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Nikola Hendrickx

EDITORIAL

One could easily gain the impression that Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, would like to turn back the clock. He sees himself, it appears, as a modern-day Tsar, or even a modern-day Joseph Stalin, ruling over a vast empire, built up originally in the name of Marxism-Leninism, to create a Communist Utopia. Putin has no such idealistic dreams. There was an awful lot wrong with the way in which Marx and Lenin were interpreted and their policies made real. In fact, they would not have recognised Stalin's megalomaniac state. Even so, they had some sort of goal, however misguided and misused. It's not clear if Putin dreams of anything except his self-enrichment and unquestioned assimilation of power. In 2005, Putin called the collapse of the Soviet Union the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century ("He who does not regret the break-up of the Soviet Union has no heart," he said. "He who wants to revive it in its previous form has no head."). This looks like history repeating itself: Russia has long had its differences with the West which Russian leaders have failed to understand or address. Stalin's "Great Terror" (or "Great Purge"), for instance, with its show trials and multiple executions, shocked the West, especially the Left. They had looked to Russia as a great hope for the working classes, only to see Lenin's comrades-in-arms and other old Bolsheviks admitting to having plotted terrorist acts against Stalin (presumably after torture). In his authoritative book "Stalin – New Biography of a Dictator", writer Oleg V. Khlevniuk wrote of the breakdown in understanding between East and West. "The West clearly saw the Terror in very different terms than Stalin. Obsessed with the idea of a fifth column, Stalin simply failed to understand that his moves to arrest and shoot so many of his own citizens looked more like weakness and instability than strength." Putin does not come close to the murderous mordancy of Stalin. At the height of what's now referred to as "the Terror" (1936-38), it's been estimated that Stalin was responsible for up to 1.2-million deaths. The jailing of Alexei Navalny by Putin is not in the same league.

He has, however, sought to consolidate his seemingly unassailable power, using the tactics of hard and soft annexation as if in a bid to regain all the lost territories of the old Soviet Union, including those of its former allies. In 2008, for instance, Russia launched a land, air and sea invasion of Georgia. This was augmented by cyber-attacks and a Russian influence campaign, which we have since seen employed elsewhere. Since that conflict, 20% of Georgia's internationally recognized territory is under Russian military occupation. In 2014, Russian-backed forces invaded and occupied Ukraine's Autonomous Republic of Crimea, after which Putin unilaterally annexed Crimea. More recently, he has been using "soft annexation" techniques, pressuring the Belarusian leader, Alexander Lukashenko, into the establishment of the United State of Russia and Belarus. It now looks as if Lukashenko, short of reliable friends, is getting ready to relinquish Belarus's sovereignty to its huge neighbour. It all points towards a desire on Putin's part to reclaim the entire territory of the Soviet Union. In little more than a decade, Russia has utilized its hard and soft annexation tactics to reclaim territory across at least three separate former Soviet Union states. Russia has also invaded sovereign states and Putin's wish to expand Russia's borders continues. For Putin, the advantages of this "war without war" and "occupation without occupying" are that it achieves his goal at a much lower cost. For the countries he targets, it means less sovereignty and more opportunities for Russian meddling.

There are, of course, parts of the Russian administration that specialise in 'malign influence.' They're a major weapon in Putin's armoury and his agents, being "foreign officials", are generally given a great deal of freedom to operate. But there are other methods, too: money laundering, for instance. Think of the last three big Russian money laundering scandals: the Moldova Laundromat, the Danske Bank Leaks, and the Nordea Nordic dirty money scandal, each involving billions of euros in Russian money, some of it stolen, some linked to the Russian intelligence services, some belonging to sanctioned oligarchs, all passed through European banks that did not know their customers (and may not have checked thoroughly enough). The CEO of Nordea Bank claimed afterwards that "we were naïve" and that is true, but it was not just one bank, there were many, supposedly with government-appointed regulators, lawyers and corporate service providers. Nobody bothered (or wanted) to check. These scandals did not hurt Russia, however, when they became public. It was the European banks and their depositors and shareholders who paid the price. Financial crimes are believed to cost Europe more than €1-trillion annually, with money laundering scandals so far hitting Austria, Romania, France, Spain, Finland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, UK, Denmark, Cyprus, Estonia, Sweden, Lithuania, Netherlands, Germany and Hungary. Defrauding Europeans is clearly profitable if the entity doing it has no scruples. Of course, Russian oligarchs own some European banks, such as the Amsterdam Trade Bank that was caught up in the Nordea leaks scandal, as well as VTB Austria and Sberbank Europe. The shell companies involved were based in the UK and Cyprus. It would seem that Russian investment in Europe should carry a warning sticker, but too often the profit-obsessed financial entities are willing to overlook the danger signs.

Europe has become the land of "golden passports", offering European citizenship to anyone who can pay. A mere €250,000 is enough. It's what allowed Kremlin influencer Oleg Deripaska to gain citizenship in Cyprus, but other countries offer similar deals, including the UK, Malta, Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland. The loopholes clearly need to be closed because Russian investments are bad for Europe. Russia has brought the cost overruns from the notorious Sochi Winter Olympics, as well as its low-quality construction standards to the heart of Europe. Russia offered an attractive financing deal to help Hungary build the Paks nuclear plant. Years later, Hungarian citizens are paying the cost and after numerous EU probes, the low-quality construction and terms that were 'open to interpretation' became evident. Worst of all, the Hungarians still do not have their power plant.

Laundered money does not just buy champagne and diamonds, it also buys European politicians and hides Russian influence. It was money laundered through Kremlin-linked banks that helped fund some French politicians; false energy contracts funded some Italian ones; and the Moldova laundromat channelled funds to a think tank in Poland. This dishonesty only came to light later and should be remembered. Who wants to play stud poker with a known crook when you can see other cards hidden in his sleeves and pockets? Josep Borrell's disastrous visit to Moscow in 2020 shows what Europe is dealing with: a country whose leaders have neither morals nor standards. Russia used the visit as an opportunity to humiliate and pour scorn on the European Union's most senior diplomat. It succeeded, although most other countries would draw the conclusion that it showed Russia's duplicity, and that it is unwise to have anything to do with Moscow and Putin. It's very like trying to do a deal with the Mafia. Or with the Devil.

Europe can no longer afford to separate commercial and economic issues from human rights, nor from political and strategic issues when dealing with Russia. Putin, like Stalin before him, only understands and responds to power. European leaders must take clear and decisive action against Russia and set limits on its behaviour. Europe must send the message that if Russia wishes to reap the rewards of the European market, it must immediately halt its malign activities and respect basic human rights. Members of the European Parliament have begun collectively to call for tough action against Russia, even though some of these will require individual member states to act themselves. States such as Germany need to stand up for European values instead of seeking economic gain from a separate relationship with Russia. Actions Europe can take now include the sanctioning of Russian officials under the European Magnitsky Act and the imposition of more decisive curbs on Russia. Only with such strong actions will the Kremlin start to take Europe seriously.

Trajan Dereville



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Janez Janša addressing the European Parliament in July 2021

JANEZ JANŠA: FOLLOWING THE BUSH DOCTRINE

Slovenia's controversial prime minister takes the helm at a nervous EU

It was George W. Bush who said: "Sometimes in this world you make unpopular decisions because you think they're right." But of course, as Bush himself proved, he could also be proved to be wrong on occasions. Quite a few occasions, actually: the reasons for entering the Iraq war springs to mind, along with his failure to take the threat of terrorism seriously before the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre, and his failure to address economic conditions and regulatory policies that ended in the housing bubble and financial crisis in the United States, but there are many more. Speaking of American presidents, the new head of the EU's European Council, Janez Janša, Prime Minister of Slovenia, won't have made many friends in the White House by claiming that Joe Biden took the Presidency by cheating and that Donald Trump is the real president, denied his rightful place by a fraudulent election. He'll have made a friend of Jake Angeli, however, who is also known as the "QAnon Shaman", "Q Shaman", and "Yellowstone Wolf", a dedicated conspiracy theorist who, at the time of writing, is behind bars awaiting trial on six criminal charges and who was a leading light (if that is even an appropriate description) in the group of armed extreme right-wingers who stormed the Capitol in Washington in an unsuccessful bid to prevent Congress from confirming Biden's presidential election victory. Closer to home, when Slovenia's turn at the helm of the European Council came around, the prospect of Janša being in charge seems to have set the alarm bells ringing. After all, he's on record as being opposed to many of the declared principles of the EU.

Slovenia is, of course, a small country of just two million people. That's more-or-less the same size in population terms as Latvia and actually smaller than, for instance, Wales, in the United Kingdom. Welsh nationalists may take some comfort from that. Cymru am byth! (It means Wales for ever, by the way). Unlike Wales, however, Slovenia is

an alpine nation, surrounded by Austria, Croatia, Hungary and Italy. Janša, who is close friends with neighbouring leader Viktor Orbán, believes his country is 'misunderstood' and a victim of double standards at the hands of the European Commission. Certainly, Janša has proved himself a problematic leader for the Commission. He has as yet

declined to nominate two candidates for the European Public Prosecutor Office (EPPO), which has been set up to try to ensure that money from the EU budget isn't misused. This has led some critics to call for Slovenia's share of the EU's €750-billion COVID-19 Recovery Package, to be held back. Janša, quite reasonably, pointed out that

the five EU member states that haven't joined the EPP – Ireland, Poland, Hungary, Sweden and Denmark – have nevertheless benefited from the EU's beneficence.

Even so, Janša has assured members of the European Parliament that the required nominations will be made by the autumn.

In his press conference, shared with European Parliament President David Sassoli, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Janša boasted to journalists of the achievements under the period of the Troika – a kind of committee made up of the current Council president and his immediate predecessor and successor and in which he participated. The achievements included progress on the notion of a COVID passport and showed, he said, that “as a union we can work together and effectively”. His first priority as President of the European Council, he said, was to ensure that as many Europeans as possible are vaccinated against the SARS-CoV-2 virus in all its various manifestations. “I believe we need a European-wide drive, a campaign involving popular opinion-makers, sportsmen, artists, who would convince the people to accept vaccines which are now available in sufficient numbers,” he said. “It's actually a miracle that we have achieved this situation and that we have enough vaccines, and it would be a great pity if in the autumn we would have to close down Europe just because we have been unable to convince people to get vaccinated.”



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I don't think many within the EU's various corridors of power would disagree with that wholly uncontroversial sentiment. Janša is on fairly safe ground there, as he is with his chosen slogan for his term of office: “Together. Resilient. Europe.” It's the “together” part that may prove difficult.

CONTROVERSY AND COUNTER-ARGUMENT

He enters into rather more controversial territory when he asserts that he and his government (and, indeed, any member state government) should be free to take decisions of any sort without the European Commission trying to interfere. “We are not a colony, we are not a second-class member of the European Union,” he told journalists after an occasionally heated debate at the European Parliament at the very start of his six-month presidency. “The EU brings together countries with different traditions, with different cultures. There are different traditions with different cultures. There are differences that need to be taken into account and respected.” But in some other exchanges during a plenary session of the European Parliament, Janša found himself facing a lot of opposition. In the debate, both Minister of Foreign Affairs Anže Logar, on behalf of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council, and Commission Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Věra Jourova, spoke against the recently adopted anti-LGBTIQ legislation in Hungary.

MEPs were critical of the Commission over its lack of action in its Article 7 procedures against Hungary and Poland. What does that mean? Not much, it seems, although it should under EU law. The Article 7 procedure is invoked if there is a “clear risk of a serious breach by a Member State of the values referred to in Article 2.” These are “values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities,” as it says in Article 2 of the Treaty of the Union. In the debate, several MEPs said that the lack of follow-through by EU authorities is leading to the continuous degradation of the EU itself and the proliferation of the sorts



Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Anže Logar



EU Commission Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Věra Jourova

of practices that led to the actions being launched. Incidentally, the EU has no power to expel a member state, but it can suspend some of the offending state's rights. This does not seem to worry the governments of either Hungary or Poland, the alleged offenders, and the Council's new President, Janša, has expressed some sympathy for their positions. You will not be surprised to read that it all concerns the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community.



European Union flags in front of a rainbow background

More liberal-minded MEPs fear that young people in those two countries cannot express their sexuality nor their true feelings because they are, effectively, being persecuted. This comes under the umbrella of “anti-paedophilia” legislation. The ban on “promoting it to minors” is an effective ban on mentioning it at all, leaving LGBTIQ+ youngsters feeling not only isolated but unable to contact others like them without breaking the law. Janša has publicly defended Hungary's right to outlaw the portrayal of homosexuality to children. He has even claimed that imposing “imaginary European values” on central Europe could lead to the union's collapse. Of course, some (but not very many) MEPs defended Hungary's new law and accused its opponents of attacking the sovereignty of the two countries and their rights to follow what

they call “traditional” values. It has to be said that a law against homosexuality is a bit like a law against having short legs. It won't make legs grow longer. An anti-LGBTIQ+ law won't make those who identify that way suddenly change. We are what we think, as the Buddha is supposed to have said.

OLD ALLIANCES AND NEW

One government that has been looking forward to Slovenia's turn in the EU presidency is Russia. The EU and Russia have not had the easiest of relationships, but European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is still positive about it. Just ahead of June's European Council meeting (before Slovenia took over its presidency) she said in a Joint Communication: “History, geography and people bind the EU and Russia. The state of our relationship is complex. We have to identify the challenges and seize the opportunities.” That sounds very positive, but... yes, there has to be a “but”, and it was supplied on this occasion by the EU's High Representative for Foreign Policy, Josep Borrell: “Under present circumstances, a renewed partnership between the European Union and Russia, allowing for closer cooperation, seems a distant prospect. Our ambition should be to explore paths that could help change the current dynamics gradually into a more predictable and stable relationship.” Moscow clearly hopes Janša can turn things to Russia's advantage. On a visit to Moscow earlier this year, Slovenia's Foreign Minister, Anže Logar, in an interview with the Russian press agency, TASS, said: “The events of recent months have brought the development of diplomatic relations between the European Union and

the Russian Federation to a very low level.” That's putting it mildly, bearing in mind land seizures by Moscow and sanctions imposed by the EU. However, Logar continued: “Slovenia supports an open and constructive dialogue both on the current issues of international importance, on which [our] opinions differ, and on issues linking the EU and the Russian Federation.” The EU has said it plans “to constrain Russia's attempts to undermine EU interests” by becoming more robust and resilient. It's not clear if Janša can persuade Brussels to pursue a friendlier course. He may feel he has to: some 40% of Slovenia's gas imports come from Russia and a recent Eurobarometer sounding of popular opinion found that 45% of Slovenians view Russia positively. But Moscow should also bear in mind that Slovenia has also expressed a willingness to play a positive rôle in promoting better EU relations with China.

At the launch of Slovenia's presidency at Brdo, just outside Ljubljana, Janša was asked what he thinks about “illiberal democracies” such as those in Hungary and Poland, but he argued that all mainstream political orientations should receive equal treatment. “I cannot agree to the division between liberal and illiberal democracy,” he said. “Democracy is democracy.”

That rather overlooks the fact that the EU is built on a foundation of liberal democracy. In fact, the whole occasion was fairly tense, with the Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen reminding Janša to: “Trust in solid institutions, trust in independent and efficient judicial systems, trust in free and independent and properly funded media, trust that freedom of expression,

diversity and equality are always respected and that the rule of law and European values are always upheld.

This is the very essence of the European Union. This is how we earn the respect of the global community and this is the key to recovering and living together as a union.” Janša denied there was any serious division among EU national leaders, although he admitted that discussions had been “heated”. Janša repeated his support for Orbán's views on the issue of the LGBTIQ+ community.



The Government Building and President's Office in Ljubljana, Slovenia

Janša also stands accused to endangering media freedom, as well as encouraging hate speech and mishandling the pandemic (he is not alone there, of course). He, for instance, has been keeping a strict hold on the funds for Slovenia's only news agency, STA, although he has said the issue will soon be resolved in some as-yet unexplained way. He also accused left-leaning journalists of applying pressure and showed a video to back up his claim. “You are accusing this government of suppressing media freedom,” Janša said, “when we defend ourselves.

We are under attack all the time, so this is not suppressing media freedom.” His use of the video images at a meeting to mark the start of Janša's presidency offended some of the Commission. It showed members of Slovenia's judiciary in conversation with Social Democrat MEPs. One of the Commissioners present, Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans, walked out and refused to be in the traditional ‘family portrait’ afterwards, saying “I simply could not be on the same podium with Prime Minister Janša after his unacceptable attack.”



Janez Janša and Vladimir Putin in 2017



CRITICISM ON EVERY SIDE

It has been suggested that much of Janša's rhetoric is aimed at shoring up the conservative vote at home, his abusive Tweets attracting attention while his alleged abuses of power go unnoticed. He certainly likes to stir things in Europe, something which may backfire on him. After Orbán pulled his (already suspended) Fidesz party out of the European Parliament's largest political group, the centre-right European People's Party (EPP) – mainly for being too 'centre' and not enough 'right' for Orbán – Janša suggested he may decide to follow suit. He claimed to journalists that it was the EPP that had changed, not his party. The accuracy of that claim may be questioned in Brussels and Strasbourg, but probably not back in Ljubljana, nor may it matter much in the long run. The figuration of the EPP has never much interested domestic followers of politics. As it is, Janša has put out lots of criticism for the EU bureaucrats and the media, but he has not yet proposed changing Slovenia's laws.

Interestingly, one of the most trenchant criticisms of Janša came from the Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, Dunja Mijatović. In case you are unfamiliar with the city, the Council and the



Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović

European Parliament are housed in different buildings and have been since 1989. Up until then, they had shared the Council of Europe's own Palais de Europe building, with the Council staff a permanent fixture and the MEPs and their staff rather irritating visitors. But with EU enlargement, its MEPs could no longer be squeezed into the Council's splendid hemicycle, nor its oddly arranged offices, and a new building was erected next door, connected by a corridor that was locked at the end of each afternoon. The Council however, despite lacking the EU's theoretical powers, still does good work and is in charge of, for instance, the European Court of Human Rights. It was on the issue of human rights that the warning was issued. Mijatović warned that some of the steps taken by the Slovenian government in recent months "risk undermining the ability of independent

blanket bans on public assemblies and heavy fines imposed on protestors, seem disproportionate and risk undermining freedom of expression." That wasn't Mijatović's only concern, either. She mentioned a deterioration of the conditions underpinning media freedom in Slovenia, including, she says, "harassment, intimidation and criminal lawsuits against journalists, restrictions on access to public information, and government actions against public service media". The Human Rights Commissioner is also very concerned about a trend towards sexist harassment and misogynistic speech against female journalists. Interestingly, Hungarian oligarchs allied to Viktor Orbán have invested millions of euros into Slovenian media, circumventing Slovenia's media laws by using a complex network of intermediaries and shell companies. Outside observers are worried.



Viktor Orbán and Janez Janša, at the EPP Summit in Brussels in 2018

voices to speak freely." She pointed out that hostile public discourse, as well as smear campaigns and intimidation targeting civil society activists and those who express critical opinions, harm free expression and can have a chilling effect on media freedom. She called on 'particular members' of the government (without naming anyone) to make reasonable and dignified use of social media platforms. "Members of the government must refrain from making stigmatizing and misleading comments about the work of civil society, and should publicly condemn such discourse by others." Mijatović wrote that she "regrets" that the Slovenian government "appears to have used the COVID-19 pandemic to discourage the free expression of dissent or political opposition." She went on to say more clearly exactly what she means. "Several measures restricting the right to protest," she explained, "including prolonged

In his address to the European Parliament, Janša mentioned the coming conference on the future of Europe and seemed to sound a muted warning. "We are talking about a common European future," he said, "therefore we are called upon to participate in these discussions, without making anybody feel like they are called upon or elected to dictate or teach others about Europe or the future of Europe. What we have to focus on is guaranteeing fair and equal discussion so that everybody can share their views on the future of Europe." Meanwhile, as the Politico website reports, Janša seems to have been waging a kind of war on journalists, at least those who don't agree with his views. "POLITICO spoke with over a dozen journalists, including senior staff at Slovenia's public media outlets. Many of them accuse Janša of whipping up hatred against public media reporters and editors, resulting in threatening phone calls,



© Twitter

Slovenian investigative journalist, Evgenija Carl

letters, emails and messages on social media. Journalists say the pressure has led to self-censorship and that some editors have resorted to calling police over threats.”

Global Voices (a website) reports on a frightening example of misogynistic bullying. The target on this occasion was an investigative journalist, Evgenija Carl. After she produced a television report about Janša's party, the SDS, Janša, who was a leading politician but not prime minister at the time, used his Twitter account to call her a prostitute. His attacks on her worsened when he became prime minister. Carl reported the abuse to the police. “He called my colleague and I, a journalist working in the field of international politics for the national Slovenian Television station (RTVSLO), “retired prostitutes”” she said, “who sell our services for 30 to 35 euros.” One of the subsequent Tweets (which I must warn you may cause offence), said: “Brothels offer cheap services of retired prostitutes Evgenija C and Mojca PŠ. One for 30€, second for 35€. #PimpMilan.” This may not seem very presidential language, perhaps. Unsurprisingly, Carl and her colleague brought a legal action once the perpetrator became clear. She takes up the story again: “My colleague and I filed a lawsuit against him and once again we were targeted by him and his loyal followers, among them politicians and some extreme right-wing media. This is an unprecedented lawsuit in Slovenia and it is still ongoing. I knew the path that followed would not be easy, but I never imagined the onslaught of attacks we would face—it was like a stampede.”

GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS

But of course, in a European Union where free speech matters and anyone can hold any views they like, Janša's opinions are his own and he

is entitled to them. His supporters, however, do not have the right to send death threats, packets containing an unidentified white powder and chauvinistic messages to Carl, nor to make derogatory remarks about her children on line. According to Carl, she was accused of being the organiser of a social media protest, merely for sharing a notice that parents and children planned to stage a protest against school closures. She was accused, she says, of causing death because, it's alleged, the protestors spread the COVID-19 virus. Again, writing in Global Voices she says: “Janša manipulates photos, recordings, spreads lies, and says that I am among those who help spread the virus and sow death. He called my colleagues and me the ‘coalition of death.’” This sort of thing doesn't seem to fit comfortably with his call, at the European Parliament, for a “common European future” nor that statement that “What we have to focus on is guaranteeing fair and equal discussion so that everybody can share their views on the future of Europe.” If his perception includes the right to post misogynistic Tweets and emails, Europe's future may not be quite what many Europeans may hope for.

Certainly it worries the Council of Europe, which, though far weaker than the EU, involves a wider range of countries and can afford to be outspoken, such as in this on-line posting: “On 6 May 2021, the Prime Minister of Slovenia Janez Janša posted a tweet implying that the director of the Slovenian Press Agency (STA) had been involved in the ‘murder’ of a former STA editor-in-chief more than a decade ago. The PM tweeted: ‘Amazing for EU in the 21st century that a collaborator in the murder of a journalist is still leading the STA and therefore pays (“is paid”, I'm guessing)



© Sreemo.org

Bojan Veselinovič

€8,500 per month. More than the president of the republic.’ It was one of a series of tweets posted by the Janša attacking Bojan Veselinovič.”

It was, says the Council, totally untrue and explains it like this: “The allegation refers to the death of Borut Meško, editor-in-chief of the STA in the late 2000s. Meško had been handed a termination notice in November 2009 due to his failure to draw up strategic plans despite a prior warning. He died the following year. International press freedom groups said the accusations by Janša were the latest act of pressure against the STA director and part of a wider effort to undermine and destabilise the work of the press.” Having said all that, Slovenia still comes in at number 36 in the world press freedom rankings of RSF (Reporters Sans Frontières), which is just two behind France and three behind the UK. The Czech Republic and Italy come lower, at 40 and 41.

There is concern, too, at Janša's alleged anti-immigration stance, despite his speech calling for economic help for poor countries in Africa, the alternative being the erection of impermeable barriers to keep asylum-seekers out. I've heard humanitarian organisations say much the same. Certainly, many would favour action to help poor African countries economically and in peace-keeping; the countries themselves cannot afford to lose through migration the very people they will need most in the future. As to the impermeable barriers, well; if it was said to shock the EU into action, it's not a bad thing to say. In a comment on Slovenia's Presidency of the European Council, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) sounded hopeful. “Building on the progress made under its predecessor, Portugal, including advancing work to establish a European Union Asylum Agency, we at UNHCR are hopeful that the incoming Slovenian EU presidency will continue to build bridges and explore avenues to broker agreement on the proposed EU pact on Migration and Asylum.” The statement goes on to call for a “truly common and sustainable system”. UNHCR wants to see a policy to address migration and one under which refugees are regarded as “people fleeing horrific war, violence



Migrant in the Rog Factory Social Centre, Ljubljana, Slovenia

and persecution. And a fair one that also works for all countries across the EU equally as they share responsibility for refugees, in the spirit of the Union and its values.” Will Slovenia under Janša provide a safe haven for the dispossessed?

We cannot be certain, of course, and Janša could surprise his critics with a truly humanitarian attitude towards migration, such as the economic help to Africa mentioned in his speech. However, an Italian court recently halted deportations to Slovenia on the grounds that there is a risk that asylum seekers will be subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment, as they are likely to be further expelled to Croatia and then to Bosnia or Serbia. Courts have also found that systemic deficiencies in the Slovenian asylum system mean breaches of the provisions of Article 4 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights are likely. (Article 4 means “Prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”)

There is also concern over the treatment of the 11,000 or so Roma people living in Slovenia, very often in extreme poverty with high unemployment, high child mortality rates and social

exclusion. I have seen close-up their living conditions in other countries of Eastern Europe. Most of the women try to be houseproud, but it’s not easy in a tar paper shack with no running water, nor windows. Those I visited, though, were clean and as well cared-for as a leaky shack can be, except where they had been housed in the condemned tower blocks, whose crumbling stairways were a death trap. Opposite the towers was a vast garbage tip, running with rats. That was not in Slovenia, it was in Romania, but the Roma (just like the Sinti and others sometimes labelled ‘gypsies’) always get a raw deal, everywhere.

Amnesty International believes there have been improvements in Slovenia, although they remain worried about the Roma. “Since its last review, Slovenia made considerable progress,” it says in an on-line press release, “including through the adoption of progressive legislation and measures with respect to family law and anti-discrimination. While Amnesty International welcomes these measures, it remains concerned about the persistent discrimination and social exclusion of the Roma population, as well as Slovenia’s treatment of migrants and refugees.” Slovenia, uniquely, passed laws to establish access to drinking water as a human right, although Amnesty points out that

“many Roma communities living in informal settlements in the southeast of the country continue to be denied access to drinking water and adequate sanitation.” Meanwhile, Janša, within a year of taking office as Prime Minister, sought to amend the law in order to help large construction companies gain access to sensitive water sources. “Discrimination against and social exclusion of a large proportion of the Roma community continues,” says Amnesty, “especially in the southeast of the country. The government still does not officially collect desegregated data on minorities, and the consequent lack of reliable information about the size of the Roma population and



A Levica poster on Facebook: “We demand a general suspension of proceedings and the exemption of penalties for protesters”

their underlying socio-economic conditions, limits the ability to develop and execute targeted measures to address and improve their situation.”

THE END OF THE WORLD? NOT YET

To summarise, the EU now has as the President of the European Council, the most controversial figure of recent years. But he lacks the EU-wide support to push through measures that are considered too illiberal. He may not even try. Even the autocratic Orbán, with his huge domestic majority (something Janša lacks) may not win in the long term. Indeed, that may not even be his intention. The EU, with its wide range of opinions and its armies of bureaucrats, cannot easily be persuaded to change course. It’s like a vast super-tanker, chugging across the Sargasso Sea.



Roma mother and child at the Dobruška Vas settlement in Škocjan, Slovenia in 2017



Prime Minister Janez Janša at a Slovenian Army Day ceremony

Turning it around involves slowly overcoming its vast inertia. It can take three kilometres and a quarter of an hour to turn one around and it has a turning circle, by the way, of around 2 kilometres, so you will need a lot of space. In the case of the EU, it would take far longer than 6 months, especially with other members of the crew trying constantly to grab the wheel and pull it in a different direction. The Politico website has expressed the concern of many about Slovenia's Presidency of the European Council, based on Janša's recent record. "Since coming to power for the third time in early 2020," it writes, "Janša has used the COVID-19 pandemic to push unrelated priorities, like restricting the rights of environmental organizations, and has attempted to ram through others, like giving policing power to the military. He has tried to outlaw Levica, Slovenia's third-largest opposition party; moved to evict NGOs from state-owned properties; refused to fund the Slovenian Press Agency, the independent state wire service; interfered with the work of the state prosecutor's office, as well as the European Public Prosecutor's Office; been indicted on corruption charges; and created a climate of hostility — particularly toward female detractors — through his venomous Twitter account." It adds: "This is not an exhaustive list". Janša believes that anyone who criticises him is "in league" with opposition parties, and that includes the judiciary.

The photograph that so offended Frans Timmermans merely showed a number of Slovenian judges in conversation with Social Democrat

MEPs. Does that count as "fraternising with the enemy"? I really have no idea, but it does seem a somewhat extreme reaction on Janša's part. If, when his half-year term comes to an end, the EU is funding economic development projects and peace-keeping measures in Africa he will be cheered to the echo. If he supports the foundation of a European Union Asylum Agency which seeks to help immigrants who have escaped wars and hunger, if he becomes a true supporter of press freedom, he will go down in EU history as having been a great president. His past record would seem to cast doubt on the likelihood of that happening, but it's much too early to tell. As the Bible says, "judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew VII, i). There will be plenty of time for that anyway when the term of office ends.

Meanwhile, the Council of Europe is worried about what may happen during the Slovenian EU Presidency; again, it's Janša's record that causes concern: "On 6 June 2021, Prime Minister Janez

Janša said in a tweet that the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatovic, is "part of #fakenews network" in a comment on her recent memorandum on freedom of expression and media freedom in Slovenia (mentioned earlier in this article). The Prime Minister's tweet quoted Mitja Iršič, a public relations expert at the Ministry of Culture, who said their considerations had not been properly represented, and called the Commissioner's report "biased and ill-informed." It would seem that Janša is happy to continue his war with what he considers to be the liberal mainstream. According to the old saying, 'a leopard cannot change its spots'. However, Sy-Sang Liaw and Ruey-Tarng Liu of National Chung-Hsing University in Taichung, Taiwan, and Philip Maini of Oxford University's Mathematical Institute have successfully adapted an equation first published by the mathematician and code-breaker Alan Turing to explain the pattern of a leopard's spots. They had to adapt it because it failed to explain the change in the spot pattern between leopard kittens and full-blown adults. So, it seems that leopards can and do change their spots as they mature, albeit only once. In Janša's case we can only wait and see. Janša would not have approved of Turing anyway; he was gay. Meanwhile, perhaps Janša should take note of something written by the English poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, who had little time for seekers after power and glory. "Titles are tinsel," he wrote, "power a corrupter, glory a bubble and excessive wealth a libel on its possessor." It should be an interesting six months.

Henry Carruthers



Prime Minister Janez Janša with President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen at the Division of Paediatrics in Ljubljana



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NEWS IN BRIEF

AIRBUS STRENGTHENS ITS MILITARY SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS POSITION



Airbus will place a dedicated UHF (Ultra High Frequency) military communications hosted payload on board the EUTELSAT 36D telecommunications satellite. As the leading provider of military satellite communications (milsatcom) services in Europe, Airbus will be able to offer a new UHF communications service to the armed forces, particularly those of European countries and NATO allies.

As the UHF frequency band is a relatively scarce orbital resource, this offering will make up for the capacity shortage around the world. Airbus has already signed the first firm orders for this capacity, well ahead of the satellite's scheduled launch in the first half of 2024.

The UHF payload will be operated from Airbus's Network Operations Centre in Toulouse. Its 18 UHF channels will enable up to 200 simultaneous communications over Europe, the Middle East, Africa, large parts of Asia, as well as the Atlantic Ocean (to eastern Brazil) and the Indian Ocean (to western Australia).

Military UHF satcoms are used by the armed forces for operations on land, at sea and in the air. They have a high level of interoperability and are therefore very useful for multinational and coalition operations. The UHF band is very flexible and is of particular interest to Special Forces units as it offers a lightweight, robust and highly secure means of communication. An extensive range of terminals for use on land, at sea and in the air is available to meet the needs of the various armed forces.

Airbus has unique experience in operating UHF milsatcom services. This new payload will enhance its portfolio throughout the lifespan of the satellite. Airbus is the only armed forces private satcom operator to cover the full spectrum of military (UHF, X, Ka Mil) and commercial (L, C/Ku, Ka) frequency bands and applications.

The EUTELSAT 36D satellite will be built by Airbus based on its Eurostar Neo platform. In addition to the UHF payload, it will also be equipped with 70 Ku-band transponders for TV broadcasting.

RIMAC AND BUGATTI COMBINE FORCES IN HISTORIC NEW VENTURE

Rimac Automobili has announced another major milestone in its history, as it combines forces with iconic automotive brand, Bugatti Automobiles, to create a new automotive and technological powerhouse.

In just 10 years, Rimac Automobili has progressed from one man garage start-up, to announcing a new company with one of the world's most iconic car brands to create Bugatti Rimac d.o.o. (in English – LLC).

In an industry evolving at ever-increasing speed, flexibility, innovation and sustainability remain at the very core of Rimac's operations. The Croatian-based brand has proven that it can not only keep up, but be the trailblazer, setting the performance and technological benchmark for others. Uniting Rimac's technical expertise and lean operations with Bugatti's 110-year heritage of design and engineering prowess, represents a fusion of leading automotive minds.

As part of the deal, the newly-formed Rimac Group will be the major shareholder with a 55% stake. Mate Rimac will retain his original shareholding in Rimac Group at 37%, with Porsche at 24%, Hyundai Motor Group doing the same at 12% and other investors at 27%. The development, production and supply of battery systems, drivetrains and other EV components that Rimac is known for and trusted by many automotive manufacturers will be separated into a new entity – Rimac Technology, which will be 100% owned by the Rimac Group. Rimac Technology will remain an independent company working with many global car manufacturers.

Mate Rimac will lead the new company. As CEO of Rimac Group, he will run both Bugatti Rimac and the new division, Rimac Technology. Bugatti and Rimac will both continue as separate respective brands, retaining existing production facilities and distribution channels. Bugatti Rimac represents the company that will develop the future



© Rimac-automobili

of both Bugatti and Rimac vehicles, by joining resources and expertise in research and development, production and other areas.

Rimac Group will continue to innovate, creating both its own hypercars, as well as developing systems and technologies for many global OEMs. Such innovative technology can also be deployed in future Bugatti and Rimac models.

Both brands will continue to operate independently, with Rimac Automobili retaining its current premises on the outskirts of Zagreb, Croatia and Bugatti production continuing in Molsheim, France.

In time, Bugatti Rimac's global headquarters will be situated at the recently announced Rimac Campus, also serving as the home of Rimac Technology. The €200M, 100,000m2 campus, due to open in 2023, will be the base for all research and development of future Rimac and Bugatti hypercars. With high-tech innovation at its core, the state-of-the-art site will accommodate 2,500 like-minded people driven by curiosity and a desire to push things to the absolute limit.

Commenting on today's announcement, Mate Rimac, Founder and CEO of Rimac Automobili said, "This is a truly exciting moment in the short, yet rapidly expanding history of Rimac Automobili. We have gone through so much in such a short space of time, but this new venture takes things to a completely new level. Rimac and Bugatti are a perfect match in terms of what we each bring to the table. As a young, agile and fast-paced automotive and technology company, we have established ourselves as an industry pioneer in electric technologies. With the Nevera, we have also proven that we can develop and manufacture outstanding hypercars, that are not only fast, but also exciting and high-quality. Bugatti, with over a century of experience in engineering excellence, also possesses one of the most exceptional heritage of any car company in history."

"We have just launched our latest hypercar – the Nevera – to universal global acclaim. So I can't begin to tell you how excited I am by the potential of these two incredible brands combining knowledge, technologies and values to create some truly special projects in the future."

Oliver Blume, Chairman of the Executive Board at Porsche AG: "We are combining Bugatti's strong expertise in the hypercar business with Rimac's tremendous innovative strength in the highly promising field of electromobility. Bugatti is contributing a tradition-rich brand, iconic products, a loyal customer base and a global dealer network to the joint venture. In addition to technology, Rimac is contributing new development and organisational approaches."

Lutz Meschke, Deputy Chairman of the Executive Board and Member of the Executive Board for Finance and IT at Porsche AG. "We bought the first shares in Rimac already three years ago and have successively increased them since then. This enabled us to build a close relationship with Mate and its highly innovative team at an early stage," says Meschke. "Now we are benefiting from this. Rimac

is helping us with its know-how to successfully lead an emotional and important Group brand into the future. I am very proud and happy that we have brought this joint venture to the finish line despite numerous challenges. Today is a good day for Bugatti, Porsche and the entire Volkswagen Group."

COUNCIL OF EUROPE: AUTOMATED TECHNOLOGY TO DETECT ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MUST RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS



© Coe/rt

Technology used to detect the online sexual abuse of children must respect human rights and the rule of law, says a new report for the Council of Europe. "There has been a sharp rise in the exchange of online child abuse material during the Covid-19 pandemic," said Council of Europe Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić.

"This has a devastating and lasting impact on the children involved, firstly through the abuse itself and then through the continued circulation of images online." "It is vital to protect child victims, to investigate these horrendous crimes and to stop the circulation of this material. And this must be done in a manner which is fully human rights-compliant – and above all, respect the children's right to privacy," she continued.

The report has been prepared by a group of experts, led by former European Court of Human Rights President Linos-Alexandre Sicilianos, for the Lanzarote Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Drawing on a wide range of Council of Europe standards, it aims to help policymakers develop a comprehensive and balanced approach to the use of automated technologies to detect child sexual abuse material.

The report contains a series of recommendations and calls for the establishment of a "public interest-based framework", based on the Lanzarote Convention and other Council of Europe conventions, enabling service providers to automatically detect, remove and report relevant content in line with data protection and privacy safeguards.

OIL DISCOVERY NEAR VISUND IN THE NORTHERN NORTH SEA

Equinor and partners Vår Energi and Aker BP have struck oil in production licence 554. Recoverable resources are estimated at between 1.3 and 3.6 million standard cubic metres of oil equivalent, corresponding to 8-23 million barrels of oil equivalent.

“This is the first Equinor-operated well in the production licence, and the fifth discovery on the Norwegian continental shelf this year. The discovery is in line with our roadmap of exploring near existing infrastructure in order to increase the commerciality,” says Rune Nedregaard, senior vice president, Exploration and Production South.

Exploration wells 34/6-5 S and 34/6-5 ST2 on the Garantiana West prospect were drilled some 10 kilometres north-east of the Visund field, and 120 kilometres west of Florø.



© Equinor

Rune Nedregaard, Senior Vice President, Exploration and Production South

The primary exploration target for exploration well 34/6-5 S was to prove hydrocarbons in the Cook formation from the early Jurassic period. The secondary exploration target was to examine the hydrocarbon potential in the Nansen formation from the early Jurassic/late Triassic period.

Well 34/6-5 S encountered a total oil column of 86 metres in the Cook formation. An about 60-metre effective medium-good quality sandstone reservoir was found.

Exploration well 34/6-5 S also encountered sandstones in the Nansen formation, but the reservoir is aquiferous, and the exploration target is classified as dry.

A successful formation test has been performed. The test indicates good flow qualities with stable flowing pressure and low pressure drop, in addition to consistent pressure build-up.

The licensees will consider tying in the discovery to the Garantiana field development project.

Due to technical problems in the main trajectory a technical side-step was made through well 34/6-5 ST2. The well was formation tested, and extensive data acquisition and sampling were carried out.

This is the fifth exploration well in production licence 554. The licence was awarded on 19.02.2010 in APA2009. The licensees are Equinor Energy AS, Vår Energi AS and Aker BP ASA.

Well 34/6-5 S was drilled to a vertical depth of 3952 metres below sea level and completed in the Nansen formation from the late Jurassic period. Well 34/6-5 ST2 was drilled to a vertical depth of 3750 metres below sea level, and completed in the upper part of the Amundsen formation. Drilled in 285 metres of water the wells have been permanently plugged and abandoned.

Well 34/6-5 S was drilled by the West Hercules drilling rig, which will now drill the pilot hole in production licences PL272 and 035 (near the discoveries 30/11-8 S (Krafla) and 30/11-9 S (Askja)) in the North Sea.

EUROPOL HELPS BELGIAN AND SWISS AUTHORITIES UNRAVEL VITAE PONZI SCHEME

With the support of Europol, the Belgian Federal Judicial Police (Federale Gerechtelijke Politie, Police Judiciaire Fédérale) under the jurisdiction of the Belgian Federal Prosecutor's Office (Federaal Parket, Parquet Fédéral) has taken action against the alleged members of an organised crime group running a worldwide Ponzi scheme.

This criminal syndicate was using the social media platform 'Vitae.co' and website 'Vitaetoken.io' to trick people into investing into a Ponzi scheme. It is believed that some 223 000 individuals from 177 countries have fallen victim to this investment scam.

On 22 June, house searches were carried out in 17 different locations in Belgium, mainly in Antwerp, West Flanders and Limburg. A total of five individuals were detained for their alleged involvement in this fraud scheme.



© NIT

The members of this organised crime group are for the most part Belgian nationals who were making use of a company under Swiss jurisdiction. A number of house searches were carried out in parallel by the Swiss Federal Police (fedpol).

A total of €1,1 million in cash was seized, alongside €1,5 million worth in cryptocurrencies and 17 luxury vehicles.

Europol deployed four of its experts to Belgium and Switzerland to assist the national authorities with the actions in the field.

The website and social media platform have now been rendered inaccessible.

This operation was carried out in the framework of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT).

9 ARRESTED IN MOLDOVA AND FRANCE FOR €2 MILLION IMMIGRATION FRAUD

In the early hours of 28 June, some hundred officers from the French National Gendarmerie (Gendarmerie Nationale) and the Moldovan Border Police (Poliția de Frontieră a Republicii Moldova) with the support of Europol swooped on the members of an organised crime group involved in large-scale financial fraud

Seven house searches were carried out in Paris, and 25 in Chișinău. A total of 9 individuals – 8 Moldovan nationals and one French national – were arrested for their involvement in this scheme which defraud the French authorities of over €2 million.

The investigation uncovered the complex scheme set up by this organised crime group. The criminals recruited over 1 000 Moldovan nationals to apply under false pretences to a programme funded by the French Office for Immigration and Integration and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This programme – known as the ‘Migration Co-Development Program in Moldova’, aims at facilitating the social and economic reintegration of Moldovan migrants who have volunteered to return to Moldova from France.



The criminals would transport to Paris the recruits by bus, where they would apply for financial support under this programme using forged documents. They would then travel immediately back to Moldova, receiving between €700 and €1 350 for their participation in this scheme. The criminals would pocket the rest of the financial support offered by this programme, receiving between €5 000 and €7 000 per fake application.

On the action day, Europol deployed four of its experts from its European Financial and Economic Crime Centre (EFECC) to assist the authorities in France and Chișinău with the cross-checking of operational data in real-time.

Source: Europol

HOPIUM UNVEILS ITS HYDROGEN-POWERED SEDAN PROTOTYPE AND OPENS THE FIRST 1000 PRE-ORDERS

<https://www.hopium.com/>



Hopium Machina Alpha 0 Front View

The French manufacturer of hydrogen powered sedans, unveiled its very first rolling prototype during the Viva Technology week in Paris last June.

Announced in October 2020 and produced in record time in the Linas-Montlhéry test workshop, this vehicle called Alpha 0, certifies the reliability of the fuel cell system. After the design and architecture phases, followed by the implementation of the various components within the vehicle, the prototype was able to be evaluated and perfected through bench and track tests. With a speed of 200 km/h (124 mph), this test version already borders on the performance promised by the Hopium Machina in its final form. Alpha 0 also introduces for the first time the signature lighting, emblem of Hopium, whose shape is reminiscent of the stratification of hydrogen and the movement of waves on the surface of water. The reveal of this technological showcase is a key step in the manufacturer's roadmap and confirms its ability to achieve the goals that have been set and meet the highest challenges. It is accompanied by the opening of an order book for the first 1,000 numbered units of Hopium Machina, whose reservation price is set at 410 euros, in Eport of Wallonia,

shape is reminiscent of the stratification of hydrogen and the movement of waves on the surface of water. The reveal of this technological showcase is a key step in the manufacturer's roadmap and confirms its ability to achieve the goals that have been set and meet the highest challenges. It is accompanied by the opening of an order book for the first 1,000 numbered units of Hopium Machina, whose reservation price is set at 410 euros, in reference to the spectral line of hydrogen. The Hopium teams are already fully committed in carrying out the next steps, aiming to produce Hopium Machina on an industrial scale, with a new rendez-vous expected in the first quarter of 2022.

About Hopium

Olivier Lombard, the youngest winner of the 24 hours of Le Mans, founded Hopium, a manufacturer of high-end hydrogen-powered vehicles, as an achievement resulting from his experience acquired on the racing circuits. With the automotive culture in his heritage, Olivier Lombard has driven for 7 years hydrogen-powered racing cars, making him the world's most experienced racer in this field. As an open-air laboratory, the race has allowed Olivier Lombard and his team to reflect on new mobility solutions to meet today's environmental challenges. While the transportation sector alone is responsible for 20% of greenhouse gas emissions, the company is positioning itself as a player in climate change. Hopium brings together a team of experts and leading partners at the forefront of innovation in the fields of hydrogen fuel cells, technology and automotive engineering. Hopium (FR0014000U63-MLHPI) is listed on Euronext Access+ and is eligible for PEA-PME

THE NEW EU SPACE PROGRAMME HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED

With the largest allocated budget ever - €14.88 billion - the new EU Space Programme has now become a reality marking a new era for Europe in space. The signature of the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (FFPA) today in Brussels anchors the European Union leadership in Space.

Why a European Union Space Programme?

With the creation of the first-ever integrated Space Programme, the European Union is reinforcing its strategy to harness the power of space to re-ignite its post-COVID economy, address climate change, transit to digitalization, and secure its autonomy and sovereignty.

The increase in the budget for the years 2021-2027, underlines the EU expectations for space as an economic enabler with a positive spillover effect across various industries. The new EU Space Programme will generate an even higher return-on-investment through the creation of value-adding, safe and secure space-based services for the EU citizens, business and governments alike. By 2025, space-related jobs across the Union should increase to 400,000.

Space data is an indispensable tool for policy-makers that helps inform policy makers and decision takers to tackle today and tomorrow's challenges. In particular, Galileo,



DG DEFIS Director General, Timo Pesonen, Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education, Manuel Heitor, Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry Breton, ESA Director General Josef Aschbacher and EUSPA Executive Director, Rodrigo da Costa

EGNOS and Copernicus support a wide range of EU policies ranging from the Common Fishery (CSP) to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) while underpinning the ambitious EU Green Deal and Europe's digital transition.

A robust EU Space programme, secured from cyber threats and supported by a range of state-of-the-art ground centres and infrastructure ensures the Union's autonomy and sovereignty.

European Commission, EUSPA and ESA: pieces the same space puzzle

Effective cooperation between the European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA), the European Commission and ESA is key to achieve a successful EU Space Programme. It will be measured by the benefits we deliver to the citizens and the growth we ignite in EU economy, innovation and society.

Each of the partners has unique and complementary function and competence.

The European Commission, as project manager, steers the wheel towards pressing societal, economic or environmental challenges where #EUSpace makes a difference.

EUSPA, as the EU market-oriented agency, makes sure that these challenges are addressed through the design and development of new space-based services which meet the needs of the users, while ensuring its market uptake.

ESA ensures the roll-out of new satellite technology and architecture of the systems that provide the services.

"With the signature of the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement today we have confirmed the powerful scheme together with the EC and ESA and to keep the EU Space where it belongs: at the top," concluded Rodrigo da Costa, EUSPA Executive Director.

Source: European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA) (<http://www.euspa.europa.eu>).

EUROPEAN UNION EXTERNAL RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS



Tackle immediate needs, both humanitarian and in the health care sector



Strengthen the health, water and sanitation systems of partner countries, and support research



Address the economic and social consequences

#CORONAVIRUS

© Hqplum

REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL AND TEAM EUROPE AGREE TO BUILD A MANUFACTURING PLANT TO PRODUCE VACCINES AGAINST COVID-19 AND OTHER ENDEMIC DISEASES

Producing COVID-19 vaccines in Africa came one step closer on July 9 after Team Europe formally agreed to support large-scale investment in vaccine production by the Institut Pasteur in Dakar, alongside other support measures. The new manufacturing plant should reduce Africa's 99% dependence on vaccine imports and strengthen future pandemic resilience on the continent. The agreement is part of a major package of investment in vaccine and pharmaceuticals production in Africa launched by Team Europe in May, which brings together the European Commission, EU Member States, and the European Investment Bank, and other financial institutions, in line with the EU's Strategy with Africa and the strategy of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and the Partnerships for African Vaccine Manufacturing (PAVM). Team Europe, together with other international partners, has committed to a significant package of support for the medium- to long-term sustainability of the project. This includes: Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is supporting the manufacturing hub in Senegal with a €20 million grant through KfW (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau), the German development bank. France, through the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), has already granted two initial financing packages totaling €1.8 million to the MADIBA project (Manufacturing in Africa for Disease Immunization and Building Autonomy)

at the Pasteur Institute in Dakar for feasibility studies and initial investments. The AFD Group and its private sector subsidiary, Proparco, are also working within the group of technical and financial partners to structure the project in order to reach financial support at a larger scale. Belgium will support Senegal in structuring initiatives to produce vaccines and pharmaceuticals, such as the Pharmapolis pharma hub. Belgium also welcomes the fact that a Belgian biotech company in novel bio-manufacturing platforms is forging, with the support of Wallonia, a partnership with the Institut Pasteur in Dakar, as a key partner for building capacity and transferring technology.

The European Commission is discussing with the Senegalese authorities the possibility of mobilizing further financial support by the end of 2021 under the new NDICI / Global Europe instrument to support this project. This is part of the €1 billion Team Europe initiative to boost the manufacturing of, and access to, vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa, which European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced in May 2021

Today, Team Europe is providing €6.75 million in grant support to enable technical feasibility studies and project preparation for the new facility at the Institut Pasteur in Dakar. This amount includes €4.75 million from the European Commission and the European Investment Bank, €200,000 from Germany, and €1.8 million from France. This will also enable the total investment cost and financial structures to be defined and agreed with Senegalese and international partners. Construction of the new plant is expected to start later this year, with 25 million vaccine doses being produced each month by the end of 2022.

Source /ec.europa.e



© Nrf

The statue of Confucius designed by Chinese artist Zhang Huan

A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES?

Where is China really going and how does it plan to get there?

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step,” according to the popular Chinese saying. Too often, the original saying, “a journey of a thousand (Chinese) miles begins with a single step (or beneath one’s feet)” gets attributed to the great Chinese philosopher Confucius (more correctly written as Kōng Fūzǐ), but that’s wrong. It was his supposed contemporary, Lao Tzu, who wrote it. Probably. Confucius was a scholar and, basically, a civil servant in what was a minor province, but he is often credited with the sayings of other people. The

original version uses the Chinese measure of distance, the li, which is generally regarded as being roughly half a kilometre, so it’s not quite as great a distance as most people assume. In fact, a thousand li comes out as around 575 kilometres, although that’s still a long way if you’re on foot. As for Lao Tzu, he is generally considered to have been the founder of Taoism. That is, if he existed at all. There is some doubt over his historical existence. China provides an endless array of complications for anyone studying Chinese history, such as

renaming things, then repurposing the original word to mean something else. Even today, there are many things about China that remain hard to understand. For instance, nobody seems to be sure of Xi Jinping’s intentions or what he would be willing to do to achieve them.

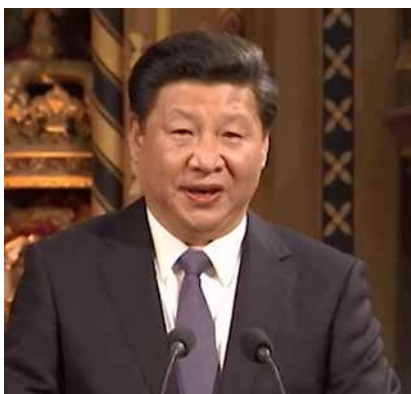
“2020 marks an important year for the People’s Liberation Army (PLA),” says the Annual Report to the US Congress on ‘Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China’, as it “works to achieve important modernization milestones ahead of the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) broader goal to transform China into a ‘moderately prosperous society’ by the CCP’s centenary in 2021.” A similar report in 2000 showed that China was concentrating on land warfare, with little regard for the latest military methods of waging war.

That has certainly changed, says the report. “Two decades later, the PLA’s objective is to become a ‘world-class’ military by the end of 2049—a goal first



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Party and state leaders Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang, Li Zhanshu, Wang Yang, Wang Huning, Zhao Leji, Han Zheng and Wang Qishan at the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China



Mr. Xi calling for speeding up China's military build-up of conventional and nuclear arms. "A strong country must have a strong military, as only then can it guarantee the security of the nation," he said. The military, he added, is "a powerful force for protecting peace in our region and beyond."

announced by General Secretary Xi Jinping in 2017. Although the CCP has not defined what a 'world-class' military means, within the context of the PRC's national strategy it is likely that Beijing will seek to develop a military by mid-century that is equal to—or in some cases superior to—the U.S."

China seems determined to be not only a great power but also one that cannot be challenged. Unlike previous leaders, Xi seems to be trying to ensure that he and the state are "one and inseparable", conflating himself with his country. In was in January 1830 that Daniel Webster of Massachusetts gave a speech to congress in defence of the union of the states, still at that time controversial and subject to heated debate, and culminating, three decades later, of course, in the American Civil War. Webster told his colleagues that he stood for: "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!" Xi

seems to be saying "me and China, now and forever, one and inseparable". But a country is bigger than one man, as even Joseph Stalin found out eventually. And, of course, Xi will grow old, as Chinese philosophers do; with no clear successor in sight, the limit on how many 5-year terms of office Xi can serve has been removed. It should be just two terms but China's National People's Congress (its parliament) has voted to allow Xi to stay in power for life, which means he'll be very old when (if) he finally steps down. Incidentally, it was said that Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu was born with white hair, having spent 8 years (or 80, in some accounts) in his mother's womb, poor woman. Her stretch marks must have been terrible. Meanwhile, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has the goal of transforming China into a "moderately prosperous society" by the time of the party's centenary this year. Xi should not forget one of the sayings of Confucius: "In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of." Where China is placed in that context is a matter for future historians to ponder.

It certainly isn't poor in military terms, as the latest Report to the Congress on China's Military and Security developments states clearly.

In fact, China is already ahead of the US in some areas. It has more warships, for one thing, with some 350 surface vessels and submarines, compared with the US Navy's 293. China has more than 1,250 ground-launched ballistic missiles (GLBMs) and ground-launch cruise missiles (GLCMs) with ranges



China's CSS-N-14 SLBM



China's CSS-7 Mod 2

of up to 5,500 kilometres, whereas the US has only one type of GLBM with a maximum range of 300 kilometres and no GLCMs at all, or at least none that it admits to having.

China can also boast one of the world's largest forces of advanced long-range surface-to-air defence systems, including Russian-built S-400s and S-300s as well as some it has designed and built itself. Of course, the man with the sharpest sword is not necessarily going to win a duel. Skill in handling it is the key.

PANDAS, BEARS AND CAMELS

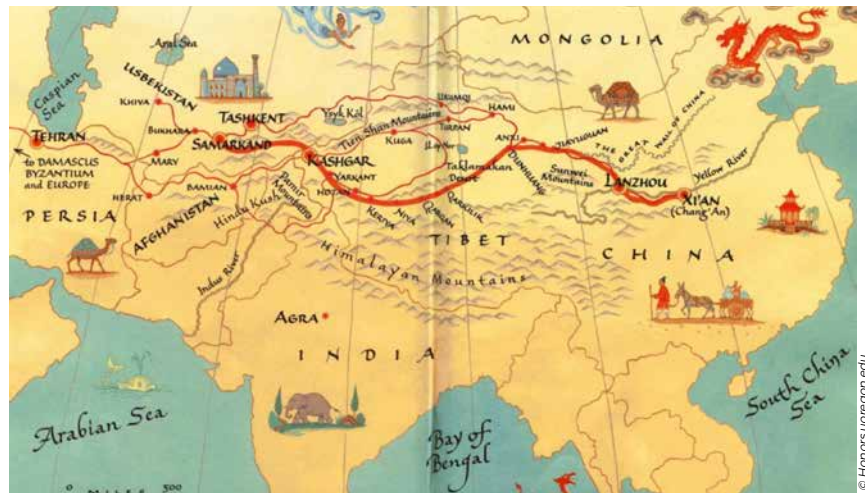
NATO, however, is well aware of the dangers of underestimating China. NATO leaders, meeting in Brussels, recently agreed that China poses major challenges. Afterwards, it issued a final communiqué that showed its members' concerns. "China's growing influence



and international policies can present challenges that we need to address together as an Alliance,” it said. “We will engage China with a view to defending the security interests of the Alliance. We are increasingly confronted by cyber, hybrid, and other asymmetric threats, including disinformation campaigns, and by the malicious use of ever-more sophisticated emerging and disruptive technologies. Rapid advances in the space domain are affecting our security.” It’s worth mentioning here that China has made massive advances in space exploration and is currently looking at ways of getting astronauts to Mars and back safely with a view to having a long-term base on the Red Planet, according to an official of the Chinese space industry. He was speaking, interestingly, at the Global Space Exploration conference (GLEXP) being held in St. Petersburg, in Russia. “Meanwhile,” says the communiqué, “the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the erosion of the arms control architecture also undermine our collective security.” Much of the communiqué concerns Russia and its many breaches of agreements, as well as its aggressive threats to the West, but China’s rapid military growth, coupled with its increasing cooperation with Russia is a serious issue.



China's CSS-6 Mod 3 SRBM



The Silk Road

“China is rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal with more warheads and a larger number of sophisticated delivery systems to establish a nuclear triad,” says the communiqué. “It is opaque in implementing its military modernisation and its publicly declared military-civil fusion strategy. It is also cooperating militarily with Russia, including through participation in Russian exercises in the Euro-Atlantic area.”

Sino-Russian cooperation is not something entirely new, of course. Part of the original Silk Road, essential to the economy of Han Dynasty China when it was first created in the 2nd century BCE, passed through southern Russia, where it seems certain that Chinese merchants must have sold some of their luxurious fabric to Russian buyers. The Chinese traders and other travellers, mainly travelling in camel trains, brought more than just silk, of course. They also helped to spread religions, such as Buddhism, Chinese philosophy, art, architecture, mathematics, and, later, they sold paper and gunpowder, too.

You may (or may not) be interested to know that among the many things China invented and sold to the world was toilet paper, at a time when most people were using fallen leaves and clumps of grass. The invention is often credited to Joseph C. Gayetty of New York in the 1850s, although it didn’t catch on immediately. But Gayetty was not the first by several centuries; the Chinese had first hit on the idea in the 2nd century AD and later, in the 14th century, the otherwise cruel Ming emperor Hongwu ordered soft, perfumed toilet paper for the imperial household. He may have created China’s most efficient secret police force, known as the Embroidered Uniform Guard,

and invented some especially cruel and ghastly methods of execution for the tens of thousands of his critics and general opponents that he had killed, but at least he wanted his nearest and dearest to be comfortable. But I digress: the fact is that trade and cooperation between China and Russia go back more than two millennia, possibly much longer. The Russians may not have bought Hongwu’s perfumed toilet paper, however.

The Silk Road, of course, wasn’t one road but a series of routes by land and sea linking China with the West, just like its modern day equivalent, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). One of those routes passed through the Great Steppes, crossing Hungary and parts of Siberia, by Lake Baikal and the Urals. The routes had any number of little by-ways to explore if the merchants fancied looking at the scenery. So, they would have been familiar with southern Russia and the Russians would presumably have helped to keep the routes open and relatively free of bandits. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) can give you detailed instructions to following the route as a leisure pursuit – all 12,000 kilometres of it – if you should feel inclined and once the Pandemic-inspired travel restrictions are lifted and your feet can stand it.

You might want to learn some useful phrases before you go, but that won’t be easy. There are a number of dialects that are very different from one another. Even Mao Zedong only spoke Mandarin Chinese as his second language and with a heavy accent. His natural tongue was Xiāng, the dialect of Shāoshān, a town in Mao’s native Hunan province, not far from Changsha, the province’s capital.

Xiāng is closely related to Mandarin, but when the Anglo-French writer and journalist Robert Payne interviewed Mao in Communist China's ramshackle 'foreign ministry' at Yenan, he needed a US Army major to serve as interpreter. The interview was conducted after a dinner comprising boiled meat, lettuce and maize, and during that meal Mao had been telling his guests about the Long March, spending much of the time praising the bravery of Chu Teh, a general and gifted military strategist for the Red Army who sometimes led the March.

Mao credited him with amazing acts of bravery, while he himself was ill. "We seemed to be climbing up vertical sheets of ice," he told his guests, "and I have no idea how I survived." Mao, however, was a polite and attentive host, according to Payne, occasionally standing up and using his own chopsticks to place some special delicacy in one of his guests' bowls. However, despite the



Mao Zedong in the Northern Shaanxi during the second civil war, 1947

language difficulties, you should find it easy enough to say "Nǐhǎo" (hello) to someone and to perform the traditional hand-cupping gǒng shǒu manoeuvre, simultaneously giving a slight bow. Shaking hands and cheek-kissing are Western traditions; physical contact is not generally practised there.

BACK TO THE FUTURE?

Clearly Xi Jinping is not trying to recreate the 6th century Tang dynasty, famous for its art and accomplishments (and also for China's only female ruler, the Empress Wu). What he seems to be seeking, initially, is a place for China in global politics equal in stature to that of

the United States.

Xi may cosy-up to Vladimir Putin when it suits him – after all, Putin has some very impressive weaponry pointed westwards – but China seems to view Russia as a rival, too, and Xi expressed concern that President Biden went to meet Putin before him. We shouldn't forget, either, that 2021 marks the 20th anniversary of the China-Russia Treaty of Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation being signed by Jiang Zemin and Vladimir Putin. Xi seems to have a higher opinion of American weapons than Mao did, although in his case, his views may have been based on Hollywood movies, which he loved, and in which artillery pieces regularly blew up and warplanes crashed. Now Xi wants real weapons that are every bit as powerful as those controlled by Washington, and he seems to have acquired them, indeed outstripping the US total in some areas. Furthermore, on 19th May this year, Xi and Putin witnessed by video link the groundbreaking ceremony of work beginning on a nuclear energy cooperation project, the Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant and Xudapu Nuclear Power Plant.

Biden's officials have met with their Chinese opposite numbers in Alaska, but witnesses say it didn't go well. Both sides issued statements criticising the other. Some American officials also doubted the bona fides of the Chinese diplomats participating, on the grounds that they were certainly not part of Xi's inner circle. Add to that the concern over SARS-CoV-2 and Beijing's refusal to permit an investigation into where the pandemic started, and things are not looking too hopeful for improved relations between the world's two largest economies. Control of Weapons of Mass Destruction were supposed to be covered by the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, signed by



Jiang Zemin and Vladimir Putin in 2002

Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987. It ran out in 2019 and President Trump refused to renew it, having already demanded a new nuclear pact that included not only Russia but also China, which had not been party to the INF Treaty. It seemed like a sound plan.

President Trump had been pushing in any case for a new treaty involving China. The New START (Strategic Arms Reductions) Treaty was a further development of an existing treaty that had been in force since 2011. The idea was to limit the risk of nuclear conflict through a series of arms control agreements that would limit how many strategic nuclear weapons any signatory party could wield, although in its existing form it only covered the US and Russia. The New START Treaty not only limited the numbers of warheads but also their delivery systems, such as intercontinental ballistic missiles. It was the only remaining treaty to control nuclear weapons and the new US President, Joe Biden, got a last-minute agreement with Russia to extend it to 2026, just before its expiry date. The idea was to buy time while more details were gone into and a new treaty agreed. But again, it didn't include China. The European Parliament's Think Tank welcomed the last-ditch deal but pointed out that "There are still many unanswered questions about the kind of weapons that a future treaty could



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping



General Secretary Gorbachev and President Reagan signing the INF in 1987

include.” As reported by Al Jazeera, “Robert Wood, US ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva who also serves as US Commissioner for the New START Treaty’s Bilateral Consultative Commission, speaking at a UN-sponsored Conference on Disarmament called for a new arms control drive that ‘covers more weapons, and eventually more countries.’ At the moment, we are left with an asymmetric agreement, since one of the three main powers is not included. It’s a point highlighted by Wood later in his address. “The United States will also seek to engage China on nuclear arms control and risk reduction. I hope that China will join us in that effort.” Russia’s Ambassador, Gennady Gatilov, also praised the new deal, and as a former Russian Foreign Minister he clearly has some experience. China was also represented at the meeting but anyone hoping for a tri-partite Treaty may be disappointed by his words.

Li Song, China’s ambassador to the event, welcomed the Treaty extension but pointed out that the US and Russia are the largest nuclear powers in the world. “China hopes to work on a basis of parity and mutual respect with all nuclear powers,” he told the meeting, “including the Russian Federation and the United States, to engage in bilateral dialogue on security, strengthening



Chinese Ambassador Li Song

mutual security measures, boosting transparency and trust.” Notice he said “bilateral” and not “trilateral”. He clearly believes that China has some catching up to do before further expansion becomes more restrictive.

HOLD THE FRONT PAGE! AND THE EDITOR!

Just at the moment, China seems to be in the process of ‘battening down the hatches’ at home. In other words, seeking to ensure domestic security in case of a breakdown in friendly relations with other powers. Xi has started close to home, by enforcing China’s will in Hong Kong and Taiwan, arresting any



The Hong Kong Civil Human Rights Front demonstration against the election of the chief executive

who question what it’s doing. In the case of Hong Kong and Macau, the old agreement to have “one country, two systems” seems to have been forgotten. When Hong Kong reverted to being a part of China, there was agreement that the citizens of Hong Kong would retain their right to elect their own representatives to the Hong Kong parliament. However, the Chinese government later told them they were free to vote only for candidates selected and approved by Beijing, which is a rather different matter.

There were protests and demonstrations, which gave China an excuse to clamp down hard. Protestors were arrested, followed by opposition politicians and journalists who dared to criticise China’s cheating. Newspapers, such as the pro-democracy Apple Daily, have been shut down, their offices raided and, in the case of the Apple Daily, its editor, Ryan Law, arrested. The paper’s owner, Jimmy Lai, was jailed last year. Basically, Xi Jinping is saying “you have one man,

one vote. And I am the one man.” In fact, it has become one country, one system, which is not what the then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher thought she had negotiated.

It seems strange that China seems to be going backwards when throughout many centuries of history it has led the way into the future. China was the first to create standardised units of money, minting coins as early as 1,000 BC.

The idea caught on fast. By the 13th century AD, some Chinese merchants started to deposit their surplus coins (which were heavy to carry) with other merchants in return for receipts that were signed and stamped with a promise

that the piece of paper concerned was the equivalent of a set number of gold coins and they could be redeemed at will. By 1274, the Chinese state was printing its own promissory notes, thus creating the first paper currency. It seems as if the world is now moving forward towards increasing use of Bitcoin and its cousins. It’s a kind of Internet currency, or “crypto-currency”, based on a ‘blockchain’, an unfalsifiable ledger of each transaction. It is immune to fraud and so seems promising as a possible replacement for ordinary cash, although it eats up computing power and also electrical power. You may not be surprised to learn that, according to testimony by Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg before the US House of Representatives Financial Services Committee, China has developed one of the most advanced digital payment systems in the world. Meanwhile, China has been clamping down on crypto currencies based elsewhere. It has placed restrictions on what’s called ‘Bitcoin mining’, which had a very adverse effect on the value of Bitcoin and others

like it.. China, of course, doesn't want competition for its own venture, the "Digital Currency/Electronic Payment" (DC/EP), or the digital yuan.

Fans of the new electronic payments system say that the Chinese version is the very antithesis of Bitcoin. While Bitcoin stresses its freedom and independence from central control, the digital yuan is all about control, although that doesn't seem to have put off its supporters. Li Bo, Deputy Governor of the People's Bank of China, has even suggested that the digital yuan could be used by athletes attending the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. If they go ahead. There are protest movements demanding the event should be relocated because of China's treatment of the Uighurs. Still, persuading everyone of any age to switch to a virtual currency may not be easy, despite claims by traders towing the Beijing line. One trader told ABC news that "Electronic payments are particularly ubiquitous in China; nowadays, older folk don't even use cash to buy fruit and vegetables at the market." Interesting, if true. I've certainly seen no evidence of it in the UK. It's been suggested that use of the digital currency could spread to Macau, because it would help in the fight against money laundering. It would also help Beijing to fight back against the ubiquity of the US dollar, which accounts for some 90% of all transactions in foreign exchange. China has the world's second largest economy; unshackling it from dollar transactions could turn the yuan into the international reserve currency. What a powerful weapon that would be in the ongoing superpower war of powers!

There is no substitute, however, for real, tangible weapons. China is building up its arsenal at an alarming pace; at least, alarming to Washington. Earlier this year, Admiral John C. Aquilino, now serving as the commander of the United States Indo-Pacific Command, urged members of a Senate Armed Services Committee to strengthen US forces "and other elements of power" in the face of an unprecedented military build-up of new weapons and new military capabilities by China. Admiral Aquilino said that the aim appears to be to block US access from Asia to Beijing and to make use of any vulnerabilities discovered in order to gain economic, diplomatic and military advantage, while falling just short of provoking conflict. He urged the members to



John C. Aquilino

ensure that US military capabilities keep pace with China, so that the US would be able to "deter and, if needed, defeat China in a war". Those are tough words. He said the Pentagon should – and this was his greatest priority – invest in better air and missile defences. China has been building and deploying increasingly advanced ballistic, cruise and the new hypersonic missiles, which deliver their payloads at such astonishing speeds that it is impossible to stop them with existing missile defence systems. At present, no anti-missile missile system exists that is capable of stopping one of the new hypersonic missiles on its way to a target at five times the speed of sound. Even if radar detected its approach, it's not clear how the weapons flight could be deflected.

ARMED AND READY? NO

Aquilino said that the most urgent need concerns the risk to Taiwan, which Beijing still regards as part of China, just as Russia considered Crimea to be part of its territory and took it back by force.

China could do the same and, Aquilino said, already has an array of very advanced weapons pointing

at the island. Hong Kong and Macau are closer and would be even more difficult to defend. In June 2020 that Chia imposed its draconian new National Security Law (NSL) on Hong Kong, effectively erasing basic civil and political rights there. It has been claimed that the NSL is part of Beijing's efforts to change Hong Kong's institutions and society from a mostly free city into one under the severe rule of the Chinese Communist Party, even if it's a form of Communism that Karl Marx and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin would scarcely recognise. Hong Kong, of course, was seized in 1841 in a most dishonourable way by Britain during the First Opium War, in an attempt to protect the rights of mainly British traders to sell the drug illegally in China. Addiction was taking a heavy social toll there and the Qing dynasty was determined to put an end to it. The Chinese authorities seized and burned 1,400 tons of opium. That was not acceptable to London, which was very devoted to the profitability of British companies. Tensions were then worsened when drunken British sailors murdered a Chinese villager and Britain refused to hand over the culprits for trial. In other words, it's very easy to understand why China considers Hong Kong to be its own and why its attitude towards the West is somewhat jaundiced. The whole affair should, perhaps, never have been allowed to drag on until 1997, when Britain officially handed Hong Kong over to Chinese rule.

Now, China seems to be making up for those years of having a capitalist state on its Communist doorstep, with the NSL empowering its forces to act like Emperor Hongwu's Embroidered Uniform Guard. China is, of course, a huge country with a population of very nearly 1.4-billion people. Governing such a vast number of people requires



Two J-20s, new-generation stealth fighter jets, independently developed by China



China's 37th naval escort fleet returns to a port in Zhanjiang, south China's Guangdong Province

strength and toughness, and that's what the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is now delivering. Mao always suspected he would end up facing American forces because they continued to send matériel to the Kuomintang to use in their fight with the Japanese, which was turned instead against the Red Army. As Robert Payne wrote about his meeting and interview, Mao remained resolute: "It doesn't matter how many tanks and airplanes they send against us. We are not afraid of them," he said. Payne asked him what his Red Army soldiers would do when confronted with heavy tanks supplied by the Americans. "We'll tear them apart with our bare hands," he said. He then threw out his hands and feet like a Chinese boxer. Many years later, Payne told me that it was this claim that had impressed him most. It was the point at which he realised that Mao and his Red Army were undefeatable. "For many months," wrote Payne in his book, *Eyewitness*, "I had been convinced that the Red Army would conquer the Generalissimo's (Chiang Kai-shek's) armies and at that moment I knew for a certainty that their victory was inevitable." And so it proved.

But of course, Xi Jinping is not Mao, nor does he have General Chu Teh to help him and guide him. He comes across as a very different leader from the often shy and reticent Mao, but then he's not trying

to win back a country from warlords and an extremely right-wing armed group. And China, of course, is a much more modern country, where even elderly villagers in remote areas, it's claimed, can use crypto-currencies to buy radishes. I know I couldn't. Then there's the poetry. Mao hated his poems, he said. They were not good enough. This is one he wrote about *The Long March* in 1935:

The Red Army fears not the trials of the March,
Holding light ten thousand crags and torrents.

The Five Ridges wind like gentle ripples
And the majestic Wumeng roll by, globules of clay.

Warm the steep cliffs lapped by the waters of Golden Sand,

Cold the iron chains spanning the Tatu River.

Minshan's thousand li of snow joyously crossed,

The three Armies march on, each face glowing.

You may have read recently about a small herd of around 16 or 17 elephants, including 3 males, that seem to have started their own "Long March" across China. Much to the surprise of scientists, they have already (at the time of writing) completed some 500 kilometres across China and they haven't finished yet. That means they will have already completed a journey of very nearly a thousand Chinese miles, and it must have begun with a single step by one elephant or another. They began the massive trip in the Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve, not far from the borders of Myanmar and Laos, and they have been travelling north, appearing in various towns and villages along the way. They have not been entirely benevolent, smashing down doors, raiding shops to steal food, bathing in canals and eating crops. They have even entered houses and used their trunks to turn on taps

when they need a drink. Like the Red Army of many years ago, the herd "fears not the trials of the March". Mao would be proud of them; at the time of writing, Xi has not passed comment. And despite their proven courage and stamina, it would seem that the United States need have no fears about the elephants' territorial ambitions. For one thing, they travel much more slowly than a hypersonic missile.

However, we should bear in mind that China is reported to be constructing more than a hundred new missile silos in the country's western desert region. In fact, Fox News reports that the total number could be as high as 145. Criticism from the US over this expansion has met with little more than a shrug from Beijing, with Wang Wenbin, a spokesperson for China's Foreign Affairs Ministry, reminding a press conference that China is still a long way behind in the nuclear arsenal stakes.

"There is an order of magnitude difference between the amount of China's nuclear weaponry with that of the United States and Russia," he told reporters. Even so, this rapid build-up by China is making US military experts nervous. "I cannot deter with the leftovers from the Cold War forever in the future", Admiral Charles Richard, Commander of US Strategic Command warned members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, appealing for an urgent upgrade. Other US experts fear China's plan (perhaps not surprisingly) is to maintain a deterrent that can survive a first strike and yet still be able to penetrate US missile defences. It's a scary thought; scary enough, perhaps, to set a herd of elephants off on a very long (dare I say 'mammoth?') journey to prove an old proverb. They, after all, are not "leftovers from the Cold War", so much as leftovers from the Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage, which eventually led to Rome's emergence as the superpower of the Mediterranean. Interestingly, theLatinLibrary.com points out that "The enmity of Carthage impelled Rome to build up its large army and to create a strong navy." Yes, superpower manoeuvres persuaded other powers to change their military strategies in response, even then. Still, elephants did alright for Hannibal, even if he lost in the end. They certainly gave the Romans a fright, anyway.

T. Kingsley Brooks



A long-range multiple launch rocket system (MLRS) attached to a brigade under the PLA 71st Group Army launches a rocket at a mock target during a round-the-clock live-fire test on June 14, 2021

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FUTURE (VERY) TENSE

Where is Europe heading (and can it get wherever it's going)?

“What is the future of Europe? Can it be conceived? And who will lead us there? These questions were uppermost in my mind as I sat down to listen to a scheduled debate on where Europe is going from here. It was part of a long discussion, widely publicised in advance, featuring representatives of the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission, various governments and civil society, among a great many others. By the time it ended I was no longer certain that Europe has a future, such was the range of incompatible and opposing opinions about the options that lie ahead. I tried to find the antonym for serendipity, but there isn't one. Not really, although misfortune, calamity, cataclysm and doom have been suggested, rather bleakly.

They're not exactly the opposite of finding good fortune by accident and without intent, though the writer William Boyd, in his 1998 book *Armaddillo*, suggested *zambianity* for that purpose, but apart from cropping up in a court judgement in Ireland during a summing up by Mr Justice Michael Peart in 2012, the word has not found widespread usage or popularity. But as the saying goes, *Romae non fuit dies* (Rome was not built in a day). Actually, it's an old French saying, so perhaps I should quote it in its original form: “*Rome ne fu[t] pas faite toute en un jour*”.



© Wikipedia

Jean Monnet has been called "The Father of Europe" by those who see his innovative and pioneering efforts in the 1950s as the key to establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, the predecessor of today's European Union

So how can we describe a successful grouping together of different nations for their mutual benefit?

As far as the founders of the European Coal and Steel Community, grandfather of the European Union, were concerned, their great plan blossomed and bloomed, despite setbacks a-plenty along the way. Serendipity, one could argue, for John Monnet and Robert Schuman, perhaps; their aim (and that of colleagues like Dirk Spierenburg, Albert Coppé and Paul Finet) had been a union binding energy generation and the production of steel so as to prevent future wars. The Second World War had only just ended.



© Evistahumanum

Robert Schuman, one of the founders of the European Union, the Council of Europe and NATO

What came out of their deliberations went on to become the European Coal and Steel Community, then the European Economic Community (EEC) and finally the European Union (EU), developments that Monnet and Schuman could have only dreamed of. It became, in fact, a much greater success than they had intended. At least, until now. I listened to the dissenting voices, from people committed, in their own personal worlds, to widely different outcomes. Their visions are further apart than, say, the planet Mercury is from the distant Oort cloud.

The Conference project was launched on 19 April, 2021; coincidentally my birthday. It was opened to a fanfare and to high hopes of Europe's member states moving forward together. “The

platform represents a key tool to allow citizens to participate, and have a say on the Future of Europe,” said the President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli. “We must be certain that their voices will be heard and that they have a role in the decision-making, regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic.”



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David Sassoli, President of the European Parliament

Certainly, the importance of listening to the public was stressed several times, even if those doing the stressing disagreed about what the public are saying. “Only a democratic Europe has a future,” the Conference heard from German Christian Democrat MEP Manfred Weber, the leader of the European People's Party (EPP) group, “Brexit taught us that.” In other words, the EU's leadership must listen more attentively to rumblings of discontent, wherever they may originate. Brexit came as a shock to a leadership that had grown complacent, and it came as a huge disappointment to Commissioner (and former MEP) Mairead McGuinness. “I chaired the last debate,” she told the conference, “Where the UK were no longer leaving and were on the way out, and I chaired with great sadness.



© Europaeu

Mairead McGuinness

And Brexit brought back words: border, barriers; words that had disappeared because of EU membership. But it's not physical barriers that I worry about most; it's the barrier of minds and hearts." It could be argued, perhaps, that those barriers of minds and hearts never really went away. They were merely hidden under the early enthusiasm for cooperation and joint development, under leaders who remembered World War II. Now, with the inauguration of the Conference on the Future of Europe, the EU's various leading lights will hear the views of the citizens. I rather think they may be surprised by the level of narrow nationalism that it will uncover, but that doesn't change the urge to listen to what the people are saying. "It's about time that we start," said Ana Paula Zacarius, Portugal's Secretary of State for European Affairs, at the opening of the session, "It's about time that we build our future together, our common future. And let's make this exercise the best that we can." Zacarius was one of three co-chairs of the session, the others being MP and former Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt and EU Commission Vice-president Dubravka Šuica.



Ana Paula Zacarius

I cannot imagine anyone disagreeing with Zacarius's sentiment, although there may be many ways of looking at it. It's a bit like religion. 85% of the world's population claim to be followers of one faith or another, the vast majority linked to one of the five major faiths: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism or Hinduism. Get them all together, however, and there will be disagreements and disputes not so much between one faith and another (although that's bound to happen, too) as between the followers of a single religion who can't agree on the correct interpretation of one

article of faith or another. The more people you gather under a single banner, it seems, the more rows spring up among the faithful as to who's right. That's certainly the case with Europe. For some, it should be nothing more than a trading group for the selling and buying of each other's output. For others, it should be a union of like-minded peoples sharing common standards, values and laws. There is a vast gap between those two viewpoints. It's what makes the mountain of obstacles lying in the path of this conference on the Future of Europe even higher. "This is a huge responsibility," said Zacarius. "We have to make this work. We have to have concrete results at the end of it. Together, we'll be stronger." Can it be done? I'm reminded of Mao Zedong's reply when he was asked some time in the 1950s if the French Revolution had worked. After a pause, he said: "It's too early to say."

YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION (JOHN LENNON, 1968)

For some Green campaigners and those fighting for social justice, the EU provides an opportunity to impose new rules and regulations about things like product safety, environmental protection and workers' rights. There are others, however, openly campaigning for the exact opposite. The European Commission is working on a proposal to protect cross-border investments in the EU, due for publication in autumn 2021. There are fears, however, that it could include a swathe of new legal privileges for corporations. A number of the largest companies have banded together to lobby for generous financial compensation in cases where new

legislation, brought in to protect the environment, consumer safety and workers' rights costs large companies money. They want a legal entity, removed from the European Court of Justice, and which would decide how much a government should pay in damages for any business-unfriendly legislation that could harm the companies (or at least, the companies' profits and thereby its shareholders' dividends).

It all began in 2018 with an important ruling in the EU's Court of Justice (CJEU), when around 130 'bilateral investment treaties (BITs)' between member states were set aside and ruled illegal. These treaties had allowed investors to by-pass national courts whenever decisions taken at government level hampered their investments in some way, suing member states in front of tribunals ruled over by private lawyers. The CJEU ruled that such settlements had been illegal as they had ignored the EU's own courts. The businesses and the legal profession could see a risk to the profits that the previous system had brought in. Business groups started lobbying the European Commission for a new justice system to run alongside the CJEU that would allow member companies to sue a government that brought in new laws on, for instance, the rights of workers in the contract-free "gig economy", or the use and disposal of plastics or other harmful materials. The large banks have been at the forefront of the lobbying campaign, even though the whole idea is based on the rather surprising notion that businesses are not sufficiently protected by existing EU law, applied through an existing EU court. If they succeed, it will discourage member state governments from bringing in new measures to



The judges from the European Court of Justice



Corporate Europe Observatory's website promoting their June publication with a title about "turning the spotlights on the European Union as an economic superpower and how the EU does, or does not regulate corporate power"

protect, say, the environment, secure fair holiday pay and decent wages or to ensure that the "polluter pays" principle applies in all cases.

According to Corporate Europe Observatory, "Industry wants to change EU law so that it mirrors the substantive investor protections and wildly speculative damage calculation methods which are common in international investment law. Provisions such as fair and equitable treatment should be 'codified, specified and further developed' in new EU legislation, according to Commerzbank and Deutsches Aktieninstitut. This would risk driving up costs for public interest regulations in the EU, making it easier for businesses to secure large amount of compensation paid out by the public purse". So already we can see the enormous differences of views between those involved in businesses, banking and the legal profession and, say, those connected with Corporate Europe Observatory. The whole affair has prompted the Austrian Chamber of Labour to remark: "While the Commission has long ignored workers' requests to create minimum social standards for the EU...complaints about the lack of protection for investors, on the other hand, have immediately prompted the Commission to run a consultation on the issue".

Whoever wins the argument, there's no shortage of people already put their names down to have their say on Europe's future, or who have already had it, including 108 members of the European Parliament, two people from each member state of

the European Council (making 54 in all), three members of the European Commission, 108 from all the national parliaments, on an equal footing, and various members of civil society. For instance, there were or will be (the process is far from finished) 80 people representing the European Citizens' Panels, one third of them under 25 years old, as well as 27 from Citizens' Panels or Conference events linked to the project. The selection process is not yet complete. They will be joined by the President of the European Youth Forum. In addition, 18 representatives from both the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, and another eight from both social partners and civil society will also take part. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy may take part in discussions about the EU's international rôle and an attempt will be made to ensure that the Conference Plenary is gender balanced. It's a lot of people, but they're people already committed in one way or another to the European way of resolving issues. It's doubtful if any of the people who

voted for Brexit would have chosen to take part at all. It has always been easier to jeer and shout "boo!" than to frame a constructive idea.

This time, the EU and its various bodies have offered a multilingual access point for anybody – everybody – to weigh in with their proposals and suggestions. It's an excellent idea but forgive me if I express my doubts: what tends to happen when the chair opens the floor is that special interest groups tend to hog the debating time and end up taking over the event. You know what I mean: just as the meeting of your local golf club, amateur dramatic society, reading group or whatever is drawing to a close, the chair bangs the gavel and says something like "Is there any other business just before I close this meeting?". You can almost taste the drink awaiting you in the club bar, but the group's principle bore then gets to his or her feet and intones those dreaded words (or something else very much like them). "If I might just draw the Chair's attention to Paragraph 3, subsection 14C of last month's minutes," he/she says, "I think you'll find that the emphasis on the third line of parts iiib to iiid has been overstated and requires rewriting in the way I originally proposed." And with a sinking heart, you know you're going to be there for hours, or at least until long after the bar closes. Inviting everyone to comment and to make proposals whilst excluding the determined bores of this world is never going to be easy.

JOINING AND QUITTING

In the years following the Second World War, there had been several attempts to create some kind of pan-European, multinational organisation, but always national interests had got



Presidents Sassoli, von der Leyen and PM Costa signed the Joint Declaration on the Conference on Future of Europe in EP plenary chamber in March 2021

in the way (they still do). The bodies that succeeding in emerging from this slough of despond have been useful over the years – the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) and, of course, the Council of Europe. Both are still going strong and serve useful (if rather different) purposes, but they fall short of the sort of bodies dreamed of by Jean Monnet. Convinced Europeans like him had learned a hard lesson: the idea of European integration meant different things to different people; the urge for something more solid and tightly bound came mainly from the United States, strangely, and it was mainly motivated by an urge to make the administration of the Marshall Plan easier. One hopeful body, the Western European Union (WEU), founded in 1948, was intended as a way towards wide-ranging European cooperation, but remained primarily military in nature.

Proposals for a political and parliamentary structure with real powers foundered on opposition from the United Kingdom, and the resulting Council of Europe was, in the words of Dirk Spierenburg, “little more than a caricature of the original idea”. Spierenburg was writing a history of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community, the early precursor of what would eventually become the European Commission in his snappily-titled book, ‘The History of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community: Supranationality in Operation’. I was fortunate enough to have a close connection with this book (which is a lot more interesting than its title suggests): when I first arrived in Brussels I was recruited by an obscure department of the European Commission to help Spierenburg. Originally co-written in French by both Spierenburg and the then Professor of History at the University of Strasbourg III, Raymond Poidevin, the two were not happy with the English translation and wanted it reviewed and, if necessary, rewritten in part, a job that fortuitously fell to me.

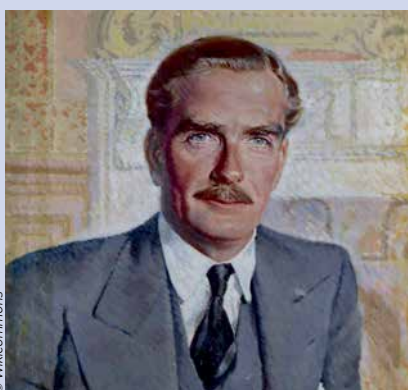
It meant having monthly meetings with Spierenburg in the disused cafeteria of an obscure Commission building just off Rue du Trône, where he told me a lot of anecdotes about



Dirk Spierenburg

those early days, as well as answering my questions concerning what certain segments of the book meant. They were quite long, meandering chats over cups of appalling Commission coffee (it’s much better these days) but they were thoroughly enjoyable. In places, the English used in the translation was so ugly and arcane that I had to re-translate from the original to understand what it meant. You must recall that there were no laptop computers in those days and desk computers (large and slow) were only available to the rich, so no spell-check, no Google, nor hidden resources. All I had were the manuscripts and my hand-written notes from my fascinating meetings with Spierenburg. That’s how I learned about the origins of what was still the European Economic Community (EEC) at the time. I was told how various ideas had been rejected by various governments, with the British being especially wary of any pan-European body with real powers. ‘Plus ça change,’ as the saying goes.

A few years later, I was to conduct a television interview with the late Cosmo Russell, an early British enthusiast for European unity who joined the staff of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in 1949 and then worked in Brussels at the European



Future Prime Minister Anthony Eden painted while Foreign Secretary by William Little

Commission from 1972 to 1986. Multilingual, he lived a large part of his life in Continental Europe, although I interviewed him at his home in leafy suburbia in the UK long after he had retired. He told me how he had always enthused to his political masters about the advantages of European nations working together.

On one occasion, he said, he’d been called to report on some project or other to Sir Anthony Eden during his brief term as Prime Minister (1955-57) and found him sitting out on his terrace. As he approached, he told me, Eden pulled a face and said “You’re not going to bang on and on to me about Europe again, are you Cosmo?” Britain’s political classes (with few but notable exceptions: Sir Edward Heath and Tony Blair, for instance) have rarely favoured closer European union.

More recently, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said of his country’s divorce from Europe “we have taken back control of every jot and tittle of our regulation” without feeling the need to explain what he means. It sounds like gobbledegook. After all, under a separate treaty, NATO has the power to order Britain to go to war, something the EU could never have done. Similarly, all trade deals involve agreements about retaining standards for imports and exports and other fine details. Hardly “every jot and tittle”, then; international relations simply don’t work like that.



Boris Johnson campaigning for Brexit / Facebook

It’s very clear from the Brexit referendum and from subsequent election results that Johnson has a majority of the British people – at least those living in England and parts of Wales – on his side. After all, the anti-



© Richard Townshend

Sir John Redwood

European stories he used to make up for the Daily Telegraph were picked up and re-used by many other journals, apparently without bothering to fact-check them. Johnson said later that concocting these daft tales was “the greatest fun he’d had in journalism” (I never saw journalism as ‘fiction-writing’) and described it as being like throwing rocks over his neighbour’s wall and listening to the crash of greenhouse glass breaking. Heath was wrong about British attitudes to Europe at least early in the UK’s membership, when Harold Wilson’s government held a referendum in 1975 that returned a 67% to 33% in favour of membership. I remember talking once with Heath at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, just outside the meeting room of the centre-right European People’s Party, of which Britain’s Conservatives were, at that time, members. Among leading Conservatives who were critical of the EU was Sir John Redwood. “Opponents of Europe in your party are highly intelligent people,” commented one of the other journalists taking part in the conversation, “After all, Sir John Redwood is a fellow of All Souls college in Oxford.”

All Souls is a very exclusive establishment, devoted to research, according to its website, mainly in the humanities, and accepting no undergraduates. Heath frowned. “No, they’re not intelligent,” he snapped, “they’re just bigots.” Redwood’s hatred of Monet’s European dream seems to be almost visceral, even to this day. He remains a back-bench MP, still posting Euro-sceptic tweets, even after Britain has departed, which seems rather like complaining that you didn’t like the food after you’ve left the restaurant.

DESPERATE TIMES, DISPARATE COUNTRIES

Britain is not the only country to have difficulties with Europe at the moment. Think of France’s beleaguered president Emmanuel Macron. In the recent mid-term election, his *La République en Marche* effectively came fifth, with just some 11% of the vote. His far-right populist rival for the presidency, Marine Le Pen, and her party, *Rassemblement National*, did far worse than expected, too. She seems to have lost out largely to disinterest: the turn-out of just 35% was far lower than expected.

Le Pen’s party has lost favour with older voters and relies on what used to be called the “blue collar” vote, but after the election had twice been postponed, interest in the result was low, especially among young voters. Only an estimated 16% of those aged between 18 and 24 bothered to vote. The parties that came off best were the age-old mainstream rivals, such as the centre-right *Les Républicains* and the Socialists, but the real winner was apathy, which is worrying with a Presidential election less than a year away.

Germany is still headed by the Christian Democratic Union and its sister party, the Christian Social Union, their main rival being Germany’s oldest political party, the Social Democratic Party (SPD), founded in 1875, which sometimes enjoys the support of the Greens. In the next election for Chancellor, the likely winner will be someone most

people outside Germany have never heard of: Armin Laschet, if the CDU/CSU win (which seems likely) or Olaf Scholz if the vote goes to the SPD. The shadow of Angela Merkel, however, is likely to hang over the future of whoever wins, such as has been her influence over German politics. As the largest countries, France and Germany carry a lot of weight in Europe, but the EU, of course, has twenty-seven member countries, including two that sometimes cause concern in the other twenty-five. Poland has two main parties, the right-wing conservative *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS), which means Law and Justice, and the moderate centrist *Platforma Obywatelska* (PO), which means Civic Platform. There are a large number of other smaller parties, too, the most significant of them being *Nowa Lewica* (SLD), or New Left (Poland).

In Hungary, the right-wing *Fidesz-KDNP* holds almost 50% of the seats in the unicameral National Assembly, followed by the equally right-wing *Jobbik – Movement for a Better Hungary*. The electoral process in Hungary seems not to matter much, with prime minister Viktor Orbán openly ignoring democratic institutions such as a free press and freedom of expression in pursuit of what he has called “illiberal democracy”. As *The Atlantic* reported in April 2021, “With this week’s passage of a law effectively removing any oversight and silencing any criticism of the Hungarian government, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán can now rule by decree for an indefinite period of time.”



© Kremlin.ru

Marine Le Pen and Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2017



© Wikimedia

Viktor Orbán

Maybe that's what the Hungarian electorate wants. The EU seems powerless to compel Poland to lift its ban on LGBTI+ people living as they want, and nor can it have any impact on Orbán while his country is the only member state of the EU to have been designated only "partly free" by Freedom House, a think tank. I can't imagine Orbán has lost any sleep over that. The remaining twenty-five members may occasionally squabble, but most issues can generally be resolved with patience. The problems posed for the EU by Poland and Hungary are less tractable, as are problems posed by Russia and Turkey for the Council of Europe. Poland and Hungary are often difficult for the Council of Europe, too, and for much the same reason. Finding a way to ensure compliance with the rules from countries that are openly disregarding them, is as yet an unresolved issue.

"We are facing challenges. Everybody knows this," said Ana Paula Zacarius, "and we need to use this opportunity to engage with citizens and with other stake-holders of the EU to see how we can emerge stronger from this Covid-19 crisis." Indeed, it's not just a case of overcoming a terrible and extremely infectious viral disease and all the economic damage it has caused; the inevitable and essential restrictions on travel, on movement and on meeting up together has been a gift to autocratic governments which have long looked for a good excuse to impose such things. One of the EU's major problems is that very few people living in Europe understand how the EU works or what it does, which helps explain its relative lack of popularity. Conducting street interviews (known as 'vox pops') in the UK before it finally left the EU, I was surprised and

disturbed at the number of people who didn't like the EU because they believed it meant Britain was always taking orders from Germany. That is mainly (but not exclusively) the fault of the UK's often anti-European media, whose attachment to truth can be somewhat tenuous on European issues.

SHAPING A FUTURE, ANY FUTURE

This problem was highlighted at the Future of Europe plenary by the President of the Committee of the Regions, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, who told the conference that the lack of knowledge is not the fault of the average European.

They are unaware that it's because of the EU that we "breathe cleaner air, consume higher quality products, that we have better-equipped hospitals and digitised schools and public services". So what is the cause of this lack of knowledge? "It means that we have done something wrong," Tzitzikostas said. "And this is what we need to do during this conference. We need to listen. We need a credible dialogue. And we need to focus on the real needs and the issues which matter to the citizens. And above all, we need to create a new vision that will unite us." The problem seems to be that not only are people largely unaware of what Europe has done for them, but they don't want to be told. When things go well, the national government (or the local authority) likes to take the credit. When things go wrong, these same bodies pass the blame on to Brussels. As the late Northern Irish



© Wikimedia

Apostolos Tzitzikostas

MEP John Hume used to say: "Success has many fathers; failure in an orphan". It's not original; he was quoting Count Galeazzo Ciano (Mussolini's son-in-law) and possibly also the Roman general, Gnaeus Julius Agricola. But whoever said it first, it clearly applies in the EU's case.

Engaging the young is, perhaps, the most important thing to do, but nobody really seems to know how. In a report for the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), Finnish MP Inka Hopsu argues that more countries should act upon UN Security Resolution 2250 by getting young people more involved in conflict prevention and resolution. This will not be easy; it seems too many young people are put off a political career by the slow pace of preferment. As she points out in her report, adopted in June 2021, only 3.9% of national parliamentarians in Europe are under 30 years old. By the time they've climbed the greasy pole, they are no longer young, either. It's a difficult thing to overcome but, says Hopsu, it's not insurmountable, if political party officials act. "I think the political parties carry a lot of the responsibility here," she told me, "So, during election campaigns, the young people should be involved in the electoral lists and taken on as candidates. And also during the campaigns, they should pay respect to them, and lift them up, really, and even some countries might need a quota for young people, in the parliament, in the municipality." It's a good idea, but successful older politicians have often had to be persuaded to help those younger than themselves who could turn out to be future rivals. As the old saying goes, turkeys don't vote for Christmas. However, the Conference on the Future of Europe is still inviting citizens and organisations to participate and table new ideas. Why not give it a try? Perhaps some young person, as yet unknown, may yet come forward with a revolutionary and brilliant solution to Europe's problems. If so, let's hope someone is listening.

Jim Gibbons



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A LANDCOM command taking ceremony held August 3, 2018 in Izmir Turkey

NATO, THE PEACE ALLIANCE

New challenges and realities continually test Nato's ability to reshape and constantly adapt

“ NATO is not only the longest lasting alliance in history, but NATO is the most successful alliance in history’ (Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General).

Indeed, this alliance which today adds up to almost one billion people, has managed to keep its citizens safe and secure ever since the end of World War II.

It has also provided cooperation and dialogue between Europe and its North-Atlantic allies.

‘Seventy years of peace and prosperity is what NATO has produced for Europe and North America’ said the US Ambassador to NATO, Kay Bailey Hutchison.

In 1949, in a European continent in ruins after WWII, the prospect of further communist expansion determined the USA and its European allies to form the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization, also called the North-Atlantic Alliance, or NATO for short.

Signed in Washington DC on April 4th, 1949 by its twelve founding members (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States), this treaty was meant to secure the North-Atlantic area and guarantee the well-being of its members. Besides trying to stop the Soviet Union’s influence in the region, it also aimed to encourage



The first NATO summit in Paris in 1957, brought the leaders of member nations together at the same time

European political cooperation after the war and to discourage any revival of nationalist militarism by having a strong North-Atlantic presence on European soil.

NATO is a political and military alliance that seeks peace and promotes democratic values. Its declared target is to solve all conflicts through negotiations and diplomatic efforts, but it also has the military capacity to respond to any threat targeting any of its members.



Secretary of State Dean Acheson signs the Washington Treaty, April 4, 1949. President Harry Truman and Vice President Alben Barkley are standing next to him. Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer



Meeting of the seven representatives of the Warsaw Pact countries in East Berlin in May 1987. From left to right: Gustáv Husák, Todor Zhivkov, Erich Honecker, Mikhail Gorbachev, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Wojciech Jaruzelski, and János Kádár

In fact, one of its most important guiding principles is clearly stated in Article 5 of the Treaty. Just like the legendary Musketeers, NATO members pledge to help and support each other and that ‘an armed attack against one or more of the Parties shall be considered an attack against them all’. So it’s “All for one and one for all”, as Alexandre Dumas, the famous French writer once said.

Luckily, in its already long history, Article 5 of the treaty has been invoked only once, in 2001, after the September 11 massive terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington DC, when the USA asked for support from its NATO allies in the fight against terrorism.

As a response to the newly formed alliance, the Soviet Union and the Eastern European nations under communist domination formed a rival alliance, called ‘The Warsaw Pact’ in 1955.

Throughout the latter part of its more than 70 year existence, the North-Atlantic alliance has faced difficult times; times of high tension, rapid reactions and decisive and firm stands. In the 1960s, the world came close to

World War III more than once (the East-West Berlin Crisis, the Cuban Missile Crisis are just two examples). Throughout recent history, the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, as well as the conflict in the Balkans among other events, clearly demonstrated that the alliance’s cooperation between its members was strong and real.

During the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, NATO not only offered full support to the UN but also conducted an air campaign (September 1995) which played a crucial role in ending the conflict.

This, as well as other conflicts in the region, demonstrated that the post-Cold War era can be as delicate and dangerous, and that instability can occur just as easily. Therefore, a strong alliance is definitely needed, even in peaceful times.

With interventions in the Balkans (in Bosnia and Kosovo), NATO practically transformed itself into a more dynamic and ready-to-act alliance. Under the authority of the United Nations, NATO has been leading a peace support operation in

Kosovo, since 1999, helping wider international efforts at building peace and stability in that region. In 2003, NATO also took command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. That mission, which ended in 2014, was meant to support the Afghan authorities and build the capacity of the Afghan national security forces to provide effective security and fight against terrorists.

The path to cooperation has not always been smooth. In 1966, under the leadership of General Charles de Gaulle and following a dispute regarding nuclear capabilities in Europe, France decided to withdraw from NATO’s integrated military command structure. However, it remained an active member of the alliance and in 2004 began assigning personnel to the permanent staffs of SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe). SHAPE is the headquarters of the North-Atlantic Treaty, currently located in Casteau near Mons, in Belgium). As of 2009, France officially re-joined NATO’s integrated military command structures.

After 1989, following the fall of the Berlin Wall and collapse of communist regimes in most of Eastern and Central Europe, NATO initiated a dialogue and developed partnerships with these countries that were its former adversaries. This dialogue began in 1991, following a joint meeting between NATO members and representatives of the former communist countries in the East. A few years later, most of these countries joined the alliance. In 1999, 2004, 2009, 2017 and 2020 there were further expansions of the alliance which currently has 30 member



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visiting the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) in July 2021



About 3,500 troops are still deployed in Kosovo as part of KFOR, the NATO-led multinational peacekeeping force.



NATO Ministers of Defense and of Foreign Affairs meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels in 2010

states. For all these former communist countries, the accession to the most powerful military alliance in the world was tantamount to a guarantee that freedom, democracy and progress were secured and closely guarded. 'NATO is built on security but it is also built on values' (Condoleezza Rice, former US Secretary of State). The citizens of these countries have embraced this historic event with great optimism and joy. For many, this had a far greater meaning than just a pragmatic one; it was overwhelming on an emotional level, after decades of communist oppression and unimaginable suffering.

Today as always, any NATO decision is the expression of the collective will of all its 30 members and all decisions must be taken by 'consensus'. It is also a symbol of the unity of the alliance and of a declared equality between its members.

Besides the 30 member states, NATO also founded the Mediterranean Dialogue with seven Mediterranean countries (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia and



Algeria), seeking to promote security and stability in the region. Throughout its history, NATO has constantly adapted to the ever-changing and challenging security environment and realities, demonstrating its flexibility and rapid reaction capacities.

In the meantime, Russia has been watching this alliance - its main opponent - gradually advance closer and closer to its borders. It was in 1991 that relations between Russia and NATO were officially established within the framework of the North-Atlantic Cooperation. Over the last 30 years NATO has expanded eastwards into the former Soviet sphere of influence and has enhanced



US Air Force B-52H Stratofortress Operating out of Moron Air Base, Spain, flies in formation with Spanish Air Force F-18 aircraft in support of a Bomber Task Force Europe mission in June 2021

clear, intentional acts of harassment, a threat to its borders and political influence, as well as the creation of a strategic imbalance. Russia also



Joint press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky in 2019

its presence in the eastern part of the alliance, with multinational and combat-ready battle groups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. NATO also constructed a missile defence system in several member states bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

The NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence (NATO IAMD) aims to safeguard and protect the alliance's territories and its citizens against potential missile airstrikes. This was requested by NATO's European allies in 2007 in order to complement the US national missile defence system in order to protect Europe from any attack. Defence interceptors have been placed in Poland and Romania together with a BMD radar hosted by Turkey. Needless to say, these actions irritated Russia which saw them as

strongly opposes any potential, further enlargement of NATO in the future, through the accession of Ukraine and Georgia to the military alliance.

In this complex and sensitive context, Romania, itself a NATO member, inaugurated the headquarters of the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre (E-ARC) in Bucharest, at the end of May 2021. While initially set up as a public institution under the authority of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its aim is to make it international in character by bringing together experts from NATO and EU countries.

The main objective of this Resilience Centre is to promote NATO's interests and objectives. It plans to serve as a 'platform for strategic discussions and development of concepts, training



Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, the chairman of the NATO Military Committee, addressing the 30 alliance chiefs of defense during a virtual Military Committee Meeting in September 2020

and exercises, and to collect and provide lessons learned' (MFA of Romania). E-ARC will also develop programmes and initiatives in the field of resilience, in three main directions: risk mitigation, developing tools and best practices and cooperation on education and training.

NATO is the foundation of its members' collective defence and, as was stated in the 'Brussels Summit Statement' (June 2021), it is 'the essential forum for security consultations and decisions among Allies'. Its mission is to preserve peace and security for its member nations, through its strategic military command (ACO, Allied Command Operations, in Belgium and ACT, Allied Command Transformation, in Virginia, USA).

In order to test its military procedures, tactics and capabilities, as well as to find ways of improvement, NATO organises periodic training exercises; for 2021, it planned 95 military exercises.

Today's realities in the region, including the Ukraine-Russia open conflict, only add to existing tensions and distrust among opponents.



The appearance of unidentified soldiers ('little green men') in Crimea was a prelude to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea on 18 March 2014, and its hybrid war in the Donbas, eastern Ukraine

At present, the Black Sea is a hot spot, with ongoing NATO naval operations closely monitored by the Russian military on the other side. Only last week Russia claimed that a British allied ship came too close or even crossed into its territorial waters, while sailing too close to the Crimean shore (annexed by Russia in 2014). Russia warned that "a real conflict with NATO might even start over the current Black Sea naval exercises", attempting to put pressure on the allies and to emphasize its total disapproval of these military exercises near its borders.

However, it is important to underline that all these exercises are purely defensive and designed to respond to potential security challenges and alerts. They are intended to send a clear message that an attack on a NATO member would be followed by a strong and determined response from the alliance as a whole. All NATO military exercises are also meant to display the alliance's expertise and level of military readiness and professionalism. Last and by no means least, it is also definitely aimed at discouraging any possible aggression against the military alliance.

Military exercises never target any particular country; they cover all allied territories, including land, air and sea zones. More recently, lately cyber security issues have also been included. 'Cyber coalition 21' in November 2021, will be one of the biggest cyber defence exercises in world history, intended to test and train cyber defence mechanisms across the alliance.

Today, cyber-attacks are become an increasingly destructive force. They



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call for new cyber policies in order to allow for effective responses to any possible attack. Telecommunications and infrastructure are crucial for any country and need to remain strong and resist all malicious interference. It is an accepted fact that 90% of military transport and 70% of communications depend on civilian services. Thus they need to attain a certain level of resilience, whose standards are agreed among all allies under the 'National Resilience Plans'. Each member state has also agreed to designate a senior



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Anti-NATO graffiti in Ohrid, Macedonia

official in its government, to keep track and coordinate all the necessary measures in order to ensure security channels and infrastructure resilience remain up to scratch.

Propaganda and disinformation can also be just as dangerous and damaging for the alliance and its members. Particularly in recent years, there has been a sharp intensification of these phenomena which are not to be neglected. Anti-NATO parties in many of the European member states try to gain new followers and to implement an anti-NATO current of opinion. The National Revival of Poland, Hungarian Workers Party, or the Green Party of England and Wales are just a few examples of such parties.

Some try to suggest that belonging to such an alliance would put the country in a military position open to conflict; others question the costs for each member or discuss the various NATO military missions in the past.

In the meantime, there is a strong movement and pressure within the European Union, especially from France, towards a greater strategic autonomy through its own security policy (Common Security and Defence Policy) and collective efforts (a European Defence Fund). With Brexit, there came a new reality. One of NATO's greatest supporters left the EU, paving the way for a more autonomous security structure. But here, the EU also lost one of its most powerful players, militarily speaking. NATO and the EU need each other and cooperation and mutual support can only be beneficial. 12,000 US troops are still present in Germany as proof of US implication and presence in Europe. But a stronger and coordinated EU military force could not only guarantee a more effective 'burden sharing' between the US and its European allies, but also be beneficial for the US, which could then concentrate more on other areas of interest, such as Asia for example. All these new challenges and realities continually test NATO's ability to reshape and constantly adapt.

In order to be able to achieve its targets, the alliance needs to raise enough resources by increasing both national and common funding. In order that their military forces guarantee security and effective reaction in times of crisis, all NATO allies face constant pressure to contribute on a greater scale to the defence budget. Traditionally NATO's budgets and programmes are



Nato members posing during the NATO 2021 Summit

funded by direct contributions from all members, to the tune of around 2.5 billion EUR per year. But this is only 0.3% of the total allied defence spending. The US is NATO's biggest contributor so far, with 3.42% of its GDP. In recent years, there have been voices, especially during the Trump administration, demanding increased contributions from other member states. Germany has pledged to increase its contribution in order to match US funding; this may serve to slightly defuse the crisis surrounding the high costs of maintaining the alliance. As a rule, each country's contribution is proportional to its GDP (except for the US) and while all contributions are set to increase, the US plans to slightly reduce its own in the near future.

While in office, Donald Trump firmly demanded that each allied state should contribute to NATO's budget with a 2% of its GDP. This target was not reached by many of the 30 members. It is also important that each country follows the NATO official target of military spending, in order to keep their armed forces in shape and ready for action whenever necessary. Of course, these expenditures can be made by some countries with stable and flourishing economies that are able to sustain in the long run, a budgetary effort of such a level.

In addition to budgets, expenditures and other such discussions, the North-Atlantic alliance must have a clear, modern and future-oriented strategy focused on the immediate realities and current threats. For the first time in 2010, NATO adopted the strategic concept of 'Active Engagement, Modern Defence', aiming to keep the alliance effective in defending peace,

security and prosperity. It also aimed to develop new ways of protection and defence against new attacks and modes of operation of opponents.

The #NATO2030 initiative states the priorities of the alliance for the near future. In June 2020, Jens Stoltenberg presented these priorities for the next decade (2020-2030). He said that members need to make sure "the alliance remains ready today to face tomorrow's challenges" and that "the alliance stays strong and takes a more global approach, in cooperation and involving political, civil society, public and private sector, all together".

The 'NATO 2030' agenda aims to strengthen the alliance's ability to adapt and become stronger and more future oriented. The alliance will remain viable and successful as long as it adapts to the changing world and responds quickly to new threats, including security and intelligence.

Strengthening resilience to protect NATO's citizens against terrorism, increased cyber-attacks, all armed attacks, hybrid warfare, natural disasters, climate change and



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg with President Trump at Winfield House in London ahead of the Meeting of NATO Leaders on 3 December 2019



NATO Deputy Secretary General, Mircea Geana

pandemics, together with the effort to reduce all present vulnerabilities are all listed under the 'NATO 2030' initiative. Resilience is considered key, as the first line of defence.

NATO Deputy Secretary General, Mircea Geoana, called the recent summit (in June 2021) "a historic moment for the alliance", highlighting some key decisions taken under the 'NATO 2030' agenda. These include the protection of critical infrastructure, promoting innovation and trans-Atlantic cooperation on new technologies. The new agenda is also setting goals on the fight against climate change, considered an important NATO task for the first time in the history of the alliance. At the recent summit, the leaders of all 30 states approved an action plan to limit, anticipate and react to the security implications of climate change.

The alliance plans to invest more in its members' global defence, to increase resilience of its nations, while also learning from each other and benefiting from each other's know-how.



Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov referring to the NATO Summit: "Abandon the phantom of the Russian threat"

NATO recognises today's new potential dangers, ethnic conflicts, economic crises, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism or political turmoil. All are recognized as potential local destabilisers, and as such these phenomena must be carefully monitored and evaluated if they occur.

The main idea following the NATO summit in Brussels was that 'a more global NATO can provide security



US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin

for the future'. It was agreed that the alliance will strengthen its strategic partnerships, especially with the European Union, but also with the Asia-Pacific region and Australia. NATO also plans to explore new engagements and possible future partnerships in Africa and Latin America.

The rise of China as one of the biggest economic and political powers in the 21st century poses concerns and needs to be considered in any future action plan of the alliance. NATO has to adapt to this new geo-political reality, to understand and recognise the economic opportunities but also the potential threats. But competition for values, for political influence as well as for economic markets and cooperation can work together. "We all need to find the right balance" said Mircea Geoana.

Russia has always been a major player and opponent to NATO. While the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov complained at the latest EU Summit in Brussels, in June 2021 that "NATO is completely refusing all military cooperation with Russia, despite Russia's offer for dialogue", France and Germany called for direct talks with Russia, especially after the bilateral Summit in Geneva, Switzerland between US President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that "conflicts can be best solved if you also talk to each other" while the French president Emmanuel Macron supported the idea and said that "warmer ties with Russia are necessary for stability of the European continent". The relations between the European nations and Russia significantly deteriorated after

the annexation of Crimea in 2014. In recent years, the alliance has found that military power is often no longer enough to maintain stability and security. The peace keeping process is often tedious and far more complex. NATO has increased its cooperation with both states and international organisations and it has now an increased international presence, becoming a major player for peace and stability.

At the latest NATO summit, it was also agreed that the alliance will develop its next strategic concept. This will take place at the next summit to be held in Madrid in 2022.

German Chancellor, Angela Merkel also emphasised: "NATO needs to adapt its strategy to meet new challenges".

Until then, it is imperative that the alliance stays united and proves that it is capable of keeping up with the changing times and the necessities of the future. It needs to be flexible, effective and to also have a good communication strategy. People from all 30 member states currently under the NATO umbrella, need to understand the importance of this alliance for their everyday wellbeing and future. They have to be convinced that the price they pay is never too high and that NATO, watches over their everyday peace and wellness uninterruptedly, in order to ensure their full support in the future. Only together can we be stronger.

'If you do not seek out allies, then you will be isolated and weak' (Sun Tzu, 'The Art of War')

Alexandra Paucescu



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MULTIPLICATION CAUSES DIVISION

Europe's population trends are worrying planners

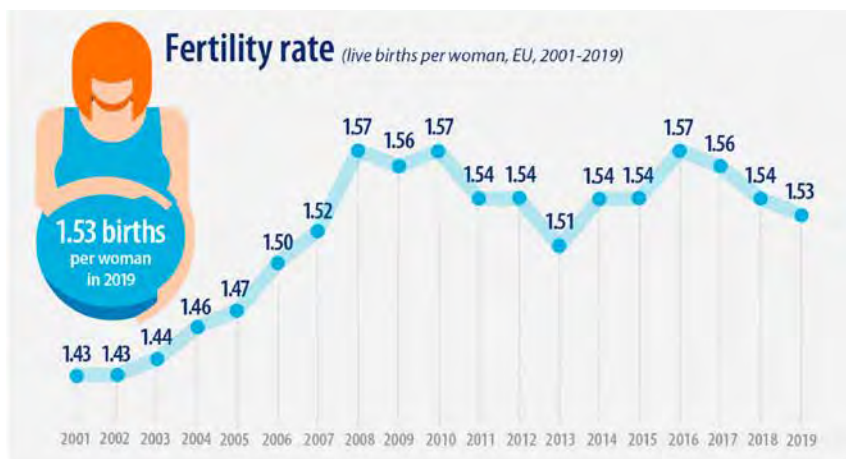
Population growth is something we have taken for granted in Europe, but if you look closely, it's a very uneven pattern and seems to be on the decline. Spanish women, who give birth to 1.26 children on average, seem to be among Europe's least fertile. This contrasts with women in France who are among Europe's most fecund with an average 1.84 children. The late British physicist, Stephen Hawking, once predicted our planet's doom if its population continues to double every forty years. "By the year 2600, the world's population would be standing shoulder to shoulder," he said, "and the electricity consumption would make the Earth glow red-hot." Don't worry, it won't. Hawking was not only a brilliant physicist, he was also a gifted self-publicist (always in a good cause) and he was looking for support for a project to send a fleet of small robotic spacecraft, using the power of light to fill their sails, towards the Alpha Centauri system, more than four light years away.

Obviously, despite the sails giving the vessels a great velocity, no craft can reach, let alone exceed, light speed, so the trip could take up to 30 years. It's an interesting idea, but it doesn't really solve the problems of a planet running out of resources to feed a population standing too close together to move. Strictly speaking, it was very much a shared project, its other notable supporters being the Israeli-Russian venture capitalist Yuri Milner and Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg. Incidentally, a signal beamed from the fleet on arrival at Alpha Centauri would take another 4 years or so to get back and it would probably simply report

that the planet, Proxima Centauri b, is uninhabitable.

Population growth is a heated topic of debate. Environmentalists are afraid that we will outgrow our planet and denude it of vegetation and other life forms (probably not viruses, but no one cares much about them) unless we restrain ourselves and start producing fewer children. Population figures alone hide another fact: our global population is not only growing, it's growing older. I mentioned the difference in birth rates between Spain and France, but these are merely a reflection of an odd fact that has become clear over the last

three decades: fertility rates are relatively high in Northern Europe and low in the South. Few people believe this difference is biological; it is more likely to be the result of family care policies and financial realities. Providing care services is expensive, and in 2015 in the South, the investment in them represented around 1.5% of total GDP, while Northern Europe invests 3.5%, more than twice the proportion. The lower figure must discourage people from having large families (which is expensive) and encourage partners to go on working to earn more money; more easily done with only a small family to consider. Interestingly, the statistics do



not bear this out. It's in countries that pay out the most in care services and where the highest proportion of women are in the jobs market that the birth rate is highest.

The birth rate in Europe, as in other parts of the world, varies over time. It peaked in Europe at the start of the 1960s – in 1964, it peaked at 6.797-million births – and has declined since, reaching a low of 4.365-million in 2002. There was a brief resurgence after that before a further decline to just 4.167-million in 2019. Another noticeable trend has been for women to give birth to their first child at an increasingly older age. There has been a tendency to put off a first pregnancy until a woman is more mature. In the United States, the average age for a woman in her first pregnancy is 26.8, and that is lower than the average in OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. In the years from 1970 to 2017, the average age for women giving birth for the first time rose by up to five years. Adolescent fertility rates have fallen sharply, too.

Across the OECD as a whole, an average of 11.8 births have been recorded per

one thousand women aged between 15 and 19, although in Chile, the current adolescent fertility rate stands at 44.7 births per one thousand women aged 15 to 19 and a significant 66.2 births per thousand in Mexico – more than 5 times the OECD average.

The National Bureau for Economic Research (NBER) attributes the fall in birth rate to personal choices, rather than any possible biological cause. “Several factors are thought to be driving that decline in Western Europe,” says its website “Socioeconomic incentives to delay childbearing; a decline in the desired number of children; and institutional factors, such as labour market rigidities, lack of childcare, and changing gender roles.” It all sounds very reasonable. People do not feel the pressure of their 19th century predecessors, where large families were essential because of high infant mortality rates. But it's a change that comes at a cost to society. In a report for the NBER, it is noted that: “In the short term, low fertility rates raise per capita income by lowering families' costs of child-rearing and boosting the share of working-age people.

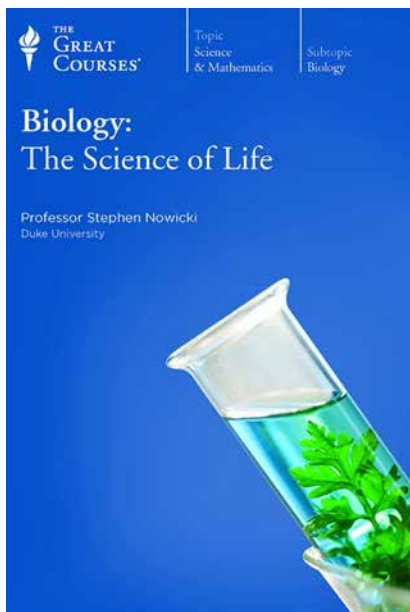
GROWING OLD DISGRACEFULLY

But as that working-age population moves into retirement, the number of workers who replace them will shrink. So, whatever short-term boon European nations may have gained from low youth dependency will be overwhelmed eventually by the economic burdens of old-age dependency. It's a point that is noted by the European Commission in a 2018 report on ageing: “The old-age dependency ratio (people aged 65 and above relative to those aged 15 to 64) in the EU is projected to increase by 21.6 percentage points, from 29.6% in 2016 to 51.2% in 2070. This implies that the EU would go from having 3.3 working-age people for every person aged over 65 years to only two working-age persons.”



That clearly has cost implications for member states. Across the EU as a whole, the total cost of an ageing population looks daunting, according to European Commission estimates. Spending on such things as pensions, health care, long-term care, education and unemployment benefits is expected to go up by 1.7% to 26.7% of GDP between 2016 and 2070. According to the OECD, “much of the decline in fertility among women aged 20-29 occurred between 1970 and 1995, but in many countries fertility rates for women in their twenties have continued to fall since 1995.” It is a matter of some concern for the European Commission and one for which no-one has yet come up with a viable solution. “Long-term care and health care costs are expected to contribute the most to the rise in age-related spending,” reads a Commission report, “increasing by 2.1 percentage points. Public spending on pensions is expected to rise...until 2040 before returning close to current levels by 2070. Education expenditure is projected to remain unchanged by 2070. Unemployment benefit expenditure is projected to decline by 0.2 percentage points.”





Japan, which has the fastest-ageing population, raised the issue at the 2019 G20 meeting, which it hosted. The global advisory and digital services provider, ICF, set out some of the major issues arising from it. “In the European Union, the working-age population—between 15 and 65—is projected to fall from 333 million in 2016 to 292 million in 2070,” it points out. “Meanwhile, the share of people aged 65 and over will rise from 19% to 29% of the population, and people aged 80 and over will increase from 5% to 13%.” Naturally, older people are going to want to enjoy a well-earned retirement, funded by the pension scheme to which they have contributed throughout their working lives. But that pension fund is not a bottomless pit of gold; it seems as if the actuaries got their sums wrong. With more people having to dig into it, without it growing proportionately bigger, the pit of gold will turn out to be fairy gold, end-of-the-rainbow gold, but the sense of entitlement will, understandably of course, remain. In his video series, “Biology: The Science of Life”, Dr. Stephen Nowicki, Bass Fellow and Professor of Biology at Duke University, put forward the notion that populations of any species can reach what he called a “carrying capacity”, which he defined as “the maximum size a population should be able to achieve given the amount of resources available in the environment in which it lives.”

Prior to the pandemic, Europe’s workforce had been becoming more mobile, crossing borders in pursuit of work and a better life. As a result, many women have been giving birth

in a country that is not their own. The share of children born to foreign-born mothers differs significantly among EU Member States: in 2019, more than 65 % of the children born in Luxembourg were from foreign-born mothers, while in Cyprus, Austria and Belgium this share was around one third. I have fond memories of Luxembourg, mainly from covering so many EU (or EEC before that) Council meetings. Luxembourgers are understandably proud of their tiny country and get annoyed when people idly assume they can talk to them in French or German (they can, of course, but that’s not the point), so to ensure I got prompt service in the press bar at the Council building, I learned those vital words: “Zwee Béier, wann ech gelift” (two beers, please), which almost always won me good service and a smile from the barmaids. According to the Britannica website, “Luxembourgish is a Moselle-Franconian dialect of the West Middle German group” and it has lots of French, German and Flemish words mixed into it, too. Luxembourgish policemen attending road accidents that involve foreign-registered cars and drivers have been known, I was told by a Belgian friend, to pretend it’s the only language they can speak. But I digress.

TWO’S COMPANY, THREE’S A SOLUTION

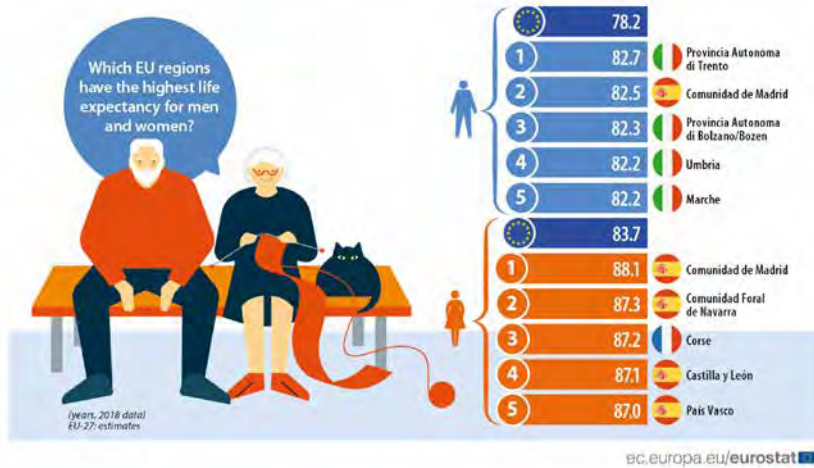
The birth rate has been a topic of much discussion in China, whose ‘one-child’ policy led to a shrinking but also ageing population. After appeals to limit family size, which had not worked properly, the Chinese government instituted a “one-child” policy in 1980, in a bid to limit the country’s burgeoning numbers. As a result, the fertility rate declined to lower than two children per woman in the mid-1990s. Because male children

could inherit the family name and property, there was an increase in the numbers of female fetuses aborted, leading to a society in which there was a disproportionately high number of males. Female babies brought to term were often put up for adoption and many ended up in the United States and other Western countries. Other children, brought to term unofficially because their parents resisted abortion, ended up facing hardship without the documents they would need, so in late 2015, Beijing announced that the policy was to be discontinued. From early 2016, families would be allowed two children, but this failed to raise the birth rate as predicted. Faced with low birth rates, an ageing population, and a dwindling workforce, in 2021 the Chinese government raised the limit to three children.

Worldwide, the SARS-CoV-2 virus has rendered most population planning out of date and unhelpful. In one generation from now the world looks like being unrecognisable, in population terms. Before it started, mass migration was seen as the factor most likely to impact on population numbers. A report drawn up for the European Commission in 2019 pointed out how westward migration over the preceding quarter century had affected smaller, poorer nations. For example, Bulgaria and the Baltic States lost between 16% and 26% of their people in that 25-year period. “Intra-EU mobility has the potential to produce large population shifts within the EU over time,” it reported. “If the movements of recent years persist as they have, the population of Romania would reduce from 19.9-million in 2015 to 13.8-million by 2060 (that is a worrying number, representing around 30% of the population). Conversely, the losses would be less than half (only around



Faced with low birth rates, an ageing population, and a dwindling workforce, in 2021 the Chinese government raised the limit to three children



-14%) without intra-EU mobility.” The Member States on the receiving end of these flows have come to rely on them to help compensate for their own ageing or shrinking populations, but the effect on their total populations is more limited because they are generally more heavily populated in the first place.

As the report points out: “Differences in wages and living standards continue to drive westward migration within the EU. Targeting economic inequality between Member States can encourage greater cohesion and integration and can help those Member States facing disproportionate population decline, a loss of working-age population, brain drain and more pronounced population ageing.” Of course, it tends to be the young, able, educated, and clever who seek their fortunes in a new land, so it becomes not only a drain of able labour but a brain-drain. The poor countries are losing the very people they are going to need most in the future. And by 2060, the OECD predicts, 32% of Europe’s expected population of 521-million will be over 65, which means that a small and probably shrinking actual workforce will be trying to help support a large and growing section of society: the elderly, certainly, but also the sick and those with small children needing care.

So, for Europe, as for the rest of the world, the future was already looking difficult and plagued with problems that nobody has really found workable ways to overcome. These problems are especially noticeable in economically advanced states, such as Japan. Japan may be economically wealthy but it is often used as an example of a nation struggling with an ageing – even an aged – population, coupled with a reduction in adults of working age. In Europe,

though, there are countries struggling with very much the same problems but lacking Japan’s relative wealth. Bulgaria, for instance, comes fifth in the European table of countries with an old and ageing population, but it lacks the financial wherewithal to address the problem. Politically, they cannot attract greater immigration, so instead they seek to attract the Bulgarian diaspora from neighbouring countries to come home. Fiscally, the effects can be severe. One million Bulgarians have left their home country to seek their fortunes elsewhere since the fall of the Soviet Union.

ALL CHANGE

And then along came a virus that can mutate faster than scientists can find new ways to destroy it or at least to keep it in check. Slightly more than two thirds of the global population have experienced some form of lockdown during the pandemic, with an all-too-predictable increase in domestic abuse and violence and a marked decrease in women’s access to medical and prenatal services. Lockdowns are also known to have impacted on social circumstances and mental health, while the accessibility of condoms has become more difficult for many women. The United Nations predicted that this fact alone could lead to 116-million unwanted babies.



Unwanted babies in China

According to Frontiers in Public Health, an open-access website, fertility rates tend to respond to poverty; those without jobs or prospects are likely to postpone having a child. This is especially the case in Low-to-Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), such as India or Pakistan. There is also the possibility of the virus directly and physically affecting the fertility of the population; as Frontiers in Public Health explains, “SARS-CoV-2 binds to the Angiotensin Converting Enzyme-2 (ACE-2) receptors to enter the cells of the human body. Several hypotheses have pointed the presence of ACE-2 receptors on male Leydig cells and female ovaries as the possible thread to directly affect human fertility.” So far there has been no evidence that this is the case, we are told, but it is something that we should, perhaps, bear in mind.

Otherwise, though, there’s no doubt that the pandemic will affect the birth rate in rich places like Europe and the United States, as well as in LMICs. According to the PMC website, representing the US National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health, “There was no correlation between the monthly number of Covid deaths and the monthly number of perinatal deaths ($r = 0.465$, NS), preterm births ($r = 0.339$, NS) or hypertensive pregnancies ($r = 0.48$, NS). Compared to the combined numbers for the same month in 2018 and 2019, there were no significant changes in perinatal deaths or preterm births in the months when Covid deaths were at their height.

The rate of preterm birth was significantly less common in January-July 2020 compared to January-July in 2018/2019 (7.4 % v 8.6 %.” It had been predicted that with couples being forced to spend more time together, births would increase, as well as domestic violence, but that hasn’t been the experience (except for the domestic violence, sadly). The Economist reports that in the 21 countries that published their population data for January, the first month in which babies conceived at the height of the “first wave” of the pandemic were due, births were down by 11% per thousand people, and down by 12% based on the countries’ fertility trend during the decade leading to 2019. Perhaps sex is losing its appeal.

Certainly, those who’ve been asked have mainly said they plan to start a family later because of the pandemic. Given the way the virus keeps coming



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An intubated female infant born prematurely after 26 weeks and 6 days gestation, weighing 990 grams. Photo taken approximately 24 hours after birth

back in new forms and varieties, it could be much later. We are currently experiencing the Delta variant; how long before the Epsilon version puts in an appearance? An on-line article by the Rand Corporation, published in April 2021, predicts fewer births in the months ahead. “While national data of U.S. fertility during the pandemic are not yet available, some states have released preliminary information,” says the report. “Philip Cohen, a sociologist at the University of Maryland, College Park, has been documenting some of these findings. He finds a drop in the birth rate between five and ten percent across several U.S. states. California, for example, saw a ten percent drop in birth rates in December 2020 compared with December 2019. Preliminary data on Spain shows a 23 percent drop in birth rate between the December/January period of 2020–2021 compared to the prior year, suggesting that birth rate declines may be even greater in other countries.” A number of reports have focused on how the pandemic has affected childcare duties, but it has also affected care systems for older people, with some families taking on the care of elderly relatives to keep them out of care homes where infection rates have soared tragically. It is hard to predict if this “home caring” trend will outlast the pandemic; probably not, or not for long. Most young (or youngish) families don’t want their “old fogey” relatives cluttering up their lives. And to be honest, the “old fogeys” probably wouldn’t enjoy it much, either.

JOIN MY CLUB. OR USE MY CLUB

Migration, though, continues. As the Rand Corporation report points out: “Worldwide, more people than ever before live in a country other than the one in which they were born. This reached 272 million in 2019, an increase of 51 million since 2010. Currently, international migrants make up 3.5 percent of the global population.” Politically, of course, migration is a tricky subject, even though the worldwide spread of homo sapiens depended on it. We know our ancestors first evolved in Africa, but into a variety of forms. By one million years ago, some hominid species had started to migrate towards the north and east, learning how to use language and how to control fire, it’s thought. Between 70,000 and 100,000 years ago, our own ancestors, homo sapiens, also left Africa, probably crossing the Strait of Hormuz. With so much of the world’s oceans bound up in ice, it would have been a short and fairly easy crossing. Some headed east, some west, and by 40,000 years ago, they had reached Western Europe, Asia by 50,000 to 55,000 years ago and Australia soon afterwards. It took them rather longer to reach the Americas. They were, in many cases, following in the footsteps of Homo Habilis, Homo Erectus, the Neandertals, the Denisovans and perhaps others now lost to history or to archaeological discovery.

Experts in the United States are still arguing over how and when the first indigenous peoples got there. It’s assumed by many that they crossed the land bridge of Beringia, which joined Siberia with Alaska while the seas were bound up in ice. They were prevented from travelling further by the Cordilleran Ice Sheet, which covered up to 2.5-million square kilometres of North America. A growing number of scientists, however, now believe that native peoples arrived earlier and, in

some cases, by boat. There are even some, admittedly a minority, who believe that the Cerutti mastodon site in San Diego County, California, shows evidence of butchered mastodon bones and stone tools from 130,000 years ago. According to Scientific American, Steven Holen of San Diego Natural History Museum, together with his colleagues, has concluded that the bone damage is clear evidence of butchering. If that proves to be the case, the butchers could not have been homo sapiens and presumably would have been homo erectus. The outcome of these arguments is important for native Americans, who will know more about their ancestors and whether or not they had settled in Beringia before the melting ice flooded it as well as destroying the ice barrier that had blocked further migration southwards. It will be less important for the vast majority of Americans who are descended from European migrants, of course. In any case, migration played a major part in the growth of the United States. It was in 1932 that Edgar B. Howard discovered butchered mammoth bones at a site at Clovis in New Mexico, together with slender stone spear tips that became known as Clovis points, thought to be evidence of the ‘first Americans’ and dating from 13,500 years ago. There is evidence to link the Clovis culture with the older Diuktai culture of Siberia. However, older remains than the Clovis points, it’s believed, have been found in Chile and elsewhere. Human populations have always moved from place to place; it’s part of what makes us human. Ultimately, our mitochondrial DNA may prove something that a great many scientists believe, namely that all of us today are descended from one woman, sometimes referred to as mitochondrial Eve. Given the immense damage we have done and are still doing to the planet, she has a lot to answer for, poor woman. And from a biological standpoint, her mate must surely share the blame.



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The Cerutti mastodon site in San Diego County, California



Mario Draghi

Meanwhile, ongoing migration continues to divide opinion and embarrass politicians. Italy's highly capable new prime minister, Mario Draghi, has persuaded other EU leaders to listen to his attempts to get a discussion going on migration. Italy complains that it is affected disproportionately by refugees travelling north from Africa and that the EU's current rules on redistributing them don't work. Other leaders, though, seem loath even to discuss the issue. When it was brought up at a recent summit, leaders spent little more than 5 minutes talking about it, which led to Draghi being criticised by his right-wing, anti-immigrant opponents at home. Even Social Democrat-led Denmark has recently passed a law under which asylum applications will be looked at in countries outside the EU and even outside Europe. Since then, border guards from the EU's Frontex agency have been sent to Lithuania to help deal with the influx of would-be refugees from Belarus fleeing the brutal regime of President Alexander Lukashenko.

The President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli, posted a Tweet about the issue: "Once again someone is unacceptably playing with

people's lives. It's clear that across Europe, be it in the South or East, we need a common asylum and migration system to respond to the crisis." There's no doubt that Mario Draghi would agree, at least. With migration, tempers flare and all too often people die. Al Jazeera reported an incident that took place at the start of July. "A non-profit sea rescue group (Sea Watch International) has slammed Libya's coastguard," said the article, "after it witnessed the Libyan maritime authorities in what it described as chasing a crowded migrant boat and shooting in its direction in an apparent effort to stop it from crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Europe." A spokesperson for Sea Watch, Felix Weiss, said that after shooting at the migrant boat, the Libyan coastguard vessel tried to ram it, presumably to sink it. "Those who shoot at refugees and try to capsize their boats are not there to save them," he said. "The EU must immediately end cooperation with the so-called Libyan Coast Guard."

Europe may well need migrants. Its population is not growing as fast as it used to and may soon go into reverse. The Economic Policy Committee and the European Commission predicted in 2006 that the working age population in the EU will decrease by 48 million, a reduction of 16%, between 2010 and 2050, while the elderly population will increase by 58 million, which equates to 77%. A recent report for the European Parliament showed a high rate of intra-EU migration, as people from Central and Eastern Europe move to the wealthier West to improve their lives.

The report also pointed out that Europe has an ageing population. Because of increasing life expectancy, 30.3% of the population is projected to be aged 65 years or older by 2070, compared to 20.3% in 2019. It's well known why



Smuggling of migrants in lorries, dismantled in Germany and Romania

the population growth has slowed to a standstill: in most OECD countries, the average age at which women first give birth now stands at 30 or above. It could lead to a skills shortage in wealthier countries and immigration could help to solve the problem. Of course, it's not just the politicians who have to be persuaded. They obviously want to keep their jobs, which means retaining the support of the voting public, and opinion polls suggest that the majority of people are opposed to immigration, especially if the immigrants choose to set up home in their neighbourhoods. In many countries, the decline in fertility for women in their twenties mainly occurred between 1970 and 1995, although in some places it has continued and fertility rates have actually risen slightly among women aged between 30 and 39. In fact, fertility rates overall have been in steady decline since the mid-1960s. There was a brief hiatus around the year 2000 but by 2010 the decline had resumed. In 2019, there were 9.3 births per 1,000 women. In the year 2000 it had been 10.5, in 1985 it was 12.8 and back in 1970, an impressive 16.4.

Perhaps it's just that people are more serious and career-focussed than they were back in the era of flower power and hippies. There are signs that people are less inclined to get close to strangers these days, emotionally as well as physically, so they are more naturally cautious. There is an old saying: familiarity breeds contempt; over-familiarity simply breeds.



Belarus refugees

Robin Crow

MOSTLY FROTH AND BUBBLE

The silly season starts with a war of words about Champagne



© Wikipedia

A 1952 poster advertising Soviet champagne

It was the Australian poet Adam Lindsay Gordon who wrote that “Life is mostly froth and bubble” in a moralizing poem called “Ye Wearie Wayfarer” in 1866. He didn’t expect it to apply to Champagne, and under normal circumstances, it shouldn’t. Clearly, nobody expected the very strange decision of Russia’s president, Vladimir Putin, to ban France from calling the world’s most famous fizzy drink by its familiar name of “champagne”. Instead, Putin’s new law insists that they call it simply “sparkling wine”, reserving the title “champagne” (or, more correctly, “shampanskoye”) for the sparkling wine produced in Russia (albeit not in a place called Champagne), which he claims is the real thing. This is a historical oddity (as well as being extremely silly): Russian champagne is a relatively recent invention.

It was Prince Lev Golitsyn, formerly wine-taster to the tsar, who first produced a wine of sufficient quality to carry the name, and that was shortly before his death in 1915. Soviet Russia continued to produce their version of champagne in the late Prince’s former vineyards on the coast of Crimea. Aristocrat and chemist Anton Mikhailovich Frolov-Bagreev was engaged to bring the latest wine-making technology to the production but his participation in the unsuccessful

1905 revolution against the tsar led to his exile in Siberia. However, he was so vital to production that he was returned the following year. The Communists regarded him as a martyr of tsarism (because they needed his expertise) rather than simply as a hated aristocrat, and he was returned to the vineyard in 1919, where he continued to work for the Soviet government in improving the country’s wine. They were even more grateful when in 1934 he developed a means of mass producing the popular fizz, production rising to 12-million bottles a year by 1942, despite the on-going war. It became hugely popular among the working classes, with some food stores serving it on tap. It was a victory for Frolov-Bagreev’s ingenuity, for the Soviet ability to bend its own rules as required, but most of all it was a victory for pragmatism.

MISTAKES WITH BENEFITS

The French version – the original version, the French would quite reasonably argue – is somewhat older. It has to comply with various rules and regulations, too. As ‘The Champagne Company’ explains on its website, “Champagne only comes from the Champagne region of France. It is the most famous and prestigious sparkling wine and is produced from grapes grown only in the Champagne region, the most northerly wine region of France, north-east of Paris.” Prenez ça, Monsieur Putin! The website continues: “There are three main areas, the Côte des Blancs, Vallée de la Marne and Montagne de Reims. Champagne is produced under the rules of the appellation, having perfected the bubble-making process often referred to as “champagne method” where a secondary fermentation occurs within the bottle.” The method is the same, but in Europe, sparkling wine produced outside the region for which it is named must use the expression “Méthode Traditionnelle”, which replaced the earlier designation, “Méthode Champenoise” in 1994, although you can still find bottles of sparkling wine bearing those words. The bubbles were seen initially as a fault with the wine, something to be got rid of. They were actually caused by a

climatic accident: the cold winters of the Champagne region halted fermentation, but when spring came around, the warmth set it off again, with the bubbles coming from sugars left in it.

In 1661, wealthy Londoners ordered cases of still wine from the region and especially enjoyed the ones that bubbled, creating a demand that soon caught on. What it all means, of course, is that the French version had been created more than 250 years before Frolov-Bagreev’s version. At the court of the Empress Anna Ivanovna, when up to a thousand bottles of champagne were served at one event, it was the French variety that the guests were swigging. However, Prince Golitsyn’s version beat his French competitors in a blind tasting competition at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900. So it was that Russia, not France, won the coveted Grand Prix de Champagne. One of the leading French producers, Louis Roederer, was asked by Tsar Alexander II (the man who liberated the serfs) to produce the very best champagne he could, which he did in 1876, serving it up in very clear crystal bottles (hence its name, Cristal, which continues to this day) so that no-one could hide a bomb in or under one, as Alexander feared (he was somewhat paranoid about possible assassination and not without good cause. In March 1881, after several unsuccessful attempts on his life, three bombs were thrown and the last one killed him). You can still buy Cristal today – devoid of bombs, of



© Kremlin.ru

Russian President Vladimir Putin

course – if you can afford it. Sometimes, the invention of champagne is incorrectly attributed to the Benedictine monk, Dom Pérignon, cellarer at Hautvilliers Abbey. He had, in fact, only tried to remove the bubbles. However, when he first tasted the sparkling wine that would go on to be called champagne, he is reported to have said “Come, for I am drinking stars!” It rather sounds as if he’d already consumed an entire galaxy.

Putin’s strange decision caught his country’s rich oligarchs by surprise. The French themselves were somewhat incommode, too. They duly cut off supplies to Russia, where surprised wine merchants thought it must be a joke. Putin doesn’t joke, however, and it must be said that his new law should help Russian producers of what they call champagne. They will undoubtedly see sales rise, when such makes as Moët et Chandon, Mumm, Dom Perignon, Piper Heidsieck and Veuve Clicquot are no longer in competition with them. Russia has been a major consumer of champagne for a long time, importing around 215-million bottles every year, many of which are drunk at New Year (as, indeed, are a great many Russian and other revellers. Drunk, that is...).

Russian distributors have been slow to criticise the new law; criticising Putin is not generally seen as a wise idea with long-term benefits. In any case, despite the weather in the Champagne region having been perfect this year for the proper grapes (only certain varieties from certain areas are permitted by law) there are fears that output will be down. The reason, of course, is the pandemic, which has led to cancelled celebrations, cancelled weddings, postponed parties and so on. Drinking champagne on your own has never been as much fun as responding to the bubbles up your nose whilst enjoying festivities with friends.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? WHAT'S IN THE BOTTLE?

Does it matter in the long term? Probably not; it seems to have been a very deliberate snub to Emmanuel Macron for no clear reason and to the advantage of very few (although the Russian champagne producer Abrau-Durso’s shares rose by 4.5%). Some people have said there’s nothing wrong with the French having to relabel their product as “sparkling wine”, although the bureaucracy involved in doing so, both at national and European



French Champagne



Russian Cobetckoe Champagne

Union level, would be substantial, given the laws that surround the stuff. Moët Hennessy - France’s best known champagne producer - suspended deliveries to Russia because, the firm said, the label change would cost them hundreds of thousands of euros.

Putin has not explained why he thought the law to be necessary, but he may have reckoned on French reticence and EU bureaucracy giving Russia’s own producers breathing space. However, as Shakespeare put it in *Romeo and Juliet*: “What’s in a name? that which we call a rose/ By any other name would smell as Sweet.” Supposedly it would still taste as sweet, too (or dry, like me, you prefer it that way).

Most of the 231-million bottles of champagne France produces each year is exported to the United States and the UK, with Russia getting up to 1.9-million bottles. Total champagne exports are worth around €2.5-billion to the French treasury. However, in terms of overall imports of sparkling wine, Russia takes in around 50-million litres, with champagne

accounting for only around 13% of that. But this latest attack on a popular EU export is not the first. Moscow has previously banned or at least restricted imports of such famous European products as Parmesan cheese, Gouda cheese and Iberian ham in response to EU sanctions over Russia’s annexation of Crimea and its arrest and subsequent imprisonment of leading opposition figure Alexei Navalny. On the champagne issue, Paris has said it will seek redress at the World Trade Organisation. Even some of the Kremlin’s most fervent supporters have expressed surprise at what many see as a fairly pointless move on Putin’s part.

According to *The Washington Post*, Vasya Oblomov, a popular Russian musician, Tweeted that Russia should now label all the cars it produces as ‘Mercedes’, whilst labelling the real thing as ‘foreign-assembled cars’. Even the well-known Kremlin propagandist Margarita Simonyan, who is editor in chief of the government-funded TV channel RT, said the law “looks very silly.” This fairly ludicrous spat could escalate, with France, perhaps, insisting that vodka imports from Russia are labelled “spirit made from potato, sugar beet, molasses and cereal”, while only French makes, such as Grey Goose and Ciroc, could be labelled as real vodka. French vodka is very nice, actually, as are those produced in Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic States. Oh, and Russia, too. Fortunately, Macron is unlikely to tread that ridiculous path because, whatever else may be said of him, he has not been accused of childishness or petulance. This looks like being what used to be called “a storm in a teacup”, or, if Putin prefers, “a tornado, hurricane or tropical cyclone in a china vessel from which to drink an infusion of the leaves of *Camellia sinensis*”. He’d probably claim that the bush was a native of Russia, too.

Toby Bowman-Grant



Vineyards of Champagne, Marne, France. Moulin de Verzenay



© DBOX & ARTEFACTORY LAB

Bay House

THE TESTIMONIO II

*The indisputable proof of a star product “Monaco Style”
in the art of luxury construction.*

348 apartments reserved for Monegasques

The most fashionable cities of the planet embark on titanic constructions, wanting to compete in the norms of excess for the sole purpose of impressing. In Monaco, the architect Alexandre Giraldi designed a pharaonic project, but which has the particularity of being a masterpiece of urban integration in a setting of Mediterranean luxury. It is not just an arrow to the sky, but a state-of-the-art megastructure offering a wide variety of opportunities for the principality's residents.

This project is the result of the perception and vision of the Marzocco Group, promoter of the Odéon Tower, and VINCI Immobilier. Although the architect Giraldi managed to fully integrate the waterfront, her particularly high-end interior design is a success signed Laura Sessa. The Testimonio II complex perfectly complements this area of the Principality by its proximity to the luxurious Monte-Carlo Bay Hotel & Resort as well as numerous leisure and business centres.

The two residential towers are 95 and 100 metres high respectively. They derive their particularity from large, airy balconies that offer a splendid view of Monaco and the Mediterranean. The 348 state apartments also feature beautiful landscaped gardens and public spaces, as well as secure private parking.

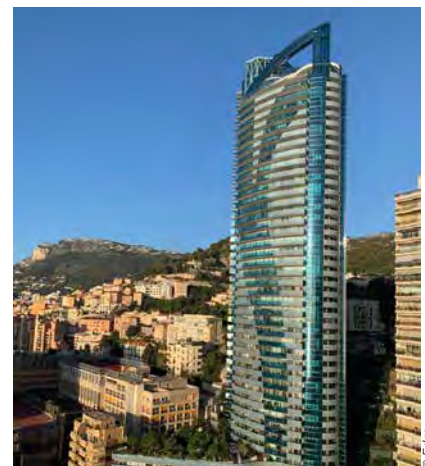
A DIVERSITY OF SERVICES THAT MEETS THE RESIDENT'S EXPECTATIONS

The current systematic trend is to combine homes and shopping malls. But the Marzocco group has designed a broader project by responding to Monegasque problems.

While more than 1,100 parking spaces are planned to relieve local traffic, other initiatives aim to position Monegasque excellence on a more international level. Turned towards the youth, an international school equipped with the latest generation of teaching materials will be created and will be able to accommodate up to 700 students from

all over the world who will bring an intense cultural abundance as well as a youth dynamism so conducive to developing new ideas.

The family aspect has not been forgotten, since a nursery with 50 cribs has also been planned to better meet the current demand. It will enjoy a bright, quiet and peaceful environment, on the ground floor of the highest tower, and a road access from the Boulevard d'Italie,



The Odéon Tower

© EGM

Monaco's main shopping avenue. Divided into sections by age groups, the area includes wake-up and play areas, sleeping areas, treatment rooms and peaceful terraces.

THE BAY HOUSE OR SOME 150,000M2 OF HOUSING INCLUDING 348 STATE-OWNED APARTMENTS OUT OF A TOTAL PROJECT OF 407 HOUSING UNITS

The "Domaine de Monaco department" has invested heavily in this project, since no fewer than 348 apartments for Monegasques have been included in the project. This investment allows Monegasques not to be penalized by the reality of the rather high rents due to the presence of many wealthy investors and residents. They benefit from much lower rent rates than those paid by foreigners.

Public housing, that is to say, under the Domain of the State, is allocated to Monegasque households according to their normal needs. The allocation priorities are based on a cumulation of points whose scale has been set by Ministerial Order.*

This policy is regularly carried out by the Monegasque authorities who do not hesitate to invest in the construction of new buildings in order to meet the needs of Monegasques. Recently in the project of the Odéon Tower, a building of 49 floors of 170 meters high, also built by the Marzocco Group and designed by Alexandre Giraldi, architect, the nationals had been able to obtain 152 apartments at privileged rents.

A PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL PART INCLUDING 5 GEMS

Apart from state-owned housing for Monegasques, the Testimonio II project consists of a private residential



Bay House

part of high standing with stunning views of the Mediterranean. More specifically, this area will consist of 59 prestigious residences, including 54 particularly spacious apartments, with areas ranging from 250 m² to 1,000 m². The residence will have three to six bedrooms depending on the models, spacious rooms to receive as well as bay windows and balconies facing south, towards the sea. But one of the main points of prestige of this project is the construction of five very luxurious villas integrating from 1,400 to 2,500 m² and this, on several levels.

Each of the villas will have its own garden-terrace and swimming pool. In addition, residents will be able to benefit from many high-end services such as a concierge service operating on the same principle as palaces, valet parking or shuttles to connect the main points to the surroundings and various equally high-end facilities such as a spa, fitness center, or meeting rooms.

- Testimonio II Tower : 181 Federal Dwellings
- Testimonio Tower II bis: 167 federal dwellings
- 1,100 public parking spaces on 13 levels. Locations will be public. Between 200 and 300.
- A crèche with 50 cribs located on the ground floor to be managed by Monaco City Hall
- The International School will

accommodate up to 700 students. Its total area will be of the order of 10,000 m²

- Five villas from 1,400 to 2,500 m². Each of the villas has its own garden-terrace and swimming pool.
- 54 particularly spacious apartments with areas ranging from 250 m² to 1,000 m².
- A mechanized pedestrian link between Boulevard d'Italie, Boulevard du Larvotto and Avenue Princesse Grace
- A public space at the foot of the two federal towers and the «Belvedere».

**As initiated by H.S.H. Prince Rainier III, and under constant development, the State housing sector enables Monegasques to be housed in apartments belonging to the State. The apartments are allocated according to criteria defined by Ministerial Order.*

Recently, H.S.H. Prince Albert II launched the National Housing Plan for Monegasques, covering the next 15 years.

This ambitious plan, will increase the capacity of state-owned housing by 43% over the next 15 years, to reach a total of 4,548 homes.

The State Property Authority has 3,334 dwellings in Monaco, allocated by State Housing Commissions, and 600 in the nearby French cities of Beausoleil and Cap d'Ail for Government officials or those employed by State-owned firms, of nationalities other than Monegasque.

There are around 33,000 residents in Monaco, most of which are wealthy foreigners but only 6.000 Monegasques from which a majority cannot afford the high rents.

Although the cost of these constructions is considerable, it remains a Government priority to serve the population and provide adequate housing.



Bay House

Xavier Frin



© Pipistrel-aircraft.com

Danish Minister of Defense, Trine Bramsen

DANISH ARMED FORCES WILL FLY TWO VELIS ELECTRO

World's first air force to train pilots on zero-emission aircraft

Pilots of the Danish Armed Forces at the Flying School in Karup will soon be able to practice their flying skills in a more climate-friendly way. The Danish Ministry of Defense has launched an action plan focusing on the transition to more environmentally friendly solutions. So, as the first country in the world, Denmark has leased two electric aircraft, on course to their operational use in the air force.

According to the plan, the two electric planes will be delivered to the Flying School in Karup this September, where they will be used for a two-year trial period. Initially, the planes will be evaluated by experienced pilots, but then they will be used as training airplanes and included in Karup Flying School's program for new pilots. The Pipistrel Velis Electro is the first type-certified fully electric plane in the world. It will complement the Danish Air Force's current training aircraft Saab T-17.

Danish Minister of Defense, Ms. Trine Bramsen says: "Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to climate change prevention. This also applies to the area of defense. Therefore, we have decided to procure electric aircraft for our air military. The electric planes

will be used for training, among other things. The experience will be important for future equipment acquisitions in the field of defense."

Lieutenant Colonel Casper Børge Nielsen of the Ministry of Defense Material and Procurement Agency has

many years of experience as a test pilot. Now he is in charge of testing the electric planes for flight training use in the Air Force. He says: "We will test whether some of the flights and tasks we have in the Air Force can be replaced by electric planes."



Danish Minister of Defense, Ms. Trine Bramsen



Lieutenant Colonel Casper Børge Nielsen

He warns there are still some limitations, because this kind of flight is still at a very initial stage, but he says that considering flight training, the two aircraft will probably be able to cover many needs of the the Danish Air Force.

Børge Nielsen confirmed he had no doubt that also within Air Force, something must happen for the protection of environment. He said the goal was to gain some experience in electric flight at an early stage, so they would be the forefront when this technology evolves over the years.

The two aircraft will be provided to the Danish Armed Forces in cooperation with Green Aerolease, owner of the largest Pipistrel Velis Electro fleet.

Pipistrel CEO Ivo Boscarol says: “We are thankful to the Danish Armed Forces for their pioneering spirit and decision to contribute to a cleaner atmosphere. Our Velis Electro will deliver immediate reduction of CO2 emissions, noise and cost associated with military pilot training operations. Surely Danish citizens will appreciate much quieter flying activities in vicinity of populated areas across the country.

For Pipistrel, it is a big honour to be selected by such an esteemed institution as the Danish Armed Forces. For all other training organizations, this is a

clear signal that Pipistrel Electric Aircraft can be used equally well in ab-initio pilot training and in the most demanding military flight training scenarios.”

Pipistrel Aircraft, founded in 1989, is among the world leaders in design and production of affordable environmentally friendly General aviation aircraft. Pioneer in terms of state-of-the-art technology for light aviation, Pipistrel is the first European aircraft manufacturer, and the only one so far, to obtain an aircraft certification from the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) for its electric aircraft, the Pipistrel Velis Electro, the ideal aircraft for initial training of pilots.

Featuring noise levels of only 60 dBA, Velis Electro is considerably quieter than other aeroplanes and produces no combustion gases at all. Its revolutionary powertrain is entirely liquid-cooled, including the batteries, and demonstrated the ability to withstand faults, battery thermal runaway events, and crash loads as part of the certification process. Velis Electro can operate in cold, hot and rain.

Conceived to be a fundamental member of the Velis Training System, the Velis Electro was designed to be simple to operate and maintain, without compromising safety. Employing the Pipistrel’s type certified electric engine, the Velis Electro delivers power instantly and without hesitation – using a simplified user interface in a cockpit that maintains the same look-and-feel of its conventionally powered siblings. The reduced number of moving parts dramatically decreases maintenance costs and the risk of malfunctions is further minimized thanks to its built-in continuous health-monitoring system. This enhanced reliability allows the Velis Electro to have more than double



The Velis Electro cockpit

the lifespan of powertrain elements in comparison to the previous generation of electric airplanes.

As part of the Type Certification, Pipistrel demonstrated that Velis Electro achieves the highest levels of safety, even surpassing those required for conventionally powered aircraft.

Velis Electro is a full-electric derivative of the proven Virus SW 121, which is already type certified by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (TC No EASA.A.573). It is equipped with a Pipistrel type certified electric engine E-811-268MVLC (TC No. EASA.E.234), developed with partners EMRAX and EMSISO, and Pipistrel’s three-bladed composite fixed pitch propeller P-812-164-F3A.

The 57.6kW liquid cooled electric engine provides power to the aircraft.

The power is delivered by 345 VDC electric system built around a liquid-cooled in-house developed high performance battery system, which includes two Pipistrel PB345V124E-L batteries connected in parallel, installed in a redundant 2-unit arrangement, total nominal capacity 24.8 kWh. Crashworthy, thermal runaway inhibiting, HIRF/EMI tolerant.

One battery pack is located in the nose of the airplane and the second behind the cabin. This ensures redundancy of the power source: in case of battery failure, the malfunctioning battery would get automatically disconnected from the system. A single battery is capable of standalone operation and has enough power capability to support climbing and continuation of flight.



Pipistrel CEO Ivo Boscarol

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Europe Diplomatic Magazine fully adheres to all internationally accepted standards and codes of conduct for journal editors, and consequently abides by the rules and regulations governing this field of activity.

These include the two following basic obligations regarding accuracy :

1-The Press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information or images, including headlines not supported by the text.

2 - A significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distortion must be corrected promptly and with due prominence, and — where appropriate — an apology published.

We have recently received critical comments from readers regarding an article published in the May 2021 edition of Europe Diplomatic Magazine that precisely emphasise and bring into play these two fundamental tenets.

We publish the reader's comments and the author's response herewith, in complete open mindedness and in a conciliatory spirit.

Trajan Dereville

“ Dear Editor,

The May 2021 issue of Europe Diplomatic features an article by Anthony James, focused on anti-Semitism in Europe, titled "If You Prick Us, Do We Bleed."

Unfortunately, the author engages in slander against Poland, claiming that "Poland is staunchly both Christian and very conservative. It was also where Auschwitz murdered many thousands of Jews..." (see attachments).

The abovementioned statement is deeply offensive and historically false for a number of reasons.

*First of all, Auschwitz was what Nazi Germans called the town of Oświęcim. Therefore, **Auschwitz itself did not murder anyone, Nazi Germans did.***

*Second of all, **Nazi Germans did not murder millions of Jewish people in Poland. They did so in the conquered and occupied Polish territory**, where many brave Poles risked their own lives and the lives of their loved ones to save their Jewish neighbours.*

*Finally, **half of the 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust were also Polish citizens.** Approximately 6 million Poles died in World War II, roughly 17% of Poland's population.*

Therefore, contrary to the author's scandalizing statements, Poland was a victim of Nazi Germany's genocidal politics, not the perpetrator.

On a side note, the author did get one fact straight: Poland is Christian and it is conservative. It is also one of the safest Member States of the EU to live in, with a thriving and harmonious society and relatively low crime rates.

That harmony happens to have a lot to do with the conservative values shared by the majority of the Polish people. The very same values that the author seems to be scorning at.

Given the above, I expect Europe Diplomatic and the author of the slanderous article to publish an apology for spreading falsehoods and hate against Poland.

Sincerely,

Witold Waszczykowski MEP



The assassination attempt against Edward I in June 1272

**IF YOU PRICK US,
DO WE NOT BLEED?**

Anti-Semitism continues to confound justice in today's Europe

Dear Editor:
 In response to Anthony James's article in the May 2021 edition of *Europe Diplomatic Magazine*, titled "If You Prick Us, Do We Not Bleed? – Anti-Semitism Continues to Confound Justice in Today's Europe", MEP Witold Waszczykowski confirms Mr. James's bigoted and false assessment of Poles today and in World War II.

I offer two additional relevant points for your consideration.

First, Mr. James cites the FRA survey as evidence that Polish Jews today fear anti-Semitism in Poland. For your and Mr. James's information, this three-year-old report by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights was based on an online survey of self-identified Jews in EU member countries. The sample size for Poland was 422, which was the lowest of all countries. The report further states its survey method "does not deliver a random probability sample fulfilling the statistical criteria for representativeness."

Second, Mr. James states: "Auschwitz murdered many thousands of Jews". What kind of nonsense is this? German and Austrian SS members were the murderers, the victims of whom included Poles, Soviet POWs, and others. Employing this absurd logic, it was Treblinka that murdered Polish Jews rather than the Germans who were carrying out Aktion Reinhardt. Mr. James's concealment of the fact that the Germans, along with their Austrian counterparts, operated the extermination camps and were the murderers in each, is shameful, as is your publication of this asinine assertion.

Cordially,

Gene Sokolowski, PhD

“ I totally reject the claims by Witold Waszczykowski and Gene Sokolowski that I “slandered” Poland in my article, “If you prick us, do we not bleed?”. I mentioned that Poland is staunchly Christian and very conservative and also that it was the country in which Auschwitz (NOT Poland, NOT the Polish people and not even a place that I mentioned under its correct Polish name of Oświęcim) murdered a great many Jews, along with Roma and Sinti people, homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses. I could have added disabled people to the list, too; the Nazis wanted to expunge from existence anyone they considered “imperfect” (in other words anyone who wasn't Aryan and preferably German). It was a shocking crime whose horrors still resonate today, but at no point did I accuse the Polish people of committing it. If anyone Polish thinks I did then I apologise to them for their misreading of my words.

When I visited Auschwitz in 1994 with a party from the European Parliament, I had a long conversation with an elderly Polish man who had been a prisoner there, not for

being Jewish but for being a Socialist. He told me a lot about life there, although the glass cases full of goods seized from the prisoners, such as spectacles and items of luggage, spoke almost as eloquently, as did the photographs of terrified faces adorning the walls, not forgetting the remaining gas chamber and incinerators in the oldest part, known as Auschwitz 1, and the appalling sleeping accommodation in huts at Auschwitz 2. A German politician who was with the group told me – with tears in his eyes – that it was not only the Jews who were killed at Auschwitz, “it was where the soul of Germany was murdered,” he said. The memory of that ghastly place still haunts me to this day.

Mr. Waszczykowski will note that I credited his colleague, Patryk Jaki, with proposing the “one-hour rule” to take down from the Internet material promoting hate as quickly as possible. It was the right thing to do, and Mr. Jaki is to be commended. However, it is a fact that in a survey conducted by the Fundamental Rights Agency, 39% of Jews in Poland said that they still fear anti-Semitism, although I appreciate the comment by Gene Sokolowski that the survey was based on a small sample. I'm sure that is true, but it doesn't alter the fact that a considerable number of Jews felt themselves subject to anti-Semitism. We should also recall that in the present day some Polish citizens, pursuing their rights under EU law to identify as LGBTI+, are prohibited from doing so in some parts of Poland, a situation defended by the Polish government despite criticism in the European Parliament and in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Jews of Poland were scapegoats for Nazi dreams of empire and it's ironic that they should have suffered in a country that, over many centuries, provided refuge to Jews fleeing brutal antisemitism elsewhere. Jews were given legal protection in Poland in 1264 by Casimir the Great under the Statute of Kalisz and there is even some evidence that in the 16th century some 80% of Europe's Jews lived in Poland for their own safety.

Interestingly, a survey carried out for the Anti-Defamation League in 2009 reported that 55% of respondents in Poland gave the opinion that “Jews have too much power in the business world”, which seems somewhat anti-Semitic. Yes, the results were worse in Hungary and Spain, but that is not much of an excuse. So no, I did not slander the Polish people, but I'm happy to apologise to any who feel that I have. I have always found Poland a friendly and fascinating place, and the municipal authorities of Kraków made us very welcome back in 1994, even providing food and shots of excellent Polish vodka to warm us up after the visit. Auschwitz had been very cold. Perhaps it always is. It still stirs strong emotions, even 76 years after its liberation.”

Sincerely,

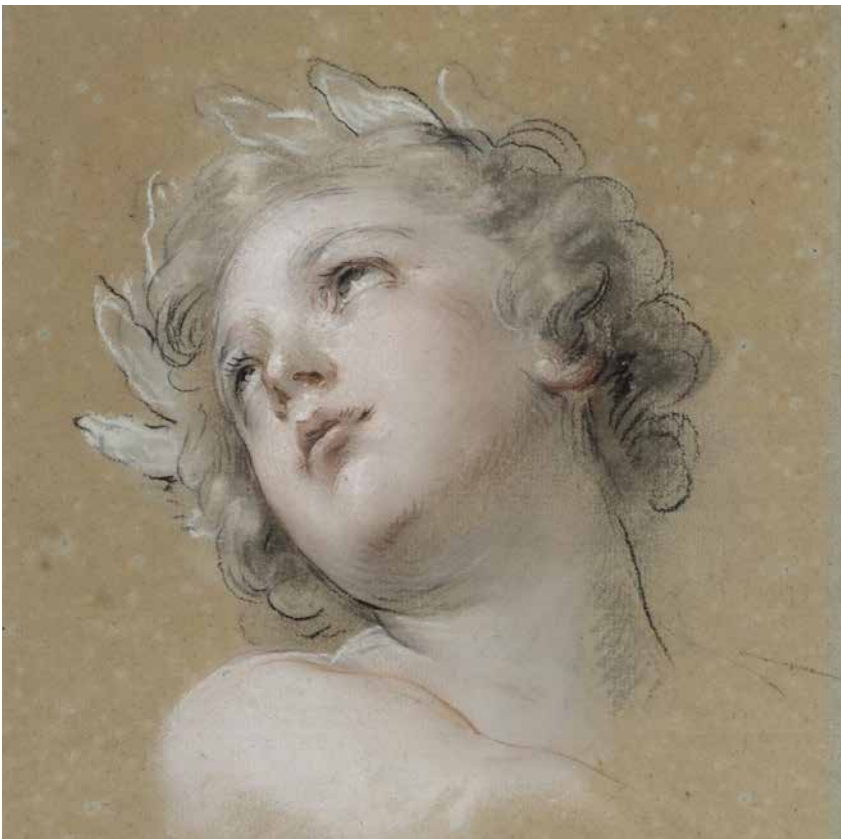
Anthony James



The palace of Versailles

TO VISIT

Drawings for Versailles 20 years of acquisitions



© Château de Versailles

Study of a head for Love of Virtue in The Apotheosis of Hercules, circa 1733,
by François Lemoyne (1688-1737)
Pastel, trois crayons and stump blending on formerly blue paper

Until the 3rd October 2021, the Palace of Versailles will be presenting an exhibition dedicated to all the drawings acquired for its Graphic Arts Department between 2000 and 2020. Visitors will discover some 100 works in every technique including pastel, pencil, sanguine, trois crayons, pen, watercolour and gouache, some of which will be on display for the first time.

The exhibition will showcase acquisitions that have joined the Palace of Versailles Graphic Arts Department over the last 20 years. On display in Madame de Maintenon's apartments, "Drawings for Versailles, 20 years of acquisitions" will present pastels, gouaches, watercolours and other works that are often kept in storage because of their great fragility.

The exhibition will include a gallery of sometimes surprising portraits and scenes from life at court, such as Louis XIV portrayed as a Roman emperor or Charles Perrault drawn by Charles Le Brun, as well as caricatures and other sketches. It will also reveal preparatory



© chateau de Versailles / Gérard Blot

Louis de France (1729-1765), Dauphin, son of Louis XV, Jean Martial Fredou (28 janv. 1710 - 26 févr. 1795) Photo (C) RMN-Grand Palais

sketches for the major painted decors of the Palace of Versailles, from the ceilings of the Royal Chapel and the Hercules Room to the over-door panels in the King's Bedchamber and the Diana Room.

Lastly, it will present views, plans and architectural drawings of the Palace of Versailles from the *Ancien Régime* through to the early 20th century.

Visitors will be plunged into the heart of the Palace of Versailles' collections and travel through four centuries of graphic creation, discovering a Versailles as depicted by the greatest artists of their times, including Charles Le Brun, Charles de la Fosse, François Lemoyne, Richard Mique, Jacques Gondoin, and Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer.

An audio guide tour in french will be available when the exhibition opens and will be downloadable free of charge in the Palace of Versailles app. The app also includes a map to allow you to geolocate yourself in the Estate of Trianon.

THE GRAPHIC ARTS DEPARTMENT

The collection includes over 30,000 works dating from the 16th to the 20th century, including 28,000 prints, some 1,500 drawings, 350 manuscripts and around 100 pastels. Considered an invaluable resource for research and knowledge of the history of the palace and its collections, it is organised around three major themes: depictions of the palace, preparatory drawings for architectural or painted decors, and portraits and allegories.

In the 1930s, at the instigation of Gaston Brière, it was decided to create a collection of portraits or “documentary prints”. Later, Charles Mauriceau-Beaupré continued the project for a museum of French iconography to “assemble, with the collection of painted and sculpted portraits from Versailles, an entirely French iconography, the inevitable gaps in which will be filled with drawings, prints and even photographs, and thus create a source

of information for researchers”. The collections were mainly iconographic and focussed on Versailles as the royal residence and Museum of the History of France from the 17th to the 20th century and included the architecture, decors and gardens of the palace, as well as portraits or allegories of royal power, life at court and scenes from the history of France from the Middle Ages to the Second Empire.



© Chateauversailles

The 2000s marked a new stage in the development of the Graphic Arts Department, with the appointment of a dedicated curator for the collection. Over the last twenty years, several remarkable pieces have been added to this collection, and they are showcased today in this exhibition.

The Palace of Versailles, the Grand and the Petit Trianon, the Park and Gardens are open.

Booking a time slot is mandatory to access the Palace.

Every visitor must have a ticket, including visitors eligible for free admission or reduced rate and even children.

The Palace is open every day except Monday.

The Palace opens at 9 am; the Trianon estate opens at noon, from Tuesday to Sunday.

<https://en.chateauversailles.fr/plan-your-visit>

TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

By Clara Bauman

7 beauty and fashion essentials you will need this summer

From the simple white shirt to the classic maxi dress by way of THE perfume that evokes the summer season, we have created a list of 7 must-haves for your most chic season ever.



© INSTAGRAM @COCOBEAUTEA

1. The white shirt

The shirt may not at first sight, be the most exciting piece of clothing, but it is one of the most stylish this year. Fashion influencers consider it a 'must have' and wear it with almost anything: shorts, jeans, skirts but also as an oversized shirt dress.

2. Dad sandals



© INSTAGRAM @J.NADIA

In terms of shoes, once again, we are welcoming the 'ugly' trends, but with an emphasis on comfort. The 'Dad sandals' trend was started by the iconic Chanel in 2020. It seems to be conquering the fashion world and they have been spotted on the feet of celebrities such as Chiara Ferragni and Alexa Chung

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

3. A letter necklace

This jewelry trend is certainly not new, but this summer there has definitely been a revival of the classic piece: we are talking about necklaces with initial pendants. And for those who did not buy the luxury Celine version in the past, they can make up for it this year with the thousands of versions offered by more affordable brands

[\(\[pdpaola.com\]\(http://pdpaola.com\), \[celine.com\]\(http://celine.com\)\)](http://pdpaola.com)



© CELINE



© PDPAOLA

4. A summer fragrance

Aqua Allegoria by Guerlain is a continuously renewed collection of fragrances that pays homage to the wonders of nature and beautiful raw materials. What are this year's creations? Nettare di Sole, a delicious icy, floral honey fragrance. This Eau de Toilette embodies the spirit of a luminous white flowers honey, immersed in aquatic notes and illuminated by Calabrian bergamot

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



© GUERLAIN

TIMELESS CHIC

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5. The 70's sunglasses

The 70's... famous for so many fashion icons – Cher, Farrah Fawcett, Bianca Jagger - that era continues to influence and inspire fashion to this day. And this summer, we're bringing back vintage style sunglasses. Whether in classic black or a bold colour, this style is flattering for so many face shapes; it's no surprise that it has come back in style yet again

[stories.com](https://www.stories.com), [tomford.com](https://www.tomford.com), [vogue-eyewear.com](https://www.vogue-eyewear.com)



© VOGUE



© ZARA



© TOM FORD



© INSTAGRAM @MALLDADIERF

6. A «Croissant bag», please

One of the key handbag trends of 2021 are the slouchy shoulder bags with soft leather, which makes them resemble a croissant. Bottega Veneta, the brand leading the charge when it comes to it-bags, is largely responsible for this new handbag shape thanks to its large shoulder bag called 'Jodie'

[bottegabeneta.com](https://www.bottegabeneta.com)



© BOTTEGA VENETA

7. The “lipstick challenge”

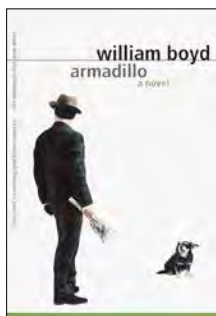
The challenge? Well, to have pretty, made up lips all day long, despite wearing a mask. And when the mask isn't mandatory, lip make-up can be displayed like a true symbol of liberation. On Stylight platforms (*): we noted a 158% increase in clicks for the liquid lipstick category, and a 407% increase in clicks for the lip pencil category



© INSTAGRAM @LEONIEHANNE

(* Stylight is the world's leading online search platform for Fashion, Beauty and Design. It helps users search through more than 1.500 online shops at once, across 16 different markets worldwide (insights.stylight.com).

BOOKS

**ARMADILLO***By William Boyd*

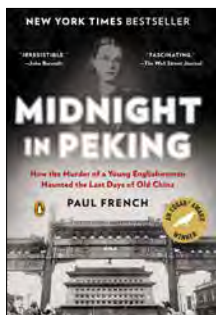
A NOVEL

From the award-winning author of *A Good Man Africa* and *An Ice-Cream War* comes *Armadillo*, a brilliant satirical noir set in contemporary London.

To his colleagues, Lorimer Black, the handsome, mild-mannered insurance adjuster rising through the ranks of his London firm, is known as the guy who has it all: the sleek suits, the enviable status. But when Lorimer arrives at a routine business

appointment and finds his client hanging from a water pipe, his life spirals out of control. His company car is blowtorched after he investigates a fire at a luxury hotel. He becomes the fall guy of a new colleague who puts the company in the red and the victim of a vicious attack by the possessive husband of a mysterious actress.

As Lorimer becomes increasingly entangled in an apparent conspiracy that involves everyone he knows, his own past comes to light. A brilliant satirical noir, *Armadillo* confirms Boyd's place as England's most versatile, sublime novelist.

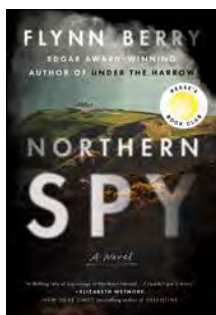
**MIDNIGHT IN PEKING***By Paul French*

HOW THE MURDER OF A YOUNG ENGLISHWOMAN HAUNTED THE LAST DAYS OF OLD CHINA

Winner of the both the Edgar Award for Best Fact Crime and the CWA Non-Fiction Dagger from the author of *City of Devils*

Chronicling an incredible unsolved murder, *Midnight in Peking* captures the aftermath of the brutal killing of a British schoolgirl in

January 1937. The mutilated body of Pamela Werner was found at the base of the Fox Tower, which, according to local superstition, is home to the maliciously seductive fox spirits. As British detective Dennis and Chinese detective Han investigate, the mystery only deepens and, in a city on the verge of invasion, rumor and superstition run rampant. Based on seven years of research by historian and China expert Paul French, this true-crime thriller presents readers with a rare and unique portrait of the last days of colonial Peking.

**NORTHERN SPY***By Flynn Berry*

A NOVEL

A producer at the BBC and mother to a new baby, Tessa is at work in Belfast one day when the news of another raid comes on the air. The IRA may have gone underground in the two decades since the Good Friday Agreement, but they never really went away, and lately bomb threats, security checkpoints, and helicopters floating ominously over the city have become features of everyday life. As the news reporter requests the public's help in

locating those responsible for the robbery, security footage reveals Tessa's sister, Marian, pulling a black ski mask over her face.

The police believe Marian has joined the IRA, but Tessa is convinced she must have been abducted or coerced; the sisters have always opposed the violence enacted in the name of uniting Ireland. And besides, Marian is vacationing on the north coast. Tessa just spoke to her yesterday.

When the truth about Marian comes to light, Tessa is faced with impossible choices that will test the limits of her ideals, the bonds of her family, her notions of right and wrong, and her identity as a sister and a mother. Walking an increasingly perilous road, she wants nothing more than to protect the one person she loves more fiercely than her sister: her infant son, Finn.

Riveting, atmospheric, and exquisitely written, *Northern Spy* is at once a heart-pounding story of the contemporary IRA and a moving portrait of sister- and motherhood, and of life in a deeply divided society.

**POWER PLAY***By Tim Higgins*

TESLA, ELON MUSK, AND THE BET OF THE CENTURY

The outrageous inside story of Elon Musk and Tesla's bid to build the world's greatest car—from award-winning *Wall Street Journal* tech and auto reporter Tim Higgins

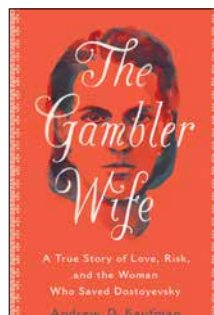
Elon Musk is among the most controversial titans of Silicon Valley. To some he's a genius and a visionary; to others he's a mercurial

huckster. Billions of dollars have been gained and lost on his tweets; his personal exploits are the stuff of tabloids. But for all his outrageous talk of mind-uploading and space travel, his most audacious vision is the one closest to the ground: the electric car.

When Tesla was founded in the 2000s, electric cars were novelties, trotted out and thrown on the scrap heap by carmakers for more than a century. But where most onlookers saw only failure, a small band of Silicon Valley engineers and entrepreneurs saw potential. The gas-guzzling car was in need of disruption; the world was ready for Car 2.0. So they pitted themselves against the biggest, fiercest business rivals in the world, setting out to make a car that was quicker, sexier, smoother, cleaner than the competition.

But as the saying goes, to make a small fortune in cars, start with a big fortune. Tesla would undergo a truly hellish fifteen years, beset by rivals, pressured by investors, hobbled by whistleblowers, buoyed by its loyal supporters. Musk himself would often prove Tesla's worst enemy—his antics more than once took the company he had initially funded largely with his own money to the brink of collapse. Was he an underdog, an antihero, a conman, or some combination of the three?

Wall Street Journal tech and auto reporter Tim Higgins had a front-row seat for the drama: the pileups, wrestling for control, meltdowns, and the unlikely outcome of all, success. A story of power, recklessness, struggle, and triumph, *Power Play* is an exhilarating look at how a team of eccentrics and innovators beat the odds—and changed the future.

**THE GAMBLER WIFE***By Andrew D. Kaufman*

A TRUE STORY OF LOVE, RISK, AND THE WOMAN WHO SAVED DOSTOYEVSKY

A revelatory new portrait of the courageous woman who saved Dostoyevsky's life—and became a pioneer in Russian literary history

In the fall of 1866, a twenty-year-old stenographer named Anna Snitkina applied for a position with a writer she idolized: Fyodor Dostoyevsky. A self-

described "emancipated girl of the sixties," Snitkina had come of age during Russia's first feminist movement, and Dostoyevsky—a notorious radical turned acclaimed novelist—had impressed the young woman with his enlightened and visionary fiction. Yet in person she found the writer "terribly unhappy, broken, tormented," weakened by epilepsy, and yoked to a ruinous gambling addiction. Alarmed by his condition, Anna became his trusted first reader and confidante, then his wife, and finally his business manager—launching one of literature's most turbulent and fascinating marriages.

The Gambler Wife offers a fresh and captivating portrait of Anna Dostoyevskaya, who reversed the novelist's freefall and cleared the way for two of the most notable careers in Russian letters—her husband's and her own. Drawing on diaries, letters, and other little-known archival sources, Andrew Kaufman reveals how Anna warded off creditors, family members, and her greatest romantic rival, keeping the young family afloat through years of penury and exile. In a series of dramatic set pieces, we watch as she navigates the writer's self-destructive binges in the casinos of Europe—even hazarding an audacious turn at roulette herself—until his addiction is conquered. And, finally, we watch as Anna frees her husband from predatory contracts by founding her own publishing house, making Anna the first solo female publisher in Russian history.

The result is a story that challenges ideas of empowerment, sacrifice, and female agency in nineteenth-century Russia—and a welcome new appraisal of an indomitable woman whose legacy has been nearly lost to literary history.

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