

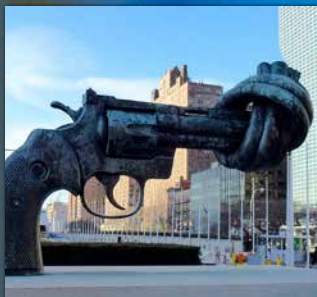
EUROPE

Diplomatic

magazine



REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
Russia's prey to catch?



UNTRUSTWORTHY?
The UN was founded to cement
peace but seems powerless
to stop wars and cure hatred

MICHELLE BACHELET

Above and Beyond Equal Rights



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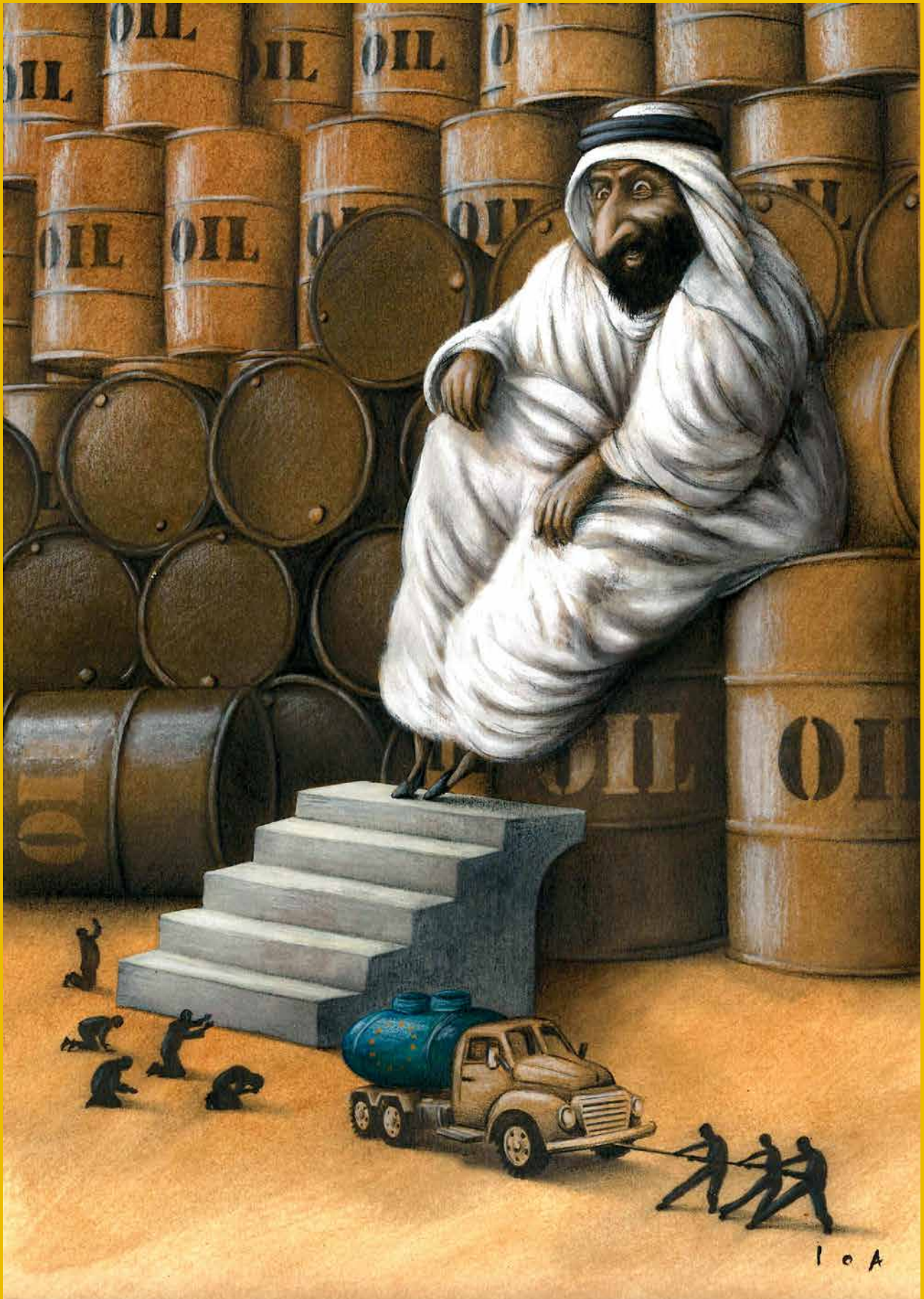
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Nikola Hendrickx



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President of Chile Michelle Bachelet at the Women's Day Commemoration in Lo Prado in 2018

MICHELLE BACHELET

Above and Beyond Equal Rights

On the soccer field of a village about one hundred kilometres from Santiago de Chile, the thermometer has climbed to 36°C. In the middle of the southern summer, Michelle Bachelet harangues the crowd and promises *"a country without exclusion, without discrimination, with the same rights for women as for men"*. Her round glasses and a simple orange blouse make her look like a school principal. But even if the race was tight, Michelle Bachelet, the candidate of the centre-left Democratic Concertation Party, in power since the return of democracy in 1990, was given as the favourite for the second round of the presidential election on this Sunday afternoon, in January 2006. At 54 years of age, this paediatrician who claimed to be *"a citizen like any other but with a vocation for public service"*, was poised to become the first woman president in the history of Chile. In a conservative society where the Catholic Church is all-powerful, it was unthinkable until a few years back that a woman could succeed the socialist president Ricardo Lagos in March 2006. *"I have all the sins imaginable: I am a woman, I am a socialist, I am divorced and I am agnostic"*, joked "Michelle", as Chileans affectionately called her. The press regularly referred to the "Bachelet phenomenon".



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Coup of September 11, 1973. Bombing of La Moneda (presidential palace)

But Michelle Bachelet is also a courageous woman. She was an underground activist for many years, and following the military coup of 11 September 1973 when General Augusto Pinochet and his junta overthrew the elected socialist government of Salvador Allende, she took great risks helping to hide activists and the families of prisoners.

Born on September 29, 1951, in Santiago, she is the daughter of Alberto Bachelet, an air force general, and Angela Jeria, an anthropologist. On her father's side, one of her ancestors left France for Chile

in 1869. He was a winemaker from the village of Chassagne-Montrachet in the Côte d'Or, which she visited in May 2009.

Michelle Bachelet began her medical studies in 1970 and joined the Chilean Socialist Party at that time. Her father, who was close to President Salvador Allende, was appointed head of the Food Distribution Office. A few years later, he was arrested, imprisoned, and tortured by the military junta led by Augusto Pinochet. He died in March 1974, probably as a result of mistreatment while in detention. In January 1975, Michelle and her mother were also imprisoned

and tortured in the infamous Villa Grimaldi, one of the most sinister prisons in Santiago.



General Alberto Bachelet

Torture, says this politician who raised her three children alone, *"is terrible, especially from a psychological point of view: it humiliates you"*. As soon as they were released, they left Chile, first for Australia, then for East Germany where Michelle continued her studies at the Humboldt University in Berlin. There, Bachelet married Jorge Dávalos, a Chilean architect who had also fled the Pinochet regime. They had a son, Sebastián, before the family returned to Chile in 1979.



Michelle Bachelet, 1975

Michelle Bachelet completed her medical degree at the University of Chile, graduating in 1982. She had a daughter, Francisca, in 1984, then separated from her husband about 1986. As Chilean law made divorce very difficult, Bachelet was unable to marry the physician with whom she had her second daughter in 1990. As a surgeon, she began working in paediatric public health at the Roberto del Rio Children's Hospital, as well as a number of NGOs.

Following the re-establishment of democracy, she worked as an advisor in the office of the Secretary of State for Health from 1994 to 1997. Since she

was also interested in defence issues, she studied military strategy at the National Academy of Political and Strategic Studies (ANEPE) in Chile, and then at the Inter-American Defense College in the United States. In 1998, she was appointed advisor to the Minister of Defence. She also studied military science at the War Academy of the Chilean Army. Michelle Bachelet, who is a proficient multilingual was already well-known for her ability to work long hours without getting much sleep.

FROM PINOCHET'S JAILS TO THE PRESIDENCY OF CHILE

Michelle Bachelet began her career in the public sector in the early 1990s. She worked for the Ministry of Health and humanitarian organisations such as the WHO, GTZ (German Technical Cooperation), and PAHO (Pan American Health Organisation). Following her position as an advisor in the Cabinet of the Secretary of State for Health in 1997, she became an advisor in the Ministry of Defence in 1998. In 2000, she became Minister of Health, and in 2002 Minister of Defence, a ministerial portfolio never held by a woman in Chile or Latin America.

Due to her growing popularity, and with the backing of President Ricardo Lagos, who was still in office in 2004, Michelle Bachelet became the presidential candidate of the Democratic Concertation, a coalition of socialists, radicals, and Christian Democrats that was in power since 1990. She faced Joaquín Lavín, supported by the Independent Democratic Union (UDI, right), Sebastián Piñera, supported by the National Revolution (RN, centre-right), and Thomas Hirsch (extreme left).



Chilean Minister of Defense Michelle Bachelet (center) escorts US Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld (right) as he reviews the troops during an armed forces full honors welcoming ceremony at the Chilean Ministry of Defense in Santiago, Chile, on Nov. 18, 2002

January 15, 2006, was a historic day; for the very first time, a woman was elected president of Chile. Michelle Bachelet won with 53.5% of the votes against 46.5% for her right-wing rival, the billionaire businessman Sebastián Piñera. Hundreds of thousands of Chileans, dancing with joy and waving multicoloured flags, invaded the centre of the capital, Santiago, in the evening.

Her election was a great victory for the Democratic Concertation, of which she was the candidate. This centre-left coalition formed by Christian Democrats, Socialists, and Radicals won the presidency of the Republic for the fourth consecutive time since the return of democracy in 1990. The outgoing president, the socialist Ricardo Lagos still enjoyed a popularity rating of 75%.



Michelle Bachelet elected President in 2006

Michelle Bachelet is the fifth woman in Latin America to become president, but the first-ever elected by direct universal suffrage. The previous four were married to either former presidents or to politically prominent and influential husbands (Janet Jagan of Guyana, 1997 - 1999. Mireya Moscoso of Panama, 1999 - 2004. Violeta Chamorro of Nicaragua, 1990 -1997 and Isabel Perón, 1974 -1976, who was vice-president to her husband). As she had promised during her campaign, her government was indeed composed of as many women as men. Following a constitutional revision, she remained president until 2010; the Chilean constitution does not allow a candidate to run for office in two consecutive elections. She, therefore, did not take part in the presidential elections of December 2009.

Michelle Bachelet's presidency was marked by significant social reforms, notably in health care, retirement benefits, and housing. There was the

signing of free trade agreements with countries from Asia and Oceania as well as sustained efforts at diplomatic rapprochement with neighbouring countries, Bolivia, Argentina, and Peru.

On the eve of leaving office, an opinion poll gave her 84% support, the highest figure ever recorded by a Head of State in Chile at the end of a presidential term. On March 11, 2010, Sebastián Piñera, a centre-right candidate whom she had ousted in the second round of elections in 2006, succeeded her as president.

In 2013, Michelle Bachelet ran for the presidency of Chile again. This time, she won with 62% of the votes against the conservative candidate, Evelyn Mattei. This was a long-awaited return but a major challenge for Michelle Bachelet who promised a series of wide-ranging measures to reduce inequality and reform the education system.



Dilma Rousseff, President of Brasil and Hugo Chávez president of Venezuela in 2011

She was, however, committed to maintaining the fiscal discipline that had characterised Chile since the early 1990s. Her pragmatic and liberal approach to the economy brought her closer to her Brazilian counterpart Dilma Rousseff than to the leaders of Venezuela or Argentina within the Latin American left. Chile, whose economy was growing at an annual rate of more than 5%, had experienced spectacular development over the past twenty years, which allowed considerable progress to be made towards eradicating extreme poverty. But inequalities persisted among its 16.6 million inhabitants; these were at the heart of the student protest movement of 2011.

Michelle Bachelet also announced her intention to reform the Constitution which was inherited



2011 Chilean student protest

from the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990) and to decriminalise abortion in cases of rape or danger to the health of the mother or the unborn child.

During this second term, however, she encountered several difficulties, notably due to the decline in the value of copper, the country's main export resource. Her term in office was also marred by several political scandals. In 2016, one year after the resignation of her son in a context of influence peddling and hidden financing of the presidential campaign, her popularity rating eventually fell to 22%, a score not seen since the end of the military dictatorship.

However, if domestically her record was denounced by a majority of Chileans, internationally, the prestige of Chile's first-ever female president remained intact. Forbes magazine, in a ranking published in November 2017, considered her the most powerful woman in the region and fourth in the world.



President Michelle Bachelet and President Xi Jinping in Santiago, Chile in 2016

Michelle Bachelet left the presidency at the end of her term in March 2018 and was succeeded by Sebastián Piñera, a long-time political opponent and her predecessor.

THE NEW VOICE OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

If heads of state and diplomats around the world were hoping that the commitment of the person occupying the post of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights would remain intact after the replacement of the Jordanian diplomat Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein, by Michelle Bachelet, they could celebrate.

In her first speech on 10 September 2018 in Geneva, for the opening of the 39th session of the Human Rights Council, the twice president of Chile and former director of the UN Women agency, pointed out the main concerns of the moment and did not spare the countries guilty of the worst violations of international humanitarian law. She put forward her political and diplomatic qualities and ambitions, indicating that she will be "attentive to governments" and will seek "consensus" between States. Her predecessor had been strongly criticised for having alienated many countries through his fiery denunciations.

The new High Commissioner for Human Rights, appointed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, recalled however that she was a political prisoner and the daughter of a political prisoner, that she was a refugee and that she was a doctor for child victims of torture in Chile. She paid a vibrant tribute to her predecessor Zeid Ra'ad Al-Hussein and left little doubt about her commitment to human rights.



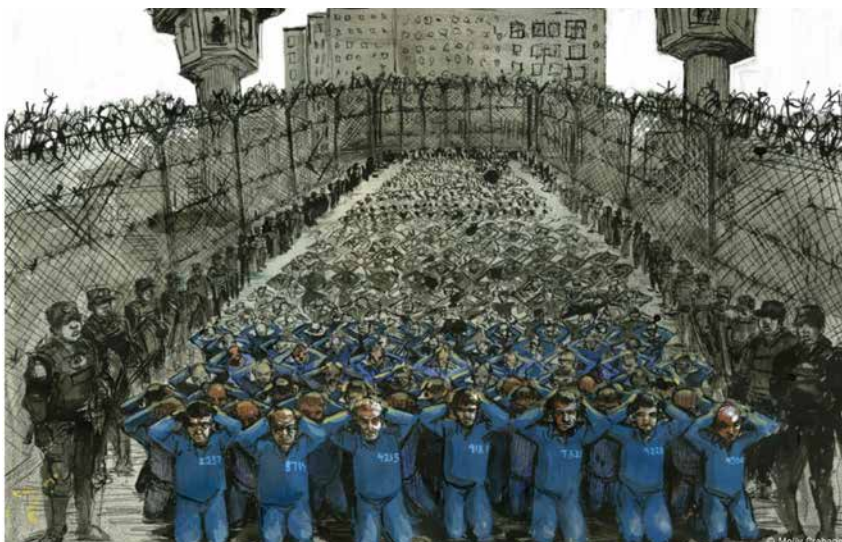
An excerpt from High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet's statement made after her official visit to China end of May: "In the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, I have raised questions and concerns about the application of counter-terrorism and de-radicalisation measures and their broad application – particularly their impact on the rights of Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities. While I am unable to assess the full scale of the VETCs, I raised with the Government the lack of independent judicial oversight of the operation of the program, the reliance by law enforcement officials on 15 indicators to determine tendencies towards violent extremism, allegations of the use of force and ill treatment in institutions, and reports of unduly severe restrictions on legitimate religious practices. During my visit, the Government assured me that the VETC system has been dismantled. I encouraged the Government to undertake a review of all counter terrorism and deradicalization policies to ensure they fully comply with international human rights standards, and in particular that they are not applied in an arbitrary and discriminatory way."

The most strident comment in the speech was directed at Myanmar where thousands of Rohingya Muslims had allegedly been murdered in 2017 and from where an estimated 700,000 have been deported to Bangladesh. She highlighted the "extremely shocking findings" of U.N. investigators, who had recommended that international justice prosecute six Myanmar military leaders for "genocide and crimes against humanity." She welcomed the decision of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to take up the crimes committed in Myanmar and called on the Human Rights Council to establish an independent international body to collect, preserve and analyse evidence of the most serious international crimes to expedite trials.

The High Commissioner listed a variety of armed conflicts of particular concern to her, including the ongoing offensives

in northern Syria and the war in Yemen. And she singled out dozens of countries where human rights abuses are an ongoing concern for her team.

She also spoke at length on the issue of migration, denouncing the attitude of some Western countries dominated by governments with anti-migration policies that violate human rights, including the United States and, Europe, Hungary, Italy, and Austria. "Erecting walls, deliberately generating fear and anger among migrants, depriving migrants of their basic rights" is a policy that only offers, according to her, "more hostility, misery, suffering, and chaos". Michelle Bachelet recalled that as far back as humanity goes, people have always moved in search of refuge and opportunity, estimating that there are currently 250 million people in this situation, on a planet of 7.5 billion inhabitants.



Amnesty International poster condemning human rights violations committed by the Chinese government against Uyghurs and other Muslims

CHINA IN THE CROSSHAIRS

In a written version of her speech handed out to the press but not read in full, she criticised China for "deeply disturbing allegations of large-scale arbitrary detentions of Uighurs," after an accusation in August 2018 to a U.N committee that one million members of the Muslim minority in the Xinjiang region are being held in camps.

As expected, China's reaction was not long in coming. Reacting to the words of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressing concern about arbitrary detentions on a large scale of Uighurs by China, Beijing promptly reminded Ms. Bachelet to respect the sovereignty of the country. "China urges the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to strictly adhere to the mission and principles of the UN Charter, respect China's sovereignty, carry out her missions honestly and objectively, and not listen to biased information," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at his daily press briefing.

According to the Chinese government, the autonomous region of Xinjiang in western China faces the threat of Islamists and separatists who are stirring up tensions between the Uighurs, a Muslim and Turkic-speaking minority that considers the region its own, and members of China's majority ethnic group, the Hans. Security measures in Xinjiang have been stepped up considerably, with the establishment of police checkpoints for identity checks, re-education centres, and massive DNA collection campaigns.

In 2020, the High Commissioner reiterated her hopes of gaining "significant access" to Xinjiang, where "reports of serious human rights violations continue to emerge". China denies the figure of one million Uighurs in detention and speaks rather of vocational training centres to support employment and combat religious extremism.

In Geneva, Ms. Bachelet repeatedly called on Beijing for full access to Xinjiang. And in late February 2021, she reiterated her call for a full and independent assessment of the human rights situation in the region. But human rights activists are continuing to call on the United Nations to announce tougher measures.

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S CHINESE CONUNDRUM

First, there was Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the head of the World Health Organisation was accused of being too close to Beijing. After a visit to Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People in January 2020, he praised China for its "speed," "efficiency" and "transparency." Today, it is another UN agency head who is in the sights: Michelle Bachelet.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has raised questions about her attitude towards Beijing, which is considered too conciliatory. If she willingly intervenes on CNN and other major broadcasters to express herself about Ukraine, she is less prolix when it comes to China. On 13 May, Uighurs who had gathered on the Place des Nations in Geneva urged her to consult them before she visited China, or even to postpone it if the conditions for unhindered access are not guaranteed.



© WHO

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

Since taking office in 2018, Michelle Bachelet has not issued a single press release on Xinjiang. She did settle for one in Hong Kong in June 2020. A report on Xinjiang has been shelved in the offices of the High Commissioner for Human Rights without anyone knowing why. This has angered several human rights NGOs and several diplomatic missions.

Michelle Bachelet's highly controversial visit to China, from 22 May to 27 May, was the first for a High Commissioner for Human Rights since Louise Arbour in 2005. This was also a politically risky undertaking, as it is still unclear whether the former Chilean president will seek a second term at the head of the OHCHR as of September 1.



Dead bodies in a makeshift hospital and morgue in an Ukrainian hotel lobby

DISMAY AND CONDEMNATION AS RUSSIA ATTACKS

"The Russian invasion on 24 February 2022 has plunged Ukraine into a humanitarian and human rights crisis that has devastated the lives of civilians across the country and beyond", UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said on 22 April 2022, calling on all parties to respect international human rights law and international humanitarian law, especially the rules governing the conduct of hostilities.

"During these eight weeks, international humanitarian law has not only been ignored but has been set aside," Bachelet said. Russian armed forces have indiscriminately bombed and shelled populated areas, killing civilians and destroying hospitals, schools, and other civilian infrastructure. These are actions that may amount to war crimes. "What we saw in government-controlled Kramatorsk on April 8, when cluster munitions struck the train station, killing 60 civilians and injuring 111 others, is emblematic of the failure to respect the principle of distinction, the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks, and the precautionary principle enshrined in international humanitarian law," said Bachelet.

The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) has documented what appears to be the use of weapons with indiscriminate effects, causing civilian casualties and damage to civilian property, by Ukrainian armed forces in eastern Ukraine. From February 24 to April 20, the HRMMU documented and verified 5,264 civilian casualties - 2,345 killed and 2,919 injured. Of this total, 92.3 percent (2,266 killed

and 2,593 injured) were recorded in government-controlled territory. Some 7.7% of casualties (79 killed and 326 wounded) were recorded in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions controlled by Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups. "We know that the real numbers will be much higher as the horrors inflicted in areas of intense fighting, such as Mariupol, are revealed," said the UN human rights chief. During a mission to Bucha on April 9, UN human rights officers documented the unlawful killing, including by summary execution, of some 50 civilians. "Almost every Bucha resident our colleagues spoke to told us about the death of a relative, neighbour, or even a stranger. We know that there is still a lot of work to be done to get to the bottom of what happened there, and we also know that Bucha is not an isolated incident," said the High Commissioner.



State Emergency Service of Ukraine rescuers searching for dead bodies

The HRMMU has received more than 300 allegations of killings of civilians in towns in the Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Sumy regions, all under the control of Russian armed forces, in late February

and early March. The intentional killing of protected persons, including summary executions, constitutes gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law and amounts to war crimes. Allegations of sexual violence against women, men, girls, and boys by members of the Russian armed forces in Ukraine are increasingly surfacing. The HRMMU has received 75 allegations, the majority from the Kyiv region. It is investigating each allegation but because survivors may not be willing or able to be interviewed, this remains a challenge.

In besieged cities, the mortality rate has particularly increased beyond the direct victims of weapons. The High Commissioner called on the parties to the conflict to investigate all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law allegedly committed by their nationals, armed forces, and affiliated armed groups, by their obligations under international law. *"Civilians are suffering immeasurably and the humanitarian crisis is critical,"* said Michelle Bachelet, noting that people often lack basic necessities. *"But above all, they need the bombs to stop falling and the guns to be silenced,"* she pleaded.

DENOUNCING THE CULTURE OF IMPUNITY

If as yet no sanctions have been taken against the State of Israel following the death of the Al-Jazeera journalist, Shireen Abu Akleh killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank, the United Nations does not intend to remain silent. It condemns with the utmost firmness, a murder that, once again, aggravated the already tense relations between the Hebrew State and Palestine.

In a statement published on its website on May 14, the UN denounced *"a culture of impunity"* and called for the immediate opening of an investigation to determine the origin of the shooting that killed the Al-Jazeera journalist, who was very popular with Palestinians.

Thus, on May 14, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, headed by Michelle Bachelet, demanded the opening of an investigation to hold Israeli law enforcement agencies accountable. In the statement, Bachelet does not mince her words: *"I am deeply saddened by the events taking place in the occupied West Bank, including East*

Jerusalem. Videos showing Israeli police attacking relatives of the deceased in the middle of the funeral of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh on Friday 13 May were shocking," she said.



© Photo/Al Jazeera
Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh

And she was not the only one. On May 13, US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, also reacted on Twitter, saying he was *"appalled"* by the images circulating on social networks showing Israeli police beating up Palestinians who had come to attend the funeral of the Palestinian journalist.

Michelle Bachelet added that all the indications are that the use of force by the Israelis was unnecessary and should be investigated immediately and that responsibility must be established for the murder not only of Shireen Abu Akleh but of all those killed and injured in the occupied Palestinian territories.



© Ron Pizsgich
US Secretary of State Antony Blinken

A SITUATION OF PROFOUND GRAVITY

In December 1948, at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was proclaimed and adopted by the 58

member states that constituted the General Assembly of the UN. The extraordinary vision and resolve of the drafters produced a document that, for the first time, articulated the rights and freedoms to which every human being is equally and inalienably entitled. Available in more than 500 languages and dialects, the Declaration is the most translated document in the world — a testament to its global nature and reach. It was meant to provide a foundation for a just and decent future for all and to give people everywhere a powerful tool in the fight against oppression, impunity, and affronts to human dignity

However, seventy-four years on, it must, unfortunately, be concluded that the world is still witnessing wide-scale violations of freedoms, the use of terror, crimes against humanity, the brutal repression of social movements and minorities, and the massive and deliberate violations of civilian populations.



Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin with United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet

It, therefore, came as no surprise when, at the 49th session of the Human Rights Council in February 2022, Michelle Bachelet called for strong leadership in the face of a *"deeply serious"* situation and declared: We have experienced periods of profound gravity in history that have divided the course of events between a "before", and a very different and more dangerous "after". *We are at such a turning point now. The remarkable progress made over the past two decades in every region to limit conflict, reduce poverty, and expand access to education and other rights is being severely threatened"*.

Weakened by the pandemic, divided by growing polarisation, affected by increasing environmental damage, and weakened by online disinformation,

hatred, attacks on democracy, and disregard for the rule of law, many societies around the world are plunging into increased repression and violence, growing poverty, anger, and conflict.

The Russian army began its invasion of Ukraine shortly before 4 a.m. on February 24, triggering what appears to be the worst war on the European continent since 1945. Massive bombardments by aircraft, cruise, and ballistic missiles targeted military sites and ammunition warehouses throughout Ukraine, including far to the west of the country. Residential areas have also been badly hit. Millions of civilians, including the vulnerable and elderly, were forced to huddle in various forms of shelter, such as subway stations, to escape the explosions.

This war is a turning point in modern history, and it will most certainly have lasting consequences. It is a watershed moment. Yesterday's certainties are gone. Today, the world faces a new reality that no one chose. It is a reality that Vladimir Putin forced upon the world, including his own country.

In her speech, Michelle Bachelet went on to add: *“Over the next three days, an unprecedented number of dignitaries will participate in this high-level debate. This is a vital opportunity to unite and take action at this grave and decisive moment. In doing so, I ask first and foremost that we all place the world's people - their common and universal rights and aspirations - at the heart of the debate”.*



An officer from the State Emergency Service of Ukraine defusing a Russian bomb

NOTHING CAN EVER BE FULLY TAKEN FOR GRANTED

Even though almost all countries are now members of the United Nations, all sorts of threats to human rights are still present. In 2018, German Chancellor Angela Merkel went so far as to doubt that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could still win the support of the majority of member countries as it did in 1948. This declaration was made more than a year before the sanitary, economic and humanitarian crisis that the world experienced. Although not enough time has passed to allow for an assessment of the long-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and its management by various states, many international institutions are already pointing out that the crisis could accentuate existing patterns of human rights violations and discrimination throughout the world:

UNICEF: “It could expose children and women to increased risk of violence and exploitation”

IFJ (International Federation of Journalists): “It could compromise press freedom”

UNESCO: “It could jeopardise access to quality education for all, and increase inequality”

Amnesty International: “It could lead to increased persecution of human rights activists”

UN: “It could jeopardise equal access to health care and services”

Human Rights Watch: “It could lead to an increase in racist and xenophobic attacks”

Human rights are best served when peace, social justice, and the rights of the vulnerable are defended... When all forms of discrimination related to age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, culture, or disability are combatted... When human dignity is placed above all else.

Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of former US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and tireless human rights activist, famously declared in 1958: *“After all, where do universal human rights begin? They begin close to home, in places so*

close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world (...). If rights are meaningless in these places, they will be meaningless elsewhere. If each person does not show the civic-mindedness necessary to see that they are respected in his environment, we must not expect progress on a world scale”.



Eleanor Roosevelt at United Nations in Paris

‘Our Common Agenda’, the report by UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres in September 2021, calls for renewed solidarity among peoples and future generations; a new social contract rooted in human rights; better management of the critical issues of peace, development, health, and our planet, and a revitalised multilateralism capable of meeting the challenges of our time.

It is perhaps fitting to end with Michelle Bachelet's declaration which came at the end of her speech on International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2021: *“Equality is about empathy and solidarity. It is also about understanding that, because we are all part of humanity, the only way forward is to work together for the common good. This was well understood during the years of reconstruction after World War II. However, our failure to “rebuild better” after the more recent crises suggests that we have forgotten the clear and recognised solutions rooted in human rights and the importance of addressing inequalities.*

Solutions that we must bring back to the forefront if we are to continue to make progress - not only for those who suffer from the gross inequalities that plague our planet but for all of us.

Hossein Sadre



Chinese President Xi Jinping, presents the heads of the People's Liberation Army Academy of Military Science with the military flag

FEE FI FO FUM, SAYS CHINA

Where is Jack the Giant Killer when you need him?

China's commercial attack on little Lithuania is as unjustified and strangely-motivated as we've come to expect from modern day Beijing, which seems to thrive on illogicality. The row is a vibrant display of selfless Lithuanian courage and ruthless Chinese bullying. Contrast them and you're drawn to the inevitable conclusion that it could be wiser to eat some Cepelinai (it means zeppelins, because of their dirigible-like shape) or perhaps some Kepta Duona or maybe some Šaltibarščiai (they're all traditional Lithuanian dishes) than, say, Peking duck or sweet-and-sour pork with noodles. In other words, stand up for brave little Lithuania, rather than supporting the aggressive regime of Xi Jinping in Beijing. The oddest thing is that the disagreement is over something most other countries would see as a trifling matter. It is trifling by any normal standard, anyway. We must remember that Lithuania has a population of just 2.6-million, while China has almost 1.5-billion, or more than 546 times as many. Lithuania is geographically small, too: just 65,3002 km. China, with 9,596,960 km², is quite

a lot bigger. Roughly 147 times as big, in fact. The point I'm trying to make is that this is a very unequal contest and little Lithuania is fighting it largely alone, apart from some fairly half-hearted words of sympathy and a little legal action from the European Union. Even China itself makes a big thing of the size differential. In its English language Global Times, the Chinese Communist Party expressed its outrage at Lithuania's audacity, describing Lithuania as being: "just a mouse, or even a flea, under the feet of a fighting elephant."

Elephants and fleas, eh? Well, the flea called *chimaeropsyllidae* can only live on elephant shrews, but that's not the same thing at all, of course. Elephants can certainly suffer from fleas of the normal blood-sucking type, and if severely irritated by them they will eat less proper food, apparently, affecting their growth rates, but this really only matters in the case of elephant calves. Sucking an elephant's blood (as fleas will do, being members of the *siphonaptera* family) won't do it any good but as they don't suck up much at one go, they're less dangerous and less



Vilnius Cathedral Square and the Palace of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania

of a threat to elephant life than some other parasites that consume rather more. But even fighting elephants can become itchy and need a good scratch. And fleas can certainly spread disease; they were responsible in the main for the spread of the bubonic plague in the 14th century (it returned in the 18th century) by carrying around the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*, and it's been the cause of other infections probably before and certainly since.

Getting back to stories about huge and generally wicked monsters and tiny heroes, there are legends a-plenty about wicked giants being slain by bold (and normally quite small) adventurers, including one about Galigantus. He is killed (in its usual source, which is the Cornish folklore story) by the legendary Jack the Giant Killer, thus freeing the many knights and ladies Galigantus holds captive and also restoring a duke's beautiful daughter, who had been turned by a sorcerer into a white hart. Jack marries her (of course) and they all live happily ever after, as people tend to do at the end of fairy stories. In the legends, Galigantus is Jack's final giant.



© Nrf

Jack the Giant Killer

Another of Jack's large victims was supposedly the two-headed Thunderdell, who utters the famous words "fee fi fo fum" (they seem to be nonsense words and consequently are often spelled in a variety of different ways) as he approaches. He also says it – at greater length – in another fairy story, Jack and the Beanstalk,



Eric Huang, newly appointed director to the representative office (third from right), poses with other staffers outside the Taiwan Representative Office in Vilnius, Lithuania on Thursday, Nov. 18, 2021

which is often performed on stage in the UK as a children's pantomime at Christmas, and Shakespeare even puts the words into the mouth of Edgar in his play, *King Lear*, when Edgar, feigning madness, says to the King, "Child Rowland to the dark tower came. His word was still: fie, foh and fum. I smell the blood of a British man." Shakespeare was clearly quoting something that he knew would be familiar to his audiences, so the story of Jack the Giant Killer was apparently well known. Sadly, Europe has no Jack the Giant Killer today to tackle the enormous and threatening giant, China, as legend says he once tackled the likes of Thunderdell and Galigantus, along with others such as Cormoran, Blunderbore and Rebeck.

GIANTS AND TIDDLERS

The reason for China's somewhat overbearing and seemingly irrational approach to Lithuania is an office. Yes, that's right: one rather small and insignificant office. China clings to its belief that there is just one China and that therefore Taiwan doesn't (or shouldn't) exist.

That attitude was perhaps more understandable when China was still young, at least in its modern form, because it was home to the Kuomintang (KMT), the Communists' old enemy for the country's rule, and the Kuomintang, who were not good or wise rulers, but who were devoted to capitalism, were still hoping Communism would fail and they'd get back into power. It seems very unlikely, however: the KMT were not hugely popular, and their rule wasn't a happy time for ordinary people. Beijing seems to have slightly overreacted when Lithuania agreed to allow Taiwan to open a representative office in Vilnius. To judge by China's furious and frantic

response to this you would have to imagine that Vilnius is threatening to bomb Beijing. It is not, and the office in question is a tiny place: 16B, J. Jasinskio Street, Vilnius, to be precise, with a reception desk decked with vases of flowers and, behind it, the flags of both Lithuania and Taiwan. It hardly looks like something over which to start a war. China, however, is extremely firmly attached to its "One China Policy" and it has been stepping up its attempts to bully other countries into breaking any ties they may have with Taipei, even if all they are doing is admitting that Taiwan exists. China now blocks not only Taiwanese products from being imported but also any products made anywhere in the EU that may contain a part, however small, of Taiwanese origin, or whose manufacture involved the use of machinery made there. That's tricky, because Taiwan, you see, is the world's largest producer of computer chips, and in our ultra-connected world, computer links are vital. It's very hard to buy any modern electronic product, from a computer to a television to a lawn mower, an electric car or an espresso machine that doesn't contain, at its heart, something produced in Taiwan. Taiwan also produces such things as USB memory sticks, mobile phones and – believe it or not – bicycles (coincidentally, under the trade name 'Giant'). Tyres for motor vehicles are another Taiwanese product.



Seimas Palace (Lithuanian Parliament seat), Vilnius, Lithuania Wikipedia



© Wikipedia

His Eminence Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-Kiun

As for the current impasse concerning trading relations, China says the blame lies entirely with Lithuania. This is a claim from the Vladimir Putin playbook of quotable untruths, like his claim that the West started the dirty war he's fighting in Ukraine and that Russia's invasion was "self-defence" against aggression by the United States and pursued in order to eradicate Nazis. It's worth noting that Lithuania's parliament has designated Russia "a terrorist country" and its actions in Ukraine as "genocide". According to the Democratic Underground website, the Lithuanian Seimas tweeted on Tuesday that its members had passed the resolution unanimously making Lithuania the first country to declare Russia a perpetrator of terrorism, according to Ukraine's Centre for Strategic Communications and Information Security. But we're not talking about the tyrant Putin; we're talking about another apparent tyrant, Xi Jinping. In China's view, the blame for the breakdown in relations with Lithuania lies squarely with the Lithuanians. "We urge the Lithuanian side not to turn back the wheel of history," the CCP wrote, "and not to make wrong decisions. We also believe that all countries in the world, including the EU, will make a fair judgment on Lithuania's attempt to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China." Given the size disparity I mentioned, little Lithuania would not seem to pose much of a threat to the territorial integrity of mighty China. If you want to see territorial integrity under threat, just take a look at what Putin's forces are doing in Ukraine.

There, the Ukrainian government's territory is under very real threat from a rapacious power that wants to take the place over completely, which Beijing at least seems to understand. Far fewer Russian or Ukrainian soldiers would be in their graves or awaiting burial, however, if someone had simply opened a representative office somewhere instead of starting a war, even if you call it a "special military operation", rather than a war. Probably. But China dismisses criticism from any quarter as unacceptable, including its arrest of Hong Kong's 90-year-old cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun and three others. They were charged with "colluding with foreign forces" (a brigade of battle-weary bishops, perhaps?). Criticism from the EU and the United States was dismissed by Beijing as "a foolish political show". China said they deserved to be punished for opposing China's view.



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Prime Minister of Lithuania, Ingrida Šimonytė

But let's get back to Taiwan and China's row with Lithuania. The woman in charge of managing the Lithuanian end of this most uneven spat is the Prime Minister of Lithuania, Ingrida Šimonytė, an economist and former finance minister who has been a member of the Lithuanian Seimas (parliament) since 2016. She's very much a local girl, too, hailing from the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, where she was born (in 1974) and educated and from whose university she gained her degrees. She is said to have a particular gift for mathematics. Politically, she is an Independent, although she has had an affiliation with the centre-right Homeland Union.

In the current stand-off with mighty China, Šimonytė has shown remarkable courage, although she and her government have been

condemned by the Beijing-leaning Global Times: "Citing a corporate source responsible for negotiating exports, Lithuanian media outlet Delfi said the country's grain exports are now being refused by the local authorities of China's Taiwan island, citing specific quality requirements." It's nonsense, of course, since there's nothing wrong with Lithuanian agricultural produce except for the fact that it comes from Lithuania. But gentle words from China have always disguised other thoughts and feelings. British journalist Robert Payne hoped throughout his dinner with Mao, at the shack that passed for his headquarters at the time, that some word or gesture would reveal the real man behind the "kindly host" mask. It came closest towards the end of the meal; Payne wrote in his book 'Eyewitness': "Suddenly the electric light went out and in the darkness Mao Tse-tung (that was how it was written at the time of publication in 1972, before it was changed Mao Zedong) called for oil lamps. As the lamps were lit, there came a brief moment when his huge shadow went racing across the wall, rippling over paper windows and crowding the ceiling; and seeing the shadow, we thought we had seen the real Mao who had eluded us throughout the dinner."

WHAT'S BEHIND IT ALL?



Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong in Chongqing, 1945

Mao wasn't frightened of American intervention on the side of Chiang Kai-shek, either. "I asked him" Payne

wrote, “what the Red soldiers would do when confronted with heavy tanks supplied by the Americans. ‘We’ll tear them apart with our bare hands,’ he said, and threw out his hands and feet like a Chinese boxer.” Payne told me years later that it was at that moment that he knew for sure that Chinese Communism would triumph. Šimonytė must be hoping in won’t on this occasion. The Global Times makes clear its own pro-Beijing politics in its style of reporting the story: “If the Lithuania’s calculation was to manipulate the Taiwan question by denying the one-China principle,” runs the on-line article, “the small European country is destined to hit the wall, because it was clearly a folly (of) miscalculation. It’s now known to all that Lithuania has caused a self-made awkward position by playing with fire on (the) Taiwan question. And, it will find itself getting burnt in the fire.” There’s nothing like a spot of unbiased reportage, is there? And that was nothing like a spot of unbiased reportage. The CCP-run Global Times is pure, unadulterated propaganda.

The website FP (for Foreign Policy) has pointed out, quite reasonably, that in technical terms Lithuania hasn’t breached the “One China” rule demanded by Beijing, although it seems to have left itself open to Chinese coercion. FP argues that those so targeted should band together and adopt a policy allied to NATO’s Article 5 – effectively, that an attack on one is an attack on all – with a rule which says that an attempt at coercion on one has similarly wider ramifications.

The FP website appears to suggest that this whole affair has less to do with any fears in Beijing of Lithuania undermining the geographical integrity of China and rather more with China’s attempt “to gain a political foothold in Central and Eastern Europe.” In other words, it all comes down to trade, rather than hurt national pride. As so often in these mercenary times, money – and the love of it – underlies most political events. The office in Vilnius may bear the word “Taiwanese” in its title, but its proper full name is “Taiwanese Representative Office”; it doesn’t call itself an embassy and never has done. As FP points out, the United States has an “American Institute in Taiwan”, and other nations have similar arrangements without, it seems, offending Beijing too much. There is more to this argument, however: Lithuania withdrew from China’s “17+1” cooperation agreement for Central and Eastern European countries because of the way in which China used it to exert diplomatic influence (for which, read “pressure”). Beijing struck back by withdrawing its ambassador from Vilnius, having a detrimental effect on trade and suspending rail travel between the two countries. This may not have actually affected Lithuania very much as yet, but it has served as a warning to other, larger European countries, such as Germany, France and Spain, that they could see their trade with China damaged or demeaned. China does not seem to believe in using gentle persuasion when simple threats will often do the job. Why use a feather duster when it’s just as easy to wield a sledgehammer?



The Chinese Embassy building in Vilnius, Lithuania

DON'T CRITICISE – OBEY!

China’s somewhat hysterical reaction to Lithuania allowing an office to be set up representing Taiwan has been described – reasonably, I think – as a “diplomatic tantrum”. Like many tyrannies, China can be extremely childish. China’s Foreign Ministry said Lithuania “brazenly violates” links between the two countries and has warned of “potential consequences”, which drew strident condemnation from the US State Department, whose spokesperson, Ned Price, said: “We support our European partners and our allies as they develop mutually beneficial relations with Taiwan and resist the PRC (People’s Republic of China)’s coercive behaviour.” He added that: “Each country should be able to determine the contours of its own ‘One China’ policy without outside coercion.” China, we shouldn’t forget, has been breaching the norms of civilised behaviour in quite blatant ways. It was its vicious treatment of the Uighur people of Xinjiang, in the country’s northwest, that upset a lot of China’s potential allies, as well as its use of the Uighurs held in its so-called “re-education” camps (which seem to be more like concentration camps) as forced and cost-free labour to produce saleable goods.

It would seem to be trying to eradicate Islam, including by the demolition and total obliteration of Uighur mosques and cemeteries, several of which have been turned into parking lots. China appears to believe that it can behave in any way it likes and treat people just as it pleases without facing any consequences, and it can also rewrite history, but that really doesn’t work in the longer term. The



Prime Minister Šimonytė visiting NATO's Forward Presence Battalion in Pabradė, Lithuania



© Wikipedia

Detainees listening to speeches in an education camp in Lop County, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China

ever-faithful pro-CCP newspaper, the *Global Times*, lays all the blame at Lithuania's door. "If the Chinese government does not take action, it may leave the rest of the world a false impression that countries that offend China over Taiwan will not get punished," it stated. The outlet's editor-in-chief, Hu Xijin, slammed Lithuania as a "crazy, tiny country" and a "U.S. running dog" in an article (I haven't seen the expression "running dog" being used for years, not since the dying days of the old Soviet Union). He said the Baltic country will "eventually pay the price." Lithuania already is paying, of course, but it considers that standing up for its principles is more important than kow-towing to Xi Jinping. Lithuania has described Beijing's treatment of the Uighur people as "genocide". Maybe in Hu's view all of that is crazy, but most other countries consider it heroic, however unwise. China really isn't making many friends here.

Lithuania has further annoyed the CCP by saying it backs Canada in condemning the death sentence passed on Robert Schellenberg.

Schellenberg was arrested in 2014 on alleged drugs offences, sentenced to death in 2018 and had his sentence upheld last August. Outside of China, many think the arrest and trial are a response to the United States' arrest of Meng Wanzhou, who is accused of doing business with Iran. Schellenberg now faces the death penalty, although he claims he was just a visitor passing through who was framed by a criminal gang. China also got very angry (it doesn't take much to make China angry, it would appear) for inviting a representative from Taiwan to speak in the Lithuanian parliament, the Seimas, in a debate about the spread of the coronavirus. Ambassador Andy Chin, who chairs Taiwan's Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, attended to participate in the discussion, which infuriated Beijing so much that the Chinese Ambassador, Shen Zhifei, has demanded an explanation. In China's view, it seems, a country must ask Beijing's permission before inviting a foreign politician to speak to its democratically elected parliamentarians.



Recalled Chinese Ambassador to Lithuania, Shen Zhifei



© Wikimedia

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda

Beijing seems not to have much time for democracy and none at all for the principle of 'independence'. According to Nury Turkel, whose brilliant new book 'No Escape' gives a first-hand account of being a Uighur in today's China, the Chinese introduced all sorts of crimes with which Uighurs could be charged: "having a long beard", for instance, or "using the front door more often than the back door". No, I don't understand that one, either, but I promise I'm not making it up. "Reciting the Qur'an during a funeral" could get you locked up, too. But the real reason, in Turkel's eyes, is that the Uighurs simply "aren't Chinese enough". A representative office for Taipei has not won universal approval, even within Lithuania. The country's President, Gitanas Nausėda, says he wasn't asked before the decision was announced. However, in an exclusive interview for Decode 39, a political website, it was stressed that Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis had made clear that: "The Lithuanian government stands firmly by its decision to welcome the opening of the Taiwanese representative office. We look forward to developing our relations with Taiwan in the areas of business, science and technology, and culture," he added, "[as well as] more contacts between Lithuanian and Taiwanese people who are bound together by common values, vibrant and open societies based on innovation." It's a bold decision for a small country to take against a giant renowned for being ruthless and uncaring towards others.



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Hong Kong support rally and counter-protest in Vilnius

STANDING UP TO A GIANT

The Uighurs' home territory, Xinjiang, accounts for around a sixth of China's total land area, yet it's home to just 2% of its people, and even then, the mainly Han Chinese who seem to be in charge don't want to give jobs to Uighurs, so there is poverty and hunger, even in Kashgar, once a major hub on the old Silk Road, where there is still vast mineral, oil and agricultural wealth to be had that is not being shared with the Uighurs. One thing is certain: China may be taking these uneven-handed and discreditable steps in the name of Communism, but it's not a form of Communism that would be recognised by Karl Marx. Marx wanted equal opportunities for everyone and a chance to share the wealth. Xi Jinping seems to want to be seen as an emperor of old, pampered and obeyed in everything and never, ever having his decisions questioned. In other words, he should be considered "son of heaven" and "autocrat of all under heaven". Not a bad job if you can get it but hardly conducive to the sort of egalitarianism favoured by the likes of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Lenin, Zhou Enlai or – dare I say it – Mao Zedong. Xi has more in common in some ways with the 4th Qing emperor, Kangxi, although he lacks the magnificent moustache, or even with the heavily bearded Qin Shi Huang.



Qin Shi Huang, founder of the Qin dynasty, and the first emperor of a unified China (259–210 BCE)



The Kangxi Emperor (XuanYe; 4 May 1654 – 20 December 1722) third Emperor of the Qing dynasty, and the second Qing emperor to rule over China from 1661 to 1722

The great German Communist writer Bertolt Brecht didn't set much store by imperial power. "The finest plans are always ruined," he wrote in his play 'Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder' (*Mother Courage and her Children*), "by the littleness of those who ought to carry them out, for the emperors can actually do nothing." It is basically an anti-war play. Xi seems determined to disprove Brecht's assertion about the power of emperors. He wants to be seen to be above the law and not subject to it. In February, a Japanese diplomat was arrested just after eating lunch in a Beijing restaurant. He was then held for several hours by secret police officers who ignored his diplomatic identity card and who refused to let him telephone the Japanese embassy. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations clearly states that diplomats should be immune from any form of arrest, but China ignored Japan's demand for an apology and insisted that the diplomat had been engaged in activities "inconsistent" with his diplomatic rôle, normally seen as a euphemism for spying. Diplomats in China are now uneasy, but China was apparently sending a message: talk to our officials but not to the Chinese people. Presumably Beijing thinks the ordinary people don't have opinions, or, if they do, that they should be silenced. Whatever the overriding politics are, they are not Marxist, whatever Xi may claim and perhaps even believe.

The EU is not happy with the current situation and in January it filed a suit at the World Trade organisation over China's sanctions against Lithuania, with the backing of the United States, Australia, Britain, and Japan. Apart from its provocative statements about Lithuania, China has warned large multinational corporations to cut their ties with the Baltic state or risk being targeted by China with further penalties. According to Lithuania's vice-minister for foreign affairs, Mantas Adomenas, some companies have cancelled contracts with suppliers in his country, and he told Reuters that China: "have been sending messages to multinationals that if they use parts and supplies from Lithuania, they will no longer be allowed to sell to the Chinese market or get supplies there." Clearly, that would impact seriously on any company engaged in global trade. MSN News reports that Adomenas has explained how Chinese authorities were further preventing exports to Lithuania by such measures as stopping export credit guarantees for goods being traded into Lithuania from China. Will it work? Not immediately, it seems. "We will not bend to this pressure," he said. "What we decide to do, by calling Taiwan Taiwan is up to Lithuania, not Beijing." According to France 24, the very few Lithuanians currently living in Taiwan have suddenly found themselves extremely popular, even getting applause when they enter a restaurant and being offered free taxi rides. Taiwan's President, Tsai Ing-wen, was asked which country she would most like to visit when the pandemic has gone. She didn't hesitate. "I think Lithuania is a very brave country," she said. "I would like very much to go there." She would be made very welcome and I'm sure she'd like it.



Mantas Adomėnas



© Taiwan Presidential Office

Taiwan's President, Tsai Ing-wen

For Lithuania, the affair is deeply personal; it was the first member of the old Soviet Union to break away from Moscow's control, back in 1990. Members of the Seimas applauded when it was formally announced that it would no longer be the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic but from then on it would be called the Republic of Lithuania. Some Lithuanians have accused Russia of bullying, too, making their country the target of hostile acts by both the bear and the panda, figuratively speaking. Not that either country would admit to caring enough about Lithuania to bother. According to an article in *The Economist*, nationalist Chinese commentator, Hu Xijin, has written on his social media account that China shouldn't allow itself to become annoyed by Lithuania. "It's a snotty little country," he wrote, "just not worth it." If so, why comment at all? This is a fairly typical Beijing ploy: denigrate your supposed "enemy" by playing down its importance to you or anyone else. The Chinese population, denied free access to many media sources may even believe it, not having the possibility to analyse what's



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Hong Kong protester throwing eggs at the portrait of General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping, 1 October 2019

really happening, since the people are denied access to anything not produced by the Beijing propaganda machine. Lithuania, however, has seen what can happen when a large and irresponsible neighbour decides to take your country over and silence anyone who voices criticism. Stalin's Russia did that to little Lithuania and its current attack on Ukraine has raised the spectre of Moscow trying to get back all the satellites it has lost, including Lithuania.

China's treatment of the Uighurs and the imposition of its draconian 'national security' law in Hong Kong mean that it's not only Taiwan that now looks askance at Beijing. Most of the countries in the free world are similarly nervous about China's ruthless behaviour. *The Economist* quotes Eric Huang, who heads Taiwan's controversial office in Vilnius, the centre of the trouble, describing China's treatment of Lithuania as "a new stage for China's coercion of the world." Beijing seems to find it hard to distinguish between

the words 'commerce' and 'coerce'. Just remove a couple of 'M's and there you are.

Unfortunately, in the real world there are very few examples of Jack the Giant Killer, however covetous and implacable the giant in question may be. Well, if you're going to make enemies of a country, why not choose two of the largest and most irresponsible the world can offer? Giants have been a part of our folklore for centuries; they're even mentioned in the Book of Genesis (Chapter 6, verse 4): "There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." In some of the old tales, the giants ate people, as other legendary monsters had supposedly done, along with domesticated animals.

It would clearly be difficult to have much of a deleterious effect on mighty China. It is far too big and powerful to need to terrorise others with its all-too-credible threats, and yet it does. However, Taiwan is to help Lithuania to develop its semiconductor industry, which would provide yet more competition to China's own industry. Lithuania has already shown its bravery in the face of menace, just as Jack the Giant Killer did in the stories. Perhaps by out-performing it in some vital industry, the giant can yet be brought to heel. And we'll all live happily ever after...?



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Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping

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NEWS IN BRIEF

CHINA'S RIVAL TO AIRBUS AND BOEING SOON ON COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS



© Comac/Xu Bingnan

At 6:52 on May 14, 2022, the C919 large aircraft numbered B-001J took off from the fourth runway of Pudong Airport and landed safely at 9:54, marking the first aircraft that COMAC will deliver to its first customer. The first flight test of the C919 large aircraft was successfully completed.

The Comac C919 is a narrow-body airliner developed by Chinese aircraft manufacturer Comac. The development program was launched in 2008. Production of the prototype began in December 2011, with the first prototype being ready on 2 November 2015 and having its maiden flight on 5 May 2017.

The aircraft, is powered by either CFM International LEAP or ACAE CJ-1000A turbofan engines, and be able to carry 156 to 168 passengers in a normal operating configuration up to 5,555 km.

The aircraft received between \$49-\$72 billion in state subsidies.

The C919 was built with US and European help. Only 14 of the aircraft's 82 suppliers are Chinese, according to aviation experts.

Since 2019, six C919s have carried out flight tests in Shanghai, Yanliang, Dongying and Nanchang, and carried out a series of ground tests and flight tests. In November, 2020, the aircraft obtained the Type Inspection Authorization (TIA), and officially entered into authority certification flight tests.

The C919 large passenger aircraft system represents the key task for China to independently develop trunk passenger aircraft.

Wu Yongliang, the vice general manager of COMAC, said at the beginning of the year that the C919 project is still in the airworthiness certification stage and is expected to be delivered in 2022.

After signing a contract to purchase the aircraft last year, China Eastern Airlines, which counts the Chinese government as its major shareholder, disclosed on May 10 this year that the total amount of funds it plans to raise will not exceed 15 billion yuan (\$2.2 billion), of which 10.5 billion yuan will be used to introduce 38 aircraft including four C919s. According to the announcement of China Eastern Airlines, the unit prices of domestic C919 aircraft and ARJ21-700 aircraft are \$99 million and \$38 million respectively – far lower than imported aircraft made by Airbus and Boeing, which have a unit price of about \$300 million.

Zhang Chao, deputy director of the AVIC Securities Research Institute, said that all six test C919 large passenger aircraft have made their first flight, and it is expected that the first delivery will be completed in 2022, batch delivery will be realized in 2023, and the annual output of 50 aircraft will be achieved in 2025.

Success of the C919 is vital to both China's technological development and its domestic aviation market.

CYBER-ATTACKS: COUNCIL EXTENDS SANCTIONS REGIME UNTIL 18 MAY 2025



© Eufm

The Council has decided to prolong the framework for restrictive measures against cyber-attacks threatening the EU and its member states for a further three years, until 18 May 2025.

This framework allows the EU to impose targeted restrictive measures on persons or entities involved in cyber-attacks which cause a significant impact, and constitute an external threat to the EU or its member states. Restrictive measures can also be imposed in response to cyber-attacks against third states or international organisations where such measures are considered necessary to achieve the objectives of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

Sanctions currently apply to eight individuals and four entities, and include an asset freeze and a travel ban. Additionally, EU persons and entities are forbidden from making funds available to those listed. These individual listings will continue to be reviewed every 12 months.

The decision to prolong the restrictive measures for three years shows the strong EU's commitment to enhance its resilience and ability to prevent, discourage, deter and respond to cyber threats and malicious cyber activities in order to safeguard European security and interests.

Background

In June 2017, the EU established a Framework for a Joint EU Diplomatic Response to Malicious Cyber Activities (the "cyber diplomacy toolbox"). The framework allows the EU and its member states to use all CFSP measures, including restrictive measures if necessary, to prevent, discourage, deter and respond

to malicious cyber activities targeting the integrity and security of the EU and its member states.

The EU framework for restrictive measures against cyber-attacks threatening the EU and its member states was set up in May 2019.

ENHANCED CO-OPERATION AND DISCLOSURE OF ELECTRONIC EVIDENCE: 22 COUNTRIES SIGN NEW PROTOCOL TO CYBERCRIME CONVENTION

The Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention), aimed at enhancing co-operation and disclosure of electronic evidence has been opened for signature at a conference organised under the Italian Presidency of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers.

The Protocol was signed in the presence of several ministers by the following Council of Europe member states: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain and Sweden, and by non-member states: Chile, Colombia, Japan, Morocco and United States.

“Cybercrime is growing and changing at an increasing rate. It disrupts everything from businesses to hospitals to the critical infrastructure we all depend on. Today, we are making a major contribution to the worldwide effort to fight online crime. The Second Protocol brings the Budapest Convention up to date with current, technological challenges, so that it remains the most relevant and effective international framework for combating cybercrime in the years ahead. It is the gateway to a safer, more secure future,” said the Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić.



Secretary General of The Council of Europe, Pejčinović Burić

“The use of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) by organised crime in all “sectors” (sexual exploitation, drug trafficking, smuggling, terrorism) represents a further challenge for our judicial authorities and for our institutions. Our governments must respond properly and effectively to all those crimes, in line with the technological evolution. The Second Additional Protocol, therefore, responds to the need for greater and more efficient co-operation between States and between the States and the private sector, clarifying the cases in which the “service providers” will be able to provide the data in their possession directly to the competent authorities of other countries. The relevance of this Protocol is a hope for the victims of cybercrime,” said Justice Minister of Italy, Marta Cartabia.



Justice Minister of Italy, Marta Cartabia

The Protocol provides tools for enhanced co-operation and disclosure of electronic evidence - such as direct co-operation with service providers and registrars, effective means to obtain subscriber information and traffic data, immediate co-operation in emergencies or joint investigations - that are subject to a system of human rights and rule of law, including data protection safeguards.

It is open for signature by Parties to the Convention and will enter into force once ratified by five States.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION LAUNCHES A PHONE HELPLINE FOR THOSE FLEEING THE WAR IN UKRAINE

The European Commission has launched today a dedicated phone helpline in Ukrainian to provide information and assist those fleeing the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Commission, through the Europe Direct Contact Centre, has been answering questions in writing in Ukrainian since the end of March and this service is now also available over the phone.

The helpline aims to assist people escaping the Russian invasion of Ukraine by answering their questions and providing a wide range of practical and useful information, from the conditions on entering and travelling in the EU, to access to rights and opportunities, such as education, jobs or healthcare.

The helpline can be contacted in Ukrainian within the EU at **00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11**, where the service is free of charge, as well as from outside the EU at **+32 22 99 96 96**, where the international standard rate applies. The helpline also provides services in official EU languages and Russian.

The helpline in addition offers a free of charge call back service. More information is available on the EDCC https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu_en



IAEA DELIVERS SPECIALIZED SAFETY AND SECURITY EQUIPMENT TO CHORNOBYL

The IAEA has delivered specialised equipment to Ukraine in the first major step in its technical assistance to help the country ensure the safety and security of its nuclear facilities during the ongoing conflict.

Responding to an earlier request from Ukraine for equipment, an IAEA team, headed by Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi, arrived at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant yesterday to conduct radiological assessments and restore safeguards monitoring systems as well as to deliver equipment such as radiation detectors, spectrometers and personal protective clothing.

Included in the batch of equipment are personal radiation detectors to detect and monitor radiation levels throughout the site. These robust and versatile personal radiation detectors are widely used by nuclear safety and security experts worldwide.

“The equipment, under the guidance of our staff on the ground, can be operational within minutes and can immediately support the staff at Chernobyl to fulfil their nuclear safety and security tasks,” said Carlos Torres Vidal, Director of the IAEA Incident and Emergency Centre.

The IAEA team also handed over spectrometers which assess the level of radiation in the environment and provide a spectrum that is like a fingerprint identifying the type of radiation. This will help Chernobyl staff to assess the radiological situation at the site and the Exclusion Zone, spanning 30 kilometres around the plant.

Spectrometers carried in personal backpacks were provided to support extended surveying with GPS mapping capabilities. The backpack lets the user focus on walking safely around an area instead of looking at a screen and numbers. This is especially necessary in an area like the Exclusion Zone.



IAEA staff packing nuclear safety equipment for delivery to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant

As a result of the conflict and the prevailing conditions following the 1986 accident, the situation in the Exclusion Zone is uniquely challenging. Ukraine recently informed the IAEA that Chernobyl's analytical laboratories for radiation monitoring were destroyed, and analytical instruments stolen, broken or otherwise disabled.

The IAEA's presence in Chernobyl will be of paramount importance, the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant said in a

statement. "We have been cooperating with the IAEA for many years in a row, and I am sure that now we will continue to have fruitful and successful cooperation," said Acting Director General Valeriy Seyda.

The IAEA assistance team also brought personal protective equipment from Vienna. Such protective garments provide protection against some types of radiation, as well as from radioactive contamination and inhalation, and therefore help to manage the risks posed to staff who due to the nature of their work are exposed to radiation.

In addition to nuclear safety and security assistance, IAEA safeguards staff travelled within the assistance team to Chernobyl this week to conduct on-site safeguards work. They will install equipment to reactivate remote data transmission from its monitoring systems installed at the Chernobyl plant.

“This is just a first step. The IAEA will be sending more equipment as we continue our assistance to Ukraine in the coming weeks and months,” added Torres Vidal.

GLOBAL EXPERTS EXAMINE THE CHANGING FACE OF MATCH-FIXING



The 12th meeting of INTERPOL's Match-Fixing Task Force (IMFTF) has concluded with a call to harmonize global efforts to curb competition manipulation.

The three-day (10-12 May) meeting brought together integrity and intelligence specialists from some 50 countries, representing law enforcement, public authorities, sports federations, anti-doping organizations and betting monitoring services.

It was the first major event held under the banner of INTERPOL's newly-created Financial Crime and Anti-Corruption Centre (IFCACC), which provides a coordinated global response against the exponential growth in transnational financial crime and corruption.

Discussions focused on mechanisms to boost intelligence sharing and close legislative and institutional gaps, such as the establishment of National Platforms, as outlined in the Macolin Convention, which centralize and analyse information on irregular and suspicious trends.

With criminal organizations increasingly operating across betting and sports markets, participants discussed the emerging uses of technology, big data and social media. They also acknowledged that match-fixers are still very much relying on tried and true methods of manipulation, such as targeting the entourage of athletes and grooming young players, pointing to a continued need for education.

INTERPOL provided an overview on the specific tools available to law enforcement dedicated to data collection on

sport corruption (project ETICA) and financial crimes analysis (FINCAF). A number of countries presented recently issued INTERPOL Purple Notices providing information on modus operandi linked to social media, identity theft, ghost and fake matches.

The meeting included a closed-door session for specialized investigators to share case studies, discuss emerging match-fixing tactics and hold multi and bilateral meetings to coordinate active international cases.

"Corruption is a key enabler to all forms of criminal activity. Any sport, amateur or professional, on any continent, can be exploited by criminals. Meetings such as this allow us to take clear look at the changing face of match-fixing." Rory Corcoran, Director of IFCACC

Exchanges revealed that while betting intelligence remained important to investigations, other sources of intelligence also needed to be exploited. For example, although doping has traditionally been viewed through a drug-enforcement lens, participants heard that positive doping tests and alerts could be a valuable source of intelligence for integrity investigations, notably on the criminal organizations behind competition manipulation.

INTERPOL and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) held a side event dedicated to stakeholders in the United Arab Emirates, in order to raise awareness, build capacity and enhance national mechanisms to prevent, detect and sanction competition manipulation.

The IMFTF was created in 2011 to support member countries with investigations and law enforcement operations in all sports, and maintain a global network of investigators for the sharing of information, intelligence and best practices. It now includes 100 member units, with more than 150 National Points of Contact worldwide.

LONG-PLANNED NATO EXERCISES ACROSS EUROPE GET UNDERWAY

Troops from NATO Allies and partners are taking part in a series of long-planned military exercises stretching from the High North to the Balkans to enhance the readiness and interoperability of NATO forces.



Two of the biggest drills, with around 18,000 troops from twenty countries, are "Defender Europe" and "Swift Response". Currently taking place in Poland and eight other countries, they also include parachute drops and helicopter assaults in North Macedonia. In Estonia, 15,000 troops from 14 countries are

involved in exercise "Hedgehog", one of the largest military drills in the country since 1991 and involving the US navy Wasp-class landing ship Kearsarge. Meanwhile, exercise "Iron Wolf" in Lithuania involves 3,000 Allied troops and around 1,000 vehicles, including German Leopard 2 tanks.

NATO Spokesperson Oana Lungescu said, "exercises like these show that NATO stands strong and ready to protect our nations and defend against any threat." She stressed that "these are regular exercises, planned well before Russia's brutal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, but they help to remove any room for miscalculation or misunderstanding about our resolve to protect and defend every inch of Allied territory. NATO exercises are defensive, transparent, and in line with our international commitments."

In Germany, 7,500 troops are involved in "Wettiner Heide", a NATO Response Force exercise. In the Mediterranean, the USS Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group will be placed under NATO command for the second time this year during the "Neptune series" of naval drills. This marks only the second transfer of a U.S. carrier group to NATO since the end of the Cold War. Next month's "Ramstein Legacy" in Poland and the Baltic countries will be Europe's largest integrated air and missile defence exercise and involve 23 countries. "Baltops", also in June, has been held annually for over 50 years and will see amphibious training across the Baltic region.

NATO partners Finland and Sweden will be involved in several Allied exercises over the coming weeks. Currently, U.S., British, Estonian and Latvian forces are participating alongside their Finnish hosts in exercise "Arrow 22", and involving UK Challenger 2 tanks and US Stryker armoured fighting vehicles.

EIT DIGITAL SUPPORTED TOUCHLAB GIVES ROBOTS A HUMAN TOUCH

UK start-up Touchlab, a deep tech venture in EIT Digital's Innovation Factory roster, has raised GBP 3,5M.

The funding round was led by Octopus Ventures, one of Europe's largest early-stage investors and backed by Creator Fund and Techstart Ventures.

Touchlab is successfully pursuing an ambitious goal to give robots a human touch. While robots excel against humans in many ways, some tasks are difficult for them to replicate - grasping objects, for instance. In areas of tactile sensing and dexterity, robots have been inferior because they cannot detect tactile information and sometimes use too much force to achieve delicate tasks.

EIT Digital's UK and Ireland director, Morgan Gillis comments: "Touchlab has outstanding technology with potential for far reaching economic and societal impact. We are delighted to support them in this stage of intense commercialization alongside Octopus Ventures, a leading European VC firm, which shares our focus on deep tech".

Akriti Dokania, Investor at Octopus Ventures adds: "Touchlab has made truly pioneering advances with its technology in tactile sensing. Electronic skin opens a world of new opportunities and applications in robotics, making it an extremely exciting time

for the industry. Touchlab has a huge vision for the business, and we couldn't be more thrilled to be supporting them on this journey".

Until now there has been little progress in giving robots a sense of touch like humans but Touchlab is solving this by developing a low-profile tactile sensing skin, which is wrapped around robots as "electronic-skin".

Zaki Hussein, CEO of Touchlab comments: "I greatly look forward to working with EIT Digital to commercialize our tactile avatar telerobot in hospitals across Europe. We aim to break the chain of hospital acquired infections (HAIs) without hindering the human interaction between clinicians and patients - a problem to which there is no existing solution. This will significantly reduce complications due to deadly pathogens, from COVID to MRSA."

Touchlab's e-skin is thinner than human skin, can be easily applied to existing robots and is able to withstand extreme environments such as acid, and high and low temperatures. When used in conjunction with tele-operated avatars, the technology also enables humans to operate remotely in hazardous settings such as nuclear plants or hospitals treating highly infectious diseases.



© Touchlab

Touchlab's team from left to right: Dr. Vasilis Mitrakos, Zach Keane, Dr. Vlad Ivan, Laura Garvia Caberol and Dr. Zaki Hussein

THE ALTERNATIVE PROPULSION MEETING FOR A CARBON-FREE FUTURE FOR YACHTING

More than 35 teams, including 27 universities will represent 20 nationalities in the Principality of Monaco

Tuesday 3rd May 2022. As the 5th Monaco E-Prix and Salon Ever ends in the Principality, both focused on sustainability and renewable energy, the Yacht Club de Monaco has extended its lead in the search for eco-friendly solutions as it gears up for the 9th Monaco Energy Boat Challenge 4-9 July 2022.

Held under the aegis of the collective 'Monaco, Capital of Advanced Yachting' umbrella brand and bringing together a new generation of engineers, Monaco Energy Boat Challenge intends to play its part in meeting the 21st century's energy and environmental challenges. It is doing this by promoting innovative solutions for recreational boats, particularly in the propulsion and alternative energy field. Since its launch in 2014, the event has gone from strength to strength establishing itself as the international rendezvous for tomorrow's yachting.

For this edition, more than 35 teams, including 27 universities will represent 20 nationalities in the Principality. "We want to build the future through an eco-responsible societal prism that cares about future generations. The yachting industry cannot evolve if it does not incorporate the sustainable development concept into all its initiatives," says YCM General Secretary Bernard d'Alessandri.



YCM General Secretary Bernard d'Alessandri

Alongside countries like Indonesia, Monaco, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, United Arab Emirates, Peru and China with the Hainan Institute of Electronics, Canada and India are making their first appearance since the event started. These two nations will be represented by students from the Montreal Polytechnic and Kumaraguru College of Technology.

Organised in partnership with the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, with support from Credit Suisse, BMW and SBM Offshore, as well as Dutch shipyard Oceanco, the Monaco Energy Boat Challenge powers creativity and stimulates innovation.

With registrations confirmed for the Solar and Energy classes, it is the turn of non-CE regulated prototypes and hydrogen in the Open Sea Class to finalise their registrations, while CE ratified boats have until 1st July.

The meeting is backed by many supporters including Bertrand Piccard, founder of the Solar Impulse Foundation:

"I've been the godfather of this event for several years and have seen how it's evolved. In the beginning, it was a bit anecdotal, the boats not being that professional, as it was just the start of those pioneers trying to do something with alternative energy sources. Yet now, after nine years, it's become marketable! Boats are now on the market.

It's clearly a new phase and the message is simple: bravo to you all for what you have accomplished and keep it up for the future?"





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THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE

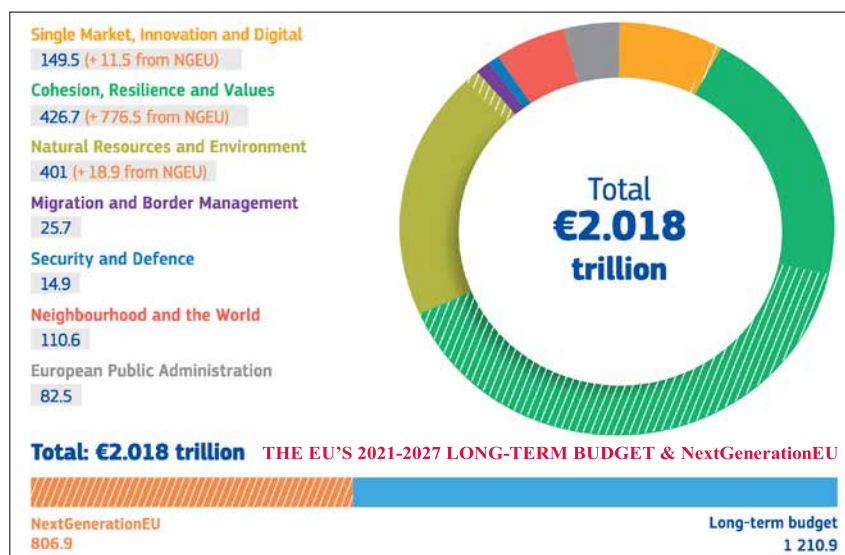
Can the EU afford to help rebuild Ukraine? Can it afford not to?

Just how far can EU resources stretch? It looks as if we're going to find out, as the EU plans for the years ahead following a spending spree it could neither expect, nor avoid. Who could foresee the arrival of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in all its many and various guises? Who could foresee that Vladimir Putin, instead of using the presidency he'd acquired (and by very dubious and probably illegal means) to improve the lives of Russians, would decide to throw those lives away on a pointless war in which many would die and from which no-one (except himself if he was VERY lucky) could hope to benefit? Even those things we should expect, we seldom prepare for. "Old age is the most unexpected of all things that happen to a man", wrote Leon Trotsky, the Russian (but part Ukrainian) revolutionary, whose expectations were further cut short when Joseph Stalin had him murdered with an ice pick in Mexico because of his opposition to Stalinism, which Trotsky personally felt was no longer true Communism. How right he was! The comment about old age coming as a surprise is irrelevant in his case,

then, but still very true. We know we're going to get old, we just never expect it, we think we will always continue to be active, mobile and full of vim and vigour. If only... However, even while building in safety provisions to a budget, even the cleverest of economists can be caught out.

When, in 2020, the EU published its spending plans for 2021-2027, most

of us had never heard of Covid and we thought Vladimir Putin was a dangerous gangster who was unlikely to affect Europe much, other than in his habit of murdering his dissidents on European soil. It now looks certain that he and his team of FSB (formerly known as the KGB) operatives were behind apartment bombings in Moscow, two of which were prevented by eagle-eyed residents who



spotted the explosives being delivered, leading to a timely evacuation. Putin's pals put the blame on Chechens, despite one of the men delivering the explosives having been recognised as a member of the FSB. As Catherine Belton wrote in her disturbing book about the Russian leader's rise to power, 'Putin's People', "If this really was the deadly secret behind Putin's rise, it was the first chilling indication of how far the KGB men were willing to go."



Catherine Belton

In Putin's case, it would appear that there are no limits, financially or morally. His oil wealth is huge, so his armed forces are unlikely in the short term to run out of money with which to prosecute their "special military operation", as Putin euphemistically calls his brutal war of invasion, although his economy could easily stagnate.

None of this, of course, is good news for financial planning in the European Union, which lacks Putin's "slush fund". As reported on the news website of Yahoo, the European Commission has slashed its growth forecast for the 19 countries that share the euro from the 4% predicted in February, just before Russia's invasion began, to just 2.7%, with a prediction that it will fall to 2.3% next year.



An unexploded Russian rocket deactivated by the Ukrainian defence force

In a statement, the Commission wrote that: "The outlook for the EU economy before the outbreak of the war was for a prolonged and robust expansion. But Russia's invasion of Ukraine has posed new challenges, just as the Union had recovered from the economic impacts of the pandemic." Things look unlikely to recover while Russia's tanks and artillery are parked on Ukrainian soil.

"By exerting further upward pressures on commodity prices, causing renewed supply disruptions and increasing uncertainty, the war is exacerbating pre-existing headwinds to growth, which were previously expected to subside," read the statement. There is more, none of it cheering: the European Central Bank wants to keep inflation at 2%, but it is forecast to reach 6.1% this year and is unlikely to fall below 2.7% next. Before Putin launched his war, presumably in expectation of a rapid and easy victory, just as he obtained when seizing Crimea, the Commission expected prices to rise this year by 3.5% and by only 1.7% next year.

IT COULD BE WORSE

According to Yahoo: "Despite government spending to cushion surging energy prices and support millions of refugees from Ukraine, the aggregate EU government deficit should fall in 2022 to 3.6% of GDP from 4.7% in 2021 as temporary COVID-19 support measures are withdrawn. It should fall to 2.5% in 2023, the Commission said." Financial journalist Jan Strupczewski, writing for Yahoo, concludes his prediction on a less pessimistic note than we might have expected: "In the euro zone, the aggregate deficit is to halve to 3.7% this year against 2021 and fall further to 2.5% next year, while aggregated euro zone public debt is to fall to 94.7% of GDP from 97.4% in 2021 and ease further to 92.7% in 2023." He also expects unemployment to fall to 7.3% of the workforce this year and to 7.0% in 2023, down from 7.7% in 2021. Surprisingly, perhaps, Ukraine's economy is surviving Russia's onslaught with considerable success. Its success at exporting cereals and iron and steel had ensured an impressive growth rate. Couple that with an efficient banking industry and a small government deficit last year of less than 3% of GDP and you have a stable foundation for a country about to be swept up in a war it had no

reason to expect. Its national debt was below 50% of its GDP last year, which should make other finance ministers jealous.

Amazingly, many parts of Ukraine's economy continue to function, with pensions and the salaries of government employees still being paid. Most businesses still seem to be paying their staff, although it's not clear how long this can continue. The World Bank is predicting that countries in the Europe and Central Area (which includes Ukraine) will see their economies shrink by 4.1% this year, with Russia's unprovoked invasion being the second catastrophe to hit the area after the COVID-19 pandemic.



World Bank Group headquarters building in Washington, D.C.

The World Bank warns that: "The economic impact of the conflict has reverberated through multiple global channels, including commodity and financial markets, trade and migration links, and confidence. Neighbouring countries in the Europe and Central Asia region are likely to suffer considerable economic damage because of their strong trade, financial, and migration links with Ukraine and Russia." Putin is likely to be recorded by history alongside the SARS-CoV-2 virus as a source of economic damage to the region. Both are deadly, both are unpredictable, both follow no form of detectable logic. The difference would seem to be that in Putin's case no vaccine is available. The World Bank predicts that Ukraine's GDP will shrink by 45% and The Economist magazine believes that taken together with Ukraine's greatly reduced tax take, as well as massive bills for military salaries, it will leave a gap of some \$5-billion (€4.8-billion) every month. As The Economist points out: "That is roughly 5% of Ukraine's depleted GDP for every month that the war goes on."



© CruiseMapper

Port of Odessa, Ukraine

From Ukraine's point of view, most of its cereal crops (plus sunflowers for its edible oil industry) have been sown and there is no shortage of potential customers for the beleaguered country's grain and for its iron and steel; the problem is delivery. The ports are closed, there are Russian warships patrolling the Black Sea (even though two of them have been sunk by the Ukrainians) and closer to the ports are Ukrainian mines, placed to deter the Russian vessels from getting too close. This renders ports such as Odessa, Mariupol and others unusable. Deliveries by rail or road are fraught with problems: the roads can't take many heavy goods vehicles while EU phytosanitary checks on foodstuffs entering EU territory are causing massive tailbacks. It would be different if Ukraine was a member of the club, but though it wants to be and even intends to be one day, as long as it isn't, bureaucracy will provide a massive obstacle. However, the European Parliament is set to approve a one-year suspension of all EU import duties on Ukrainian exports to support Ukraine's economy. The plan has already been endorsed by the International Trade Committee and will have the effect of completely removing duties on industrial products as well as anti-dumping duties and safeguard measures on steel imports. The EU is very good as a creator of mind-numbing bureaucracy, but it has now (somewhat belatedly) agreed to do something about it to help Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Russia has been signally unsuccessful in its advance across Ukraine. The Ukrainian forces have put up resistance that the Russians were simply not expecting, sometimes through the Ukrainian use of Russian-made long-range weapons.

Even Russia's continuing assault on the Azovstal steel plant, the centre of Ukraine's resistance in Mariupol, brought the Russians no closer to seizing Mariupol until late May, when the Ukrainian defenders finally pulled out. The Atlantic Council believes that the long stand-off and the successful repulsion of Russia for so long was partly (or even largely) due to the delivery of Soviet-built and Western heavy weaponry, such as long-range artillery, rockets and air and missile attacks. Northeast of Kharkiv, Russian forces are being gradually beaten back towards the Russian border. The Atlantic Council writes that: "Russia continued to strike Odessa with missiles but has not begun an assault on the city. We predict that a major Russian offensive in the south is unlikely in the near term." There is a reason for that prediction, too: "Given the ongoing and intensifying fight in eastern Ukraine, doing so would replicate Russia's early error of splitting its focus and fires on multiple areas of operations."



© Ukrinform

The besieged Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol

IS ANYWHERE SAFE?

On the other hand, the Atlantic Council assessment believes that Ukraine could take the initiative, perhaps even

targeting the Russian city of Belgorod, which would put the Russian forces' supply lines in jeopardy. It needs those if it is ever to take Donbass. It's thought that Ukrainian forces have already struck Belgorod, taking out an ammunition warehouse, probably with missiles. It has also been active in the Black Sea, where, as mentioned earlier, it has successfully sunk a second Russian warship. The identity of the vessel – and its type – is unclear. It could have been the frigate Admiral Makarov, or else a Serna-class landing vessel, according to the Atlantic Council, destroyed using a missile launched from a Turkish-made TB-2 Bayraktar drone.



© Alisa Dovydenko / TRASS

The Russian Aerospace Forces' Central Scientific Research Institute on fire in Tver, Russia

Belgorod may not have been the only city targeted by Ukrainian forces, either: fires at oil depots in the Russian city of Bryansk, nearly 160 kilometres inside the Russian border were caused by explosions that hit a fuel depot and an oil pipeline. Fires have also been reported at the Central Research Institute of the Aerospace Defence Forces in Tver, northwest of Moscow, with a second fire at a chemical plant in Kineshma, 400 kilometres east of Moscow (a long way from Ukraine). The following day, reports the Atlantic Council, another fire broke out at the Korolyov Centre for Security and Civil Defence of the Population, just 24 kilometres from Moscow itself. The Atlantic Council finds it unlikely that Ukrainian missiles caused these fires, so far from the border, unless by paramilitary sabotage. However, Russian air defences have video footage that appears to show an air-born target being brought down in or near Kursk, although it's unclear if it was a small, unmanned drone on a reconnaissance mission or a small missile aimed at Voronezh, almost 322 kilometres inside Russia.

The Atlantic Council thinks a possible source of the attacks and fires was, rather, a low-level air attack using either Su-24 Fencer or Su-25 Frogfoot ground-attack fighters or – more likely – Mi-24 Hind helicopters, that have been seen flying over Ukraine. Even so, the Council thinks that TB-2 drones were probably the carriers of the weapons used.

TB-2 drones have been seen engaged successfully in combat missions over Ukraine. Ukraine's allies seem to have played a part here, too, with both Bulgaria and Slovakia helping to repair Ukrainian matériel, including repairs to captured Russian weapons. Meanwhile, Russia is finding it increasingly difficult to repair its own weaponry. A lack of vital components, for instance, has forced Russia to shut down its two main tank production factories. It's the foreign-made computer chips, so essential to modern armaments, that Russia is being denied. The main culprit here is the world's largest computer chip manufacturer, the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, the world's largest manufacturer, which has halted exports to Russia, in line with the sanctions imposed by Taiwan. As the report says, this is turning into a war of attrition.



A Turkish Bayraktar TB-2 drone

It could turn into a war of hunger. On 10 May, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged the international community to take action to lift Russia's blockade of Ukraine's ports. Ukraine, as you know, is one of the world's biggest exporters of wheat and corn, but there is, for now, no way to get it to its markets. Zelensky said: "For the first time in decades there is no usual movement of the merchant fleet, no usual port functioning in Odessa," rubbing it in by adding: "Probably this has never happened in Odessa since World War II." He also stressed the urgency needed in taking action: "Without our agricultural exports,



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky posting a video on Feb. 26

dozens of countries in different parts of the world are already on the brink of food shortages.

And over time, the situation can become downright terrible." He also reminded journalists: "This is a direct consequence of Russian aggression, which can be overcome only together – by all Europeans, by the whole free world." He has a very good point, but the EU is not a military alliance and it would appear that only strong military action can drive Putin back.

According to the Emerging Europe website, Ukraine's deputy foreign minister, Emine Dzhaparova, condemned the "sheer horror" and "pure evil" of Russia's attack on Ukraine when she addressed an extraordinary meeting of the UN's Human Rights Council. "Russia was committing 'the most gruesome human rights violations on the European continent in decades,'" Dzhaparova told the meeting as she described Moscow's alleged violations. Putin should recall, perhaps, the fate of Joseph Stalin, who became a much lauded global hero after his mighty Red Army had swept through Hitler's Nazi forces with merciless determination.



Emine Dzhaparova, First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Information Policy, Ukraine

Most people would probably agree that the Nazis deserved no mercy. Putin, of course, tried to persuade his people – and the rest of the world – that the Ukrainians were Nazis, too, in order to justify his assault. But they were not. While Stalin watched a victory parade across Red Square in June 1945 – a justifiable victory parade, unlike Putin's half-hearted affair in May 2022 – he was aware of how much his country had suffered in a war thought to have cost Russia some 27-million lives, most of them young people, representing the country's future. Many Russian towns and villages were in ruins and Russia entered a period of famine, at least in part because collectivised agriculture was inefficient and Stalin's distribution system was poor. Some 1.5-million Russians died of hunger or disease in the immediate post-war period.

FUELLING THE FIRE

Russia's greatest weapon, of course, is energy. Putin has insisted that if European countries want access to Russian gas they must open bank accounts in roubles in order to pay their bills. Now the European Union has agreed to permit companies to comply, although Poland has criticised this acquiescence.

"I am disappointed to see that in the European Union there is consent to pay for gas in roubles," Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said. "Poland will stick to the rules and will not yield to Putin's blackmail." Russian gas supplies to Poland were halted in late April. Bulgaria also refused Russia's demand for payments in roubles and had its supply cut off. Poland's and Bulgaria's stand will not



Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki

stop the flow of gas to Europe, of course, nor will it stop others from complying with Putin's demand to be paid in roubles, necessitating the opening of bank accounts in Russia. "The announcement by Gazprom that it is unilaterally stopping delivery of gas to customers in Europe is yet another attempt by Russia to use gas as an instrument of blackmail," said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. "This is unjustified and unacceptable. And it shows once again the unreliability of Russia as a gas supplier," she wrote in a statement. The new Council and Commission regulations "do not prevent economic operators from opening a bank account in a designated bank for payments due under contracts for the supply of natural gas in a gaseous state, in the currency specified in those contracts for the fulfilment of payments pursuant thereto." The entire sentence runs to a full paragraph but I'm sure you get the gist of it, couched in the bureaucratic terms beloved of lawyers and EU bureaucrats.

Germany's Economics Minister has said he's hopeful that German utility companies will be able to make their payments to Moscow on time and that gas will continue to flow to Germany. However, the new guidance also says that: "Operators should make a clear statement that they intend to fulfil their obligations regarding the payment already fulfilled by paying in euros or dollars, in line with existing contracts." This looks suspiciously like backing a horse both ways.

In any case, Al Jazeera reports that: "European companies are starting to move ahead to comply with Russian demands and keep the gas flowing." Putin's 'blackmail' is clearly paying dividends. "Italian energy giant

Eni SpA," writes Al Jazeera, "will move to open accounts in roubles and euros with Gazprombank by Wednesday (18 May) so that it can make payments on time this month and avoid any risks to gas supplies, according to people familiar with the situation." Big gas suppliers in Germany and Austria are expected to do much the same.



Gazprombank

With hindsight, it's clear that it was unwise to permit a dependency on an unstable but extremely ambitious nation such as Russia to develop. According to the quarterly report from the Institute for Economic Affairs (EIA), higher gas prices are likely to lead to a slight drop in global demand this year. "Russia's invasion of Ukraine has triggered a major energy supply and security crisis that has sent commodity prices to new highs, with wider implications for the global economy," the report says. "The conflict has put further considerable pressure on natural gas markets and raised uncertainty in the context of an already tight market." The price rises for natural

gas have intensified demand for liquefied natural gas (LNG), resulting in some cargoes being redirected away from Asia. EIA reports that average spot prices for LNG in Asia during the 2021-22 heating season were more than four times their 5-year average. In Europe, says EIA, LNG prices were five times their 5-year average, despite a relatively mild winter. The quarterly report quotes Keisuke Sadamori, Director for Energy Markets and Security for EIA: "Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine is above all a humanitarian disaster," he says, "but it has also triggered a major energy supply and security crisis."



Keisuke Sadamori, Director of the Office for Energy Markets and Security at the International Energy Agency

It has also killed off the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, in the EIA's (and most other experts') opinion. Senior Contributor Ken Silverstein writes that the gas pipeline, nearing completion: "should be juxtaposed next to the Berlin Wall – two dying breeds of oppression and a sign that a new day is coming." He writes that if the Berlin Wall represents the



Nord Stream 2

fall of Communism, “Nord Stream 2’s demise embodies autocracy’s death and the rise of renewable energy.” Silverstein gives credence to the EU’s stated aim to wean itself off Russian gas and oil and switch to greener alternatives. It’s a nice idea but a number of countries and companies seem to be largely ignoring it, restricting themselves to criticising Russia, rather than refusing to import its gas. In May, twelve protestors from Greenpeace blocked a Russian oil tanker from docking in the Thames. Yes, I know that the UK is no longer in the European Union, but it, too, has condemned Russia’s attack on Ukraine and promised action. The protestors got past security and occupied the jetty where the vessel was due to dock. Wearing hard hats and climbing gear, they unfurled banners saying “oil fuels war” and “fossil fuels war”. The tanker, carrying 33,000 tonnes of diesel oil, had to turn around in the Thames and eventually anchored off Margate, on the south coast of England. The protestors were all arrested. Greenpeace issued a statement about their action: “It’s been nearly three months since Russia invaded Ukraine. Since then, our television screens and social media feeds have been filled with horrific images of war. Putin’s former adviser has said that banning Russian fossil fuels could stop the war. The government said they would block all Russian-owned ships from UK ports, but these were empty words, and ships carrying Russian fossil fuels are still entering the UK.”

The campaign group says that, according to their estimates, the UK alone has imported nearly two million barrels of Russian oil, worth an estimated £220-million (€260-million), since the invasion of Ukraine began. This particular tanker, the *Andromeda*, sails under a Greek flag but carries Russian oil. Of course, EU unity on any oil and gas embargo is spoiled by Hungary, which refuses to agree. Budapest remains opposed to any embargo. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said the embargo would drop an “atomic bomb” on Hungary’s economy. The welfare of other countries doesn’t seem to figure high on his list of policy priorities. Judging by his recent landslide election victory, we must assume that most Hungarians agree with him.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Given Russia’s display of naked aggression, it’s perhaps not surprising that both Finland and Sweden have expressed a desire to join the NATO alliance. It won’t be easy, however: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has sworn to block the move, saying that both countries are home to “Kurdish terrorists”. Since Turkey is a member of NATO, he has the power to stop it from happening. At a press conference in Ankara, Erdoğan said that the country’s foreign minister had met with his Swedish and Finnish

opposite numbers but said neither had “a clear stance” against terrorist organisations.

“Even if they say: ‘we are against them,’



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during the 2018 NATO Summit at NATO headquarters on July 11, 2018 in Brussels, Belgium

on the contrary they have statements saying that they do not hand over the terrorists that they need to hand over to Turkey,” he said. He described Sweden as a “nest” for terror organizations, saying it allows terrorists to speak in parliaments. “They even have pro PKK MPs in their parliaments. How are we going to trust them?” Finland’s Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto has said his country won’t “bargain” with Turkey. Russia is still forecasting “far-reaching consequences” if the two countries join the alliance, but having seen what Putin is prepared to do in any case, without any sort of provocation, it’s unlikely to dissuade them. Putin has made himself into the alliance’s best and most persuasive recruiting officer.

It is arguable, however, that Erdoğan has a point. The Yazidi community, for instance, have been unable to return to their homes because of the presence of PKK terrorists in northern Iraq’s Sinjar region. The Yazidis have been forced to survive – with difficulty – in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)-controlled Duhok region. Speaking to Anadolu Agency, Yazidis from Sinjar decried the “indifference of the international community” to the difficulties they have faced as a result of oppression by the PKK terrorist group. The Yazidis, who had to flee their homes after the Daesh terrorist group carried out an attack on the Sinjar district of Mosul in 2014, have been living in camps under harsh conditions for eight years. Daesh/PKK



Articulated Loading Column at the oil and gas terminal in Novoportovskoye, Russia

has a record for brutality, which is why Turkey asked for the extradition of 21 suspects from Sweden, 10 affiliated with the Gülen movement (remember them?) and 11 with the PKK. Fethullah Gülen is a former Erdoğan supporter, but Erdoğan blames his followers for a failed coup attempt in 2016, which Gülen says was a false-flag event, organised by Turkey to discredit him. Whatever the truth of the matter, there is a serious attempt being made to defeat Daesh/ISIS by a group called the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh/ISIS (I didn't say it had a particularly original name), which met in May in Marrakesh, Morocco. The ministers attending reaffirmed that "ensuring the enduring defeat of Daesh/ISIS in Iraq and Syria remains the number one priority." For them, at least.

BUYING A BETTER FUTURE

Back in 2020, the European Union decided to make a massive investment in what it hoped would be a brighter future: a stimulus package for the years after the pandemic, worth a total of €2.018-trillion. This was, of course, before Putin made his catastrophic misjudgement about how much resistance there would be to him trying to take over Ukraine. The proposed budget differs from those that have gone before. In the 1980s, much of the budget went to agriculture. In the 1990s, it was cohesion – the levelling up of EU member states. This time, the proposal was for a higher share of the budget to be spent on what the Commission described as "new and reinforced" priorities, compared with agriculture and cohesion. That's why 31.9% of the long term budget for 2021-2027 is for research, education,

border protection and other things seen as urgent. The amount allocated to economic, social and territorial cohesion is down to 30.5%. Fighting climate change comes in at 30%. However good the plans are, however, they depend on Russia's war in Ukraine coming to an end. Of course, most of us in the West would like to see Russia pay for the damage it has inflicted, but the EU is expecting to have to help and is setting up a solidarity trust fund to finance reconstruction when the guns fall silent. It won't be cheap.



Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President-Designate - European Green Deal

One thing the whole business is likely to have speeded up is the move towards renewable energy. The head of the EU's Green Deal, Frans Timmermans said: "Let's dash into renewable energy at lightning speeds." It sounds like a good idea, although these things take time and should, arguably, have been started long ago. The Green Deal is aimed at halving the EU's emissions of greenhouse gases by 2030, hopefully achieving full carbon neutrality by 2050. It's doable – probably – but it will

take some economic turbulence and put up the cost of energy for everyone. EU citizens will have to be patient (and perhaps buy warmer winter clothing). As Timmermans says, however: "Renewables are a cheap, clean, and potentially endless source of energy, and instead of funding the fossil fuel industry elsewhere, they create jobs here." That reads to me like a carefully crafted and well-rehearsed line, intended to sway the waverers, penned by an advertising executive.

It may well become necessary, and perhaps somewhat earlier than had been imagined. Although some EU member states are unhappy with any embargo on Russia's fossil fuels, a leaked policy document claims that the Commission is to advise EU member states to step up their preparations for a complete disruption to Russian fuel supplies. The member states most dependent on gas from Russia will find things very tough. Prices of natural gas – at the time of writing – have risen seven-fold compared with the long-term average. Some member states are said to be holding the rest hostage by refusing to agree to it, but the real obstacle remains Hungary. If all the other members were to impose their own bans individually, it could make it very difficult for Hungary to obtain supplies, but that would require a unity of purpose that, I must admit, would be most unusual. But there again, look at Russia: forced to access its "rainy day" fund to overcome a budget deficit of 1.6-trillion roubles (€20,73-billion). With its soaring inflation and massive capital flight, Russia also now faces possible debt default by some Western countries. All-in-all, everything inxc Putin's garden looks far from rosy. Still, the solution is in his hands. He can get out of the mess he's created but the world – and many of his own people – will never forgive him. If he were to step down, it would be rather like Stalin's death – long anticipated by his closest colleagues but unsuspected by the public – which would change everything. "There was a sense right there, in the Presidium, people were freed from something that had been weighing them down, that had bound them," the writer Konstantin Simonov remarked after seeing Stalin's dead body. He was commenting on the end of a murderous dictator.



Special European Council, 17-21 July 2020 : From left to right: Dutch Prime Minister, Mark Rutte, German Federal Chancellor, Angela Merkel, President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, President of France, Emmanuel Macron and President of the European Council, Charles Michel

Robin Crow



© Coe

The capital of Moldova, Chişinău

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Russia's next prey to catch?

Republic of Moldova is a small country of only 32.850 km², in Eastern Europe, neighbor to Ukraine to the north, east and south and to Romania to the west. Between the 14th and the beginning of the 19th century, most of Moldova's present territory was part of the Principality of Moldavia, now part of Romania. That is basically the reason why the two countries speak the same language (a fact that was only officially recognized after Moldova's independence in 1991). They have similar customs and traditions and a long common history. After 1812, the Ottoman Empire (whose vassal state Moldavia was) ceded the Moldovan territory to the Russian Empire and it became known as Bessarabia. In 1856 southern Bessarabia was returned to Moldavia (Treaty of Paris). Three years later, in 1859, Moldavia and Wallachia united and created Romania. But Russian rule was restored over the entire Moldovan region after 1878 (Treaty of Berlin). In 1917, Bessarabia became autonomous, known as the Moldavian Democratic Republic and in 1918, after the WWI, was officially reunited with the mother country of Romania (Treaty of Paris). The decision was always disputed and contested by Soviet Russia, which considered it an occupation, and in 1940, after the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, which was politically disastrous for Romania, the country lost Bessarabia, which became the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, and Northern Bukovina, which became part of Ukraine. The Republic of Moldova only recovered its independence in 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. With a new constitution in 1994 and Romanian as official state language, decades of Russian dominance and indoctrination finally ended. But even today, 9.3% of Moldova's citizens are Russian native speakers, while the actual percentage of Russian speakers is much higher, after Russian had been imposed as official language for so many years



© Facebook

Veaceslav Ionita

But the fact that the country is small, not in a great economic situation and in a complicated geo-political region, persuaded many of its citizens to move west, looking for a better life and more work opportunities. According to the latest statistics, since the proclamation of its independence, Moldova lost more than 1.5 million people from its

initial population of 4 million, from the times of its detachment from the former Soviet Union. 'Moldova is the absolute champion of migration on the European continent,' said Veaceslav Ionita, IDIS expert. The negative population growth also adds up to this sharp demographic decline. Meanwhile, in a recent survey, 17% of the citizens who were questioned said

that they plan to leave the country in the near future.

After 1991, many citizens of the Republic of Moldova chose to become also Romanian citizens. Due to the common history, common language and also openness from the Romanian authorities which at times openly encouraged this move, about a quarter of the Moldovan citizens now also hold a Romanian identification document and the numbers are still growing. Of course, it is easily understood that such a decision offers advantages, as Romania has a higher standard of living, better work and study opportunities while holding a Romanian passport also offers a free access to the whole European Union market, with no more work or stay permits required.

From the total number of people who left Moldova in recent years, around 33% are from Transnistria, a strip of the Moldovan territory on the Eastern bank of Dniester river, a pro-Russian separatist region which self-proclaimed its independent government in 1990 and has been 'de facto' occupied by Russian troops, imposing a pro-Russian regime, ever since. The Transnistria war broke in 1990 between the Moldovan forces and the separatists, at the border with Ukraine. Ever since then, it has been an ongoing frozen conflict between the Republic of Moldova and the self-proclaimed micro state. About 1500 Russian troops are stationed in Transnistria.



Transnistrian and Russian tanks in a joint military exercise

Slowly but surely the country made small steps towards democracy and a functional market economy. But, although in recent years we've seen a steady increase in GDP (GDP per capita is now \$1.893 US), with the



latest growth of 4.5%, the Republic of Moldova remains one of the poorest countries in Europe. However, especially after the democratic election of pro-European Maia Sandu in November 2020 and the triumph of her party, PAS, in elections, the country made progress and openly expressed its will to head to the West and to embrace its values. On March 3, 2022 Maia Sandu officially signed the letter of application to join the EU. In her speech she pointed out that the Republic of Moldova proved itself when 'it did not allow tyranny to settle in, defended democracy in elections and, in the days of war in Ukraine, with the sound of cannons audible at the borders of Moldova, remains mature and offers help to the neighbors fleeing the disaster.' She also underlined that after 30 years of independence, the Republic of Moldova has the maturity and capability to assume its European role and European future.

Heidi Hautala, Vice president of the European Parliament said 'I strongly believe that the Republic of Moldova is doing everything it can in this fragile situation, to be able to finally obtain the status of a candidate country for the EU. We need to help Moldova get rid of this energy dependence on Russia; we need to help them get rid of misinformation which is detrimental

to their European path. Of course, Transnistria is a real danger now, a frozen danger is a real danger and this is a crucial moment when the Republic of Moldova needs all our support.'



Vice president of the European Parliament, Heidi Hautala

Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova are new candidates to European Union membership and the European Parliament, meeting in Strasbourg, welcomed the submission of their applications (in accordance to Article 49 of the Treaty of the European Union). It also called on the EU Commission to complete its evaluation and provide full support during this long and elaborate process of integration, which might take many years. The EU Parliament asked for a strong political signal from the European Council meeting in June. It

is understood that a concrete prospect of European Union membership would provide hope and boost resilience in populations which are now confronted with political, military and economic difficulties.

Moldova is in a very hot spot in Europe right now and in an extremely delicate position. It is only natural that many are worried about its future, especially with regard to the Ukrainian fight against Russian invaders.



Refugees fleeing Ukraine, as they prepare to board the buses provided by IOM and UNHCR for fast-track transfer from Ukraine-Moldova border point of Palanca to Romania, through Moldova

Since the conflict in Ukraine started, many of the Ukrainian refugees crossed the border to Moldova. More than 450,000 people transited the small country of 2.7 million residents and about 100,000 decided to stay, turning Moldova into the country with most refugees per capita. The EU stepped in and allocated €8-million in humanitarian aid to help civilians affected by war and to support local efforts in a country with so many refugees. The Republic of Moldova activated the EU civil protection mechanism and the EU member states have also provided various types of assistance, like shelters, hygiene kits or electrical generators.

Between 2022 and 2024 the European Union will carry out a macro- financial assistance operation for the Republic of Moldova, up to €150-million in grants and loans. The EU also promised to step up some military assistance.



President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis



The Ungheni-Chișinău gas pipeline

Until now, Romania, as Moldova's strongest supporter in the region, has sent around 73 tonnes of humanitarian aid. The Romanian president, Klaus Iohannis, had several talks with the Moldovan president, Maia Sandu, when he reaffirmed Romania's full support and solidarity. He was the first president in the EU to congratulate Maia Sandu on signing the application letter to join the EU. Iohannis also signed a decree to ratify a bilateral agreement on technical and financial assistance, which will provide €100-million in non-reimbursable funds to Moldova.

Mihai Popsoi, vice-president of the Moldovan Parliament in Chișinău, declared that 'for our steps towards European integration, Romania's support has been and is very important'. The Republic of Moldova's total exports to EU countries are about 61% of the total (mainly oil, fruits, wine and other agriculture produce). Economically speaking, the Republic of Moldova exports more to Romania (26.5%) than to Russia, which is however, an important trade partner for the small Moldovan state. Moldova is highly dependent on Russian imports, especially when we talk about energy (oil and gas). In 2021 it had a \$777.5-million in commercial deficit (Source: G4media.ro).

This makes it vulnerable in a worst-case scenario to an open conflict with the Russian Federation. In fact, since 2013, Russia already has imposed a commercial embargo on some Moldovan products.

The pro-west moves are not seen with 'good eyes' by all in Moldova. The fake news and Russian propaganda are influencing an important part of the population. On May 9th, a parade for 'Victory Day' in Chișinău, Moldova's capital, gathered many nostalgic and also members of the Communist and Socialist Party, with red flags of the former Soviet Unions and flags of the Russian Empire. On the same day, Maia Sandu said: 'we commemorate those who fell in WWII, we mark peace on Europe Day, which has come together to stop wars on the continent and has given Europeans prosperity and progress. Peace begins in the family and in the community. We can keep it if we don't fall prey to division. We are different but we have to live together, to build a future in our country. Moldova has a future in peace'.



Moldovan President Maia Sandu and Nato Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg

Many fear that the Ukrainian conflict might spill over the borders. While Ukraine is constantly warning that Moldova might be next, the Moldovan officials choose to insist on its neutrality and that the risks of

spillover are low. Moldova is seen as a buffer zone.

For the Moldovan citizens, the tensions in Transnistria and the war in Ukraine are a bitter reminder of the risks to which they are exposed.



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Moldovan Minister of Foreign Affairs Nicu Popescu

Recent attacks, in April 2022, on some government buildings and a radio tower in the separatist region, for which no one claimed responsibility, raised concerns about a possible escalation of the conflict. Unlike Romania, Poland and the rest of Ukraine's pro-west neighbors, Moldova is not part of the EU or NATO and it doesn't have the strong security guarantees and allies that the others have. So the regional situation worries Moldovan population and its officials, related also to its vulnerabilities. The country already feels the pressure of the economic impact of war, with many of its essential supply chains being seriously disrupted. Moldova's electricity and gas supplies come from Russia, through Ukraine and Transnistria.

Moldova's foreign minister, Nicu Popescu, said about the attacks in Transnistria that 'they were in fact a pretext for straining the security in the region'.

Another possible cause for concern is that on April 22, Rustan Minnekayev, the acting commander of Russia's central military district, commented that in Transnistria there was 'oppression of the Russian speaking population'. Sounds familiar?...

Maia Sandu said that 'Moldova remains neutral but supportive, calm, generous and responsible'.

With Russians trying harder than expected to control Eastern and Southern territories in Ukraine, it might not be the time to waste their attention and efforts elsewhere, for now...

In a live interview with Wolf Blitzer for 'The Situation Room' at CNN, Mircea Geoana, NATO Deputy Secretary General, declared that 'there is now a discrepancy between president Putin's political ambitions and army capabilities'. When asked about the risk of a spreading conflict to the region, to Moldova and Transnistria, he added that 'NATO's role is also to try to minimize the risk of escalation'.

In the meantime, although pro-Russian, the Transnistria government wouldn't want to jeopardize its commercial relations with the EU and risk sanctions. A heavily industrialized zone, dating back to the Soviet Union times, Transnistria is now exporting 70% of its trade goods to the European Union, so the implications of a potential re-opened conflict are much more complex.

Many feared that in his speech on May 9th, Vladimir Putin would announce a farther mobilization of its people and will officially declare war on Ukraine. The speech was highly anticipated and even feared by some. But it didn't bring much news, not in terms of war but nor in terms of peace, either.

The former commander of the US Special Operations Command in Europe, retired US Army Maj. Gen. Mike Repass, appreciated in an interview for CNN that conquering the Ukrainian Black Sea port of Odessa will not only cut Ukraine's access to the Black Sea but it will also offer Russia 'a gateway to Transnistria and Moldova'. He said: 'I do think they have their eyes on Moldova. If they can take it, they will'.

As a clear signal of full support for the small European country, so close to the ongoing military conflict, a series of high European and American officials have visited Republic of Moldova since the war broke in Ukraine. Presidents of some EU countries, Charles Michel, president of the European Council, António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization, the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borell and the US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, they all come with messages of solidarity and help, supporting peace in the region.

For a country that already has Russian troops on its territory, it might not be enough.

The way this war is going right now and the results of the Russian military aggression in Ukraine, since February 2022, are far from encouraging or satisfying for the Russian Federation and normally do not offer many arguments for an expansion of the conflict in nearby areas. But, as many analysts have repeatedly said, Vladimir Putin's moves were always unpredictable and maybe at times, even inexplicable.

The risk is always there. Be aware!

'Eternal peace lasts until the next war' (Russian proverb)

Alexandra Paucescu



© kremlin.ru

Russian President Vladimir Putin



DRAWING THE LINE

MEPs want Moldova to join the European Union

“Moldova belongs in the European Union,” its President, Maia Sandu, told MEPs during an address to the European Parliament in May. She urged EU member states to rally behind her country’s bid to join the club. There’s little doubt that most MEPs agree with her, too; just a couple of weeks before Sandu’s visit, the Parliament adopted a resolution to agree that the EU should provide macro-financial assistance to Moldova and that it should be integrated into the single market straight away. It also expressed serious concern over developments in the breakaway territory of Transnistria, whose self-proclaimed independence from Moldova is only recognised by Russia and her closest allies. The Parliament’s ready acceptance of a proposal to help Moldova on its path towards full membership owes much to Russia’s brutal invasion of neighbouring Ukraine. The resolution stated that Moldova had been disproportionately affected by the war next door. Some 450,000 Ukrainian refugees have entered the country and almost 100,000 are still there, half of them children. Moldova is also suffering from a loss of trade and a steep rise in the cost of energy and transport.

Moldova made a formal application to join the bloc on 3 March this year. After addressing MEPs, Sandu reminded journalists of her country’s place within the Union. “Moldova is a European country, with a European history and it will certainly have a European future,” she said. Certainly,

that is far more the case for Moldova itself than for the backward-looking region of Transnistria, sometimes described as “the world’s largest open-air museum, a place where the Soviet Union never collapsed”. With its own (unrecognised) government, currency (which can only be spent



Moldovan President, Maia Sandu and President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen

in Transnistria), flag (bearing the hammer and sickle emblem), police and armed forces, it is a region that looks to the past. Statues of Lenin are easy to find there, but that means nothing: I have a small bronze bust of him on my desk, too, a memento of a working trip to Eastern Europe long, long ago. Moldova, however, has the highest proportion of Ukrainian refugees anywhere, for the size of its own population.



Lenin Statue on 25 Oktober street, Tiraspol, Transnistria

In an article for *The Big Issue*, an excellent UK magazine sold to raise funds for Britain's homeless, Steven MacKenzie points out that the city shown on maps as Tiraspol, the second largest city in Moldova after the capital, Chişinău, is known by its residents as the capital of what they call the Pridnestrovskiaia Moldavskaia Respublica, although normally referred to as Transnistria, "for reasons as complicated as the former name's pronunciation," MacKenzie explains. The region, during its history, has been variously conquered and taken over by Romania, Turkey (twice) and Sweden, each time being liberated by Russia, which may explain the Transnistrians' fondness for the place.

"We speak one of the EU official languages," Sandu reminded the press conference (it's Romanian, by the way), "and our people have repeatedly shown how committed they are to freedom and democracy, when they fought anti-democratic abuse in our country and started a huge reform programme aimed at consolidating state institutions, at boosting the economy, reforming the judiciary, boosting the capacity of our corruption-fighting institutions. We want to build a country where our citizens can catch a glimpse of their

future." Sandu clearly hopes – as do all Moldovans – that the future is going to be both European and peaceful, although there are danger signs. Russian President Vladimir Putin has talked about creating a "new Russia" (Novorossiia), which would basically restore the pre-1989 borders: Putin's "legacy", perhaps? He has tanks, planes and helicopters in Transnistria and there have been claims that he has drawn up plans to invade Moldova from there. He also wants to isolate Ukraine from the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, effectively cutting it off, according to Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister, Anna Malyar.

For Putin, nationalism is linked to his supposed religious faith; he is said to pray frequently in a small chapel beside his office in the Kremlin. Both his mother and wife were devoted Christians and members of the Orthodox church. The Church itself seems to support the sort of nationalism Putin epitomises. It helps Putin retain his popularity at home: surveys have shown that the Russian people trust the Orthodox church more than any other public institution, including the law courts, trades unions, mass media, the police and the government. This suits Putin very well. His displays of faith, it has been noted, may also soften the antipathy towards him on the part of America's highly influential religious right.



Deputy Minister of Defense of Ukraine Anna Malyar

For Moldova, whatever Putin's long-term goals (and however unrealistic they are in reality) his invasion of Ukraine has come as a shock. "The EU is our main economic and development partner," Sandu told journalists.



St Katherine Church, Lipcani, Briceni Region, Republic of Moldova

"The war in Ukraine has brought instability and uncertainty in the region," she said, "but also an opportunity to rebuild the continent based on fairer rules. We need to be decided, if we want the Republic of Moldova to be secure and to develop." The answer would seem to be obvious enough, but it will take a serious effort, because Russian criminal gangs have been using Moldova to launder dirty money in a massive operation, seemingly supported by Russia itself.

It became known as "the Russian Laundromat", and it involved Russian figures and groups moving some \$20-billion (€19-billion) through Moldova's Moldindconbank over a 5-year period. Court orders issued in Moldova then "cleaned" the money by supporting fraudulent claims that borrowers had defaulted on promissory notes. The proceeds were then moved to Latvia or even further afield, where they disappeared. The actual sums involved may have been much higher. In 2017, Britain's *The Guardian* newspaper reported that Moldovan law enforcement officials believed the total amount laundered may have been as high as \$80-billion (€76-billion). There was also widespread belief that Moldova had done too little to halt the activity. This particular route for laundering cash may be blocked now but the Russian government continues to seek out small, vulnerable economies to facilitate its illegal operations and those of its criminal gangs. As the

German Marshall Fund of the United States reports on its website: “small jurisdictions matter”. That’s because nobody notices what happens there.

Sandu was asked at her press conference about the issue. “We know that some of this money went through banks in countries that are now democracies,” she told the journalists. “Some of this money, some of these corruption cases, involved shell companies. We do know that some of the corrupt people in Moldova managed to buy properties even in EU countries, using the stolen money from Moldova, so my request is to have a joint common effort not to allow for the money stolen, especially for the money stolen from fragile democracies, to be used by these crooks in nice countries where they enjoy good public services and where they’re trying to hide the money that they’ve stolen.” Criminal gangs are always one jump ahead of the law, but Sandu thinks by working together their lives can be made more uncomfortable.



Moldovan President, Maia Sandu

“Membership of the EU is the only path that we have to be part of the free world,” Sandu said at her press conference. She admitted that joining would take time. “We’re not naïve. We believe that EU integration for our country will be a lengthy and intricate process that will demand a lot of work on our part. We’re not looking for shortcuts; we are ready to do our homework.”

Asked by a Moldovan journalist if Europe was united in its welcoming attitude, Roberta Metsola, the Parliament president, said that it

is, and emphatically so. “It is a full house,” Metsola replied, “We support Moldova, just like we support Ukraine and Georgia on their European path. Our doors are open, just as they are for any country whose values and fundamental principles we share. The European Parliament will continue to do our utmost.”



President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola

Another journalist, this time from Latvia, asked Sandu if hers and other Baltic states had anything to fear from Russia’s war spreading across their borders. “A lot of our people in our country are afraid of it,” she said. “It’s alright to be concerned when a neighbouring country decides to attack its neighbour, and a lot of us are concerned,” Sandu replied, but offered some reassurance: “We do believe that the Baltic countries are in a safer environment, because they are part of the EU, because they have the NATO security umbrella, but of course this war presents a big threat to all of us, especially Croatia.” That may be why the Parliament, the day after Sandu’s visit, urged the European Council to open membership negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia.

Only time will tell if Sandu’s pessimism or optimism will triumph in the end. Putin continues to drum up support for membership of both the EU and NATO, and we all know that is the last thing he intends. What he wants is to bring the nations he sees as co-religionists of the Russian Orthodox Church together under his umbrella. In the view of Bishop Kirill of Moscow, Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox

Church, the Church’s official doctrine is to build ‘a national identity’, uniting the Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians together in their shared Orthodox belief. Kirill blessed the Russian army and gave his blessing for the war before the invasion, which he described as “a special peacekeeping mission”. It hasn’t seemed very peaceful to the rest of the world. If unifying the Orthodox-following countries is Putin’s aim, he seems to have adopted a thoroughly un-Christian way to achieve it, although not according to Kirill.



Bishop Kirill of Moscow, Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church

He has turned a blind eye to Russian atrocities, saying, bizarrely: “Russia has never attacked anyone,” which will come as news to the relatives of the many Ukrainian citizens Russian forces have slaughtered. He said that in a sermon while Russian bombs and shells were falling on Kyiv, Kharkiv and Mariupol. He seems to think it’s all a spiritual exercise in which no-one is ever hurt. “We have entered into a struggle that has not a physical, but a metaphysical significance,” he has said. So, Putin is safe; his soul is secure, in Kirill’s view. Whatever happened to the 6th Commandment: “Thou shalt not kill?” We may never know, but the European Parliament wants a special international tribunal to examine crimes of aggression: “Perpetrators of war crimes must be brought to justice,” it says. Kirill is unlikely to agree, but then, he’s Putin’s friend.

Martin Gardiner

EPIONE

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'Non-Violence', a sculpture by Carl Fredrik Reuterswärd, in front of UN headquarters in New York City

UNTRUSTWORTHY?

The UN was founded to cement peace but seems powerless to stop wars and cure hatred

The record of the United Nations in fulfilling its founding goals is variable, to put it kindly. Yes, it has some successes to its name, but it has also been accused of being irresolute, indecisive, overcautious and vacillating. The goals of those who set it up in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War were fourfold: to keep peace in the world; to encourage and develop friendly relations between nations; to cooperate, so as to help people live better lives by eliminating poverty, disease and illiteracy, while striving to stop environmental destruction. It was also supposed to encourage respect for one another's rights and freedoms. That third one looks to me like five aims rolled into one. And finally, to be a centre for helping nations achieve these aims, which I think hardly counts as a separate goal at all. All very laudable, of course, and sometimes it has worked; but only sometimes. Look at the letters that represent it: "U" and "N", for United Nations: the 21st and 14th letters of the alphabet in that order, as expressed in English, and representing the most ambitious multinational project the world

has ever seen. Interestingly, if we're going 7 letters at a time, the next one should be "G", which would produce the word "gun", not a very propitious outcome, I fear, however predictive. I hesitate to say: "most successful" with regard to the UN, but "most ambitious", certainly. They are also the letters used to turn a word into its own negative: "Natural – Unnatural", for instance; "Happy – Unhappy"; or "Known – Unknown", or how about "Expected – Unexpected"? But they are also the first letters of the word "unity", which the UN was set up to achieve but has not really succeeded in doing, if not for want of trying: unity still evades the world and probably always will.

Of course, "un" is French for "one", at least in its masculine form, derived from the Latin unus, una or unum. The Romans had a neuter gender as well as masculine and feminine, of course. As you know, for the feminine version in French, add an "e" to the end, as in the title of that haunting song that won the 1971 Eurovision Song Contest for Monaco: "Un Banc, Un Arbre, Une Rue" (a bench, a tree, a street),

performed by the lovely French singer, Séverine, and composed by Jean-Pierre Bourtayre, with words by Yves Dessca.



UN Security Council meeting on maintenance of peace and security in Ukraine, May 2022

However, among the UN's 193-strong membership there's very little sign of unity. Because each member has equal power, and in the Security Council (but not in the General Assembly) one individual country has the right to block a resolution, as Russia's representative has done with any motion seen as critical of Russia's vicious military incursion into

Ukraine, the UN's effectiveness has been called into question. President Vladimir Putin calls his bloody invasion a "special military operation", of course, and definitely not a war, whilst denying his troops have been targeting civilians and private homes and also denying the great many rapes and beatings they're alleged to have carried out. But, there again, he told his soldiers they'd be welcomed as "liberators" by the Ukrainian people (which I imagine he must have known to be untrue) and that his aim was to "de-nazify" the country, although before he turned up nazis were in fairly short supply there.



© UN / Euan Schneider

Vassily Nebenzia, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of February 2022, chairs the Security Council meeting on the situation in Ukraine

Russia justifies its vicious aggression by saying it is trying to protect pro-Russian separatists in the Donbass region from 'unwarranted' attacks by Ukraine's armed forces, and when a minute's silence was declared at a meeting of the UN security Council to remember Ukraine's many dead, the Russian envoy, Vassily Nebenzia, insisted that the silence must also be for the rebels who had died, killed – he claimed – by Ukrainians that Russia has described as 'ultra-nationalists'. Nebenzia failed to mention the 298 innocent passengers of Malaysian airlines flight MH17, brought down by a Russian-made SA-11 missile, presumably fired by the separatists (it remains unproven, although it was launched from the area held by rebels, who also had access to this type of missile) in the mistaken belief that it was a military flight.

Norway's ambassador, Mona Juul, believes that Nebenzia should not have been allowed to participate in the vote. "A veto cast by the aggressor undermines the purpose of the council," Juul said. "It's a violation of the very foundation of the U.N. Charter. Furthermore, in the spirit of the charter, Russia, as a party,

should have abstained from voting on this resolution." Nebenzia would not have dared to abstain, I suspect.

In early May, the Security Council finally agreed on a resolution calling for peace in Ukraine, that was actually supported by Russia, although Russia denies it's engaged in war, of course; merely an operation to "denazify" the country. Killing everyone who lives there would seem to be a rather extreme way to achieve that end, even supposing that the country is chock full of Nazis, which it clearly is not. Why this proposal involves bombing and shelling houses, apartment blocks, a theatre, factories, and schools is not clear. Even so, the adoption of the resolution was welcomed.

"Today, for the first time, the Security Council spoke with one voice for peace in Ukraine," said UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, although the "one voice" claim would seem to be stretching the facts somewhat. "As I have often said, the world must come together to silence the guns and uphold the values of the UN Charter. I welcome this support and will continue to spare no effort to save lives, reduce suffering and find the path of peace," said Guterres in a statement. His determination is admirable. Guterres had visited both Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, in April, although his talks with Putin were said to have been "chilly" and a physical distance was maintained between them throughout.

© President.gov.ua
UN Secretary-General António Guterres with Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine in Kyiv, 28 April 2022

Back in February, a UN Security Council resolution, condemning Russian aggression in Ukraine, was blocked by the Russian envoy. He dismissed it as "anti-Russian" but also claimed it had been "anti-Ukrainian", because it was not in the interests of the Ukrainian people. It's

hard to imagine that he thinks bombings, shelling and widespread destruction are in the Ukrainian people's interests, but one must assume he does, unless he simply means that an early surrender would save lives. It comes under the same heading as the claim by the President of Russia's parliament, the Duma, that supplying arms to the Ukrainian military should count as a 'war crime', on the basis that it is extending the war. Or, to put it another way, delaying a Russian victory and the extinction of Ukraine as an independent nation.

NOT PERFECT BUT SPECIAL



© Mikhail Klimentiev/Russian presidential press service

Russian President Vladimir Putin at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly in 2020

It's worth asking ourselves, after three quarters of a century, if the United Nations organisation has made a significant difference to people's lives. I'm inclined to grant it the sort of comment that was sometimes written in my school reports: "could do better". It's very far from perfect but the world would be a worse place without it. Since its foundation in 1945, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, it has concerned itself with a number of important issues: decolonisation, economic and social development, human rights, and the environment. An attempt to ban nuclear weapons still awaits ratification by any nuclear power. In any uneasy crowd, the people holding the biggest sticks are always going to be reluctant to give them up. So, the UN is not perfect – far from it, as Russia's continuing war in Ukraine proves – but as Bob Marley, the Jamaican Reggae singer, musician and songwriter, said: "The most beautiful things are not perfect, they are special." No-one could say that the UN isn't "special".

For one thing, it helps to establish and maintain peace. Since 1948, the UN has helped to bring conflicts to an end all

over the world, such as in Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mozambique, Namibia, and Tajikistan. According to the UN's own website, its peacekeeping efforts have also made a big difference in, for instance, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Timor-Leste, Liberia, Haiti and Kosovo. To quote the website: "By providing basic security guarantees and responding to crises, these UN operations have supported political transitions and helped buttress fragile new state institutions. They have helped countries to close the chapter of conflict and open a path to normal development, even if major peacebuilding challenges remain." The UN admits, however, that not everything has gone quite the way it intended, on those occasions when: "UN peacekeeping – and the response by the international community as a whole – have been challenged and found wanting, for instance in Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s." However, the UN says it learned from these setbacks, which: "provided important lessons for the international community when deciding how and when to deploy and support UN peacekeeping as a tool to restore and maintain international peace and security."

Take a look at Côte d'Ivoire, for example, which in 2004 was divided in half by a civil war. There were presidential elections in 2010, during which some 3,000 Ivorians were killed and around 300,000 became refugees because of the ensuing conflict. Instructed by the Security Council, the UN deployed more than 6,000 peacekeepers in 2004, increasing that number to 11,792 in 2011. Their presence facilitated further presidential and legislative elections in 2011 and 2016, and in that second election the opposition took part for the very first time. Voting for and against your representatives is a much better route to peace than by siting them along the barrel of a gun. Human rights abuses were greatly reduced through the work of the National Commission on



UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) peacekeepers

Human Rights, with a reported 1,726 abuses in 2011 cut to just 88 in 2016. That's still 88 too many, of course, but it's a big step in the right direction. Furthermore, 70,000 combatants were disarmed and re-integrated into civil society, a quarter of a million refugees were returned to their homes by 2016 and, better social cohesion was supported through 1,000 'Quick Impact Projects', which reduced inter-communal conflicts by 80%. Of course, it doesn't mean that old enmities were forgotten and they "all lived happily ever after", as people do in fairy tales. People don't forget those resentments, but in time they become fireside tales told by grandparents to small children, while having fewer combatants means more people to till the soil and plant and harvest crops. The peacekeeping forces saw the administrative part of the Ivorian administration spread across the country so that it is now present in all 108 local departments, with security forces made up of a 23,000-strong army, 19,000 in the gendarmerie and 18,000 police. With peace and security restored, Côte d'Ivoire is now one of Africa's fastest-growing economies, with a growth rate of more than 9%. I'd say that's definitely "special".



Nikita Khrushchev (right), and Premier Fidel Castro, of Cuba, greeting each other in the UN General Assembly Hall in September 1960

But it hasn't all been a catalogue of remarkable achievement. The Soviet Union, as it was back then, ignored the UN's views on Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The UN did nothing much about Israel's aggressive activities in the Middle East, and it did very little over the Cuban missile crisis, when a secret deal between Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev and the Cuban premier, Fidel Castro, could have seen nuclear missiles deployed on the island. Those with good memories may recall Khrushchev addressing the General Assembly at one time and taking off one shoe to bash on the podium to emphasize his point.

Few remember what the point was, but many remember the shoe. Indeed, several launch sites were under construction on Cuba when President Kennedy decided to ignore his pugnacious advisors (many of whom favoured an invasion of the island) and put it into "quarantine". He also warned Khrushchev of the possible outcome. The USSR and Cuba backed down, eventually. The UN had done virtually nothing, however, a response it repeated over Vietnam.



The Three Servicemen, statue by Frederick Hart, at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Looking back at those parlous times, it's hard to see how we all emerged virtually unscathed from it (although the Vietnam War inspired some of the 1960s' best protest songs; my favourite was "The Vietnam Song" by Country Joe McDonald and the Fish, which they performed at the Woodstock festival in 1969). The UN was equally ineffective at restricting the spread of nuclear weapons through what's called "horizontal expansion", and it has often expressed its support for democracy while itself being relatively undemocratic. It has proved itself unable to restore trust after the US invasion of Iraq in a fruitless search for non-existent 'weapons of mass destruction'.

These and other examples of inactivity and misjudgement raise the question of just how "special" the UN really is. I suppose it would be fair to say that it may not achieve much but that even less would be achieved globally were it not there.

WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?

A complaint that has been levelled against the UN is that it is too financially dependent on the large, industrialised nations (especially the United States), which has led to it lacking impartiality and neutrality when a crisis arises. That



© Andrea Bocher/FEMA

Rescue workers climb over and dig through piles of rubble from the destroyed 9/11 World Trade Center as the American flag billows over the debris. It took the 9/11 attack in New York in 2001 before terrorism was officially outlawed, although it was only Al Qaeda and the Taliban that were named

tends to erode trust in its judgement, especially among the poorer nations. Meanwhile, various diseases continue to spread, despite the UN's best efforts. The spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus can hardly be blamed on the UN, but it could have done more, some argue, to halt the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and infections (STDs and STIs). AIDS is a difficult one, and much harder to deal with, but it has been estimated that every day around the world a million more people develop a sexually transmitted infection of some kind. It's not always through the act of sexual intercourse, either; some of them can be passed on by skin touching skin, which means that a condom won't necessarily save you. Gonorrhoea rates for adolescent boys aged 15–19 have reached a disturbing 220.9 per 100,000 male respondents, while around a million pregnant women suffer from syphilis. Any man tempted to pay for sex should remember that around 50% of sex workers (prostitutes) have gonorrhoea (commonly known as “the clap”, or more colourfully in the 18th century as “Cupid's measles”), and that most STDs don't produce easily recognisable symptoms, at least not quickly.



© Wikimedia

King Amanullah Khan of Afghanistan

What other examples of UN failure could be cited? Take the hijacking by Palestinian terrorists of El Al flight 426 in 1968, often said to be the first of the modern terrorist attacks. The UN condemned the attack but did nothing about it. It took the 9/11 attack in New York in 2001 before terrorism was officially outlawed, although it was only Al Qaeda and the Taliban that were named. The Taliban, now back in control having told women to wear the veil at all times and not to be seen in public, would have horrified Amanullah Khan (الله خان ازی امان), the Afghan king who threw off British colonial rule and strove to move his country into the 20th century. He was a monarch who had been influenced by Soviet thinking, as well as by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and who had little time for his country's religious fanatics. He also retained some admiration for Britain. Amanullah was much admired during a state visit to Egypt as the only Muslim monarch to have made a European colonial power back down. But he saw no reason for women to cover up or wear a veil, nor for men to wear beards. He fined anyone caught wearing a turban. When he made his declaration about the veil during a long lecture to his people, his queen Soraya stood up and removed hers. It was the first time that Afghans had seen any queen's face, let alone their own queen's. Several other women did the same and Amanullah introduced education for women, including the learning of foreign languages. When religious leaders told him that women must wear veils, Amanullah asked them where that was written in the Qu'ran, knowing that it is not written there or anywhere. Strangely, some religious Muslims sided with the colonialists, hoping the British would help them to counter what Osama Bin Laden would later call “the near enemy”: secular Muslims and modernisers. Religious extremists started a rumour at the time

that he planned to make soap from the bodies of dead religious Muslims and these ludicrous rumours still surface from time to time. That, of course, began before the UN existed and it's not the UN's fault that such silly fantasies still circulate.

But remember: the UN had not outlawed other terrorist groups. Amanullah's successful visit to Soviet Russia was facilitated by his friendship with Vladimir Lenin, who had hailed him as “a brother”.

The UN was not very successful in curbing the spread of nuclear weapons. Only the United States had one when the UN came into being in 1945, but others were not far behind. The Soviet Union, of course, in 1949, plus the old colonial powers of Great Britain (1952) and France (1960). China had one by 1964 (it now has lots, it seems) along with India (1974), Pakistan (1998), North Korea (2006) and Israel (date unknown, but some time between 1960 and 1979). A single modern nuclear weapon has power equivalent to 100,000 tonnes of TNT or more, which, if detonated in a densely populated area, could kill more than half a million people. The only country to threaten the use of such a weapon recently is Russia, with Putin saying he would use one on countries that supply weapons to Ukraine. That's no way to become more popular. It's an extreme response, not unlike someone who, when losing a game of chess, throws the board to the floor and stamps on the pieces. Logical, reasonable behaviour is not what we expect from Putin, I'm afraid.



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Former Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-Moon

The UN also failed to put a stop to a very bloody civil war in Sri Lanka, which began in 1983 and didn't end for 26 years, with the separatist Tamil Tigers fighting for the independence of their region. Almost 200,000 people were forced to

flee the fighting and the UN's Human Rights Council (HRC) was urged to investigate allegations of war crimes. A supposedly 'safe zone' was declared along the heavily populated northeast coastline but it didn't work: between January and the end of April 2009, more than 6,500 people were killed there. The UN failed to intervene. The then Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-Moon admitted he was "appalled" by what he saw there.



Items recovered in a warehouse in the former Yugoslavia where men and boys were held, were used as evidence in trials at the ICTY

Nor were the famous "Blue Helmets" – regular soldiers drafted in to support the UN – much of a reassurance in such places as Bosnia, Kosovo, Cambodia, Haiti, and Mozambique, where child "prostitution" soared. There is a strong suspicion that soldiers who had raped a young girl would then give her a candy bar or a very small sum of money, so that it would be seen as a commercial transaction, rather than an act of sexual violence. But rape is rape, candy bar or not. It is never excusable. Most people would, I hope, agree that Stalin's greatest general, Georgy Zhukov, was wrong to condone the mass rapes carried out as the Red Army swept through Hitler's Germany and into Austria, however horrifying the actions of the Nazis had been. The use of vetoes in the UN Security Council is also disturbing, as I mentioned earlier. The Security Council has fifteen members, five of them permanent – France, Russia, China, the United States, and the United Kingdom, but ten more members are then elected to bring up the total to fifteen, each serving two-year terms, and resolutions have to be passed unanimously. The five permanent members can thus veto any proposal, even if all the other members leap up and down in ecstatic acceptance (that would be something worth seeing). China and Russia have both used that power, most recently of course with Russia vetoing criticism of its invasion of Ukraine and the demand for its immediate withdrawal. It

happened in 2012, too, when the Security Council tried to use sanctions under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter to intervene in Syria and prevent a bloodbath. China and Russia successfully halted international intervention there, since when some 60,000 civilians have been killed and thousands more displaced.

THERE'S NO-ONE MORE PEACEFUL THAN THE DEAD

The UN's supposedly good intentions were also thwarted in 1995 with the Srebrenica massacre, also known as the Srebrenica genocide. It happened during the Bosnian war, with Serbs targeting Bosniaks, who were mainly Muslim. The UN designated Srebrenica a "safe zone" in 1993, but it wasn't. Militarised units were obliged to disarm and a UN peacekeeping force of some 600 Dutch soldiers was put in place, but they were surrounded by Serbian soldiers, tanks and artillery, cutting off supplies. Serbian forces advanced, forcing the UN team to withdraw. Some 20,000 Bosniak refugees fled to seek protection from the Serbs, but the Serbs entered the camp anyway, raping the Bosniak women and murdering at will, while the Dutch troops did nothing, although they had been ill-prepared and poorly equipped. By July that year, 7,800 Bosniaks were dead, making this the worst single act of mass murder on European soil since the Second World War.



Skulls from the killing fields in Cambodia

For an example of UN failure, you should take a look at Cambodia in the 1970s. Remember the Khmer Rouge? Their peculiar version of Communism involved the mass killing of those who disagreed with their leader, Pol Pot, who appears to have been a psychopath. He had ordered the "executions" (which

were murders in reality), which led the Vietnamese army to invade and remove him and his forces. Pol Pot was sent into exile and a new government was put in place, but the UN refused to recognise it because of the recent war between Vietnam and the United States. Instead, the UN recognised the Khmer Rouge as the proper Cambodian government, even though they had killed some 2.5-million Cambodians, roughly a third of the country's population.

The UN has failed even to try to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). During the Cold War, the UN did and said nothing when countries in the Soviet bloc crushed moves to uphold the UDHR by force. It failed to do anything when Sudan attacked non-Arabs and its government created the so-called Janjaweed terrorists, who attacked peaceful villages, using artillery and helicopter gunships, while Sudan's military painted their aircraft white so that people would think they were from the UN. Between 2003 and 2010, some 300,000 Sudanese civilians were killed by their own government. The genocide in Rwanda was another example of inaction and ineptitude on the UN's part. The Canadian Commander there warned the UN that Hutu mobs planned to kill members of the Tutsi minority, but either the cable didn't arrive or it was ignored. The UN team was not authorised to use military means to keep the peace. After the deaths of eighteen US soldiers in a battle at Mogadishu, the United States was unwilling to supply more assistance in any case. Belgian peacekeepers abandoned a school they were supposed to be protecting after ten of their soldiers were murdered, and thousands of Tutsis who sought sanctuary there were slaughtered by the Hutu mobs. In the end, one in five of the population were killed; close to a million people. It was not the UN's finest hour.

WHERE TO NOW?

So, there we have it: an international organisation set up to prevent war after the biggest war in history. It was supposed to set certain standards and to defend them, by force if necessary. An admirable intention with some remarkable successes to its name, but also with some lamentable failures to spoil its record. Human nature is not always kindly, thoughtful or selfless. It's impossible, of course, always to be right, to take the best

decisions in a suitably resolute manner and always to act accordingly, so in the case of the United Nations we have to weigh up the pros and cons and see if there is a way to renew it, perhaps even to relaunch it, in a manner that is more foolproof and successful and less likely to make a mess of things. One thing is certain: however good it is, it won't please everyone. The UN celebrated its 75th anniversary last year, and with the Second World War having receded into the evermore-distant past, we must ask ourselves if it can – and should – continue. In a report published to mark the anniversary and lay out proposals for the way ahead, Secretary General Antonio Guterres spoke about “our common agenda”.



Victims and survivors of Rwanda genocide in 1994

When he launched his report in September 2021, he began with a scathing critique of the world in which we live. There was, arguably, a more universal devotion to the UN's founding principles in the beginning, when it was new. But as we also know, it didn't last and in some areas it didn't really work. Yes, it would be wonderful if all the nations of the Earth agreed to work together towards a common peace, with better health, a more caring society, greater environmental awareness and less selfish greed, reduced paranoia about other people and groups and less inclination to dislike those we each, in our own ways, see as “other”. “From the climate crisis to our suicidal war on nature and the collapse of biodiversity,” Guterres warned, “our global response is too little, too late.” Since we do not yet have a way to time-travel and turn back the clock, we are where we are and have done what we've done. It may be too little, too late, but we have to do something, don't we? “Unchecked inequality,” Guterres warned, “is undermining social cohesion, creating fragilities that affect us all.”



UN Headquarters in New York

Technology is moving ahead without guard rails to protect us from its unforeseen consequences.” He said that we face two alternative futures: one of “breakdown and perpetual crisis, and another in which there is a breakthrough, to a greener, safer future.” In his doomsday version, he described a world subject to a SARS-CoV-2 virus that is forever mutating to become evermore infectious and deadly, because the rich countries hoard vaccines, allowing health systems to become overwhelmed. In that scenario, our planet becomes uninhabitable with rising temperatures and extreme weather events pushing millions of species to the brink of extinction. It would also lead to the erosion of human rights, disappearing jobs, mass poverty and unrest, with violent repression to keep things in order. The alternative direction, he believes, would mean the equitable sharing of vaccines, a sustainable and largely decarbonised economic recovery helping to put the brake on global temperature rises, and with vulnerable groups protected. It sounds like a form of utopia, but it's not beyond our grasp if we work together. Guterres wants to see a “Summit of the Future”, which would (or could, at least) “forge a new global consensus on what



Jair Bolsonaro, President of Brazil

our future should look like, and how we can secure it.” All those long-dead fish, seaweeds and crustaceans are best left where they are, deep underground or undersea (or both). At the COP26 conference on climate change, held in Glasgow, Scotland, last year, Guterres was as outspoken as usual: “We are digging our own graves by treating nature like a toilet,” he told the delegates. “The six years since the Paris Climate Agreement have been the six hottest years on record.”

It's not the only solution, of course. We can all stop using gas, oil and coal (difficult though that will be) but it's not the crock of gold at the end of the rainbow. The magazine *Nature* suggested last year that the rich countries should donate \$100-billion (€94.7-billion) a year to poor nations to help them to cope. It now thinks it underestimated: “Trillions of dollars will be needed each year to meet the 2015 Paris agreement goal of restricting global warming to well below 2°C, if not 1.5°C, above pre-industrial temperatures,” the magazine says. “And developing nations (as they are termed in the Copenhagen pledge) will need hundreds of billions of dollars annually to adapt to the warming that is already inevitable.” Brazil's right-wing president Jair Bolsonaro apparently wants to cut down the Amazon rainforest upon which his indigenous people depend, and it appears to involve the use of fire. Smoke from the Amazon's fires can be seen from space. To people like Bolsonaro and his supporters, it would appear that profit is more important than a sustainable and healthy environment. But there again, he doesn't believe in climate change and has accused his critics of being “agents of foreign powers.” All of this does not bode well for our poor, beleaguered planet. The UN's rôle in preserving our world, as far as possible, will be vital, although it probably means taking on the far right, who don't seem to believe the problem exists. When I was a child I used to read the comic (long gone) called “The Eagle”, featuring the comic-strip spaceman Dan Dare. In one of the stories, Dare was trying to save the planet from people who were unaware that their devotion to plant life would kill off the human race. Of course, good old Dan succeeded, despite some pretty nasty enemies. Let's hope Guterres does, too.

Toby Bowman-Grant



The European Parliament building in Strasbourg

LOUDER THAN BOMBS

Europe Day looks ahead to ways of improving European unity

It's an interesting fact to note that the 9th May saw celebrations in Russia and in the European Union, but they weren't celebrating the same thing and they weren't much alike. Vladimir Putin had hoped to complete his invasion of Ukraine so that he could emerge the heroic victor in front of his rapturous and admiring people, although there's nothing very heroic about murdering citizens, bombing their homes and raping women. Still, that was his aim, and his celebrations in Moscow involved tanks, guns, military fly-pasts and rank upon rank of soldiers in uniform, marching smartly with heads held high and carrying their weapons. The celebration in Strasbourg was very different and devoted to peace and to a hoped-for brighter future. It marked the conclusion (for now) of a long process of public consultation on how to take the European Union forward, which has produced more than 300 proposals to achieve 49 objectives. It was an ambitious project, involving consultations with a wide range of people of different nationalities and of different ages and backgrounds: around 800 of them in all. Dubravka Šuica, a Vice-President of the European Commission from Croatia's

centre-right Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) reminded delegates in a speech to a packed European Parliament chamber in Strasbourg that the Schuman Declaration, which led to the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community, was as valid today as when it was spoken on 9 May 1950.



Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Democracy and Demography

Schuman believed that by uniting the industries that he considered to be "the engines of war", namely coal and steel, he would render future conflicts out of the question. It would, as he put it, make war

between those historic rivals, France and Germany, "not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible".

Of course, the European Coal and Steel Community would develop into the European Community eventually, it matured into the EU. Celebrating that event seems a much more sensible thing to do than to celebrate Russia's unachieved "victory" over Ukraine, which it attacked on 24 February as the first step in a war that Putin is still fighting. As Dubravka Šuica put it, "our democracy is louder than Putin's bombs". We will find out just what the European public suggested quite soon: Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has promised to introduce at least one of the ideas put forward in the Conference on the Future of Europe as a proposal for legislation during her State of the Union address to Parliament this September. One leading contender for legislation is to replace the requirement for unanimity with one for qualified majority voting. Hungary and Poland won't like it, but most other countries will welcome it as a way to achieve things more quickly and to cut through the tangled jungle of bureaucracy.



The Conference on the Future of Europe concluding its work after a year of collaboration between citizens and politicians

Hungary and Poland are both EU member states, however, even if their politicians believe that EU laws don't apply there. Some EU politicians and officials favour a strong line against the two countries, whose populations seem to favour remaining in the EU. Others prefer the "softly, softly" approach. "That was always Ms. Merkel's course and that is also Ursula von der Leyen's approach," said German Socialist MEP Katarina Barley in an interview with Der Spiegel: "dialogue, building bridges, no confrontation. The Polish government has now been in office for six years and the Hungarian government for eleven years. We can now see where the course of the dialogue has led. In Hungary one can hardly talk about democracy anymore. In Poland, the rule of law is being eroded. We should not repeat the mistakes of the past few years. More consistent measures are now needed." EU pay-outs to Poland and Hungary are now being withheld after much prompting and even then somewhat reluctantly. "It's far too late," Barley said. "I also have little confidence that she will hold out in her position."



German Socialist MEP Katarina Barley

With the best will in the world, I cannot imagine which argument should be used to pay out the money now; but I think anything is possible with this Commission." A recalcitrant Poland and a barely democratic Hungary are just

two more problems to dump on von der Leyen's desk. The EU does have one card up its sleeve, though, as Barley told Der Spiegel: "80 percent of Polish citizens want to stay in the EU."

It's hard to know which way to go when the directions are unclear and seem to be self-contradictory. The EU has faced hazardous times before and it will again, but the right decisions now could help set out a sensible route through them. Probably. Because while our politicians (or most of them) are trying to sort truth from fiction, other forces, backed with large sums of money and a lot of technology, seem to be spreading deliberate disinformation. Some politicians, especially but not exclusively in Russia and the United States, are apparently helping in this endeavour. It looks as if they're trying to boost their own profits by somewhat dishonest (and certainly dishonourable) means. Russia especially has become a global exporter of lies, trying to substitute its chosen fiction for reality. Russia is not alone in spreading untruths, of course, but it seems to have become a world leader in the field. Perhaps that's why it kills journalists in Ukraine, just in case they tell the truth and the rest of the world gets to find out what Ivan and Gregor have really been up to in the name of the fatherland. Russia also used artificial intelligence (AI) to plant false information in the West about the Covid pandemic, such as the scientific nonsense that the illness was caused not by a virus but by the new 5G mobile phone networks. Many who should have known better (and clearly weren't paying attention during physics lessons at school) latched onto this ridiculous idea and even attacked phone masts physically. Putin must have laughed himself silly at that: ordinary people doing his work for him, at risk to themselves and to their own disadvantage. We must assume, I suppose, that he was hoping to cause people to ignore the sensible

measures introduced by governments to slow the spread of the virus (such as mask wearing, inoculation and social distancing) and thus to raise the death rate. In other words, Putin was trying to kill you. He is using disinformation as a weapon in an undeclared war. Did you even know you were a combatant?

GIMME! GIMME! GIMME!

Putin's avaricious attitude towards neighbouring countries, especially those that were once part of the Soviet Union, is making people in the European Union think hard about how best to resist him.



Mario Draghi

It all feeds into this ongoing debate about Europe's direction. "With the pandemic and the war," Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi told MEPs, "The EU institutions have taken on unprecedented levels of responsibility." He believes the answer lies in what he called: "pragmatic federalism." Basically, it means more shared decision-making. "We must show the citizens of Europe that we are capable of leading a Europe that lives up to its values, its history, and its rôle in the world." Draghi is most remembered for his response to the euro-crisis during the currency's early existence. At the time, the new currency was coming under pressure because of bail-outs by debt-laden members who were pushing it to the brink of collapse. Some commentators, predicting the new euro's impending demise asked Draghi: "what would you do to save it". His reply is legendary: "Whatever it takes," he said. It worked. At a plenary session of the European Parliament in early May to discuss Europe's future and how it is coping with the double challenge, several MEPs reminded him of his famous remark. Their point seemed to be that a similarly bold approach is needed now. Draghi told MEPs that they must help to

defend “our EU values”, which he listed as “peace, humanity and solidarity,” all of which are under threat from both Putin and the global and still-mutating virus (they’re not related, although they sometimes appear to be working together).

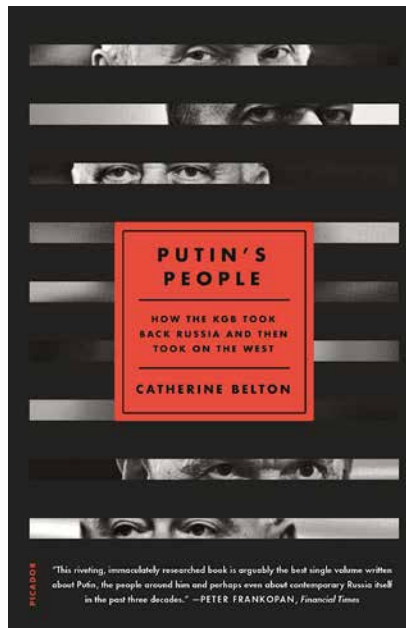
Talking of Putin and his war, in which Ukrainians allege that Russian soldiers have been engaged in looting, as well as murder, rape and the shelling of private housing, Draghi wants to commit to helping the beleaguered country. “By protecting Ukraine, we are also protecting ourselves,” he told MEPs.

Some 5.3-million Ukrainians have left their home country to come to the EU, mainly women and children. But we mustn’t forget that Ukraine itself is (or was before Putin’s invasion) the EU’s 4th largest supplier of foodstuffs. Things are not so rosy now, with the Eurozone experiencing 7.5% inflation, while the EU’s predicted growth for this year is down to 2.9% from 4% at the start of the year.



Kacper Parol during his May 6 2022 speech in front of EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at the closing event of the Conference on the Future of Europe

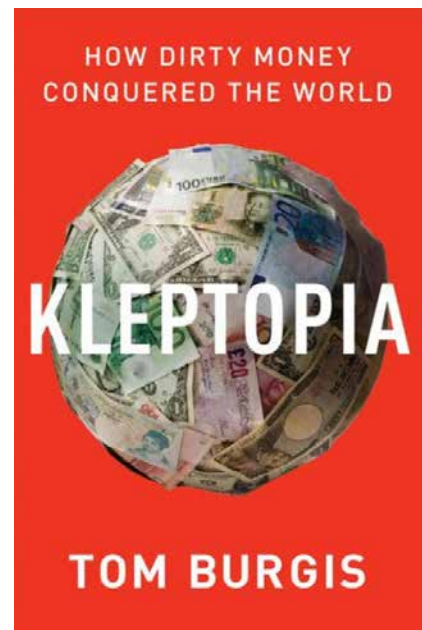
Strangely, Europe spends three times as much on defence as Russia does, but on a more divided and less coherent basis. One of the speakers at the concluding session of the Conference on the Future of Europe was Kacper Parol, a Polish delegate, who reminded his audience that: “Our future is here in the European Union,” going on to say that: “We must stand together, build a European identity together. We need more Europe.” Note that expression: “more Europe”. He was also critical of the older generation, or at least of those who pay no attention to warnings about the environment. “Our leaders don’t listen” he said, “although by ignoring climate change they are stealing our future.” Again, taking decisions on



the basis of qualified majority voting would make such progress easier, as well as making it harder (and certainly much more expensive) for those who would prefer to retain the status quo to buy the votes they need to get an outcome more favourable to a particular corporation or set of beliefs. It would allow a more collegiate opinion to succeed against vested interests and recalcitrant member states.

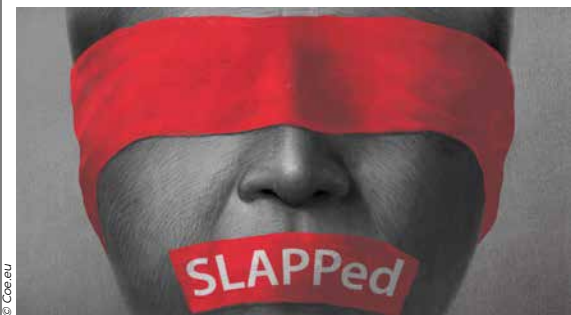
Not everyone is likely to want to see the EU taking over more responsibilities from member states. For instance, the EU is proposing to introduce legislation against what are called SLAPPS – Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation: law suits brought not because of wrongdoing but simply to silence opponents.

The move against SLAPPS is to prevent the wealthy and powerful – including governments of whatever flavour – from trying to silence their critics with endless and costly legal actions. Catherine Belton, author of the supremely well-researched and very worrying book “Putin’s People” is one of those taken to court in London. Defending herself against legal actions by some of the kleptocratic oligarchs her book mentions cost her some £1.5-million (€1.75-million). Former cabinet minister David Davies warned the UK Press Gazette that: “Some newspapers hesitate to cover certain topics, such as the influence of Russian oligarchs, for fear of costly litigation. In at least one case I know, the publication avoids the subject outright.” But malicious lawsuits have been used against several other people,



like Tom Burgis, whose book ‘Kleptopia: How Dirty Money is Conquering the World’, and Carole Cadwalladr, who exposed links between the leaders of the UK’s Brexit campaign and Donald Trump, as well as dirty Russian money. Putin’s oligarch friends (some of them still friendly with leading UK figures and politicians) are quick to consult a lawyer whenever their suspicious activities are drawn to public attention, as are their like-minded friends in Britain, Europe and the United States.

Several large London law firms, more interested in profits than in upholding justice, have been keen to take a ride on this money-making roundabout, rubbing their hands at the chance of big fees whilst helping to destroy free speech and democracy. Many of the business leaders named in these various exposés are not really the fine, upstanding establishment figures they pretend to be. They’re more like the chap selling dodgy knock-off wristwatches from a suitcase down a dark alley than



A picture illustrating « Time to take action against SLAPPS », a comment by Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, published on the Council of Europe internet site

serious, honest traders. You know the type: inclined to close the case and run if they see a policeman anywhere. They're not like serious market people, most of whom are honest. Cadwalladr accused Facebook of "breaking democracy" in a much-admired Ted talk that didn't go down well in parts of Silicon Valley; I wonder if she's any keener on it under its new owner, Elon Musk.

The EU is still trying to be a force for good in a troubled world, even if it doesn't always succeed, and it aims to get better at it. The world seems to be getting ever-more difficult, while those trying to make things better come up against the enemies of democracy and its institutions. During the early May plenary session, for instance, MEPs from the Green group pointed out how Pegasus spyware had been found on the mobile phone of the Spanish Prime Minister. It can record conversations and steal passwords and – amazingly – you can buy it on-line, although it's not as free as it sounds. For instance, Estonia wanted to buy it specifically to track Russian agents working for the Kremlin in Estonia, but after intervention by Russia itself, its Israeli manufacturer agreed to change it so that it couldn't track Russian phones. Israel didn't want to upset Putin, it seems; it would rather lose a potential Estonian customer. Acting on the orders of Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán, Hungary routinely uses Pegasus to spy on the government's opponents (and in Hungary's case there must be quite a large number, albeit not a majority in electoral terms, it seems).

MEDIAEVAL AGGRESSION

However, the EU wants to get tough on Putin and his war machine. First and foremost, it wants to cut its reliance on Russia for oil and gas. Not every EU country is happy about this; they have come to rely on Putin for their fossil fuel needs. It's not as if Putin made the stuff: it was formed from organic materials between 300 and 500 million years ago in the appropriately-named carboniferous era. Just to the south of what is now Siberia, for instance, on the north-east coast of the Tethys Ocean (and ironically in what is now part of the United States), vegetation we wouldn't recognise (along with leaves, tree trunks, insects, fish and other organic material) sank into still, stagnant black waters.



Gazprom produced 193.8 billion cubic meters of gas from January 1 through May 15, 2022. This is a decrease of 3.7 per cent (or 7.5 billion cubic meters) versus the same period of 2021, according to data from Gazprom's internet site

The air contained far more oxygen than we have ever known: 50% more than we have today. In temperatures already far higher than anywhere on Earth now, kerogen (the organic material in oil shale that will be distilled into oil one day), begins to yield its hydrocarbons. At between 2,000 and 3,800 metres deep, with temperatures around 1000 Celsius, it starts to turn into oil. When it sinks further, perhaps to between 4,000 and 5000 metres, it produces lighter hydrocarbons, gradually turning into methane (CH₄). It has passed through what chemists, geologists and prospectors call the "gas window". Production of hydrocarbons stops below 8 to 10 kilometres because it's too hot there for them to exist. The oil and gas rise through porous sandstone but can get trapped by shale, from which our modern-day oil and gas companies extract it. Continental drift has granted the bounty to Russia, but other fields exist elsewhere, of course. Russia's reserves are estimated in some quarters at 80-billion barrels, just below the United Arab Emirates' 97-billion, and ahead of Libya's 48-billion. None of those are in the same league as Venezuela: 303-billion – that's around 18% of the world's total – but beset by poverty and conflicts that badly impact on the ease of extraction. Or how about Saudi Arabia with 267-billion? Even Canada has more than Russia: 167-billion barrels. Not all of it, of course, is easy to get; it's not only Venezuela that has problems. These difficulties with obtaining nature's fossilized bounties are what have given Russia such a strong hand to play. Perhaps that's why it exports more than anyone else. But nobody seems quite sure who really has the biggest supplies.

However, despite conflicting claims, according to "Worldometer", Russia has the most gas after all: very nearly 1.7

million million cubic metres (MMcf), just ahead of Iran and Qatar. 24.3% of the world's total supplies, in fact. The websites all disagree on who has what supplies: some say Venezuela is way in front, others say it's nowhere, even placing Saudi Arabia (almost 300 million MMcf) behind the United States, with almost 370 million MMcf). Who do you believe? And does it matter? Wikipedia puts Iran first, Russia second and Venezuela down in 8th place. The fact is that Russia insists on being paid in roubles and the EU refuses. It doesn't want to prop up a rogue government that is invading a neighbour, even if it calls its war a "special military operation". It was European Parliament President Roberta Metsola who described Putin's invasion of Ukraine as Mediaeval aggression. She has a point, I think. The EU wants to cut off Russia's gas access to the Union, however difficult this will be for those countries that rely on it. It's a case of trying to phase it out, although it's being suggested that the EU could also ban anyone from shipping it or insuring it. It's claimed by Bloomberg, the 24-hour financial news and information provider, that the draft legislation will affect shipments to every country in the world.



State owned Venezuela Petromonagas upgrader, Anzoátegui State, Venezuela. In 2020, Russia's state-controlled Rosneft sold its Venezuelan oil assets to an unnamed Russian wholly owned company to preserve Moscow's assets against US sanctions. During several years, Rosneft helped Venezuela circumvent sanctions by lifting Venezuelan crude to other markets

"Russia will never win," said a confident-sounding President Emmanuel Macron. "We believe in freedom and have faith in the future," he told delegates at the last session of the Conference on the Future of Europe. He also said that the perpetrators of war crimes will not be allowed to get away with it. "We will fight against impunity for those committing crimes," he told the Conference. "It is our duty to be by Ukraine's side and we will help it to rebuild". He also warned against

acts of vengeance when the conflict is finally over. “We must never give in to our desire for revenge.” The husband, brothers, fathers and sweethearts of women who have been raped may find that a tough one to obey. But meanwhile, the reforms and new measures the many delegates have been debating must go ahead anyway, in order to strengthen the independence and effectiveness of Europe. He went on to say that Europe must agree to invest more in defence (a lesson taught to Europe by Putin) and on clean energy. Russia must not be able to hold Europe over a barrel. “Europe must become an environmental power,” Macron said.



Saudi Arabia holds 266,578,000,000 barrels of proven oil reserves as of 2016, ranking 2nd in the world and accounting for about 16.2% of the world's total oil reserves

Up to now, exports to the EU have accounted for more than half of Russia's total exports. The EU is taking control of Putin's piggybank. Even those Russians who believe his every word (some do, it seems, extraordinary as that may appear) will start to feel the pinch. In any case, whoever has the world's largest supplies, Russia still has massive leverage when it comes to selling the stuff. “Europe is still too reliant on autocrats where energy is concerned,” European Parliament President Roberta Metsola warned the conference delegates,” reminding them

also that a switch to renewable energy is “as much about security as it is about the environment”.

We may not like Putin or his strongarm tactics over oil but the current situation reminds me of a joke I heard in primary school. Question: “what do you call a large gorilla holding a machine gun?” Answer: “Sir”. Putin, it seems, is that gorilla. In the short term, the effect of electric vehicles on the U.S. fossil fuel markets would appear to be negligible, according to Joshua Linn, a senior fellow at the energy think tank Resources for the Future. Electric vehicle additions may — because of the way federal fuel standards are calculated using fleet averages — even increase oil and gasoline demand, he warned. To quote another old song, “I beg your pardon; I never promised you a rose garden.” Just as well, really. The switch to electric vehicles won't help us much as many hope on the oil dependency front, either. The switch may reduce demand for fuel oil, but it could actually raise demand for natural gas. According to S&P Global Market Intelligence, “U.S. oil and liquids demand could drop by about 25% from 2019's 20.3 million barrels per day (that was before the COVID pandemic) to an estimated 15.3 million b/d by 2050,” according to an ‘Inflections’ base case from IHS Markit research (yes, it really IS spelled Markit).

ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL

That would seem to be a sensible approach to the EU's difficulties. It was, of course, the motto of Alexandre Dumas's “The Three Musketeers”, although it first appeared in William Shakespeare's Rape of Lucrece in 1593 (verse 21):

“The aim of all is but to nurse the life

With honour, wealth, and ease, in waning age;

And in this aim there is such thwarting strife,

That one for all, or all for one we gage;

As life for honour in fell battle's rage;

Honour for wealth; and oft that wealth doth cost

The death of all, and all together lost.

It is not a very cheery work, as you may gather, about how the wife of an honourable soldier is raped by his friend and so commits suicide to overcome her “dishonour”. In the Latin translation of the phrase, “Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno”, it is the motto of Switzerland. Whatever its origins, though, it supports the notion of mutual aid and togetherness, which is what Europe needs right now.



European Parliament President Roberta Metsola

The conference newly ended is supposed to be the start of something quite new: an attempt to match up the aspirations of the populace with the actions of the EU, never an easy thing to accomplish, as Metsola pointed out, because different groups of different ages and backgrounds aspire to different things. In her speech, President Metsola spoke about the reality of a gap which exists between what people expect and what Europe is able to deliver at the moment, particularly in the areas of health, energy and security. She also said that the future of Europe is tied to the future of Ukraine. “And I ask: how will history judge our actions?” she asked. “Will future generations read about the triumph of multilateralism over isolationism? The cementing of an inter-dependent relationship between nations and people who are proud of their differences as Laura (a Conference delegate who had spoken earlier), but who understand that in this new world, the future can only be together?”



Putin, Macron, Merkel, Zelensky in 2019

Macron reminded delegates that some countries had addressed the Covid pandemic with an authoritarian clamp-down. In the United States, right-wing groups condemned any attempt to stop the spread of the virus as “authoritarianism”, telling followers to ignore mandates to wear face masks and also to refuse vaccination. One of the silliest banners I saw in a report on demonstrations in the United States was “Jesus is my vaccine”. I understand that widespread plagues of various kinds were common once humankind switched from the hunter-gatherer lifestyle to settle in communities. Close proximity helped bacteria and viruses to spread more easily. In those religious times of the so-called “middle-ages”, with a great many religious communities around, there would have been no shortage of prayer. The Cyprian plague of 250 AD was even named after its first victim, the Christian bishop of Carthage.



Priti Patel, UK Secretary of State for the Home Department

We must not forget the plight of Moldova, described by United Nations Secretary-General as Ukraine’s “most fragile neighbour”. Despite not being a wealthy country, it has taken in almost half a million refugees from Ukraine, earning the praise and admiration of many. Traumatized refugees are finding it far harder to reach and settle (even temporarily) in the relatively wealthy United Kingdom, whose system for granting temporary visas has been described as “Kafkaesque”, after the labyrinthine bureaucracies described in the nightmare worlds of Franz Kafka’s books. I bought a copy of one of them, *The Trial*, in English from the tiny bookshop inside his minuscule house near Prague Castle when I was there. Other countries have set up easily navigable routes to getting a visa, while the UK seems to have set about devising the most unfriendly system they could. The UK’s Home Secretary, Priti Patel insists on imposing what she calls “vital security checks” on women fleeing with their small children.

140 other countries don’t do that, proving that the UK is out on its own in terms of not offering much-needed help to fleeing Ukrainian refugees.



Secretary-General António Guterres meets with Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilă of Moldova

Moldova has won praise from António Guterres, who told an audience in Moldova’s capital, Chişinău, that it is the “most fragile” of Ukraine’s neighbours and that it deserves massive financial support to reflect its generosity. He also warned that he was afraid that Russia might spread its war there. “Your sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and the solid progress you have made over the past three decades, must not be threatened or undermined,” he told them. Moldova has taken in the highest number of refugees compared with the size of its own population, putting the UK to shame. The UN has appealed for \$2.5-billion (£2.37-billion) for humanitarian aid in Ukraine and an additional \$1.85-billion (£1.75-billion) to support Ukrainian refugees in other countries. If you have never visited Moldova, I can personally recommend it as a place to visit.

Meanwhile, the European Union will continue to assess the 49 proposals for change contained in the 320 measures agreed by those who have been working on the project. The topics mentioned cover a very wide range of issues, such as climate change, the environment, health, making the economy stronger, social justice and jobs, the EU’s place in the world, values and rights, the rule of law, security, digital transformation (presumably that just means becoming more up-to-date), democracy, migration, education, culture, youth, and sport. It has taken a year to get this far, with participants having to spend several weekends away from home. “Citizens, especially young people, are at the heart of our vision for Europe,” Metsola told the closing session, “They have directly shaped the outcome of the

conference. We are at a defining moment of European integration and no suggestion for change should be off-limits. We should not be afraid to unleash the power of Europe to change people’s lives for the better.” MEPs have already acknowledged that some of the reforms being called for will require changes to the founding treaties. Macron told the meeting that he would support such a move: he wants to see decision making made easier. Former Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, who has also criticised Boris Johnson for his half-hearted response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis whilst also failing to sanction the many Russian oligarchs resident in the UK, said: “Citizens’ recommendations and the Conference conclusions, offer us a roadmap to avoid the European Union becoming irrelevant or even disappearing,” adding that in his view, “A new, effective and more democratic Europe is possible.”



Former Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt

It all sounds very grand, but the EU’s record on following through on its better ideas is not wholly without fault. Inertia gets in the way, but that may be changing: it’s the bad things that may lead to a faster, more decisive response: there’s nothing like an emergency to spur people into action. Ask any fireman. The bad things certainly should not make us waver in our determination, according to Macron. “I’m convinced,” he told the meeting, “that crises should not turn us from our proposals.” He said that “independence and effectiveness” are what matters. Does Europe have those qualities? We shall have to wait and see, but with the SARS-CoV-2 virus battering at one door and the murderous Putin battering at another, time is not on Europe’s side. But even so, the response to events in Moscow and Strasbourg suggest that democracy can make a bigger noise than bombs, and hopefully one that will resonate for longer.

Anthony James



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JOURNALISTS IN UKRAINE PAY A HIGH PRICE FOR REPORTING THE WAR

Taking risks to inform the public

In a special internet edition The Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists publishes a list of journalists and other media workers covering the Ukrainian war that have been injured, killed, are still missing or have been or are still detained.

According to the organisation, as of 11 May 2022, at least ten journalists and media workers have been killed while covering the war or because of their status, and at least ten have been injured. At least three journalists and media workers have gone missing or been taken hostage.

We believe it is important to publish the list of our fellow journalists who are victims of their duty covering the news in conflicting zones order to inform. Without their commitments and courage nobody would know what happens in the world.



© Oleg Peregon

Ihor Hudenko, Ukrainian photojournalist disappeared in Kharkiv

On 26 February 2022, the Ukrainian photojournalist Ihor Hudenko lost contact with his friends and family while in Kharkiv, according to the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU), news reports, and the Kharkiv-based journalist Oleg Peregon, who with Hudenko covered environmental issues in Kharkiv. The city and its surroundings have been the site of intense fighting since the start of the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. On 24 February, shortly after the start of the invasion, Hudenko posted original photos and video of abandoned Russian tanks on his personal Facebook page, Peregon told CPJ.



Press Vehicle hit by Russian artillery shell near Zaporizhzhia

On 26 April 2022, a Russian artillery shell hit the press vehicle in which a Spanish journalist from the broadcaster Radio Nacional de España



Ukrainian journalists Roman Nezhyborets (top) and Zoreslav Zamoysky's bodies were found in Bucha and Yahidne, following the withdrawal of Russian forces

(RNE), Fran Sevilla, and a Brazilian journalist were travelling, in the south of Zaporizhzhia, towards Mariupol. Their vehicle was badly damaged but they are all safe. The two journalists and their driver had to leave the vehicle and wait for the artillery fire to stop before they could leave the area.

Two journalists, Roman Nezhyborets (left) and Zoreslav Zamoysky, were found killed in Bucha and Yahidne, following withdrawal of the Russian forces from the region. Roman Nezhyborets' body was found buried in the northern village of Yahidne, and Zamoysky's body was found in Bucha, near Kyiv. Nezhyborets worked as a video editor for Dytynets, a privately owned TV broadcaster. Russian forces occupied Yahidne on 5 March. Nezhyborets, who was sheltered with his family in Yahidne, attempted to hide evidence of his work with Dytynets, and called his mother to ask that she notify his friends and colleagues that he should be removed from group chats for Dytynets workers, according to his mother. She told CPJ that Russian forces caught Nezhyborets and took him away from his family on 5 March. On 6 April, after Russian forces withdrew from the city, Ukrainian volunteers found Nezhyborets' body in a grave in Yahidne, with gunshot wounds to his knees and his hands

tied. In Zoreslav Zamoysky's case, local residents in Bucha found his body on a street in the city in early April, according to statements by the Ukrainian National Union of Journalists (NUJU) and the Irpin city council. Zoreslav Zamoysky covered the activities of local authorities in the region around Bucha and the city of Irpin as a freelancer for his outlet and other local media groups. Zamoysky's last post on Facebook was published on 4 March. The CPJ asked the authorities to thoroughly investigate the deaths of these journalists, determine if they were targeted for their work, and hold those responsible to account.



Journalist and writer Yevgeny Bal died after being tortured for three days by the Russian military

On 18 March 2022, the Russian military detained journalist, writer and member of the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine Yevgeny Bal in his house near Mariupol. The reason for the detention was "compromising" photos of Bal together with the Ukrainian military which were found during the search in his flat. Bal was kept in the cellar for three days, where he was tortured and beaten. After being released on 21 March, he died on 2 April. National Union of Journalists of Ukraine said that his death was result of the torture.



Ukrainian journalist Iryna Dubchenko abducted by Russian forces

On 26 March 2022, Russian forces detained the journalist Iryna Dubchenko in the city of Rozivka, and took her to the separatist-controlled city of Donetsk, according to media reports, a report by the Ukrainian National Union of Journalists (NUJU) and social media posts shared by Dubchenko's friends. On 28 March, the Ukrainian military command in Rozivka told Dubchenko's family that the journalist had disappeared two days before and had been taken to Donetsk. Her sister, Oleksandra Dubchenko, told CPJ that the journalist called her on 26 March and said that Russian forces had occupied Rozivka and that a local resident had told those forces that Dubchenko had been involved in volunteer work and journalism; the forces then proceeded to search her house, during which they accused Dubchenko of hiding a wounded Ukrainian soldier at her home, before taking her to Donetsk for an "investigative action". Oleksandra Dubchenko told CPJ she then lost contact with the journalist. CPJ was not able to independently verify the reason the journalist was detained. Oleksandra Dubchenko told NUJU that the Russian forces said they "knew everything about [Dubchenko's] journalistic activities". On 29 March, the Ukrainian military administration of the Zaporizhzhia region, which includes Rozivka, confirmed the journalist's abduction and said that "response measures are being taken". Dubchenko has worked for Ukrainian outlets including the news website Depo.Zaporizhzhia, the newspaper Subota, and the UNIAN news agency.



Ukrainian journalist Dmytro Khilyuk, held by Russian forces since early March

In early March, Russian soldiers detained Dmytro Khilyuk in the village of Kozarovychi, north of Kyiv, according

to the Media Initiative Group for Human Rights, a local press freedom group, and a relative of the journalist. On 1 March, Khilyuk, a reporter for the Ukrainian news agency UNIAN, had written that Russian troops were occupying the village in a post on his personal Facebook page, where he posts commentary on current events and has about 450 followers. The relative, who asked that her name not be published, told CPJ that Khilyuk called her on 3 March and said Russian soldiers had searched the home he shared with his parents, seized their phones and SIM cards, and looked at Khilyuk's posts on social media. After the search, Khilyuk's home was hit by a Russian missile, forcing him and his parents to spend the night with their neighbours, according to the Media Initiative Group for Human Rights. The relative told CPJ that she lost contact with Khilyuk after 3 March, and that local residents in Kozarovychi told her on about 4 March that the journalist and his father were detained at a nearby Russian base. CPJ was not able to immediately determine the exact date that Khilyuk was detained. Russian forces accused the journalist, who covers the Ukrainian legal system and high-profile court cases, of communicating with the Ukrainian military and law enforcement agencies, according to the Media Initiative Group for Human Rights. Russian authorities released Khilyuk's father on 10 March, and then took the remaining detainees, including the journalist, to the nearby town of Dymer, according to the relative and the Media Initiative Group for Human Rights, which said other captives who were later released recognised Khilyuk among people being held in a Dymer office building. The relative told CPJ on 5 April that she had no updates on Khilyuk's status.



Oleksandr Gunko, editor-in-chief of Nova Kakhovka City, abducted by Russian forces

Gunko was released on 6 April, according to Facebook posts by his family and the journalist's friend, Lera Lauda. Lauda told CPJ that Gunko had been held in a Russian-controlled pretrial detention centre in Kherson. She said he was in good spirits after his release, and that Russian soldiers retained possession of his phone and laptop, which they said they would return by 8 April.



Ukrainian journalist Konstantin Ryzhenko, missing in Kherson

On 30 March 2022, Russian forces searched in the city of Kherson for Konstantin Ryzhenko, and his family lost contact with him, according to Sergei Chernyavsky, a friend who published about Ryzhenko's situation on Facebook. On 31 March, a post appeared on Ryzhenko's Telegram account, saying "if you are reading this text it means that something has happened". The post explained that Ryzhenko, editor in chief of the Kherson Newscity news website, had scheduled that post for publication ahead of time, in case the journalist was detained or lost access to his phone or to the internet. "Where Kostya is now is unknown. There is no connection with him", Chernyavsky told CPJ. Kherson has been occupied by Russian forces since 2 March. On 31 March, Russian forces searched the apartment of Ryzhenko's family in Kherson, detained the journalist's brother Zakhar, and seized Zakhar's phones after accusing him of using the encrypted messaging app Signal, according to the Ukrainian National Union of Journalists (NUJU). The journalist's father, Aleksandr, was present during that raid and told the NUJU that the soldiers demanded he get in touch with Konstantin. Aleksandr said the soldiers told him that "many people died" because of Ryzhenko, and asked about whether Konstantin was reporting solely for

the money he made, and whether he had "nationalist views". The soldiers said that they could "find a common language with him" if the journalist was working solely for money. Chernyavsky told CPJ that he believed Russian authorities searched for Ryzhenko because he had streamed and recorded anti-Russian demonstrations by civilians in Kherson. He was also cited as a source on the situation in Kherson by news outlets including the BBC and Meduza. In an interview with Meduza before his disappearance, Ryzhenko said that he had been "tracking Russian fakes and refuting them" since the beginning of the war, and that Russian forces had been "asking where they could find such a journalist".



Lithuanian documentary filmmaker, Mantas Kvedaravičius killed in Ukraine

On 2 April 2022, the Lithuanian documentarian Mantas Kvedaravičius was killed while attempting to leave Mariupol, according to news reports, social media posts by his friends and colleagues, and a statement by Ukraine's Ministry of Defence. The Russian film director Vitaly Mansky wrote on Facebook that Kvedaravičius died "with a camera in his hand". The President of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda, issued a statement saying that Kvedaravičius "until the very last moment, in spite of danger, worked in Russia-occupied Ukraine". The Ministry of Defence alleged that Kvedaravičius had been killed by Russian forces. The Prosecutor General's Office of Lithuania stated its intention to investigate the documentarian's death as part of a larger investigation into Russian war crimes in Ukraine. CPJ was unable to immediately determine the circumstances of his death. Russian forces have repeatedly harassed people attempting to flee Mariupol, where at least 5,000 civilians

have been killed since the start of the war on Ukraine, according to news reports. Kvedaravicius' documentary film "Mariupolis," about the southeastern Ukrainian port city, was shown at the 2016 Berlin International Film Festival. His 2011 film "Barzakh," based in Chechnya, was awarded the Amnesty International Film Prize.



Missing Ukrainian journalist Maks Levin found dead

On 2 April, Levin's death was announced by the news website LB.ua, and confirmed on Telegram by the aide to the President of Ukraine Andriy Yermak. LB.ua said police found Levin's body on 1 April after a "long search" near Huta-Mezhyhirska. The Vyshhorod district prosecutor's office has announced an investigation into Levin's death over a potential violation of the laws and customs of war under Article 438 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code: "According to preliminary information, unarmed Maks Levin was killed by soldiers of the Russian Armed Forces with two firearm shots. A pre-trial investigation is ongoing, and measures are being taken to establish all the circumstances of the crime," it said in a statement. Oleksiy Chernyshov, a serviceman and former photographer with whom Levin drove to Huta-Mezhyhirska, remains missing, according to LB.ua.



Russian journalist Rodion Severyanov shot and wounded in Ukraine

On 29 March 2022, Rodion Severyanov, a war correspondent for the Russian broadcaster Izvestiya TV, was shot in the leg and wounded in Mariupol, according to reports by his outlet. Severyanov was covering the activity of Russian forces and their allies in Ukraine, when one of the soldiers was injured; he was shot when he paused reporting to help that soldier, Severyanov told Izvestiya TV in an interview: "I was shot by a Ukrainian sniper. It was impossible not to notice the inscription 'Press' on my bulletproof vest, so he knew exactly who he was shooting at".



Ukrainian journalist Andriy Tsaplienko injured by Russian shelling

On 25 March 2022, Russian forces shelled a convoy of evacuating civilians in the region of Chernihiv, injuring Andriy Tsaplienko, a reporter with the Ukrainian broadcaster 1+1 who was filming the evacuation, according to media reports and a statement by his outlet. Tsaplienko sustained a minor injury to his thigh and was treated at a local hospital.



Russian journalist Oksana Baulina killed amid Russian shelling in Kyiv

Oksana Baulina, a reporter for the Latvia-based investigative news website The Insider, was killed on 23 March 2022 while reporting in Kyiv's Podilskyi district, according to one of Baulina's colleagues and a statement published by her outlet. Baulina was covering Russian

forces' shelling of the city, which had intensified on residential areas near the centre early on 23 March. The Insider reported that another civilian died in the attack that killed Baulina, and two persons accompanying her were wounded and hospitalized. Baulina was based in Ukraine and covered Russian politics as well as alleged corruption. Before joining The Insider, she worked for the Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation, until the organisation was put on the list of extremist organisations in June 2021 and she was forced to leave the Russian Federation. At least five other journalists have been killed since the Russian Federation started its invasion of Ukraine in late February.



Four Ukrainian journalists detained by armed men

On 21 March 2022, unidentified armed men briefly detained four journalists with the Ukrainian news agency MV in the southeastern Russian-occupied city of Melitopol, according to a report by the Ukrainian National Union of Journalists (NUJU). At about 6 a.m., the men detained the MV executive editor Yevgeniya Boryan, the journalists Yuliya Olkhovskaya and Lyubov Chayka, and the retired MV publisher Mykhaylo Kumok at their homes in Melitopol, and took them to an undisclosed location, according to that report and a Facebook post by Kumok's daughter, Tatiana, who was also detained.



'Hromadske' reporter Victoria Roschina's car was hit by gunfire

On 5 March 2022, Hromadske reporter Victoria Roschina was targeted by gunfire when her vehicle came across a column of Russian tanks while she was covering the ongoing war in Ukraine near the city of Zaporizhia. The journalist and her driver were not hit by the bullets. According to Reporters without borders (RSF), they managed to leave the vehicle marked “press” and found refuge behind abandoned houses nearby. Roschina explained that, while they were hiding, Russian soldiers stole her laptop, camera, and other belongings that were in the car. They spent several hours hidden, surrounded by tanks and without being able to communicate and pass on information. On 21 March 2022 Roschina has been released. According to Hromadske, she has been forced by Russian security forces to record a video, in which she denied being held by Russian forces.



Journalist Oleg Baturin missing in Kherson Region

On 20 March 2022, Baturin’s sister announced the journalist’s release after eight days of detention. Olga Perepelitsya wrote on Baturin’s behalf on Facebook: “Practically without food. Almost without water for a few days. No soap, no changing clothes. Not knowing where I am. But they clearly knew what for. They wanted to break, trample. To show what will happen to every journalist: you will be distributed. You will be killed”. The message does not identify his abductors.



Fox News journalists Pierre Zakrzewski and Oleksandra Kuvshynova killed, and Benjamin Hall injured following Kyiv blast

On 14 March 2022, the Fox News camera operator Pierre Zakrzewski and the journalist Oleksandra Kuvshynova were killed while reporting from Horenka, a city close to Kyiv. The Fox News reporter Benjamin Hall was seriously injured in the attack. Fox News reported that their vehicle came under fire as they headed towards the city of Irpin. Anton Gerashchenko, an adviser to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, posted on Telegram that the crew probably “came under mortar or artillery fire” from Russian forces. However, the Fox News statement and the news reports did not specify the suspected source of the attack. On 16 March, the Fox News CEO Suzanne Scott announced the death of Pierre Zakrzewski: “It is with great sadness and a heavy heart that we share the news this morning regarding our beloved cameraman Pierre Zakrzewski”. The Prime Minister of Ireland, Micheál Martin, wrote on Twitter that Zakrzewski’s death “disturbed and saddened” him. Zakrzewski, 55, was a French and Irish citizen based in London who reported from many war zones for Fox News, from Iraq to Afghanistan to Syria. Kuvshynova was a 24-year-old Ukrainian journalist. She had been working as a consultant assisting the Fox News team for a month. Scott said: “Sasha was helping our teams navigate the city, gather news, and speak with the sources. Round the clock, she helped to share Ukraine’s story with the world”. Both died from injuries sustained during the attack. Ukrainian authorities said on 16 March that Hall was still hospitalised and had to have part of his leg amputated. Hall is a Washington correspondent for Fox News, where he has worked since 2015, and was deployed to cover the war in Ukraine.



U.S. reporter Brent Renaud killed near Kyiv

On 13 March 2022, the award-winning U.S. reporter Brent Renaud was shot dead when his vehicle came under fire at a checkpoint in the city of Irpin, outside Kyiv. The U.S. journalist Juan Arredondo and a Ukrainian citizen, who were in the vehicle, were wounded in the attack and taken to a hospital in Kyiv. The circumstances surrounding the shooting remain unclear. The Chief of the Kyiv Regional Police, Andriy Nebytov, wrote on Facebook that Russian forces had opened fire on the car. “We were across one of the first bridges in Irpin, going to film other refugees leaving, and we got into a car”, Arredondo said in a video published on Twitter. “Somebody offered to take us to the other bridge and we crossed a checkpoint, and they started shooting at us. So the driver turned around, and they kept shooting; there’s two of us. My friend is Brent Renaud, and he’s been shot and left behind... I saw him being shot in the neck”. Renaud, 50, was on assignment for Time Studios working on a “project focused on the global refugee crisis”, according to a statement by the Time management. A journalist and documentary filmmaker who lived and worked in New York City and Little Rock, Arkansas, his film and television projects have covered the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the earthquake in Haiti, political turmoil in Egypt and Libya, the fight for Mosul, extremism in Africa, cartel violence in Mexico, and the youth refugee crisis in Central America.

On 2 March 2022, journalists from the Czech news outlet Voxpot, Majda Slamova and Vojtěch Boháč, came under fire by Russian forces in the city of Makarov near Kyiv. The journalists reported that they are alive, but as they were escaping, Russian forces kept deliberately targeting their car, even though it was marked “PRESS”. Shots from AK-74 can still be seen on the car’s door. On 6 March 2022, the Swiss freelance journalist Guillaume Briquet was driving towards the city of Mykolaiv, near the Black Sea, when he was hit by Russian fire, according to the outlet Ukrayinska Pravda. He had just passed a Ukrainian checkpoint when several bullets hit his vehicle, which was marked « PRESS ». Briquet was reportedly wounded in the face and forearm from what appears to be glass from the shattered windscreen. After he stopped, members of what the journalist referred to as a « Russian commando » appeared and took his documents, cash, laptop, photo, video,

and protective equipment. According to the Ukrinform news agency, Briquet drove on to Kirovohrad, where the police arranged for his admittance to hospital.



Cameraman Yevheniy Sakun killed in missile attack on TV tower

On 1 March 2022, the Live TV cameraman Yevheniy Sakun was killed during a missile attack in Kyiv, Ukraine. The media operator was identified by the National Police on the basis of to his union membership card. Later in the day, Live TV confirmed the information, and the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU) expressed its condolences to the family. In total, five persons were killed in the Russian missile attack on the Kyiv TV tower and the Babin Yar Memorial Complex, a Holocaust memorial site.



Sky News team shot at in ambush, with one journalist wounded

On 28 February 2022, a British television crew for Sky News was attacked while covering the war in Ukraine. Chief correspondent Stuart Ramsay and his four colleagues were driving back to Kyiv when they were ambushed. A bullet hit Ramsay in his lower back while camera operator Richie Mockler was shot twice in his flak jacket. According to media reports, the team fled the car while still under fire and got cover inside a factory building before being rescued by Ukrainian police. Ramsay said the car was hit by up to 1,000 bullets despite their shout of "journalist!". Ramsay recalled: "The first round cracked the windscreen. Camera operator Richie Mockler

huddled into the front passenger footwell. Then we were under full attack. Bullets cascaded through the whole of the car, tracers, bullet flashes, windscreen glass, plastic seats, the steering wheel, and the dashboard disintegrated. We didn't know it at the time, but we were later told by the Ukrainians that we were being ambushed by a saboteur Russian reconnaissance squad. It was professional, the rounds kept smashing into the car - they didn't miss." Stuart and his team were safely repatriated to the United Kingdom on 4 March.



Danish journalists Stefan Weichert (left) and Emil Filtenborg Mikkelsen were shot and injured in eastern Ukraine

On 26 February 2022, two Danish freelance journalists, reporting for the Danish newspaper Ekstra-Bladet and the Daily Beast were shot and injured while covering Russia's war in Ukraine. Journalist Stefan Weichert (left) and photographer and reporter Emil Filtenborg Mikkelsen were driving near Ohtyrka, a town 90 km from Kharkiv in the northeast part of Ukraine, when they were attacked by gunfire. The shooters were not identified. The reporters managed to reach the hospital for treatment and surgery. Both are in a stable condition.



Frederic Leclerc-Imhoff

On May 30th French President Manuel Macron tweeted :

« Journalist Frederic Leclerc-Imhoff was in Ukraine to show the reality of the war.

On board a humanitarian bus, alongside civilians forced to flee to escape the Russian bombs, he was fatally shot,"

Leclerc-Imhoff, 32, worked for CNN affiliate BFM TV, which released a statement saying its staff was "deeply saddened" by his death, adding that he was killed on the road to Lyssychansk in the Severodonetsk region of Ukraine. According to a official report he suffered a fatal wound to the neck after shrapnel pierced the armoured vehicle he was travelling in. His colleague Maxime Brandstaetter was also injured

ABOUT THE PLATFORM FOR THE PROTECTION OF JOURNALISM AND SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

The Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists is a unique mechanism which helps the dialogue between the governments and the organisations of journalists, with the aim of stopping violations to press freedom in the member states of the Council of Europe and enabling journalists to exercise their profession without the risk of compromising their safety.

It aims to improve the protection of journalists, better address threats and violence against media professionals and foster early warning mechanisms and response capacity within the Council of Europe.

Since 2015, the Platform facilitates the compilation and dissemination of information on serious concerns about media freedom and safety of journalists in Council of Europe member states, as guaranteed by Art. 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Contributing Partner organisations - invited international NGOs and associations of journalists - issue alerts on media freedom violations and publish annual reports on the situation of media freedom and safety of journalists in Europe.

The Platform enables the Council of Europe to be alerted in a more systematic way on the situation with regard to media freedom in the member states and to take timely and coordinated action when necessary. It helps the Organisation identify trends and propose adequate policy responses in the field of media freedom.

ART EXHIBITION TO VISIT

Château de Chantilly France

ALBRECHT DÜRER PRINT AND RENAISSANCE

Considered a universal genius during his lifetime, Albrecht Dürer continues to fascinate to this day. With his prints, he contributed to shaping the European Renaissance by positioning himself at the heart of artistic exchange. Dürer has been too rarely exhibited in France – the last French exhibition dedicated to his work was more than a quarter of a century ago! An exceptional homage will be paid to this immense artist at Chantilly this coming summer. For the first time, two major collections of Albrecht Dürer's works in France, that of the Condé Museum in Chantilly and that of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, are joining forces. More than 200 folios will be brought together in an unprecedented joint exhibition that will highlight Dürer's dazzling graphic creation, placed at the heart of his own artistic practices and the upheavals of his time.



Albrecht Dürer (Nuremberg, 1471 – Nuremberg, 1528) The Sea Monster, 1498 - Condé Museum, EST-233

ALBRECHT DÜRER'S EUROPEAN RENAISSANCE

A native of the prolific artistic centre of Nuremberg, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) is the son of a very vibrant Europe. His beginnings with Michael Wolgemut, his study trips in the footprints of Martin Schongauer, his meetings with princes, clerics and humanists, his numerous stays in Italy and the Netherlands: each stage of his career is an opportunity to discover and assimilate the production of his peers, to integrate and exceed technical and formal innovations, and above all to influence and leave a lasting mark on his time. The exhibition will examine the making of one of the greatest artists of all time, his training, his early knowledge of Quattrocento Italian prints and the dialogue he established with the great Germanic engravers and draughtsmen of his time, in particular Martin Schongauer.



Albrecht Dürer (Nuremberg, 1471 – Nuremberg, 1528) - Christ Child Holding a Crown, 1506 - Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Prints and photography department, Réserve B-13 (2)-boîte écu

The famous woodcut series that brought him renown (the Apocalypse, the Life of the Virgin and the Great Passion) will be exhibited in their entirety, and will form the milestones of the exhibition itinerary. The discovery of Venice, during possibly his first journey there and his well attested second journey, marked a turning point in his art. Drawings and prints bear witness

to the flourishing exchanges that took place between Dürer and the Venetian School, during or after his journeys. Exceptional drawings, sketches for his greatest masterpieces such as the Feast of the Rosary or the Landauer Altarpiece, enable us to understand the maturation and artistic scope of the latter.



Albrecht Dürer - Head of a woman, profile to the right, around 1500-1504 Compiègne, Antoine Vivanel Museum, L. 91

Albrecht Dürer nurtured a global, humanist artistic project to understand and emulate nature, in a way that few other artists had done. The study of the human body, of anatomy, of depiction of the living and of space was a constant in his career, as shown by the exhibition. Dürer encountered the greatest artists of his time, such as Mantegna, Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci, and in return he generated admiration among his peers. Marcantonio Raimondi and Raphael, as well as Flemish artist Lucas de Leyde and the Germanic artists, some of whom worked in his studio, Hans Baldung Grien, Hans Wechtlin, Lucas Cranach and Hans Burgkmair will be convoked to understand how Dürer created a veritable revolution. In 1520-1521, at the peak of his fame, and to ensure his imperial pension, the Master embarked on a major voyage to the Netherlands, which resulted in a rare sketchbook, the exceptional leaves of which are held by the Condé Museum, in reserve for the last 20 years. The exhibition ends with this voyage, which sums up

all the ambitions and obsessions of an artist who definitively placed himself at the centre of the concert of the European giants of the Renaissance.

AT THE HEART OF ALBRECHT DÜRER'S CREATION: THE PRINT REVOLUTION

Dürer was a painter, a draughtsman and an engraver; prints play an absolutely dominant role in his artistic practice. He was one of the first artists to raise print to the same level as the other arts. He mastered all the known techniques of his time: woodcut, line engraving, etching and drypoint. A true genius of engraving, the quality of many of his leaves remains unrivalled to this day. An almost complete panorama of his engraved work will be on view. His main series on wood, which in their time were revolutionary, will be presented in their entirety. His universal masterpieces (Melencolia; Knight, Death and the Devil; Saint Jerome in his cell) will be exhibited alongside more intimate compositions. Above all, the Master's works will be confronted with the main creations of German, Italian and Flemish contemporary engravers who influenced his art or were inspired by it. The exhibition will highlight the intense rivalry between Dürer and the artists of his time, a phenomenon which contributed substantially to the flourishing of the Renaissance.



Albrecht Dürer (Nuremberg, 1471 – Nuremberg, 1528) Apocalypse, Saint John Devouring the Book, 1496-1498 Woodcut, Paris - BnF, Prints and photography department, Réserve Ca-4 (b, 3)-Fol

With an exceptional range of more than 200 prints and drawings, this exhibition in Chantilly will ultimately enable the central role of the immense artist Albrecht Dürer to be considered in a new light.



Château de Chantilly

Château de Chantilly

The Château de Chantilly is one of the jewels of France's national heritage. It is also the work of a man with an extraordinary destiny: Henri d'Orléans, Duke of Aumale, son of the last King of France, Louis-Philippe. This prince, who is considered to be the greatest collector of his time, made Chantilly the showcase for his countless masterpieces and precious manuscripts, housed in the Condé Museum. His collection of graphic arts is notable in particular for the number and quality of drawings and prints by Albrecht Dürer, which, as set out in the Duke's will, cannot leave the Condé Museum. The exhibition will be an opportunity to admire these rarely viewed folios, in dialogue with masterpieces from external collections, especially those of the Bibliothèque nationale de France. The exhibition is part of the rich cultural programme dedicated to the Duke of Aumale and his collection, to mark the bicentenary of his birth (1822-2022).

Bibliothèque nationale de France

With the Albrecht Dürer. Print and Renaissance exhibition, the Bibliothèque nationale de France will enable the public to view some of the masterpieces from its collection of Renaissance prints, one of the most substantial in the world. The Prints and photography department holds works by the greatest Germanic, Flemish, Italian and French engravers of the Renaissance. The richness of this collection is in large part due to the history of the Cabinet des Estampes (Prints Room), created when in 1667 Colbert acquired, on behalf of King Louis XIV, one of the most substantial print collections of the period, that of the scholar Michel de Marolles. At that time, approximately 80,000 folios entered the royal collections, among which almost all of Albrecht Dürer's wood and copper engravings, as well as nine of his drawings.

The Albrecht Dürer. Print and Renaissance exhibition, organised by the Château de Chantilly and the Bibliothèque nationale de France, will present more than 150 prints from the BnF's Prints and photography department, among which masterpieces of the Renaissance, works by Albrecht Dürer, Martin Schongauer, Andrea Mantegna, Marcantonio Raimondi and many others. Exceptionally, three of the nine drawings by Dürer held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France will also be exhibited.

THE OTHER LENDERS

- Brussels, Ixelles Museum
- Compiègne, Antoine Vivenel Museum
- Paris, Beaux-Arts de Paris, Cabinet de dessins Jean Bonna Paris, Fondation Custodia, Frits Lugt collection
- Paris, Louvre Museum
- Rueil-Malmaison, Châteaux de Malmaison and de Bois-Préau National Museum
- Catalogue authors
- Under the direction of Mathieu Deldicque and Caroline Vrand: Laura Aldovini, head of the Musei Civici de Pavie
- Stijn Alsteens, international head, Old Master Drawings department, Christie's
- Anna Baydova, resident curator, the Getty Paper Project at the Prints and photography department, Bibliothèque nationale de France
- Aude Briau, PhD student in art history, SAPRAT, EPHE, PSL University/French National institute of art history
- Pauline Chougnat, libraries curator, in charge of drawings at the Prints and photography department, Bibliothèque nationale de France
- Marie-Pierre Dion, general libraries curator, head of the library and archives at the Condé Museum
- Nicole Garnier-Pelle, general heritage curator, in charge of the Condé Museum
- Alice Klein, PhD student in art history
- Anne-Sophie Pellé, scientific assistant with SSGK- Staatliches Museum de Schwerin

4 June to 2 October 2022

Jeu de Paume,

Château de Chantilly, France

<https://chateaudechantilly.fr>

TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

Hey June !

Collaborations between prestigious designers, summer collections that play the sustainability card, and surprises in cosmetics ... that's all we want this month !



When Marni meets Uniqlo

For the very first time, global apparel retailer Uniqlo announced its first collaboration with the Italian luxury fashion brand Marni.

And what is the result ? A timeless, everyday lifewear collection with a playful touch. The staple items characteristic of Uniqlo provide a blank canvas for the distinctive use of colour that is synonymous with Marni.



Among the surprises you'll discover : a mini scented candle, a body shimmer oil, a foaming shower gel or even a hair and body mist ([rituals.com](https://www.rituals.com))

13 Summer Rituals

Do you like Advent calendars ? Then, you'll love the « Summer Box of Joy » by Rituals. Available only for summer 2022, this wonderful gift box contains custom-made editions, as well as some of your favourite collections of the brand – for Him and Her.

All you have to do is to be ready for a 13-day journey of personal well-being, and discover every day (or at your own pace, to make the pleasure last longer), easily accessible tools, practices and routines that will help transform your life and welcome a summer of soulful living.

Candy Crush



This season, the iconic sneakers brand Veja features a collaboration with Mansur Gavriel, the New York cult brand that is redefining luxury through its distinctive approach to colour and design. The limited-edition capsule features Veja's popular Campo sneakers made in four quintessential Mansur Gavriel colours – bright blue, sand, bubblegum pink and sunny yellow.

Last but not least, Veja has stayed true to its sustainable design ethos. According to the brand, the soles are made from a mix of recycled rubber and organic materials such as rice waste. Most of the leather is also produced without use of heavy metals or acids (veja-store.com)

Back to the 90's

All of your '90s denim dreams are about to come true: Levi's has launched a new take on its iconic '501 Jeans' and the brand has enlisted the help of model Hailey Bieber to do so. With a touch of slouch, a looser fit, and easy-to-wear vibes, those nostalgic '90s vibes are back...for our greatest pleasure. (levi.com)

TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

X bag trends that will spice up your summer

Bright neon or discreet/ sobre , tiny or XXL size, pour le jour ou le soir... whatever your style, there's a bag for you this season.

1. Tote'ally fashion

For those have a lot to carry (like me) an extra-large tote bag is exactly what you need. Et parce que le hasard fait parfois bien les choses : ils sont hautement tendance cette saison !

Inspiration

Is the Saint Laurent Icare tote the new summer it-bag ? It's already been spotted on celebs embodying the coolest of the cool (such as Hailey Bieber) et le buzz fut immédiat ... la réponse à la question sera donc OUI !



Must have



Nude cotton logo-print tote bag (Karl Lagerfeld, spotted on farfetch.com)



Cotton linen tote bag elevated with an all-over Anine Bing monogram print (eu.aninebing.com)



Tote bag in black smooth leather with metallic ZV initials (zadig-et-voltaire.com)

3. Light bright

Bright and bold colors lovers, réjouissez-vous! Pink, green, yellow et autres orange are present across all categories including bags.

Inspiration

L'influenceuse allemande Sonia Lyson (321 K followers) a adopté this sunny yellow Prada shoulder bag with sleek lines that comes with a strap for versatility.



Must have



Parakeet green eather shoulder bag (bottegavenetta.com)



Yellow shoulder bag with V logo (valentino.com)



Wild berry mini quilted leather crossbody bag (michaelkors.eu)

2. Straw bags

Straw is a classic summer bag material, and this year, the selection of straw and “raffia-style” bags will be more significant than ever before. Designers – et, dans la foulée, les influencers – love them for their « French touch » but also for their versatility. With the different shapes and sizes available, they can be worn to complement any outfit.

Inspiration

The Loewe basket bag has become a versatile accessory that you won't want to put down. Tying the sophisticated qualities of tan leather, usually bound to winter, with the summer appeal of raffia, this bag will lead the season.



Must have



Raffia style bag with the Longchamp brand's signature galloping-horse motif to the front (spottedonfarfetch.com)

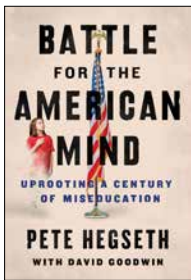


Raffia shoulder bag (isabelmarant.com)



Large Basket bag in palm leaf and calfskin (loewe.com)

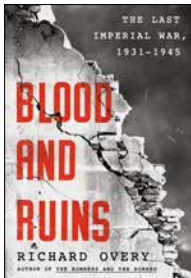
BOOKS



BATTLE FOR THE AMERICAN MIND: UPROOTING A CENTURY OF MISEDUCATION

By *Pete Hegseth*

Fox News host and New York Times bestselling author Pete Hegseth delivers his most important book yet: an excoriating examination of the state of America's broken education system that offers a helpful road map to raising children to uphold the values Americans have always treasured. Conservatives are familiar with the craziness on college campuses. They also have long assumed that colleges and universities are self-contained ecosystems with little impact on the broader culture and K-12 education. But the radical ideologies pervading higher education have now infected nearly all of America's education systems. In an Idaho school district, books like *A Is for Activist*, *Antiracist Baby*, and *Not My Idea: A Book about Whiteness* are read to elementary students. In Massachusetts, Cambridge Public Schools' "Early Childhood Curriculum" teaches black families to be "free from patriarchal practices" as part of the "disruption of Western nuclear family dynamics." Our kids receive the same barrage of progressive messages from Hollywood and social media, Pete Hegseth charges. In *The Battle for the American Mind* he explains the critical mistakes conservatives make when it comes to education in America. He shows why, no matter what political battles conservatives win, progressives are winning the war—one student at a time. Most importantly, he reveals an all but lost philosophy of education that has the potential to reverse these troubling trends. And he shares what he is doing to raise his own children in a way that instills in them the values Americans have always treasured. (Thriftbooks.com).



BLOOD AND RUINS

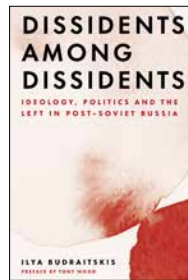
By *Richard Overy*

THE LAST IMPERIAL WAR, 1931-1945

Richard Overy sets out in *Blood and Ruins* to recast the way in which we view the Second World War and its origins and aftermath. As one of Britain's most decorated and respected World War II historians, he argues that this was the "last imperial war," with almost a century-long lead-up of global imperial expansion, which reached its peak in the territorial ambitions of Italy, Germany and Japan in the 1930s and early 1940s, before descending into the largest and costliest war in human history and the end, after 1945, of all territorial empires.

Overy also argues for a more global perspective on the war, one that looks broader than the typical focus on military conflict between the Allied and Axis states. Above all, Overy explains the bitter cost for those involved in fighting, and the exceptional level of crime and atrocity that marked the war and its protracted aftermath - which extended far beyond 1945.

Blood and Ruins is a masterpiece, a new and definitive look at the ultimate struggle over the future of the global order, which will compel us to view the war in novel and unfamiliar ways. Thought-provoking, original and challenging, *Blood and Ruins* sets out to understand the war anew.



DISSIDENTS AMONG DISSIDENTS

By *Ilya Budraitskis*

IDEOLOGY, POLITICS AND THE LEFT IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA

How have the fall of the USSR and the long dominance of Putin reshaped Russian politics and culture?

Ilya Budraitskis, one of the country's most prominent leftist political commentators, explores the strange fusion of free-market ideology and postmodern nationalism that now prevails in Russia, and describes the post-Soviet evolution of its left. He incisively describes the twists and contradictions of the Kremlin's geopolitical fantasies, which blend up-to-date references to "information wars" with nostalgic celebrations of the tsars of Muscovy. Despite the revival of aggressive Cold War rhetoric, he argues, the Putin regime takes its bearings not from any Soviet inheritance, but from reactionary thinkers such as the White émigré Ivan Ilyin.

Budraitskis makes an invaluable contribution by reconstructing the forgotten history of the USSR's dissident left, mapping an entire alternative tradition of heterodox Marxist and socialist thought from Khrushchev's Thaw to Gorbachev's perestroika. Doubly outsiders, within an intelligentsia dominated by liberal humanists, they offer a potential way out of the impasse between condemnations of the entire Soviet era and blanket nostalgia for Communist Party rule—suggesting new paths for the left to explore.



THE PALACE PAPERS

By *Tina Brown*

INSIDE THE HOUSE OF WINDSOR—THE TRUTH AND THE TURMOIL

"Never again" became Queen Elizabeth II's mantra shortly after Princess Diana's tragic death. More specifically, there could never be "another Diana - a member of the family whose global popularity upstaged, outshone, and posed an existential threat to the British monarchy."

Picking up where Tina Brown's masterful *The Diana Chronicles* left off, *The Palace Papers* reveals how the royal family reinvented itself after the traumatic years when Diana's blazing celebrity ripped through the House of Windsor like a comet.

Brown takes readers on a tour de force journey through the scandals, love affairs, power plays, and betrayals that have buffeted the monarchy over the last twenty-five years. We see the Queen's stoic resolve after the passing of Princess Margaret, the Queen Mother, and Prince Philip, her partner for seven decades, and how she triumphs in her Jubilee years even as family troubles rage around her. Brown explores Prince Charles's determination to make Camilla Parker Bowles his wife, the tension between William and Harry on "different paths," the ascendance of Kate Middleton, the downfall of Prince Andrew, and Harry and Meghan's stunning decision to step back as senior royals. Despite the fragile monarchy's best efforts, "never again" seems fast approaching.

Tina Brown has been observing and chronicling the British monarchy for three decades, and her sweeping account is full of powerful revelations, newly reported details, and searing insight gleaned from remarkable access to royal insiders. Stylish, witty, and erudite, *The Palace Papers* will irrevocably change how the world perceives and understands the royal family.

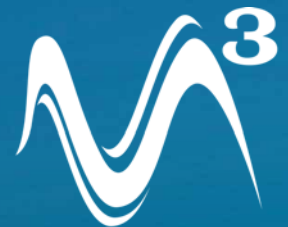


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