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## SECRETS WORTHY OF A SPY NOVEL

The strange cases of  
dying Russian diplomats



## WHO'S NEXT?

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# CHRISTINE LAGARDE

*Chairing the European Central Bank  
and being popular are not compatible*



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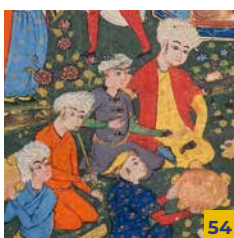
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Nikola Hendrickx

# EDITORIAL

## WILL THE WORLD ACT QUICKLY ENOUGH TO AVOID CATASTROPHE?

There are three challenges that generate despair when thinking about the climate emergency. The first is that it is a profoundly unequal problem; those who pollute most are not those who will suffer most from the effects of that behaviour. The second is that it necessarily involves money, lots of money. The third is that it requires political will to be able to change its short-term objectives for a long-term vision that is difficult to imagine and sell to electorates inflamed by populism. This is why climate agreements have failed in the past, the Paris Agreement has not yielded the expected results and the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland, is at risk of failure. Still, we have no choice but to insist. The future is literally at stake.

In the United States, Joe Biden put forward an ambitious budget plan that, while not going as far as he would have liked, would make key investments in energy transformation. China continues its ambivalence to launch bombastic announcements while using its economic clout to pressure smaller nations and bodies that could show how much it lacks in commitment. Russia is entrenched in the whims of its authoritarian leader. The European Union promises much, but its internal squabbles are a constant threat. Not to mention countries like Brazil, with an incoherent, anti-scientific and populist political leadership.

## CLOSURE OF COAL-POWERED ELECTRICITY GENERATION

Glasgow, the cradle of the coal-fired industrial revolution, will nevertheless remain the city where for the first time at the highest level and after 26 conferences, the words 'fossil fuels' and 'coal' which refer to the main culprits of global warming, will have been put down on paper. This is long overdue, but very welcome. The year 2021 saw the tap of coal financing shut off and COP26 opened a new chapter of accelerating the retirement of existing coal plants. However, naming coal and oil as major culprits proved a painful process. In the very room where the conference president's final gavel was to resound, India and China managed at the last moment, to again attenuate the formulation by insisting on 'reduction' instead of 'exit' of coal, forcing a tearful Alok Sharma, the Conference President, to present his apologies to the world.

Be that as it may, Beijing must in the near future keep the promises of the Glasgow Climate Pact by setting a date for the end of coal on its territory. The way in which countries will establish new cooperation to achieve faster action over the next 12 months will be the real test of Glasgow, not forgetting the other promises of COP26 on the reduction of methane emissions, a powerful greenhouse gas, deforestation, and the financing of fossil fuels.

*"I encourage political and economic leaders to act immediately and with foresight," Pope Francis said after the Angelus prayer, referring to COP26. And the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) warned, "If countries, and in particular the major emitters, remain on their 'business as usual' policies, they will condemn present and future generations to a world of indescribable suffering and damage."*

Suffering already experienced by the poorest countries, the least responsible for global warming, but in the front line of its impacts and who fought in Glasgow to obtain specific funding for their 'losses and damages'. They reluctantly gave in, agreeing to a continuation of the dialogue so as not to lose out on the progress in the fight against global warming.

On the eve of the final declaration, U.S. envoy John Kerry said, *"We always knew that Glasgow was not the finish line."*

There is certainly no question of encouraging nihilism; despite the difficulties, we have to insist. There is no other option. For the sake of humanity, COP26 must be a success. Will we make it?

*Trajan Dereville*  
Editor-in chief





## VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE

### *Chairing the European Central Bank and being popular are not compatible*

Going up in the world takes effort and earns you few friends. Every President of the European Central Bank has come in for criticism, probably because every financial journalist in the world, as well as every politician with some financial nous, thinks they could do it better. This is almost certainly not the case; it may be a job in which it is quite impossible to please everybody. Remember the urbane and charming Wim Duisenberg, the ECB's first leader? I was there in order to interview him when he first assumed this high – and unprecedented – office in June 1998, while my cameraman got shots of him sitting at his new desk.

He was succeeded in 2003 by Jean-Claude Trichet, who always stopped for a chat with me whenever he visited the European Parliament in Strasbourg and happened to pass my camera position near the entrance to the Chamber. I liked him, but then, I'm not an economist. A former General Director of the Treasury at France's Ministry of Finance and also a former governor of the Bank of France, Trichet's term included the European Sovereign Debt crisis, and he was criticised at the time by French President Nicolas Sarkozy for not pursuing a more growth-orientated policy during his seven years in charge. However, he kept interest rates under control

and is credited with recording a better performance at the time than Germany's Bundesbank managed.



Wim Duisenberg 1<sup>st</sup> President of the European Central Bank

Next, in 2011, came Mario Draghi, a widely experienced but perhaps more sombre figure but clearly in control and running the institution his own way. He famously said that he would be prepared to do "whatever it takes to prevent the euro from failing". Indeed, he is widely credited with having saved the currency during the European debt crisis, earning him the media nickname "Super Mario". So Super, in fact, that he was invited by Italian President, Sergio Mattarella, to form a 'government of national unity, which he has headed as Prime Minister since February 2021. And that brings us to the fourth and present incumbent at the ECB: Christine Lagarde, the subject of this article.

She has certainly attracted criticism since she took office in November 2019. Perhaps most recently, it was the popular German newspaper *Bild* that accused her of destroying people's earnings as well as their savings by permitting inflation to rise. *Bild* had said much the same in 2019 in criticism of Lagarde's predecessor, Draghi, so it will come as no surprise. It was very critical of Draghi getting the job instead of its preferred (German) candidate, suggesting that Italians were profligate and would cause chaos. Draghi did not, of course, and we can put this down as an example of *Bild*'s nationalism. The German public, like the peoples of other countries, are hostile towards the idea of inflation eroding the value of their money. It's been reported that quite a lot of Germans think the ECB is a bit too loose with its controls, which means that their anguished cries are bound to be picked up and echoed by a popular newspaper. *Bild* described Lagarde as "Madame Inflation" (which makes her sound more like a balloon than an economist). This latest attack came shortly after the ECB's decision not to take counter measures when consumer prices hit a 13-year high. Lagarde is, it seems, unmoved.



Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Mario Draghi, president of the European Central Bank during a 2019 conference in Frankfurt

"The current increase in inflation is expected to be largely temporary and underlying price pressures are building up only slowly," she told a press conference at the ECB's splendid Frankfurt headquarters. "The inflation outlook in our new staff projections has been revised slightly upwards, but in the medium-term inflation is foreseen to remain well below our two per cent target." She told journalists that inflation is expected to rise further towards the end of this year before coming down again in 2022.

In a speech she gave in Lisbon in early November, Lagarde compared the Covid crisis with the massive earthquake that rocked the city one early November morning in 1755, costing up to 30,000 lives and also up to 48% of Portugal's GDP at the time. It was a terrible tragedy, but from it changes were made that benefited the people of Portugal over the years ahead. "We have also faced a human tragedy, with over 800,000 people in the EU losing their lives," she told her audience, referring to the pandemic. "We have reacted decisively to prevent even worse outcomes: policies have worked together in an unprecedented way to preserve jobs and stave off bankruptcies. And now we have a chance to transform the economy, accelerating the necessary green and digital transitions and protecting ourselves in a fast-changing world." Reform will certainly be needed: the pandemic has caused the euro area's biggest GDP fall on record. Lagarde then went on to explain how the bank had reacted and how that had helped. "Our pandemic emergency purchase programme (PEPP) ensured that financing conditions for all sectors of the economy remained favourable," she reminded her audience, "even during the darkest moments of the crisis. Coupled with measures taken by ECB Banking Supervision, our policy response is estimated to have saved more than one million jobs." The monetary Policy Decision of 21 October reiterated the determination that there exists no current reason to raise interest rates, "The Governing Council continues to judge that

favourable financing conditions can be maintained with a moderately lower pace of net asset purchases under the PEPP than in the second and third quarters of this year," it said in a press release.

## TALES FROM THE CRYPT (-OCURRENCY)

Lagarde is not likely to be popular among those who invest and trade in cryptocurrencies, of which there are now a growing number. She told an audience at the European University Institute that Crypto-currencies are only useful for money laundering.

In an interview on the David Rubenstein show on Bloomberg and other channels, Lagarde said she believes the word "cryptocurrency" is a misnomer. "Cryptos are not currencies, full stop," she declared. "Cryptos are highly-speculative assets that claim their fame as currencies, but they are not. I think we have to distinguish between cryptos that are highly speculative, suspicious occasionally, and high intensity in terms of energy usage. Assets, but not a currency." There are those boldly claiming to have made a fortune dealing in crypto currencies without having any knowledge of finance or the markets. Some of these tales are clearly a form of advertising and should only be heeded by those who are really competent and knowledgeable about such things. However, it's clear that whatever Lagarde may have said in the past, the idea of an ECB-backed cryptocurrency hasn't gone away.



European Central Bank Governing Council presided by Jean Claude Trichet in 2007



In October 2021, she replied to a written query from German MEP Gunnar Beck, suggesting that the idea is still under consideration. “As regards so called ‘crypto-currencies’ which you refer to in your letter, let me point out that they are not without risk and are not fit to serve Europeans as an alternative to the euro, as official currency, in terms of basic monetary functions (a store of value, a means of payment, and a unit of account).” So don’t expect to switch to crypto-euros any time soon. However, she goes on to say: “A digital euro would be very different from crypto-assets: people using it could have the same level of confidence as with cash, since like cash, a digital euro would also be backed by a central bank.” Lagarde reminds Beck that the ECB’s Governing Council decided on 14 July to launch “the investigation phase of a digital euro project,” adding that “The launch of this phase does not anticipate any future decision on the possible issuance of a digital euro.” Research by Eurobarometer suggests that the public have great faith in the euro as a currency, with 79% of correspondents backing the single currency.



© European Union / Dominique Hommel

MEP Gunnar BECK

Meanwhile, investigations into where to take it next continue, in the awareness that the use of credit cards continues to grow in every member state while the use of notes and coins for day-to-day transactions declines. Our world is becoming more and more digital, whether we like it or not. Research continues with the European Parliament about the legal instruments that would be needed as well as with the European Commission on how the digital euro would work. This research



© Wikimedia

US Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen, President of the European Central Bank Christine Lagarde and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen at the EU headquarters

phase is scheduled to last for twenty-four months. “A digital euro,” says the Bank, “must be able to meet the needs of Europeans while at the same time helping to prevent illicit activities and avoiding any undesirable impact on financial stability and monetary policy.” Apart from the European Parliament and other European decision-makers, citizens, merchants, and the payments industry will also be involved, according to ECB Board Member Fabio Panetta, Chair of the High-Level Task Force on a digital euro.

There is controversy over cryptocurrencies, however, quite apart from their seemingly unavoidable volatility, and much of that stems from widespread ignorance of exactly what they are and how they work. Even experts agree that the technical controls and source codes that support and secure cryptocurrencies are extremely complex. The value of a transaction is still expressed traditionally, so if we call our fictional cryptocurrency splat, then you can talk about 3.5 splats, just as you would talk about 3.5 euros, dollars, or roubles, for instance. Cryptocurrencies rely on something called a blockchain,

which is the master ledger, storing all the previous activities and transactions. The blockchain validates the ownership of every unit of the currency at any given time. Identical copies of the block chain are stored in every node of the software network for the cryptocurrency. Unless you’re a tech-minded individual who can read the stock market figures (just the figures, not the text) without getting bored, this is where it all gets difficult. The blockchain is a network of decentralized server ‘farms’, as they’re called, that are run by computer-savvy individuals or groups of individuals known as ‘miners’. These people record and authenticate cryptocurrency transactions all the time, without pause. No transaction is considered finalised until it has been added to the blockchain, at which point, unlike a credit card transaction, it is irreversible. This has been one aspect of the whole thing that has put potential users off, so some of the newer cryptocurrencies have been developing ways to overcome this drawback. Holders of cryptocurrencies have a ‘key’ that can be up to 78 digits long, which they must retain. Lose it and you have lost your money; it cannot be recovered.



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Fabio Panetta, Member of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank





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The aim of most of the supporters of cryptocurrencies is to create a decentralised finance system, known as ‘Defi’, which sounds almost laudable: a financial system not under the control of the normal regulators and therefore more open to innovation. It’s also referred to as the ‘metaverse’. The Economist magazine described it as similar to going down the rabbit hole, as Alice in Wonderland did in Lewis Carroll’s famous books. The traveller enters an unreal place where they are represented by avatars of their choice. “The ultimate goal,” says The Economist, “is to replace intermediaries like global banks and tech platforms with software built on top of networks so that the value they generate goes back to the users who own and run them.” The article points out that it could all lead to a “better type of finance: a system that is quicker, cheaper, more transparent and less reliant on powerful centralised institutions.” This is, however, to ignore the fact that these powerful centralised institutions can be sued if things go horribly wrong. Who does one sue in a Defi?

To buy cryptocurrencies, should you wish to, you have to go on-line to one of the several brokers dealing in them. You must then tell them how much you want to invest and in which cryptocurrency. The dealer sites most often recommended (but I’ve never visited their sites, so what do I know?) are Etoro, Libertex and Crypto Rocket, but there are many more with reasonable star ratings. Top Brokers Trade website warns that even the virtual ‘wallets’ used by cryptocurrency holders can be vulnerable to electronic theft. Since the ‘miners’ clearly don’t do any real digging, nor lift a tool heavier than a pencil, what do they do? Top Traders explained it like this: “Cryptocurrency

miners serve as record-keepers for cryptocurrency communities, as well as indirect arbiters of the value of the currencies.” With the use of vast amounts of computing power, often manifested in server farms that are privately owned by mining collectives that comprise of dozens of individuals, the miners use methods that are highly technical to verify the completeness, accuracy, and security of currencies’ block chains. “The scope of the operation isn’t much different to the search for new prime numbers, which also requires massive amounts of computing power,” the website points out. The new Mayor-elect of New York, Eric Adams, has nevertheless said he’ll take his first three months’ pay in bitcoin and turn his city into the “centre of the cryptocurrency industry”, where more server farms can be established.



Mayor-elect of New York, Eric Adams

It seems that the Mayor of Miami, Francis Suarez, may have influenced the decision with an email sent to Adams when his victory was announced. Suarez has said he will also take his next paycheck in bitcoin.

Bitcoin, the first and best-known cryptocurrency, is reported to use 121 Terrawatt-hours every year to verify and guarantee transactions. That’s more electricity than Argentina uses, while etherium consumes as much power as Qatar. Environmentalists are worried because the ‘mining’ operation becomes less and less efficient as the value of a cryptocurrency goes up, which means that the more it is used the more energy will have to be generated to power the computers running the transactions. According to a report by CNBC, bitcoin mining accounts for about 35.95 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year—about the same amount as New Zealand. Defenders of cryptocurrencies argue that much of the power they use comes from renewable sources, but quite a lot doesn’t. Environmentalists fear that cryptocurrencies will continually increase the demand for energy beyond the point where it is sustainable. The already fairly empty promises of the COP26 meeting in Glasgow will become emptier still.

## OUT AND ABOUT

What about the ECB and the wider world? Certainly, the wider world watches what the Bank is doing and listens to what Lagarde has to say, even if it sometimes doubts what she has said. Take the case of interest rate rises, for instance. She has told a number of meetings recently that the ECB is unlikely to raise interest rates in 2022, although some forecasters expect that to happen by next October. Despite what she said, inflation is currently running at a 13 -year high and the markets have been betting that the ECB’s policy will come under a lot of pressure and may force an about-turn in policy for the first time in more than a decade. Lagarde doesn’t see it that way. “In our forward guidance on interest rates, we have clearly articulated the three conditions that need to be satisfied before rates will start to rise,” she told an event in Lisbon, going on to add that despite the current inflation surge, the outlook for inflation over the medium term remains subdued. Any rise in inflation is thought by the ECB to be transitory.

Lagarde, though, is not blind to the risks and pitfalls lying ahead for Europe. She warned that the globalized nature of the euro area’s economy makes it highly vulnerable to systemic shocks

from supply chain disruptions. “There are signs that the global economy could increasingly be a source of shocks for Europe rather than a stabilizer against volatility,” she said. What about Russia, with an upcoming election and its sights still set on Kyiv? It’s not clear if Lagarde has changed the view she held in September 2017 as President of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), when she said: “Russia is not interested in the economic collapse of Ukraine.”



Former President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko and Christine Lagarde in 2017

She may feel reassured but people I know in Kyiv are not. According to Lagarde, she hopes that Russian support for Ukraine's economy will continue. However, there is virtually no prospect of access to any financial facilities being extended to Moscow. Russia remains subject to economic sanctions first imposed in 2014 in response to Russian actions in Ukraine. Ukraine itself, on the other hand, is seen as a ‘priority partner’ for the EU, which remains Ukraine's main trading partner, representing 42% of Ukraine's total trade, and with a fairly balanced split between imports and exports. Ukraine has recently passed a draft law to legalize cryptocurrencies with a view to opening up the crypto market to businesses and investors by next year. Even so, Lagarde seldom makes public comments on what is happening in Ukraine, nor in Belarus, but that doesn't mean changes don't occur. In February 2021, the Board of the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus approved an instruction on safe and developmental banks, including the European Central Banks, so the door is opening for dialogue and even, perhaps, for possible transactions.



Sergei Kalechits, Deputy Chairman of the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus

In 2019, the National Bank of the Republic of Belarus (NBRB) said it was “looking forward to a new twinning project with the European Union”. NBRB Deputy Chairman Sergei Kalechits was speaking at the final conference of the European Union's twinning project designed to enhance the potential of Belarus' central bank. According to the Belarus government's official website, Belarus.by, NBRB Deputy Chair Sergei Kalechits said that the central bank had become the first Belarusian body to implement a twinning project. “We think highly of the results,” he said. “We and our European partners have reached a preliminary agreement on starting work on preparing a new twinning project involving the National Bank.”

In his words, the joint use of the expert potential of Belarus' central bank and the central banks of European Union countries in the course of the twinning project allowed both sides to secure significant practical results in matters of financial stability, banking oversight, protection of rights of consumers of financial services, the payment system and information technologies, the management of financial risks, and the communication policy.

However, even the calmest of seas (and the current ones are arguably not so much calm as ‘caught between waves’) can contain sharks. One of them could arguably be Vladimir Putin, although Lagarde has clearly had a long affection for Russia. In 2018, when she was still Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, she gave a talk in St. Petersburg, saying: “It is a great joy to be back in St. Petersburg, which is one of my favourite places. It is hard to top the beauty of the surroundings, the elegance of the architecture, the magnificence of the art, and the warmth of the people.” Nothing

ambivalent there, and nothing much to argue with. It is a truly beautiful city and the trams (when I was there) were an extremely cheap way to get about, if somewhat ‘rustic’ to ride in; they have probably been modernised since then. Lagarde went on to say that “challenges are best solved in an ethos of cooperation, by deepening ties among the family of nations, and by heightening collaboration in the service of the global common good.” That won't be easy, given the EU's range of sanctions against Russia.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has predicted that the Russian economy will grow by 3.0% in 2022, having already expanded by 4.3% this year, and Russia's GDP is reassuringly buoyant, it seems. Russia's statistics agency, Rosstat, has recently raised its estimate for Russian GDP growth for the second quarter of 2021 to 10.5% annualised.



Maxim Reshetnikov, head of Russia's Ministry of Economic Development and Trade

What's more, Maxim Reshetnikov, head of Russia's Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, said the potential for further recovery has not yet been exhausted, even if industrial output has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels. Russia has raised its interest rate to 6.75% in a bid to control inflation, and in the ECB's Governing Council there are quite a number of members not reassured by the eurozone inflation figures who feel a rise in its interest rates would be better sooner, under tight control, than suddenly later as a panic measure. In much of Eastern Europe the rates have already risen.





© IMF Staff Photo/Stephen Jarffe

French Finance Minister Christine Lagarde succeeded Dominique Strauss-Kahn as International Monetary Fund's Managing Director in 2011

## NAUGHTY, NAUGHTY – OR NOT?

Lagarde herself faced trial in a French court in 2016 and the court found her guilty of negligence for approving an award of €404-million to the controversial businessman Bernard Tapie for the disputed sale of a company. She was still managing director of the IMF at the time, but despite the guilty verdict she was not punished. She denied wrongdoing and was not in court for the hearing. The board of the IMF said afterwards that it retained full confidence in Lagarde, as did the French government who promptly reappointed her to her IMF post.

The actual charge was “negligence by a person in a position of public authority”. It involved the alleged misuse of public funds, not corruption, but it could have carried a sentence of one year in prison and a fine of €15,000. Instead she walked away without even a criminal record. The judge who heard the case, Martine Ract Madoux, said she had taken into account the difficult position in which Lagarde had found herself in the middle of the financial crisis, as well as her ‘good reputation’ and her ‘international standing’.

This was a rare case and it's worth remembering that the Cour de justice de la République (Court of Justice of the Republic) is made up mainly of politicians, not judges, and it mainly handles allegations of crimes allegedly committed by cabinet ministers. It not the first time the CJR has found

an accused person guilty and set them free. Tapie was a majority shareholder in the Adidas sports goods company but when he became a cabinet minister in the government of François Mitterrand, he had to sell the company. After his compensation, approved by Lagarde, he was ordered to pay back €404-million plus interest. It came about because in 1993, Tapie sought to sue Credit Lyonnais for allegedly undervaluing the company and thereby defrauding him.



© Wikicommons  
French businessman Bernard Tapie in 2012

The case was passed to Lagarde who was Finance Minister under Nicolas Sarkozy, a conservative president, and compensation was duly paid out the following year, much to the annoyance of the public, who saw the compensation as ‘public money’ being paid to an extremely wealthy man, Credit Lyonnais being state-owned. Tapie was eventually obliged to pay back the money with interest.

The pay-out had clearly been Lagarde's fault, but she was left, as the old British phrase has it, “without a stain on her character”.

The court case is yesterday's news, however, and Lagarde seems to have moved on successfully, putting it all behind her. The more interesting question for the markets now is how determined is she to resist raising interest rates? The markets don't seem convinced by her denials and have already priced in a rate increase for some point during 2022, despite the ECB's promise to keep rates low and predicting that the uptick in inflation is a temporary phenomenon that the Bank expects to go down again in the New Year. The tentative rate increase means that the major debtors, such as Italy, will face higher costs. It prompted Lagarde to promise again that rates would not rise, or at least that such a rise would be “very unlikely”. As a result, the yields on Eurobonds fell. The European Central Bank has made any increase conditional on inflation stabilising at 2%, but the Bank's experts foresee a gradual fall and economists are predicting that by 2023 inflation could be as low as 1.5%.

The big decisions will come this December: even Lagarde can't deny rising prices, despite her assurances. Inflation in the eurozone, even if it drops next spring, is currently the highest in more than a decade, with supply shortages slowing down recovery from the pandemic. Some have been predicting a reduction in the Bank's €1.85-trillion bond purchase programme, set up to save the eurozone economy during the pandemic. A shortage, for instance, of computer chips is holding up production in the car industry, delaying recovery. A worrying sign is that inflation in the eurozone hit



© Présidence de la République

Christine Lagarde and Nicolas Sarkozy in 2012

3.4% in September, and some say it could rise to 4% before the year's end, but ECB experts say that's a temporary glitch and that over the medium term it will not get anywhere near the 2% threshold the ECB has set itself. In any case, inflation in the eurozone is less pronounced than it is in the United States, because European governments spent less on feeding stimulus money into the economy. Meanwhile, the ECB's lending rate to banks stands at 0%, while banks that want to deposit money overnight must pay -0.5%, so the only way for banks to avoid that cost is to use the money to lend at interest to enterprises instead, thus hopefully stimulating the economy.



© Wikimedia

Christine Lagarde, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and Ivanka Trump at the W20 Conference Gala Dinner in Berlin

The pandemic is sadly not over, with some countries still making panicky decisions and not showing

much resolve. Lagarde mentioned the problem in her speech in Lisbon. “Externally, the pandemic has shown us how vulnerable we are to disruptions that threaten the global trading order – and this is particularly true for Europe, with our deep integration into the global economy,” she said. “Indeed, today’s supply chain disruptions may only be a dress rehearsal for some of the difficulties we will face when natural disasters become more frequent, or if international relations become more fraught and supply chains start to be influenced by geopolitical biases.” Lacking a crystal ball, Economic forecasters can only make predictions based on facts, figures and trends, so Lagarde is urging Europe to pay attention to the ways things are going in order to build for the future. “On the internal front, we need to step up our investment in the sectors of the future,” she said. “And we have an ideal tool for the job: the €750 billion Next Generation EU (NGEU) fund. It gives us a mechanism to stay focused on future-oriented investment even when national fiscal policies become less expansionary after the pandemic. And it helps reduce the green and digital divide within Europe, which is crucial for ensuring that future growth is equitable.” Lagarde warned, however, that not every eventuality can be predicted. “On the external front, we need to be ready for a more uncertain world.

As I have recently argued, this means using Europe’s economic weight to support reciprocated trade openness globally, while strengthening its own domestic demand to insure against a more volatile global economy.”

Lagarde is not without her critics, of course, and some of the German media have descended to raw sexism in their attacks. They have suggested that her apparent affection for high fashion and luxury goods have blinded her to the plight of the poor and the elderly. Leading the attack was Bild, of course. “Lagarde likes to wear luxury fashion including Chanel,” it trumpeted, “earns almost €40,000 a month — but she doesn't seem to care about the worries of normal people.” Bild even nicknamed her ‘Luxury Lagarde’. As the Politico on-line news source pointed out, the paper also calculated “that surging inflation would cost each German saver €1,400 this year — a sum that Lagarde can only laugh about, it added. For this money she would only get the arm of a Chanel blazer,” it wrote, adding somewhat unfairly that “Some of the ECB president's luxury jackets cost €7,000 and more.” Whatever the papers say, Lagarde will probably continue to be a fashion ikon, although she would probably prefer to be remembered as the woman who helped save the euro.

*Anthony James*



# NEWS IN BRIEF

## EBRD LENDS €150 MILLION FOR KEY RAILWAY LINE FROM ISTANBUL TO BULGARIAN BORDER



© General Directorate of Infrastructure Investments

- 150 million EBRD loan for the construction of the Ispartakule-Cerkezkoy rail section
- Low-carbon passenger and freight rail to benefit EU-Turkey connectivity and cross-border trade
- Rail line to be tendered and built in line with EBRD standards

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is extending a €150 million loan to the Turkish government for the construction of a 67 km section of the high-speed railway line from Istanbul to the Bulgarian border. The loan will further support Turkey's transition to a low-carbon economy.

The EBRD financing was approved by the Bank's board of directors on 10 November 2021 and signed earlier this week.

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank is considering parallel financing and the Turkish government will provide the remaining funds needed for the €640 million infrastructure project.

The double-track Ispartakule-Cerkezkoy section is part of the electrified Halkali-Kapikule railway line, co-financed by European Union (EU) Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) funds. The line is part of the EU Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and will provide safe, sustainable and low-carbon passenger and freight transport to and from the EU, improving connectivity and trade.

Lütfi Elvan, Turkey's Minister of Treasury and Finance, said: "We appreciate the EBRD's support and contribution to the Ispartakule-Çerkezköy railway line project, the first public project financed by the Bank in the field of transportation. It is expected to improve Turkey's internal and cross-border connectivity and is also an important opportunity to nurture our productive partnership with the EBRD for the future."

Arvid Tuerkner, EBRD Managing Director for Turkey, said: "The loan for the construction of the Ispartakule-Cerkezkoy line builds on more than four years of joint work by the

EBRD and the Turkish authorities on legal and regulatory reforms aimed at improving the commercialisation of the railway sector and providing opportunities for greater private-sector participation."

The Ispartakule-Cerkezkoy railway section will be tendered and built in line with the EBRD's procurement rules and environmental and social standards.

Turkey's Directorate General of Infrastructure Investments has also committed to implementing a series of measures to promote greater career opportunities for women and to create working conditions in which women thrive.

The EBRD is a major investor in Turkey. To date, the Bank has invested more than €14 billion through 351 projects in various sectors of the economy, with 95 per cent of those in the private sector. Sustainability is at the heart of its work.

## TURKEY'S AKBANK RECEIVES US\$ 50 MILLION EBRD LOAN TO FINANCE WOMEN-LED FIRMS

- EBRD and Akbank join forces to narrow funding gap for women-led businesses
- Funds are part of Women in Business programme backed by the EU and Turkey
- EBRD support to Akbank also includes signing of new trade finance limit and risk-sharing facility

To boost the ability of Turkey's banking sector to finance women-led businesses, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is providing a US\$ 50 million loan to Akbank, a key Turkish lender.

The funds are part of the EBRD's newly expanded flagship Women in Business programme, which is providing a total of €600 million to women-led businesses through Turkish banks. The programme is supported by the European Union and Turkey's Credit Guarantee Fund, as well as the Ministry of Treasury and Finance.



© Ebrd.com

In addition, the EBRD is stepping up its trade finance support for Akbank through a new limit and, under a dedicated Risk Sharing Framework, will also share up to 50 per cent of the risk on individual Akbank loans to small and medium-sized enterprises.

Arvid Tuerkner, EBRD Managing Director for Turkey, said: “As business activity is normalising after a series of lockdowns triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, we want to ensure that, within the resilient financial system, businesses have access to a more diverse range of financing sources that suit their needs. Together with Akbank, we have developed a broad range of options, including dedicated loans for businesswomen, trade finance and risk sharing.”

The EBRD is a leading institutional investor in Turkey. To date, it has invested €14 billion in the country through 351 projects, with 95 per cent of those in the private sector. The Bank’s portfolio of €7 billion in Turkey is the largest of the 38 economies in which the EBRD invests.

Source: By Olga Rosca@olgarosca

### CPT URGES SPAIN TO PREVENT AND EFFECTIVELY INVESTIGATE CASES OF PRISON ILL-TREATMENT

A new report by the Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) urges the Spanish authorities to take determined action to prevent ill-treatment in prison and ensure that cases of alleged ill-treatment are investigated effectively. It also proposes measures to improve the treatment of prisoners and patients held in psychiatric penitentiary hospitals and to tackle ill-treatment by police officers.

The report contains the findings of a visit to Spain from 14 to 28 September 2020 and has been published together with the response of the Spanish authorities.

Most of the persons met during the visit stated that they had been treated correctly by law enforcement officials. However, the CPT’s delegation received a significant number of allegations of ill-treatment, mainly concerning the Policía Nacional, consisting of slaps, punches, and kicks as well as, occasionally, the use of batons. It was purportedly inflicted to force persons to provide information, confess to crimes or punish them for the alleged crime committed. The CPT stresses the importance of proper oversight and training of law enforcement officers.



A Spanish prison

In the adult male prisons visited, the CPT’s delegation received many consistent and credible allegations of recent physical ill-treatment by prison officers which consisted primarily of slaps to the head and body, punches, kicks, and blows with batons. In a number of cases, the alleged ill-treatment was supported by injuries documented by

the delegation or noted in the person’s medical record. As regards female prisoners, the report calls for a gender-specific approach taking into account the needs of women, for example, concerning the range of activities on offer, and to adopt a policy to prevent acts of self-harm.

In their response, the Spanish authorities engage in a constructive and substantive dialogue. They provide information on the action taken to tackle ill-treatment in prisons, to reduce the number of persons placed in closed-regime modules, to limit the resort to mechanical fixation and to adopt a gender perspective in prisons.

### EU INVESTS OVER €1 BILLION IN INNOVATIVE PROJECTS TO DECARBONISE THE ECONOMY



The European Union is investing over €1.1 billion into seven large-scale innovative projects under the Innovation Fund. The grants will support projects aiming to bring breakthrough technologies to the market in energy-intensive industries, hydrogen, carbon capture, use and storage, and renewable energy. The projects are located in Belgium, Italy, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Sweden.

Executive Vice-President **Timmermans** said: “*Innovation is crucial to provide the solutions we need this decade to keep 1.5 degrees within reach. Together with sharp emissions reductions, innovation gives us a path towards the Paris Agreement. Today’s decision gives concrete support to clean tech projects across Europe and enables them to scale up game-changing technologies that support and speed up the transition to climate neutrality. Our Fit for 55 package proposes to increase the Innovation Fund so that even more innovative European projects and ideas can jump ahead in the global climate innovation race.*”

The seven projects were selected for funding under the first Innovation Fund call for large-scale projects, i.e. projects with total capital costs above €7.5 million. They were evaluated by independent experts for their ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions compared to conventional technologies and to innovate beyond the state-of-the-art while being sufficiently mature to enable their quick deployment. Other selection criteria included the projects’ potential for scalability and cost effectiveness.

The selected projects cover a wide range of relevant sectors to decarbonise different parts of Europe’s industry and



energy sectors, such as chemicals, steel, cement, refineries, and power and heat. All projects are either already part of industrial hubs or kick-start decarbonisation clusters of interconnected industries.

### Projects in brief

**Energy-intensive industries:** A project in Sweden aims to entirely eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from steel production by using renewable hydrogen in Gällivare and Oxelösund. Another project, in Finland, will demonstrate two ways of producing clean hydrogen at a refinery in Porvoo, through renewable energy and by capturing CO<sub>2</sub> and permanently storing it in the North Sea. In France, a project will capture unavoidable emissions in a cement plant and in part store the CO<sub>2</sub> geologically in the North Sea and in part integrate it into concrete. To reduce the emissions in the production of hydrogen and chemicals, a project in Belgium will develop a complete carbon capture, transport and storage value chain in the Port of Antwerp.

**Renewable energy:** A project in Italy will develop an industrial-scale pilot line for the manufacture of innovative and high performance photovoltaic cells in Catania. Another project in Spain will convert non-recyclable municipal solid waste in El Morell to methanol, a key basic chemical and low-carbon fuel. Another project in Sweden will create a full-scale bioenergy carbon capture and storage facility at its existing biomass combined heat and power plant in Stockholm.

### Next steps

Successful projects are starting to prepare the individual grant agreements with the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA), the implementing body of the Fund. These are expected to be finalised in the first quarter of 2022, allowing the Commission to adopt the corresponding grant award decision and start distributing the grants.

On 26 October, the Commission launched the second call for large-scale projects with a deadline of 3 March 2022. All the projects that were not successful in the first call are encouraged to re-apply.

## 7<sup>TH</sup> EDA HELICOPTER TACTICS INSTRUCTORS COURSE COMPLETED

The course began on 30<sup>th</sup> of August with a four-week classroom phase, which included simulator training at Airbase No1 in Sintra, followed by a three-week deployment to the Pápa Air Base in Hungary where participants engaged in live flying exercises. Supported by personnel from the Hungarian Defence Force and Pápa Air Base, the flying phase included a complex operational scenario employing dissimilar formation flying, evasion training against a range of airborne threats, Electronic Warfare (EW) against both ground-based and airborne systems and a variety of additional tasks such as Helicopter Assault, Convoy Escort and Mutual Support. The course was led by EDA's HTIC chief instructor team and followed by Austrian, Czech, German, Hungarian, Portuguese and Swedish crews flying on six different types of helicopters: AW-109, EH-101, H145M, Mi-171, OH-58 and UH-60.



EDA's 7<sup>th</sup> Helicopter Tactics Instructors Course (HTIC) at Airbase No1 in Sintra (Portugal) and Pápa Air Base in Hungary in October 2021

The staff instructors came from Austria, Germany and Sweden, together with some contracted support provided by Inzpire Ltd. Also, fixed wing support was provided by units of the Czech Alca Jets and the Hungarians Gripens, acting mainly as threats during the helicopter training. In addition, EW assets and personnel were provided by Austria and Hungary.

In total, 18 Bronze, 7 Silver and 3 Gold qualifications were awarded ensuring an important contribution to the international cadre of Helicopter Tactics Instructors (HTI).

### Background

The Helicopter Tactics Instructors Course (HTIC) is an advanced helicopter training activity aimed at creating helicopter tactics instructors which are able to train nationally standardised tactics procedures to foster interoperability of the European helicopter units, their level of preparation, and to facilitate readiness for future deployments. This is done independently of the type of helicopter used. It is delivered since 2013. Since 2021, its location changed to Airbase No1 in Sintra (Portugal), where the ground and simulator of the course is executed, and to Pápa Air Base (Hungary), where the flying phase is delivered.

HTIC provides aircrew from participating nations with the skills and knowledge to teach advanced tactics to front-line aircrews from within their own national organisations and to assist in delivering the EDA's Helicopter Exercise Programme (HEP), the Helicopter Tactics Course (HTC) and future HTIC. Successful graduates from the course are awarded a qualification recognised by other Member States. HTIC development courses run over two years: in the first year, prospective instructors refine their own knowledge of advanced helicopter tactics to the maximum degree. In the second year, the emphasis shifts to develop the participants' ability to teach those tactics. In turn, Instructors who have demonstrated excellent abilities in delivering the course will be individually selected to come back a third time and teach alongside the existing instructional staff to finally achieve their Gold instructor qualification to become supervising instructors for future HTIC and/or components of the HTIC Chief Instructor Team.

The three main elements of HTIC include Evasion Training, Electronic Warfare and advanced Operations. They are initially taught as stand-alone skills before being brought together in a complex, non-permissive environment in the framework of the planning and execution of Composite Air Operations (COMAO).

## GAUSSIN PRESENTS WORLD'S FIRST HYDROGEN RACING TRUCK THAT WILL COMPETE IN THE 2022 DAKAR RALLY IN JANUARY

The H2 RACING TRUCK® is the first vehicle in GAUSSIN's range of zero-emission, 100% hydrogen and electric road trucks



The H2 RACING TRUCK® incorporates high-performance design to withstand extreme environments, and it is intended to demonstrate the performance and reliability of the hydrogen-electric motorization developed by GAUSSIN. The data and information collected during the 2022 Dakar Rally will be used to further develop GAUSSIN's range of road trucks scheduled for launch from 2022.

"On January 12 in NEOM, Saudi Arabia, the Dakar organization presented its "Dakar Future" energy transition program, which aims to make the Dakar 100% "green" by 2030. The climate outlook announced by scientists is indeed alarming. We are the first generation to feel the effects of climate change and the last generation to act. By entering the first 100% hydrogen and electric truck in the

Dakar, GAUSSIN intends to demonstrate the reliability and performance of its hydrogen road range in a difficult environment. New technologies based on renewable energies are available and mature and should help accelerate the energy transition. For the GAUSSIN Group and its partners, this project, which has now become a reality, represents a technological achievement and the fruit of years of

work and experience in zero-emission mobility", declared Christophe GAUSSIN, CEO of GAUSSIN.

"We are delighted that Gaussin, a pioneer and visionary company in the transport market, is taking part in the Dakar Future initiative with a 100% hydrogen truck. By competing in the Dakar, Gaussin is laying the foundation stone for the energy transition we all want to see, and the Dakar is the ideal open-air laboratory for manufacturers", said Yann Le Moenner, CEO of Amaury Sport Organisation.

The H2 RACING TRUCK® is the most powerful hydrogen truck in the world combining technology, power and robustness designed with high quality components to operate in extreme environments, including:

- Two e-motors of 300 kW each
- 380 kW of fuel cells
- 82 kWh of batteries
- 80 kg of hydrogen
- A high-performance cooling system
- A lightweight chassis designed specifically for the performance and integration of the hydrogen electric system
- A speed limit of 140 km/h in compliance with regulations
- A range of 250 km in race conditions
- A 20-minute recharge with a specific hydrogen cooling station
- Registered for the road

## IAEA AND UNICRI TO BOOST COLLABORATION IN PREVENTING AND COUNTERING CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES WITH NUCLEAR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) today signed an agreement that will increase collaboration in preventing and countering criminal activities around the world using nuclear science and technology.

Nuclear techniques in forensics are used to characterise the origin and history of products and materials - such as art, food or nuclear and other radioactive materials - subject to counterfeiting, or illicit trafficking. Such nuclear techniques help the work of police investigators, courts and customs officials to solve crimes, detect fraud, catch food adulteration and identify forgeries.



"While criminals might want to cover their tracks, atoms do not lie," said IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi. "Through this important collaboration, we will use our efforts to identify common approaches, projects, funds and partners, and ensure that newly developed technologies address the actual needs of our beneficiaries such as police officers, prosecutors, producers, exporters, industries, and consumers."

The work of the IAEA and UNICRI is complementary: UNICRI assesses criminal activities, identifies trends



and strengthens crime prevention and criminal justice, the IAEA develops and delivers innovative nuclear analytical tools and related frameworks, in support to Member States' needs.

The IAEA and UNICRI capacity building plan will enable the transfer of technologies to promote the application of nuclear science and technology for forensic science, and to develop tools for the forensic and law enforcement community. One example of the future collaboration is the development of nuclear analytical tools for investigating and prosecuting different forms of illicit trade. Working closely with forensic experts and end users, such tools will help identify fraudulent products which counterfeiters intend to pass-off as originals such as trafficked works of art and cultural property.

“Today we are taking a decisive step forward to ensure that technologies and tools are designed, developed and validated together with their end-users, the forensic and law enforcement community,” said Antonia Marie De Meo, Director of UNICRI. “This important partnership between UNICRI and IAEA bridges the gap between scientists and the law enforcement and forensic community and is especially timely since criminals are extremely innovative in exploiting technological advances.”

### IAEA and UNICRI activities in crime prevention and control

The IAEA supports the development and application of novel nuclear techniques for analytical purposes. Thanks to its worldwide network of national nuclear laboratories, the IAEA provides concrete tools to forensic experts and investigators. For example, the IAEA through its Coordinated Research Project (CRP) has studied how nuclear analytical techniques can be used to obtain information on food origin and authenticity, to assess art authenticity, and to analyse glass residues in crime scenes.

The IAEA also supports countries by providing technical assistance on nuclear forensics capacity building in the form of trainings, coordinated research programmes, residential assignments and scientific advisories and consultations.

UNICRI is focused on analysing the complex, highly adaptable, transnational nature of organized crime. Its work helps in increasing knowledge on the ways criminal organizations profit from intellectual property crimes. The Institute has identified investigative techniques to disrupt these criminal networks as well as possible technological responses available at global level through which the legitimate supply chain of several products can be better protected from the infiltration of organized crime.

UNICRI and IAEA have already cooperated in computer security, in a research project on utilizing nuclear analytical techniques in forensic science, as well as in fighting production and trading counterfeit and fraudulent products.

### OLAF CASE REVEALS €107 MILLION EU-WIDE FRAUD

**The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) has finalised an investigation of a sophisticated EU-wide potential fraud scheme involving the import of goods from China. The case reveals a suspected €14 million fraud in underpaid customs duties and an estimated €93 million in VAT evaded.**



OLAF anti fraud inspectors

The OLAF investigation started with a focus on a small number of consignments of textiles and shoes, first identified in Italy by the Italian Guardia di Finanza, but later expanded until it covered some 1,992 consignments. OLAF worked closely with the Italian Guardia di Finanza and the Italian customs service and then with the customs authorities of Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia in building up the picture of how the consignments first entered and were then distributed throughout the EU.

Three companies operating from the United Kingdom first arranged for the import of the consignments into the EU. They were brought in through different ports in various Member States and were ultimately traced back to Slovakia. In Slovakia, their customs value was under-declared causing a suspected initial loss to the EU budget of €14 million. Although the goods had originally been declared as being destined for the United Kingdom, they were found to have been rerouted from Slovakia to other declared destinations throughout the EU and under a regime of suspended VAT payments due on them. At least 11 Member States are concerned and OLAF has established through a detailed examination of the transport records of the consignments that the goods disappeared from official control and were likely sold on the black market. OLAF estimates that the loss of VAT for the consignments could be as high as €93 million.

OLAF carried out its administrative investigation to determine if financial losses occurred against the EU budget. This case was finalised by OLAF in complementarity with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), which will now pursue a criminal investigation.

In this case, OLAF has issued financial recommendations to the 11 Member States affected so that appropriate action can be taken at national level. The criminal aspects of the case have been reported to the EPPO for a possible criminal investigation in respect of the Member States concerned. OLAF has also issued a judicial recommendation to the Hungarian Prosecutor General's Office for follow-up of the criminal aspects identified in respect of that Member State.



© Olaf

The seat of the European Anti-Fraud Office, in Brussels

Commenting on the case, OLAF Director-General Ville Itälä said: *“OLAF has just closed a major case of customs and VAT fraud that has multiple implications. First, suspected fraudsters left EU taxpayers with a bill of up to €107 million. Second, selling products on the black market – often at rock bottom prices – distorts the single market and harms legitimate businesses. We have issued financial recommendations to recover the money and judicial recommendations to prosecute those behind the scheme. In line with the good working arrangements in place, we are ready to support the European Public Prosecutor’s Office with the criminal investigation.”*

**BELGIUM: GREEN LIGHT FROM EIB BOARD OF DIRECTORS TO SUPPORT WALLONIA IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

- The EIB Board of Directors has given its in-principle approval for a record €1.1 billion operation for Wallonia
- Energy efficiency and flood resilience are in the spotlight

**Financial agreements should be signed before the end of the year**

On 17 November, the European Investment Bank (EIB) Board of Directors gave its in-principle approval for financing of €1.1 billion for the Walloon Region to support its energy efficiency and flood resilience projects. It should be implemented rapidly via financial agreements to be finalised soon by the EIB teams and the Walloon Region.

This amount — the largest ever provided by the EIB in a single operation in Belgium — will make it possible to improve the thermal performance of Walloon social housing stock and strengthen regional water infrastructure to adapt it to future extreme climate events.

EIB Vice-President Kris Peeters said: *“We are reaching the first milestone in a new financial partnership with the Walloon Region by granting a record amount for Belgium and supporting major projects that are vital for the future of the people of Wallonia. These are fully in line with the EIB’s strategic priorities as the climate bank. The active front in the fight against climate change involves reducing the carbon footprint of the social housing sector. It also requires adaptation and anticipation in the face of the risk of disasters like those we saw last summer, performing numerous works to reinforce river banks. The EIB answered the Walloon Region’s call. We will provide the financing needed to make these high priority investments quickly. We must work together to overcome the challenge of the century and preserve our planet for future generations.”*

**About the European Investment Bank (EIB)**

Operating in around 160 countries, the EIB is among the world’s largest multilateral lenders to climate action projects. It recently adopted the EIB Group Climate Bank Roadmap to help it to implement its ambitious programme aiming to support the mobilisation of €1 trillion in climate action and environmental sustainability investment from 2021 to 2030, and to bring the share of its investment it dedicates to these areas to 50% by 2025. In line with the Roadmap, all new EIB Group operations have also been aligned with the goals and principles of the Paris Agreement since the beginning of 2021.







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© Doed

Us troops in Afghanistan

## READY, AIM, ARGUE

### *Military withdrawal from Afghanistan reignites calls for an EU army*

In the years immediately following the world's deadliest-ever conflict, World War II, the European Union was born as the European Coal and Steel Community. Its aim was to place what were seen as the instruments of conflict – energy and raw materials for armaments – under common control, thus (it was hoped) rendering the possibility of another international conflict on a similar scale on the continent of Europe less likely, perhaps even impossible. It also provided, in the words of the European Commission's most famous and arguably best-ever President, Jacques Delors, “a bold initial impulse for European integration”. In theory, little has changed. “Today's European Union (EU) is based on treaties negotiated and ratified by the member states,” wrote Finn Laursen in his article entitled ‘The Founding Treaties of the European Union and Their Reform’ in the Oxford on-line Research Encyclopaedia.

“They form a kind of ‘constitution’ for the Union.” Laursen goes on to

explain: “The first three treaties, the Treaty of Paris, creating the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951, and the two Treaties of Rome, creating the European Economic Community (EEC) and European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) in 1957, were the founding treaties.” Their aim was peace and prosperity in a Europe which had just witnessed a conflict in which up to 85-million people had been killed.



© Finn Laursen.com

Professor of Political Science Finn Laursen

The originators of the plan clearly hoped it would develop further. France's Foreign Minister at the time, Robert Schuman, told the meeting, which was held in the Salon d'Horloge at his Quai d'Orsay headquarters in Paris, that it would be “the first concrete step towards the federation of Europe.” Wishful thinking, I'm afraid. It looked like a sound idea, and it was, although even then it failed to find acceptance in the argumentative UK. “Oh, no,” responded Emmanuel (Manny) Shinwell, the Labour government's Minister of Fuel and Power, when the idea was put to him in a London restaurant where he was having dinner, according to Dirk Spierenburg, (who would go on to become a member of the new European Coal and Steel Community's High Authority, forerunner of the European Commission), “the Durham miners would never forgive us.” No-one ever asked them, of course.

Their opinions may not, in fact, have counted for very much in Westminster's corridors of power at



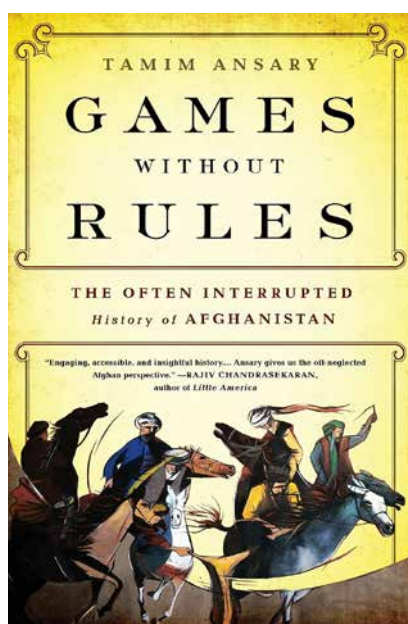


any point in my lifetime, (and now that all the coal mines are closed, not at all) although the annual Miners' Gala parade through the beautiful old city of Durham, with its many brass bands blowing triumphantly as the participants march up to the city's superb 11<sup>th</sup> century cathedral and then on to the County Hotel, on whose balcony sit the big name VIPs, still attracts quite a crowd, at least some of whom must remember when miners were powerful. Interestingly, and despite representing the constituency of Sedgfield, which is sited at the heart of the Durham coalfield, former Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair never attended one. What a shame: they're splendid events.

But I'm wandering from the point here. We're not talking about pacifist post-conflict dreams of European nations co-operating without a squabble. No, we're looking at Afghanistan. Recent events there have shocked many and almost certainly changed the ground rules. As France 24 put it: "European countries had no option but to pull out of Afghanistan along with the US – despite their desire for Western troops to stay and stop the country falling into the Taliban's hands." But pull out they did, leaving that sorry country's citizens in the power of some very nasty and unreasonable people, previously led by Mullah Omar who claimed to be 'God's deputy on Earth' (no-one asked God's opinion).

This would have come as no great surprise to Tamim Ansary, writer of an excellent brief history of Afghanistan, his native country: 'Games Without Rules'. "Five times in the last two centuries," he wrote, "some great power has tried to invade, occupy, conquer or otherwise take control of Afghanistan. Each intervention has led to a painful setback for the intervening power, and the curious thing is, these interventions have all come to grief

in much the same way and for much the same reasons – as if each new power coming into Afghanistan has vowed to take no lessons from its predecessors." When I was there and crossing (illegally) over the border from Pakistan, the tailfins of a Soviet missile were still protruding from the roof of the wrecked post office at Torkham, just beside the border, while some market stalls in Peshawar, on the Pakistan side, were selling items of plundered Russian military uniform and equipment, just to help emphasize who had won.



## TANKS FOR THE MEMORY

Getting the member states of the EU to agree on anything is a Herculean task. They have agreed to co-operate on various issues in the past but often don't when it comes to the pinch. When it comes to matters of mutual defence, the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, believes that it often comes down to misunderstanding. Stoltenberg supports European defence, he says, "but at times you get the impression that strategic autonomy or European Defence, with a capital E and D, is something outside, alternative to NATO. And that I don't support." NATO has been central to European defence thinking for decades, despite (or perhaps because) it makes Russia uneasy. It seems that the EU would have to depend on NATO to undertake any military missions on

its behalf, rather than have a separate military body. Furthermore, even if some of the more bullish leaders of EU states were to allocate troops and matériel to some new, as-yet unspecified force, who would pay for it? How would the additional costs be allocated fairly? "There is no way you can get more European defence without European Allies spending more," said Stoltenberg at a recent session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, "And there is one institution that's been pushing for more European defence spending for years, and that is NATO." In the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, with budgets stretched and supply chains badly disrupted, the prospect of higher spending to cope with no immediate emergency is unlikely to garner much support.

There is a provision in the EU's rules for the creation of what is, in effect, an EU army. It's called the European Defence Agency (EDA), set up under the Lisbon Treaty. The EDA was established by the Council of Ministers on 12 July, 2004, "to support the Member States and the Council in their effort to improve European defence capabilities in the field of crisis management and to sustain the European Security and Defence Policy as it stands now and develops in the future". Its aim, it makes clear, is to do with preserving the peace. The original 'Joint Action' that created the EDA was replaced in 2011 by a Council Decision in 2011 (further revised in 2015), with the aim of supporting the development of the EU's defence capabilities and enhancing military cooperation. It was also intended to stimulate defence research and technology to boost Europe's defence industries, while serving as an interface with the EU's wider policies.





© European Defence Agency

The European Defence Agency (EDA) is closely involved in the organisation and running of Bison Counter, bringing together Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices (C-IED) teams and capabilities from European countries as well as the US

On its own website it describes its purpose: to act as a catalyst, promoting collaborations, launching new initiatives and improving Europe's defence capabilities. "It is also," it says, "a key facilitator in developing the capabilities necessary to underpin the Common Security and Defence Policy of the Union." Among the conclusions and recommendations of a review in 2017, the EDA stated that one of its principal aims is: "To acquire and maintain key capabilities, Member States will need to further enhance defence cooperation. In their "Bratislava Declaration" of September 2016 Heads of State and Government highlighted the Bratislava Roadmap and its call to strengthen cooperation on defence and to make better use of the options in the Treaties, especially as regards capabilities." With so much intellectual effort around the world being devoted to developing advanced weapons systems, the EDA also has to keep up with developments. "One of the main tasks of the Agency," it says on its website, "is to support the Member States in the development

of cooperative defence capability projects in the air, land, maritime, cyber or space domain." Training courses have focused, among other things, on carrying out airlifts, the use of helicopters, identifying and neutralising improvised explosive devices (IEDs), the use of drones and organising cyber defence.

NATO, meanwhile, has recently been testing new technologies to counter the threat from drones. It is working with industry and carried out a trial of various counter-drone technologies at an airbase in the Netherlands in an exercise called C-UAS TIE 21 (it stands for Counter-unmanned Aircraft Systems Technical Interoperability Exercise; the military seems to like long, complicated terms). In the exercise, specialists from the civilian, military, scientific and industry worlds cooperated to come up with a solution.

Europe's capabilities are often compared unfavourably with those of the United States, but that may be unfair: the USA is one large country, the states of which are sometimes less united than the name suggests,

while the EU comprises twenty-seven quite individual member states, not all of them even speaking the same language and often disagreeing about their history, too. Stoltenberg spelled out the situation at the same Parliamentary Assembly meeting, defining it as 'fragmentation'. "In the United States," he told the Assembly, "there are many thousands of battle tanks, and there are only one type. In Europe, we have fewer battle tanks, and there are seventeen different types," The United States uses the M1A1 Abrams or its M1A2 variant, of which some 9,000 have been built. Estimates of the numbers in service vary but it could be around 6,600. In Europe, there are some fourteen different Main Battle Tanks (MBTs), although some of them are just variants of other models. MBTs would be vital in any conflagration across the EU, it being a land mass and, for much of it, relatively flat.

France, which seems to be keenest on having an EU army, sees the EU and NATO's eastern flank as a vulnerable area, and has done so since the Crimean crisis of 2014. France's next tank is seen as being an element in the Main Ground Combat System (MGCS). The current Leclerc MBT looks certain to be replaced. The MGCS is supposed to have inter-operability facilities which the French favour, but the Germans fear could be too complicated and thus possibly vulnerable, although there's an awareness that the German-built Leopard 2, the de-facto MBT of choice throughout Europe, will have to be replaced in the not-too-distant future.



© Antidrones-project.org

Simulation of an anti-drone system to detect, recognize and track killer-drones





German build MBT Leopard 2 A5



British Army Challenger Main Battle Tank (MBT)

In planning for possible future conflicts, we have to bear in mind that while the French (like the Poles) still see Russia as the greatest threat, Italy is still concerned about the possibility of conflict among EU member states. Italy's MBT fleet currently includes two hundred of its home-built C1 Ariete tanks. Britain still relies on the Challenger, currently in its third iteration as the Challenger III. Having so many different types presents the potential for mix-ups with spare parts. Carrying everything that might be needed with a European combat group would certainly be a challenge.



Prototype of Russian main battle tank T-14 Armata

It may not count for much in the long run, though: Russia can boast a total of 12,000 MBTs – twice the number that the United States has. Incidentally, the most rapid development of more advanced MBTs has been carried out by Russia and Israel, despite British Eurosceptics insisting that the UK must be prepared to defend the sceptred isle against those who eat croissants, panettoni and sauerkraut. But the devoted Europe-haters will always trot out these arguably childish neo-nationalist notions.

### ASSEMBLING THE PIECES (IF THEY FIT)

Europe's armaments industries are fragmented, and so, too, are their products. That is a worry because there would appear to be an arms race in progress that nobody can easily win. "NATO-EU cooperation has already reached unprecedented levels," Stoltenberg told a meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in October 2021. "In cyber space, we exchange information on threats and vulnerabilities in real time. In the Aegean Sea, our maritime mission works with the EU to implement their agreement with Turkey. And in Kosovo, NATO troops "stand shoulder-to-shoulder with EU diplomats" (wearing combat gear and armed with reinforced fountain pens?) "to bring peace and stability to the region." He also spoke about "strengthening cooperation in other areas, such as military mobility, resilience, emerging and disruptive technologies, and the security impact of climate change." But how does he feel about the arguments put forward by some EU leaders for going further? He told delegates that he welcomes the EU's "increased efforts on defence" but added that "These efforts should not duplicate NATO. What is needed is more capabilities, not new structures."

Writing in an on-line article for the Istituto Affari Internazionali, Alessandro Marrone and Ester Sabatino urged military authorities to update their arsenals before it's too late. "The new MBT's characteristics require a greater technological effort than in the

past, ranging from active protection systems to gun, turret, vetronics (vehicle electronic architecture) and optronics, and particularly to automation. Yet MBTs in European inventories are often outdated and their readiness level is low."



Eurocorps hosting a Change of Command ceremony at "Château de Pourtalès", in September 2021

They note that France and Germany launched a joint project in 2017 to develop and produce a next generation Main Ground Combat System (MGCS). Italy and Poland have repeatedly asked to join the MGCS cooperation, yet Paris and Berlin apparently want to keep it exclusively bilateral until a prototype is developed. After that, who knows? Therefore, Italy must choose from among a limited range of options in order to satisfy its army's MBT needs, as well as maintain a reasonable level of technological sovereignty in this sector. Of course, under the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU, there already exist two types of EU multinational forces, set up either inter-governmentally and made available under article 42.3 of the Treaty on European Union such as the Eurocorps, or else the EU Battlegroups, which were set up at EU level. The Battlegroups stem from the contributions made up through a coalition of member states.

The EUBG is to be deployed in a distance of 6.000 km from Brussels. It is to be capable of achieving initial operational capability in theatre within 10 days after decision of the European Council has been taken to launch the operation.





© Eurocorps.org

The EU Battlegroups are based on a combined-arm, battalion-sized force, reinforced with combat-support and combat service-support elements. In their generic composition, but depending on the mission, Battlegroups are about 1.500 personnel strong depending on lead nation's decision

There are eighteen altogether, each providing a battalion-sized force of 1,500 soldiers, together with combat support teams. The groups rotate and are kept in readiness for instant deployment under the control of the Council of the European Union, made up of member state ministers and prime ministers. Although they were ready for combat by the start of 2007, they have yet to see action. Some have called them the EU's "standing army" but that is a bit of a misnomer. They're really more of a fail-safe provision, just in case of unforeseen emergencies. In any case, the most rapid technical advances in the design and construction of tanks comes from Russia (probably no surprises there) and Israel.

Reports about a possible EU army were raised by Euro-sceptics during the long discussions surrounding the UK's referendum on remaining in the Union. Most of the quotes you will find on-line are from nationalist right-wing newspapers which are relentlessly anti-European. Certainly, the issue of an army to give the EU more clout has been discussed over the years; I watched some of the debates myself from the press seats. Debates among members of the public have also been held on the Internet, with the majority usually being against the idea, if not by very much. For instance, one organised by Debate.org,

which showed arguments on both sides, claimed that only 44% want a European army. We must assume (the website doesn't state) that 56% don't, although I suspect the numbers taking part were relatively small and therefore possibly unrepresentative.



© NATO  
NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg meets with the President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron

According to the political magazine *The Week*, which wrote in 2018: "In November, French president Emmanuel Macron warned that Europeans cannot be protected without a "true, European army" to defend the EU from China, Russia and even the US." Really? In the past, the former German Chancellor Angela Merkel has backed the idea. The

article goes on to cite the ways in which the idea has been used to scare British voters and persuade them to leave the EU. It stresses that "The Centre for European Reform said in 2016, that 'Britain's Eurosceptics have spent years frightening people with the idea of an EU army', and that 'conspiracy-minded Brexiters insist that, were the UK to stay in the European Union, British troops might soon be faced with conscription into a Brussels-controlled army.'" It shows great imagination, at least, but also very little knowledge of how the EU works. One contributor to this debate was horrified at the thought of "British troops" being "called up to fight in a Brussels-led army." Those of us familiar with how the union and its various institutions work may find the idea vaguely amusing but not under any circumstances likely.

The *Week* magazine quotes Macron as saying that no country can tackle today's security threats on its own. "The French president said that Europeans can no longer rely on the US to defend them in response to President Donald Trump's decision to pull out of a landmark 1987 nuclear treaty with Russia that effectively protects Europe from nuclear weapons." In an interview on the French radio station Europe 1, he went further: "I want to build a real



security dialogue with Russia, which is a country I respect, a European country - but we must have a Europe that can defend itself on its own without relying only on the United States.” The significant thing here, I think, is that without American air power, Europe felt it couldn’t leave any troops in Afghanistan, much as it wanted to. France in particular was furious and emerges from the whole debacle with the most credibility.



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and US President Donald Trump in the Oval Office in 2018

## POLITICAL POT-SHOTS

The European Parliament debated the whole issue in May 2021. Debates held in the European Parliament are generally speaking quite learned affairs, whatever the UK’s right-wing press may say, with quite a few members having a store of expert knowledge gained in former posts. In 2017, a Eurobarometer report on security and defence showed 75% of those members of the public who were questioned favouring a common EU defence and security policy, with a far smaller majority – 55% – wanting to see an EU army. In an address to the European Parliament, Merkel told MEPs “We ought to work on the vision of one day establishing a proper European army.”

A security and defence union has also been one of the goals of Ursula von der Leyen’s Commission. In fact, the Treaty of Lisbon states the need for a common EU defence policy, but it also stresses the importance of national defence policies. Some EU member states are obliged under their constitutions to observe neutrality: Austria, Ireland, Finland, Malta and Sweden. Their forces (and they all have some) would never join in an EU military operation. It’s not clear that many of the others could afford to: despite agreeing at a NATO summit in 2014 to spend 2% of their gross domestic product (GDP) on defence by 2024, with the European Parliament urging them to live up to their promises, only Greece, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Lithuania have done so.

MEPs have repeatedly called for all member states to live up to their Lisbon Treaty promises in moving towards a European defence union. They have, on several occasions, called for better and closer cooperation, and for the pooling of military and strategic planning resources to create what they have called “synergies at EU level in order to better protect Europeans.” There is, however, the problem of different traditions and cultures that complicate full cooperation. In a straight comparison between the European Union and the United States, for example, in 2014 the EU had the highest GDP at €14,000,671, compared with €13,111,780 for the United States. But of course, it’s not just a case of how much you spend; it matters how you spend it. The US spends 4% of its GDP on defence, while the EU, taken as a whole, spends just 1.3%. Of that, 51% of the EU’s defence spending is on staff and just 19% on investment, including research, procurement and development. For the US, just 33% goes on staff, with a whopping 29% going on research, procurement and

development. Europe’s fighting forces are greater: 2,149,800 people under arms, compared with the 1,381,250 in the US. The EU spends €23,829 per soldier on research and development, while for the US the figure is €102,264. The EU’s forces also use a bewildering variety of types and makes of weapons, totalling some 154 in all, whereas for the US, it’s just 27. Research for the European Parliament suggests that if all EU countries used the same ammunition certification system it would save €500-million.



Czech army armoured personnel carriers (APCs) Pandur II manufactured by the Austrian company Steyr-Daimler-Puch

Similarly, the EU has 17,160 individual armoured personnel carriers (APCs), but they come in 37 different types. That’s a lot! The United States has far more individual APCs: 27,528. Even better, they come in just 9 different types. The same pattern emerges for air refuelling tankers: for the EU, just 42 aircraft but in 12 different types. The US has a massive 550 tankers, giving its forces worldwide reach, but despite the numbers, they come in just 4 types. It’s a similar picture where combat aircraft are concerned: the EU has 1,703, but they come in 19 types, while the US has far more – 2,779 – and there are only 11 types. I stress again that these are figures from 2014. It helps explain why EU countries felt they had to leave Afghanistan when their US allies did. 68% of EU citizens say they think that the EU should do more in connection with security and defence policy; up from 66% just two years earlier. Europeans, it seems, expect their countries’ leaders – and the EU itself – to protect them from predatory countries, of which, as we know only too well, there are several.

The European Parliament has been told that EU countries waste some €26.4-billion each year through duplication, over-capacity and various barriers to procurement. The EU could provide the basis for far greater liaison



German Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2019 visiting the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force Land (VJTF) – NATO’s rapid intervention force in Munster, Germany

and cooperation. As it is, Europe has six times as many defence systems as the US, most of them incompatible with one another. Getting a perfect match is important. Back in my youth, when I was a member of a target shooting club and held a British firearms certificate and a Husqvarna Lahti pistol, I witnessed what happened when the owner of a 9mm Walther P38 handgun used Mark 2Z ammunition. It was designed for sub-machine guns, not handguns, being significantly more powerful and therefore more damaging to the pistol in which it was used (the 'Z' indicates that the rounds are loaded with a nitrocellulose powder, rather than Cordite. So does the Mark 1Z but it uses less of it). However, the shooting club had access to a cheap supply of Mark 2Z rounds and those of us owning 9mm pistols took advantage of it. The Walther blew up in my friend's hand, injuring him, and another round greatly damaged the pistol I was using, turning it into scrap metal, although I was unhurt. Getting the details right is important and also much easier with standardised *matériel*. For the US, Russia and China, that's simple. For an EU made up of various competing countries it's much more difficult and potentially dangerous.



© Heritage.org

Ted Bromund

The Begin Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA) at Bar-Ilan University is not sure it's even possible. In a report for BESA, Ted Bromund, Senior Research Fellow in Anglo-American Relations at the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom in Washington's Heritage Foundation, wrote: "Yes, Europe can have an army. But calling a thing an army does not make it one." The variety of cultures and traditions, he argued, would make it virtually impossible. "An army must draw on a military culture," he wrote. "European cultures are

profoundly unmilitary." He also draws attention to the fact that European countries seldom agree on very much, which would make a European armed force unwieldy. "An army must be sent by its national leaders to the battlefield," he reminds us, "But Europe was split on the Balkans, Iraq, Libya, Georgia and Ukraine. When Europe does take action, it is belated, limited, and usually divided. Europe has few core interests in common, so it will not be willing to send an army in common." He also suggests that "there are not enough Europeans who want to kill and die for Europe to form an army."



© Geopolitique.eu/jpeg

Elena Lazarou

I would suggest that few if any people join an armed force just because they want to kill someone and die in glory for their country. Those that do are usually (and correctly) labelled "terrorists", trying to spread their extreme views by means of violence. So perhaps some sort of force that could be mobilised in support of EU countries might be possible after all.

"Within a scenario of growing geopolitical instability and rapid technological innovation in the defence sector, the EU has engaged consistently in building up its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)," writes Elena Lazarou, Senior Policy Analyst at the External Policies Unit of the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) in Brussels. "Some of its achievements so far in the area of defence are: the activation of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO); the establishment of military planning and conduct capability (MPCC); the coordinated annual review on defence (CARD); preparatory action for defence research; the European defence industrial development program (EDIDP); the new compact for civilian CSDP; plans for military mobility; and a dedicated European defence fund in the

next multiannual financial framework." If you read any of these reports, you have to be careful not to drown in a sea of acronyms. The same report also quotes Andrey Kortunov, Director-General of the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) in Moscow. He believes the EU could assemble a powerful army but the fact that it has never done so, despite talking about it a lot, suggests that there is insufficient motivation to do so. "Nobody is eager to have a military machine in Europe duplicating NATO or even some of its functions," he points out. Why? Here is his explanation: "Such a machine would be expensive, hard to manage, and politically risky for the transatlantic partnership – it might even provoke a US strategic disengagement from Europe. Second, it is not clear how a European army can respond to major EU security concerns."



© russiaforcouncil.ru

Andrey Kortunov

"The aim of an argument or discussion should not be victory, but progress," wrote the French moralist Joseph Joubert. Where the idea of a European defence force is concerned there have been a great many arguments and some often quite forthright discussions, but although there has undoubtedly been progress, it has not been on an Earth-shattering scale. It's a long time since the Treaties of Rome were signed but the idea of an army, recruited from all the member states, remains a matter of debate with no obvious solution in sight. Most of the news reports stating that a European army is just around the next corner come from the more nationalist journals, keen to pour a little more petrol on the fire of xenophobia to impress their supposedly "patriotic" (at least in their own eyes) readership. That means in other words those readers who love disliking foreigners. If such an army were to be created, who would have the final say on deployment? This doesn't seem to be the kind of the decision that



the European Council would relish. As we all know, the EU member states don't always agree on everything and decisions can involve lengthy debates spaced over years. Armed conflict would seem to depend on the ability to take split-second decisions. What hope is there for an army that seeks consensus before shouting "charge"?

The idea that seems to have the most impetus behind it is the Initial Entry Force (IEF) first mooted in May 2021. It would come under the aegis of Strategic Compass Operations (SCO), currently under preparation by 14 member states, including France, Germany and Italy. The plan here is to reinforce the EU Battlegroup (EUBG) to enable the EU to respond more quickly in emergencies. Yet the EUBG has never been deployed in its 15 year existence. An IEF would not have helped in Afghanistan,



according to Dylan Macchiarini Crosson, a researcher for the Centre for European Policy Studies. "The proposed IEF currently under member state consideration would not have been deployed (in time) to support the West's retreat from Afghanistan. Nor would the IEF solve the root problems underlying

the effective deployment of EU military forces and subsequently help make the EU a more capable global actor in the future." There's no nice way to put it, but Europe is too divided, its members too set in their ways, to suddenly provide an army that could stand against the world.

The Western Balkans remain an issue for EU defence ministers. Three of the Western Balkan states have been taking advantage of NATO's mutual defence guarantee. They have shown considerable commitment to NATO by contributing to its operations, by hosting NATO bases and by committing troops to NATO missions in such places as Albania, Montenegro, and to North Macedonia's contributions in Afghanistan. Kosovo also currently hosts a NATO mission, says CEPS, the Kosovo Force (KFOR), tasked with building the legal foundations and capacities of the Kosovo Security Force and supported by North Macedonia and Montenegro. Bosnia and Herzegovina would like to become full members but Republika Srpska (a sub-division of Bosnia-Herzegovina) won't permit them to. Just to clarify this, Republika Srpska (Република Српска) is one of the two parts that make up Bosnia and Herzegovina, the other being the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. And as if that wasn't complicated enough, there is also a city that has a special status and is not in either part, called the Brčko District. It gets more difficult still, with Serbia's nationalist politicians putting out negative stories about NATO to keep their nationalist supporters suitably fired up. Prince Otto von Bismarck is claimed to have said towards the end of his life: "If there is ever another war in Europe, it will come out of some damned silly thing in the Balkans." Let's hope he was wrong.

November 2021  
#EUdefence

## A STRATEGIC COMPASS FOR THE EU

In an era of increasing strategic competition between states and complex security threats, Europe's security is at stake. The Strategic Compass provides answers for the EU to become a provider of security for its citizens, act faster and more decisively to protect our values and interests and contribute to international peace and security.

**THE WORLD WE FACE**

The EU conducted for the first time a comprehensive analysis on key threats and challenges to the Union, its Member States and citizens, including global and regional threats, conflicts in our neighborhood by state and non-state actors.

**The Threat Analysis is a classified intelligence report identifying key trends:**

- Global level:** slowdown of globalisation, growing economic rivalry between global powers, climate change and competition for resources, migratory pressures, and threats to the multilateral system.
- Regional level:** regional instability, conflict, state fragility, inter-state tensions, external influences, destabilising impact of non-state actors.
- Threats against the EU:** state and non-state actors targeting the EU with hybrid tools, including disruptive technologies, disinformation, and other non-military sources of influence; terrorist threat.

The Strategic Compass sets out a **common strategic vision for EU security and defence:**

<p><b>ACT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving the readiness of EU armed forces and civilian experts to reinforce CSDP missions and operations.</li> <li>• Developing a European Union Rapid Deployment Capacity of up to 5000 troops supported by strategic enablers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SECURE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening our capacity to prevent, deter and respond to hybrid threats including external cyber-attacks and foreign information manipulation and interference.</li> <li>• Safeguarding EU security interests in the maritime and space domains.</li> </ul>
<p><b>INVEST</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jointly investing in key military capabilities to operate on land, at sea, in the air, in the cyber domain and in outer space.</li> <li>• Boosting research and innovation to fill strategic gaps and reduce technological and industrial dependencies.</li> </ul>	<p><b>PARTNER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening cooperation with NATO and the UN, as well as with OSCE, AU and ASEAN.</li> <li>• Boosting cooperation with individual partners such as the US, Canada and Norway and other countries.</li> </ul>

**TIMELINE**

Jim Gibbons



Russian President Vladimir Putin paying last respects to the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Turkey, Andrei Karlov

# THE STRANGE CASES OF DYING RUSSIAN DIPLOMATS

*Secrets worthy of a spy novel*

German newsmagazine Der Spiegel reported that a Russian diplomat's body was found outside Moscow's embassy in Berlin in October 2021. News of the discovery only emerged on 5 November.

On 19 October at 7:20 am, police guarding the embassy premises discovered a 35 year-old man lying on the pavement just outside the embassy building. They tried to resuscitate him and called in emergency services. But it was too late and the man was declared dead where he lay on the side walk. They then tried to get the Russian authorities from the embassy to surrender the body for an autopsy but that request was declined by invocation of the diplomatic status of the victim.

Consequently, the body was handed over to the Russian embassy and promptly flown to Moscow the next day, without undergoing an autopsy.

In the meantime, it was discovered by Bellingcat, the renowned investigative journalism website, that the dead diplomat whose identity they have



The Russian Embassy, Unter den Linden 55-65, in Berlin-Mitte, Germany

not released, was the second secretary of the embassy and had previously served as the third secretary at the Vienna representation of Russia to the United Nations until June 2019, when he was relocated to the Berlin embassy.

Furthermore, it was discovered that the man's father is a high ranking FSB general; in fact, he is one of the top five people at the FSB. He is in charge of a department known as 'The unit for the protection of the Constitutional Order of Russia'. This is a very important section of the Federal Security Service as it is essentially the political police. It is in fact the entity that has been targeting, tracking, tailing, surveilling and, as was found out by Bellingcat in 2020, poisoning dissidents in Russia.

Russian opposition figures poisoned in mysterious circumstances :





© Wikimedia/Michal Sieglajewicz

Alexei Navalny



© Wikimedia/Jindřich Nose

Vladimir V. Kara-Murza



© Wikimedia/Rodrigo Fernández

Dmitry Bykov

It is precisely the entity that tailed and organised the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, as well as the surveillance of many other opposition figures such as Vladimir Kara-Murza and even the poet and journalist Dmitry Bykov who was poisoned in suspicious circumstances in 2018.

German security services believe that the general's son was also an FSB undercover operative, although this has not been proved at this point.

A number of observers then raised the question of why it took so long for news of the diplomat's death to emerge.

the German security apparatus about what this event actually meant. Was this death the result of some sort of foul play, or was it due to some internal power play within the Russian embassy and possibly the security services, or was this a completely accidental death in mundane circumstances ?

But be that as it may, this event was just the latest in a string of unexplained and unexpected deaths befalling Russian diplomats around the world. Beginning in 2015, high-ranking Russian diplomats, an aide to a former deputy prime minister, a lawyer for an opponent to Vladimir Putin and a former Russian member of parliament have died in mysterious circumstances. While some were shot, the causes of death for the others have systematically been described laconically by Russian authorities as 'heart attacks' or 'brief illnesses'.

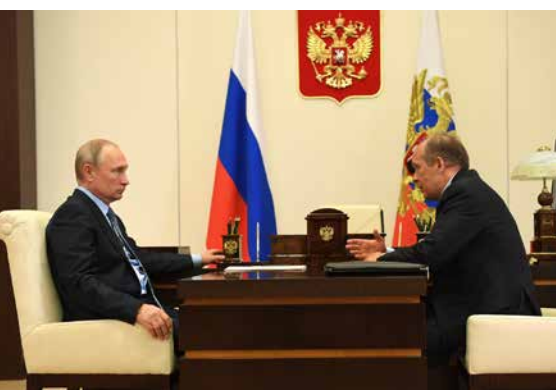
### CONFIDANTS, CONSULS AND AMBASSADORS

First, there was the Russian founder of the controversial Russia Today television network and special advisor to President Putin, **Mikhail Lesin**. He died in November 2015 in his hotel room in Washington DC.

He had been awarded the 'Order for Merit to the Fatherland' medal, one of Russia's highest decorations for civilians. His ability to get virtually all Russian media outlets under control of the Kremlin had earned him the nickname 'The Bulldozer'.

Reports said that he appeared disconcerted before his death. Later, it emerged that he died of a head injury. A medical examiner however said that death was due to 'blunt force injuries', possibly a baseball bat. Alcohol consumption was also blamed, but many questions remained unanswered until the release of his autopsy report in 2019. The evidence suggested possible murder and not a drunken fall.

On November 8, 2016, **Sergei Krivov**, was killed at the Russian Consulate in New York. At first, it was announced that he 'fell' from the roof before consulate officials quickly changed the narrative and said Krivov had a heart attack before falling, hitting his head on the ground and dying as a result. The medical examiner's office did leave the case open until the following day but the New York Police Department closed the case without a formal cause of death.



© Kremlin.ru

Russian President Vladimir Putin with Director of the Federal Security Service (FSB) Alexander Bortnikov

The explanation may be that the death of a diplomatic agent in a foreign country is not necessarily reflected in the general flow of information, mainly because of the diplomatic immunity that the agent in question enjoys. So, police officers in charge of homicide cases in Germany would not have received this information rapidly, unless the Russian embassy had voluntarily requested an investigation.

But there may also have been a certain amount of confusion within



© Wikimedia

Russian President Vladimir Putin with Mikhail Lesin, Minister of Press, Television and Radio Broadcasting and Mass Media



© Washington Police

Mikhail Lesin's Hotel Room at the The Dupont Circle Hotel in Washington



Consulate General of Russia in NY

After all, Krivov was a security officer at the Russian Consulate, a term that can include many activities. He may have been just one of the security guards who are normally assigned to all diplomatic missions, or he may have been a cover for other activities - especially those related to espionage or counter-espionage. The American press that investigated this case found the man to be far too discreet to be honest. That said, if a Russian service had anything against him, it would have proceeded in a different way to neutralise him, simply because a death at the consulate in New York could not but intrigue observers.

On 20 December 2016, the Russian ambassador to Turkey was gunned down by an off-duty Turkish police officer in an art gallery in Ankara. There was no effective security as the killer simply walked up to Ambassador Andrei Karlov and shot him several times in the back. The entire incident was filmed by TV cameras. After firing several rounds and fatally injuring the ambassador, the gunman shouted 'Allah u Akbar !', 'Do not forget Syria', 'Do not forget Aleppo'.



Former Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Turkey, Andrei Karlov

The 22 year-old assailant was shot and killed by Turkish special forces shortly after the attack. Minutes later, Vladimir

Putin appeared on television with a terse message,

“This murder is clearly a provocation aimed at undermining the improvement and normalisation of Russian-Turkish relations, as well as at undermining the peace process in Syria promoted by Russia, Turkey, Iran and other interested parties”.

On the very same day and just hours after the Ankara shooting, another Russian diplomat was found dead in his Moscow apartment. **Petr Polshikov**, 56, served as senior diplomat in the Latin American section of the Russian foreign ministry. According to some reports, Polshikov had left the foreign ministry but it was unclear whether he was employed by another Russian government agency. He had apparently also served at the Russian embassy in La Paz, Bolivia.



Russian medical team at the scene of the shooting at Petr Polshikov's flat in Moscow

He had been shot through the head with a handgun that was found under the sink in his bathroom. His wife was reportedly in the apartment at the time of the shooting but the circumstances of this incident remain unclear.

The lifeless body of **Oleg Erovinkin** was found in Moscow on December 26, 2016 in the back of a car belonging to Rosneft, a giant Russian integrated energy company. The deceased was a former general who served in the KGB and then the FSB before being appointed in May

2008 as chief of staff to Igor Sechin, a close adviser to President Putin and boss of Rosneft.



Oleg Erovinkin (the only available file photo)

Russian authorities suggested that Erovinkin died of a heart attack. But rumor has it that he was the main Russian source for Christopher Steele, the former MI-6 officer who wrote a controversial report on Donald Trump dated July 19, 2016. In this particular case, there is indeed room for doubt. If, contrary to legend, the use of violence is extremely rare in the world of the secret services, it must be exemplary when it is used. If this is the case for Erovinkin, his execution is not intended to punish him but to discourage any other volunteers from gossiping.

On January 9, 2017, **Andrei Malanin**, Russian consul in Athens was found dead in the bathroom of his apartment. Again, the circumstances remain mysterious. Assault seems most unlikely since no break-in was reported and the street inhabited by many diplomats is closely guarded by police officers on duty. Diplomats posted abroad enjoy the immunity that comes with their position and investigations by local authorities are therefore automatically restricted, and a heavy veil of secrecy is placed on any findings that may be made.



Presidential guard in Athens, Greece



Any country that dares to break these international rules will face retaliatory measures against its own diplomats. In the case of Malanin, it should be noted that a consul is a relatively junior official in the Foreign Office. Thus, he is not really a 'personality' who counts, even though his work is indispensable, particularly in terms of support for the expatriate or visiting national community, the issuance of visas and also in the area of financial management. In the past, the cases that have concerned the consular world are essentially related to corruption and embezzlement. The consequences are generally settled by disciplinary measures with the recall of the offenders and sometimes legal action taken against them.

On January 27, 2017, **Alexander Kadakin**, the Russian ambassador to India and Delhi's diplomatic corps' most prominent face for decades died in a Delhi hospital following an unspecified illness.



Alexander Kadakin

The 67 year-old diplomat had apparently been ailing for a few weeks and Russian officials said he died of a heart attack. Kadakin was known for his strong statements in support of India, especially on the issue of terrorism, and was a part of all major agreements between India and Russia, from the days of the Soviet Union and the India-Soviet treaty of friendship of 1971.

As usual, diplomatic secrecy covers the exact circumstances of this dramatic event.

**Vitaly Churkin** was widely considered one of the most incisive personalities in international diplomacy. As Russia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, his speeches and interventions were noteworthy as

he oversaw some of Russia's and the world's most important events in a position he held since 2006.

On 20 February 2017, the diplomat whose 65<sup>th</sup> birthday was on the following day, collapsed while on the premises of the Russian representation to the United Nations and was rushed to a Manhattan hospital, apparently suffering from heart problems. He was pronounced dead on arrival.



Vitaly Churkin

On the following day, the New York City Medical Examiner's Office released the results of the autopsy which stated that the cause of death required further study. This often indicates the need for toxicology tests. However, a court order following a request by the Russian UN Mission on grounds of diplomatic immunity suppressed the public disclosure of the cause and manner of death.

This close collaborator of Vladimir Putin, who was considered as the potential successor of Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, was known for his outspokenness and his adherence to the hard line of the Kremlin. What seems certain is that it was not the Russian administration that had a grudge against this loyal servant of the state.

The Russian ambassador to Sudan, **Mirgayas Shirinski**, was found dead on 23 August 2017 in the swimming pool of his residence in the capital, Khartoum.

Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said embassy staff called an ambulance but he "could not be saved."

The cause of death was not revealed but the authorities in Khartoum already rule out the criminal trail. "According to preliminary

investigations, he died of natural causes," said police spokesman Omar al-Mokhtar, without further details.

The Russian embassy in Sudan, for its part, said that Mirgayas Shirinski died of a heart disease. "For the moment, the official cause of death has not yet been revealed, given the absence of autopsy results. But judging by external factors noted by the doctor, there is every reason to believe that it was a heart problem. Either a heart attack or a stroke," the embassy spokesman told the press.

Mirgayas Shirinski had been appointed ambassador to Sudan in December 2013, after having held the same position in Rwanda between 2006 and 2013. He suffered from high blood pressure and his body was placed in the morgue, according to Omar al-Mokhtar.



Mirgayas Shirinski

The Sudanese Foreign Ministry offered its condolences to the Russian authorities. Moscow confirmed 'with sorrow' the death of its diplomat, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, promising at the same time, to give details on the circumstances of his death upon receipt of information from diplomatic staff at the embassy in Khartoum.

## MURDER OR COINCIDENCE ?

Many of these unexplained deaths have left observers and analysts but also internet conspiracy theorists trying to spot a pattern. There may be nothing in it whatsoever, because after all, diplomats are neither immune to heart attacks or to any other disease.



Vladimir Putin addressing Russian Federation ambassadors and permanent envoys at the Russian Foreign Ministry in Moscow

But still, the fact that so many senior diplomats have died in such a short period of time is rather odd. If we assume that at least some of these deaths were caused by assassins, then we must also assume that Russian intelligence is also responsible for killing its own people.

The main threat to Russian diplomats is probably that posed by Russian separatists and Islamist extremists. But these groups would certainly find it extremely difficult to operate on such a global scale, with such plausible deniability and such means of assassination that makes them appear natural. Causing heart attacks and other illnesses requires an enormous amount of planning, patience and competence; few intelligence services have that mix of abilities. But of course, Russia has them.

Now, as to why the Russians would kill their own officials, two possibilities can be envisaged.

The first is if the officials in question were political rivals or opponents to

Vladimir Putin, or had offended him in some way. There is no evidence to suggest that is the case with any of the dead diplomats and other officials here, so that leaves one other option: the Russian security service's belief that the diplomats were providing intelligence to a foreign power.

In this context, the locations where some of the diplomats died are interesting. Some African countries such as Sudan are regularly used by a number of intelligence services to provide their new operatives the skills to recruit new sources.

Athens and New Delhi are also two top espionage capitals, serving as hubs for numerous trade, economic and political delegations from across the world.

And that is important, because most intelligence service recruitment of foreign officials does not occur in the nation where that official is actually from. In this regard, foreign capitals such as Athens and New Delhi are an attractive proposition because Greece

and India lack the counter-intelligence presence, as well as the public attention garnered by capitals such as Beijing, Moscow, or Washington D.C.

Now, if we go along with the theory that some of the dead diplomats were spying for a foreign power and were killed by the Russian secret service, we must also ask how they were identified.

It seems obvious that without inside information it would be almost impossible for the Russians to identify so many double agents in so many locations in such a short period of time. Yet considering the ranks of some of these officials, it also means that the source of such inside information would also be a high-ranking individual.

Ultimately, it is probable that most of the individuals described here simply died of some sort of illness. But still, some of them stand out as very suspicious, such as the death of Sergei Krivov in New York, the abrupt deaths in murky circumstances in Moscow, as well as that of Petr Polshikov and the former FSB officer.

This is also an interesting question : if Sergei Krivov and Alexander Kadakin were indeed in such poor health before their deaths, why were they not ordered back to Moscow for treatment ? Or perhaps they were, but refused to comply for some reason ?

We shall probably never know, but these mysterious incidents in foreign lands certainly make for an exciting spy story !



The FSB headquarters at Lubyanka Square

*Hossein Sadre*



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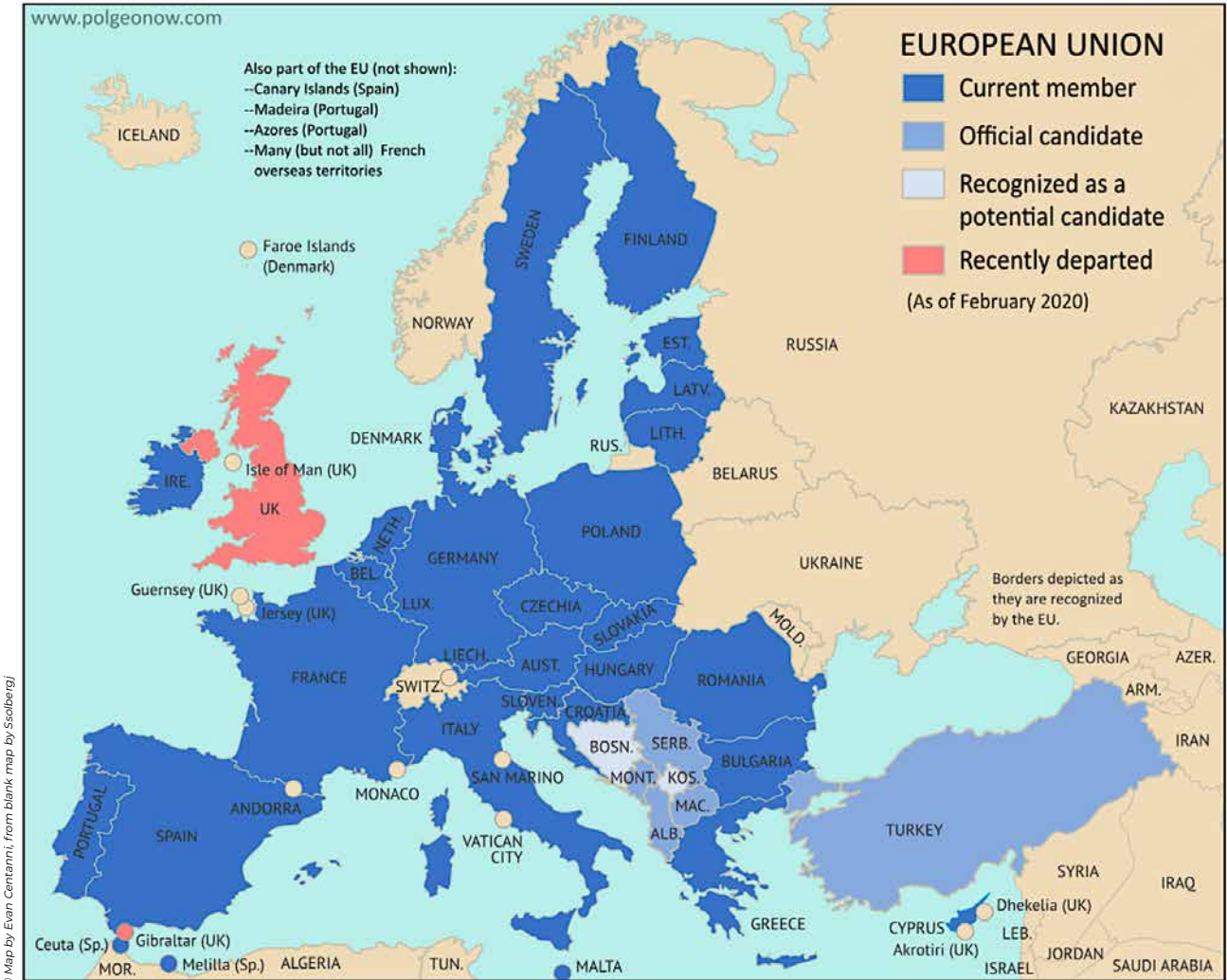
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# WHO'S NEXT?

*Are any of the EU's dissatisfied members considering an exit strategy?*



The European Union after the January 2020 departure of the UK and Gibraltar (pre-Brexit version here)

I am still a huge fan of the American mathematician and writer of humorous satirical songs, Tom Lehrer. At the time of writing, he had reached the impressive age of 93 but sadly he no longer writes and records his clever songs which made unspeakable news seem somehow less offensive. I was introduced to his work by a school friend, and we both found his work hilarious. I saved up my pocket money to buy his LPs as well and I now have all his songs in the (slightly) more up-to-date medium of the CD. By the way, such was his mathematical genius at Harvard that Lehrer started teaching maths to undergraduates while he was still a student. He gave up being a satirist,

sadly, because he said he felt that satire was made obsolete when Henry Kissinger was awarded a Nobel peace prize. One song, composed in 1964, was about the nuclear arms race, which was rushing ahead at the time as one country after another announced that it had acquired nuclear capability. The song was called "Who's Next?"



President Vladimir Putin and former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 2005

Lehrer seems to have felt that the rush to come up with an individual 'nuclear deterrent' (a 'bomb', in other words) was not only fairly pointless but also somewhat dangerous. At the time it was recorded, Ronald Reagan was the outspoken right-wing Governor of California, his time in the White House still lay some way in the future, and in the original version of the song he got a mention which was replaced in subsequent performances (there were a couple of other minor changes, too). Reagan crops up in the last verse as Lehrer jokingly lists possible future nuke-owners, suggesting Luxembourg and even Monaco. "We'll try and stay



serene and calm,” Lehrer sings, “When Ronald Reagan gets the bomb!” (The wording later changed to “When Alabama gets the bomb”). It’s still amusing, although poor old Reagan succumbed to Alzheimer’s Disease, a terrible form of dementia, in which the individual’s brain and thought processes are effectively erased. Nobody deserves to go that way.

The “Who’s next?” I mean in this article relates to the EU and is a query as to which of the EU’s remaining 27 member states will choose to follow the UK out into the wilderness. The UK left the EU on 31 January 2020, ending 47 years of membership (since described by Britain’s Brexit negotiator as ‘a nightmare time’ but without defining how), since when its government has striven to provoke disputes with its former Continental partners as a way to whip up a little anti-European xenophobia.



Boris Johnson campaigning for Brexit

The ghost of Napoleon Bonaparte stalks the corridors of Westminster and perhaps Prime Minister Boris Johnson wants to portray himself as the new Duke of Wellington, or even as King George III or his successor, George IV, or maybe it’s as the Prime Minister of that time, Lord Liverpool. It’s all nonsense, of course: the Napoleonic Wars ended on the battlefield of Waterloo in Belgium (I lived not far from the site for a few years, although quite a long time afterwards, of course. It’s a nice little town). Things have not gone altogether smoothly since the UK’s Brexit referendum in June 2016. For one thing, both Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to stay in, but Johnson’s predecessor decided that the opinions of the Scots and Northern Irish didn’t matter. This rather reinforces the commonly-held impression that the view from Westminster encompasses only England (and mainly its better-off southern half). The humorous singing duo Flanders and Swan sang a song about English xenophobia, which they

called “A Song of Patriotic Prejudice”. The chorus line goes: “The English, the English the English are best/I wouldn’t give tuppence for all of the rest!” It’s a funny song that’s clearly intended to make us laugh, but it would seem that some people in positions of power take it seriously.



Former British Prime Minister Theresa May

Interestingly, when Theresa May was Britain’s Conservative (Tory) Prime Minister and was facing a referendum in Scotland on its possible departure from the United Kingdom, I interviewed various politicians in Brussels – Conservative, Labour, Liberal-Democrat and Scottish Nationalist – several of whom, including, interestingly, Government-supporting Tory MEPs and visiting junior ministers who were warning that if Scotland voted to leave the UK it would also be obliged to leave the EU and reapply for membership, which it would find very disadvantageous. These same politicians, warning against an accidental departure from the EU and the need to reapply to join as an independent country, have since urged British voters to vote to LEAVE the EU. All-in-all, it sounds like somewhat contradictory advice? Tories were advising Scottish voters: vote to remain part of the UK or you’ll lose your place in Europe and then, a short time later, urging them to vote to leave the EU altogether. Now, of course, a few political groups seem to be calling for their own country’s departure from the EU, whatever that may mean for future generations. In the lead-up to the so-called ‘Big Bang enlargement’ of the EU, there had been prophets of doom who had foreseen problems with some of the Eastern European countries. After years of corrupt leadership, hidden under the billowing skirts of the Communist bloc, those who had climbed the greasy pole weren’t about to slide back down into oblivion with nothing to show for it if they felt they had a chance to reinforce their positions.

## IN AND OUT OF THE LIFEBOAT

As a result, we now have people making up words that link particular countries with their own words for ‘goodbye’. One website called ‘Twisted Sifter’ came up with several ideas, such as “Quitally”, “Abortugal” and (a bit of a cheat this, using the name of a city instead of a country): “Withdrawsaw”. Others on the site include “Czeching Out”, “No longer Remainia”, and “Finnished”. You can come up with some of your own if you like. Most of the ones I found rely on a sort of ‘pun’ that only works in English. None of them is particularly funny, I must admit.



A Polesit demonstration in Poland

The most commonly proposed name for a Polish decision to leave is ‘Polesit’, which sounds uncomfortably like ‘Polecat’. Former Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski, despite holding very conservative views, ruled that out when we spoke last month. “Yes, this is a growing concern in Warsaw and Poland,” he told me, “because we were hoping that the whole project of the European Union would fulfil its promise of everything from economic cooperation, to the free market, the common market, but over these last 20 years, it has tended in a political direction, delegation, and even some policies of a hegemonic character with some countries, especially Germany.”

Waszczykowski accused the European Commission of trying to dictate policy in the EU member states and creating its own laws, but he thought it unlikely that his country would seek to find the way out. Poland, he told me, is a European country, and having seen how the Nazis wanted to dismantle it, it is less likely to go its own way.



© Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych PL  
Katarzyna Siemion-Bielska

Former Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski

Although some have pointed out that Britain's departure was "successful" (in that no blood was spilled and there was no physical violence) Markus Gastinger of the University of Salzburg thinks the British example will put people off taking that route. It's interesting to note that some of the people predicting a rush for the doors after the UK's departure are those politicians who most strongly urged Britain to leave, so this could be merely an attempt to put flesh on the bones of a forecast based more on wishful thinking than on careful analysis and inside knowledge. It would also make Britain's "Brexiters", as they're often called, seem less lonely. In an article for the website of the London School of Economics (LSE), Gastinger reminds us that "one argument among Brexiters in the run-up to the referendum was that the UK needs to break free from the EU as a 'failing political project', a mantra repeated by Leave supporters to this day." However, he then adds another point: "But how likely is it that the EU will fail?" Gastinger believes there are just two scenarios in which the EU could collapse. The first of these, which looks about as likely as NASA finding a colony of gnomes on Mars, is that all the remaining member states would agree together unanimously (an unlikely eventuality at the best of times) simply to change the Treaties and dissolve the EU (perhaps those unexpected gnomes could put it back together again whilst humming Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy?'). This eventuality is remote enough to merit a place in a book of fairy tales. Gastinger mentions another possibility which looks to me to be almost, but not quite, as unlikely as the gnomes. He suggests that if the UK's departure is extremely successful, then quitting the Union could be seen as a viable option in a case of serious disagreement.

The table Gastinger produces for his article shows that the UK was positioned very close to the exit from some time before the referendum. However, it also shows that since Brexit the remaining member states seem to have pulled more closely together.

Only Italy has figures that hint at possible departure, but then only 39% of Italians say they lack a 'European identity', compared with 63% in the UK prior to the actual referendum. A lot of that can be attributed to a British media that was (and still is) universally hostile to the whole 'we're part of Europe' attitude. Some of the leading popular newspapers seem to have abandoned any attempt at telling the truth as far as EU issues are concerned, adopting instead an unshakeable 'us and them' approach. Reading some of these so-called "red-tops" (because their banner titles are often printed in red) one might think that the UK was at war with Europe. As far as the UK is concerned, most of those who campaigned for "leave" have done well personally, but not all of them. Take Dominic Cummings, for instance, an ardent long-term campaigner for Britain to leave the Union, who was also nicknamed "the rudest man in Westminster" for his cavalier attitude to MPs, civil servants and the media. He lost his place, however, and now snipes from the sidelines. On the other hand, a middle-ranking diplomat, David Frost, suddenly emerged to carry the banner of separatism alone, and this propelled him swiftly to the top of the tree, which included getting a peerage. He is now (despite never having been elected) the Minister for Brexit, and is often seen on television, despite having been seen by many contemporaries as 'mediocre' when at Oxford University.



© Uni-salzburg  
Markus Gastinger

The Guardian newspaper gave an interesting assessment of the hardest-possible Brexit, for which Lord Frost was responsible. "The most damning criticism

of the Brexit that Frost negotiated is that not one industry or trade can say that, however greatly others are suffering, we at least are benefiting from being outside the EU. Even fishermen and women, whose precarious lives were exploited with such cynicism by Nigel Farage (an ardent Brexit campaigner and founder of the Brexit party) and Boris Johnson, are finding they must fill in 71 pages of paperwork to export one lorry of fish, as new bureaucracy extends to every fishing village in the land."



© Cage Skidmore  
Nigel Farage

The UK government's refusal to permit temporary visas that are long enough to be appealing have left the country with severe shortages of health workers, agricultural workers, and long-distance lorry drivers, but the 'red-top' newspapers are blaming that on an intransigent EU. In tabloid-speak, Britain can never be wrong, the EU can never be right. The readers apparently never question this, nor check if the "facts" they've just read are correct. I once had a disturbing and somewhat heated telephone conversation with a friend who couldn't understand why the First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, would want to keep her country in the EU "where people don't even speak our language". It's an interesting point of view, but Lord Frost's antipathy towards hearing any other tongue but English is strange given that his degree was in French and European History.

### EVERYONE IS TO BLAME (EXCEPT ME)

This fixation in the UK with apportioning blame anywhere but Westminster probably originates in the lingering annoyance with the fact that Britain once had an empire and no longer does. The Guardian article quotes the great Czech writer, Franz Kafka, who wrote 'The Trial' and 'The Metamorphosis', giving rise to the term 'Kafkaesque' to describe too much bureaucratic paper being needed.





© Wikipedia

Franz Kafka

In describing the immediate aftermath of an Earth-changing event, he wrote: “Every revolution ‘evaporates and leaves behind only the slime of a new bureaucracy.’” The Guardian, perhaps unsurprisingly, adds this to its Kafka quote: “Britain’s Brexit revolution is evaporating now and leaving behind the slime of David Frost.” This unrelenting driver of the hardest of hard Brexits felt that EU membership had put chains on British ambition. He perhaps should have recalled another Kafka quote, this time from “The Trial”: “*Es ist oft besser, in Ketten als frei zu sein*” (“It’s often better to be in chains than to be free”). Perhaps the UK’s former partners lack the Frost effect: a middle manager with ambitions but without much backing or high plaudits and so relying on shock tactics (or a sudden change of tactics) to make an impact.

Even so, there are other possible escapers from the EU fold. Much may now depend on Angela Merkel’s successor. Merkel herself had the nickname ‘Mutti’, which translates as “Mommy”. She is popular, too, by and large, and extremely clever; even her political enemies seem to respect her. She modelled herself on Marie Curie, the first woman ever to win a Nobel Prize. She has degrees in quantum chemistry and physics and was the only woman occupying a position in the theoretical chemistry section of the East German Academy of Science.



© Wikimedia/Michael Lucan

Olaf Scholz, likely successor of Angela Merkel as German chancellor

Not a bad record. Mainly raised in the former East Germany (the German Democratic Republic or GDR) she is a fluent Russian-speaker but she dislikes Vladimir Putin who, knowing Merkel’s fear of dogs, deliberately let one into the room where negotiations were taking place, just to discomfort her. Hardly a diplomatic act, but then Putin is no diplomat. So, she commands the ear of many and even those who don’t much like her, respect her. Apparently, she also does very telling impressions of other leaders, which I would love to see. Perhaps we shouldn’t read too much into that particular skill, however; the late Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević used to do it to entertain journalists while we were awaiting the outcome of meetings. His impression of former president of Croatia, Franjo Tuđman was so lifelike that it was difficult to record an interview with Tuđman immediately after watching Milošević doing that particular impression without laughing.



© NTF

Slobodan Milošević during his trial in The Hague



© Wikipedia

Franjo Tuđman

Gastinger’s research suggests that the remaining EU states have moved closer together since Brexit. At the extreme ends of the scale, the largest and smallest are unlikely ever to go for

being on their own. It’s only possible to make a quasi-joke out of it by mixing German and English as others have done (it’s not funny in either). So how about “Tschüss to be alone” (“choose to be alone” in sound but actually meaning ‘ta-ta to be alone’, which makes no sense at all) for the Germans and perhaps for Luxembourgers you could have, “äddi-subtract”, which sounds like ‘add-subtract’ but which is closer to ‘ta-ta subtract’). Let’s face it, both Germany and Luxembourg have far too much to lose to risk a walk on the wild side without company. Unlike the UK, both would also have difficulties in abandoning the euro and establishing a new currency, as would Italy. When I was regularly covering meetings of the European Council when it was held in Luxembourg, I learned how to ask for beer in Luxembourgish because I found I got prompter service in the Council press bar that way. The dictionary says it’s “*zwéi Béier, wann ech glifft*”, but I was told it should be “*zwéi Humpen, wann ech glifft*”, to indicate that I meant beer on tap, rather than the bottled variety. It seemed to work, although smiles from the bar staff at the Council were rare. In any case, I never met a Luxembourger who wasn’t also extremely proficient in French, German and, by and large, English.

Some post-Brexit surveys have suggested that a few more UK voters now anticipate a future outside the EU in a more favourable light, but mainly because it means that the years of all that “in-out” wrangling have finally come to end. At the same time, British attitudes towards immigrant have turned positive. No, I don’t know why, but it seems that around 70% of British respondents view immigration positively, compared with just 53% at the time of the referendum, when some of the tabloid newspapers were talking about Britain being ‘swamped’ with foreigners back in June 2016. Some British newspapers still write leading articles about the numbers trying to get to the UK and how the French are not really trying to stop them. They also write about the incomers ‘taking British jobs’ and occupying British houses, but at a time when certain jobs previously done by immigrants are now not being done at all, I wonder if the message is having quite the desired effect? “Foreign drivers take our truckers’ jobs” as a headline sits badly alongside “unhelpful EU stops drivers from working in Britain”.



Port of Calais

It is a fact – sad but true – that there are people in Britain who are quite happy to blame Europe for everything, but who still fancy holidaying on the Costa del Something-or-other when the weather turns warm.

### WIN SOME, LOSE SOME (BUT LOSE MORE)

If Britain's former co-members of the EU are looking for the advantages they might gain from following the UK's lead, they'll need a powerful magnifying glass and a forensic attitude to clues. Those who voted Leave, or at least those who did the cheer-leading for it, remain convinced that it was the right thing to do, without ever, in most cases, being able to explain how or why. They still seem to believe that the EU will ultimately fail but cannot explain in what way that might happen. One possibility, however remote, in Gaster's opinion, is that the EU could be "hollowed out" by individual, perhaps widely-spaced, departures as individual member countries opt to go their own ways. If the mountain of paperwork that has now sprung up for those seeking to import or export between the UK and the EU is anything to go by, the "cross-border trading" option between the Union itself and an individual former-member seems unlikely to win many supporters.



Jondy Ward (left), going to the the Court of Appeal

To begin with, Britain's response to, for instance, the arrest of the British-registered scallop dredger, *Cornelis Gert Jan*, owned by MacDuff Shellfish of Scotland, was bluster, backed up by threats. The boat has now been released after its Irish skipper, Jondy Ward, appeared in the court of appeal in Rouen. He still faces a trial in Le Havre in August, 2022, charged with non-authorized fishing in French waters by a boat from outside the European Union, which carries a maximum fine of €75,000. The actual legal situation remains unclear at the time of writing and the whole affair seems to have more to do with posturing than justice.

Would such issues persuade others to follow Britain out of the EU? Not according to Brendan Donnelly, Director of the Federal Trust for Education and Research. "During the 2016 referendum advocates of Leave often claimed that other countries would follow the UK in leaving the EU," he told me. "The reality has turned out to be very different. The chaos of Brexit has reinforced the prestige and cohesion of the EU. Even in countries like Hungary and Poland, where certain leading politicians encourage Eurosceptic sentiments, public opinion has looked at Brexit and decided that the British example is not one to be followed. The reports in the British press of the collapse of the EU are wishful thinking, not serious reporting." The problem is that the negotiations for quitting the EU were never completed, the government's claimed 'oven-ready deal' never existed. Furthermore, the UK has reneged on several of the promises it made.

Take, for instance, the mess over Northern Ireland. While Britain was inside the EU, trade across the border between Northern Ireland (which is part of the UK) and the Republic of Ireland was straightforward and unimpeded. With Britain outside, border checks have become inevitable,

and so would a physical barrier of some kind between the two, which nobody wanted. It was made the subject of a protocol which Britain has already broken. Step forward, Lord Frost, once again. In a badly received speech that he made, he cited the so-called 'father of Conservatism', Edmund Burke, before laying all the blame for the current confusion at the door of Brussels, although it is caused by the agreement he cobbled together and the fact that the British government chose the hardest-possible Brexit, with Britain outside not only the Single Market but also the Customs Union.



Stephen Barber

This put the agreement that brought peace to the island of Ireland and ended 'the Troubles' at dire risk. Lord Frost insisted that the agreement secured 'balance', but it never did, according to Stephen Barber, Professor of Global Affairs at Regent's University London and Senior Fellow of the Global Policy Institute. "The fundamental difficulty is that we are being asked to run a full-scale external boundary of the EU through the centre of our country, to apply EU law without consent in part of it, and to have any dispute on these arrangements settled in the court of one of the parties." The fact that it doesn't work would be embarrassing for Boris Johnson, which is why he and his supporters seem to have resorted to mud-slinging. The Government accuses anyone who rocks the boat of wanting to see Brexit fail. Those who orchestrated this unworkable plan are happy not to mention Brexit at all, claiming it's done and that's that. "They have been no more sensitive to the fragility of the Northern Ireland settlement than they have to the traditions of Parliament, which Johnson attempted to prorogue," wrote Professor Barber, "or the institutions of the judiciary which were undermined as 'enemies of the people' (for questioning



Johnson's right to prorogue parliament illegally). The failure to 'Get Brexit Done' could pose political risks to the government and that is perhaps why, even where it genuinely wants to revisit the Protocol, constructive discussions remain undermined by point-scoring and political attack."

It's very sad for those living there but also for those of us who reported on the frequent meeting and negotiations between such notables as John Hume and Ian Paisley, who buried their differences long enough to find common ground.

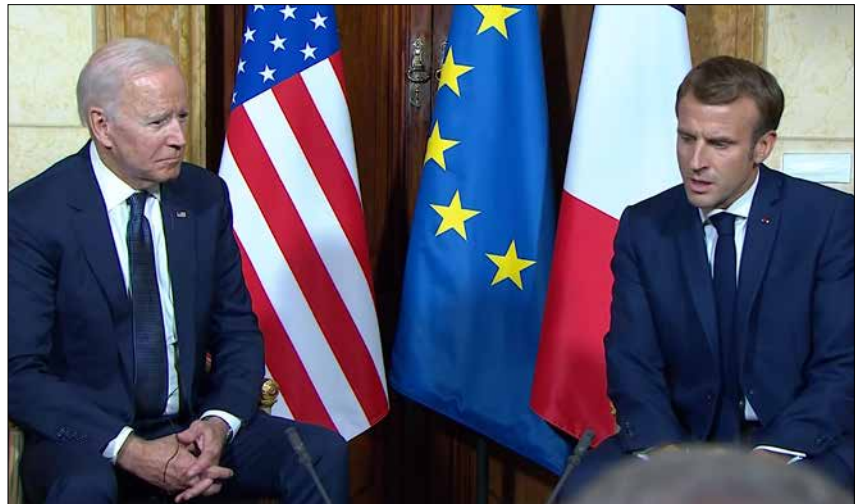


Former Irish nationalist politician from Northern Ireland and former MEP John Hume



Northern Irish loyalist politician and Protestant religious leader Ian Paisley

I can only assume that those who remain supportive of Lord Frost's views have never visited homes where strong wire defences have had to be erected over people's gardens to keep out petrol bombs, nor have they seen the barriers across parts of Northern Ireland between Republican and Loyalist areas. Those differences are likely to remain; a Sinn Fein Belfast councillor I interviewed long ago still recalled how he and his friends (and enemies, I suppose) used to gather along the line between Catholic and



US President Joe Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron discussing the AUKUS deal

Protestant communities in Belfast's Alexandra Park for what he described as 'recreational violence', which more closely resembled football hooliganism than the bombs and bullets that came later and which scarred the North for so long. That sort of traditional hostility doesn't die out overnight when it has lasted for decades or even centuries. Oddly enough, Ian Paisley, that fiercely protestant pastor and leader of the largest unionist party in Northern Ireland ended up on very good terms with Martin McGuinness, a Sinn Féin politician and former commander of the Provisional IRA, introducing him to me in Brussels in friendly terms. They seemed to get on very well.

The Office for Budget Responsibility is now forecasting that the economic damage caused by Brexit will be twice as serious as that inflicted by Covid-19. It is difficult to believe that the signing of marginally beneficial trade deals with far-away countries like Australia and New Zealand will do much to convince British public opinion that Brexit is going well. The Australia deal, known as AUKUS (Australia, UK and US) is arguably the most controversial, involving Australia and the United States in an agreement that provides Australia with nuclear-powered submarines which use American technology. The problem is that Australia already had a deal with France for twelve conventional submarines. Quite apart from the EU, France is supposed to be a close defence ally under the Lancaster House Treaties, agreed in 2010. Britain only told Paris that Canberra was reneging on its deal with France two hours before the AUKUS agreement was

formally announced. France withdrew its ambassadors to the United States and Australia but not Britain, which the French believed had merely seized an existing opportunity. It is, however, a clear breach of confidence with a long-time partner and ally. Britain doesn't even get much out of it since the technology involved is American. It does demonstrate, however, how much Britain's defence policy is now dictated from Washington. This will not have gone unnoticed in the EU.

Britain looks set to lose out in other ways, too. Before Brexit, getting close to the UK was seen by India as a good way of cosying up to the EU. New Delhi now sees Britain as a less important ally in that regard, especially as the EU now views the Indo-Pacific region as strategically more important, even appointing its own envoy for the region. Dr. Karine de Vergeron, Associate Director and Head of the Europe Programme at the Global Policy Institute (GPI) in London, stresses the changed geopolitical reality and why it matters. "The Indo-Pacific creates 60% of global GDP, two thirds of global growth and 30% of trade to the EU passes through the region." She also makes an interesting prediction: "After Brexit, the forthcoming French presidency of the EU starting next January will no doubt seek to bolster European defence as a priority. It will be an interesting test of the EU's capacity, freed from British restraint, now to engage in significant new steps towards further integration." It would seem unlikely that a France that leads the EU and whose big Australian contract was scuttled with British efforts will look with friendly eyes across the Channel.

*T. Kingsley Brooks*



© Wikimedia

Nobel Peace Prize Medal

## THE 120 YEAR OLD NOBEL PRIZE

*An award worth a medal and about one million Euros*

“The best remedy against depression is a hot bath and the Nobel Prize” (Dodie Smith, novelist).

The Nobel Prize may indeed be the most prestigious and best known award on Earth; one which can certainly not only put an end to depression, but also ensure world recognition and admiration for its recipients.

The man behind the prize, whose name it also bears was Alfred Nobel, an accomplished Swedish scientist and best known as the inventor of dynamite. As well as holding some 355 patents, Nobel was a successful entrepreneur and businessman who also wrote poetry and drama. In fact, his diverse interests are reflected in the categories of the prizes he established.

The Nobel Prizes were bestowed after his death in 1896, when he left most of his large fortune - about 265 million dollars in today's money - to the establishment and funding

of these prizes. Beginning in 1901, the Nobel Prize has been awarded each year for great achievements in the fields of Physics, Chemistry, Medicine, Literature and Peace, as had been stipulated in his last will in 1895. He also designated the institutions that would be responsible for the awards, as well as the selection of the winners. The four awarding institutions are the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, the Swedish Academy, the Nobel Assembly at the Karolinska Institute and the Norwegian Nobel Committee.

In 1968, Sweden's central bank, Sveriges Riksbank, established the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in honour of Alfred Nobel by making a large donation to the Nobel Foundation on the occasion of its 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Since 1969, the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences is awarded each year by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, following the same criteria as for the other Nobel Prizes.



© Alexander Mahrmoud/Nobelpeaceprize.org

Alfred Nobel

Since 1900, it is the Nobel Foundation that manages Alfred Nobel's fortune. Its main purpose is to ensure the long term financial stability and independence of this private institution and to fulfill the objectives stipulated in Alfred Nobel's will and testament. Over the years, the Nobel Foundation has actively developed and strengthened the 'Nobel' brand; it has expanded its network and related events, thus



disseminating knowledge about the famous prize. There is now a Nobel Prize museum in Stockholm and a Nobel Peace Center Foundation in Oslo, both externally funded but contributing to the ever increasing popularity, prestige and acknowledgment of the Nobel Prize.

The Nobel Prize Foundation also organises several educational programmes, exhibitions and public debates under the general motto: 'Science impacts lives', aiming to spread Alfred Nobel's vision and to inspire people to great discoveries and achievements.



The Reading room in 1905

Since 1901, the Nobel Prizes are traditionally presented each year on December 10<sup>th</sup>, to mark Alfred Nobel's death anniversary. The festive ceremonies take place at the Stockholm Concert Hall, where, after the presentation speeches, His Majesty the king of Sweden hands out the coveted medal and a diploma to each laureate. This event is followed by a Nobel Banquet hosted by the royal family of Sweden and to which around 1300 guests including family members of the laureates, prominent figures of society as well as 250 students are invited. The yearly Nobel ceremonies are, as Alfred Nobel intended, a great celebration of academic achievements that attract massive international media coverage and public attention.

"The Nobel awards should be regarded as giving recognition to this general scientific progress as well as to the individuals involved", said John Bardeen, the only person to have ever received the Nobel Prize for Physics twice, in 1956 and 1972.



Marie-Curie

Marie Curie was the first woman to receive the prestigious prize. She was exceptionally awarded two Nobel Prizes, one in recognition of her great achievements in physics in 1903, for the study of spontaneous radiation, won together with her husband, and the other in chemistry in 1911, for the discovery of two new chemical elements, radium and polonium.

But the record for the most Nobel Prizes won is held by the International Committee of the Red Cross. This celebrated Swiss institution is the only three-time winner of the prize in 1917, 1944 and 1963, as a recognition of its tremendous drive and activity around the world, 'for the efforts to take care of wounded soldiers and prisoners of war and their families'.

The Nobel Prize rewards bold discoveries, tireless efforts and great personalities.



Albert Einstein and wife Elsa on their arrival in New York on the SS Rotterdam

"The further the experiment from the theory, the closer it is to the Nobel Prize" (Frederic Joliot-Curie).

It was Albert Einstein who possibly came closest to embodying this statement. He received the Nobel Prize in 1921 'for services to theoretical physics'. For years, many have voiced the opinion that the world's most renowned scientist should have won perhaps seven more Nobel Prizes for his immense contributions to world knowledge and progress, including one for his famous Theory of Relativity.

Over the years, there have been well-known people as well as more obscure recipients of the awards, including some unexpected names in the long list of laureates.

In 2016, to the surprise of many, folk singer Bob Dylan was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in recognition of his contribution 'to the creation of new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition'.

Contrary to public belief, Winston Churchill never won a Nobel Peace Prize. Instead, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1953 for 'his mastery of historical and biographical description as well as for brilliant oratory in defending exalted human values'.

Most odd and surprising was the nomination of Adolf Hitler for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1939...the same year he started World War II. It was a Swedish member of parliament by the name of E.C.G Brandt who nominated the infamous dictator. If this was done as a joke, it certainly was a bad one!



© Wikimedia

Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, Civil Rights March on Washington D.C., March 1963

The Nobel Peace Prize is possibly the most popular among the Nobel Prizes, partly because of the prominent names who have been awarded it over the years; great personalities known for their activities and efforts. As was stated in Alfred Nobel's will, the Nobel Peace Prize is to be awarded to the person who 'shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations and promotion of peace'. Nobel said, "I intend to leave after my death a large fund for the promotion of the peace idea, but I am skeptical as to its results".

Nobel also decided that this prize will be the only one awarded in Oslo, Norway. The laureates are chosen by a five-member Norwegian committee, appointed each year by the Norwegian Parliament or 'Storting'. It is not known with any certainty why Alfred Nobel made this specific choice and why Norway was chosen.

But irrespective of the venue, the Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded 102 times to 137 laureates, some of whom are great personalities and renowned institutions.

Martin Luther King Jr. won it in 1964 for 'combating racial inequality through nonviolent resistance', Willy Brandt in 1971 for 'the efforts to strengthen cooperation and for achieving reconciliation between West Germany and Eastern Europe', Mother Theresa in 1979, for 'her work in the struggle to overcome poverty and distress'.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, the former president of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, the dissident and former president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, and former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan are some of the great names on the Nobel Peace Prize list.

Barack Obama, the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States of America was awarded the prize in 2009, just eight months after being elected, for 'his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation, especially reaching out to the Muslim world'.

There is a special mention for Malala Yousafzai who in 2014 became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize recipient at the age of seventeen. This Pakistani girl has become famous for her determined efforts to defend girls' rights to attend school and for the right of all children to education.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, founded in 1950, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1954 for 'protecting refugees, displaced communities and stateless people and assisting in their voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement to a third country'.

In 1965, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was rewarded for its 'efforts in providing humanitarian aid to children worldwide'.

Amnesty International also won the prize in 1977 for protecting human rights, as did the European Union in 2012 for achieving 'over six decades of peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe'.

While the Nobel Prizes are widely regarded as a great honour and as the most prestigious award given for intellectual achievement in the world, six winners in the entire history of the prizes declined to accept it; some were put under pressure from their governments and others rejected it for personal reasons.



© Wikimedia

French philosopher and writer, Jean-Paul Sartre



© Nrf

Vietnamese general, revolutionist, diplomat and politician, Le Duc Tho

The first was the German chemist Richard Kuhn who was awarded the prize for 'his work on carotenoids and vitamins' in 1938. However, the Nazi regime forced him to decline the award. The following year, Adolf Butenandt was awarded the Nobel Prize in chemistry for his work on sex hormones and Gerhard Domagk won the Nobel Prize in medicine. Both were forced to decline the



award by Adolf Hitler. In fact, the Gestapo arrested Domagk soon after the Nobel committee announced his nomination. In 1958, the Russian novelist Boris Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature for 'his important achievement both in contemporary lyrical poetry and in the field of the great Russian epic tradition'. But Soviet authorities publicly denounced Pasternak's novel, *Doctor Zhivago*, and threatened him of arrest if he went to Sweden to receive the award. French philosopher and writer Jean-Paul Sartre declined the Nobel Prize in literature in 1964, explaining that the reasons that motivated his decision were 'personal and objective'. And finally, the Vietnamese politician Le Duc Tho refused to accept the Nobel Peace Prize he shared with Henry Kissinger in 1973 for his efforts in the Paris Peace Talks that led to a ceasefire in the Vietnam War.

In 2021, the Nobel Prize was awarded to 13 laureates for achievements 'that have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind'.



© BBC screenshot

Abdulrazak Gurnah

The 2021 prizes rewarded the work for 'Physical modeling of Earth's climate, reliably predicting global warming' (Nobel Prize for Physics - Syukuro Manabe, Klaus Hasselmann and Giorgio Parisi), for 'The development of asymmetric organocatalysis' (Nobel Prize for Chemistry - Benjamin List and David W.C. MacMillan), for 'Discovery of human temperature and touch receptors' (Nobel Prize



Dmitry Andreyevich Muratov and Maria Ressa

for Medicine - David Julius and Ardem Patapoutian), for 'The contribution to labour economics and analysis of casual relationships' (Nobel Prize for Economic Science - David Card, Joshua D. Angrist and Guido W. Imbens).

The 2021 Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to Abdulrazak Gurnah, a novelist born in Africa but living in the UK and writing in English. In his novels he documents the immigrant experience from different perspectives. The motivation for the award states that he proved an 'uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of refugees in the gulf between cultures and continents'. Gurnah was previously elected a fellow of the British Royal Society of Literature in 2006, and was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize.

This year's Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded for 'efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace'. It was awarded to two journalists, Maria Ressa and Dmitry Andreyevich Muratov, thus underlining the importance of a free press all over the world. It also recognizes the current trend of growing repression of the media and restrictions on freedom of expression in some parts of the world.

Maria Ressa is only the 18<sup>th</sup> woman to have been honoured in the Nobel Prize's 120 year history. The Filipino-American journalist was awarded the almost 1 million dollar prize for her struggle to bring attention to the violation of human



© NFR

rights and press freedom in the Philippines.

The second laureate of this year's Nobel Peace Prize is Dmitry Muratov, the celebrated Russian journalist, founder and editor-in-chief of the only truly critical national newspaper in Russia today. 'Novaya Gazeta' investigates high-level corruption cases, human rights violations and abuse of power. This bold project which began with two computers and one printer was initially also supported by the former Soviet president, Mikhail Gorbachev, who donated part of his Nobel Peace Prize money to fund the newspaper. Today, it has become a publication of national influence with one million readers. In an interview, Muratov described their activity as being like in a war zone, commenting on the brutal or mysterious deaths of some of his colleagues which occurred while investigating corruption cases in high political spheres.

Whether for Peace or any of the other categories of human endeavour, the Nobel Prizes reward groundbreaking discoveries that contribute to world progress and to the promotion of great personalities whose bold actions have a lasting and positive impact on peoples' lives.

The Nobel Prizes continue to celebrate courage and vision, 120 years after they were first conceived.

"Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less". (Marie Curie)

*Alexandra Paucescu*



© Trangi Lithium

With resource and production assets in Australia, Chile and China, Trangi Lithium, based in Chengdu, China, is believed to have controlled as much as 46% of global lithium production in 2018

## ENERGY CRUNCH, WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

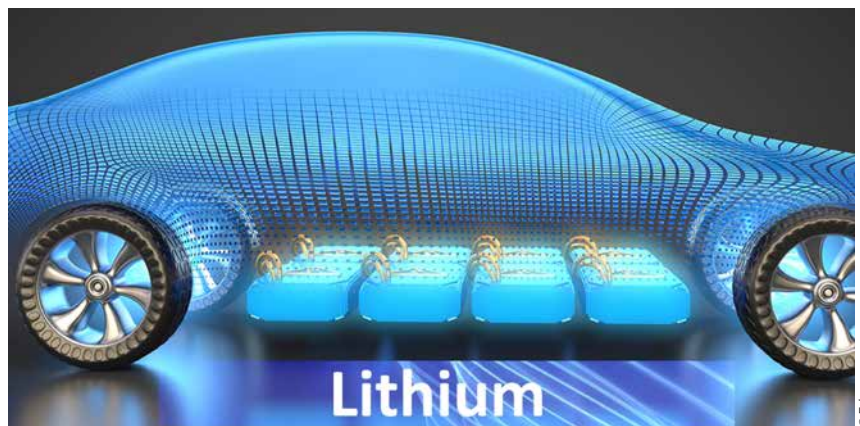
### *Lithium, lithium, lithium !*

If there was one commodity to follow in summer 2021, it was the soft, silvery white metal called lithium that when thrown into fire, flares into magnificent bright crimson.

Lithium from the Greek "lithos", which means "stone". Its price skyrocketed this summer to unprecedented levels, trading at 29,358USD per ton in October 2021.

Investors were so intensely focused on investing in electric vehicles (EVs) that they forgot these same cars need batteries to function, not to mention a whole process called the 'supply chain'. Now, confronted with the shortage, the world is in the middle of a 'chip crisis' affecting more than 169 industries, from communications to pharmaceuticals, to smartphones to laptops, to cars, video games and consumer goods.

Lithium is a highly interesting metal; it is the lightest and softest known metal

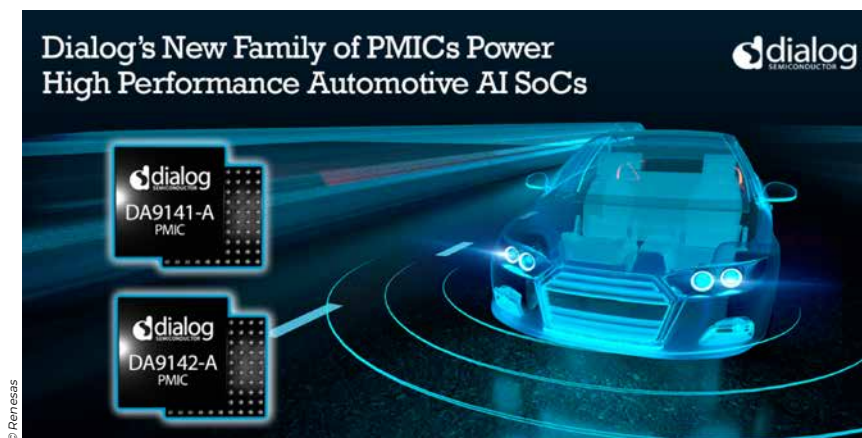


Lithium car batteries

that can float on water and be cut with a kitchen knife. Also known as a mood lightener, it is used in the mental health industry and pharmaceuticals as a common treatment, helping to stabilise wild mood swings caused by bipolar disorder. Lithium is also present in the cosmos, produced by the bright celestial explosions; according to the Big Bang theory at the birth of the universe, lithium was one of the three

basic chemical elements after hydrogen and helium. According to NASA, lithium should be present in abundance in the solar system and the galaxy, but somehow it is scarce, mostly due to its nuclear instability. This is a mystery known as 'The Cosmological Lithium Problem'. This magical substance that has come to the attention of the mass media only recently, seems to keep surprising us in all sorts of ways.





Dialog Semiconductor, a Renesas company, has launched its new integrated circuit that manages the power in an electronic device or module

With 8 million tonnes, Chile has the world's largest known lithium reserves. Together with Argentina (2 million tonnes), they make South America the biggest reserve of the new gold, ahead of Australia (2.7 million tonnes), and China (1 million tonnes). Within Europe, Portugal has smaller quantities of the valuable raw material. The total global reserves are estimated at 14 million tonnes, corresponding to 165 times the production volume in 2018.

But not all those who have lithium are rich. At least a quarter of the global lithium reserves cannot be developed in the near future due to political issues - for example in Bolivia - and lack of technical knowledge, lack of infrastructure and access to water.

Other than that, the shortage in semiconductors was also very much related to the pandemic; due to the large scale lockdown in 2020, the chip factories didn't produce as much as they did in previous years. Furthermore, the US-China trade war was a major influence, as the US manufacturing plants were unable to buy the Chinese chips, and China was reluctant to make any sales to the US. So, the US turned to Taiwan - accounting for more than 50% of the global market in 2020 - and to South Korea. Samsung was already producing at maximum capacity and demand was so high that they too got exhausted.

US companies then looked desperately for semiconductor suppliers anywhere they could. But then, as luck would have it, the Japanese Renesas Electronics Corporation that was supplying 30% of the global output, caught fire in March 2021, delaying the production by at least three months. The odd timing of the fire

has raised questions about the accident; for instance, whether the trade war was not encroaching on other sensitive areas.

On the side of the law-makers, under the Paris agreement signed in 2015, the European Climate Law is working to get the world on track for net-zero emissions by 2050, in order to prevent a climate catastrophe. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), to achieve this goal, an annual investment of 4 billion dollars in clean energy is required; this represents three times the current investment. The law also sets the intermediate target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030.

In January 2021, the American car giant General Motors announced plans to stop selling petrol-powered and diesel models by 2035 and to become completely carbon neutral by 2040. The German automobile manufacturer Audi also announced that it will cut production of such vehicles by 2033, and it is expected that many other automotive producers will follow suit and issue similar road maps. By 2035, half of the vehicles produced worldwide will thus be electric, driven by consumer initiative and private demand. But all these cars will need lithium.

This means that hundreds of millions of vehicles will hit the roads, carrying massive batteries, each containing tonnes of materials that are yet to be mined; the same stuff that today is very scarce and expensive. It is predicted that 140 million electric vehicles will be on the roads worldwide by 2030. This means that 140 million EV batteries will need to be produced by 2030. Each EV battery consists of 30-40% of valuable cathode material by weight, and even if

the lithium percentage in the lithium-ion battery accounts for only 7%, the total amount of lithium needed for 140 million vehicles equals 3,000kt of lithium content.

According to these calculations from the IEA, there is a high probability that the currently known natural reserves of lithium would run dry during our lifetime.

Right when the market is confronted with the dilemma on semiconductors, another predicament on the global energy market is hitting us with full force. With skyrocketing coal costs, gas prices have skyrocketed and there are predictions for oil prices reaching 100\$ per barrel. These prices are unprecedented since 2008.



Tuha Oil Field, Turpan, Xinjiang, China

The cold winter of 2020 followed by the summer heat waves, compounded by the post-lockdown fuel demand, especially in China, India and the US have all added to the 2021 energy crunch. It should be kept in mind that one of Europe's biggest natural gas onshore fields at Groningen will be closing by 2022, after it was hit by an earthquake in 2018.

Furthermore, due to the ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) investment guidelines with new regulations imposed on fossil fuels, as well as the latest European Union taxation on carbon emissions have caused many investment companies to withdraw their funds from coal and fossil mining industries in recent years, hence contributing to the shortage of traditional energy.

In Europe in early October, natural gas was trading for the equivalent of 230\$ per barrel, in oil terms - up more than 130% since the beginning of September, and more than eight times higher than the same period last year, according to data from Independent Commodity Intelligence Services.



Connecting pipe sections above water

© Nord Stream 2 / Axel Schmidt

But of course, oil and gas are inseparable from geopolitics; the declining European gas reserves have left a large gap in the output, hence more sway to Russia which provides one third of the European gas.

Yet, in the midst of a European gas shortage, the Russian state-controlled gas giant Gazprom PJSC has this year, rejected the 15% extra gas supplies to Europe, forcing analysts to believe that the Kremlin is using the current energy crunch as a tool to pressurise the West on the Nord Stream 2 project. This is a \$10 billion pipeline carrying natural gas from Russian fields to the German coast, spanning 1230 kilometers under the Baltic Sea. Gazprom PJSC has said it is fulfilling its contractual obligations, a statement confirmed by the companies receiving gas.

Once operational, the intercontinental conduit is supposed to double the imported gas volume of the original 2011 Nord Stream, which runs parallel to the new project, supplying gas to Germany – Europe's largest industrial nation and heavily reliant on gas and oil imports - at a relatively low cost, as the continent's production capacity decreases.

The Russian president, Vladimir Putin has said that the gas shortage in

Europe can be solved easily once the Nord Stream 2 pipeline is approved. Although technically ready, the pipeline is still waiting for the German regulators' green light which has been slow to materialize, amid Europe's various programmes to decarbonise and abandon fossil fuels. Given the tensions around the project since its inception, one can wonder about its geopolitical repercussions. Although Germany and Russia insist that the project is exclusively economic and energy-focused, other countries see major political stakes at play.

The Nord Stream 2 project is sponsored by the Russian Gazprom, the German Wintershall and Uniper, the French ENGIE, the Austrian OMV, and Royal Dutch Shell. However, the US opposes the project along with many Eastern European countries relying on the Russian gas that currently passes through Ukraine.

The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Romania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Croatia are all highly dependent on Russian gas. They are in fact, under the domination of Russia which can, with just one flick of the switch, turn off supplies anytime it feels it has been wronged in any way.

In previous disputes between Russia and Ukraine, Moscow simply turned off its gas supplies to Ukraine, leaving millions of Europeans without gas during the winter months of 2006 and 2009.

Once the Nord Stream 2 is up and running, it will generate over 2 billion dollars per year in transit fees, a crucial source of income for Ukraine's battered economy. Italy is in the same position; the country's main supply of natural gas is delivered through Ukraine.

Some argue that not only is the Nord Stream 2 pipeline extremely expensive (the cost of repairing the current Ukrainian route is estimated at about \$6 billion compared to the \$10 billion price tag for Nord Stream 2), but also according to some studies, Germany is not in crucial need of extra gas.

Over the past several years, Germany has consumed between 85 billion and 90 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually, importing about one-third from Russia, a further third from Norway and about 30 percent from the Netherlands. The rest comes from domestic sources. It has been speculated that this arrangement would suggest that an additional 55 billion cubic meters of supply (the potential capacity of Nord Stream 2) would not be necessary.

So, why is it that despite the pipeline being so politically charged, unnecessary in terms of energy supply, too expensive and incompatible with the EU energy and climate goals, Germany has insisted on this project?

One could argue that the prospects of securing a lifetime's supply of cheap gas versus prospects of declining European reserves, has made the deal worthwhile despite all the diplomatic complications. Or perhaps, the prospect of becoming Europe's nerve centre for natural gas imports in the midst of an energy shortage is too attractive to ignore.

The heart of the matter is not who is selling gas to whom, but rather, the development of the renewable energy sector. A decarbonised economy is not good news for Russia, nor for any other gas and oil exporting country. With half of the top Russian companies using traditional sources of energy and accounting for 40% of the country's GDP, a green economy, in the long term, would mean depriving the Russian economy as well as the Kremlin from its main source of income. It is therefore not surprising that Russia is pushing to monopolise its position as the main energy exporter to Europe via Nord Stream 2, and is playing its hand at having the project up and running as soon as possible.

The cherry on top is the recent statement by the Belarusian President, Alexander Lukashenko - a protégé of



© Kremlin.ru

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





© kremlin.ru

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin in July 2021

Vladimir Putin - threatening to shut down Russian gas transiting through his country to Europe. This is of course directly linked to the Western sanctions following his disputed election victory in 2020. And now, he has been accused by the EU of intentionally luring migrants from Iraq, Syria and Yemen to his country, in order to facilitate their crossing into bordering EU member states such as Poland and Lithuania, in retaliation for the sanctions.

Facilitated by Belarusian travel agencies, the national carrier Belavia as well as Turkish Airlines have flown immigrants from Istanbul, Beirut and Dubai to the capital, Minsk, while Belarusians themselves are generally banned from traveling due to Covid-19 regulations. According to Reuters, there are even reports of immigrants being provided with wire cutters by Belarusian guards at the EU borders.

Manufacturing a 'migrant crisis' on the borders of the EU by using Belarus seems to be another card and leverage point that Putin may be trying to use in order to accelerate the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project. The Kremlin has naturally rejected the allegations.

In the meantime, while European gas reserves are drying up quickly, sustainable and renewable energies are not yet scalable replacements for gas and other fossil fuels.

An estimated 35 gigawatts growth of the global supply of renewables from 2021 to 2022, is by far not enough to meet the 100 gigawatts growth of the global power demand over the same period; there is clearly a gap to be bridged. With demand already spiking

to pre-pandemic levels, the shortfall is expected to only widen as economies are about to reopen and international travel about to resume.

According to the French finance minister Bruno Le Maire, the EU should follow the French model, referring to nuclear energy that accounts for a large part of the market, resulting in the relative independence of France on the electricity market. Led by France, a group of ten EU countries consisting of Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania have asked the European Commission to recognise nuclear power as a low-carbon energy source and in line with the transition towards climate neutrality. While 26% of the EU's electricity comes from nuclear power, the project is being strongly opposed by Germany who is planning to shut all its reactors by 2022, accompanied by Austria, Denmark, Luxembourg and Spain. The European Commission's position on nuclear energy is not yet clear and it is expected that a decision will be forthcoming sometime in 2022.



© Wikimedia/Jacques Paquier

French finance minister, Bruno Le Maire

So, with nuclear power facing opposition and natural gas being turned into a political tool, the only option left for now seems to be the good old-school coal. It is an economical and available commodity and yet considered by many as tragic and regressive for the climate. But in the short term, and considering the skyrocketing household energy bills, there seems to be little choice but to adopt a conservative approach in exchange for the missing back-up plan.

In the meantime, China is leading the renewable energy production figures; currently the world's largest producer of wind and solar energy, four of the world's five biggest renewable energy deals were made by Chinese companies in 2016. What's more, over half of the electric vehicles produced are coming from China. It has invested heavily in lithium and therefore dominates the lithium-ion battery supply chain. By 2029, 101 lithium-ion battery plants out of 136 worldwide will be based in China. This means that the more Europe shifts towards the zero emission carbon system – that is to say electric vehicles - the more it will depend on China for fuel for the new cars.

The conclusion then, comes down to this : Given that a total energy independence is not yet possible, would it be preferable to continue using natural gas and depend on Russia or to go electric and depend on China ?

As noble as this may sound, our era has to go through the first teething troubles of the historic transition from fossil fuels to green energy.

At the time of writing, a surprisingly warm and windy autumn so far has resulted in less overall gas consumption and more wind energy production. This has caused the Dutch TTF Gas future to go down from 160,00 EUR in September to 90,49 EUR in mid October.

Ultimately, nothing is written in stone, including energy prices which in the new age, will be at the mercy of the Gods and dependent on the mastery of the four elements, rather than the whims of Vladimir Putin and Greta Thunberg.

Vianne Savoli

# ASTRONAUT TRAINING IN THE LAND OF VOLCANOES



© ESA-A. Romeo

Standing at the rim of this volcanic edifice, the Pangaea field team stops to take a 360° panoramic photo to show the remote science team at ground control

A team of astronauts, engineers and geologists is travelling to Spain's Canary Islands, one of Europe's volcanic hot spots, to learn how to best explore the Moon and Mars during ESA's Pangaea geological training course.

This edition's participants are ESA astronaut Andreas Mogensen, ESA engineer Robin Eccleston and NASA astronaut Kathleen Rubins, who is part of the group of NASA astronauts selected to potentially land on the Moon for the Artemis missions, where research on lunar geology will be crucial.



© ESA-A. Romeo

Roscosmos astronaut and former Pangaea trainee Sergei Kud-Sverchkov is ready to rock, providing the science team with a detailed audio description of the highly-altered sample he is examining

The crew learned how to identify interesting rock samples and traces of life during field trips to the Italian Dolomites and the Ries crater in Germany in September.

Thanks to lessons by leading European scientists, "by now we are able to listen to and better understand the geologic heartbeat of the planet. Some rocks are like open books telling you the story of our Solar System," says Andreas.

## VOLCANIC UNIVERSE



Roscosmos astronaut and former Pangaea trainee Sergei Kud-Sverchkov took this picture of the island of Lanzarote, Spain, from the International Space Station during his spaceflight mission in 2020

Lanzarote's volcanic landscapes are exceptionally well-preserved, and recent geological activity makes it a unique open-air museum.

Here, basaltic lava flows resemble vast plains on the lunar maria and volcanoes are similar to those in some regions of Mars.



© ESA-A. Romeo

ESA's Aidan Cowley and Roscosmos astronaut Sergei Kud-Sverchkov are tagging a sample site with a QR code, and sending photos back to the science team at ground control

"In Lanzarote we can really look into the geological interactions between volcanic activity and water – two key factors in the search for life," explains Samuel Payler, Pangaea training coordinator. Surprisingly microorganisms can thrive inside the rocks despite the apparently barren soil.

Volcanism is not exclusive to Earth. Our Moon had extensive volcanic activity until less than two billion years ago. Mars is currently a cold, dry desert, but in the past most of the planet's surface was shaped by water and volcanoes in a very Earth-like fashion. The Red Planet has the largest known volcano in our planetary neighbourhood – the 22 km high Mount Olympus.

## PREPARING FOR OTHER PLANETS

Pangaea – named after the ancient supercontinent – prepares the astronauts for expeditions to other planets. Trainees acquire skills and knowledge both in the field and in the classroom tailored towards the needs of future planetary explorers.

Participants analyse the chemistry and mineralogy of the soil, choose their own exploration routes and rely on technology in constant communication with the science and training teams.

"We instruct astronauts on reading and describing landscapes and running efficient sampling taking into account the environment around them, such as dust and volcanic rocks," says Francesco Sauro, Pangaea's technical course director.

"From selecting a landing site to describing samples with the right scientific vocabulary, this is the basic geological education they will need in future field trips for lunar missions," adds the geologist.

Video : [https://www.esa.int/Science\\_Exploration/Human\\_and\\_Robotic\\_Exploration/Astronaut\\_training\\_in\\_the\\_land\\_of\\_volcanoes](https://www.esa.int/Science_Exploration/Human_and_Robotic_Exploration/Astronaut_training_in_the_land_of_volcanoes)

Source : © ESA





**Going for a coffee? ... Lock your desktop first!**

[www.enisa.europa.eu](http://www.enisa.europa.eu)



© Tangi Lithum

© ICBL/Gwenn Dubourthoumieu

## LANDMINE CASUALTIES 'EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH

*Syria and Afghanistan worst-hit*

Global casualties from anti-personnel landmines were “exceptionally high” last year, with Syrians and Afghans worst-hit, according to a UN-backed civil society report.

According to Landmine Monitor 2021, the number of victims rose by 20 per cent in 2020 compared with the previous 12 months, the result of “increased armed conflict and contamination” of land with improvised mines.

### VICTIMS IN 50+ COUNTRIES

In total, more than 7,000 people were killed or injured in 54 countries and areas, while Myanmar was the only State where it was confirmed that the weapons have been used in the last 16 months – as they have been since reporting began in 1999 - the Landmine Monitor said.

There was also unconfirmed “sporadic” use of the weapons in a dozen other countries, including Cameroon, Egypt, Niger, the Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia and Venezuela, along with “strong indicators” of landmine use in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict in 2020, and in surrounding districts.



© UN Photo/Martine Perret

A visual search for landmines takes place in Mehaires, Western Sahara



“Our problem was that we did not have information of what mines were there, if mines were laid during the active conflict, or if the mines were used after the imposed peace and ceasefire,” said Landmine Monitor contributing editor, Mark Hiznay, who also highlighted access problems to the region.

“The parties have not been forthcoming in terms of information provided...but it’s clear there are some very strong pointers (that) someone used anti-personnel mines there.”

From June 2020 to October this year, non-State armed groups were also found to have used improvised landmines in at least six countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, India, Myanmar, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

On a more positive note, some 70 non-State armed groups have now also agreed not to use landmines, Mr. Hiznay noted.

### NON-COMBATANTS PAY HIGHEST PRICE

Civilians continue to be the weapons’ primary victims,

accounting for eight in 10 casualties, with children making up at least half of those killed or maimed.

Although men and boys account for 85 per cent of all casualties, injured women and girls are particularly affected later in life, when it comes to accessing assistance for victims.

### STOCKPILE DESTRUCTION

Despite the rising toll from landmines, progress has been made on destroying landmine stockpiles, the Monitor’s researchers insisted.

They pointed to the fact that since 1999, more than 30 countries have cleared all mined areas on their territory, most recently Chile and the United Kingdom.

Some 94 States Parties have now reported the destruction of more than 55 million anti-personnel mines since the Mine Ban Treaty became international law in 1999, including more than 106,500 mines destroyed in 2020.

In addition, Sri Lanka is the latest State to have completed destruction of its stockpile in 2021.

### CONTAMINATED LAND

Challenges remain, however, as at least 60 countries and other areas are known to be contaminated by anti-personnel mines, including 33 of the treaty’s 164 State Parties.

“Many States Parties will not meet the aspirational target of achieving clearance by

the end of 2025,” said Ruth Bottomley, Landmine Monitor contributing editor, adding that although COVID-19-related restrictions had contributed to some “uncertainty” over deadlines, a few States had also been making “slow progress” prior to the pandemic.

At a community level, to respond to the interruptions in awareness-raising caused by pandemic movement restrictions, the report noted that many countries had successfully implemented and expanded digital and online methods to deliver risk education and save lives.



Patients during rehabilitation sessions inside Kandahar Rehabilitation Centre, Afghanistan, during the COVID-19 crisis



© Tangi Lithium

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## EQUINOR PLANS TO LAUNCH GW-SIZE FLOATING WIND CONCEPT IN SCOTLAND

Equinor, the leading developer in floating offshore wind has designed a new floating wind concept that will enable industrial standardisation and maximise opportunities for local supply chains.

Having reaffirmed its commitment to Scotland earlier this year, the offshore energy company has now revealed its preferred floating wind foundation design for full-scale gigawatt (GW) commercial floating offshore wind, if successful in ScotWind. The Wind Semi, a semisubmersible wind turbine foundation, has been designed with flexibility, specifically to allow for fabrication and assembly based on local supply chain capabilities.

“We are ready to develop the next generation, large-scale commercial floating offshore wind in Scotland. By leveraging our twenty years of floating offshore wind experience and innovations, we plan to develop GW-size floating projects in one single phase. Implementing large scale projects will accelerate Scotland’s energy transition to net zero. At 1GW, this project would be over 30

times bigger than Hywind Scotland, the UK’s and Equinor’s first floating project and have the potential to not only position Scotland as a leader in deep water technology, but also create opportunities for both existing suppliers and new entrants to the offshore wind sector”, says Sonja C. Indrebø, Equinor’s vice president of Floating Offshore Wind.

To ensure that the technology can be deployed cost effectively whilst maximising local benefits, Equinor has developed a set of design principles and solutions that are applicable across floating concepts.

Equinor installed the first ever floating offshore wind turbine in 2009, and operates Hywind Scotland (30 MW), the world’s first floating wind farm. Since it began production in 2017, Hywind Scotland has consistently achieved a

higher capacity factor than other UK wind farms, demonstrating the true potential of floating offshore wind.

“Hywind Scotland proved that the floating concept works, and as we move to the next generation floating offshore wind projects, we need to demonstrate that floating offshore wind is deployable at scale, in different geographies cost effectively whilst bringing local benefits. We have seen the journey of fixed bottom offshore wind, and combined with our long experience in floating, we can take learnings into account as we design and innovate the concepts for full-scale GW floating wind farms”, says Indrebø.

The Wind Semi has several features making it particularly suited for harsh waters, and solutions that can maximise the opportunities for the Scottish supply chain:



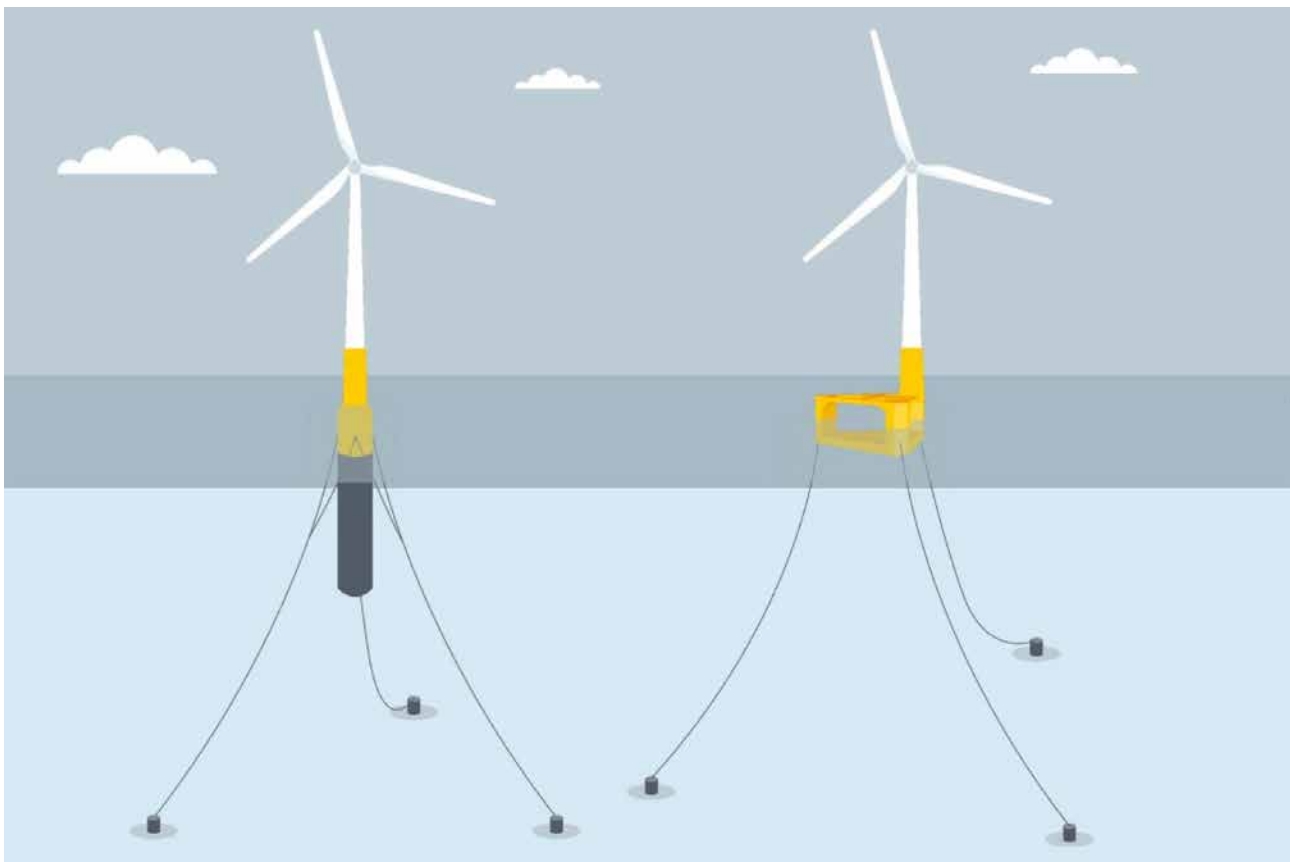
- **Increased dependability:** By introducing a passive ballast system, the Wind Semi has a simple substructure design, reducing the risk of system failure and the amount of maintenance needed
- **Simpler, more robust design:** A flat plate design that is free from bracings, heavy plates and complicated nodes that are prone to fatigue cracking
- **Flexibility towards the supply chain:** With a harbour draught

of less than 10 m, the Wind Semi's turbine integration can be assembled at most industrialised ports. The Wind Semi's simpler flat plate design enables the substructure to be built in blocks that can either be fabricated locally and/or shipped from other locations.

"Scotland can be in the forefront of this exciting technology. We asked ourselves how we can achieve industrial standardisation and maximise local content opportunities to create additional

and sustainable long-term value from floating offshore wind projects. With a design-based approach we've used our experience and gone right back to basics to incorporate this focus in the initial concept design", says Indrebø.

Equinor will select the best suited floating wind concept for its projects. Water depths, conditions around shipyards and ports, and the specialisations and capacity of the local supply chain are primary drivers for selecting a given design.



© Equinor

There are two main design concepts of floaters for offshore wind, - spar buoy (left) and semi-submersible (right). Equinor's common design principles and solutions are applicable across both

Selecting the most cost-efficient concept design and achieving optimal fabrication efficiency is key to competitive full-scale floating wind parks. In Scotland, Equinor will actively work to develop a broader and more competitive supply chain that can efficiently and effectively deliver a ScotWind floating projects safely, on time, and on budget. In particular, Equinor will work closely with the domestic supply chains in Scotland and rest of the UK to maximise the opportunities for local suppliers and local communities.



© Equinor

Sonja C. Indrebø, Equinor's vice president of Floating Offshore Wind

# 'IRAN' – FIVE MILLENNIA OF ART AND CULTURE

*At the Museum für Islamische Kunst - Berlin*



Bahram Gur with the princess in the blue pavilion, detail, Iran 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century

A fascinating cultural landscape developed over thousands of years in Iran. Between deserts, mountain ranges and bodies of water, the region was home to great historical civilisations, yet its artistic achievements are unknown

to many. Exquisite works of art from the Sarikhani Collection, London and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, many never been shown before, invite visitors to a journey across in time and to experience the country's rich cultural heritage.

Spanning five millennia, 360 objects present a rich kaleidoscope of art made for the courts and urban elites and illustrate the outstanding importance of Iran as a source of inspiration and centre of intercultural exchange from China to India and the Mediterranean, dating from the first advanced civilisations of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC to the end of the Safavid Empire in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Highlights of this journey are the empires of the Achaemenids and Sasanids, the formation of a Persianate Islamic culture, the artistic splendour of the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century, and the Golden Age of the Safavids.

*A special exhibition of the Museum für Islamische Kunst – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin in cooperation with the Sarikhani Collection - Until 20.02.2022*



Scene from the Divan of Hafis, detail, Iran 1655-60



Scene in the palace garden, detail, India 16<sup>th</sup> century

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# TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

By Clara Bauman

## 6 luxurious countdowns to Christmas

Advent Calendars are enjoying great success and this year, more than ever, cosmetics brands have some great surprises in store for us! From Rituals to M.A.C, and The Body Shop to L'Occitane, let the beauty Advent Calendar countdown begin!



### Ah-mazing!

M.A.C is making all make up lovers' Christmas dreams come true with its new Advent Calendar.

**What's inside?**

24 iconic M.A.C products hidden behind psychedelic swirled doors, including the Strobe Cream, the Fix Plus setting spray as well as its inimitable matte lipsticks.



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

### Merry, cosy moments



Wow, just, wow! Rituals has created an illuminated festive winter village full of surprises, hidden in each one of its lovely houses.

**What's inside?**

When it comes to Rituals Advent Calendar, you know you're getting the most cosy countdown to Christmas possible. Enjoy a shimmer body oil, smell wonderfully perfumed candles, or enjoy your bath time with body scrubs, foaming shower gel or soap bars.



([rituals.com](http://rituals.com))  
batteries are not included



### It smells 'beautiful'

This year, Acqua di Parma's Holiday Collection shines bright in the iconic style of Emilio Pucci, the Italian politician but also fashion designer, whose eponymous company is synonymous with geometric prints in a kaleidoscope of colours.

**What's inside?**

25 windows to discover a whirlwind of surprises day by day and have a complete and multifaceted view of the Acqua di Parma universe, from Colonia to Blu Mediterraneo collections, and from Le Nobili to the precious Home collection.



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



### Pure luxury

Count down to Christmas with a sumptuous selection of fragrances, body and home delights by Molton Brown. Charmingly illustrated by artist Rebecca Williams, this calendar will make you discover exciting new treats and much-loved favourites.

**What's inside?**

Coastal cypress & sea fennel bath salts, orange and bergamot body lotion, delicious rhubarb & rose candle...we won't spoil the surprise anymore!



([moltonbrown.eu](http://moltonbrown.eu))

### Head-to-toes treats



Body Shop lovers, this Advent calendar, which is one of the cutest is for you! The brand has launched an amazing pop-up construction that transports you to its joyful Christmas world.

**What's inside?**

A collection of 25 surprises and accessories for true beauty lovers, including best sellers like the Drops of Youth™ Concentrate, the Himalayan Charcoal Purifying Glow Mask and, of course, the iconic perfumed shower gels and body scrubs and butters. Yummie!



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

### Sustainable gift



Made from recycled cotton, the reusable L'Occitane en Provence Advent calendar has been created in collaboration with British designer Kitty McCall who is inspired by nature to create colours, patterns and joy for your homes.

**What's inside?**

The most coveted products, from skincare to body care classics, all perfumed with the sweet scents of Provence. Need some clues? Lavender foaming bath, Verbena shower gel, Almond shower oil or else, the Almond Crunchy Muesli Scrub.



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



# TIMELESS CHIC

## Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

By Clara Bauman

### Find your perfect coat for a winter bliss

Which coat colours are trending this season? What length and which material will be the most popular? And which accessories will elevate your coat into a statement piece of outerwear in 2021/2022? Look no further, you will find all the answers in our fashion report!\*

#### 1. Camel coat

Camel - but also beige and chocolate brown colours - are taking over the trends for this autumn/winter. Once you invest in a well-fitting camel coat, you will keep it for life. It plays well with everything, everywhere and at all times.



**Inspiration**  
French fashion influencer Julie Sergent Ferreri wears her camel coat with a genuine Parisian touch. Notice the “so 2021” detail: a thin belt.



© MAX MARA

**Must have**  
The unmistakable, oversized style of the 80s, kimono sleeves, elegant double-breasted fastening, and soft beaver wool and cashmere fabric: these are the distinctive elements that have made the 101801 Max Mara coat the absolute star in the outfits of super models, celebrities and women all over the world.

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

#### 2. ‘Faux fur’ coat

It’s time to talk about materials that will give us the trendiest coats of 2021. In previous years, the teddy coat was the piece to invest in, and after continual and increasing interest in green shopping as well as increased awareness in the fight against cruelty to animals, synthetic fur is becoming the new favourite.



**Inspiration**  
The 3 million followers of fashion influencer Caroline Daur have proclaimed: “It’s officially teddy coat season”!



© TOMMY HILFINGER

**Must have**  
This Tommy Hilfinger double-breasted fastening teddy coat will be your fluffy addition of the winter.

([spotted on fr.debijenkorf.be](http://fr.debijenkorf.be))

#### 3. Quilted coat

We saw the quilted coat in all its splendour on the Max Mara runway. Luxurious, floor length and in green (one of the inevitable colours of the season). Perhaps this cozy outerwear isn’t so unheard of after all - we’re all coming out of a year of lockdown, when walking around with a blanket over our shoulders didn’t look so strange.

**Inspiration**  
It brings to mind a feeling of comfort for going on long walks in the wilds, but also the chic of an ultra-warm overcoat... Yes to the quilted coat!



© MAJE

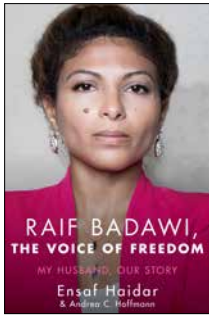
**Must have**  
Khaki casual or black chic? The reversible quilted coat by Maje fulfills all our desires in stylistic look.

([spotted on fr.maje.com](http://fr.maje.com))

\*Data source: Stylight

Stylight is the world’s leading online search platform for Fashion, Beauty and Design, with over 1,500 partner shops across 16 global markets ([insights.stylights.com](https://insights.stylights.com)).

# BOOKS



## RAIF BADAWI, THE VOICE OF FREEDOM

By *Ensaf Haidar and Andrea Claudia Hoffmann*

MY HUSBAND, OUR STORY

*A powerful first-person account of Ensaf Haidar's life with her husband, Saudi Arabian social activist Raif Badawi, and her worldwide campaign to free him from imprisonment.*

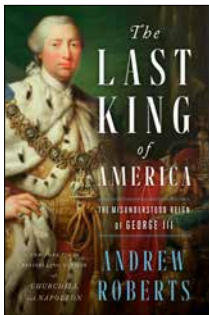
Ensaf Haidar's unforgettable account of her marriage to imprisoned Saudi blogger Raif Badawi tells the story of the survival of their love against all odds, and of her courageous fight for her husband's freedom.

When Ensaf and Raif married in 2002 they shed tears of joy; they had overcome the resistance of her family and the rigid conventions of Saudi Arabian culture, and their battle to be together was finally won. But an even greater challenge lay ahead.

After the romance of their clandestine courtship, the triumph of their wedding day, and the ups and downs of married life, Ensaf discovers that Raif is becoming active in the liberal movement. Their partnership grows stronger as Raif works tirelessly, daring to question the social order of Saudi Arabia until his activities attract the attention of the religious police. With Raif under increasing surveillance, Ensaf reluctantly accepts exile as the only way to protect their three young children, hoping that Raif will soon join them.

But Raif's arrest and subsequent sentence to ten years in prison and 1,000 lashes change everything. Ensaf must take up the fight for her husband's life, galvanizing global support and campaigning for his freedom and their right to be reunited as a family again.

This profoundly moving memoir is both a love story and an inspiring account of the making of not one but two heroic human rights activists.



## THE LAST KING OF AMERICA

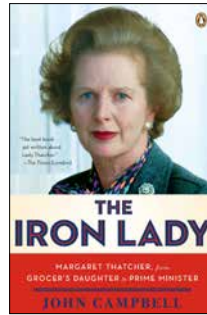
By *Andrew Roberts*

THE MISUNDERSTOOD REIGN OF GEORGE III

*The last king of America, George III, has been ridiculed as a complete disaster who frittered away the colonies and went mad in his old age. The truth is much more nuanced and fascinating—and will completely change the way readers and historians view his reign and legacy.*

Most Americans dismiss George III as a buffoon—a heartless and terrible monarch with few, if any, redeeming qualities. The best-known modern interpretation of him is Jonathan Groff's preening, spitting, and pompous take in *Hamilton*, Lin-Manuel Miranda's Broadway masterpiece. But this deeply unflattering characterization is rooted in the prejudiced and brilliantly persuasive opinions of eighteenth-century revolutionaries like Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson, who needed to make the king appear evil in order to achieve their own political aims. After combing through hundreds of thousands of pages of never-before-published correspondence, award-winning historian Andrew Roberts has uncovered the truth: George III was in fact a wise, humane, and even enlightened monarch who was beset by talented enemies, debilitating mental illness, incompetent ministers, and disastrous luck.

In *The Last King of America*, Roberts paints a deft and nuanced portrait of the much-maligned monarch and outlines his accomplishments, which have been almost universally forgotten. Two hundred and forty-five years after the end of George III's American rule, it is time for Americans to look back on their last king with greater understanding: to see him as he was and to come to terms with the last time they were ruled by a monarch.



## THE IRON LADY

By *John Campbell*  
Abridged by *David Freeman*

MARGARET THATCHER, FROM GROCER'S DAUGHTER TO PRIME MINISTER

*The Iron Lady*, the definitive Margaret Thatcher biography, is available just in time for the movie starring Meryl Streep as one of the most infamous figures in postwar politics.

Whether you love her or hate her, Margaret Thatcher's impact on twentieth-century history is undeniable. From her humble, small-town upbringing to her rise to power as the United Kingdom's first female prime minister, to her dramatic fall from grace after more than three decades of service, celebrated biographer John Campbell delves into the story of this fascinating woman's life as no one has before. The result of more than nine years of meticulous research, *The Iron Lady* is the only balanced, unvarnished portrait of Margaret Thatcher, one of the most vital and controversial political figures of our time.



## THE NUREMBERG INTERVIEWS

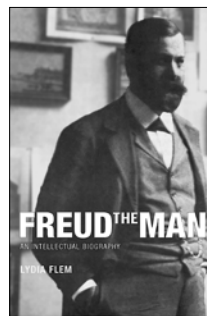
By *Leon Goldensohn*  
Introduction by *Robert Gellately*

Edited by *Robert Gellately*

AN AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIST'S CONVERSATIONS WITH THE DEFENDANTS AND WITNESSES

During the Nuremberg trials, Leon Goldensohn a U.S. Army psychiatrist monitored the mental health of two dozen German leaders charged with carrying out genocide. These recorded conversations went largely unexamined for more than fifty years, until Robert Gellately one of the premier historians of Nazi Germany made them available to the public in this remarkable collection.

Here are interviews with the likes of Hans Frank, Hermann Goering, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, and Joachim von Ribbentrop the highest ranking Nazi officials in the Nuremberg jails. Here too are interviews with lesser-known officials essential to the inner workings of the Third Reich. Candid and often shockingly truthful, *The Nuremberg Interviews* is a profound addition to our understanding of the Nazi mind and mission.



## FREUD THE MAN

By *Lydia Flem*

AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY

About *Lydia Flem*

Lydia Flem is the author of several books on Freud and Freudianism, and is also the author of the best-selling work *Casanova: The Man Who Really Loved Women*. She is a practicing psychoanalyst and lives in Brussels and Paris with... More about Lydia Flem

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