

EUROPE

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**THROUGH THE EYE OF
A NEEDLE TO DEATH**

Bishop Kirill glorifies Russia's
blood-soaked journey of
slaughter through Ukraine



**THE CUSTODIAN OF
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How a Belgian politician
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KAJA KALLAS

Getting tough on Putin



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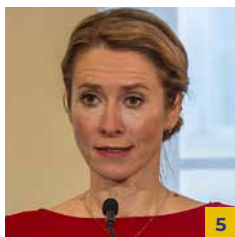
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“EUROPE DIPLOMATIC MAGAZINE” is characterized by a very open editorial line that allows it to capture all the themes that affect directly or indirectly the European political, economic, social and security issues. Whether piracy in the Gulf of Aden and its threats to the global economy, articles about political leaders, geostrategic situations or technological developments affecting our civilization, Europe Diplomatic Magazine strives to work in comparing opinions and providing an objective analysis based on extensive research. For a wide audience composed of both members of the diplomatic corps, lobbyists, international officials or academics, the magazine gives everyone the necessary and useful information about all topics that make up our daily lives. Covering sensitive issues such as nuclear, the rise of Islamism and energy dependence, the magazine opens its pages to recognized specialists who would like to express first order and exclusive information. But Europe Diplomatic Magazine is not only a source of information on recent topics. It is also addressing older facts with deep thought for further analysis. Whether it's news, security, diplomacy, technology, energy, terrorism, European affairs, no subject is treated superficially. Europe Diplomatic Magazine is an independent media, conveying balanced ideas of openness and analysis based on almost 30 years of experience in the journalistic world.

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Nikola Hendrickx



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Estonian Defence Forces

KALLAS-THENICS*

Getting tough on Putin through isolating exercises!

I will start this article with a literary reference that seems pertinent to the times through which we're currently living. It was the English writer Rudyard Kipling of Jungle Book fame who wrote: "We're all islands shouting lies to each other across seas of misunderstanding." The quotation comes from Kipling's first book, "The Light that Failed", and it's about unrequited love for a woman on the part of a young artist who is going blind. Kipling was just 26 years old when he wrote it and was suffering the pangs of unrequited love himself at the time. The quotation, however, seems strangely apt for today's world and appropriate as a response to the conscienceless aggression of Vladimir Putin and his attempt to seize Ukraine and make it a part of Russia. Yes, Putin is isolated, except for his pack of tame sycophants, who are probably not very entertaining when it comes to conversation, seeking to gain his favour with empty lies of exaggerated admiration. He can massage his own deluded ego, however, by listening to world leaders who telephone him regularly and waste their collective breaths, trying to persuade him to desist. "There is no point in talking to Vladimir Putin if we really want him to understand he is isolated," said Kaja Kallas, Prime Minister of Estonia. If famous figures, world leaders, are taking the time to call him, it must make him feel important, even loved, in a strange sort of way. Is it love? Is it hate in disguise? "Love and hate are not blind" wrote Nietzsche, "but they are blinded by the fire that they themselves carry with them."



© Finnish Government

Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas

For goodness sake, let's not give Putin a box of matches. "I feel that if everybody is constantly calling him, he doesn't get the message that he's isolated," Kallas told an audience in the Estonian capital, Tallinn, "so if we want to get the message through that actually 'you are isolated', don't call him. There's no point."

Estonia's Prime Minister fears that with

world leaders beating a path to his door, Putin is going to remain convinced that he's the king-pin, the heavyweight, the big cheese, even the top banana. "He feels that he's the centre of attention because everybody wants to talk to him, but what do we get out of this?" Kallas asked. "I don't see any results, because after all these talks, Bucha happened; Irpin happened. We don't see any signs of de-escalation," she noted. Nor will we, I fear,

* As Wikipedia explains, Calisthenics (American English) or callisthenics (British English) is a form of strength training consisting of various movements that exercise large muscle groups such as standing, grasping, or pushing. These exercises are often performed rhythmically and with minimal equipment.

unless Russian armour suddenly finds itself coming face-to-face with NATO armour and America enters into this war Putin started.

Then we enter a whole new ball game and this bloody but relatively small conflict turns into global conflagration which, even if Putin's forces are defeated, will leave behind it a trail of blood and a lot of corpses. Kallas was asked in an exclusive interview for Euractiv if it made any sense to keep diplomatic channels with Russia open. She replied that she can see no point in even talking to Putin.

Kallas has been described as "Europe's new Iron Lady" (Presumably not because she has a melting point of 15380C, nor a density of 7.87 g/cm³, but because she's tough). And she is.

Certainly her approach to Putin has been uncompromising. Estonia's contribution to the war Ukraine has been forced to fight, proportionate to its size, is the greatest in Europe: 0.81% of GDP. Latvia comes next, with 0.72%, still way ahead of third place Poland, with a generous (but not Earth-shattering) 0.46%. Interestingly, it's the United States in 4th place.



Prime Minister Kaja Kallas in Eastern Ukraine in 2021

The Finbold website explains: "It is worth noting that a significant share of the aid is allocated through traditional foreign donor channels like money towards urgent support, health services and food assistance to Ukrainian refugees impacted by the war." In any case, little Estonia is more than doing its fair share to help. The thing about Tallinn I most remember is how clean it is, or at least was while I was there. As the famous Chinese philosopher Kong Qiu or K'ung-fu-tzu (the Master Kong) – better known to us as Confucius – said: "He who wishes to secure the good of others has already secured his own." In that case, Estonia's soul must be very healthy. Kallas's

outspoken criticism of Putin, including her call for him to be put on trial for war crimes, has boosted her popularity at home, despite concerns in some quarters that having a border with Russia puts Estonia at risk of Putin's adventurism and seemingly total lack of any sense of humour. Or a sense of proportion.



President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky

In Estonia, Volodymyr Zelensky is seen as a hero; one small Estonian resort town, Tõrva, located in Valga County in southern Estonia, has created a sculpture of Ukraine's leader in 72 metric tonnes of sand, showing him as part of the Statue of Liberty. The sculpture was carved out by Ukrainian refugees living in the town and funded by local entrepreneurs. Kallas made clear her position immediately Russia's unmerited attack began, Tweeting: "I condemn in the gravest manner Russia's large-scale military attack against Ukraine. Aggression is a crime that demands the clearest international reaction and strong response. We are with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people at this dark hour. We #StandWithUkraine. Слава Україні (Glory to Ukraine)!"

GLORY (AND ROCKETS) TO UKRAINE

Putin has promised to attack any long-range weapons supplied by the West and his cruise missile assault on Kyiv in early June was meant to be part of that plan, with a claim that any new arrivals would be targeted, too. Putin threatened this military escalation without specifying what the new targets might be, but the threat came days after the United States announced plans to deliver \$700-million (€653-million) of defence assistance, including four precision-guided, medium-range rocket systems, along with helicopters, Javelin anti-tank systems, radar systems, tactical vehicles and

more. Military analysts say Russia hopes to swiftly overrun Ukraine's encircled eastern industrial Donbas region, where Russia-backed separatists have been fighting the Ukrainian government since 2014. It will take a couple of weeks or so for the new weaponry to be delivered and put in place. Estonia, on the other hand, has donated a third of its military defence spending to Ukraine. Estonia's Central Bank has even issued a new €2 coin designed by a Ukrainian refugee.

It's worth remembering, whenever Putin or his religious lapdog, Patriarch Kirill, talk about Ukrainian forces being unkind to the pro-Russia terrorists in Donbas that it was those terrorists – perhaps I should call them 'separatists' – who shot down Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 over Donbas in 2014.



Estonia - Ukraine Commemorative 2 euro coin

Moscow has claimed that it was shot down by Ukrainian forces, even though the Ukrainians trying to hold their country together had no reason to do so, the separatist they're fighting lack any aircraft to shoot down. What's more, the weapon used was a missile of the 9M38 series, launched through a BUK TELAR missile system, which had been transported to its launch site in a farmer's field near the town of Pervomaiskyi directly from the Russian Federation. Then, with one of its two missiles missing, it returned to Russia. Investigators concluded that it had been fired by Russia's 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade, based in Kursk. Immediately after the attack, the separatists and their Russian allies claimed on-line that they had shot down a large Ukrainian military plane, although these claims disappeared from the Internet as soon as it became clear that the target had actually been a civilian airliner. All the 283 passengers and 15 crew were killed and four men – three Russians and one Ukrainian – are still on trial in the Netherlands for the

act, although they are, of course, being tried in absentia. Russian news sources are still saying there is no evidence linking Russian or separatist forces with the incident, but, like much of Russia's propaganda, this is simply a lie.



© Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Jüri Ratas

Estonian anger with Russia is real, even though it is Ukraine, not Estonia, that is under attack: a petition in Tallinn calls for the address of the Russian embassy there to be changed to "Free Ukraine 1", just to remind diplomats of how most people in the world (and most certainly in Estonia) think about their invasion.



© President.ee

Estonian President, Alar Karis

But not everything has been going Kallas's way politically, even if she seems to have successfully found a way through it so far. Indeed, the speaker of the Riigikogu (Estonian parliament), Jüri Ratas, has said that she and her government should have resigned, rather than dismissing seven Center Party ministers, having first obtained assent from the President, Alar Karis. She published her letter to the President on-line, accompanied by this note to the general public: "I have just proposed to the President of the Republic to release from office ministers Jaak Aab, Tanel Kiik, Eva-Maria Liimets, Taavi Aas, Kristian Jaani, Erki Savisaar,

and Tiit Terik. Now more than ever, Estonia needs a functioning government, a government that is based on common values." Her policy plans were, if not derailed, certainly upset a little by votes on pre-school education in the Estonian language, when a proposal to teach the very young only in Estonian was rejected by the Centre Party and EKRE. It's an issue of great importance in Estonia, even if it is heavily overshadowed by Moscow's military ambitions and its brutal invasion.

Domestic stories often matter more to ordinary citizens than issues of more international significance. "I believed that the events of 24 February and the genocide committed in Ukraine by Russia had opened the eyes of all parties in the Riigikogu to the importance of having a common understanding of the dangers to our independence that we are facing as a neighbour of Russia," she wrote. "Unfortunately, it turned out yesterday that there are two parties in the Riigikogu that, even in the current situation, are unable to come together and stand for the protection of our independence and constitutional values." Kallas sees a strong link between the language issue and Russia's unwarranted aggression: "When I was appointed prime minister," she wrote, "I promised to dedicate my efforts to securing the future of the Estonian people. We will secure our future not only by increasing military spending but, above all, by the unity of our people and the unwavering will to defend our independence." She went on to explain the perceived link: "Proficiency in the Estonian language is a prerequisite and foundation for this. In a situation where the Centre Party is actively working against the most important core values for Estonia in the government, we can no longer continue cooperation with them." Problems for politicians always seem more intractable where national pride and even nationalism are involved. But there is more to it than that. Some fear that Putin could use the existence of a Russian-speaking minority in the Baltic states to justify aggression.

It's not a fear Kallas shares. "We just conducted a survey asking our Russian speaking minority which country they feel emotionally connected to," Kallas told the groupe d'études géopolitiques, "and 74% said they feel emotionally connected to Estonia." What about possible support among Russian-speaking Estonians for a Russian invasion? "We don't see that as a possibility. We have 300,000 Russian

speakers whose native tongue is Russian, but they are not a homogenous group. There are different views regarding this war, and the majority of our Russian speakers are Estonian citizens." Russian speakers also took part in Estonia's Independence Day celebrations, which, by an unhappy coincidence, took place on 24 February, the day Russian troops entered Ukraine. "In Eastern Estonia," said Kallas, "90% of the population are Russian speakers. They live across the river, and it is so much worse on the other side. If you were to ask, especially right now, there are Russians who want to find their way to Estonia. In such a crisis, always look at which way the refugees are going. They are going towards the EU, not Russia." For Kallas, being a hawk doesn't just extend to rhetoric. She wants to see real action. "We should move from a deterrence plan to a defence plan so that we are actually able to protect our territory," she said. "We should also think about our common capabilities, which is a European defence issue. What I mean by this is that there are some capabilities, such as air defence, that are too expensive for any individual state. Just last week, I asked my military to show me how smaller bubbles and bigger bubbles of air defence work, and how far they go. We should do this together. This comes to mind now because defence has been such a national issue."



© Erik Peinar, Riigikogu

The Riigikogu (Estonian Parliament)

As for Kallas's dismissal of those ministers over their failure to agree on the language issue, the former leader of Estonia's Social Democrats (SDE), Jevgeni Ossinovski, said he detected an attempt by the Christian Democratic and Conservative Party, Isamaa, to enter into a coalition with the Center and Conservative People's Party (EKRE) to take over power, making use of the cover provided by Russia's aggression and public anxiety over Estonia's place in the resulting international problems.



© Wikipedia

Jevgeni Ossinovski

Ratas wrote that Isamaa's leaders had been shaken by recent opinion polls suggesting that the popularity of Kallas is on the rise. Kallas, it seems, has forced Isamaa's hand with what Ossinovski described as "shadow play", which would mean that Isamaa will have to admit that it would like to be in power alongside Center and EKRE but not with Reform and the SDE. To anyone not Estonian the whole thing looks horribly complicated and more of an amusing sideshow than a matter of national importance. As it is, Ossinovski described Kallas's action as "appropriate", by accelerating the formation of a new government. Kallas, then, is a smart operator, so what of her background? Born in 1977, she is married with two sons and a daughter. She graduated in law from the University of Tartu in 1999, completing her post-graduate studies at the Estonian Business School in 2007. She is seen as one of Europe's leading hawks on the issue of Russia, from which Estonia only gained its independence in 1991, which explains the nervousness many Estonians feel about Russia's seemingly revanchist tendencies. "I am of the lucky generation," Kallas told *The New Statesman* in an interview. "We were living in a prison, with no freedom, no choices, nothing. And in 1991, when I was a teenager, we got our

independence and freedom back." She said that things had been very different for her grandparents, at least until the country was swallowed up by the Soviet Union in 1940.

War is terrible, but so would be "peace at any price", Kallas argues. She has said that peace should not be the ultimate goal. At least, not if it means that everyone stays within the boundaries established by Russia's aggression. That would still mean that Russia had seized a sizeable portion of Ukrainian territory, and it also means that Putin will not rest there: "If Russia is not punished for what they are doing," Kallas said in her interview, "then there will be a pause of one, two years, and then everything will continue: the atrocities, the human suffering, everything." She believes it would not end with Ukraine, either; that will never be enough to satisfy a Putin emboldened by even a little military success. "I mean other countries around Russia. Moldova... The imperialistic dream has never died." Few doubt that Estonia could be one of Putin's prime targets. It led to some angry discussions at a recent EU summit. "We had a very heated debate about calling Putin," Kallas said on Estonian television.

© NTF
Prime Minister Kaja Kallas and French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris in 2021

GREEN FOR GO, GO FOR GREEN

Meeting with other EU leaders in Brussels towards the end of May, Kallas stressed the importance of the EU's "green agenda", too – the gradual switch to more sustainable sources of energy. Supporters of Kallas see it as a positive move and not only for saving the planet. "The green transition must be a transition that people make," Kallas said after talks with the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, while stressing that it's a project for

ordinary citizens, not just policy-makers. "Achieving our climate objectives will be a change with very broad-ranging impact because we have set ourselves the goal of reaching both climate neutrality and energy independence. But if we are to do so, then those objectives have to be realistic and achievable by everyone." Kallas said that achieving climate goals and completing the green transition are long-term processes of which the most tangible benefits will be felt in the field of energy, but not only that. "They will allow us to secure independence from Russian energy and cover our own energy needs while maintaining our environment," she explained.

© Twitter: kajakallas
President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas on Estonian "Auvetech" autonomous self-driving vehicle

Naturally, Kallas and von der Leyen also talked about the military situation in Ukraine. "The Ukrainians are fighting for European values and simply to belong to Europe," said Kallas. "We must grant them the hope of becoming an EU candidate country. Russia must not be allowed to think that aggression pays off. To that end we must press ahead with sanctions that make the price that Russia pays for the war even higher. Until Ukraine wins the war, there will always be more that we can and must do." A few days earlier, Kallas had met with Sweden's Prime Minister, Magdalena Andersson, and she told her that Estonia supports Sweden's bid to join NATO. "Accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO will increase the security of us all," said Kallas, adding that this particular NATO expansion: "is an opportunity to open new doors in defence cooperation between Estonia and Sweden." Kallas also stressed that just stopping the war is not enough; Russia must be defeated. "We must refrain from premature peace in Ukraine," she said. "Concluding a peace deal at all costs is dangerous; it must take place at the request and on the



On August 20 1991, volunteers rushed to protect Tallinn's TV tower after Soviet forces were sent to the country to cripple the country's communication systems. That night, 69 members of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Estonia voted in favor of the Resolution on the National Independence of Estonia

terms of Ukraine,” said Kallas. “Ukraine continues to need our military support as a matter of priority in order to fight the aggressor and liberate its territory.”



© Frankie Fouganthin

Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson

While we’re mentioning green issues, however, it’s worth taking note of Estonia’s plans to help both the economy and the climate in her country. Estonia’s plans, which it hopes to complete by 2035, are based upon five main themes, the goal being to improve the innovation and research and development capabilities in Estonian enterprises, which contribute to the growth of productivity and international competitiveness. “To achieve that,” says the government’s website, “we will develop new support services to encourage innovation in all stages of the business and technology development, such as market monitoring of new technologies and advice on the engagement of intellectual property, new business models and creative competencies. We will also reorganise support for applied research and increase investment in research and development by state-owned companies. We will facilitate the scientific knowledge created in Estonian research institutions to advance to business use faster and we will encourage collaboration between research institutions and entrepreneurs.”



© NTF

Estonians demonstrating in Tallin against the Russian aggression on Ukraine



Estonian PM, Kaja Kallas with British PM Boris Johnson, June 2022

It’s an ambitious list of aims for Kallas to achieve. There is a lot to do, judging by the Estonian government’s own website. “To ensure R&D collaboration between research institutions and enterprises in areas that are important for the Estonian economy and its regions (including rural and coastal regions)” (e.g., technologies supporting environmental protection, more efficient use of local resources, ICT), “we will develop sectoral research programmes, rethink smart specialisation priorities, provide support for participation in the EU’s strategic value chains, and promote a sustainable bio-economy.”

What about the Estonians themselves? Do they agree with the war, with helping Ukraine and with the responsibility for the conflict? A report was commissioned to look into that, data from which shows that 68 percent of people in Estonia view Russia as a threat compared to 24 percent who do not, which does not come as much of a surprise. The results were similar when respondents were asked which statement they agreed with most: “[It was] Russia that invaded Ukraine” (68 percent agreed), [the] West that provoked Russia (15 percent) or that “it was Ukraine that oppressed the Russian-speaking part of the population” (9 percent). Additionally, 65 percent of Estonians believe Ukraine is fighting for democracy in Europe. Sixty-nine percent of respondents agree Ukraine is an independent country, but 24 percent said it was a “puppet of the west”. Fifty-six percent said Ukraine should be a member of NATO while 33 percent said it should be a neutral country.” Not that such opinion polls ever actually change anything, nor mean very much.

ONE DOWN, SEVERAL THOUSAND TO GO

Kallas paid a visit to London where she met the UK’s beleaguered prime minister, Boris Johnson. Unusually, he didn’t greet her on the steps of No. 10,

Downing Street, presumably in order to avoid the journalists waiting to ask him about the confidence vote he would have to face later.

He won it, incidentally, if not very convincingly. Kallas thanked Johnson for his “great leadership”, saying: “We have been great allies in NATO, and we are very grateful for the British troops in Estonia, and also that you have doubled them while the war took place.” Mr Johnson said it was a “great pleasure” to welcome Kallas and praised her for the “outstanding job” she is doing by standing up to Putin. She Tweeted Johnson to say: “Thank you PM Boris Johnson for a great welcome. We share the same vision on bolstering NATO’s Eastern flank. Estonia and the UK will work together in NATO to strengthen the forces & command structures committed to the defence of Estonia.” Kallas’s visit to the UK coincided with the news that one of Putin’s most ruthless mercenaries, Vladimir Andonov, a member of the notorious Wagner group, had been killed in eastern Ukraine, probably by a sniper. Andonov’s nickname was “the Executioner” in recognition of his exceptional brutality. Johnson reassured Kallas that Estonia could “depend on the UK to support it, both through NATO and the Joint Expeditionary Force, as well as through the UK and Estonia’s strong bilateral relationship.” As for the way in which the war seems not to be going quite as Putin hoped, Johnson said that “the Russian President is the author of his own embarrassment.”

Kallas is on record as saying that, in relative terms, Estonia is one of Ukraine’s biggest supporters, having supplied ambulances and millions of euros in medical aid, as well several tonnes of food aid. Furthermore, despite its small size, Estonia has welcomed large numbers of Ukrainian refugees fleeing the fighting and Russia’s relentless bombardments. “I am very proud of the people of Estonia for the way they



© NATO

“The integration of Allied units into our defence is not a threat to Russia mentioned by Putin or a violation of his security interests. This is the West’s reaction to the aggressive behaviour of the Russian Federation,” said Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces Lieutenant General Martin Herem

have opened their hearts to the people of Ukraine,” Kallas said. “The priority now is to assist the refugees who have come here in adapting to Estonian society and our linguistic sphere and finding their place here so that they are able to cope on their own.” Now out of reach of Putin’s missiles and tanks, this cannot be the end of the road, Kallas admits. “Physical safety alone is not enough, because people need homes, jobs, schools and kindergartens, as well as health care and other services. This is a lot for the state and society here in Estonia to shoulder, and a major challenge, since the refugees that are here already account for well over 1% of the total population.”

Another aim of Kallas is to put up the cost of waging war for Russia. She is cooperating with Estonia’s allies: “to raise the cost of aggression even further for Putin’s criminal regime and to cut off the sources of funding for its war machine.” Speaking in March, she went on to explain the thinking behind the policy: “The European Union’s fourth package of sanctions has just been implemented, and a fifth is being worked on,” she explained. “We are continuing to pursue the economic and political isolation of

Putin’s regime.” She highlighted Russia’s expulsion from the Council of Europe and the ordering by the International Court of Justice immediately to suspend all military operations in Ukraine. “These decisions show that the aggressor has no place among us and that its war crimes will not go unpunished,” she said. “Putin must not be allowed to develop a sense of impunity.”

It was on 16 March that Russia ceased to be a member of the Council of Europe after 26 years. The Russian Federation can now no longer take part in the work of the Council itself, nor its various subsidiary organisations, like the CDCJ (Centre Européen de Coopération Juridique), the committee on legal co-operation in private and public law. The decision to end Russia’s participation led to the launch of action under Article 8 of the Statute of the Council of Europe. The following day, the Council suspended relations with Putin’s puppet-state, Belarus, as well. The exclusion of Russia has been on the cards for some time. Back in 2019, a report prepared by Kanstantsin Dzehtsiarou and Donal K. Coffey described Russia as displaying “persistent and clear disregard of the values and aims of the CoE,” including the occupation of other member states, the sponsorship of separatist movements and by ignoring judgements made in the European Court of Human Rights. In February 2022, 42 out of the 47 member states voted in favour of suspending Russia’s membership as a direct result of its invasion of Ukraine.



© Mil/lee

A military convoy with six Challenger Main battle tanks and other armoured vehicles from the UK military’s Royal Welsh Regiment entering Tapa, Estonia on February 2022. The UK has bolstered its presence in the Baltic region in order to increase deterrence against any hostile activity

After her brief meeting with Britain’s beleaguered prime minister, Boris Johnson, Kallas said: “Russia’s war in Ukraine has thoroughly changed Europe’s security. The threat that Russia poses is not gone, and NATO must adapt in the new security environment.”

Kallas and Johnson agreed that NATO must change its fundamental defence and deterrence position on the east flank and that specific decisions regarding this matter must be taken at the next NATO Summit, to be held in Madrid. “We need stronger, highly prepared forces with functioning NATO management structures to defend Estonia,” Kallas stressed. “We agreed with Prime Minister Johnson that Estonia and the United Kingdom will collaborate on establishing a division-level management structure in Estonia.”

More specific details will be established for the NATO Summit in Madrid. In their discussion about the war Russia started, the two prime ministers acknowledged that Ukraine does not have time to wait and that the free world must act decisively. “Ukraine must win this war and the aggressor must lose,” Kallas emphasised.



© NFI

Ukrainian refugees

Her continuing tough stance on Russia’s aggression has raised her popularity rating at home. Strong leaders are generally appreciated, especially when faced with threats. As for Putin, there seems to be less and less concern about him losing face. He has shown no mercy and no contrition about the invasion, nor about the brutality of his troops during the conflict. History will judge him harshly. He may end up with little choice other than to quote the words of a character in the Rudyard Kipling book I mentioned at the beginning, ‘The Light that Failed’. “I have my own matches and sulphur, and I’ll make my own hell.” Some might argue that Putin has already made a hell for others and Kallas may feel it’s about time he had a taste of it himself.

Anthony James



© US Navy

USS Kearsarge (LHD-3) docked in Tallinn, Estonia

NEWS IN BRIEF

IN SPACE MANUFACTURING AND ASSEMBLY

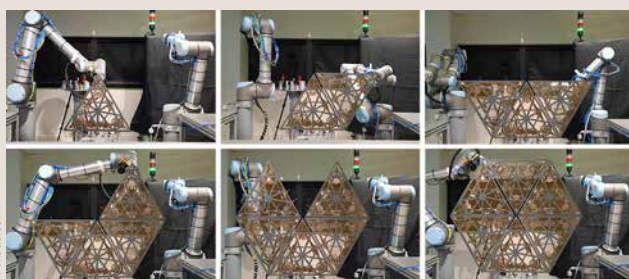
Delivering technological bricks for Airbus space factory

What's next in space? A factory that's out of this world

The upcoming opening of Airbus' next production site is not going to be in Europe or the United States ... It's going to be truly out of this world - up in space!

Up to now, this was pure science fiction. But as early as next year, it will become reality - to some extent, at least. And Airbus is making it happen. Because that's when the astronauts on the International Space Station (ISS) will take their own practical companion on board: Metal3D, the first metal 3D printer in space.

Metal3D, developed by Airbus for the European Space Agency (ESA), is a real game changer. It uses metal as source material and prints it at 1,200 degrees Celsius to produce new parts such as radiation shields, tooling or equipment directly in orbit. Future versions of the 3D printer could also use materials such as regolith (moondust), or recycled parts from decommissioned satellites. As early as the end of this decade, 3D printers could also be used on the Moon, enabling a sustainable human presence there by printing structures for lunar rovers or habitats.



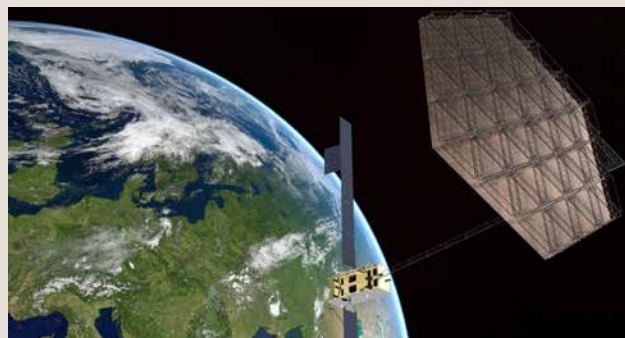
Kit assembly for huge reflectors

3D printing in space or on the Moon is only the beginning. Airbus wouldn't be Airbus if it didn't take in-space manufacturing to the next level. As soon as in the next three to four years, it will be producing and assembling entire satellites in space. So its next satellite factory will not be in Europe or the United States, but in space, hundreds of kilometers above us!

Since there is enough space in space, it will be possible to build bigger structures such as huge reflectors, allowing telecom satellites to cover the entire planet. Airbus' solution is to launch kit parts that will be assembled in space by the robotic arms from our space factory.

Producing satellites and larger structures directly in orbit will revolutionise traditional space system manufacturing: not only will production on Earth no longer be necessary; weight and size constraints associated with getting satellites to their orbit will be a thing of the past.

Not to mention that production in space is sustainable: fewer rocket launches are needed, and the material for production can be sourced from the space debris floating around. So with the space factory, Airbus is also helping to clean up space and ensure a sustainable future for the industry.



Artist's impression of reflector made in space

BOMBARDIER INTRODUCES GLOBAL 8000 AIRCRAFT, THE FLAGSHIP FOR A NEW ERA IN BUSINESS AVIATION

Bombardier unveiled the newest member of its industry-leading business jet portfolio with the introduction of the *Global 8000* aircraft, the world's fastest and longest-range purpose-built business jet, innovatively crafted with the industry's healthiest cabin for safety, comfort and performance beyond compromise.

With an industry-leading range of 8,000 nautical miles and an unbeatable top speed of Mach 0.94, the *Global 8000* aircraft is the ultimate all-in-one business aircraft, offering customers a unique blend of outstanding performance married with the smoothest ride and an uncompromising passenger experience – the absolute leader in the long-range class.

“Today, Bombardier solidifies once more its position as the leader in business aviation with the newest member of the industry-leading Global family,” said Éric Martel, Bombardier's President and Chief Executive Officer. “The *Global 8000* aircraft leverages the outstanding attributes of the *Global 7500* aircraft, providing our customers with a flagship aircraft of a new era. We remain unmatched, which for an innovation-focused team like us, is great.”



© Bombardier

Some of the impressive performance capabilities of the new *Global 8000* aircraft were witnessed as early as May 2021, following a demonstration flight with a *Global 7500* flight test vehicle. The aircraft, accompanied by a NASA F/A-18 chase plane, repeatedly achieved speeds in excess of Mach 1.015, a key step in enabling a maximum Mach operating speed (MMO) of M0.94 and becoming the fastest business jet in the world and the fastest in civil aviation since the Concorde. During the demonstration flight, the aircraft also became the first Transport Category airplane to fly supersonic with sustainable aviation fuel (SAF).

The discerning *Global 8000* business jet also features the healthiest cabin in the industry, with the lowest cabin altitude in its class of 2,900 feet when flying at 41,000 ft. It is also equipped with Bombardier's Pür Air and advanced HEPA filter technology for the cleanest cabin air and the fastest fresh air replacement.

The *Global 8000* aircraft is the only true four-zone cabin business jet to have a range of 8,000 nautical miles – and it more than delivers even when it comes to comfort. With its spacious four personalized suites ergonomically designed to maximize space and freedom of movement, the *Global 8000* aircraft also incorporates the revolutionary features introduced on the *Global 7500* aircraft that dramatically improve passenger comfort, including the Soleil circadian lighting system to help combat jet lag. Coupled with the innovative Nuage seat with the first-ever zero gravity position, passengers will arrive at their destinations revitalized and refreshed.

An exemplary commitment to detail is assured on the new *Global 8000* aircraft, including an available Principal Suite with a full-size bed and a stand-up shower in the En-suite. Revolutionary cabin entertainment control and connectivity, the intuitive nice Touch CMS and OLED touch dial, Bombardier's l'Opéra directional audio sound system and available 4K monitor, also ensures passengers will receive an unrivalled cabin experience.

In the cockpit, the *Global 8000* aircraft features the renowned Bombardier Vision flight deck with its next generation fly-by-wire technology and blend of cutting-edge avionics with exceptional ergonomics and aesthetics for remarkable comfort and control.



© Bombardier

Performance-wise, the new *Global 8000* aircraft can efficiently transport customers to a wide variety of destinations both faster and farther than ever before. And with its exceptional class-leading range and short-field performance, even more exclusive city pairs are now achievable, including Dubai-Houston, Singapore-Los Angeles, London-Perth and many others.

Expected to enter service in 2025, the *Global 8000* aircraft development is ongoing, and the program is progressing to plan.

FUTURISTIC ELECTRIC DELOREAN ALPHA5



The Alpha5

The DMC DeLorean is a rear-engine two-passenger sports car manufactured and marketed by John DeLorean's DeLorean Motor Company (DMC) for the American market from 1981 until 1983-ultimately the only car brought to market by. The DeLorean is referred to by its internal DMC pre-production designation, DMC-12.

Designed by Giorgetto Giugiaro was noted for its gull-wing doors and brushed stainless-steel outer body panels. Though its production was short-lived, it became widely known after a DeLorean was featured as the time machine in the *Back to the Future* films.

DeLorean Motor Company, or DMC – went bankrupt in 1982. In 1990 the rights to the DeLorean brand were purchased by a new company that adopted the same name.

The new DeLorean Motor Company is preparing the production of a new all-electric vehicle, the Alpha5, a look-alike of the DMC-12.

The Alpha5 should have its official unveiling in August at the California car show « Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance ».

DeLorean Alpha5 is capable of 0-100kmh sprint in under three seconds and comes with a 100kWh battery, offering an estimated 300 miles of range and a top speed of 155mph.

The electric vehicle should enter production in 2024.



DeLorean DMC-12 Head on photo with doors open

© Kevin Abato / www.gignemedia.com

EMSA RPAS FLYING OVER THE BLACK SEA REGION IN SUPPORT OF ROMANIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

Romanian national authorities have been using EMSA RPAS to conduct flights over the Black Sea region from a base in Mangalia. The flights are offering enhanced maritime surveillance to the country's Border Police, Naval Authority and National Agency for Fishing and Aquaculture. The day-to-day monitoring provided by the remotely piloted aircraft is particularly useful for the implementation of coast guard functions where getting a clear picture of what is happening at sea helps enable an efficient and effective response.

The request for the service was placed by the Romanian Border Police following successful operations in 2021 and is expected to run until the end of the summer. The flights performed will enhance surveillance for multiple purposes including general maritime safety such as vessel traffic management, ship and port security, pollution detection, accident and disaster response, and fisheries inspection and control, all within Romanian territorial waters and exclusive economic zone.



© EMSA

S100 Camcopter

The RPAS in use is an unmanned helicopter with an endurance of six hours and a range of more than 100km. It is being provided through EMSA's contractor, Schiebel Aircraft GmbH. The aircraft – the S100 Camcopter – is also equipped with both an optical and infrared camera, as well as an AIS receiver and an automated maritime search sensor capable of detecting objects on the sea surface.

Thanks to the dedicated platform of the EMSA RPAS Data Centre, the end users of the service can communicate with each other and respond to the flight data shared with them in real time. In this way, depending on their various roles and responsibilities, the authorities can pick up and act on any activity at sea which might be considered harmful, dangerous or unlawful in a targeted and well-coordinated manner.

ABOUT EMSA

The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) is a decentralised agency of the EU, based in Lisbon, Portugal. EMSA serves the EU's maritime interests for a safe, secure, green and competitive maritime sector, delivering value for member states through support for pollution prevention and response, maritime surveillance, safety and security,

digitalisation and the provision of integrated maritime services, and technical assistance.

Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) services are offered free to all EU member states by EMSA. They have been developed to assist in maritime surveillance operations and ship emission monitoring, and can operate in all seas surrounding the European Union. RPAS services can provide support to traditional coast guard functions, including search and rescue and pollution prevention and response. The services are offered to member states individually and as part of EMSA's regional RPAS strategy, which allows multiple coast guard functions in several EU member states to be supported by one or more RPAS services.

FDA APPROVES FIRST SYSTEMIC TREATMENT FOR ALOPECIA AREATA

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Olumiant (baricitinib) oral tablets to treat adult patients with severe alopecia areata, a disorder that often appears as patchy baldness and affects more than 300,000 people in the U.S. each year. Today's action marks the first FDA approval of a systemic treatment (i.e. treats the entire body rather than a specific location) for alopecia areata.

"Access to safe and effective treatment options is crucial for the significant number of Americans affected by severe alopecia," said Kendall Marcus, M.D., director of the Division of Dermatology and Dentistry in the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. "Today's approval will help fulfill a significant unmet need for patients with severe alopecia areata."

Alopecia areata, commonly referred to as just alopecia, is an autoimmune disorder in which the body attacks its own hair follicles, causing hair to fall out, often in clumps. Olumiant is a Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitor which blocks the activity of one or more of a specific family of enzymes, interfering with the pathway that leads to inflammation.



© Brett King/Yale School of Medicine

Before and after images of four participants in a study who received 36 weeks of treatment for severe alopecia areata with the drug Baricitinib

The efficacy and safety of Olumiant in alopecia areata was studied in two randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trials (Trial AA-1 and Trial AA-2) with patients who had at least 50% scalp hair loss as measured by the Severity of Alopecia Tool for more than six months. Patients in these trials received either a placebo, 2 milligrams of

Olumiant, or 4 milligrams of Olumiant every day. The primary measurement of efficacy for both trials was the proportion of patients who achieved at least 80% scalp hair coverage at week 36.

In Trial AA-1, 22% of the 184 patients who received 2 milligrams of Olumiant and 35% of the 281 patients who received 4 milligrams of Olumiant achieved adequate scalp hair coverage, compared to 5% of the 189 patients who received a placebo. In Trial AA-2, 17% of the 156 patients who received 2 milligrams of Olumiant and 32% of the 234 patients who received 4 milligrams of Olumiant achieved adequate scalp hair coverage, compared to 3% of the 156 patients who received a placebo.

PRINTING INSECURITY: TACKLING THE THREAT OF 3D PRINTED GUNS IN EUROPE

The International Conference on 3D Printed Firearms gathered over 120 participants from 20 countries

Law enforcement professionals, ballistic experts, forensic scientists, policy makers and academia have gathered this week in The Hague, the Netherlands, for one of the world's biggest platforms of exchange on the threat of 3D printed weapons.



© Europol/europa.eu

The International Conference on 3D Printed Firearms, organised by Europol and the Dutch National Police (Politie) in the framework of EMPACT Firearms and hosted at the University of Leiden, saw some 120 participants from 20 countries address the latest challenges facing law enforcement in their efforts to tackle this threat.

Over the course of two days, the participants explored the fundamental processes required for developing joint intervention strategies in this field, including tactical and forensic research, software, scientific developments and legislation.

Opening the conference, Chief Constable Gerda van Leeuwen at the Dutch National Police (Politie), said:

The development of 3D printing of firearms is a current and future threat. International cooperation therefore is crucial to be able to counter. This conference will focus not only on current state of play, but also on building a strong network of specialists on this topic, creating intervention techniques and sharing best practices.

The team leader of Europol's Analysis Project Weapons and Explosives, Martin van der Meij, added:

The threat posed by 3D printed weapons is very much on the radar of Europol, amid the growing number of such firearms being seized in investigations across Europe in recent years. Such a challenge can only be addressed by combining the expertise, resources and insights of law enforcement, the private sector and academia to get such guns off the streets.

3D printed weapons are no longer a matter of fiction

Back in 2019, two people were shot dead in Halle, Germany, by a perpetrator using a homemade weapon, based on a blueprint downloaded from the internet to partly manufacture the weapon with a 3D printer.

In April 2021, the Spanish National Police (Policía Nacional) raided and dismantled an illegal workshop in the Canary Islands which was producing 3D printed weapons. Two 3D printers were seized, alongside gun parts, a replica assault rifle and several manuals on urban guerrilla warfare and white supremacist literature. The owner of the workshop was arrested and charged with illegal possession of weapons.

A month later, two men and one woman were arrested in the town of Keighley in the United Kingdom as part of an investigation into right-wing terrorism. All three were charged with possessing components of 3D printed weapons.

Conclusions of the conference

- Connection and cooperation between law enforcement and the industry/private sector is needed to identify and monitor the developments around 3D printed firearms;
- An international network of experts on 3D printed firearms will be created, tasked with keeping law enforcement agencies abreast of developments in 3D printed firearms;
- The main policy recommendations of participants and other developments around 3D printed firearms will be put into a factsheet, which will be distributed to partners and policymakers worldwide.

EU AND US FOSTER COOPERATION AGAINST RANSOMWARE ATTACKS

Ransomware has become a global problem that requires cooperation on a worldwide level. Judicial experts and practitioners from the European Union and the United States participated in a two-day workshop in The Hague organised by Eurojust and the U.S. Department of Justice. The event aimed to share best practices and enhance collaboration in confronting ransomware attacks.

The event was opened by Eurojust President, Mr Ladislav Hamran, and Assistant Attorney General Mr Kenneth A. Polite, Jr. of the U.S. Department of Justice's Criminal Division.



Ladislav Hamran

Mr Ladislav Hamran said: *'There is no doubt that the scale, sophistication and impact of ransomware attacks is significant, affecting all sectors of the economy and society at large. We warmly welcome the opportunity to join forces with our US colleagues in combating this form of crime. Through this week's workshop, we are fostering closer cooperation, not only between national authorities, but also between the public and the private sector. I am convinced that this will prove crucial in our efforts to protect our citizens against online and offline threats.'*

Assistant Attorney General Polite said: *'Only by working together with key law enforcement and prosecutorial partners in the EU can we effectively combat the threat that ransomware poses to our society. I am confident that the US-EU ransomware workshop will spur greater coordination and collaboration to address the ransomware threat.'*



Kenneth A. Polite

The workshop, organised by Eurojust and the U.S. Department of Justice, brought together more than 100 prosecutors, law enforcement representatives and experts from the private sector and non-governmental organisations, representing 27 countries. It took place on 15 and 16 June at Eurojust's premises and online.

Participants attended a series of presentations and panel discussions on topics such as transnational cooperation during ransomware investigations, victim remediation, and prosecution of criminal organisations.

Attorneys from the Justice Department's Computer Crime and Intellectual Property Section (CCIPS), representatives from the FBI, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), European Judicial Cybercrime Network, Eurojust's Cybercrime Team and Europol's European Cybercrime Centre shared their experiences, best practices, and lessons learned in directing an investigation to a successful outcome including by collaborating with the tech and

wider private sector. Law enforcement officers also discussed adversaries' tactics and the latest investigative techniques.

Prosecutors additionally discussed relevant changes in the law, including issues related to electronic evidence, charging options, and cross-border considerations. Private sector and non-governmental organisation representatives included the CyberPeace institute, Microsoft and Bitdefender.

THREAT OF SPIES IS INCREASING IN EUROPE

A series of high-profile cases that have recently led to arrests and convictions shows that the threat posed by spies seems to have increased in Europe over the past decade.

"In times of geopolitical tension, the activity of different countries' intelligence organisations increases," says Michael Jonsson, Deputy Research Director at FOI.

Together with analyst Jakob Gustafsson, Michael Jonsson has conducted the study, *Espionage by Europeans 2010–2021*, where they analyse openly known cases of infiltration or insider espionage. Of the 62 individuals involved, 42 were convicted of espionage during the studied period, something that Michael Jonsson himself describes as "the tip of an iceberg."

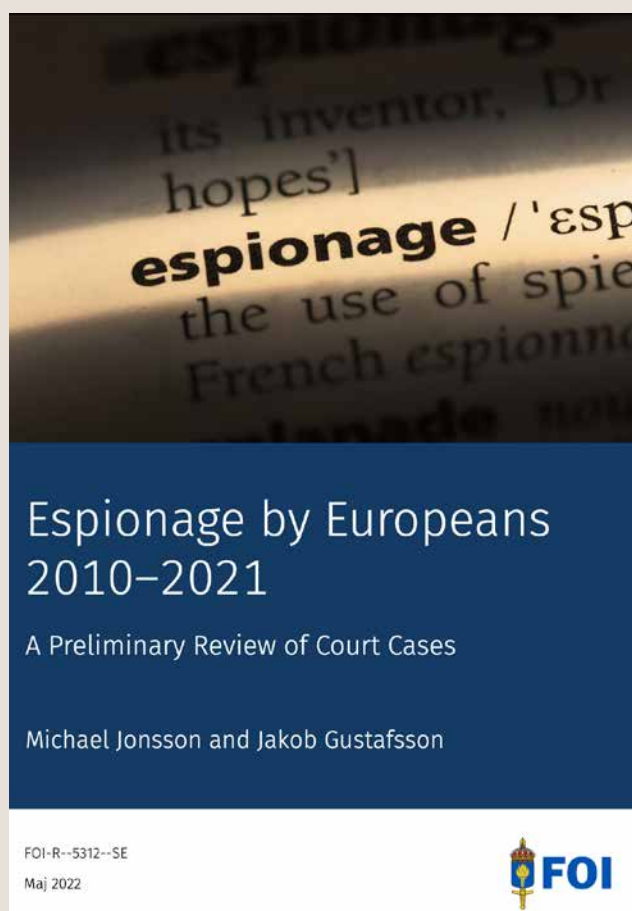
"We have chosen to use open sources, mainly newspaper articles, and focus exclusively on cases that resulted in convictions in court, to avoid the discussion about whether this is really about espionage or not. It's a complex subject. There is very little data and more basic research is needed. This is a narrow selection, but it still provides a relevant picture of the situation."

Russia is behind the vast majority of all spy cases

From the time period in question, there are spectacular examples of operations believed to have been carried out by Russian intelligence services, such as the poison attack in Salisbury, the assassination attempt on a Bulgarian arms dealer and the explosion of weapons stores in the Czech Republic. The new study also shows that Russia is behind the vast majority of all spy cases in Europe.

"It is difficult to describe a typical spy, but in our study, it is clearly a man, with a Baltic background. It is also true that Russia is the absolutely dominant recipient of espionage in Europe. And then there are different types of spies, who we describe in our study as different clusters who engage in espionage," says Michael Jonsson.

One such cluster is men with a background in the military or intelligence services. Another group consists of consultants, researchers or government officials. The researchers also found a group of petty criminal smugglers, in Estonia, who were used as spies. Potential spies can also be recruited from among those who for ideological reasons are "friends of Russia."



“The most valuable spies are probably those who have access to classified material about combat forces, weapons and defense capabilities. But you can also be interesting as a spy if you have information about new research, innovations and new technology,” says Michael Jonsson.

A spy’s life is pretty unglamorous

So, what makes some people take the plunge and become a spy? The study has found some common denominators, such as a feeling of being disadvantaged, either at home or at work, and struggling with financial difficulties.

“These are people who can be a little bitter about their careers, for example if they haven’t been promoted as they’ve expected. There are certain narcissistic traits, and the role of spy makes them feel important and needed. We also saw that several had problems with debts,” says Michael Jonsson.

The recruitment of a new spy often begins cautiously, with the intelligence officer asking for innocuous information that is already available from open sources. Gradually, the demands for information increase and then it can often be difficult to withdraw. The study shows some cases of extortion and threats against relatives when someone tries to withdraw.

“Initially, you also pay for less valuable information, so that the spy gets used to the approach and is incriminated early. The intelligence officer who handles the spy is also very friendly, to build trust. By then, someone who

still wants to withdraw can be blackmailed; we have for example a case of an Estonian spy with a military background who had small children, where his family was implicitly threatened,” says Michael Jonsson.

It is a rather unglamorous picture of the spy life that emerges in the study, and it is not about huge sums of money, either. A study from the US shows that not even the most well-paid spies earned more than a million dollars in total.

“Given the enormous risk-taking it entails and the relatively limited remuneration in relation to the stakes, being a source is not a very good deal. Rather, it is a cynical exploitation of vulnerable individuals. Our study is also about failed spies because they have all been caught.”

When asked if there is no truth in all the spy movies and books involving corrupt women, alcohol and luxury hotels, Michael Jonsson replies that they nevertheless contain a grain of truth.

“For a certain group of spies, mainly the most valued sources, the handover of information often takes place in third countries. That’s when the alcohol, restaurant visits and hotel stays come in. In the case of the Swede who spied on Volvo and Scania, for example, he was arrested in a restaurant and in possession of a large sum of cash,” he says.

War breeds more spies

The study finds that most convicted spies are found in Northern Europe, particularly the Baltics. In this context, Sweden has a vulnerable geographical location. When asked how many spies there may be in Sweden, Michael Jonsson answered that in addition to the one who spied on Scania and Volvo, two more people have been arrested pending trial in a separate case.

“It’s not possible to say for certain, but the Swedish Security Service, SÄPO, estimates that a third of the staff at Russian embassies are usually intelligence officers. That would mean 10–15 people at the Russian embassy in Stockholm.”

Michael Jonsson believes that cases of espionage will continue to increase, not least in light of Russia’s war in Ukraine. History shows that war always produces more spies. For example, during World War II, in neutral Sweden, Stockholm was a tumultuous place for spies. Today, Brussels, with all its international institutions, is probably a similar place.

“This is a threat that we must take seriously! And as the global political situation deteriorates, espionage will only increase. Just in the time since we completed the report, there have been a number of new European cases that are likely to go to trial,” says Michael Jonsson.

Source FOI Sweden



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

www.enisa.europa.eu



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THE DANES HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS

Denmark takes a greater interest in mutual defence

Looking at the world around us we may be tempted to despair; things are going wrong all over the place and in just about every conceivable way. One might be excused for thinking that some things never change. They do, however, and constantly. If you're wondering why, the answer is the angular momentum of the Earth's rotation, as viewed by an observer moving with it (mathematicians put it like this: $\approx 7.2 \times 10^{33} \text{ Kg m}^2\text{s}^{-1}$, whatever that means). Well, that's part of the answer anyway. We're dealing here with angular momentum, the degree to which a body rotates, defined as the product of the moment of inertia ("I") and angular velocity ("ω"). The proper unit for Angular momentum is given as kilogram meters squared per second (kg m²/s). Angular Momentum formula is made use of in computing the angular momentum of the particle and also to find the parameters associated to it.

Wonderful thing, angular momentum.



© Danish Ministry of Defence

Defence Ministers of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden and Foreign Affairs Minister of Iceland in Kirkenes, Norway on 11 May 2022

Or consider entropy, generally regarded as the measure of a closed system's disorder. In this instance, our planet, Earth, can be considered to be a closed thermodynamic system. Earth, having completed the accretion of matter that makes up the body of our planet, and its nuclear-generated energy having (more or less) settled down, will inevitably seek to achieve equilibrium with its surroundings; thus we get an increase in or maximisation of entropy. As the Science Direct website puts it: "Many

focus(ed) on the gloomy picture of increasing disorder and thermal death, characteristic of equilibrium thermodynamics and isolated systems. In this regard, entropy is used to point out and measure the decreasing availability of high quality resources (i.e., resources with low entropy and high free energy), the increase of pollution due to the release of waste, chemicals, and heat into the environment, the increase of social disorder due to degraded conditions of life in megacities all around the world (well worth noting), the 'collapse' of the economy, and so on." What I'm trying to say is that if you look up at the stars on any night, then repeat the exercise on the same spot night after night, you will never look up at the exact same view. Physics dictates that things move on and can never return to the exact same conditions that existed the last time you looked.

There is another way to put it using an expression that is familiar in English, known as 'Murphy's law', which



Boltzmann's grave in the Zentralfriedhof, Vienna, with bust and entropy formula

basically says that “if a thing can go wrong, it will go wrong”. Or, to put it another way, it all comes down to the Second Law of Thermodynamics: “The entropy of any isolated system never decreases. In a natural thermodynamic process, the sum of the entropies of the interacting thermodynamic systems increases.” In Boltzmann’s equation about entropy and the Second Law of Thermodynamics, that comes down to the following mathematical formula: $S = KB \log W$ (or Ω). In case you’re wondering, S is entropy, KB is the Boltzmann constant, (which equals 1.380649×10^{-23} J/K. The W stands for the probability (which in German is *Wahrscheinlichkeit*, hence the W) of a macroscopic state. To put it more simply, things may, if you’re extremely lucky, stay as they are, they will never become less messy and in most cases things will continue to get messier. And looking around our much-troubled world, we can see that is true. From the point of view of Vladimir Putin, things would seem to be getting much messier, Boltzmann notwithstanding, and he is the one responsible. He thought that by threatening other countries they would cave in to his ever-greater demands, but he was wrong. It’s made them take a tougher line instead.



Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen

Denmark has been a member of the European Union since January 1973, having joined at the same time as Britain and Ireland, but it has remained outside the Union’s “Common Defence Policy”, steadfastly clinging to its historical neutrality. Vladimir Putin changed the Danes’ minds by invading Ukraine. In a referendum, two thirds of the people voted to get rid of the opt-out from the policy: 66.9% chose defence over neutrality, which means that Danish officials won’t have to leave the room when their colleagues from other member states discuss defence-related issues. It will also mean that Danish armed forces will be able to participate in EU military operations and exercises. In campaigning for a “yes” vote, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen had told voters it would “strengthen our (Denmark’s) security”. With the outcome clear, Frederiksen said in a speech she gave in the capital, Copenhagen: “When there’s a war on our continent, we can’t be neutral. Maybe this is the biggest ‘yes’ in an EU referendum ever in Denmark.” Perhaps Putin will finally take note: Europe is not intimidated by bluster and threats, nor even by the arrival of his troops and their armoured vehicles. Based on past performance, he’s more likely to ignore it.



Danish Foreign Minister, Jeppe Kofod

Back in 2016, anti-Europeans in the UK were predicting that Denmark would soon follow Britain through the exit door, but instead every region in the UK has said, in a variety of recent polls, that leaving Europe was a huge mistake, leading to higher prices and a shortage of labour and certain goods. The Danes have watched that happening, so the Danish referendum vote should come as no surprise, although Frederiksen admitted to her country’s parliament that many Danes are still opposed to the EU.

She promised no more referenda on Denmark’s other opt-outs from EU treaties, such as the single currency and cooperation on justice affairs. The Danes voted not to join the euro in 2000, choosing instead to keep the krone (DKK) in virtual lock-step with it instead. Denmark’s Foreign Minister, Jeppe Kofod, has admitted to the media that there remain “a series of formal steps before Denmark can be admitted” to the common defence policy but Mette Frederiksen said the results represent “a clear signal” to Putin. As, of course, do the applications of Sweden and Finland to join NATO, whether or not Turkey drops its objections to letting them in. It’s a signal Putin may consider to be rather hostile and unfriendly, but warning people you’re going to harm them if they try to defend themselves would seem to be fairly pointless and clearly a counter-productive exercise. We have to wonder if Putin really has a proper grip on reality and logic.



USS Kearsarge (LHD-3) transits through the Danish Straits and enters the Baltic Sea on May 13, 2022

A BALANCING ACT

So, let’s look more closely at Mette Frederiksen, who was born on November 19th 1977 in Aalborg, making her Denmark’s youngest-ever prime minister. Her father, Flemming Frederiksen, was a typographer and her mother, Anette, was a teacher. She has a daughter, Ida Feline, and a son, Magne, and she also has a master’s degree in African Studies from the University of Copenhagen. She’s a member of the Social Democratic Party, which she has led since 2015. She spent a short spell working for a trade union but most of her life has been lived as a professional full-time politician. When she was elected, she became Denmark’s second female

prime minister, having been a member of the Folketing since 2001. The political group she leads has a great many component parts: her Social Democrats, the Social Liberals, the Socialist People's Party, the Red-Green Alliance, the Faroese Social Democratic Party, and Greenland's Siumut and Inuit Ataqatigiit, all of them left of centre in some way, as well as her minority Social Democratic party, backed by the so-called Red Bloc.



Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and her husband Bo Tengberg

She had partly campaigned on an anti-immigration platform but changed her position briefly to allow more much-needed foreign labour into the country. In a biography, she wrote that: "For me, it is becoming increasingly clear that the price of unregulated globalization, mass immigration, and the free movement of labour is paid for by the lower classes." An internal poll carried out by her party found that 37% of the members (still a minority but a fairly large one) believed Denmark's immigration policy was too weak and should be tightened. It seems that Frederiksen agrees, and it's a view she shares with the right, despite moving further to the left on economic issues. She has called for a cap on "non-western immigrants" and for a law to ensure that immigrants work 37 hours a week in order to qualify for benefits. After some uncertainty, her party voted against plans to hold foreign criminals in an offshore facility used for research into contagious animal diseases and with no bridge to the mainland. In other ways, however, she has earned condemnation from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) for leading her party to join with the minority Liberal

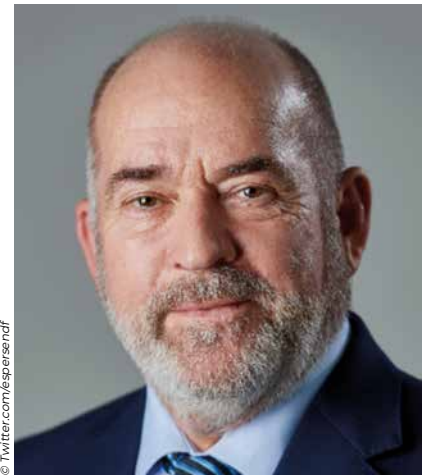
government of the time and to vote in favour of a law allowing her country's authorities to confiscate money, jewellery, and other valuable items from refugees crossing the border into Denmark. They would have been allowed to retain just DKK 10,000 (€1,340), bringing them – arguably – into line with Danish citizens who must sell any assets they own worth more than that before they become entitled to social benefits. After the vote, Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen of the opposition Red-Green Alliance Party described it as "a symbolic move to scare people away from seeking asylum in Denmark." That would appear to have been an astute observation.

In addition, the new law would, in many cases, triple to three years the waiting period for family reunion applications, shorten the duration of temporary residence permits, and tighten conditions for the issuance of permanent permits. The Prime Minister at the time, Lars Lokke Rasmussen of the centre-right Venstre party, shrugged off criticism of the proposals to seize assets, calling them: "the most misunderstood bill in Denmark's history". And arguably the most heavily criticised: "The decision to give Danish police the authority to search and confiscate valuables from asylum seekers sends damaging messages in our view," UNHCR spokesperson Adrian Edwards told reporters, while Amnesty International regional director John Dalhuisen described the vote as "mean spirited". The UNHCR later likened the idea to the treatment of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe.



Former Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen

Frederiksen's party also voted to ban the wearing of burqas and niqabs, which has drawn similar criticism. Denmark is not alone in seeking to restrict the wearing of religious face coverings; there are various but similar laws in place in Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands. In Denmark's case, Muslim women who defy the ban risk a fine of DKK 1,000, (€130) rising to DKK 10,000 (€1,300) for repeat offences and even to 6 months in prison. Frederiksen argues that it liberates Muslim women and promotes gender equality, although it's not clear if Muslim women see it that way (Muslim women I met in Afghanistan many years ago said they would feel less exposed running through the streets naked than removing their niqabs or burqas in public, so perhaps it is the mindset, rather than the choice of clothing, that needs to be addressed). The explanation is widely seen as an excuse, anyway.



Søren Espersen of the Danish People's Party

Søren Espersen of the right-leaning Danish People's Party supports the ban and dismisses what he sees as unnecessary vindications, along with: "all the contortions we have to make in order to avoid 'discrimination'. This is about the burka and niqab and nothing else. Let us just discriminate. I do not give a damn." The ban certainly has Frederiksen's support, although as Justice Minister in 2014 she opposed the idea. Espersen's remarks, however, are unlikely to win over other Social Democrats. Strangely, research by the University of Copenhagen in 2009 found that only around 0.1% - 0.2% of Muslim women in Denmark (that was around 200 individuals at the

time) actually wear the niqab, while even fewer wear the burqa, and only around 5% of Denmark's 5.7-million inhabitants are Muslim anyway. The Religious Freedom Institute wrote that: "Ironically, then, one could say that the first 'problem' with Denmark's new burqa ban is finding a burqa to ban." It would seem that Frederiksen, as Justice Minister back in 2014, when such a ban was first mooted, was right when she said that; "In my opinion, it is out of proportion to start legislating about it." She obviously changed her mind. The official excuse adopted by Venstre and others is to overcome any terrorist threat resulting from people being able to hide their faces. The Religious Freedom Institute suspect that the real reason is so that Venstre can retain the support of the European People's Party in order to remain in power, because: "Denmark is not suffering from a crime spree conducted by groups of burqa-clad Muslim women."

UPSETTING TRUMP

Frederiksen proved herself strong (and certainly less controversial) by standing up to the then President of the United States, Donald Trump, when she refused to sell the autonomous region of Greenland to him. Not that it was hers to sell, of course. Trump had discussed with his aides the possible purchase of the territory, despite Kim Kielsen, the Premier of Greenland, clearly stating that it was not for sale. Frederickson described the whole idea as "absurd", adding that: "Greenland is not Danish. Greenland belongs to Greenland." In a fit of pique, it seems, Trump then cancelled a state visit

scheduled for later that year, blaming the decision on Frederiksen's refusal to talk about selling him Greenland. Caveat emptor, as the saying goes, assuming the caveat part proves possible.

Frederiksen has been highly critical of the EU's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in which opinion she is far from alone, but it helped to cement her reputation as "Denmark's most Eurosceptic Prime Minister", which she has held for years. She has continued to criticise the EU vaccination programme and the EU's general response to the crisis, all very understandable. Her attempt to get mink farmers to cull their animals (in case they were carrying the virus) proved to be less so and was ruled out as "unconstitutional". It must have come as a relief to the mink themselves. In 2021, after talks with Chancellor Sebastian Kurz of Austria and Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu, she agreed a joint programme of research and development with them, together with plans to consider a shared production facility to provide long-term supplies for booster shots against the SARS-CoV-2 virus and to deal with any possible mutations. Denmark under Frederiksen became embroiled in the tension between the United States and Iran after the assassination of the Iranian general, Qasem Soleimani, by US forces. Frederiksen said it was "a really serious situation" and avoided answering questions about the killing. Having disappointed Trump, however, she was not anti-American and initiated talks earlier this year on the possible stationing of US troops on Danish

soil, expressing enthusiasm for the idea. She is reported as saying: "We want a stronger American presence in Europe and Denmark." It could be a good idea. It's being reported that Putin is becoming ever-more paranoid after a recent attempt on his life, which has already deepened his isolation and could make him more inclined to resort to using nuclear weapons. He is said to believe that the West will "blink first" in the ongoing battle of wills.



Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez visiting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on April 22 April

Frederiksen wanted to be a 'prime minister for children', with plans to give local authorities greater powers to remove children from violent households, and to give children a greater say in divorce cases, but global events have slightly knocked her off track. Following Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, Frederiksen called together the country's five main political parties to talk about the available options. The five are: her own, plus the Social Liberal Party, the Socialist People's Party, Venstre and the Conservative People's Party. Together, they came up with what they called the "National Compromise on Danish Security Policy", with a steep increase in defence spending: an emergency allocation of DKK 7-billion for the defence of Denmark (that's €940-million), a plan to end dependence on Russian gas and the referendum on that opt-out from EU defence policy, now clearly won by the side wanting to end the opt-out. Denmark will now move towards stepping up its spending on defence to 2% of GDP by 2033, in accordance with NATO's preferred levels. It means that the spending on defence will increase year-on-year by DKK 18-billion (€2.42-billion).



Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark Mette Frederiksen during the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) 70th anniversary meeting with President Donald J. Trump in 2019



On Thursday, 31 March, following a meeting with Prime Minister of Denmark Mette Frederiksen, Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš welcomed Denmark's commitment to send an additional 800 soldiers to Latvia to strengthen NATO's Eastern flank

Frederiksen said in a speech: "When a freedom threat knocks on Europe's door and there is once again a war on our continent, then we cannot remain neutral." Her people seem to share that view. "We support Ukraine and the people of Ukraine," she said. "Tonight, Denmark has sent a very important message. To our allies, to NATO, to Europe. And we have sent a clear message to Putin." Denmark has also sent 700 soldiers to the Slagelse military base in Western Sjælland to reinforce the country's defences while Danish jet fighters will be sent to the island of Bornholm. Russia advised Denmark against the move but Frederiksen responded by saying: "I can give a very short answer to this. The Russian ambassador should not get involved in what happens on Bornholm." The Danish government wants to leave Putin in no doubt that Denmark will be defended.



Russian President Vladimir Putin and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen

Moscow has expelled Danish diplomats in the inevitable tit-for-tat response to Denmark's expulsion of their Russian counterparts. Russia has also now turned off the gas to Denmark, too, because it refused to pay for it in roubles. The Danish energy

conglomerate, Orsted, reassured customers that it will still be able source natural gas supplies from the European gas market after Gazprom announced that it would turn off the taps. Frederiksen had announced in March that she planned to end her country's reliance on Russian gas and seek Denmark's energy elsewhere. It's that demand for payment in roubles that is the stumbling block, for Denmark and others. "This is totally not acceptable," Frederiksen told a press conference. "This is a kind of blackmailing from Putin. We continue to support Ukraine, and we distance ourselves from the crimes that Putin and Russia commit." Russian state gas giant Gazprom has confirmed that it had stopped gas supplies to Denmark's Ørsted as well as to Shell Energy Europe after the two companies refused to abide by the rule on payments in roubles. The head of the Danish Energy Agency, Kristoffer Böttzauw, told the media: "We still have gas in Denmark, and consumers can still have gas delivered." And if the situation should worsen, he told journalists that he has plans in readiness.

In fact, Denmark has been a net exporter of natural gas for many years, but its Tyra field in the North Sea is being renovated, which means that the country currently has to import about 75% of its gas through Germany. The Tyra field should be able to be reopened in the middle of next year. In Denmark, some 380,000 households use natural gas for heating.

WHY, WHEREFORE AND WOEFUL

The reason the referendum on the defence opt-out was needed stems from the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, when Danish voters demanded four "special arrangements". The signing ceremony was a very grand affair and those of us who were there knew we were witnessing something that was historically important. Denmark opted out of sharing policies with the other EU member states in several areas: defence policy (the opt-out they have now voted to abandon), the single currency (the euro), justice and home affairs, and also insisted that EU citizenship could only ever complement Danish citizenship, never



View of the Tyra platform, Danish North Sea

replace it, a position that became the case for all member states under the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997. Denmark has also held referenda on joining the euro, in which the people rejected the idea, despite political parties and trades unions supporting it. The Danes also voted to retain their country's opt-out on justice and home affairs, against the advice of their government. That has enabled Denmark to follow Britain in doing a deal with the East African country of Rwanda to take its unwanted migrants, even though the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, has condemned the scheme as an "egregious breach of international law" and "contrary to the letter and spirit of the Refugee Convention".



UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi

Such criticism hasn't had any effect on the United Kingdom, where Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his Foreign Secretary, Priti Patel, have agreed to pay the Rwandan government £120-million (€140-million) to accept Britain's "rejects", which leaves many in the UK feeling vaguely ashamed. It looks like buying a solution (or trying to) that is no solution at all, or certainly not for those in desperate need of help.

Putin seems to be achieving the exact reverse of what he wanted at the outset of his war: he wanted Ukraine to become a part of Russia, despite he himself being hated by most Ukrainians (Kyiv's street markets have been selling rolls of lavatory paper with pictures of his face on the sheets for years), he despises the EU but has helped to make it more unified that it was.

He wanted to warn NATO to stay clear of Russia's borders but has attracted other neighbouring countries to seek membership, expanding NATO's footprint. Now non-military Denmark has joined the EU's Common Defence Policy but it had already announced its readiness to help with arming Ukraine.



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg praising Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen for Denmark's strong contributions to NATO during a visit to Copenhagen in November 2021

"I am ready to send military equipment to Ukraine," Frederiksen told a press conference. "We are already giving advice." Denmark has been helping Ukraine with cyber security since January following a cyber attack that Kyiv blamed on Moscow. The EU has also agreed to ban some 66% of Russia's oil imports, which will hit Moscow's revenue stream quite substantially. Most EU leaders had been hoping for a larger-scale ban, but Hungary refused to cooperate, citing the country's reliance on Russian energy. The real reason, however, may lie in the close relationship between two anti-liberal leaders: Viktor Orbán and Vladimir Putin. They are friends who think alike on a lot of issues. Orbán even broke the isolation imposed on Putin following his annexation of Crimea, which did not please his EU partners. He accuses them of depicting Putin as having "hooves and horns" when he rules what is (according to Orbán) "a great and ancient empire". Orbán also

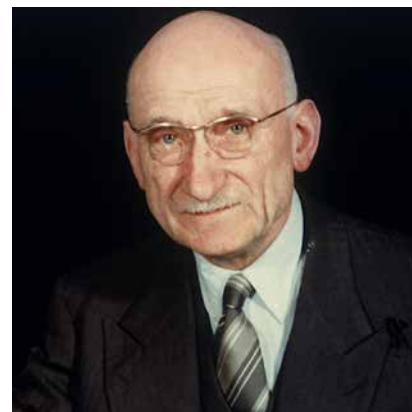
copied Putin's techniques for despotic rule, taking over all media outlets to ensure all news reports about him are positive, and also gathering around himself wealthy oligarchs who view power as little more than a route to greater wealth. Then, in 2014, Orbán's government awarded a €12.5-million contract to renovate Hungary's only nuclear power station, Paks, to the Russian state-owned corporation, Rosatom.

In fact, thanks to Orbán, Hungary is very much in hock to Moscow, even though more than 80% of its own exports go to its EU neighbours. Russia supplies 57% of its natural gas and 89% of its oil, and Orbán has upheld Russia – under Putin – as a positive example of an "illiberal democracy". Orbán sees the notion of illiberal democracy as the way forward, presumably because it means he'll be free to run his country as he chooses without any checks or balances and without reference to anyone else, like a mediæval monarch. Orbán thinks we should get used to them because they're growing in number and thinks they're the future for Europe. Fareed Zakaria, Managing Editor of 'Foreign Affairs', defines illiberal democracies as "democratically elected regimes often re-elected or reinforced by referendums that ignore the constitutional limits of their power and deprive their citizens of basic rights and liberties." He fears they're on the increase, citing the examples not only of Hungary but also of Poland, Slovakia and Croatia, not to mention Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Some have included Donald Trump as a leader who would favour an 'illiberal democracy' if he could achieve one.



Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Oban

Certainly, Budapest's goals are not those of the EU's founders. Hungary's alternative vision of illiberal democracy comprises order, press control, the importance of family, observance of religion, the cult of the homeland, a 'mythification' of the past (in other words, telling lies about it so it seems more glorious than it was), and even the re-establishment of the death penalty, which Orbán considered putting on the agenda in May 2015. It's a million miles away from the statement by Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, first spoken in the Salon de l'Horloge at the Quai d'Orsay in Paris.



Former French prime minister and minister of foreign affairs Robert Schuman (1886-1963) is mostly known for his famous declaration dated 9 May 1950. He proposed the political and economic integration of Western Europe which resulted in the creation of the European Economic Community, and later the European Union

He was the co-founder of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) that would one day evolve into the EU, believing that if control over coal and steel – what he called "the engines of war" – were put under common control there could never be another war. That was back in the days of politicians with vision, who seem to be in rather short supply these days. Schuman was speaking not long after the Second World War, shortly after adopting the plan for Europe dreamed up by the ECSC's co-founder, Jean Monnet, the French entrepreneur, diplomat, financier, administrator, and political visionary. "World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it," Schuman said. "The contribution which an organized and living Europe can bring to civilization is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations." Note: we're

talking about “civilisation” here, not a “devil-take-the-hindmost” dash for power for its own sake, which seems to be the aim of illiberal democracy’s proponents. Therein lies the difference between illiberal democracy and Schuman’s dreams of building a lasting peace.

ILLIBERALISM ON THE RISE

The European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) has warned of growing tension between EU standards, along with the Union’s way of ruling, with the beliefs of those who want illiberal democracy. “The Europe of rules, principles, and procedures is clashing head-on with the political Europe of strongmen who use raw power and codes of honour. It is a dirty but fundamental fight,” it said. It’s worth noting, too, that what these strongmen call “honour” is, in reality, a secession, a total abdication to the strongmen’s will. It would be the end of compassion, debate, and consideration for others. Nobody discusses policy; the strongman (or woman) simply imposes his (or hers).

Orbán sees himself as offering a ‘Christian’ way of governing (so does Putin, theoretically), although you may not recognise it as that and nor may most Christians, I would guess. Basically, it comes down to rule by bullying. That is something Mette Frederiksen does not want to see. During a recent visit by the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, Frederiksen urged him to try to stop the war in Ukraine by putting pressure on Putin. It’s unlikely to have much effect; India chose to remain neutral, earning plaudits from Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who praised



Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė (right) with Prime Minister of Denmark Mette Frederiksen, and President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola (left) during their discussions about support for Ukraine, the security situation in Europe, and the need to take joint decisions

India for judging “the situation in its entirety, not just in a one-sided way.” Frederiksen blames Europe in part for not getting close enough to India. “In fact, it is quite obvious that we in the West,” she told journalists, “have a completely unequivocal interest in getting India as close to us as at all possible.”

Meanwhile, Russia continues its unjustified attack on Ukraine. It has attacked a railway in the west of the country, using cruise missiles. CNN reports that the strikes occurred close to the Beskyd tunnel in the Carpathian mountains, not far from the border with Slovakia. It’s the second time that Russian forces have targeted the line. According to the report, the goal was to: “disrupt rail traffic and stop the supply of fuel and weapons from our allies.” Frederiksen, meeting in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, with its Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė, agreed that more sanctions are needed against Russia and against Belarus. We tend to forget Belarus and its rôle in Putin’s war, but it carries on, like a small but vicious dog biting

the enemies of its owner’s best friend. Belarus recently redirected a Ryan Air flight to Minsk, seized Russian student Sofia Sapega and her journalist boyfriend and has now sentenced her to six years in prison for stirring up dissent. That’s the sort of thing that an illiberal democracy can lead to. Forget justice; the convenience of the leader is all that matters.

You will recall that I started with the mathematical formulae for entropy and the inevitability of disorder. Putin and his odd supporters, including Orbán, should perhaps recall that there is also an inevitability about decay. It’s not only disorder that is unavoidable, it’s everything. Exponential decay can measure the way that amounts (and power, presumably) decline by a series of set percentages in accordance with a well-known mathematical formula: $y = a(1 - r)^x$. In this equation, a is the initial amount of something, r represents the decay factor and x is the time interval. Given the recent attack on Putin at home, his time may be shorter than he hopes. Even Orbán, despite his recent election victory (his opponents and critics say the result was fraudulent, but that’s an acceptable route to power in an illiberal democracy) may not be unassailable. It all comes down to maths at the end, and the question of how long a leader will stay in power, with an answer somewhere between 0 (zero) and a higher number, but not even the most deranged and optimistic politician will ever reach infinity (∞).



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Russian President Vladimir Putin

Jim Gibbons



© Nif

Iranian Sejil MRBM Launch

IRAN EVER CLOSER TO THE NUCLEAR THRESHOLD

War rages in Ukraine, but the Middle East remains true to itself – constantly close to boiling point.

And a question continues to haunt military chiefs of staff, diplomats, and politicians around the world: is the Islamic Republic of Iran "on the threshold" of nuclear power?

It is thought that the country could be able - in a matter of months - to have access to enough enriched uranium for the dreaded nuclear warhead.

In principle, the United States, China, Russia, and the European Union are, in this matter, on the same wavelength. All are convinced of an urgent need: to bring to a successful conclusion the negotiations underway in Vienna to prevent Tehran from crossing this "threshold".

In return for the lifting of sanctions, the Islamic Republic would accept the close monitoring and supervision of its nuclear activities by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

But the war in Ukraine certainly seems to have complicated the situation. *"These things have nothing to do with each other,"* US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken affirmed to CBS recently. However, this is far from certain.

In the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, Iran and its Arab allies – the

Lebanese Hezbollah, the Syrian regime, Yemeni Houthis, and Iraqi militias – have lined up behind Moscow.

As for China, it has established a "strategic partnership" with the Islamic Republic, laying the foundations for close bilateral cooperation. Some even speak of a Moscow-Beijing-Tehran axis. Iran seems far from isolated.

But the Islamic Republic is, once again, challenged from within. It faces a wave of anger, that in many cities, is bringing to the streets an exhausted population, worn down by a dire economic situation - a by-product of gross mismanagement, Western sanctions, and the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the price of food and other basic necessities.

Inflation hovers around the 40% mark, and it is estimated that 33% of Iranians are now living below the poverty line. The middle class is being gradually

wiped out. To these recurring revolts, the regime – a theocracy dominated by its military branch, the Revolutionary Guards – always counters with the same response... ruthless repression.

A MATTER OF GRAVE INTERNATIONAL CONCERN

In May 2018, then-US president Donald Trump pushed for the unilateral abrogation by the United States of a previous agreement concluded between Iran and the international community in Vienna in 2015, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Although the United States then gradually tightened its sanctions against Iran as part of its "maximum pressure strategy", Tehran was effectively released from its obligations of abiding by the terms of the signed agreement.



© White House / Joyce N. Boghosian

President Trump at the White House in 2018

The unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the Agreement did not, however, lead to the reinstatement of the UN sanctions which had been lifted in accordance with resolution 2231, despite the American attempt at a "snapback" in August 2020, which was thwarted by the fact that the United States was no longer a participant in the Agreement.

However, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany, known as the E3/EU, continued to respect all their commitments under the JCPOA despite the American withdrawal; they maintained the suspension of all European sanctions which had been lifted in January 2016 pursuant to the agreement.

They also undertook additional efforts to preserve the JCPOA with the creation of INSTEX in January 2019. The 'Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges' was a special-purpose mechanism with the aim of facilitating non-US dollar and non-SWIFT bank transactions - without breaking US sanctions - between European Union countries and Iran, in humanitarian sectors considered most essential for the Iranian population.

© Wikicommons/Hossein Heidarpoor
Former Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi in Bushehr Nuclear Plant in 2015

However, since 2019, Iran has taken a number of nuclear measures in violation of its commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which have seriously called into question the benefits of this agreement in terms of non-proliferation.

© INB
Centrifuge cascade at the Natanz Uranium Enrichment Facility, April 17, 2021

The International Atomic Energy Agency has indeed been reporting since July 1, 2019, that Iran has successively exceeded both the authorised limit for its low-enriched uranium stockpile and the enrichment rate authorised by the agreement, freed itself from research and development constraints, resumed enrichment activities at the Fordo site, before exonerating itself from the last operational component of the limitations from January 2020.

Iran is now accumulating up to 60% enriched uranium and has started production of uranium metal, two activities that are key steps in the development of a nuclear weapon and are not justified by any credible civilian need.

At the same time, Iran substantially reduced the access of the International Atomic Energy Agency from February 23, 2021, by ceasing to apply both the verification and monitoring measures provided for by the JCPOA and the Additional Protocol to its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement concluded with the IAEA.

ENTERING DANGEROUS, UNCHARTED WATERS

It was following what Tehran called "an act of sabotage" on its nuclear facility at Natanz in April 2021, that then-president Hassan Rouhani announced the launching of new IR-6 centrifuges and the enrichment of uranium to a level of 60%.

The Natanz nuclear plant suffered a massive power outage that was attributed to Israeli agents. "The fact that we announced today that we will activate the IR-6 centrifuges in Natanz or increase enrichment to 60% is the answer to your malice," he told the cabinet, referring to Israel. "You cannot plot against the Iranian nation and commit crimes in Natanz," he said, promising, "We will respond to them".

Furthermore, the country will install an additional 1,000 centrifuges in Natanz with a 50% higher enrichment capacity, added the man who is leading Iranian negotiators at the Vienna talks with representatives from the UK, China, France, Russia, and Germany.

IR-6 centrifuges spin uranium 10 times as fast as the first-generation centrifuges that Iran was once limited to under its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. As of February 2021, Iran already had been spinning a cascade of IR-6s at its underground facility at Fordo, according to the IAEA.

Barely 24 hours after Iran's announcement, the governments of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom (the E3) voiced their grave concerns regarding the new levels of enrichment, using advanced centrifuges as Iran communicated to the IAEA. They emphasised that this is a serious development since the production of highly enriched uranium constitutes an important step in the production of a nuclear weapon. Iran has no credible civilian need for enrichment at this level.



On the National Day of Nuclear Technology, Iran's president visited the exhibition of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran (AEOI) to see the new achievements of Iranian scientists in the field of peaceful nuclear activities

They also expressed their concern at the news that Iran plans to install 1000 additional centrifuges at Natanz, which will significantly increase its enrichment capacity. Iran's announcements were particularly regrettable given they come at a time when all JCPOA participants and the United States have started substantive discussions, with the objective of finding a rapid diplomatic solution to revitalise and restore the JCPOA. Iran's dangerous recent communication is contrary to the constructive spirit and good faith of these discussions.

In light of recent developments, all the participants rejected escalatory measures by any actor and called upon Iran not to further complicate the diplomatic process.

Iran is in fact, expected to reach a new dangerous, destabilising threshold, having enough highly enriched uranium (HEU) to fashion a nuclear explosive, about 40-42 kilograms (kg) of 60 percent enriched uranium.

With this quantity, an enrichment level of 60 percent suffices to create a relatively compact nuclear explosive; further enrichment to 80 or 90 percent is not needed. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, 41.7 kg of 60 percent enriched uranium (uranium mass) is a significant quantity, which the IAEA defines as the "approximate amount of nuclear material for which the possibility of manufacturing a nuclear explosive cannot be excluded".

A common fallacy is Iran would require 90 percent HEU, more commonly called weapon-grade uranium, to build nuclear explosives. Although Iran's nuclear weapons designs have focused on 90 percent HEU and probably prefer that level of enrichment, modifying

them for 60 percent HEU would be straightforward and well within Iran's capabilities.

Historically, the term highly enriched uranium was developed in the nuclear-weapon states to distinguish between enriched uranium able to fuel a practical nuclear weapon versus enriched uranium, labeled low enriched uranium, unable to do so.

Their cut-off is at 20 percent enriched uranium. At the least, a device made from 60 percent HEU would be suitable for underground nuclear testing or delivery by a crude delivery system such as an aircraft, shipping container, or truck, sufficient to establish Iran as a nuclear power.

INTENSIVE DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

The arrival in January 2021 of a new US administration in favour of a return of the United States to the JCPOA marked an important turning point for our efforts to preserve the agreement.

US President Joe Biden has been very clear from the outset of his term in favour of negotiations aimed at the return of the United States as a participant in the agreement, as soon as Iran also returns to full implementation and of its nuclear commitments under the agreement.

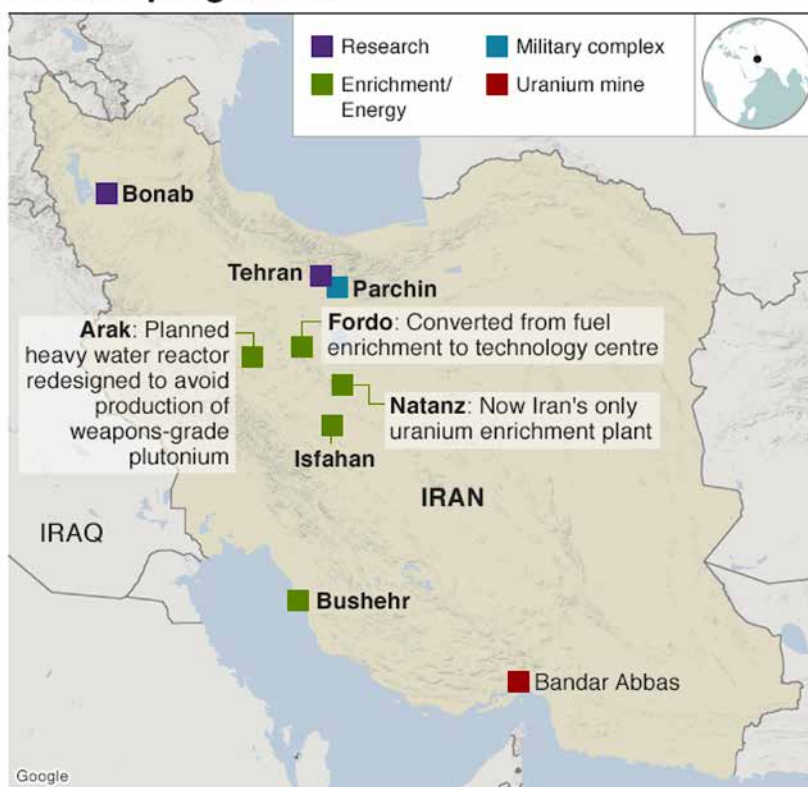
In this new context, negotiations for the rapid return of the United States to the JCPOA and of Iran to the full implementation of its nuclear commitments under this agreement began on April 2, 2021.

They are taking place between the countries participating in the JCPOA, that is, the European Union E3 (France, the United Kingdom, Germany), Russia, and China, and indirectly, with the United States, under the coordination of the European External Action Service (EEAS).

The working sessions were temporarily suspended between June 20 and November 29, 2021, pending the establishment in Iran of a new administration, following the election of hardline president Ebrahim Raisi.

These negotiations have continued almost without interruption in Vienna since that date.

Changes agreed under Iran deal to limit nuclear programme





Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi

The objective for the European E3 partners, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany is clear. To put an end to Iran's serious nuclear violations, some of which have irreversible proliferation consequences, and restore the non-proliferation benefits of the agreement, fully restore the IAEA's monitoring and verification capabilities in Iran provided for in the JCPOA, and lift US sanctions, contrary to the JCPOA in key sectors for Iran, with the prospect of significant economic benefits for the Iranian people.

HOW HAS THE EUROPEAN UNION PERFORMED?

Efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the dispute about Iran's nuclear programme are the most ambitious and high-profile action taken by the European Union to date in the field of non-proliferation. Over 10 years of engagement, the EU has played an important role in preventing a military escalation of the conflict.

Even though the context of European engagement changed significantly, the EU and the E3 (France, Germany, and the United Kingdom) have consistently promoted a non-military solution to the conflict on the basis of improved, though fluctuating Iranian guarantees about the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme.

The EU has also brought the USA closer to its dual-track approach and thus avoided a repetition of the transatlantic split after the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq.

In dealing with Iran, the EU has revised its policy of 'effective multilateralism', as described in the 2003 European Security Strategy, and as the conflict over Iran's nuclear programme unfolded, the EU and the E3 focused more on maximising tactical advantages in direct negotiations with Iran, rather than on a diplomatic initiative that would comprehensively address Iranian concerns and interests.

In the short term, the EU might try to capitalise on new opportunities for finding a way out of the deadlock over Iran's nuclear programme by defining what a final deal could look like and outlining steps toward such an agreement.

THE THREAT PERSISTS

On 30 and 31 October 2021, leaders of the G20 group of nations met for a two-day summit hosted by the Italian G20 presidency in Rome. The European Union was represented

by Charles Michel, President of the European Council, and Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission.

In the face of what continues to be perceived as a persistent threat, the following common declaration was adopted by the leaders of the European E3 and the United States at the close of the meeting, "We express our determination to ensure that Iran can never build or acquire a nuclear weapon, and our deep and growing concern at the accelerating pace of Iran's provocative nuclear activities, such as the production of highly enriched uranium and enriched uranium metal, despite the fact that Iran has suspended negotiations on its return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) since June. There is no credible civilian need in Iran to conduct these activities, but both are important for the production of a nuclear weapon."



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, Deputy Secretary of State Antony "Tony" Blinken, and Ben walk down the hall as they make their final rounds at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., on January 17, 2017



The ministers of foreign affairs and other officials from the P5+1 countries, the European Union and Iran at the announcement of the framework of a Comprehensive agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme. Hailong Wu of China, Laurent Fabius of France, Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany, Federica Mogherini of the European Union, Javad Zarif of Iran, an unidentified official of Russia, Philip Hammond of the United Kingdom and John Kerry of the United States in Lausanne, Switzerland on 2 April 2015

These measures are particularly troubling because Iran has at the same time reduced its cooperation with and transparency towards the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We agree that Iran's continued nuclear progress and the obstacles it imposes on the IAEA's work will undermine the possibility of a return to the JCPOA."

The current situation underscores the need for a negotiated solution that brings Iran and the United States back

into compliance with the JCPOA and lays the groundwork for a continued diplomatic dialogue to address other issues of concern to the E3, the United States, and Iran. President Biden's clear expression of his desire to see the United States return to compliance with the JCPOA, and continue to do so as long as Iran does so was naturally very welcome.

A return to the JCPOA will effectively allow for a lifting of sanctions that will have a lasting impact on Iran's economic growth. This, of course, will only be possible if Tehran changes its course. And it is for Iran's leaders to seize this opportunity and resume a good faith effort to bring the ongoing negotiations to a successful conclusion as a matter of urgency. This seems to be the only sure way of avoiding a dangerous escalation, which is in the interest of no country.

HOPES ARE DASHED YET AGAIN

On 9 June 2022, the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) adopted by a large majority, a resolution formally calling Iran to order for its lack of cooperation. The text, submitted by the United States and the E3 (United Kingdom, France, and Germany), is the first reprimand against Tehran voted on by the UN agency since June 2020, against a backdrop of the escalation of the Iranian nuclear programme and the deadlock in negotiations to resuscitate the 2015 agreement. The resolution was approved by thirty members of the board of governors, with only Russia and China voting against it. Three countries also abstained (India, Libya, and Pakistan).



Mohammad Eslami, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation (AEIO)



IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi delivers his remarks at the opening of the Board of Governors meeting June 6 at the Agency headquarters in Vienna, Austria

The resolution urges Iran to “comply with its legal obligations” and to “cooperate” with the IAEA, which in a recent report, deplored the absence of “technically credible” answers concerning traces of enriched uranium found at three undeclared sites. Of symbolic significance at this stage, the resolution may be the prelude to the transfer of the dispute to the United Nations Security Council, which is empowered to impose sanctions.

“Iran has no hidden nuclear activities or unreported sites,” Mohammad Eslami, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation (AEIO), said following the announcement, accusing Western nations of wanting to “keep maximum pressure with this political resolution”. In response, the Islamic Republic began disconnecting 27 surveillance cameras as well as the online enrichment monitors (OLEMs) on nuclear sites in the country, according to a statement from the IAEA.

For Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General of the IAEA, this action could deal a “fatal blow” to the nuclear agreement concluded in 2015. Mr. Grossi had previously warned that without the cameras, Iran could manufacture centrifuges and divert them to unknown locations. For its part, the Iranian government did not immediately admit that it was removing the 27 cameras, although it had previously threatened to take tougher action. State media aired footage showing workers unplugging two IAEA cameras one day after the announcement of the resolution.

In addition to disabling the cameras, Iran has informed the IAEA of the installation of two new cascades of

advanced centrifuges on the Natanz site, thus significantly strengthening its uranium enrichment capacity. The IAEA can continue inspections and still has 40 cameras on-site, but this new move by Tehran results in “less transparency, more doubts,” Grossi explained. He called on Iran to resume dialogue once “the emotion subsided”.

“We hope they will come to their senses and respond to Iran's cooperation with cooperation,” Behrouz Kamalvandi, a spokesman for Iran's nuclear program, said of the IAEA officials. *“It is not acceptable for them to show inappropriate behaviour while Iran continues to cooperate.”*

FROM DIPLOMATIC HOPE TO FURTHER ESCALATION

Clearly, Tehran's policy of blowing hot and cold on these sensitive nuclear issues, not to mention the recent disconnection of surveillance cameras, have revived the gravest concerns of the IAEA, the European E3 and the United States. Talks for a new Iranian nuclear deal that seemed to be on the way to success a few months ago are now paralysed.

After months of indirect negotiations in Vienna, via European mediation, a text was indeed about to be signed. It was to allow the partial lifting of US sanctions and a return of Iran to the spirit of the 2015 JCPOA agreement.

The unilateral withdrawal of the US and the return of sanctions, aggravating the poverty of Iranian society have discredited this agreement, concluded in 2015 by the so-called ‘moderates’, including former President Hassan Rouhani.



IAEA safeguards inspectors checking nuclear material at a research reactor facility

© D. Calinau/IAEA

A consequence of the US withdrawal was the triumph of the most conservative fringes of the Iranian political class in the legislative elections of 2020, followed by the presidential election of 2021.

Deprived of its American sponsor and its Iranian signatories, the agreement survived with difficulty until 2021 and the arrival of Democrat Joe Biden who was determined to resuscitate the agreement.

How, then, can one explain the current impasse? For one thing, Iran has meanwhile set a new condition: the removal of the Revolutionary Guards, the elite corps of the Iranian army, from the American list of "terrorist organisations". A request to which the American envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, responded at the end of March 2022 with a categorical refusal, "including in the event of an agreement", he hastened to add.

Placing the Revolutionary Guards on the list of terrorist organisations was a decision taken by Donald Trump in 2019, with a view to exercising a

'policy of maximum pressure' against the Iranian regime. However, this measure was, at the time, clearly aiming to pressurise Tehran, in the hope of renegotiating a tougher agreement with Iran.

The Islamic Republic is ruled by the ultra hardliners, and those called the Revolutionary Guards constitute the core of the power structure. To be placed on the list of terrorist organisations by Washington is unacceptable for the ruling elite and its supporters ; it is a question of both ideology and national pride.

For the United States, the question of the Revolutionary Guards is more of a domestic political issue. President Joe Biden and the Democrats are in a somewhat uncomfortable position as the midterm elections approach, and the idea of being tough on Iran is an electoral selling point.

But in Europe the feeling seems to be that the priority for Washington should be the issue of collective security represented by the closure of the Iranian nuclear file.

The current escalation risks leading one of the parties to go too far, which will bring us into a period of tensions even higher than those caused by Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine.

TWO POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS

US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken warned that the latest "provocations" by Tehran risked leading to "an aggravated nuclear crisis" and "increased economic and political isolation of Iran". But at the

same time, he left the door open to diplomacy, saying he still wanted to save the nuclear deal. At this stage, its relaunch would still respond "strongly to the national security interests" of the United States, it was explained in his entourage.

According to certain experts, things can go in two different directions: the latest tensions can either push Tehran and Washington to go for the compromise that is on the table, or on the contrary, cause another cycle of escalation that will only get worse.



Iranian Zolfaghar missile

© Wikimedia/Flashim News

But the the E3 and the EU can play a prominent role in fostering an agreement. Europe's most important role has been to caution against the consequences of a military strike against Iran's nuclear programme. This needs to remain a clear priority for the EU. Based on the history of negotiations, however, the E3+3 should go further in defining what a final deal could look like, and provide leadership by outlining steps toward such an agreement.

The EU has been consistently keen to frame the conflict over Iran's nuclear programme in a regional context. The EU has tried hard to be an honest broker to prepare a conference on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction that was planned for as long ago as 2012.

Despite the decision to postpone that meeting, the idea of creating a WMD-free zone in the Middle East remains probably one of the best opportunities to address many of the divergent interests that make a resolution of the conflict over Iran's nuclear programme so difficult.



Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

Hossein Sadre

EPIONE

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Patriarch Kirill

THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE TO DEATH

Bishop Kirill glorifies Russia's blood-soaked journey of slaughter through Ukraine

“Then Jesus said unto His disciples, ‘Verily I say to you, it is extremely difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.’” (St. Matthew Chapter 19, verse 24, of my Oxford University Press Bible, printed in 1860 and in such a tiny typeface that I need a magnifying glass just to read it). It’s a well-known quote from Jesus, supposedly spoken not long before his arrest and execution, when he was advising a rich young man to give away his wealth and become one of his – Jesus’, that is – followers, if he wanted to get into Heaven. Needless to say, the young man was very disappointed with this advice and, according to the Christian Bible, “went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.” It’s doubtful if he had as many, in comparable terms, as today’s Russian Patriarch, Kirill I, leader of the Russian Orthodox Church. If Kirill had

any problems getting his camel through the eye of a needle, he would only have to telephone his close pal, Vladimir Putin, who would no doubt send troops along to blast a larger hole through the needle and probably to slaughter and carve up the camel to punish it for being difficult. In fact, I think it could be argued that Kirill is not much of a good example of Christian living to encourage others to emulate him, although many might envy him his great wealth and his luxurious dacha next door to Putin’s beside the Black Sea, along with his many, many other homes and possessions. His birth name is Vladimir Gundjaev and people often refer to him and his mighty mentor as “the two Vladimirs of St. Petersburg”.

We could look at what the Qur’an has to say about wealth, too. “Zakat” – the giving of alms by the rich to the poor – is one of Islam’s “Five Pillars”, reducing the gap between rich and poor, but also reducing the need for usury, which is

seen as a sin. The Prophet Muhammad stated that a man’s wealth would not be diminished by Zakat, because it would lead to Allah rewarding his generosity, purifying the souls of rich people by making them less stingy and mean but also purifying the souls of the poor, who might otherwise be envious and grow to hate their richer neighbours.



Patriarch Kirill and Russian President Vladimir Putin

Note: no camels were involved in this statement. According to the Qur'an (57:10) "Those who spend in charity will be richly rewarded." Later in the same chapter, the Qur'an says: "Verily, those who give Sadaqat, men and women, and lend to Allah a goodly loan, it shall be increased manifold, and theirs shall be an honourable good reward." That means Paradise, of course; up to a point, it seems you can buy your own ticket. So, looking at the world's great religions, they are unanimously opposed to people building up wealth for themselves and very much in favour of being generous towards those who are less well-off. We must assume, I guess, that Kirill has read his Bible (perhaps not the Qur'an) so he must know that wealth is not normally a route to Heaven, although it is, of course, a route to luxury and comfort, which is, perhaps, what he wants.



© Colasch/teletyphod

Former priest Dmitry Sverdlov

Kirill, like Putin, is unlikely to pay much heed to the views of Americans, but the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent and bipartisan body, set up to advise the US Congress and the Federal Government on issues involving freedom of religion, has warned that "there could be egregious religious freedom violations if Russia is successful in taking over Ukraine." Kirill, on the other hand, has described Putin's presidency as "a miracle of god", and has said that Putin has corrected Russia's "historically wrong path," holding special prayer sessions to mark Putin's election. Kirill has also made changes to the way in which the Church is run, not all of them popular. Provincial clergy claim he has bureaucratized it, too, whilst severely increasing church taxes. Kirill's position has come under particular criticism from Dmitry Sverdlov, a former priest

who fell out with his church after Kirill's tough line with the Pussy Riot all-girl punk group for staging a protest song inside the Cathedral.

The three members performed a number in the most sacred part of Moscow's Christ the Saviour Cathedral, with words that included a call for the Virgin Mary to "chase Putin out". They were arrested and charged with hooliganism, for which they were sentenced to two years in prison. Kirill seems to have strong views about women generally and described the idea of Western churches allowing women into the priesthood as a sign of "moral degradation". On the other hand, his taxation of the churches under his overall administration is proving very difficult for churches in poor areas. "And nobody knows where the money goes," Sverdlov says. It's not the only thing Sverdlov has said in criticism of the Russian Orthodox Church's top man. "He was skiing in the Alps long before the current political elite ever set foot outside Russia," he told *The Moscow Times*, although Kirill later claimed that his experience in the West was what convinced him that Russia's way was best. Even so, the *Moscow Times* reported a different side of the man. "He earned the reputation of a liberal pseudo-Catholic," the article says. "He was a zapadnik (pro-Westerner) to them," according to church expert Ksenia Luchenko. Sverdlov agreed: "The traditionalists inside the Orthodox church do not tolerate any ties with Western Christians. They saw him as a traitor." As for the suffering Ukrainians, according to Kirill they don't exist. "There are no Ukrainians," he assured a congregation, "only peoples of Holy Russia." He's clearly no diplomat, then, nor much of a geographer.



© Evgenia Kokareva

Ksenia Luchenko

TO THOSE WHO HAVE A LOT, MORE WILL BE GIVEN

One thing is certain: Kirill is a very rich man. It's been estimated that the assets he controls are worth \$1.5-billion (€1.4-billion) but two years after this was published, researchers at *Moskovskiye Novosti* reckoned that Kirill's wealth could be as much as \$4-billion (€3.8-billion). He sees the Russian church's wealth as a sign that it has God's favour (presumably he thinks he has, too). He made the comparison with Roman Catholic Spain, whose most luxurious properties are being snapped up by Russian oligarchs. Many churchgoers in Ukraine are worried that Putin's territorial kleptocracy, eagerly supported by Kirill, will diminish their own churches. It was in 2018 that the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, the theoretical leader of the world's 300-million Orthodox followers, recognised the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as independent, which would mean it no longer falls within Kirill's remit. But, as we know, Kirill denies the existence of Ukraine and Ukrainians. He also condemns "a world of excess consumption", which seems ironic.



© Facebook

Mariupol, Ukraine

The principle of a "holy war" died out centuries ago when the Crusaders gave up trying to recapture the Holy Land, but Kirill believes that Russia's war in Ukraine is not only justified but that it's not really a war at all. It is a policing operation, apparently, to correct those Nazi Ukrainians and restore order. Kirill would not want anything to threaten his wealth and position, so the fact that the European Commission proposed for the first time in its existence to impose sanctions on a religious authority – Kirill and his church – must have disturbed him a little.

The plan was blocked by Putin's pal, Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister of Hungary, who claimed it was an attack on freedom of religion, although Orbán does seem to enjoy thwarting EU plans generally. Kirill had been listed in the sixth package of punitive measures that Brussels had put forward in response, not only to the unjustified war but to Patriarch Kirill's comments, including: "We do not want to fight anyone. Russia has not attacked anyone." The former inhabitants of such places as Kharkov and Mariupol might not see it that way. But Kirill went further. "It is astonishing that a great and powerful country has never attacked anyone, but only defended its borders. May God grant that by the end of this century, our country will be like this: strong, powerful and at the same time loved by God," he said. And what would God have to say about that? According to Proverbs, Chapter 6, verses 16 to 19: "These six things doth the Lord hate, yea seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." On the face of it, the only one of those that Kirill seems not to have committed is "running with swift feet unto mischief." His days of running swiftly in any direction would appear to be largely over. But there again, with a nice dacha by the Black Sea and a luxury apartment in a posh part of Moscow, as well as a villa in Zurich, why would he need to run,

and where to? In any case, the Bible is quite firm in its condemnation of liars. The Qur'an doesn't like them, either: "O you who believe! Be afraid of Allah, and be with those who are true (in word and deeds).

It's worth looking at where Kirill's immense wealth originates; after all, church pastors are not famous for earning a lot of money. Those I've known have tended to walk about in tatty, dusty clothes and in worn-out shoes. According to the Russian newspapers Kommersant and Moskovskij Komsomolets, Kirill profited by abusing the privilege of running the duty-free importation of cigarettes, granted to the Orthodox Church in the 1990s. It earned Kirill the nickname "Tobacco Metropolitan". A Metropolitan is a senior rank in both the Orthodox and Roman Catholic faith, being a short form for "Metropolitan Bishop", meaning the bishop of a metropolis or city. Roman Catholics and Protestants normally shorten it to "bishop", but in the Orthodox Church, it gets shortened to "metropolitan". In Orthodoxy, the title represents a very senior position. Kirill has come in for severe criticism from other senior figures in the Orthodox church, such as Bartholomew I of Constantinople, the spiritual leader of Eastern Orthodox Christians around the world. He condemned Kirill's vocal support for the invasion of Ukraine, saying it risked damaging the prestige of the whole of Orthodoxy. Kirill has referred to Russia's opponents in Ukraine (in other words the Ukrainians) as "evil forces", which is hard to equate with the women

and children fleeing their bombed and shelled homes to seek asylum abroad. Pope Francis has held long conversations with Kirill using the Zoom network to try to persuade him to advocate peace, but without success.



Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill meeting in Havana in 2016

Kirill used the call simply to justify Putin's invasion. The Pope was interviewed afterwards by the Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera, and he spoke about Kirill's long rambling vindication of Putin's aggression. "After 20 minutes of listening to all his justifications for the war," the Pope said, he told Kirill: 'I don't understand any of this. Brother, we aren't politicians. We can't speak the language of politics, but of Jesus.' Kirill, it seems, either doesn't understand that idea, doesn't agree with it, or sees Putin as being equivalent in status to God. As for Pope Francis, he added that: "We have to find our way to peace and stop the shooting. The patriarch can't be Putin's messenger". He seems to act as if he is, however. At a church service for the armed forces Kirill said: "I want to say again and again: we are a peace-loving country and a very peace-loving, long-suffering people who suffered from wars like few other European nations. We have no desire for war or for doing something that could harm others. But we have been so educated by our entire history that we love our Fatherland and will be ready to defend it in the way that only Russians can defend their country." Despite these sentiments, he refuses to talk about peace with Pope Francis, other than to defend Russia's aggression. Russian missiles have now destroyed the Palace of Culture in Kharkiv, injuring eight people and destroying its treasures. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said it



Metropolitan Tikhon (Shevkunov) of Pskov and Porkhov (left) Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and Russian President Vladimir Putin

showed that the Russians have now: “identified culture, education and humanity as their enemies. What is in the minds of people who choose such targets?” Zelensky asked. “Absolute evil, absolute stupidity.”

PILLAGE AND PROSPER

As for his reported wealth, Patriarch Kirill's Department for External Church Relations became Russia's largest supplier of foreign cigarettes. It was extremely profitable, being entitled to receive 10% of the profits, and with a US embargo in place over Iraq, the Church cleaned up, but it's by no means certain that Kirill was guilty of embezzlement or profiteering, despite the rumours. American diplomat Nathaniel Davis said that he thinks it more likely that the vast sums made this way were used: “for urgent, pressing Church expenses”. Could these have included Kirill's purchase of a house in the canton of Zurich in Switzerland? It's the perfect place from which to pursue his love of skiing, which he developed in childhood. Kirill seems to have a taste for luxury, although this also he denies. It came to light when the Russian Orthodox Church airbrushed a very expensive watch from Kirill's wrist in a photograph for its website. However, they omitted to airbrush out the reflection of the watch on the shiny surface of a table. The Church later apologised for what it called a “foolish mistake” and has promised to punish the person responsible (the photo editor, not Kirill, of course), arguing that the Church never alters its official photographs. Except in this case, it seems. The incident earned Kirill the nickname: “the Bishop of Bling”.



Patriarch Kirill wearing the expensive watch in a photograph published by a Kremlin-critical news site

The watch itself, a Breguet with a white gold case and a crocodile-skin strap, is thought to be worth more than €30,000 (\$32,000). Kirill claims it was a gift from a grateful parishioner but that he seldom wears it, preferring to keep it in its box. This has failed to convince some of the faithful, although it means we may not see it on his wrist in public in future. He seems to attract lavish gifts, including a luxury apartment in central Moscow filled with very costly furniture and, it's claimed, he also owns (or at least has the use of) two Cadillacs. Incidentally, he does seem to have toned down his taste for costly wristwear. He has since been snapped wearing a Ulysse Nardin Dual Time 42 mm model, said to be valued at just \$16,000 (just over €15,000). That's little more than half the value of the Breguet. Modest stuff.

Many of Kirill's critics don't agree that the profits from the cigarette trade were all put to good use, either, although the sanctions that were proposed by the European Commission have also been heavily criticised. The spokesman for the Moscow Patriarchate, Vladimir Legoyda, said that Kirill came from a family that had been persecuted for its faith under Communism. “Only those who do not know the history of our Church can believe that they can intimidate the clergy and its faithful by including them in some lists.” Kirill still denies the commonly held belief that he was once a KGB informant, although to be honest, if members of his family were being targeted by the KGB, he may not have had much choice. Even so, at an ecumenical assembly in Nairobi in 1975, Kirill strongly criticised a rebel pastor, Gleb Yakunin, who had written a letter criticising the way in which believers

were, he said, being persecuted by the Communist state because of its commitment to atheism. The Soviet Union's clampdown on Orthodoxy had actually been reversed by Joseph Stalin in September 1943, when he ended an 18-year prohibition on religion. Stalin told three metropolitans he'd invited to meet him in his Kremlin office that they should appoint a Patriarch (Kirill's predecessor) and they were even authorised to use aeroplanes to bring bishops to Moscow to accelerate the selection process. In response to Yakunin's accusation of official and enforced atheism, Kirill wrote a letter in which he denied that believers' rights were being violated. It seems a strange thing to have done in the light of his more recent statements, but he was correct.



Gleb Yakunin, dissident Russian Orthodox priest who was defrocked and later excommunicated

St. Petersburg was also Putin's hub of operations as a KGB (later FSB) agent, in which rôle he watched the looting of the Baltic Sea fleet, seemingly without comment. The only person to speak out against it, according to Catherine Belton in her excellent book, “Putin's People”, was the city mayor, Anatoly Sobchek. According to Belton, Sobchek wrote in an article that: “The prosecutors, the FSB and the policemen who took part in this should be charged with abusing their position and for causing the country enormous loss.” Four months later, Sobchek died of a heart attack at the age of 62. Another man who tried to retain state control over the various



The destroyed Palace of Culture in Lozova, Kharkiv

assets in St. Petersburg was Mikhail Manevich, head of the city's Property Department. He believed that the KGB and their gangster associates were pillaging the city's wealth. He was shot dead by a sniper on his way to work one morning. According to Belton's book, Putin and his KGB pals used the organised crime groups active in the city to help control the public and to maintain order in the prisons. They certainly didn't encourage disagreement.

LAYING UP TREASURES UPON EARTH

Meanwhile, Kirill continues to amass his treasures on Earth. This is not the way recommended in the Gospel of St. Matthew in the Bible. In Chapter 6, verses 19 and 20, it says: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon Earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through, nor steal." On the face of it, Kirill would seem to have got that advice back to front. After all, he's not short of houses. His main working residence is at 5, Chisty Pereulok in Moscow, once owned by Russian nobility before the revolution. He also has the use of a palace in Peredelkino, which belongs to the Church. Another of his many homes is a house in Gelendzhik, which locals refer to as a "palace" because of its palatial style. In the 1990s he became the owner of a 5-room apartment, a gift from President Yeltsin, in the House on the Embankment, with a view of the great Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.



In 2019, Russian media « The Bell » published this picture in an article about the Kremlin spending \$43M to renovate Imperial Mansion in St Petersburg for the residence of Orthodox Patriarch Kirill

It's estimated to be worth 90-million roubles (€1.5-million), although he doesn't actually own it. He does own a house that was an illegal construction near Divnomorskoye, however, hidden away among pine trees and mountains on the Black Sea coast, probably worth (according to experts) around €34-million. His nearest neighbour is Vladimir Putin (surprise, surprise) and anyone trespassing too near may be seized upon by FSB agents who patrol the grounds. This is not a house into which to welcome parishioners wanting clarity on some ineffable theocratic point of faith. They're not allowed anywhere near this religious palace. Locals are obliged to take the long way around, along a busy road (one was recently killed by a vehicle while walking there). Kirill gets annoyed if people mention his vast wealth and luxurious lifestyle, saying it's all lies, intended to distress the faithful. Now the Kremlin is to lavish €43-million on restoring a tsarist-era housing complex near St. Petersburg for Kirill's exclusive use.

The EU proposed imposing sanctions because of Kirill's unwavering support for Putin's aggression and Kirill's endless lies about the war, which have not gone down well in Roman Catholic circles. Adalberto Minardi, an Italian monk from San Gimignano supported the idea of sanctioning Kirill: "Because the Patriarch's actions since the beginning of the war are seen as an unconditional supporting of Putin's war," making him more of a political figure than a cleric. "The Patriarch does not use the term 'war' but he speaks about the defence of the homeland, about the homeland in danger in front of an aggression of forces that dominate the world, he speaks about the values that must be defended. This is in line with Kirill's discourse in recent years but read at this time it is clearly (in line) of the Russian president's arguments." It would seem that Kirill is angry because almost a third of the Orthodox churches under his theoretical control are in Ukraine and he wants their wealth (or what's left of it after the Russian invasion) for his own coffers. If you want to know the reasons why, you can probably do no better than follow the advice first spoken by a character in the film about the Watergate scandal, 'All the President's Men': "follow the money".



On 21st May 2022 the 'Orthodox Church of Ukraine' seized the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in the settlement of Ivankov in the Kiev region

Now the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) has formally separated itself from Kirill, an act which has been seen by some religious scholars as "a huge blow to Putin".

More than a hundred of Ukraine's churches had previously rejected the UOC in favour of the Orthodox Church Ukraine (OCU) – sorry, but the names are confusing – which in turn had split from Moscow in 2019. Kirill said he "understood how the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is suffering today", but blamed "spirits of malice" for their concern, not the Russian armour pounding their towns and homes and slaughtering their families. Fox News quoted Rebekah Koffler, a former Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) officer, who explained that Putin has weaponised the Russian Orthodox Church as "a geopolitical tool". She went on: "The idea of Putin unifying the Russian world, including Ukraine and other post-Soviet states, hinges on the idea that Russia is the centre of Christianity and the centre of the unique Eurasian civilisation that the Russians believe is exceptional just like the Americans think America is exceptional. Once the church splits, it takes the whole divinity idea out of it." Koffler says this latest development is more significant than it may appear from the outside. "Regardless of whose side you're on, even if you buy into Putin's explanation for why he's doing it, you can't, as a spiritual person, condone civilian deaths." Koffler believes this new split undermines Putin's main argument. "The split punches a hole in Putin's narrative that the Russians and Ukrainians are spiritually and ethnically one people and therefore Ukraine should not exist as a separate country."

The orthodox faithful seem to be achieving what the EU was hoping to do by adding Kirill's name to a list of politicians and businessmen who have supported Putin's war. EU diplomats tried to reach agreement on the measures but failed to overcome Hungary's opposition. Kirill, listed under his birth name, Vladimir Gundjaev, was on the list alongside former Russian gymnast Alina Kabaeva, said to be Putin's girlfriend, and several dozen military officers accused of murdering and torturing civilians in the town of Bucha. The list includes Azatbek Omurbekov, a commander in the 35th army, nicknamed the "butcher of Bucha" for his responsibility for murders, rapes and torture. The sanctions will mean for them a travel ban and the seizure of any assets in the EU itself, although Kirill is no longer among them, of course. According to BNE Intellinews, however, Kirill is not only a billionaire but "a thoroughly corrupt billionaire". One with poor judgement, too, it would appear. He has described Putin's illegal invasion as part of a 'metaphysical' battle against Western ideology, which he said had been forced on other nations through a vanguard of 'gay parades', which he clearly sees as being more immoral than the accrual of vast wealth for himself by whatever means, or, indeed, the slaughter of innocent civilians.



Rebekah Koffler presenting her book "Putin's Playbook"

So egregious has been his appropriation of homes, expensive jewellery and personal wealth whilst lying about the war that there have been calls to expel the Russian Orthodox Church from the World Council of Churches.



Lieutenant Colonel Azatbek Omurbekov nicknamed the "butcher of Bucha" decorated by the Kremlin and blessed by one of the highest authorities of the Russian Orthodox Church

The EU has so far frozen more than €10-billion in physical assets and €20-billion in the bank accounts of Russian oligarchs known to be playing a part in Putin's war by helping to fund it. The EU feared that some of this could be shifted to a safe haven, unless those holding it could be convicted of trying to evade sanctions or some other crimes, so it has adopted a new law, which has received unanimous agreement by member state governments, making it easier to confiscate criminal assets, as well as simplifying the prosecution of lawyers, bankers or other professionals engaged in getting around the measures imposed. According to Commission estimates, criminal gangs in the EU make some €139-billion a year, of which only some 2% become frozen and only a half of that amount gets confiscated. It only required one EU leader to prevent the imposition of sanctions on Kirill. Hungary's Viktor Orbán, often a thorn in the side of EU policy-makers, blocked the move, saying it's a matter of religious freedom. Four EU countries are urging the Union to use frozen Russian financial assets to help pay for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

The Kremlin is sticking to its line that it had to invade Ukraine because of attacks on the country's Russian-speaking residents by "representatives of Nazi groups", as well as to stop NATO's eastwards expansion. Since Putin's war has encouraged both Finland and Sweden to apply for membership after decades of neutrality, it's a tactic that would seem to have backfired. The World Council of Churches, which represents Christian churches around

the world, has twice written to Kirill, urging him to help seek a peaceful solution. He seems not to be listening to the Council, nor to a Russian Orthodox church in Amsterdam, which split from the Moscow patriarchate because of Kirill's pro-war stance. The Russian Orthodox Church has criticised Pope Francis for urging Kirill not to become "Putin's altar boy", too. Kirill claimed that the Patriarch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church had written to him asking forgiveness, but like many of Kirill's public comments, it was a lie. The Patriarch of Ukraine, Philaret, has stated that there was no such letter and no plea for forgiveness. Nor will there be, says the euvdisinfo.eu website. It's not the only lie about the war that it has highlighted. As for Kirill's warmongering language, he won't now face travel bans and a freezing of his assets, which would have meant joining the 1,093 individuals, including Putin, his government, and a number of oligarchs in being subjected to various forms of punishment.

THE BLAME GAME

According to the DevDiscourse website, Kirill has consistently echoed Putin's unfounded claims that Ukraine's armed forces (Putin says they're Nazis) were engaged in exterminating Russian loyalists in the breakaway eastern enclave of Donbas, which has been held by Moscow supporters since 2014. There has been fighting between the separatists and Ukrainian forces and that has resulted in deaths on both sides, but however regrettable, that doesn't seem surprising under the circumstances.



The Patriarch of Ukraine, Philaret

Kirill also denied that Russia had launched the invasion, despite satellite images of Putin's advance. It's interesting to wonder why, but research suggests that Russian church-goers are more nationalistic than most other people. Kirill simply reflects that fact, even if it means turning into Putin's mouthpiece. Kirill's supporters have said his attitude is rooted in his suffering for his beliefs under Stalin, but even before World War II ended, Joseph Stalin allowed the Russian Orthodox Church to open its own theological schools in order to prepare young people to lead more Christian lives and to do Christian service. Those were major events that shaped the path of development for the Moscow church. Remember, Kirill was born in November 1946, long after Stalin launched his more inclusive set of policies for the church. Kirill has never admitted to being a nationalist but he has often spoken of Russia's "great mission" and its "God-given destiny".

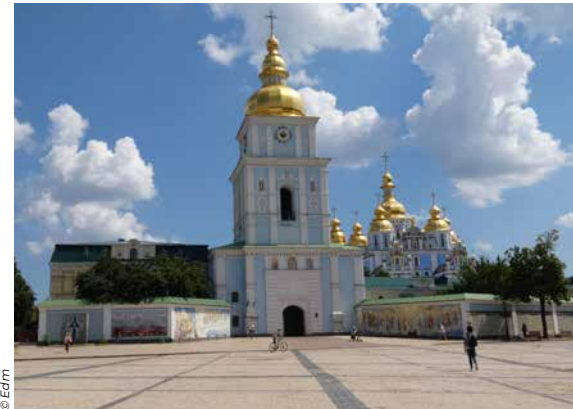


Unexploded Russian bombs in a Ukrainian suburb

Kirill's claim that "Russia never attacked anybody" is not born out by history. We start in 907 AD, with the Rus'Byzantine war, which Russian forces won. Greek sources don't mention the war, although it clearly must have affected them. There were many more down the years, with Russia as the aggressor, some of which Russia won and some of which it lost. Between 1570 and 1572, Ivan the Terrible fought the Crimean Khanate, then between 1580 and 1762 (a very long war indeed), Russia invaded and eventually conquered Siberia, bringing it into the Russian fold. Once again, Russia was the attacker. The Ainu people, who were affected in this war in much the same way that native Americans suffered at the hands of white settlers, have always said that they're really natives of the Kuril Islands, now part of Russia's Sakhalin Oblast, which means that both the Russians and the Japanese have been invaders. In 2004, one small Ainu community wrote to Putin, pointing out the unfair treatment they had received and urging him to recognise this aggression, especially from the Japanese, but also from Tsarist forces and from the Soviets. Putin turned them down. History, it seems, is not his strong point, and nor is compassion. It's by no means certain that Russia could hold Ukraine in the face of popular resistance, even if it wins the war. The Economist magazine quotes American army doctrine that says: "to face down an insurgency – in this case one backed by NATO – occupiers need 20 to 25 soldiers for every thousand people; Russia has little over four." It's rumoured, however, that Putin is considering the reintroduction of mass conscription, even banning men of military age from leaving the country. Indeed, conscription may have already started by the time you read this.

The Russian Orthodox Church has cut its ties with the Church leadership in Istanbul, the Constantinople Patriarchate, which is traditionally regarded as the headquarters of the Orthodox faith. The Russian patriarchate claims 150-million adherents, which is more than half of all Orthodox worshippers, but Moscow (and Kirill, of course) did not agree with Constantinople's decision to recognise the independence of Ukrainian Orthodox worshippers. Followers of

the Orthodox faith in Ukraine started to demand independence after Russia annexed Crimea and its separatist supporters seized territory in the east of the country.



St. Michael's Golden-Domed Cathedral in Kiev, Ukraine

Only Moscow recognises the supposed separatist states as not being part of Ukraine, but the Russian Orthodox church has accused Ukrainian nationalists of attacking its churches and their followers. It could even be true: Ukrainian ultra-nationalists are not warm-hearted and kindly souls, by and large. Nationalists seldom are. Kirill's insistence on taking back control, however, is more likely to be rooted in their wealth. In Paris, Archbishop John of Dubna heads a Russian Orthodox parish in Europe, but he declared solidarity with Ukraine and, in a letter to Kirill, denounced the war as "monstrous and senseless", also condemning Kirill's support for it. In Amsterdam, four priests of St. Nicholas signed a petition to Kirill, urging him to help bring the war to an end, but Kirill defended the war, despite a petition from Orthodox priests in Russia to put an end to the killing. The head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which is loyal to Moscow, appealed directly to Putin for "an immediate end to the fratricidal war". Later, a large "Z" was painted on the church gates, a symbol supportive of Russia's heedless violence and clearly intended as a warning. The parish church received a number of threats, eventually closing its doors completely. I'm not sure how the Moscow Orthodox Church can celebrate the loss of parishioners like that. Kirill is often pictured wafting his censer of incense before his followers, but some may perhaps detect a whiff of sulphur instead.

Toby Bowman-Grant



© European Parliament

Guy Verhofstadt

THE CUSTODIAN OF EUROPE'S CONSCIENCE

How a Belgian politician still battles for a stable and honourable Europe

“The far right still love Putin,” wrote Belgian Liberal politician Guy Verhofstadt in a Facebook post, “They still want to be with him; They still want to be like him; They want to destroy everything he dislikes: Europe, democracy, freedom...” adding the warning: “Let’s never forget whose side they’re on!” There’s not much risk we’ll forget, as long as Mr. Verhofstadt is there to remind us (and Russian shells and missiles keep falling around us). Of the man himself and his various political speeches and statements there is no shortage. Britain’s prime minister, Boris Johnson, must hate him. The feeling may be mutual, especially since Johnson compared Ukrainian resistance to Russian attack with Britain’s bid to “escape” from the EU. During the messy manoeuvring for Britain to leave the Union, still known as Brexit, Boris Johnson compared himself and Britain with the comic book character, the Incredible Hulk, who always escaped, whenever and wherever he was trapped. It failed to impress Verhofstadt, who

was the European Parliament’s coordinator on Brexit, and who wrote: “Even to Trumpian standards the Hulk comparison is infantile. Is the EU supposed to be scared by this? The British public impressed? Is this Boris Johnson whistling in the dark?” He may be out of tune, in that case. Even so, Johnson succeeded in leading his country out into the wilderness, where it has encountered problems that its cheerleaders never foresaw, but should have done.

The UK government’s response to discovering that agreements which it had proposed, negotiated, and to which it agreed and signed up to aren’t working is to discard them, regardless of the legal ramifications. The message seems to be that the best thing any negotiating partner can do with an agreement signed by the British government is to regard it as mutable and only as solid and long-lasting as an iced lolly on a sunny day. In more polite terms regarding the UK’s bid to break its own agreement on a trading

protocol for Northern Ireland, three MEPs: David McAllister (EPP, Germany), Bernd Lange (Socialists, Germany) and Nathalie Loiseau (Renew Europe – Liberal – France), said in a statement after a meeting with Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, that it “constitutes a serious and unacceptable breach of international law”.



British Prime Minister Boris Johnson

Verhofstadt is a fervent supporter of the EU and of the ideals that led to its foundation, but he has also been a fierce critic of its failings and its weaknesses. So, what of the man himself? Born in 1953, He studied law prior to joining and becoming an activist in the Association of Liberal Flemish Students before being elected president of the Flemish Liberal Party's youth wing and, at the age of just 29, he was chosen by popular vote to be president of the *Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang*, the Flemish Liberal Party, becoming the youngest political party leader in Belgian history. He also practised for a while as a lawyer in Ghent, but it was politics that held his interest.



Guy Verhofstadt (right) as a young leader of the VLD (Belgian Liberal Party)

In the 1980s he served as vice-prime minister and Minister of Budget in a coalition government headed by the Christian Democrat, Wilfried Martens. In a kind of game of political musical chairs, having changed the name of the party to the Liberal and Democratic Flemish Party, in the hope of attracting more centrist voters, he defeated the centre-left coalition of Jean-Luc Dehaene to become Belgium's first Liberal Prime Minister for more than six decades. The people liked him, and he was re-elected in 2003, although he failed in his bid to replace Romano Prodi as president of the European Commission. His government succeeded in legalising same-sex marriage, euthanasia, and the private use of marijuana. The party's hopes were high (as, presumably, were some of its supporters).

When I was based in Brussels as a journalist accredited to the European Commission and all the other EU institutions, Verhofstadt was seen as the Union's most daunting supporter, which makes the many references to him in, for instance, Britain's more right-wing press somewhat rather surprising. It is,

of course, his well-informed criticisms of the EU that they quote. They were very interested when Verhofstadt and MEP Sophie in 't Veld (like Verhofstadt, a member of the Renew Europe faction in the European Parliament) started collecting signatures for a motion of no confidence in European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Their anger with her arises from the decision of her Commission to disburse what are called Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) Funds to help Poland to recover economically, but without Poland instituting the democratic restructuring most MEPs would like to see and Poland had said it would undertake. Instead, von der Leyen accepted the Polish National Reconstruction Plan just as it stands, despite Poland's record of blocking some EU plans. For the no confidence vote to succeed (previous attempts related to different issues have failed), it will require the support of 71 MEPs. It all concerns the sum of €58-billion, which will be granted to Poland from EU funds in the form of €23.9-billion in grants and more than €34.2-billion in loans. From Poland's perspective, it translates into 158.5-billion Polish zlotys. In a letter to MEPs, Mr Verhofstadt said the Commission "blatantly disregarded Parliament resolutions" on Poland's capabilities to follow EU rules.



Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt with an injured arm greeting Vladimir Putin in Brussels in 2001

COULD DO BETTER

Those are words I dreaded seeing on my old end-of-term school report. Not quite as ominous as "see me" but clearly meant as a warning. In a letter to his fellow-MEPs, Verhofstadt expressed similar sentiments about the Commission's approval of RRF funds for Poland, when he wrote: "The Commission decided to give a positive assessment, in blatant disregard of several Parliament

resolutions, several ECJ (European Court of Justice) rulings, and dissent within the College, as five key Commissioners publicly doubt whether the so-called milestones are sufficient to comply with the ECJ rulings." Moreover, these Commissioners fear that implementation will not be rigorously verified by the Commission. Verhofstadt pointed out that the European Commission is supposed to police the treaties. "If the von der Leyen Commission no longer fulfils its role as guardian of the Treaties," he said, "Parliament should withdraw its confidence." The EU's executive Commission froze access to the funds for Hungary and Poland over their nationalist governments' political record of undercutting liberal democratic rules by clamping down on the rights of migrants, gay people, and women, as well as increasing state control over the media and courts, sometimes on somewhat spurious religious grounds Hungary is supposedly negotiating to reach an agreement with the EU by the end of this year in the hopes of gaining access to billions of euros in pandemic recovery funding, but there is little sign of retreat by prime minister Viktor Orbán on his arch-nationalist policies. Orbán is also a friend and supporter of Russia's president, Vladimir Putin.

Verhofstadt has noted in articles he has posted that it harms the EU's reputation when it criticises autocratic leaders such as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and US President Donald Trump, but remains oddly quiet about such figures as Poland's de facto leader, Jarosław Kaczyński, and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Orbán uses corrupt practices to ensure that his views – and only his – are disseminated in Hungary. Media outlets that carry them get tax breaks, while those that are critical are taxed to the point of collapse.



(From left to right) Polish PM Mateusz Morawiecki, PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński, and Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán



Guy Verhofstadt during his anti-Viktor Orbán campaign in 2018 “Hungary’s Viktor Orbán wants to destroy Europe”

That way, the media fails to reflect popular opinion (it’s hard for citizens to form an opinion when they are only allowed to see, hear or read one side of an argument) and Orbán is able to win election after election. Whatever it is, it’s not the democracy Orbán claims it to be. In the distant past, Orbán championed liberal values and was widely seen as a ‘centrist’; recent events have shown him to be so far from the centre that he should fall off the edge. It’s all part of the growth in nationalism, espoused by Orbán and others today but seemingly on the rise worldwide. It weakens substantially Europe’s ability to play the rôle it should in international affairs. In its latest attack on democracy and moderation, Orbán’s government is still attempting to shut down the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest. Orbán doesn’t like the intelligentsia and his cronies ask students to report any professors who display left-wing views. Freedom of thought? Not in Orbán’s Hungary! Founded in 1991 by the Hungarian-American investor and philanthropist George Soros, many of its departments rank among the global top 50. Orbán, however, has refused to talk with the man who runs it, Michael Ignatieff, the human rights campaigner and opposition leader in Canada, and, as a result, the university could be forced to close. Orbán, in often somewhat hysterical articles, has accused CEU of having “foreign funding” (for which, read: funding by some person or organisation that is not extremely right-wing) and therefore “un-Hungarian.” It seems that, like other despots from history, Orbán is against intellectualism.

There is not a lot the EU can do about it. As Verhofstadt writes: “Once a country has gained entry to the bloc, there is little that can be done to ensure that it maintains democratic standards and upholds European values.” In Orbán’s mind, being European is purely a

geographical issue and nothing to do with proper governance or humanitarian standards. “The European Commission can launch as many ‘infringement procedures’ against Hungary as it wishes,” Verhofstadt points out, “Orbán will simply ignore them with smirking pleasure.” The only option that remains open to the EU’s ruling bodies – if they can find the courage for it – is to invoke Article 7 of the Treaty of Lisbon, agreed before anyone anticipated a far-right leader’s views gaining traction. Article 7 could ultimately remove Hungary’s voting rights. “Invoking Article 7 is not a ‘nuclear option,’ as some have claimed,” Verhofstadt explained, “Rather, it is the logical response to a member-state government that has routinely violated citizens’ fundamental rights and EU values.”



Donald Tusk, President of the European Council (2014-2019)

The row over the influx of refugees has further weakened European solidarity, displaying the EU’s difficulty on taking joint decisions in a crisis. Verhofstadt wants an extraordinary EU summit to be called for Thursday 6 August in order to address what he calls the “increasingly untenable” situation at the EU’s borders. The problem with refugees is that however much neighbouring countries may sympathise and say “tut, tut”, nobody really wants them. In a letter to the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, Verhofstadt has described the crisis as being in need of an urgent solution. So far this year, more than 180,000 migrants have crossed the Mediterranean in order to enter EU territory. Just like those trying to reach the UK from France, it involves unsafe crossings on overcrowded boats that are barely sea-worthy, piloted by criminal gangs making money from other people’s misery and desperation. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has estimated that at least 2,000 people have drowned trying to reach

their chosen shore. “If a reminder is at all needed that the current EU asylum and migration system is not fit for purpose,” Verhofstadt wrote, “the deaths in Calais and the Mediterranean are testimony to this.”

LET’S DO IT TOGETHER

Verhofstadt wants to see much closer cooperation among member states. He wants an EU-wide response, rather than see a handful of countries bearing much of the burden. “This must go beyond the pitiful response to the resettlement of 40,000 migrants from Italy and Greece,” he told Euractiv. The issue was supposed to have been solved with the so-called Dublin III Regulation, which came into force on 1 January 2014. It had been hammered out during the Dublin EU summit of 2013, and even as its details became clearer to the journalists who attended, some even then were raising doubts about just how effective it might prove to be, especially since the EU had been looking for a common asylum system since 1999. According to Open Migration, it’s supposed to work like this: “The asylum request by a third country national is to be presented in the first European country the person arrives in – usually, either Italy or Greece – and where he or she was identified by local authorities. This evidently means that individual preferences – that is, where people arriving into Europe actually want to go to and where do they wish to live – are bound to not be properly taken into account.” Ignored in other words. That is only the first snag, of course. The migrants had presumably dreamed of a future life for themselves and their families in the country of their own choice, not under a box-ticking exercise carried out by an anonymous clerk sitting in a distant office.



Asylum seekers in the Mediterranean Sea

In order for this to work at all, there is a central data bank known as Eurodac where the data and fingerprints of every individual entering a European state and presenting an asylum request are

registered. Using this data bank, the various authorities can trace back to find out in which State each person first entered EU territory; the person thus identified can then present an asylum request if they wish. In cases where there are no papers to present, a train ticket or receipt can be used to prove where the first entrance actually occurred. But the problem is not just with migration and asylum seeking. It's a case of who has what power and how they choose to use it. "Soft power, like hard, is increasingly something we do together as Europeans," wrote Verhofstadt. "Traditionally, hard and soft power go together-one cannot do without the other, or at least not for long. Of late, we have seen hard power colliding with soft power as never before."



Guy Verhofstadt is welcomed to Government Buildings in Dublin by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and European Affairs Minister Helen McEntee in 2017

As Verhofstadt wrote, even Europe's soft power is underused. "In the 2021 Global Soft Power Index there was only one mention of the European Union," he wrote. And where was this reference? "... in the context of geographical indication protection for Parmigiano Reggiano. Yet EU influence is considerable in all seven of Brand Finance's pillars of soft power: business and trade, governance, international relations, culture and heritage, media and communication, education and science, people, and values." Trying to turn that into hard power is never easy, and probably not always advisable. After all, soft power has been likened to simple advertising. "The European Union needs to learn the lessons of the Ukraine crisis," he told a conference in Dublin at Dublin Castle on the future of Europe, organised by the Institute of International and European Affairs, "and organise itself as a 'real continental power' in economic, financial and military terms or it faces fading into oblivion." Perhaps a little hyperbole there, but it's a view he feels passionately. He must scare politicians of the far right (not Orbán, perhaps, who seems to

think that he alone can walk on water), because if you Google his name, by far the greatest number of hits you get are from far-right British newspapers. If he didn't worry them, I don't suppose they'd bother. He called for EU member states to donate a great deal of defensive military equipment to Ukraine. "The world will never be the same," he said. "I have the same feeling today that I got after 9/11."

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

The Irish Times quoted him as saying: "this would involve the bloc organising itself 'as a real continental power' in economic, financial, and military terms. That will be necessary in the world of tomorrow, which is already the world of today," he told his audience. "That's the world of so-called empires, super-powers, China, India, Russia, and the US. Europe has to take the lesson that we need to do a number of reforms to make it a real European Union, because it is not a union today." It's sadly true, and it's also a point he has been labouring for some time. We cannot say he didn't warn us.

Verhofstadt believes that the EU needs to unify itself further. Its current weaknesses, he has said, are preventing it from taking action "in a timely manner". The delay on the implementation of a sanction on Russia over the SWIFT system of money transfers is an example of that, he argues, because it's based on the principle of unanimity. "I think that a more solid, integrated, strong EU would have been a bigger threat to Putin to start such a war. Let's take the lessons from there", he said.



Former Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Charles Haughey and former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher

But how does the EU get there? One of Verhofstadt's proposals, many years ago, is for the member states to form themselves into a kind of 'United States of Europe'. Given their seeming disinclination

to work together on any project that threatens their individual sovereignty, it probably isn't possible. That was his language of 2005, but he has updated it to reflect the perilous circumstances in which Europe now finds itself. That brings us back to that conference held at Dublin Castle on the future of Europe. Dublin Castle always reminds me of the memories left behind when a conquering power takes over someone else's country, then leaves again.

At the 1990 European Summit held in Dublin Castle, I was fortunate enough to be within earshot as the leaders were strolling out. Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of the time, Charles Haughey was walking beside the then British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. She said to him with a hint of pride and a sweeping hand gesture towards the ancient stone work: "See what a wonderful heritage we left behind for you." Haughey, in what might be called a "stage whisper", that I believe was meant for her to hear, replied: "Only because you couldn't take it with you." Military defeats and the imposition of foreign rule on any country causes massive and long-lasting resentment. Haughey himself seems to have been most annoyed by the poor standard of food provided by his country for the delegates and for the large flock of journalists like me trying to follow events. Normally, the food at such summit get-togethers was (and presumably still is) very good, while Haughey was a renowned gourmet who patronised Dublin's finest dining establishments. He felt that what he described as being "only of good pub grub standard" reflected badly on Ireland.

It's Europe's unpreparedness that worries Verhofstadt. The EU is too slow to respond to events, even world-shattering major events. "The Americans, when the war started on 24 February, were capable immediately, three weeks after that, to launch – by an Executive Order of President Biden – an embargo on oil, on coal and on gas," he told the European Parliament in a debate in June this year. "And they did that on 8 March, so the war started 24 February, and 8 March, by an executive order, the Americans were ready to stop the funding of the war machine of Putin." Europe did not do as well, he reminded MEPs: "You have to compare that with the way we in Europe have handled that same issue. For us, it has taken three months to come to a conclusion.



President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky with President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen

It was on, I think, on the 4th May that Ms. von der Leyen said: ‘Yes, I have a proposal’ – two months after the Americans, and then it has taken three weeks, nearly a month, to decide on it, and it will be implemented by the end of the year.” Even then, the need for unanimity is a barrier it must overcome. As it is at present, the Polish and the Hungarian governments can simply block proposals that only they dislike or can even refuse to accept proposals their EU colleagues want unless they get something in addition. It’s a form of blackmail, in fact. That’s why there is now a petition calling for signatures that would remove the power of individual nations to impose a veto. I should mention, however, that there is another petition trying to block the first one and to defend the right of individual countries to block the entire Union. Verhofstadt is unrepentant and still pressing ahead: “Vetos are killing European unity. They lead to blackmail, ineffectiveness, loss of credibility and faith in the EU. Unanimity needs to go. It’s that simple. Sign the Petition!” he wrote on Twitter.

STAND TOGETHER OR FALL APART

Verhofstadt is insistent that the EU should show more solidarity (as well as more haste) in reacting to Russia’s aggression by hitting Putin financially as hard as possible. “Only a full oil and gas embargo can stop us financing Putin’s war machine!” he Tweeted angrily. His vision, however, although opposed by right-wing forces and sections of the media, is getting its time in the spotlight. On the 9 June, according to Verhofstadt’s Liberal “Renew” political group, the European Parliament began its move towards reforming the EU treaties.

The current Treaties have been in force for a decade, in which time Europe has faced the COVID pandemic and Russia’s brutal invasion of Ukraine. The Renew bloc, in agreement with Verhofstadt, wants to ensure that one single member state is unable to stand in the way of changes intended to help the EU’s 450-million citizens. Under the new rules adopted by MEPs, the European Parliament gains the right of legislative initiative, which supporters say is “a critical asset for any parliamentary assembly and is indispensable for a genuine European democracy.”

The vote certainly met with Verhofstadt’s approval. “The citizens in the Conference on the Future of Europe called upon us,” he declared “to make Europe more effective, more tangible, more democratic.” Of course, we mustn’t forget that Viktor Orbán, who bargains financially with the media for their support, also considers himself a democrat, albeit not in a way Verhofstadt would recognise.



Sandro Gozi

He, unlike Orbán, believes that the people, not their leaders, should have the final say. “We owe it to them,” Verhofstadt continued, “to implement the conclusions, even the hardest parts, where the treaties need to be updated. With this vote, the European Parliament follows up on its promise, so that the EU can fully deliver on its potential.” That view was echoed by Sandro Gozi, a French MEP and shadow rapporteur for Renew on the Parliament’s right of initiative: “A Parliament proposes, adopts laws and controls the executive,” she said after the vote. “Otherwise, it is not a Parliament. The European Parliament must enjoy a right of legislative initiative, which represents a pillar of democratic legitimacy, other than a clear request

formulated by citizens during the Conference on the Future of Europe,” adding a pertinent reminder: “This issue has become even more urgent due to the return of war to our continent, requiring the emergence of a truly sovereign and democratic Europe.”

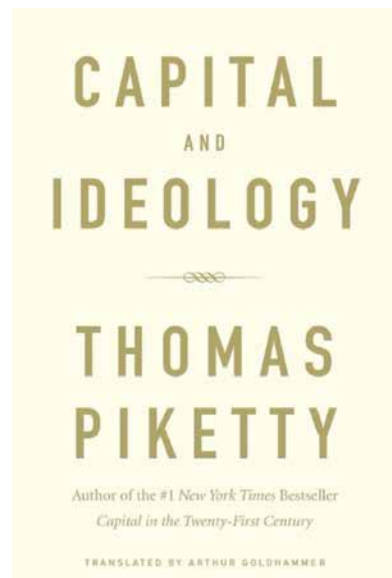


Guy Verhofstadt during the debate and vote on the EU-UK withdrawal agreement in January 2020

Reassuring though it would be to see the EU member states united in a cause, it’s not just because of Russian aggression that the EU needs greater coherence. We have seen and are still experiencing the effects of the CORONA-19 pandemic. Verhofstadt has pointed out that the end of the pandemic (when and if it comes) will not be the end of Europe’s difficulties. Europe must get ready for the next crisis, whatever form it may take. “The jobs and livelihoods of millions of Europeans are at stake,” he wrote on the Politico website. “Large companies have ample buffers and credit lines, but people on a modest salary, the self-employed or small company owners are at risk. The repercussions of bungling our response will be dire.” Verhofstadt is only too well aware that the EU leadership’s record on facing up to crises is somewhat patchy and could be greatly improved. “To avoid the worst,” he wrote, “Europe has to learn from its past mistakes and act quickly, decisively and with a sense of solidarity. Only by sharing the burden of this challenge do we have a chance of succeeding.” Verhofstadt is pleased that there are safety nets in place for the most vulnerable and severely affected. But that won’t be enough, he says. “Yes, our national social security mechanisms and government emergency measures will absorb some of the blow. But if we want to prevent this from turning into a new sovereign debt crisis like the one we saw in 2012 - and from which we’ve only barely recovered - we’ll have to come up with a common European

approach.” It’s that “common approach” notion that seems to cause Europe so many problems. Nationalism still reigns supreme. It was this “my nation is best, forget or ignore the rest” attitude that led to Brexit and which continues to dog EU decision-making.

“It’s high time now that the European Commission steps in and takes responsibility for designing a common proposal that can match the coronavirus package of nearly \$2-trillion being launched in the United States,” wrote Verhofstadt. “The Commission won’t have to start from scratch. The European Central Bank has already made the right move by proposing a ‘Pandemic Emergency Purchase Program’ (PEPP) of €750-billion and announcing there will be ‘no limits’ in order to keep the euro afloat and ‘the spreads’ between the cost of borrowing of heavily indebted countries and Germany’s under control. But we should not let the ECB fight this alone.” The ability to respond quickly in a crisis is the great strength of the central banks, as the economist Thomas Piketty pointed out in his book, “Capital and Ideology”. Piketty’s books are invariably brilliant, analysing economic issues with surgical precision and in a comprehensible way. “From a strictly technical standpoint,” Piketty wrote, “the Fed or the ECB could create dollars or euros worth 600% of GDP and attempt to buy all the private wealth of the United States or Western Europe. But this would raise serious issue of governance: central banks and their boards of governors are no better equipped to administer all of a country’s property than were the Soviet Union’s central planners.” Even so, there is an undoubted and unequivocal rôle for the ECB in ensuring that Europe is prepared for the next disaster, whatever it may turn out to be. According to Piketty, the balance sheet of the ECB in



2019 (the date of publication) was 40% of the Eurozone’s GDP, but this still only equates to 4% of the financial assets in circulation.

Verhofstadt points out that the European Commission: “should be the one to develop the initiative to first stabilize and then assist the recovery of our public finances and our economies,” adding that the size of that initiative will have to be much bigger than the €250-billion the Eurogroup wants to mobilize through the European Stability Mechanism, the intergovernmental organisation established by the member states of the euro area in 2012, with the mission to enable the countries of the euro area to avoid and overcome financial crises and to maintain long-term financial stability and prosperity. Not an easy balancing act. Verhofstadt adds a warning with regard to speed: “Let’s not make the same mistake we did in 2008 by being reluctant and slow to react. That approach – which was too little, too late – made the economic crisis in Europe much longer and more painful

than it had to be.” As it is, it’s estimated that the pandemic has so far cost the EU some €1-trillion, or around 8% of GDP. Verhofstadt believes it should now try to mitigate the damage by launching a European Stability and Recovery Programme (ESRP) worth €1-trillion. Part of that – the “stability” part – would take the form of loans for countries whose economies are in trouble. The rest of it, the “recovery” part, could provide bridge and investment credits to the “real” economy. Verhofstadt proposes a new “Euro Safe Assets or Recovery bond”, backed by some kind of what he calls “a pan-European guarantee”, based on a reformed EU budget. Whether or not Verhofstadt will ultimately get not only his “right on initiative” reforms but also his economic reforms remains to be seen, although the signs look promising.

As Thomas Piketty argues, it’s in all of our interests to make ourselves aware of what is happening, despite the massive complexity of economics at the scale we’re talking about. “Their complexity is such that it is unjustifiable to abandon them to a small caste of experts,” he wrote. “The contrary is true. Precisely because they are so complex, only broad collective deliberation, based on reason and on the past history and experience of every citizen, can lead to progress toward resolving these issues.” I think Verhofstadt would agree with that verdict; Europe must not only be ready, but it must have worked out how to put in place measures to offset the worst effects. A Europe that really works: wouldn’t that be nice?

Jim Gibbons



“We are committed to support euro area citizens through this extraordinary crisis. The pandemic emergency purchase programme has been, and remains, at the core of our policy response.”

Christine Lagarde
President of the ECB



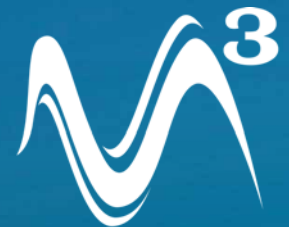
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Licorne nuclear test, 1971, French Polynesia

OPINION

The nuclear threat and absolute enmity: On the relevance of interpreting war

As the scope and ferocity of the Ukraine war unfold, concerns are deepening over how to effectively prevent escalation. Today, politicians refer to the possibility of a nuclear war, either as a blatant (strategic) threat or out of serious concern. In this respect, it is crucial to bear in mind that wars are not simply accompanied by interpretations; they are driven by them. The way we interpret events contributes to their dynamics. Interpretations can have an impact on the readiness to escalate.

If we are to counteract this dynamic, maintaining a reflected perspective is vital. There are different levels of interpretation in the understanding of any war. Furthermore, there is one line of interpretation that spurs an escalation on both sides. The readiness to deploy weapons of mass destruction is fuelled by a specific concept of the enemy.

THREE LEVELS OF INTERPRETATION

There are at least three dimensions to the understanding of war. Each dimension entails specific reasons that may underpin warfare.

1) The economic level:

Strong economic ties between states have the potential to secure peace,

as long as there is mutual benefit. Economic ties rely on a practice of mutual recognition. In the recent past, it was assumed – somewhat naively, as we can see more clearly today – that economic interdependencies could give rise to a deepened awareness of the freedom of the individual, and thus ultimately to a political evolution. Especially in Germany there was much talk of "change through trade".

Yet at the same time, expansive economic dynamics can trigger wars – not to mention the fact that war itself is an economic factor. This expansive dynamic is inherent in economic activity, since this activity not only serves to provide for vital needs but is imbued with a concept of the 'good life' ('lifestyle'). Securing a constant supply of scarce goods becomes increasingly difficult



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due to an unbridled refinement and multiplication of artificial needs. Ukraine is a country immensely rich in both food and raw materials, and its shores are a gateway to the world. Because of these factors, Ukraine lies in the focus of other actors pursuing their own economic interests. For instance, it has been emphasised recently that the Russian invasion was in fact a gigantic heist.

However, economic utility calculations are not the sole reason shaping international relations. Antagonisms emerge from deeper political causes to which even economic considerations are subordinated. Thus, both Europe and Russia are currently willing to endure the mutually detrimental consequences of Russia's economic isolation.

2) The geostrategic level:

This concerns the ways and means of sustaining a political community's sovereignty in relation to other actors. On this level, there is a constant trial of strength between political systems.¹ The bilateral showdown between Russia and the Ukraine is simultaneously the arena

for a multilateral showdown between NATO and Russia.

From a "Western" perspective, the issue is to defend the democratic order against imperialistic despotism. After the invasion of the Ukraine, NATO again appears as the only real guarantor of European defence (which poses a real challenge for the further development of Europe's strategic autonomy in military terms). In Moscow's view, it is about defending the multipolar world order against an advancing global hegemony of "the West" led by the USA. Above all, Russia perceived NATO's eastward expansion as a major geostrategic provocation. The Russian elites believe that the recognition of their country as a global superpower, which is widely denied by the Western world, must be fought for.

These geostrategic perspectives therefore also open the way to sophistry and propaganda. Any aggressive war can be reinterpreted as a war of defence.

3) Consciousness of freedom:

Political systems, in turn, are inspired by basic orientations of

the concept of freedom. This is the civilisational-cultural dimension (which is often ignored in the West out of the fear of invoking a "clash of civilisations"). From a Western perspective the modern interpretation of freedom, which acknowledges a right of subjectivity or individuality,² stands opposed to a pre-Enlightenment mindset that instead embraces a subordination of the individual to the collective. It is significant in this context that Russia – despite its long-standing Christian tradition that gave rise to world-class cultural achievements (especially in poetry and music) – is geographically located predominantly in Asia. From the Russian point of view, the West places a one-sided emphasis on the right of individuality, leading to a fragmentation and atomisation, which ultimately dissolves all moral order based on universal obligations. This is the "westernisation" that Russia wants to avoid. In this sense, the Kremlin explicitly invoked the defence of cultural sovereignty as the goal of its security doctrine last summer. Ukraine seems to be indeed the theatre of a showdown between "the West" and Russia.



© Wikimedia/Adam Schultz

Nato Heads of State and Government at the June 2022 Madrid Summit

¹ A classic example are the Greco-Persian wars, which the Greek side interpreted as a struggle of a more concrete principle of freedom against an Asian despotism.

² This refers to the core of classical liberalism (John Locke): the individual has the right, even with regard to the state, to choose her or his own welfare and 'pursuit of happiness'.



© Nrf

Russian SS-27 Mod 2 intercontinental ballistic missile

UNDERSTANDING DOES NOT EQUAL PERSPECTIVISM

Before we turn to the problematic perspective, we need to consider the following: To acknowledge different perspectives of interpretation does not mean to level out clear differences. In view of the war in Ukraine, we can at least establish two differences of this kind: First, the strategic culture of despotisms and republics differs.³ The readiness to risk the lives of their own citizens is more inhibited in republics. Most of the NATO member states are democracies. Secondly, it is true that the "West" faces many issues arising

from a one-sided understanding of the right of subjective freedom in the understanding of law and the state. Nonetheless, the basic orientation that facilitates democratic republics - namely the consciousness that human beings are free as human beings and that political order has to be sustained by participation - is a more concrete consciousness of freedom than that realised in a despotic collectivism. This difference in the consciousness of freedom shows itself in the heroic resistance of the Ukrainians against a superior, but poorly motivated opponent. This reminds us of the source of national defence: the will to selfhood. The fighting morale is

fed by the conviction to stand up for a principle of freedom that is justified in itself. This gave Europe's "post-heroic society" (H. Münkler) something to think about.

THE MORALIZING VIEW...

All these antagonisms permeate the individuals involved. It is thus understandable - especially in view of Russian war crimes - that the events in Ukraine are viewed from a moralizing perspective as a struggle of good against evil.⁴ What holds true for the actions of the individual is projected onto entire nations: here the realm of light, there the realm of darkness. This perspective, however, is not appropriate to historical processes since morality is only the individual's relationship to his or her disposition. Historical movements that encompass entire states and nations cannot be fully understood by means of these categories. World-historical processes revolve around something that is prior to individual moral consciousness, namely differences within the consciousness of freedom, confrontations between more concrete and more abstract interpretations of freedom.



© Mps S. Cov/Upa

A Ukrainian civilian rescued after a Russian bombing

³ Kant has demonstrated this in his essay on "Perpetual Peace".

⁴ Luhmann emphasized the 'polemogenic' nature of a moralizing attitude towards the other. However, true morality (in Kant's sense) is to be distinguished from mere moralizing.



© Nrf

UN Secretary-General António Guterres and Russian President Vladimir Putin on April 26 at the Kremlin

...GIVES RISE TO THE ABSOLUTE ENEMY

The moralizing view is also a means of propaganda, because it gives rise to the fanaticism of hatred directed at an 'absolute enemy'⁵ of humanity and civilisation whom one not only refuses to understand, but also denies the status of even being human. This undermines the achievements of the regulation of war under international law (the *ius in bello*, for instance, the distinction between combatants and non-combatants) and creates a willingness to commit atrocities, even wars of extinction.

Hence, there is a connection between the moralizing perspective and the progress of weapons technology: The greater the destructive potential of weapons systems, the more you need an absolute enemy against which deploy them. Weapons of mass destruction are used only against an absolute enemy.⁶

Given the dynamics of war, we should ask ourselves – irrespective of the above-mentioned differences in the concept of freedom – how does the "West" contribute to the creation of an 'absolute enemy'? Is it justified to demonstrate hostility towards Russians by implying they share collective guilt? The opposite tendency to the creation of an absolute enemy are incentives to engage in dialogue, such as the visit of the UN Secretary General to President Putin. As futile as these impulses may appear on the surface, they bear inherent merit in that they imply a basic recognition of the other as a human being.

WILL TO COEXISTENCE OR UNBRIDLED WILL TO POWER?

The situation seems to be aporetic. Ukraine is oriented towards the Western principle of freedom out of an inner drive and not because of anti-Russian intrigues of external actors, as Moscow suggests. The western world cannot therefore abandon Ukraine. Thus, the "West" justifiably refrains from a policy of appeasement towards Russia. Pacifism must not ignore that true peace can only be a just peace, a peace expressing a correspondence between the actual consciousness of freedom and the political order. This is worth fighting for. In addition, the only way to set limits to a despotically organised aggressor state, as one can learn from Aristotle, is through force.

But Russia is not a country like North Korea. Isolation policy must take this into account appropriately, if only for geostrategic reasons. Radical isolation, which also cuts diplomatic ties, threatens to cement despotism in Russia – even for a post-Putin era. And it strengthens the ties between Russia and Asia, especially with China. Russia is the largest country on earth which – probably not only from the point of view of its elites – has to fight for its recognition in a multipolar world order.⁷

It is crucial to bear in mind that this war manifests a deeply rooted problem in the world order that has been latent ever since the fall of the Soviet Union: Is it possible

to (re-)establish a world order involving a rule-based coexistence of the "Western world" and Russia? Diplomatic initiatives that lack an understanding of this issue are doomed to fail.

Objections to this are obvious: What is the point in diplomatic initiatives if Russia aims to compensate its presumed lack of weight within the world order by a belligerent imperialism? Why should the "West" unilaterally engage in serious diplomacy as long as Russian propaganda is systematically fostering absolute enmity? Furthermore, no politician wants to be considered weak, especially in times of war. If both sides lack the will to look at their actions through the eyes of the other – which has traditionally been a strength of diplomacy in Europe as a "peace power" – , what will remain dominant is a 'will to power' which tends to dehumanise the other.

What can be done to de-escalate? Those siren voices that – out of short-sighted calculation – stir up absolute enmity on both sides should be met with caution. We should not lose the willingness to reflect on the mentioned levels of interpretation, nor the willingness to look at one's own actions through the eyes of the other. This attitude is the prerequisite to work towards a peaceful coexistence once again.

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⁵ A phrase coined by Carl Schmitt in the "Theory of the Partisan".

⁶ This idea is examined in more detail by Carl Schmitt in his "Theory of the Partisan".

⁷ This has been recently emphasized by Tatiana Stanovaya in <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/01/putin-war-ukraine-west-misconceptions>.



Thousands of Syrians stream across the border into Iraq in search of shelter

REFUGEES...

The trip to a safer world

‘When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him’ (Bible)

When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him’ (Bible) The notion of ‘refugees’ was present, even in very ancient times... people trying to desperately escape dangerous situations, seeking refuge elsewhere... Joseph’s and Mary’s escape with baby Jesus to Egypt, in order to save him, the expulsion of Jews from Spain in the 15th century, the persecution of the Huguenots in France after 1685 are just the first examples that come to mind. In fact, the word ‘refugee’ was first used in this context to describe the fleeing Protestants from France, after being persecuted by religious authorities. A few centuries later, World War I brought the first big exodus of people. More than a million after Germany invaded Belgium. Before the start of the Second World War, millions of Jews were forced to leave Germany and Austria, including some famous figures, such as Albert Einstein. Much later, other celebrities, including

famous singer Gloria Estefan, Bob Marley, Freddy Mercury or politicians such as Madeleine Albright were forced, at some point in their lives, to run away from some kind of oppression, war or persecution. Social status or money do not count. The end of World War II left Europe in ruins and in a terrible humanitarian crisis never encountered before. It is thought that more than 40 million people were displaced from their own countries. Some tried to escape war and Nazi occupation, others ran away from the ‘Jew hunt’ and others (about eleven million) including the concentration camp survivors, prisoners of war and forced labor survivors, were left in Allied-occupied Germany in 1945. No words can fully describe the drama of those days. And yet, almost 80 years later, the world is in a similar phase, with refugee numbers rising sharply by the day.

Over the past ten years, the number of refugees has doubled. Millions of people worldwide have been forced to leave their homes or even their countries.



Iranian refugee in a Belgian shelter

After more than a decade of destruction and war in Syria, there are now more than 13.5 million Syrians - about half of the country’s entire population - who were forced to flee the country or at least to internally relocate. With 11.1 million people in desperate need of humanitarian assistance and at least half of them children, this is one of the worst humanitarian crises of the 21st century. (Source: World Vision). The economic impact of the war has driven the Syrian population into poverty and left people in desperate need for help.

In 2015, about 1.3 million people, mostly Syrians, came to Europe to request asylum, the most in a single year since World War II. It was a period of significantly increased movement of refugees in Europe and has led to serious conflicting views in the member states of the European Union. Refugee quotas were proposed and discussed while the most affected countries, like Greece or Italy have seen their most marginal territories assaulted by endless waves of migrants. Tragedies have happened, accidents have occurred... The image of a young boy found lying face-down on a beach near the Turkish resort of Bodrum made headlines worldwide in 2015 and has certainly sensitized the entire world. Germany, in an unprecedented move, officially opened its border to more than a million refugees. Angela Merkel's famous words 'We can do it!' were met with reluctance in the country, but Germans tried to work things out and find sustainable solutions to integrate these people into their society and work force. Other countries in Europe, like North Macedonia, Hungary, Serbia, or Montenegro, were more reluctant to welcome them. Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees in Europe, with Syrians representing the vast majority of them (officially, 3.6 million are Syrian).

Refugees are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, children, with the



Ukrainians at the border with Moldova

same hopes and ambitions as us, except that a twist of fate has bound their lives to a global refugee crisis on an unprecedented scale.' (Khaled Hosseini).

Yemen is another example of humanitarian disaster. After more than seven years of an internal violent conflict, about 66% of Yemen's citizens (20 million Yemenis) are now entirely dependent on international assistance. 4.3 million people are currently internally displaced, living in terrible conditions and being constantly exposed to eviction and starvation.

Afghanistan, (where one in ten people fled to neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Iran), Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Myanmar, with its minority Rohingya community, South Sudan, the largest refugees

crisis on the African continent (2.6 million) or Eritrea, where 10% of the population is currently living as refugees. These are some of the regions where urgent and constant support is needed.

Venezuela has also seen about 3.6 million people fleeing the country in recent years, trying to escape poverty and look for a better life elsewhere.

The distribution of refugees is terribly unbalanced with developing countries hosting 86% of the world's refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad. The Least Developed Countries provide asylum to 27% of them.

February 2022 brought another part of the world to attention. It had happened 80 years ago on the European continent, but this time, it was totally unexpected. It is a sad



© UNHCR

Somali refugee family sits near their shelter in Kharaz refugee camp, Yemen

premiere, as it is officially the worst refugee crisis in Europe since the 1940s. When Ukraine, a country with a total population of 44 million, making it the second largest in Europe, was attacked by Russia, people fled over the borders, to the neighboring countries. Millions have headed west, mainly to Poland, but also to the other countries such as the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia or Hungary. More than 450.000 people transited the small country of Moldova, with its 2, 7 million residents. About 100.000 Ukrainian refugees decided to stay, making Moldova currently the country with the most refugees per capita in the world.



© UNHCR/1953

UNHCR's first task in 1951 was to help an estimated 1 million mainly European civilians, including these refugees in a camp in Germany, still uprooted in the aftermath of World War II

Because of this unexpected development, 2022 has seen the highest number of refugees worldwide. For the first time in history, the total number of displaced individuals (including refugees) has reached a staggering 100 million.

The United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM) declared at the beginning of May 2022 that more than 8 million people were internally displaced in Ukraine

(mainly fleeing the most attacked regions of Kharkiv, Donetsk and Kyiv) and another 7 million (mainly women and children) have been recorded leaving Ukraine. More than a million have sought asylum in Poland, others in Moldova, Romania or Slovakia. Germany is also one of the main European destinations for the Ukrainian refugees. With much of its infrastructure partially or entirely damaged, Ukraine has seen in recent months its biggest human exodus. Because of the scale of this disaster, a regional Refugee Response Plan has been initiated. UN and NGOs are focusing on supporting the affected persons and provide humanitarian aid as logistical support.

The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is a UN agency meant to help and protect refugees, displaced communities and stateless people, and also to assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to another country. UNHCR has been one of the main actors involved in protecting the people in need from the very beginning.

It is a non-profit global organization initially created in 1950 to support the millions of displaced Europeans, after World War II and had a mandate of only 3 years at first. Just two years after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize for its work, in 1954, when 200,000 Hungarians had fled to Austria in order to escape persecution in their country, the organization stepped in and helped with their resettlement. UNHCR response to numerous crisis on the African continent or in Asia and Latin America have also shaped the way other NGOs deal with refugees, setting standards and earning another Nobel Prize for Peace, in 1981. The organization gradually expanded and today, more than 80 years later, it works in 135 countries with around 18,000 employees, helping millions. More than 20 million refugees are currently under UNHCR protection. 'This must serve as a wake-up call for more action to promote peace and address all causes of forced displacement' said Filippo Grandi, the 11th United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He also added that

100 million displaced people 'is a record that should never have been set'. Indeed, the total number of displaced people equals now the population of a large country like Vietnam, or about 1% of the world population!

Funded mostly by voluntary contributions from governments and the European Union, the UNHCR was launched in 1950 with a small budget of just 300,000 USD. However, because of its increased needs, the annual budget reached 9.15 billion USD in 2021. From the smallest items to heavy duty vehicles, the agency's work involves high-level and constant logistic and organizational efforts. It also follows the 1951 Refugee Convention rules and the 1967 Protocol, both core documents for the UNHCR. One of the main principles of the Refugee Convention (signed by 149 states) is 'the principle of nonrefoulement', meaning that refugees should not be returned against their will to the countries of origin, where they could face threats to their life or freedom. On their website, it is clearly stated that the UNHCR 'serves as a guardian of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol'.



© Unhcr.org

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi

The UNHCR is present in the most affected areas and in the refugee camps. For instance, in Poland which remains the main country of arrival for Ukrainian refugees, (more than 3.5 million crossed the border since February 24), even though the pace of arrivals has slowed down lately. There are still around 20,000 daily border crossings, with also more "pendular" movements, as people go back and forth across the border to Ukraine. As the war is still raging, UNHCR expects more Ukrainian



© UNHCR/Chris Melzer

Refugees from Ukraine enter Poland at the Medyka border crossing

refugees to go to Poland and other neighbouring countries. From the 1.1 million who have registered with the Polish authorities, 94 % are women and children. For them, the UNHCR initiated a threemonth cash assistance programme, established in eight main areas hosting refugees, including Warsaw, Krakow, Poznan, Wroclaw, Ostroda, Gdynia and Gdansk. Over 100,000 refugees from Ukraine have already received financial support from the UNHCR, covering basic needs (rent, food and medicine). In Sudan, the UNHCR is working together with local authorities and partners to provide emergency shelter, food, hygiene essential products and clean water to the many refugees coming from the Tigray region in Ethiopia. Last years, there were also information campaigns on COVID-19 prevention, with the distribution of soap and 50,000 face masks at border points. the UNHCR also helps with the registration of new arrivals from Ethiopia.

In Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency has displaced nearly 2.4 million people. Although there have been improvements lately, civilians in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad are still affected by human rights violations, violence and forced recruitment. So, the UNHCR is present with its local office, and safeguards the welfare of millions.

By the end of 2019, Greece was hosting over 186,000 refugees and asylumseekers from countries like concentrated on the protection of these people, the country being one of UNHCR's largest operations in

2019 on the European continent. Last year, the Greek government took over the running of all refugee camps and the EU-funded cash assistance program, which was formerly run by the UN.

With its almost 5 million refugees, Turkey has been the largest refugee hosting country in the world for the past several years.

The financial requirements for supporting this vast number of people are huge. Turkey has repeatedly demanded increased funding from the EU in order to protect refugees and stop them from going further into Europe. According to the UNHCR, their own funding for required regular programmes and the Syria Situation Response in Turkey is around 349 million USD in 2022.

The presence of refugees in Turkey has caused tensions with locals,

especially now, as the country is in economic turmoil. But president Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared that "we will never expel refugees from this land. Our door is wide open to them".

Worldwide, Lebanon is a country where nearly a quarter of its total population are refugees. Around 1.5 million people are currently displaced there as a result of the civil war in Syria. Refugees began entering Lebanon in large numbers since 2011 and sadly, 90% of these Syrian refugees are now living in extreme poverty. The UNHCR with its local office supports both Lebanese communities and refugees, coordinating the protection response, together with the Lebanese Government, other UN agencies and partners, through the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan.

Over the years, the UNHCR has wisely associated its name to prominent international figures, leading to an increased popularity and attracting more donations and contributions. Famous American actress, Angelina Jolie, is now a Special Envoy for UNHCR, actress Cate Blanchett, supermodel Alek Wek, designer Giorgio Armani or footballer Alphonso Davies (himself a former refugee, born in a refugee camp in Ghana) are just a few examples of Goodwill Ambassadors of the organization. They all give part of their time and energy and use their names to support the refugee cause. Luciano Pavarotti, the magnificent Italian tenor who



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Refugees in Turkey



#WithRefugees

initiated the grandiose, annual concerts 'Pavarotti and Friends' and raised money for UNHCR projects in Kosovo, was named United Nations Messenger of Peace in 1998, and awarded the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award in 2001 for his generous and continuous contribution.



Luciano Pavarotti

The UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award is given each year since 1954, to a person or organization, as an official recognition of exceptional commitment to supporting refugees, displaced or stateless people. The latest laureate of this medal is the humanitarian organization

Jeel Albena Association for Humanitarian Development (JAAHD), as recognition to their service for displaced people in Yemen. The association managed to help more than 60,000 people and built 18,000 shelters for the needy, despite the dangerous and difficult on-site conditions.

The UNHCR and the social media platform Tik Tok have recently launched a hashtag challenge and a live concert series. #TheWorldNeeds is a campaign of solidarity with refugees, trying to use music to bring people closer together for this cause. This unique humanitarian campaign encourages artists to spread the message of global support for refugees and calls for safe and legal access to asylum. The famous song 'What the world needs now' by Dionne Warwick has been chosen as a centerpiece of the online challenge. Tik Tok has opened a dedicated information page where people can find out about ways to support and donate for refugees. All donations will help the UNHCR to fund some critical and urgent humanitarian programs. As the agency's Director of External Relations, Dominique Hyde suggested, "UNHCR needs

more partners like Tik Tok, to bring a awareness to those who need it most".

In 2022, the Oscar awards ceremony, with its 1 billion audience worldwide was a display of support for refugees and the perfect opportunity to spread awareness. Lots of A-class movie stars wore blue ribbons with the sign #withrefugees and used the occasion to affirm their solidarity with refugees around the globe. Also, five of this year's nominated movies directly addressed themes of displacement and were refugee-related. UNHCR tweeted on Oscar night "Five Oscar-nominated films tell the stories of conflict, displacement and the remarkable strength of the human spirit".

People have to be aware of the global refugee situation and need to show empathy and solidarity with others in need. "It is the obligation of every person born in a safer room to open the door when someone in danger knocks. Giving refuge should be thought of as an act of compassion rather than a gift" (Dina Nayeri, Iranian novelist and former refugee).

Alexandra Paucescu



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Injecting methamphetamine

EUROPE'S CHANGING ROLE IN EXPANDING COCAINE AND METHAMPHETAMINE MARKETS

2022 EU drug markets analyses from the EMCDDA and EUROPOL

Europe's role in international drug production and trade is changing, according to new analyses released today by the EU drugs agency (EMCDDA) and Europol. In an in-depth look at the cocaine and methamphetamine markets, the agencies point to increased production activities in Europe and how collaboration between criminal groups worldwide is creating new security threats and expanding the market.



© EMCDDA

EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel

The new analyses cover trends along the supply chain from production and trafficking to distribution and use. They describe a large and expanding cocaine market and a currently small, but steadily growing, methamphetamine market in the EU. They also warn of the heightened threat posed by innovation in production processes and chemical precursors, and a growing range of products that may be hazardous to consumers.

EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel says: 'Our new analyses show that we are now facing a growing threat from a more diverse and dynamic drug market, that is driven by closer collaboration between

European and international criminal organisations. This has resulted in record levels of drug availability, rising violence and corruption, and greater health problems. In response, we need to be even more sensitive to signals coming from the market and invest in greater coordinated action, not only in Europe, but also with our international partners in producer and transit countries.'

Europe is a major synthetic drug producing region, both for domestic and external markets. Increasingly, it is also a key trans-shipment point for drugs originating elsewhere and destined for other world regions. For both cocaine

and methamphetamine, there is evidence that Latin American and European criminal groups are partnering in production, trafficking and distribution.



© Europeaeu

Europol's Executive Director Catherine De Bolle

Europol's Executive Director Catherine De Bolle stresses: 'The trade in illegal drugs continues to dominate serious and organised crime in the EU, and nearly 40% of the criminal networks operating at the international level reported to Europol are active in drug trafficking. Fighting this illegal trade is a key priority for Europol and the EU. Today's analysis supports us in understanding the market dynamics and is crucial for formulating effective law enforcement responses.'

Today's findings draw on data and information from the EMCDDA's drug monitoring system and on Europol's operational intelligence on organised crime. Taking a threat assessment approach, the agencies present key areas for action at EU and Member State level. These include: rapidly identifying emerging health and security threats, investing in forensic and toxicological capacity to keep pace with innovation, targeting the illicit drug supply chain and reducing vulnerabilities at external borders.

COCAINE - RECORD SEIZURES AND INCREASING PRODUCTION IN EUROPE

Today's analysis shows that the European cocaine market is expanding, driven by unprecedented levels of trafficking leading to historically high availability. High levels of cocaine production in South America have resulted in record quantities seized in Europe. Europe is also a destination and transit zone for cocaine bound for the Middle East and Asia. More production is also now taking place inside Europe, indicating changes in the region's role in the international cocaine trade. A large variety of individuals and criminal networks shape the complex supply of cocaine to, and within, the EU. The potential for new smokable cocaine products to emerge on the market raises concerns about future health risks.

Cocaine is the second most commonly consumed illicit drug in the EU after cannabis, with a market retail value in 2020 estimated at EUR 10.5 billion (range EUR 7.7

billion to 12.8 billion). Around 3.5 million Europeans (15–64 years) report having used the drug in the past year, 14 million in their lifetime. While cocaine use remains concentrated in the south and west of Europe, the market appears to be spreading eastward.

For the fourth consecutive year, record amounts of cocaine (214.6 tonnes) were seized in Europe in 2020, a 6% increase from 2019, suggesting high availability of the drug. Three countries - Belgium (70 t), the Netherlands (49 t) and Spain (37 t) - accounted for around three-quarters of the European total, but large quantities were also seized by Italy (13.4 t), France (13.1 t), Germany (11 t) and Portugal (10 t). Most cocaine seized in Europe arrives in maritime shipping containers. Entry points of cocaine shipments are diversifying, with greater amounts seized in ports in Eastern Europe and Turkey.



© Montenegro Police

A ton of cocaine hidden in a shipment of bananas in 2021 seized by the Montenegro police

Most cocaine manufacturing still takes place in Colombia, Bolivia and Peru. The new analysis describes



A fishing boat carrying 3 tonnes of cocaine intercepted off the Canary Islands on April 13 by Spanish customs officers





Narco submarine seized by the Spanish National Police

however, how cocaine processing is now taking place inside Europe (mainly in Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands). Large quantities of chemical precursors used in cocaine production have been seized from illicit production laboratories and at European borders. Recent data also suggest that large amounts of cocaine powder have been processed in Europe from intermediary products, such as coca paste and cocaine base. Some of these are smuggled from South America in carrier materials (e.g. charcoal, plastics) and then extracted in specialised facilities. Availability in Europe of large amounts of cocaine base and coca paste creates a risk of new smokable cocaine products (e.g. ‘crack’) emerging on European consumer markets, posing considerable health and social risks.

Nevertheless, the latest analysis shows the growing threat posed by this drug in the region, as availability increases and use spreads to new areas. Methamphetamine is produced inside the EU to supply both domestic and external markets. Europe is also a destination and transit zone for this drug from other production hubs (e.g. Iran, Nigeria, Mexico) bound for Asia and Oceania. The emerging methamphetamine industry in Afghanistan poses a threat to the EU, given competitive prices and long-established drug trafficking routes to Europe.

Today’s analysis shows that long-term trends point to a steady market expansion. Between 2010 and 2020, the number of methamphetamine seizures in the EU 27 more than doubled (from 3 000 to 6 200), while the quantities seized increased by 477% to 2.2 tonnes in 2020 (EU 27).

In 2020, nine EU Member States reported the dismantling of 215 methamphetamine laboratories. Historically production in Europe typically occurred in small, but widespread, ‘kitchen’ laboratories in Czechia and its neighbouring countries. While these still exist, there is now growing concern about production facilities located in Belgium and the Netherlands, where methamphetamine can be produced on a considerably larger scale.

Methamphetamine facilities detected in Belgium and the Netherlands have increased in size, sophistication and output since 2019. Recognising the profitability of methamphetamine, European synthetic drug producers are now seen to be working with Mexican

criminal groups to develop production processes and exploit existing infrastructure in Europe. In addition to methamphetamine produced in Europe, multi-tonne quantities of the drug originating in Mexico have been seized in the EU since 2019, also implying collaboration between European and Mexican criminal networks.



Methamphetamine

An additional development is the production of methamphetamine in Afghanistan, although currently the country does not appear to be a major source of supply to the EU. Nevertheless, given the relatively low wholesale price of Afghan methamphetamine, criminal networks may consider it economically attractive to traffic the drug into the EU along established heroin trafficking routes.

Methamphetamine use in Europe has historically been concentrated in Czechia and Slovakia, but use appears to be spreading elsewhere. Latest wastewater data reveal that the drug is also present in Belgium, Cyprus, the east of Germany, Spain, Turkey and several northern European countries (e.g. Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland,



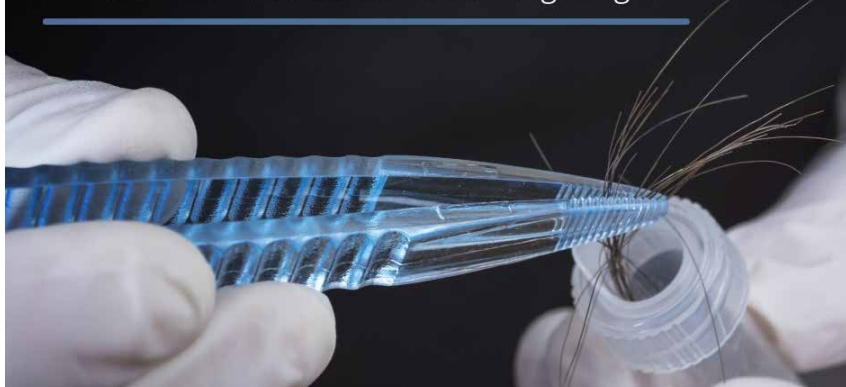
About 700kg of seized crystal meth

METHAMPHETAMINE - A SMALL, BUT STEADILY GROWING, MARKET

Methamphetamine - the most widely consumed synthetic stimulant drug in the world - still plays a relatively small role in Europe’s drug market.

Hair drug testing

an innovative method for monitoring drug use



Testing for drugs in hair sample

Netherlands), competition between drug suppliers has intensified, resulting in an increase in violent clashes. The expanding EU cocaine market has brought with it a rise in homicides, kidnappings and intimidation, with violence spilling over to those outside the drug market (e.g. lawyers, government officials, journalists). Meanwhile, the growth of large-scale production of methamphetamine in Europe has the potential to 'drive more corruption along the supply chain, creating a parallel economy'. Corruption has been identified as a key threat in the EU, with almost 60% of criminal networks estimated to use corruption as a facilitator.

Norway). Of the 58 cities with data on methamphetamine residues in municipal wastewater for 2020 and 2021, around a half (27) reported an increase.

seen in traditional drug-producing countries, are increasingly seen within the EU. The analyses highlight that, in some EU Member States (Belgium, Spain, France,

Environmental damage, risks and costs: A prominent cross-cutting theme in today's findings is the environmental impact of drug

With greater amounts of methamphetamine present on the European market, there is concern around increased demand for the drug, particularly in its smokable form ('crystal meth'). This could have long-term implications, including a greater burden on health systems and a threat to public safety.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Logistics - an emerging parallel business: While established criminal networks often manage their own activities, others now outsource a range of services along the supply chain. Today's analyses show how logistical support has become a parallel business, with some criminal groups specialised in providing the chemicals, equipment and expertise needed to set up and operate production facilities. Analysis of encrypted criminal communications, through recent high-profile operations, have shown that trade is often reliant on a web of facilitators and brokers who connect producers, transporters and distributors. European criminal networks are boosting production efficiency drawing on the know-how of their counterparts in Latin American drug-producing regions.

Rising violence and corruption: Violence and corruption, long

EU Drug Markets: In-depth analysis

Amphetamine

EU Drug Markets

Cannabis

EU Drug Markets

Cocaine

EU Drug Markets

Heroin

EU Drug Markets

Methamphetamine

EU Drug Markets

MDMA

EU Drug Markets

NPS

EU Drug Markets

Impacts, drivers and responses

EU Drug Markets

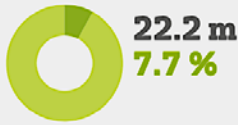
AT A GLANCE – ESTIMATES OF DRUG USE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Cannabis

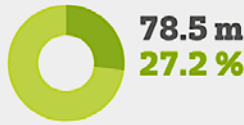


Adults (15-64)

Last year use

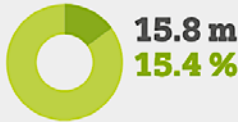


Lifetime use



Young adults (15-34)

Last year use



National estimates of use in last year



Cocaine

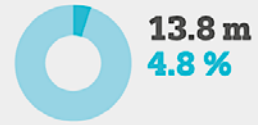


Adults (15-64)

Last year use

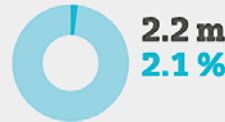


Lifetime use



Young adults (15-34)

Last year use



National estimates of use in last year



MDMA



Adults (15-64)

Last year use

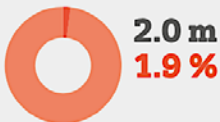


Lifetime use



Young adults (15-34)

Last year use



National estimates of use in last year

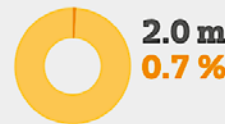


Amphetamines

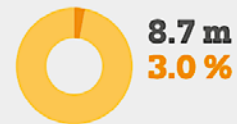


Adults (15-64)

Last year use

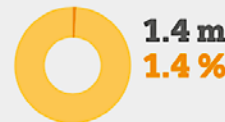


Lifetime use



Young adults (15-34)

Last year use



National estimates of use in last year



Heroin and other opioids



High-risk opioid users

1.0 million

510 000

opioid users received substitution treatment in 2019

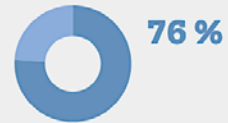
Drug treatment requests

Principal drug in about 26 % of all drug treatment requests in the European Union



Fatal overdoses

Opioids were found in 76 % of fatal overdoses



© EMCDDA

production. This includes the dumping of chemical waste, which can result in ecological damage, public safety risks and high clean-up costs. Fatalities have been recorded in synthetic drug production laboratories in Belgium and the Netherlands in recent years, due to fires, explosions or suffocation from carbon monoxide or other toxic fumes.

COVID-19 impact on markets: Despite the unprecedented disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, cocaine and methamphetamine markets in the EU have continued to evolve. Analyses show that COVID-19 restrictions were felt more at retail than wholesale level, where cocaine trafficking via maritime routes continued at pre-pandemic levels.

Retail drug markets were disrupted during the early lockdowns, although dealers quickly adapted using new methods (encrypted messaging services, social media apps, online sources and home deliveries). In 2020, methamphetamine was one of the drugs most often seized in postal consignments.

Source : EMCDDA and EUROPOL

TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

Let's swim, but in style!

This year's trends are so diverse that there is swimwear to suit everyone's wishes. Cut-out bathing suits, sporty style, and shiny fabrics...you're spoiled for choice!

Thanks to the data collected on sales sites (*), we have identified the strongest trends and the most desirable swimwear models for this summer

Tankinis rock!

To be precise, the tankini is a women's two-piece swimsuit, combining a top half, styled like a tank top or a crop top with a bikini bottom. The first and most obvious advantage is that tankinis give you more coverage, which means more flattery and confidence for you.



bananamoon.com



speedo.com

Athleisure one-pieces

While the itsy-bitsy bikini might be a swimwear classic, it seems like functionality is becoming more relevant as swimwear begins to overlap with ready-to-wear. Sporty one-pieces reminiscent of 90's Baywatch bombshell, Pamela Anderson are making their comeback. Full coverage wetsuits are also popular, proving to have both a fashionable athleisure look, as well as providing additional protection against UV rays.

Cut! It! Out!

Fashion enthusiasts spotted the cut-out trend on several runways this season. Let's choose among these daring suits, showing off some extra skin, but ... beware of awkward tan lines!



bananamoon.com



bananamoon.com



guess.eu



guess.eu



guess.eu

Lurex swimsuits

Last but not least, swimsuits in lurex or sequins are already very popular this season, especially as a way to transition easily from the beach to the party. Some brands have created "Sunset-to-Sunrise" collections.



(* Data collected by Stylight, the world's leading online search platform for Fashion, Beauty, and Design (stylight.com/insights).



FLYING BLIND

By Peter Robison

THE 737 MAX TRAGEDY AND THE FALL OF BOEING

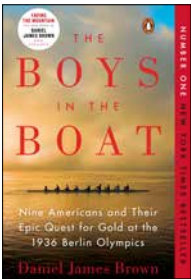
Boeing is a century-old titan of industry. It played a major role in the early days of commercial flight, World War II bombing missions, and moon landings. The planemaker remains a cornerstone of the U.S. economy, as well as a linchpin in the awesome routine of modern air travel. But in 2018 and 2019, two crashes of the Boeing 737 MAX 8 killed 346 people. The crashes exposed a shocking

pattern of malfeasance, leading to the biggest crisis in the company's history—and one of the costliest corporate scandals ever.

How did things go so horribly wrong at Boeing?

Flying Blind is the definitive exposé of the disasters that transfixed the world. Drawing from exclusive interviews with current and former employees of Boeing and the FAA; industry executives and analysts; and family members of the victims, it reveals how a broken corporate culture paved the way for catastrophe. It shows how in the race to beat the competition and reward top executives, Boeing skimped on testing, pressured employees to meet unrealistic deadlines, and convinced regulators to put planes into service without properly equipping them or their pilots for flight. It examines how the company, once a treasured American innovator, became obsessed with the bottom line, putting shareholders over customers, employees, and communities.

By Bloomberg investigative journalist Peter Robison, who covered Boeing as a beat reporter during the company's fateful merger with McDonnell Douglas in the late '90s, this is the story of a business gone wildly off course. At once riveting and disturbing, it shows how an iconic company fell prey to a win-at-all-costs mentality, threatening an industry and endangering countless lives.



THE BOYS IN THE BOAT

By Daniel James Brown

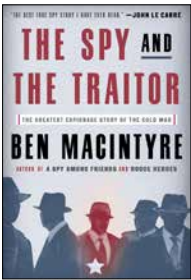
NINE AMERICANS AND THEIR EPIC QUEST FOR GOLD AT THE 1936 BERLIN OLYMPICS

Soon to be a major motion picture directed by George Clooney

For readers of *Unbroken*, out of the depths of the Depression comes an irresistible story about beating the odds and finding hope in the most desperate of times—the improbable, intimate

account of how nine working-class boys from the American West showed the world at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin what true grit really meant.

It was an unlikely quest from the start. With a team composed of the sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers, the University of Washington's eight-oar crew team was never expected to defeat the elite teams of the East Coast and Great Britain, yet they did, going on to shock the world by defeating the German team rowing for Adolf Hitler. The emotional heart of the tale lies with Joe Rantz, a teenager without family or prospects, who rows not only to regain his shattered self-regard but also to find a real place for himself in the world. Drawing on the boys' own journals and vivid memories of a once-in-a-lifetime shared dream, Brown has created an unforgettable portrait of an era, a celebration of a remarkable achievement, and a chronicle of one extraordinary young man's personal quest.



THE SPY AND THE TRAITOR

By Ben Macintyre

THE GREATEST ESPIONAGE STORY OF THE COLD WAR

"The best true spy story I have ever read."—JOHN LE CARRÉ

Named a Best Book of the Year by *The Economist* • Shortlisted for the Baillie Giffords Prize in Nonfiction

If anyone could be considered a Russian counterpart to the infamous British double-agent

Kim Philby, it was Oleg Gordievsky. The son of two KGB agents and the product of the best Soviet institutions, the savvy, sophisticated Gordievsky grew to see his nation's communism as both criminal and philistine. He took his first posting for Russian intelligence in 1968 and eventually became the Soviet Union's top man in London, but from 1973 on he was secretly working for MI6. For nearly a decade, as the Cold War reached its twilight, Gordievsky helped the West turn the tables on the KGB, exposing Russian spies and helping

to foil countless intelligence plots, as the Soviet leadership grew increasingly paranoid at the United States's nuclear first-strike capabilities and brought the world closer to the brink of war. Desperate to keep the circle of trust close, MI6 never revealed Gordievsky's name to its counterparts in the CIA, which in turn grew obsessed with figuring out the identity of Britain's obviously top-level source. Their obsession ultimately doomed Gordievsky: the CIA officer assigned to identify him was none other than Aldrich Ames, the man who would become infamous for secretly spying for the Soviets.

Unfolding the delicious three-way gamesmanship between America, Britain, and the Soviet Union, and culminating in the gripping cinematic beat-by-beat of Gordievsky's nail-biting escape from Moscow in 1985, Ben Macintyre's latest may be his best yet. Like the greatest novels of John Le Carré, it brings readers deep into a world of treachery and betrayal, where the lines bleed between the personal and the professional, and one man's hatred of communism had the power to change the future of nations.



KLEPTOPIA

By Tom Burgis

HOW DIRTY MONEY IS CONQUERING THE WORLD

In this shocking, meticulously reported work of narrative nonfiction, an award-winning investigative journalist exposes "capitalism's monster"—global kleptocracy—and reveals how it is corrupting the world around us.

They are everywhere, the thieves and their people. Masters of secrecy. Until now we have detected

their presence only by what they leave behind. A body in a burned-out Audi. Workers riddled with bullets in the Kazakh Desert. A rigged election in Zimbabwe. A British banker silenced and humiliated for trying to expose the truth about the City of London.

They have amassed more money than most countries. But what they are really stealing is power.

In this real-life thriller packed with jaw-dropping revelations, award-winning investigative journalist Tom Burgis weaves together four stories that reveal a terrifying global web of corruption: the troublemaker from Basingstoke who stumbles on the secrets of a Swiss bank, the ex-Soviet billionaire constructing a private empire, the righteous Canadian lawyer with a mysterious client, and the Brooklyn crook protected by the CIA.

Glimpses of this shadowy world have emerged over the years. In *Kleptopia*, Burgis connects the dots. He follows the dirty money that is flooding the global economy, emboldening dictators, and poisoning democracies. From the Kremlin to Beijing, Harare to Riyadh, Paris to the White House, the trail shows something even more sinister: the thieves are uniting. And the human cost will be great.



PUTIN'S PLAYBOOK : RUSSIA'S SECRET PLAN TO DEFEAT AMERICA

By Rebekah Koffler

HOW DIRTY MONEY IS CONQUERING THE WORLD

The "Russian collusion" hoax not only poisoned American politics but also sowed confusion about the real Russian threat to the United States. President Vladimir Putin wasn't colluding with the

Trump campaign, but as a former U.S. intelligence specialist makes clear in this eye-opening book, the judo-loving ex-KGB agent most certainly has a plan to defeat the United States

Born and raised in the Soviet Union, Rebekah Koffler came to America as a young woman. After 9/11, she joined the Defense Intelligence Agency, devoting her career to protecting her new country. Now she reveals in chilling detail Putin's long-range plan-- his "playbook"--to weaken and subdue the United States, preparing for the war that he believes is inevitable.

With the insight of a native, Koffler explains how Russians, formed by centuries of wartorn history, understand the world and their national destiny. The collapse of the Soviet empire, which Putin experienced as a vulnerable KGB agent in East Germany, was a catastrophic humiliation. Seeing himself as the modern "Czar Vladimir" of a unique Slavic nation at war with the West, he is determined to restore Russia to its place as a great power.

Koffler's analysis is enriched by her deeply personal account of her life in the Soviet Union. Devoted to her adopted homeland but concerned about the complacency of her fellow citizens, she appreciates American freedoms as only a survivor of totalitarianism can. An opportunity to view ourselves and the world through the eyes of our adversary, *Putin's Playbook* is a rare and compelling testimony that we ignore at our peril.

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