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic Ocean, Gibraltar was always certain to be strategically important. In fact, its importance and its significance to national pride in Britain far outweigh its modest size. It is just 5 kilometres from north to south and roughly 1.2 kilometres across at its widest point. Its most famous residents are a tribe of Barbary macaques, the only wild monkeys to live in Europe. They may have been introduced by the Moors who lived there from 700 until nearly 1500, and they were presumably brought there as pets, although there are also claims that they only appeared in the 17th or 18th centuries. Recent DNA analysis shows them to be of Moroccan and Algerian origin genetically, proving that they are not, as some have claimed, remnants of a population that existed in Europe before the last ice age. They're not apes, either: despite the lack of a visible tail (their tails are almost vestigial, or at least very small) they are, in fact, monkeys. It's stated, although it remains unproven, that it was the monkeys that saved the territory from

a combined attack by Spain and France during the "Great Siege", that lasted from 1779 to 1783. It's said the monkeys heard the attackers approaching and kicked up such a racket that they woke up the British forces (why were they asleep during a siege?), causing the attack to be abandoned.



The Governor of Gibraltar, General George Augustus Eliott, is on horseback pointing to the rescue of the defeated Spanish sailors by the British. The Defeat of the Floating Batteries at Gibraltar, September 1782 by John Singleton Copley



Sir Winston Churchill

As a result, it's said that Gibraltar will stay British as long as the macaques remain there, snatching sandwiches, sweets and other goodies from tourists too busy saying "Oh! Aren't they sweet?" to notice their concerted efforts at petty larceny, a pastime at which they are said to excel, especially with regard to food.

Britain's wartime leader, Sir Winston Churchill, considered the macaques so vital to British interests in terms of self-confidence and prestige that he ordered the then colonial secretary to find ways to increase their numbers and maintain

them thereafter. The order was duly obeyed, the macaques multiplied and they now number just over 300, divided into seven separate troops, which do not have to suffer, shivering through the winter in Morocco and Algeria when snow coats the Middle Atlas mountains, but live as much-loved assets to the population and to the summer visitors, often climbing on them. As to their diet, quite apart from the tourists' sandwiches, often purloined, there is an ample supply of wild food for the discerning monkey. According to the Discover Wildlife website, "Their varied plant diet ranges from olive leaves and fruits to the roots of introduced Bermuda buttercups, and this is supplemented with live prey, such as small lizards and numerous invertebrates."



King Carlos III

But while the combined forces of pre-revolutionary France and the Spain of King Carlos III failed to prise Gibraltar from Britannia's grasp, it seems as if the jingoistic (if seemingly ill-informed) patriotism of the Brexit campaigners may have driven the territory partially into the arms of Madrid and its (and until lately Britain's) trading partners in the European Union. I'm sure that obliging the Gibraltarians to seek comfort within the Schengen group was the very last thing the enthusiasts

for Britain leaving the EU had in mind. However, unintended consequences seem to have come into play, with Britain's notoriously right-wing and largely anti-European press having failed to inform their readers of this possibility. There again, Gibraltar is quite a long way away, so perhaps they didn't really care much, either. As the great Scottish poet Robert Burns put it in his poem 'To a Mouse', "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft a-gley." In other words, however hard you plan, things can still go wrong in a way you hadn't anticipated. If it all happens, it will mean that Spanish citizens can enter and leave Gibraltar without stopping at the border, as will citizens of all the other Schengen member states, but anyone from the UK will still have to carry a passport, as they do now. This is unlikely to please Britain's neo-nationalists (or its bombastic, bellowing mainstream media). So far, then, in terms of patriotic fervour for Gibraltar, the score is Barbary macaques 1, Brexiteers 0.

It was the Arabs who first named it, at least on the public record. After all, it has been inhabited consistently for almost 3,000 years and was at one time home to a group of Neanderthals who lived there more than 50,000 years ago. Who knows what they called it, other than by whatever their word was for 'home'? We don't know what the Phoenicians called it, either, during their stay. They arrived there in around 950 BC. The Carthaginians visited it, too, as did the Romans, building shrines to Hercules on the famous Rock of Gibraltar. The Romans did give it a name: Mons Calpe, which means Hollow Mountain. The Arabs, though, called the place Jabal Tāriq, which means the Mount of Tarik, in honour of Tāriq ibn Ziyād, who captured Gibraltar for them in 711 CE. He turned it into a fortress and its successive rulers have followed suit. It was the name Jabal Tāriq, of course, that evolved into Gibraltar.

The Arabs lost the place to the Crown of Castile in 1309, since when it has remained Christian, except for a break between 1333 and 1462, when the Moors seized it and made it Muslim again. Spain then took it back, but during the War of Spanish Succession it was captured by an Anglo-Dutch fleet in the name of one of the contenders for the Spanish throne, the Habsburg Charles VI of Austria. When the war ended, Spain ceded Gibraltar to Britain

in 1713 under the Treaty of Utrecht, although, as the incident with the apes proved, Madrid wasn't entirely happy about parting with it, hoping to take it back later. In that sense, nothing much has changed; Spain would still like to regain the territory. It has been symbolic of British naval strength since the 18th century, however, and it has remained the guardian of the Straits of Gibraltar.

Its strategic importance was especially noticeable during the Second World War, when control of the Mediterranean was vital to all sides. It came under sustained and repeated attack from Germany, Italy and even from Vichy France which staged a number of bombing raids, although relatively little damage was inflicted. A British naval trawler, the HMT Lady Shirley, was sunk by a torpedo, however, with the loss of all hands, but not before she herself had sunk U-111, capturing her 44 crew.

Nazi Germany tried to get the Spanish dictator, Francisco Franco, to help it by occupying Gibraltar but, somewhat surprisingly, he declined, although he did renew his claim to the territory when the war was over. However, he closed his country's border with Gibraltar from 1969 until 1985, during which time there was virtually no communication. Britain, along with the Gibraltarians themselves, stuck to the claim of self-determination, rejecting Spain's ambitions. Negotiations about the place between Madrid and London have continued, on and off, ever since. Who would ever have imagined that the most eagerly flag-waving English nationalists would have chosen, without realising it, to jeopardise its status as a British territory?

It remains British, however, as UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab



UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab



Currency Note with the Image of Tariq Ibn Ziyad

assured the media. “We remain steadfast in our support for Gibraltar,” he said at a press conference after agreement was reached, “and its sovereignty is safeguarded.” The deal is a temporary one, just for the next four years, and its details remain shrouded in mystery. The nub of it is, though, that the border between Gibraltar and Spain remains open, as it is now. Chief Minister Fabian Picardo assured citizens that Gibraltar’s “red lines” remain unbroken but that its relations with its nearest neighbour were being “reset”. “There are no aspects of the framework that has been agreed that in any way transgress Gibraltar’s positions on sovereignty, jurisdiction or control,” he said.

SMALL PLACE, BIG PROBLEM

With a total area of around 6.72 kilometres, which makes it 15 times the size of Vatican City, 3.4 times the size of Monaco but less than 24% the size of Liechtenstein, it’s pretty small, by any standards. Its population is also an unremarkable 33,686 at last count, making it just 0.00043% of the world population. It is also deeply undercut by about 16 kilometres of tunnels, mainly dug for defensive purposes over the years. In 1967, Gibraltarians voted overwhelmingly to remain British, and in 2002 they voted not to share sovereignty with Spain.

However, in the 2016 referendum on Britain’s continued membership of the European Union, they voted by 95.91% for Britain to remain in the EU. At present, some 15,000 European – mainly Spanish – citizens commute every day to Gibraltar for work and even if no deal is worked out between Madrid and London, provisions were in

place to allow those who had registered their situation before 1 January 2021 to cross, using a document being provided especially for them (where none was needed previously). Negotiations on how to police the border were continuing even after the UK’s EU membership ended, which was essential because the supposed ‘trade deal’ agreed at the last minute made no mention of Gibraltar, which is classed as a ‘British Overseas Territory’. Picardo assured Spanish broadcaster TVE that both sides were working hard to make sure workers remain able to cross easily, with membership of the Schengen area still on the table for Gibraltar, but he warned that “the clock is ticking”. It looks as if travellers from outside the Schengen area wanting to cross the border will need to carry passports to get from Spain to Gibraltar or *vice versa*.

Gibraltar also depends on tourism, attracting some ten million visitors every year. Their spending accounts for about a quarter of Gibraltar’s economy. Gibraltar will now be regarded as being within the Schengen area, its many British tourists will have to show their passports (as they have done for years), while travellers from within the Schengen countries will not. One assumes this is not the outcome the Brexit supporters would welcome.

“We do not have much time, and the chaotic scenes from the UK must remind us that we need to keep working to reach a deal on Gibraltar,” warned Arancha González Laya, the Spanish foreign minister, just days before the UK’s ‘transition period’ with the EU ended.

As Picardo said at a press conference: “This is a moment where we have the choice to make for our people, of



Spanish foreign minister Arancha González Laya



Chief Minister of Gibraltar Fabian Picardo

whether we ensure that none of us loses at this table even if none of us wins, or we ensure that all of us wins to ensure that none of us loses. It’s that clear. I’m optimistic that we can get there.” And they did, sort of. There was a real fear that a failure to find a deal would have turned Gibraltar into a giant truck park, much as it has done with Britain’s south-east county of Kent and other parts of Britain that have major ports. It’s unclear from some government statements if ministers were even aware of the continuing chaos. In one Downing Street briefing, Secretary of State for Transport Grant Shapps assured viewers that the numbers of trucks queuing on the approach to Dover had been reduced from 500 to 130, while a news report later that same evening gave the actual number as “around 1,500”. Shapps clearly hadn’t got anyone to count them.

To end up as a truck park would have been unfortunate after the place’s formidable past. The Rock of Gibraltar, for which it is famous, is a promontory rising to a ridge more than 400 metres high. It was formed during the Jurassic



Philip Hammond Chancellor of the Exchequer from 2016 to 2019 under Prime Minister Theresa May together with Gibraltar’s Political Leaders and representatives of local Associations and Groups

Gibraltar 1846 From E.F.Kelaart's *Flora Calpense*

era, when the Atlantic Ocean was much narrower and still widening. It is made up mostly of the shells of dead marine creatures, mainly terebratulæ, living at the time in warm, shallow seas. The terebratula is described as having had an elongated biconvex shell, to have been vaguely egg-shaped but small with a “large ventral umbo (the raised pimple in the centre) with pedicle (or stalk) opening, curved hinge line, anterior margin of both the valves with two folds, ornamented with fine concentric growth lines”. So you’ll know one if you ever come across it, although that seems unlikely. They died out in the late Mesozoic era. The shells collected on the sea floor when the animals died and gathered into a pile that turned gradually into limestone. This in turn was lifted up by pressure between the African plate and the European plate coming together, the Rock itself being the highly eroded part of an overturned crustal fold. In other words, it is effectively upside down, with older rock lying above younger, rather as you might get if you pushed a tablecloth from each side until it buckled.

James Smith, writing in the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society* in February 1846, expressed the opinion that Gibraltar should really be classed as “belonging to the coal measures” in view of the organic remains there being indicative of the Jurassic era. He admits to being uncertain, though, because of the lack of clear evidence. “Fossils are of such rare occurrence and in such an imperfect state,” he wrote, “that no certain inference can, in the present state of our knowledge of its organic remains, be drawn from them.” There are coal measures just to the north, too, but of small size and poor quality, more like shale than burnable deposits.

WHAT, NO RIVIERA?

However, the lifting of the Rock through continental drift not only

had the effect of lifting and turning that crustal fold but also of sealing off the entrance to the Mediterranean. It happened around 6-million years ago, and for the next one-and-a-half million years the Mediterranean dried up completely, partly because an ice age froze so much of the sea. Then, around four-and-a-half million years ago, the ice caps started to melt and sea level eventually rose high enough for waters from the Atlantic to roar back through the widening gap. This created an area of sea in which Greeks, Romans and Barbary pirates could sail and across which the various forces called to help Menelaus and Agamemnon to besiege the city of Troy would row their warlike boats, full of warriors. It also became, of course, Homer’s “wine-dark sea” (οἶνον πόντος), in which Odysseus and his unfortunate crew got lost on their way home to Ithaca (although his seven years as a prisoner of the beautiful Calypso on the island of Ogygia, during which time he fathered two sons with her, Nausithous and Nausinous, must have had its more enjoyable side. As Calypso was supposed to be the goddess of silence it would have been fairly quiet, too. What a hard life these classical heroes had). Eventually, of course, the sea would also provide soft beaches, swept by balmy breezes and flanked by

palm trees and expensive hotels, upon whose sands, starlets could gain a tan while being photographed, reluctantly-on-purpose, by the paparazzi and where luxury yachts could bob gently by piers, hosting cocktail parties for the well-heeled glitterati without ever having to put to sea.



Rock of Gibraltar from Bayside Road, Gibraltar

FORTRESS GIBRALTAR

Although Spain will continue to argue for taking complete control of Gibraltar, the territory’s official language remains English, although most citizens are at least bilingual, speaking Spanish as fluently as they do English. Locally, many people speak Yanito, an Andalusian-based creole language with many English, Italian, Hebrew, and Maltese words. The territory also boasts shops familiar to a British high street, such as Marks and Spencer, Morrison’s supermarket and others, although with so many familiar shops in the UK closing forever because of restrictions imposed over the Covid-19 virus, the future cannot be certain for many of them.

Gibraltar Barbary Macaques (*Macaca sylvanus*)

It cannot be certain, either, for the Gibraltarians. Few in number though they be, they presumably matter to the British government and its baying nationalist media. Unlike his hero, Churchill and his bid to increase the number of macaques, however, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has not ordered anyone, ministerial or otherwise (Britain no longer has a Secretary of State for the Colonies, of course) to encourage human Gibraltarians to increase their numbers through a breeding policy. He hasn't even visited himself to see if anything can be done to boost the numbers.

During the war, the Gibraltarians themselves were evacuated, initially to Casablanca, which at that time seems to have been a very far cry from the place where Humphrey Bogart met his former screen lover, Ingrid Bergman, at Rick's Bar and where the policeman played by Paul Henreid served a useful turn, aiding their sad separate getaways. The French, who had surrendered to Nazi Germany in 1940, were not happy at being saddled with refugees. In fact the Vichy French, sympathising with Berlin, were minded to get rid of them. This proved possible when fifteen British cargo ships arrived carrying French forces evacuated from Dunkirk. The French seized the vessels and refused to release them until their captains agreed to carry away the unwanted refugees, something forbidden by the British Admiralty, although the commander in charge relaxed the rule when he saw them being herded through the dockyard gates at bayonet point by French soldiers. They were allowed to take on board only what they could carry and no supplies, largely because the French were still angry at the attack by the British Mediterranean



Operation Aerial was the evacuation of Allied forces and civilians from ports in western France from 15 to 25 June 1940

Fleet on Mers-el-Kébir, on the coast of French Algeria, to stop France's warships from falling into German hands. Unfortunately, the British attack also killed over a thousand French sailors, so there was a lot of understandable bad feeling. The Gibraltar refugees were taken home but were only allowed to stay briefly while an alternative destination was found.

Inevitably, many ended up in Britain, but with accommodation limited, some 2,000 were moved on to the Portuguese island of Madeira. Those that remained in the UK were mainly housed around Kensington in London under the care of the Ministry of Health, from where they sent harrowing reports about the nightly bombing raids on London to relatives still living in Gibraltar. Some groups were also moved to refugee camps in Scotland and Northern Ireland. In 1940, a majority of the Madeira refugees were shipped home to Gibraltar, only to be evacuated again later in the same year, this time to Jamaica. Once Italy surrendered in 1943, objections to repatriation lessened and the long business of getting people home began, although there were inevitable delays and some did not get home until 1951, having been absent for around 10 years. In Jamaica, more than a hundred babies were born to the Gibraltarians during their exile there and parts of the special camp in which they were housed were converted into the University of the West Indies.

The real reason for the evacuation was not just to save the locals from enemy action but to create space for British and allied forces. Gibraltar played a key part in the Battle of the Atlantic and in the Mediterranean and Middle East Theatre. It was from Gibraltar that the British Navy provided escorts to vessels carrying supplies to the besieged island of Malta. During the war Gibraltar was bombed by the Vichy French and by the Italians. It also suffered underwater attacks by Italian commandoes. Inside the Rock itself, more caverns were excavated to make room for barracks, offices and a fully equipped hospital. German plans to invade Gibraltar were delayed until after the defeat of the Soviet Union, which never happened, of course.

Russia proved a much tougher nut to crack than Adolf Hitler had ever imagined. The arrival of the victorious



Hitler and Eberhard von Stohrer greeting Franco at Hendaye in 1940

Red Army in Berlin must have come as a bit of a shock for all those who had supported the Nazi party. After what the Russian troops had seen done by the Nazis as they progressed through Russia, their savagery when they reached Germany will come as no surprise.

Franco had assured Berlin that he had a force ready to take Gibraltar, but when his agents reported on how well it was defended and he realised the damage that could be done to Spain's economy by a blockade of Spanish ports, he changed his mind. Hitler was not pleased, so his plan to take Gibraltar would have involved German forces ignoring Spanish sovereignty. But it never happened, although the attacks on Gibraltar continued, and it remained the staging point for further attacks on Nazi positions. It was from Gibraltar that Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower travelled to North Africa to lead Operation Torch, devised to neutralise Italy by taking over the French colonies of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, from where attacks on Benito Mussolini's forces could be staged, as well as to reach and take control of the Suez Canal.



British Field Marshal Montgomery and Supreme Allied Commander, U.S. General Eisenhower

In 1942, after his victory at El Alamein, British Lieutenant-General Bernard Montgomery became ground commander of the Anglo-American forces under Eisenhower. The two men never really got on, partly because a wound to his lung during World War One left Montgomery with a hatred of smoking, while Eisenhower smoked all the time.

Montgomery's only connection with Gibraltar, however, is that it was where the Australian actor Meyrick Clifton James, acting as his double, was flown to fool German spies into believing an attack on the European mainland would start well away from Normandy. Germany knew that Montgomery – described by one colleague as “unbeatable and unbearable” because of his prickly personality – would be at the forefront of any allied invasion. After having breakfast with the Governor of Gibraltar, watched by a known Spanish spy for Germany, Clifton James was flown to Algiers and a very public tour of the airport, before being hidden in Cairo until the real Montgomery turned up in France, immediately after D-Day.



The Gibraltar Governor's Residence called The Guard House on The Convent

WHERE TO NEXT?

This, of course, is all history. Gibraltar played a huge part in the defeat of Nazi Germany and its citizens paid a very high price for that victory. The people of the United Kingdom should be grateful; they probably were, but as the American journalist Joseph Alsop wrote in an article for The Observer newspaper in 1952, “Gratitude, like love, is never a dependable

international emotion.” Just as UK citizens are suddenly finding that the departure from the EU for which they voted (albeit by a fairly narrow majority) now means customs forms to send parcels into the EU, along with health certificates for animal products and other bureaucratic obstacles for exporters, it's all beginning to look rather more complicated than the government politicians and the bulk of the media had promised.

The Gibraltarians did not want to see huge queues of trucks blocking the access route from Spain, nor did they want to see their airport converted into a parking lot for trucks. Being promised something by a government insisting on radical change at all levels is all very reassuring but the devil, as they say, is in the detail. You may recall a song by the Rolling Stones, which was issued as the ‘B’ side to Honky Tonk Women. Written, of course, by the inimitable Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, the chorus ran:

“You can't always get what you want
You can't always get what you want
You can't always get what you want
But if you try sometimes you just might find
You get what you need”

That, of course, is what the people of Gibraltar have been hoping for and have probably got, although it may not be quite what the Brexit campaigners expected. After all, Chief Minister Picardo had said that a borderless arrangement with Gibraltar joining the Schengen area “would be most positive” for his territory. It is already clear that Gibraltar's citizens will not share in any advantages arising from

the trade deal between the UK and the EU. However, Picardo said, “We anticipate that those who are residents of Gibraltar, of whatever nationality, will have the ability to enter and exit Schengen like Schengen nationals, and those who are not resident in Gibraltar or the rest of the Schengen area, will then have to go through the third country national check.” That, of course, includes citizens of the UK.

Arancha Gonzàles Laya, Spain's Foreign Minister, told journalists that Gibraltar will not be considered part of European air space and its inhabitants will no longer have access to Spanish social security funds. In addition, they will have to obtain special endorsements to their driving licences and pay extra for vehicle insurance. Another stalling point was the plan to allow the EU's border agency, Frontex, to take over control of passengers passing in and out through Gibraltar's ports and airport. Madrid still wants them to be answerable to Madrid, because Spain will be responsible for ensuring that Gibraltar continues to apply the rules required under the Schengen agreement, but no-one is saying if they will be or not. Picardo told journalists that there will be an increasing responsibility for Britain's Borders and Coastguard Agency in Gibraltar once the Frontex teams are deployed, “not least because the agreement will open up opportunities for flights from the Rock to Schengen countries.”

The Government of Spain has agreed a temporary decree on the status of Gibraltar and its citizens, since they were deliberately omitted from the



British Patrol vessel in Gibraltar



© Frontex
Frontex agent checking the European border

trade deal between the UK and EU, which will allow Gibraltarians to continue to hold jobs in Spain's public sector, as well as to work in professions requiring EU residency and to study at Spanish universities. However, there had been a very real risk that without an agreement, Spain's border with Gibraltar could have become an external EU border, with none of the (admittedly fairly scant) advantages that UK citizens will have. However, the temporary deal will have to be subject to a separate treaty between the UK and the EU. What has been agreed protects fluidity at the border, while Gibraltar, unlike the UK, will retain access to Europol databases and EU information systems. If the treaty is finalised the border fence will come down, according to Gonzàles Laya. The border will see other radical changes, too, once everything is agreed. Will it be safe? Picardo says it will be safer. "We will have more electronic surveillance than we do

today," he told journalists. Gibraltar's airport and seaport will become external borders of the EU, although according to the Gibraltar Chronicle, none of the parties to the deal were prepared to say how Frontex will operate over the temporary period. Picardo said that no Spanish officers would be present in Gibraltar.

WHAT'S THE BETTING?

As reported in the Gibraltar Chronicle at the end of December 2020, "Chief Minister Fabian Picardo had urged the UK and Spain to 'defeat 300 years of history' and seal a post-Brexit deal for Gibraltar that protects frontier fluidity in the interests of citizens on both sides of the border." Picardo told the newspaper that a mutually accepted settlement would be important not just for Gibraltar but for the entire region. "It's not just us that need a resolution to that issue," the Chief Minister said. "Cross-frontier workers need a resolution to that issue as well, whether they are current cross-frontier workers or whether they are future cross-frontier workers. The whole region, if we are to create this area of shared prosperity, needs a deal to create that shared prosperity. In other words, we need the deal to go further, to do more, to provide more from the economic engine that is Gibraltar." Gonzàles Laya stressed that the talking would go on to the very last moment, and it did. Before agreement was reached, she said "What is in play for this territory, which voted to remain within the EU, is that they could be the ones who pay the price of the UK's failure to reach a deal. They are going to end up outside, and it is very cold outside the EU." Boris Johnson

hailed the UK's trade deal with the EU on Christmas Eve as "his Christmas present to the British people"; an odd present, perhaps, as it leaves them with less than they had inside the EU except for the right to wave a Union flag and sing "Rule Britannia" a little louder. The super-rich can also profit from doing business outside EU jurisdiction. In any case, Johnson's largesse clearly didn't extend to Gibraltar.

The Cross Frontier Group, made up of businesses and trades unions on both sides of the border, wrote to Picardo, Britain's Boris Johnson and Spain's Pedro Sánchez, urging them to find a solution. "As you will be aware," they wrote in a letter since made public, "there is an interdependence not just only on the economic side, but also socially in this area, as can be expected of neighbouring populations that are forced to understand each other in order to live together. These ties that unite us make it necessary for pragmatism to reign in the negotiations and for the interests of citizens to be placed above any other issues." Any agreement, of course, involves an element of compromise, something that was in short supply during London's negotiations with Brussels. The letter reminds the leaders that "the main objective of a government is to respond to the demands and aspirations of its people, especially when these are legitimate and reasonable, such as those of the Gibraltarian and Campo-Gibraltarian citizens, reason why, [sic] we reiterate our call for an agreement that allows us a peaceful coexistence and common development between the communities that populate both territories." That, it seems, is what they got, even if the details remain partially secret because negotiations will continue. And yet, with so much at stake for Gibraltar, there was always the glimmer of hope that common sense would prevail. One of the mainstays of Gibraltar's economy is the on-line gambling industry. I wonder how much has been bet on obtaining an outcome favourable to Gibraltar? Unless they had failed to hit the jackpot with a workable deal the people of Gibraltar stood to lose more than their shirts. Perhaps the Barbary macaques should have warned them.



© Wikimedia

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez

Tobias Bowman-Grant



© BMW Group

The BMW Concept i4

BMW 'S NEW ELECTRIC CAR TO COMPETE WITH TESLA

The BMW Concept i4.

Munich. The BMW Group is opening a new chapter in its history with the unveiling of a pure- electric Gran Coupe. The BMW Concept i4 takes electric drive to the core of the BMW brand and heralds a new era in Sheer Driving Pleasure. The BMW Concept i4 represents a look ahead to the BMW i4, slated to enter production in 2021. It provides a whole new take on the dynamic excellence for which BMW is renowned and blends a modern, elegantly sporty design with the spaciousness and functionality of a four-door Gran Coupe – all while generating zero local emissions.

“The BMW Concept i4 brings electrification to the core of the BMW brand,” says Adrian van Hooydonk, Senior Vice President BMW Group Design. “The design is dynamic, clean and elegant. In short: a perfect BMW that happens to be zero emission.” The drivetrain’s standout numbers include a range of up to 600 km (WLTP), output

of up to 530 hp, 0 – 100 km/h (0 – 60 mph) acceleration of approximately 4.0 seconds and a top speed in excess of 200 km/h (124 mph). However, the driving qualities of the BMW Concept i4 cannot be expressed in figures alone. The virtually silent delivery of power creates an entirely new sensation of dynamism.

“The design of the BMW Concept i4 shows fantastic proportions, a powerfully expressive character and, of course, a lot of attention to detail,” adds Domagoj Dukec, Head of BMW Design. “With the BMW Curved Display, we have redefined BMW’s signature driver focus in an extremely elegant way. At the same time, the BMW Concept i4 transports a feeling of sustainable driving pleasure.” As part of the package, the Concept i4 includes several exterior and interior design elements which will make an appearance in both the BMW i4 and other electrically-powered production vehicles.

THE EXTERIOR – ELECTRIFYING AESTHETICS

The modern, elegant exterior represents a deliberate counterpoint to the dynamic flair of the driving experience. The perfectly resolved Gran Coupe proportions create an authentic, modern and confident appearance. The long wheelbase, fastback roofline and short overhangs form a basic profile brimming with elegance and dynamism. With its four doors, the BMW Concept i4 offers not only a high level of everyday usability and practicality, but also a much larger interior than the car’s modern and dynamic proportions would immediately suggest.

CLEAR SURFACES AND AERODYNAMIC DETAILS

Crisp, smooth lines and taut volumes merge into a rich, smoothly contoured sculpture and create a clear surfacing



language. The modern exterior paint shade Frozen Light Copper reprises a colour nuance displayed by the BMW Vision iNEXT and showcases the interplay of surfaces to visually stunning effect. Blue elements in the front end, flanks and rear end point to the car's BMW i origins. They shine a spotlight on the signature BMW i icons and bring the technology below the surface to the fore – for example, the kidneys in their role as an intelligence panel, the mouldings in the side skirts concealing the battery technology, and the diffuser elements in the rear end, which fill the design space vacated by exhaust tailpipes and enhance aerodynamic efficiency.

A host of other aerodynamic measures maximise the car's electric range. The blanked off kidney grille and clear aero lips provide detail examples of sophisticated airflow engineering at work. Another distinctive area of the car are the wheel rims. These have been designed exclusively for the BMW Concept i4 and blend aerodynamic and lightweight design; smooth – and therefore aerodynamically optimised – surfaces contrast with ultra-low-weight, high-strength spokes. The rims extend the car's palette of colours and materials, emphasising its luxurious overall character.

THE FRONT END – THE EYE-CATCHING FACE OF A NEW ERA

The front-end treatment of the BMW Concept i4 presents the familiar BMW icons in a new look, lending a visually powerful face to the electric age at BMW. The prominent, closed-off kidney grille provides a tangible connection between the past and future of BMW. The BMW icon also gains new functionality: With no combustion engine to require cooling, the grille now serves primarily as an

“intelligence panel” housing various sensors. The grille teases the technology behind the scenes with a special design for this model. The headlights likewise provide a bridge between the past and the future; the classical four-eyed front end is reprised here with a very modern and pared-back interpretation. Two intricate, freestanding LED elements on either side integrate all of the requisite light functions. Clean surfaces and a small number of crisp lines around the grille create a contemporary front-end graphic with considerable visual impact. A BMW i-style blue accent in the grille surround sets the seal on the front-end styling.

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS WITH THE NEW BMW BRAND IDENTITY

In the course of the BMW Concept i4 presentation BMW is unveiling the brand's new look for the first time. The new logo for communications also provides the basis for the badge on the BMW Concept i4. Its two-dimensional and transparent design ensures seamless

integration and brings the special exterior colour shade Frozen Light Copper to even greater prominence. The concept car not only has the task of looking ahead to the future in terms of aesthetics, technology and innovation, it also explores the design potential within our BMW trademark.

STRIKING REAR END WITH AERODYNAMIC FEATURES

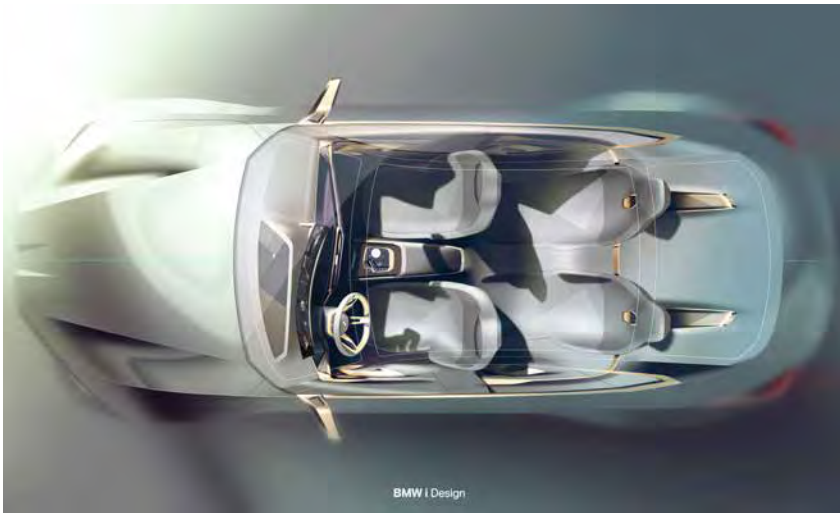
The rear of the BMW Concept i4 sits low over the road and cuts a broad, horizontally emphasised figure. The surfaces progress across the rear in a smooth and luxuriant movement, and give it a very modern and calm appearance. The long, slim L-shaped rear lights continue the theme. Below the rear lights, the inward-angled surfaces form aerodynamics-enhancing lips and incorporate vertical air outlets. The verticality of the design here emphasises the car's sporting stance. Further down, the rear apron has a forceful presence and enhances aerodynamic efficiency. Where exhaust tailpipes would once have been found, diffuser elements in BMW i Blue indicate the presence of a pure-electric drive system and reference the design of the BMW i Vision Dynamics.

THE INTERIOR – INNOVATION MEETS MINIMALISM

The interior of the BMW Concept i4 focuses on those times when the driver chooses to pilot the car themselves. To this end, every element in the front of the cabin is trained on the driver. The new BMW Curved Display teams up with the steering wheel to reveal a new take



Oliver Zipse, Chairman of the Board of Management (CEO) of BMW



on driver orientation and offers a look ahead to the display in the production versions of the BMW iNEXT and BMW i4. Here, the presentation surfaces of the information display and Control Display merge into a single unit inclined towards the driver. This screen grouping optimises presentation of information and makes the display's touch operation more intuitive. Advanced display tech with non-reflective glass also removes the need for a shroud to shade the displays and therefore contributes to an extremely uncluttered and airy cockpit.

The BMW Curved Display encompasses a large proportion of the section in front of the driver and above the centre stack, and gives the front area a very modern appearance. Its slim, borderless form exudes quality and sophistication. Almost all operating functions are integrated into the display as part of an overall approach centred on reducing the number of haptic controls to the minimum. Even the climate control system now works by touch control.

FOCUS ON THE ESSENTIAL

The front section of the interior around the BMW Curved Display also majors on pared-back design. The understated use of different materials and the fundamental arrangement of controls creates a modern yet also luxurious ambience. With this in mind, elements such as air outlets are integrated almost invisibly into the overall geometry and concealed behind strong patterns.

Accent strips in warm Gold Bronze blending to chrome lend the interior a high-class touch. The central control panel replaces a traditional gear lever with a toggle-type shifter. Elements

such as the iDrive Controller and seat memory buttons in the doors are finished in a classy crystal glass. The cloth/leather combination for the seats – composed of microfiber with line graphics and natural leather tanned using olive leaf – sets a high-quality and sustainable seal on the interior. The overall result is a clearly structured, bright and airy cabin which brings across the tranquility and authority of electric drive systems.

SPACIOUS REAR COMPARTMENT

Rear-seat passengers are greeted by a generously-sized compartment offering levels of headroom and legroom that exceed expectations of a coupe. Integral head restraints for the front and rear seats add further to the sporting feel. The cut-out in the head restraints is a classy detail that references sporty BMW models from the current line-up.

The rear seats extend the horizontal graphic emerging from the doors to

create a lounge feel in the rear. Meanwhile, the outer seats reprise the dynamic form of the front seats, heightening the sporting flavour. They also use very little stitching, which further emphasises the clean and modern feel.

FURTHER DEVELOPED USER INTERFACE DESIGN WITH EXPERIENCE MODES

The screen grouping with new BMW Curved Display provides a digital gateway into the electric age at BMW. Look and feel are clearly influenced by the latest electronic devices and have been made deliberately less “automotive” in nature. In the display itself, flat layers provide considerable visual depth. Overall, the BMW Curved Display and new presentation approach combine to provide a first-class content-viewing experience.

Three different Experience Modes enable users to explore the various facets of the electric drive system and provide a look ahead – in terms of visuals at least – to the next-generation operating system from 2021. The sometimes emphasised visual differentiation between the three Experience Modes (“Core”, “Sport” and “Efficient”) spans everything from how the user experiences the display and graphics to how the interior is presented. Ambient lighting in the dashboard, doors and (indirectly) below the display indicate the technical adjustments taking place.

“Core” mode introduces the driver’s area to an updated interpretation of the four “widgets” familiar from the display concept of existing models. Here, the graphics reprise the pattern



above the air vents and the Gold Bronze accent colour, consciously referencing the car's interior design. In the area where the central display used to be positioned, a map and widgets now line up alongside one another. The user can navigate around the diagonal widgets using a swipe movement and arrange them intuitively by drag-and-drop. This allows them to adapt the display to their personal preferences.

In "Sport" mode, the "widgets" come closer together and create a focussed view. Sideways movements behind the zones are used to show how tight the next corner is, facilitating anticipatory driving. This form of content presentation also allows effective peripheral viewing. The right-hand area of the display shows specific functions in a similar way to BMW M's lap timer app.

"Efficient" mode debuts an "Assisted Driving View", which shows the driver what the car's sensors are detecting. This Experience Mode opens up deeper insights into the car's technology, such as how it communicates with its surroundings. In the BMW Concept i4, the focus here is on anticipatory and efficient driving, and key information for efficient driving is incorporated. The right-hand area of the display shows additional vehicle information, such as the charge level and range.

THE SOUND OF THE BMW CONCEPT i4

The BMW Concept i4 is not only characterised by its individual design, but also by its own visionary and unique sound. It was developed under the brand name of BMW IconicSounds Electric by world renowned composer Hans Zimmer together with BMW Sound Designer Renzo Vitale. BMW IconicSounds Electric aims to emotionalise BMW's electric vehicles and make them audible using individual sound worlds. The sound of the BMW Concept i4 achieves this to perfection – it combines BMW's past and future. It gives the driver the feeling that there are no limits of expression. The sound is manifold, surprising and it provides a sense of lightness and transparency. The sound worlds of the BMW Concept i4 range from the driving sounds in "Core" mode to the more intense and pronounced sounds of "Sport" mode. Also included are the sounds of the door opening and the starting scenario.



THE TECHNOLOGY AS EARMARKED FOR THE UPCOMING BMW i4

Fifth-generation BMW eDrive technology is a defining feature of the BMW i4 and therefore also of future electric mobility. The BMW iX3 due to go into production in 2020 will lead the way in the application of the new tech, which will be introduced in a number of electrically powered BMW vehicles – such as the BMW iNEXT and BMW i4. The electric motor, power electronics, charging unit and high-voltage battery using fifth-generation BMW eDrive technology are all new developments enabling the BMW Group to take another significant step forward in the field of electrified drive systems. The electric motor developed for the BMW i4 generates maximum output of up to 390 kW/530 hp, which ranks it alongside a current BMW V8 combustion engine. Its instantaneous power delivery gives the BMW i4 standout performance attributes and exceptional efficiency.

The fifth generation of BMW eDrive also brings a newly designed high-voltage battery with the very latest battery cell technology. The version of the battery developed for the BMW i4 impresses with its extremely slim construction and optimised energy density. It weighs roughly 550 kilograms, has an energy content of around 80 kWh and achieves an operating range of up to 600 km in the WLTP cycle.

All in all, fifth-generation BMW eDrive technology sets new standards in terms of power density, efficiency and range in locally emission-free driving.

SERIES PRODUCTION OF THE NEW BMW i4

Series production of the new BMW i4 will begin in 2021 at the BMW Group's main plant in Munich. This means that, in the future, combustion-engined vehicles, plug-in hybrids and all-electric vehicles will be manufactured on the same assembly line in Munich.

Integrating the BMW i4 into the existing production system represents a challenging task for Plant Munich. The body concept of the BMW i4 differs from the architectures of the vehicle models produced at the plant to date due to the need to accommodate its high-voltage battery. Approximately 90 per cent of the existing production equipment in the body shop can be incorporated into the process, i.e. adapted to manufacture of the i4. However, the remaining ten per cent – especially the machinery involved in building the rear structure – will need to be newly built.

A separate new piece of equipment will be fitted in the assembly halls for installation of the high-voltage battery, as the battery needs to be fitted in the car from below. A particular challenge in the conversion/installation process are the crowded structures of the assembly halls. Working within these tight confines, old machinery will have to be removed and new equipment installed and brought on stream within a six-week period. This requires long-term planning and precise implementation.

The company is investing a total of around 200 million euros in Plant Munich to bring series production of the BMW i4 to fruition.

Source Bmw Group

CEZANNE, THE MASTER OF PROVENCE

From 4th March 2021 to 2nd January 2022

Carrières de Lumières

The new digital and immersive exhibition in the Carrières de Lumières will present Cezanne's most significant works, such as his still lifes of apples, The Card Players (1890–95), and The Great Bathers (circa 1906). A self-taught painter who produced 900 canvases and 400 watercolours, Cezanne (1839– 1906) painted portraits, still lifes, landscapes, and historical scenes ... and created many versions of a single theme, as he endlessly experimented with the possibilities of pictorial representation.



Paul Cezanne, Self-Portrait in a Bowler Hat (sketch), 1885–86, oil on canvas, 44.5x 35.5 cm Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek, Copenhagen

Initially rejected at the Salon and later recognised by his contemporaries, at a retrospective held in 1895 by Ambroise Vollard, Cezanne is now considered the pioneer of modernism. Strongly influenced by Delacroix and Courbet at the beginning of his career, he subsequently abandoned studio work and shifted towards Impressionism, following Pissarro's example and painting in the open air.

His unique construction of form and use of colour, and his tendency towards abstraction led him to go beyond Impressionism, and he even influenced the cubists, the Fauves, and the avant-garde painters.

The father of modern art, he inspired Zola, van Gogh, Pissarro, Monet, Renoir, Matisse ... Picasso described him as 'the father of us all'. Via a thematic and intimate itinerary that promotes reflection, the immersive exhibition created and produced by Cutback under the artistic direction of Gianfranco Iannuzzi reveals Cezanne's inner torment, the power of his compositions, his approach to light and colour, and his link with nature, which was his greatest source of inspiration-his obsession.

The visitors are then immersed in nature, under the vast canopy of the trees, forests, parks, and gardens where the bathers can be seen, ending with the Cézannian representation of nature par excellence: Bibémus and l'Estaque, culminating in the Mont Sainte-Victoire. Dismissing the need to produce works that are immediately pleasing to the eye, his paintings are also deeply and completely sincere, conveying the artist's uncertainty and passion. Visitors will view representations that reflect the artist's personal life: the self-portraits that capture his inner torment, the sobriety that resulted from the slow pace of daily life in Aix-en-Provence, and the intimacy of his studio.

The energetic brushstrokes, the use of paint and its evolution, the continuing presence of nature, the suspension of time, the development towards an abstract reality of forms and colours ... Cezanne's oeuvre attests to this multifaceted pictorial style. Following the theme of nature, Provence, and the Mont Sainte-Victoire, 'Cezanne, the Master of Provence' takes visitors on a journey into the heart of the artist's major works.



© akg-images

Paul Cezanne, The Pond, 1877-79, oil on canvas, 47 x 56.2, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, USA

Route de Maillane 13520 Les Baux-de-Provence France

The Carrières are located 800 metres from the Castle of Les Baux, 15 km to the north-east of Arles and 30 km to the south of Avignon. The Carrières de Lumières are entirely accessible for people with reduced mobility.

Open every day: January, November, and December: 10 a.m.–6 p.m. March: 9:30 a.m.–6 p.m. April, May, June, September, and October: 9:30 a.m.–7 p.m. July and August: 9 a.m.–7:30 p.m. Last admission 1 hour before closing time. The cultural gift shop is open during the Carrières opening times.

INFINITY DES LUMIÈRES

OPENING MARCH 2021, THE DUBAI MALL

Culturespaces is opening a new CULTURESPACES DIGITAL® art centre in Dubai, in partnership with the Spanish group METRA, which will be called "Infinity des Lumières".

The new digital art centre was inspired by the Atelier des Lumières in Paris, which is visited by more than one million persons each year who come to see its immersive exhibitions that focus on the greatest painters in the history of art. The 'Infinity des Lumières' will be located at the foot of the famous Burj Khalifa tower, on the second floor of the Dubai Mall, which is visited by 80 million people every year. Work is underway and the CULTURESPACES DIGITAL® technical teams will set up the site for an opening soon (2021), with an inaugural immersive exhibition devoted to Van Gogh.

On two floors, with 7.5 metre high ceilings, 120 video projectors, and 35 speakers, this new 2,500 m² digital art centre will host several immersive digital exhibitions devoted to classical, modern, and contemporary artists; this is made possible by the expertise of CULTURESPACES DIGITAL®, which is capable of perfectly and simultaneously integrating thousands of images in enormous areas. Thanks to this cutting edge technology, the visitors will be completely immersed in the images and music.

The digital and immersive exhibitions are veritable visual and audio experiences that are accessible to all.

CULTURESPACES DIGITAL®, which runs the largest digital art centres in the world, is continuing to develop its activities internationally and pursuing its objective of cultural dissemination with the opening of the Infinity des Lumières, its fifth digital art centre.



© akg-images

Paul Cezanne, The Pond, 1877-79, oil on canvas, 47 x 56.2, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, USA

The CULTURESPACES DIGITAL® art centres include:

- The Bassins de Lumières, Bordeaux (in 2020)
- The Atelier des Lumières, Paris (since 2018)
- The Bunker de Lumières, Jeju, South Korea (partnership since 2018)
- The Carrières de Lumières, Les Baux-de-Provence (since 2012)

TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

By Clara Bauman

Grey + yellow = the 2021 combo

Each new year, we await THE star colour selected by the Pantone company (*), whose famous colour charts determine the major trends to come. Surprise, surprise! : in 2021, it's not one, but TWO colours that are the lucky winners.

Presentation and some inspirational shopping.

Symbols of fortitude and optimism

First, we have "Ultimate Grey" (Pantone code 17-5104), that is emblematic of solid and dependable elements which are everlasting and provide a firm foundation. It also quietly assures, encouraging feelings of composure, steadiness and resilience.

And then, there is «Illuminating» (Pantone code 13-0647), a bright and cheerful yellow, sparkling with vivacity... a warming yellow shade imbued with solar power. Like a beacon in the night, «Illuminating» could turn out to be an optimistic messenger who is telling us to «get ready for a brighter future». A very fitting mantra!



Have fun with the Pantone 2021 colours

Solo or in duet, grey and yellow will soon have you hooked.



1.

Mini wallet in goatskin with 2 credit card slots
([hermes.com](https://www.hermes.com))

© Hermès



2.

At night, all duvets are grey
([ikea.com](https://www.ikea.com))

© IKEA



3.

The epitome of relaxed style, that's Malden. A laid-back organiser with rustic stitching
([filofax.com](https://www.filofax.com))

© Filofax



4.

Hello Sunshine! Go for a sunshine yellow umbrella to try and stop the rain
([moschino.com](https://www.moschino.com))

© Moschino



5.

The fashion influencers' favourite handbag has no choice but to flaunt itself in yellow
([bottegaveneta.com](https://www.bottegaveneta.com))

© Bottega Veneta



6.

Infused with pure colour pigments, this liquid eyeshadow delivers a vibrant silver effect
([armanibeauty.com](https://www.armanibeauty.com))

© Armani Beauty

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

TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

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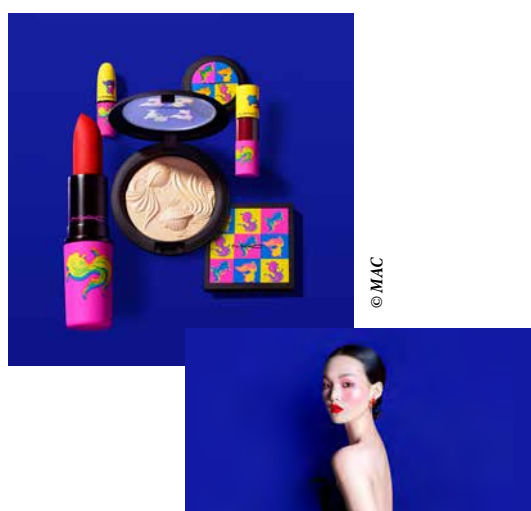
Pandora colours your life

Soothing blue, blazing red or romantic pink ... Pandora's My True Colours Collections has what it takes to make your head spin ! Thanks to stackable rings, inlaid with coloured stones, you can display your moods at will.

(fr.pandora.net)



© Pandora



© MAC

Make this Lunar New Year pop

You can always count on M.A.C to create collections that are as original as they are lavish. For example, this « Moon Masterpiece Collection », rich in brilliant colours.

“This collection is everything you need to get ready to give good face and give way to the Lunar New Year,” says Regan Rabanal, M·A·C Senior Manager of Makeup Artistry, Asia Pacific.

Need something pretty to slip into your beauty case? A 9 colours eyeshadow palette, powder blush duos, lipsticks with vibrant colours (red, orange-coral, pink...) as well as a finishing powder for a flawless skin.

(maccosmetics.com)

The "New Year's Resolution" kit

A stylish yoga set, trendy sneakers to cover long distances, a good fitness application... these are enough to trigger that «this-year-I'm taking up-sport-again» feeling!

Check out our motivational shopping list.

Fitness/yoga mat «South Beach»

(zalando.co.uk)

Yoga bra and leggings crafted with sustainably sourced materials, such as recycled polyamide and organic cotton

(stories.com)

New Balance is the favourite brand of fashion influencers ... and sporty girls too. The “Fresh Foam Arishi Trail GTX” is equipped with waterproof GORE-TEX® Invisible Fit technology and built to withstand your trail running adventures.

The application by Melissa Wood (*). Taking her numerous video courses (10 to 45 minutes each), makes all parts of the body go through an intense work out. The workouts are effective, results are achieved quickly and Melissa's personality shines through the screen, making you feel so inspired day after day.

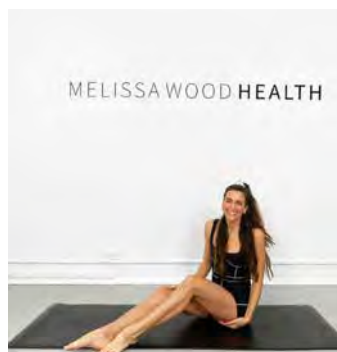
([Melissa Wood Health - on iOS and Android](#))

(*) Melissa Wood is an American certified health and wellness coach, mediator, yoga and Pilates instructor, as well as the creator of The MWH Method™ Long Lean Lines™.

© New Balance



© & Other Stories

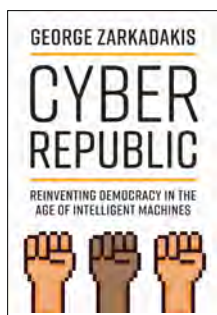


© INSTAGRAM - @melissawoodhealth

© Zalando



BOOKS



CYBER REPUBLIC

By George Zarkadakis

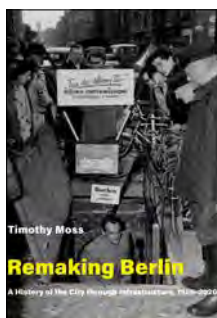
Foreword by Don Tapscott

REINVENTING DEMOCRACY IN THE AGE OF INTELLIGENT MACHINES

How to make liberal democracies more inclusive and the digital economy more equitable: a guide for the coming Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Around the world, liberal democracies are in crisis. Citizens have lost faith in their government; right-wing nationalist movements frame the political debate. At the same time, economic inequality is increasing dramatically; digital technologies have created a new class of super-rich entrepreneurs. Automation threatens to transform the free economy into a zero-sum game in which capital wins and labor loses. But is this digital dystopia inevitable? In *Cyber Republic*, George Zarkadakis presents an alternative, outlining a plan for using technology to make liberal democracies more inclusive and the digital economy more equitable. *Cyber Republic* is no less than a guide for the coming Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Zarkadakis, an expert on technology and management, explains how artificial intelligence, together with intelligent robotics, sophisticated sensors, communication networks, and big data, will fundamentally reshape the global economy; a new "intelligent machine age" will force us to adopt new forms of economic and political organization. He envisions a future liberal democracy in which intelligent machines facilitate citizen assemblies, helping to extend citizen rights, and blockchains and cryptoeconomics enable new forms of democratic governance and business collaboration. Moreover, the same technologies can be applied to scientific research and technological innovation. We need not fear automation, Zarkadakis argues; in a postwork future, intelligent machines can collaborate with humans to achieve the human goals of inclusivity and equality.



REMAKING BERLIN

By Timothy Moss

A HISTORY OF THE CITY THROUGH INFRASTRUCTURE, 1920-2020

In *Remaking Berlin*, Timothy Moss takes a novel perspective on Berlin's turbulent twentieth-century history, examining it through the lens of its water and energy infrastructures. He shows that, through a century of changing regimes, geopolitical interventions, and socioeconomic volatility, Berlin's networked urban infrastructures have acted as medium and manifestation of municipal, national, and international politics and policies. Moss traces the coevolution of Berlin and its infrastructure systems from the creation of Greater Berlin in 1920 to remunicipalization of services in 2020, encompassing democratic, fascist, and socialist regimes. Throughout, he explores the tension between obduracy and change in Berlin's infrastructures. Examining the choices made by utility managers, politicians, and government officials, Moss makes visible systems that we often take for granted.

Moss describes the reorganization of infrastructure systems to meet the needs of a new unitary city after Berlin's incorporation in 1920, and how utilities delivered on political promises; the insidious embedding of repression, racism, autarky, and militarization within the networked city under the Nazis; and the resilience of Berlin's infrastructures during wartime and political division. He examines East Berlin's socialist infrastructural ideal (and its under-resourced systems), West Berlin's insular existence (and its aspirations of system autarky), and reunified Berlin's privatization of utilities (subsequently challenged by social movements). Taking Berlin as an exemplar, Moss's account will inspire researchers to take a fresh look at urban infrastructure histories, offering new ways of conceptualizing the multiple temporalities and spatialities of the networked city.

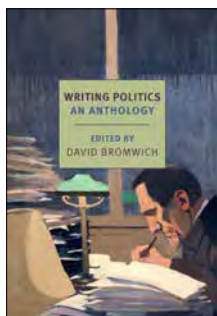


THE E.U. AN OBITUARY

By John R. Gillingham

IS BREXIT THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR THE EU?

Fully updated and revised, this new edition of John R. Gillingham's swingeing study explains why the European Union is so profoundly unsuited to the modern political economy. In a devastating historical account of political failure, he takes readers back to the union's postwar origins, when it was considered the best means to guarantee peace, demonstrating how the flaws of the institution date to its origins. Today, these inherent failings leave it unable to deal with the most pressing issues of our time: the refugee crisis, Britain's exit, the founding eurozone, and the increasing disquiet among its member states. In a globalised marketplace where technological innovation transcends state boundaries, the EU is no longer fit for purpose. It is time to let the union dissolve.



WRITING POLITICS AN ANTHOLOGY

Introduction by David Bromwich

Edited by David Bromwich

David Bromwich is one of the most well-informed, cogent, and morally uncompromising political writers on the left today. He is also one of our finest intellectual historians and literary critics. In *Writing Politics*, Bromwich presents twenty-seven essays by different writers from the beginning of the modern political world in the seventeenth century until recent times, essays that grapple with issues that continue to shape history—revolution and war, racism, women's rights, the status of the worker, the nature of citizenship, imperialism, violence and nonviolence, among them—and essays that have also been chosen as superlative examples of the power of written English to reshape our thoughts and the world. Jonathan Swift, Edmund Burke, Henry David Thoreau, Harriet Taylor, Abraham Lincoln, George Eliot, W. E. B. Du Bois, Mohandas Gandhi, Virginia Woolf, Martin Luther King, and Hannah Arendt are here, among others, along with a wide-ranging introduction.

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**THE FUTURE
IS YOU**



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