

# EUROPE DIPLOMATIC

MAGAZINE

EVA KAILI

**Former EP Vice President at  
the heart of the turmoil**



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# IN THIS ISSUE

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*Nikola Hendrickx*

# NOT VICTIMS BUT ACCOMPLICES

## The EU's "Qatargate" scandal continues to claim more victims







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President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola

It was the author of the dystopian novel “1984”, George Orwell, who wrote: “A people that elect corrupt politicians, imposters, thieves and traitors are not victims... but accomplices.” Now the European Parliament is riven with claims, counterclaims, and accusations of criminality for gain; the only people enjoying this sorry debacle would probably be the British politicians who campaigned for Brexit, although the deterioration of the UK since it left the EU is apparently making the citizens of other countries less keen these days on the idea of leaving the Union. Most people must surely know about the claims that Qatar bribed some important and influential MEPs to vote in ways its government wanted and that would prove lucrative to the country. The Parliament has strict rules on honesty and transparency which some MEPs seem to have ignored, although nothing has yet been absolutely proved in a court of law. MEPs, however, have been given the go-ahead to change the Parliament’s internal rule book to provide the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) with powers to demand the lifting of legal immunity from members if needed. During its short existence, the EPPO has tracked down billions of euros in possible damages. The President of the Parliament, Roberta Metsola, wants tougher rules on meetings with lobbyists and campaigners, with the same rules also applying to staff. The changes were adopted unanimously.

Followers of all the various religious faiths are supposed to be opposed to the use of criminal means for self-advancement. But it happens. It is strictly forbidden in the Quran, just as it is in the Christian Bible and other “Holy books”, but even the most devout countries have found the path to righteousness strewn with thorns and nettles, and with a few savage beasts lurking in the undergrowth, not to mention the

demons of temptation (money, in other words). However, the preachers of the various faiths continually urge their faithful followers (perhaps not quite as faithful as they would like, at least not in every case) to shun sin and adopt the path of purity and innocence. “Mankind is prone to corruption anywhere in the world,” wrote Imam Khamenei, an Islamic scholar, “Any human who does not practice self-observation is prone to corruption.” He was clearly a sensible chap. All faiths oppose corruption in principle and find it hard to forgive, according to their scriptures, although theoretically they all forgive in the end. Forgiveness is more-or-less inevitable, if rarely earned. And it carries a cost. The price of forgiveness for corrupt politicians and officials seems to be resignation from high office and handing back the improperly acquired loot.

Corrupt activities happen even in countries sworn to honesty and bound by religious practices. “May the curse of Allah be upon the briber and the bribe recipient,” says the Qur’an. It could hardly be clearer. And yet, of course, bribery and corruption still happen in Islamic countries, just as they do in countries that observe different faiths, or none at all. There may be a large number of religious beliefs, all different, but greed is truly universal and everywhere it is supposedly frowned upon. Most people seem to want to be seen as honest, especially if they are followers of a faith and observe its teachings. There are a lot of “would-be” saints, but very few who qualify for a seat in one of the seven levels of Heaven in which most Muslims are said to believe.

In the Qatargate scandal now gripping the European Parliament, four people have so far been charged with corruption and money laundering. Others seem certain to follow. Matters have moved quite quickly; it was only in December that Belgian authorities launched an investigation of current and former members of the European Parliament who had been accused of accepting bribes in return for voting in ways demanded by Qatar and, it’s alleged, Morocco. One of the four to be charged is Greek Socialist MEP Eva Kaili, who was Vice-President until she was removed by a landslide vote of 625 to 1. She – and, for that matter, Qatar – deny any wrongdoing. Now the Parliament and its president, Roberta Metsola are left with the job of sweeping out these “Augean stables”, which had been one of the labours of Hercules in



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Belgium’s Minister of Justice, Vincent Van Quickenborne



Greek mythology: a messy, difficult job, as Kaili, who is Greek, should know. Prior to her arrest she had served as one of the European Parliament's fourteen vice-presidents. By the time you read this, a new vice-president will have taken her place.

## I No Stone Unturned?

She will probably also be out of the prison where she has been held since 9 December, together with her partner Francesco Giorgi. Like her, he has appealed for release. Both deny any wrongdoing. It's a complicated investigation, involving money laundering, corruption and organised crime and it allegedly implicates not only MEPs and some of their staff, but also the states of Qatar and Morocco. Qatar denies any involvement in trying to buy influence with the European Parliament, but investigators in Belgium, Italy and Greece who have been looking into the affair have seized €1.5-million in cash while simultaneously seizing computers and mobile phones and charging four people (at the time of writing; by the time you are reading this there could be more) with various offences connected to the allegations. Belgium's Minister of Justice, Vincent Van Quickenborne has vowed to "leave no stone unturned" in his detailed probe into alleged corruption. In fact, it's now said to be the biggest such investigation in a quarter of a century, with law enforcement officials having both Qatar and Morocco in their sights, which makes it especially unusual. Investigations on this scale normally involve allegations against criminal gangs, not countries.

It's not plain-sailing, however; some lawyers are saying that information is being leaked, despite the seizure of mobile phones, computers and, of course, vast sums in cash. The leak of key documents, though, is worrying, with some experts saying that fair judicial procedure is no longer possible, with defence lawyers able to use the leaks to weaken cases against their clients. Van Quickenborne now requires round-the-clock protection from the gangs that ultimately lie behind the whole sordid affair. Now another Socialist MEP, Belgium's Maria Arena stands accused of corruption for not recording that her trip to the Qatari capital, Doha, to take part in a conference, as well as her accommodation there, had been paid for by the Qatar government. She denied that the event had been co-organised by the European Parliament, despite photographs showing her speaking from a podium with the Parliament's logo. She has blamed her secretary for failing to declare the foreign travel. It was "an error" Arena said, that she has ordered to be put right. None-the-less, she could still face a financial penalty of up to €10,140.

Meanwhile, Belgian investigators have now asked for immunity to be lifted for two more MEPs suspected of involvement in the scandal: Marc Tarabella, a Belgian, and Italian Andrea Cozzolino. Furthermore, former Italian MEP Antonio Panzeri, together with his wife and daughter, saw in the New Year under arrest, instead of in a luxurious Marrakesh hotel, funded by the Moroccan government. He is thought to have been employed to improve Qatar's image ahead of the World Cup. Panzeri had headed EU-Moroccan relations until he lost his seat in the 2019 election.

It was in July 2022 that Francophone Office Central pour la Répression de la Corruption (OCRC) and the Dutch language Centrale Dienst voor de Bestrijding van Corruptie



Socialist MEP, Marc Tarabella



Pier Antonio Panzeri, former Member of the European Parliament

(CDBC), both part of the Belgian Federal Police, (those unfamiliar with Belgium must be aware that both French and Dutch (Flemish) are spoken there so official bodies must be duplicated in order to respect both languages) opened their investigations. On 9 December, Belgian police carried out twenty raids at nineteen Brussels addresses. In addition, other arrests were made across Belgium and also in Italy, with homes and offices being searched, and that included offices inside the European Parliament's headquarters building in Brussels. As required under the Belgian constitution, the President of the Parliament, Roberta Metsola, was obliged to return from her home in Malta in order to be present for the search of the home of Eva Kaili, who enjoys diplomatic immunity both as an elected MEP and also (at that time) as a Vice-President of the European Parliament. Following on from the raids at

Kaili's home, her father attempted to escape, fleeing the Sofitel Hotel in Place Jourdan, Brussels, after he had received a tip-off about an impending raid. As he was trying to get away, police searched his hand baggage and thus recovered "several hundred thousand euros", packed into a suitcase. It was certainly more than he might need for a coffee, an ouzo or the duty-free shop.

## Spreading The Net Wider



Greek MEP Eva Kaili and Qatari Minister of Labor during her visit to the country

Also raided were locations linked to a former Italian MEP, Antonio Panzeri, where police found large sums of cash in a safe. Ironically, the investigators also raided the offices of the international anti-corruption NGO, "Fight Impunity", which was set up to assist in the fight against people being let off without punishment for their criminal acts in cases involving serious violations of human rights and crimes against humanity. Panzeri was the organisation's president. When the Brussels raids had been completed, a number of people were under arrest, including Eva Kaili, Antonio Panzeri, and Francesco Giorgi, who is Kaili's partner and also an advisor to the Italian MEP Andrea Cozzolino.

In addition, Alexandros Kailis, who is Kaili's father and a former Greek politician, plus Luca Visentini, who is General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), were all taken into custody. In Kailis's case, investigators found a suitcase with "several hundred thousand euros" on his person as he attempted to flee. Investigating judge Michel Claise deemed the arrest to be in flagrante delicto, or "caught in the act". This led to Kaili losing her diplomatic immunity, which had thus far prevented investigators raiding her property. Kaili's property was subsequently searched. Around a dozen police officers as well as judge Claise took part in the search. They then arrested Kaili, who did not resist, but she was described as being "in a state of shock and confusion, crying and terrified". Kaili was then interrogated for more than five hours.

The list goes on: it includes Niccolò Figa-Talamanca, Secretary-General of the NGO, "No Peace Without Justice", and also an assistant of the Italian MEP, Alessandra Moretti. According to Politico, Alexandros Kailis was later released from custody and Visentini was conditionally released. Reports say that €600,000 in cash was found at the Panzeri house in what police described as "a well-stocked safe", with further cash being traced to Kaili's father's home as well as turning up in his hotel room and at the home shared by Kaili and Giorgi. The total sum discovered came to €1.5-million. Following Kaili's arrest she was initially detained at the Prison de Saint-Gilles until her transfer five days later to another prison in Haren, Bussels.

Needless to say, Qatar isn't letting these allegations go unchallenged. While Belgian investigators look into claims of corruption at the same time as Putin is threatening to use the winter as a weapon, gas-rich Qatar has warned that any sort of investigation into Qatar's allegedly illegal activities and possible corruption could mean there will be no deal on gas. This would seem to run contrary to the spirit of Islam, but where profit is concerned, moral and correct behaviour can get forgotten. Belgian investigators are thorough, and in a previous case uncovered the gangsters' code for communicating with their crooked colleagues. The code, Sky ECC, had been cracked, which enabled them to roll up an organisation run by some very wicked people.

As Van Quickenborne has said before, the country doesn't give free passes to crooks. The Greek news website, Ekathimerini.com, reported that a Belgian appeals court has decided to keep Niccolò Figa-Talamanca, an Italian suspect in the "Qatargate" scandal, in detention after prosecutors objected to a decision to release him with an electronic tracking bracelet. The affair has now become one of the biggest corruption scandals Belgium has ever seen.

One British newspaper has pointed out that



Francesco Giorgi

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**Luca Visentini, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation**



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**Niccolò Figa-Talamanca**

the whole affair points an accusatory finger at Europe's left-wing parties. "The fact is that all those so far accused of taking bribes from Qatar and its ally Morocco are left-wing MEPs – or former MEPs – and their assistants, or else bosses of left-wing human rights charities or trade union leaders," according to Nicholas Farrell writing in *The Spectator*. "Most are Italians who are members, or ex-members, of Italy's post-communist party – the Partito Democratico (PD)." Farrell then proceeds to rub salt in the wound: "The hypocrisy of these prize exponents of the Euro left – some of whom, according to leaked transcripts of their interrogations, have already in part confessed – is staggering. For these defenders of the rights of the poor and the downtrodden are accused no less of systematically taking bribes from the small gas-rich Islamic state in the Persian Gulf (among other things) to whitewash its dire human rights record." Certainly shocking, if true, but the "if" is important here. The Qatar-based news source, *Al Jazeera*, reported how the country could retaliate if investigations continue. Please note: this is not a threat to retaliate if a negative report results from the ongoing investigation suggesting corruption by Qatar. It's a threat to take retaliatory action if Qatar's methods even come under scrutiny.

In other words, "investigate our methods and we will punish you", whether or not



© BELGIAN FEDERAL POLICE

**Money seized by the Belgian anti corruption police**

you uncover any criminal activity on our part. And yet the allegations are serious, suggesting that elected parliament members accepted cash from Qatari officials in order to sway their voting intentions. If proved, it would mean that Qatar had bought a particular outcome. Cash for votes has always been seen as a very serious matter, whatever the issue that someone is seeking to influence.

Qatar has accused the Belgian legal authorities of singling it out for criticism in a way that is "unfair". In this case, the unnamed Qatari diplomat said the emirate nation believes it is being victimised by the authorities and it has denied any improper or immoral activity. "We firmly reject the allegations associating our government with misconduct," the diplomat told the media. Some news reports have suggested that individuals with links to Morocco are also under investigation. "We have observed this week's selective condemnation of our country with great alarm," the diplomat added, saying that Belgium had made insufficient effort to establish lines of communication between the two countries. "It is deeply disappointing that the Belgian government made no effort to engage with our government to establish the facts once they became aware of the allegations," the diplomat told



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**Niccolò Figa-Talamanca**

the media. He also alleged that the Belgian authorities had used “inaccurate” information in their investigation. It is unfortunate in the extreme that this whole issue should arise just as Russia is stepping up its pressure on the West over supplies of gas.

## I Bigger and bigger

Qatar is one of the world’s largest exporters of natural gas and it is keen to develop long-term contracts to supply its gas to European and Asian markets. It’s not the only Middle Eastern supplier of natural gas to be vying for long-term contacts with the West. Qatar, which is one of the world’s largest gas exporters, is seeking to expand its capacity to produce and to export liquefied natural gas but without, of course, becoming accidentally embroiled in Russia’s attempt to take over and subjugate Ukraine. Apart from other considerations, Qatar is keen to expand its market in such European markets as Italy, France, Germany, and Austria. Under a deal it signed in November, Qatar will supply liquid natural gas (LNG) for the next 15 years from its North Field East and North Field South expansion projects, working closely with ConocoPhillips of the United States to develop its market.

The gas itself is predominantly methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), with a small admixture of ethane (C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>6</sub>), cooled until it is in liquid form for safe storage and transport. In this way it takes up just 1/600th of the volume of natural gas in its unprocessed state. It is hazardous because, despite being odourless, colourless, non-toxic and non-corrosive, it is none-the-less extremely flammable. It has to be reduced to minus 1620 or around 25 kilopascals (kPa or 4psi) at gauge pressure, or around 25% of atmospheric pressure at sea level. It is, of course, the decomposition of organic material that produces marsh gas, which is what natural gas is. Methane, the simplest and lightest hydrocarbon, is a highly flammable compound



A Qatari offshore oil rig



© HOUSE.GOV

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

consisting of one carbon atom surrounded by four hydrogen atoms. It was mainly formed at around the same time as most of the world’s coal: roughly between 359-million and 273-million years ago, during the Carboniferous and Early Permian eras, when much of the land, including Antarctica, was covered in trees. Never in the planet’s history have there been so many woods covering the world’s surface. Once the gas has formed, its fate depends on just how porous the rock is that surrounds it. Porosity is a matter of major concern to the oil and gas industries since it dictates how much the rock can store and how easy or difficult it may be to extract it.

Porosity is the percentage of void space in a rock, according to the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, carried out by the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Porosity is defined as the ratio of the volume of the voids or pore space divided by the total volume. It basically comes down to how much of the desired fossil fuel it can hold in its interstices, which is a matter over which the country fortunate enough to possess a large quantity of it has no control. We know Qatar has quite a lot of it, it’s relatively easy to access and the government there wants to do business. Its record for fair play may be considered dubious in some quarters, however; Qatar seems prepared to do business with some fairly unsavoury customers. In the United States there are those who would prefer not to do business with Qatar at all because of its alleged support for terrorist groups, including Hamas, which has an office in the country. The Daily Wire reported in November that: “Qatar has openly housed Hamas leaders, Taliban leaders, and has several individuals who have been sanctioned by our U.S. Treasury Department, and it has failed to prosecute them.” That was why former Republican Senator Ileana Ros-Lehtinen thought trade links should be cut off. “At least one high-ranking Qatari official

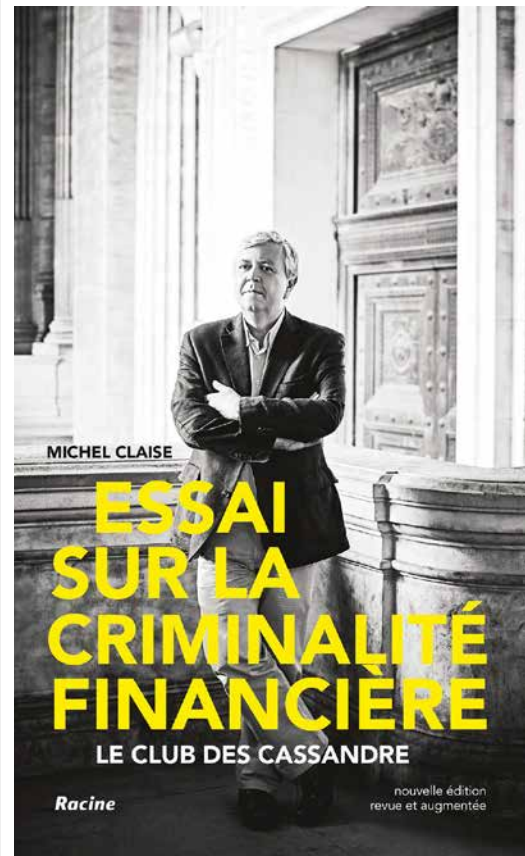
provided support to the mastermind of the 9/11 terror attacks against our country, Khalid Sheikh Mohammad,” she said. However, the Biden administration has agreed an arms deal with Qatar under which the US will sell Qatar various kinds of weapon to the value of \$1-billion.

The State Department said the move will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States, and it referred to Qatar in a statement as “an important force for political stability and economic progress in the Middle East.” Such is the state of Middle East politics that it is not easy to look at a map and point out the lines between friend and foe. “The proposed sale will improve Qatar’s capability to meet current and future threats by providing electronic and kinetic defeat capabilities against Unmanned Aircraft Systems,” the Daily Wire quoted the State Department as saying in a statement. The picture is further complicated by the position of Iran. When you look closely, the picture is normally much more complicated than you might imagine. I have a good and clever friend who is Iranian and when I was in Afghanistan I found the Mujahideen friendly and often amusing. Indeed, I still have a photograph of a group of them, posing with their Kalashnikovs, framed on the wall of this office where I write. They were not like today’s Taliban rulers who are so terrified that women may be cleverer than them (something that clearly would not be hard to achieve) that they have now chosen to ban all education for girls. Qatar, however, also has links with the international terrorist Khalifa Mohammed, who was responsible for funding al-Qaeda and who also masterminded the 9/11 attack. Interestingly, Mohammed was tried and convicted by Bahrain in absentia in 2008. He was then arrested but Qatar released him just 6 months later. Qatar’s commitment to opposing terrorism would seem to be somewhat half-hearted at best. Ros-Lehtinen told the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives that: “Many individuals and charities in Qatar have been known to raise large sums of money for al-Qaeda, the Nusra Front, Hamas and even ISIS.” There’s more, she said, too: “In Qatar, there are three buckets: Terror financing by the government; terror financing done in Qatar through their own citizens that their government may not know about; and terror financing in Qatar that the government knows about but does nothing to stop.”

## A handful of bad apples or a barrelful?

In the EU’s corridors of power there is a degree of nervous tension right now. Is it just a few individuals who couldn’t resist temptation? Or is the whole edifice built on shaky foundations and about to tumble down?

Initially, the investigation launched by Belgian prosecutor Michel Claise led to the arrests of four individuals, including former Vice-President Kaili. She has been charged with corruption, money laundering and with being part of a criminal organisation. How many more will find themselves under police investigation? It’s hard to say. Some European Parliament officials are predicting that only “a few individuals” will be found to have accepted bribes to take Qatar’s side in debates and votes of importance to Doha. Certainly, the sums of money allegedly involved were large enough to provide a lot



“Essai sur la criminalité financière” ( Financial crime essay) published by Belgian prosecutor Michel Claise in 2018

of temptation. The police soon began further raids and searches of premises, so it may well stretch beyond the “handful” that was being predicted. The raids in Brussels began as soon as the Parliament opened a plenary session at its other site in Strasbourg. It seems that, as of 21 December, six further arrests had been made and police had seized an additional €1-million. It’s been predicted that more people will face arrest, with some experts anticipating that the Qatar bribery scandal was just a small part of



Address of H. H. The Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani at the opening of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022



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**HE Eng. Saad bin Sherida Al Kaabi, Minister of State for Energy Affairs**

something far bigger and more widespread. It's also being predicted that the dragnet will involve a wider range of EU institutions than just the Parliament. It seems that oversight of financial activities has been less than scrupulous, with individual non-EU countries able to contact MEPs without those contacts being recorded anywhere except, one supposes, in the diaries or appointment books of the individual politicians. It's been noted that the ability of states to contact elected members without those contacts being recorded anywhere is a recipe for corruption and bribery.

It's not the first time that an EU institution has been rocked by allegations of corruption. Jacques Delors had been a very successful President of the

Commission, although he was inclined to listen perhaps a little too closely to his press officer. Delors was due to step down in 1994, but some governments had seen him as too much of a federalist during his term of office, so opposed having the Belgian Prime Minister, Jean-Luc Dehaene as his replacement. He was thought to be similarly federalist, so they chose instead the Luxembourg Prime Minister, Jacques Santer. As a result of being "the second choice", his position was viewed as weaker than, for instance, that of Delors had been, although he gained the power he needed under the Maastricht Treaty, and it was Santer's Commission that oversaw preparations for adopting the euro as the EU's single currency. The whole affair became embroiled in scandal and controversy, largely turning into a party-political skirmish between the left-wing Party of European Socialists (PES) and the right-of-centre European People's Party (EPP). Controversially – and not without a political battle – the entire Commission tendered its joint resignation. It was a total mess.

That was then; this is now. Qatar was always a controversial choice to host the World Cup football tournament, ultimately won by an understandably elated Argentina. There were plenty of accusations about Qatar using slave labour to complete the work, with the argument in favour of the choice of venue being swayed by the country's huge gas reserves and willingness to do deals. Its reserves of gas are reckoned to be the third biggest in the world after Russia and Iran, whose moral judgements are unlikely to find much support in Europe.

Qatar's Energy Minister, Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi assured CNN that that his country planned to play a "central rôle" in the region's energy policy. He had already signed a gas deal with Berlin before a single football (or spectator) was kicked. Qatar is also a massive investor in Europe, owning glittering showpiece properties such as London's Shard skyscraper, Harrods prestigious department store and 20% of Heathrow airport, while France remains the second most significant destination for Qatari investments, involving more than \$26-billion (€24.45-billion) in assets. It has also created some 72,000 jobs.

It was in her testimony to the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs that Ros-Lehtinen reminded



© QATARENERGY/OFFICIAL PHOTO

**QatarEnergy (formerly Qatar Petroleum) teamed up with FIFA as an official Partner for the FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2021**

colleagues of Qatar's terrorism links and of its failure to punish the very few people it catches and brings to trial. In other words, Qatar is certainly not a friend to the United States, even if it buys its armaments there. Nor to the rest of

### LATE NEWS - KEY SUSPECT TAKES A PLEA DEAL

As the Qatargate scandal continues to rock the European Parliament, some odd decisions have been made in the scramble by some members to extricate themselves from the mess, which goes on looking ever-murkier. One of the accused, former Italian MEP Pier Antonio Panzeri has now agreed to reveal to investigators information about influence-peddling and bribes offered or arranged by him and by third countries through him in return for a "limited sentence", which still includes a jail term, a fine and a confiscation of €1-million in assets, according to Belgian prosecutors. The plea deal is of a type used only once before in Belgium under a law designed for cases involving the Mafia, and it supposedly means that Panzeri will give prosecutors the names of people he admits to having bribed (or helped to bribe) while also explaining how it was done, as well as revealing details of the financial deals he made with other countries supposedly involved. Among other accusations, Panzeri admits he accepted bribes from Morocco and allowed an entity known as "The Giant" to pay off his credit card bill. Furthermore, Italian police have issued arrest warrants for Panzeri's wife and daughter, while Belgian prosecutors have requested the lifting of immunity from two MEPs: Belgium's Marc Tarabella and Italy's Andrea Cozzolino, in connection with the same case. The European Commission now proposes to table a new law to criminalise corruption, but European Parliament leaders want to impose a 500-word limit on any resolutions linked to human rights abuses, known in EU parlance as "urgencies", while placing limitations on the length of any criticisms of other governments' alleged crimes. As several observers have pointed out, it makes no sense. For instance, it would not have restricted a resolution passed last November that was critical of Qatar's human rights record, which certainly annoyed the rulers of the Emirate.



Michiel van Hulten Director Transparency International EU

the West. Taken all-in-all, it's a bit of a mess, and it's widely considered now that the buck doesn't stop in Doha. Blame is spread more widely than that and it's not just individuals that are involved. Politico reports a conversation with Raphaël Glucksmann in Strasbourg. Glucksmann, the French head of Transparency International's EU office, said: "The courts will determine who is guilty, but what's certain is that it's not just Qatar, and it's not just the individuals who have been named who are involved." He means "involved in foreign influence operations".

Michiel van Hulten, now heading Transparency International's EU office, told Politico that while egregious cases of corruption involving bags of cash were rare, "it's quite likely that there are names in this scandal that we haven't heard being mentioned yet. There is undue influence on a scale we haven't seen so far." He then went on to define his meaning more clearly: "It doesn't need to involve trips to far-flung destinations paid for by foreign organizations – and in that sense there is a more widespread problem."

Politico also sensibly points out that the European Parliament has no built-in protection for internal whistleblowers, despite having voted in favour of such protections being put in place for EU citizens. He reminded the newspaper that back in 1998, it was a whistle-blower denouncing mismanagement in the Santer Commission that precipitated the mass resignation of the entire EU executive. Glucksmann wants to see "extremely profound reforms", as he put it, to a system that allows lawmakers to hold more than one job, leaves oversight of personal finances up to "a self-regulating committee staffed by lawmakers, and gives state actors access to lawmakers without having to register their encounters publicly."

One has to admit that Glucksmann is making a very sound point, although I'm inclined to believe that with power as a lure and cash-in-hand as a reward, it's going to be extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, to stamp out temptation. It's worth remembering this quotation from the Islamic prophet Hazrat Ali Ibn Talib As, whenever you feel tempted to give in to a lust for gold or power: "Greed is permanent slavery". Hold to that and you may not be so tempted to accept a bribe.

*Robin Crow*

# NEWS IN BRIEF



© AIRBUS

## RACER: SUCCESSFUL POWER ON

*The Racer team recently celebrated a major milestone. The aircraft successfully completed its “POWER ON” test, firing up all systems to conduct initial functional checks.*

The POWER ON test — which spoiler — was an overwhelming success, was conducted at the Airbus Helicopter facility in Marignane, France with the participation of all the teams involved in this key milestone.

« *The RACER is a unique European concept, without equivalent in the world, being funded under the Horizon 2020 programme. It completely meets the Clean Sky 2 objectives to reduce CO2 emissions and noise. This is a highly innovative compound helicopter, with more than 90 patented technologies developed, involving 40 companies across 13 EU countries* ».

“*A very nice example of collaboration requiring an open mindset that develops a European aeronautical industry rich in technological innovation. We congratulate all the participants who contributed to this important milestone on our route towards the maiden flight scheduled in the 2nd part of 2023.*” Says Sébastien Dubois, Head of Programmes at Clean Aviation.



© AIRBUS HELICOPTERS | LORETTE FABRE

Developed by Airbus Helicopters in the frame of the Clean Sky 2 European research programme, the Racer demonstrator is being developed as a high-speed helicopter aiming to achieve optimal speed, cost efficiency, sustainability and performance. With a cruise speed that is double that of a conventional helicopter, Racer will be hugely advantageous for missions where time is of the essence such as search and rescue operations and emergency medical transport. The aircraft also has scope to boost efficiency for inter-city urban air mobility.

## WILL ALL THE THE PARTHENON MARBLES RETURN TO GREECE

Pope Francis has decided to return to the head of the Greek Orthodox Church the Archbishop of Athens Hieronymus II all of Greece three fragments of the Parthenon that have been on display in the Vatican since several decades.

The Greek government was hoping that the Parthenon Sculptures, in display at the British Museum, consisting of a collection of different types of marble architectural decoration from the temple of Athena (the Parthenon) on the Acropolis in Athens would also be returned to their homeland.

The Parthenon Sculptures are from Athens, Greece. When, in 1834, Athens was officially declared the capital of the newly established independent Greek State, most of the post-Roman period structures on the Acropolis were removed, to accommodate further archaeological exploration.

By the early 19th century, the Ottoman Empire had been the governing authority in Athens for 350 years. Lord Elgin was the



© VATICAN MUSEUM

One of the three Parthenon marbles





The Trustees of the British Museum, as well as the painter (right, sitting), are depicted pondering the artistic and humanistic value of the Parthenon sculptures (1819), on display in "The Temporary Elgin Room" of the museum as of 1817

British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire and successfully petitioned the authorities to be able to draw, measure and remove figures.

He was granted a permit (firman), and between 1801 and 1805 acting under the oversight of the relevant authorities, Elgin removed about half of the remaining sculptures from the ruins of the Parthenon. He also obtained permission to have removed sculptural and architectural elements from other buildings on the Acropolis, namely the Erechtheion, the Temple of Athena Nike and the Propylaea.

All of Elgin's collection of antiquities was then transported to Britain. His actions were thoroughly investigated by a Parliamentary Select Committee in 1816 and found to be entirely legal, prior to the sculptures entering the collection of the British Museum by Act of Parliament.

A formal request for the permanent return to Greece of all of the Parthenon Sculptures in the Museum's collection was first made in 1983. There have been various meetings and discussions since then. Media coverage has referred to Greek government requests to settle the matter as soon as possible.

The British Museum does not seem to be inclined to transfer the ownership of the Elgin's marbles to Greece but, as it has been reported, secret talks have been taken place without any formal agreement.

## NEW SCENES FOR CAREER GUIDANCE – A EUROPEAN LIFELONG GUIDANCE CONFERENCE

During the upcoming Swedish Presidency in 2023, Cedefop\* is partnering with the Swedish Council for Higher Education, The National Agency for Education, and the Swedish Public Employment Service as well as the Swedish Association of Guidance Counsellors in organising an event to promote lifelong guidance in Europe: New Scenes for Career Guidance.

The conference aims to discuss the "new arenas for career guidance" – how the conditions for lifelong guidance have changed and how career guidance is being re-designed in new ways and for new target groups. The aim is also to investigate what these changes mean for the guidance profession, for policy development and for the content of guidance practices.

## Save the date-invitation

Where: Stockholm

When: May 31-June 1 2023

Much has happened since the last Swedish EU presidency in 2009, not least when it comes to the education and labour market arenas and the relationship between them. We have a rapidly changing labour market due to technological developments, demographic trends, and a global energy crisis on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also find ourselves in an educational world where the individual is expected to continuously learn new skills in a lifelong perspective. The greening of economies brings new career and skills needs to the table and an uncertain world has an impact on individual career decision-making.

## Joint vision, joint arrangement

Investing in Career Guidance (Cedefop; European Commission; the ETF; ILO; OECD, UNESCO 2019; revised in 2021) serves as an umbrella advocacy tool for the conference. Here, the Inter-Agency Career Guidance Working Group (CGWG) share their joint vision of the strategic role of career guidance in our changing world. The basic hallmarks of an effective and efficient career guidance system are listed. The Erasmus+ programme, with its support for inclusion, constitutes another important frame for the conference.

The conference is jointly arranged by:

- The Swedish Council for Higher Education.
- The National Agency for Education.
- The National Public Employment Service.

Cedefop and the Swedish Association of Guidance Counsellors are partners.

The conference dates have been decided to coincide with the annual network meetings of both the Euroguidance Network (29-30 May) and Cedefop's CareersNet (afternoon of 1 June).

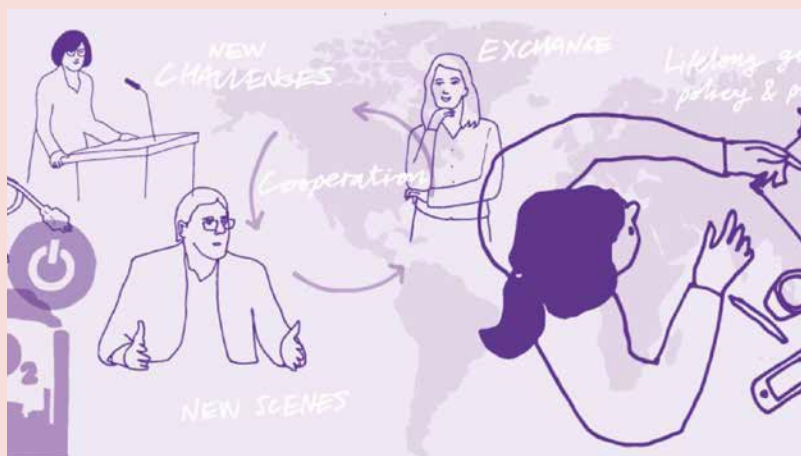
## Target groups

Invited national, European, and international stakeholders - policymakers, researchers, trainers, practitioners, and others operating in the field of lifelong guidance in Europe will be welcomed to Stockholm in the Scandinavian early summer for fruitful discussions and the exchange of ideas and experiences.

Places are limited to 3-4 persons from each country.

• Cedefop, The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training is an agency of the European Union.

**For further details:** <https://www.uhr.se/om-uhr/Konferenser/scences-for-careers-guidance/>



## CERN AND AIRBUS PARTNERSHIP ON FUTURE CLEAN AVIATION



© CERN

CERN's High Temperature Superconducting (HTS) rare-earth barium copper oxide (also referred to as REBCO) power transmission cable used to study the feasibility of superconductivity for aircraft.

### CERN and Airbus UpNext sign a collaboration agreement to assess the use of superconducting technologies for future zero-emission aeroplanes

CERN and Airbus UpNext, a wholly owned subsidiary of Airbus, have launched an innovative collaboration to explore the potential use of superconducting technologies developed by CERN for particle accelerators in the electrical distribution systems of future hydrogen-powered aircraft.

Superconducting technologies could drastically reduce the weight of next-generation aircraft and increase their efficiency.

The partnership focuses on the development of a demonstrator known as SCALE (Super-Conductors for Aviation with Low Emissions), bringing together CERN's expertise in superconducting technologies with Airbus UpNext's capabilities in innovative aircraft design and manufacturing.

If the expected performances and reliability objectives are achieved, the collaboration could reach the ambitious target of flying a fully integrated prototype within the next decade.

"In its research, CERN pushes back the limits of science and engineering, and partners with industry to enable innovation, with a positive impact on the environment," said Raphaël Bello, CERN's Director of Finance and Human Resources. "Our technologies have the potential to be adapted to the needs of future clean transportation and mobility solutions, as this agreement with Airbus demonstrates. This partnership is only a first step in our journey with the European leader in aviation, and shows how much we value the excellence of our Member States' industry."

"Our role at Airbus UpNext is to explore the full potential of technologies for future aircraft and to partner with the world's leaders to prepare for this future. Partnering with a leading research institute like CERN, which has brought the world some of the most important findings in fundamental physics, will help to push the boundaries of research in clean aerospace as we work to make sustainable aviation a reality", said Sandra Bour-Schaeffer, CEO of Airbus UpNext. "We are already developing a superconductivity demonstrator called ASCEND (Advanced Superconducting and Cryogenic Experimental powertrain Demonstrator) to study the feasibility of this technology for electrically powered and hybrid

aircraft. Combining knowledge obtained from our demonstrator and CERN's unique capabilities in the field of superconductors makes for a natural partnership."

"Superconducting technologies have fuelled some of the greatest discoveries in high-energy physics and, if applied to aircraft power distribution systems, would drastically reduce their weight and increase their efficiency. CERN has over 40 years of expertise in building world-record superconducting systems that are at the core of existing and next-generation particle accelerators. Such systems present negligible resistance to the flow of current, thus transmitting much higher intensities than traditional, heavier, non-superconducting cables," said José Miguel Jimenez, Head of the Technology department at CERN.

## BULGARIA-BORN COMPANY DRONAMICS AWARDED GRANT FROM THE EUROPEAN INNOVATION COUNCIL



© DRONAMICS

The Dronamics Black Swan drone

Dronamics, the world's first cargo drone airline with license to operate in Europe, announced that it has been awarded a €2.5 million grant by the European Commission under the prestigious European Innovation Council (EIC) Accelerator program. The EIC has also expressed a material commitment to support Dronamics' upcoming Series A round.

The grant will support the development and roll-out of Dronamics' cargo drone fleet, the deployment of the first droneports in its network as well as operations in Europe.

« The European Union is home to millions of people who live in territories that often take days to reach by traditional freight. Dronamics aims to democratize air freight, by enabling affordable, and sustainable same day delivery for businesses and communities everywhere, especially remote and under-served ones » says Dronamics.

Dronamics was selected as one of the few companies to have been awarded funding by the EIC Accelerator program, which had nearly 1,000 candidates.

### The Black Swan

The Black Swan is a new type of cargo drone, remotely-piloted and fuel-efficient, suitable for a longer range and higher load factor than electric solutions.

Built specifically for cargo, unlike other aircraft, the Black Swan can carry the same load as a small cargo van at a distance of up to 2,500 km, resulting in cost, time, and carbon emission savings.

### About Dronamics

Dronamics is the world's first cargo drone airline. As a leading developer and operator of large, long-range drones built specifically for cargo, its flagship Black Swan is able to carry 350



Wingspan	16m / 52ft
Fuselage	8m / 26ft
Height	4m / 13ft
Diameter	1.3m / 4.3ft
Payload	350kg / 770 lbs
Capacity	3.5 cmb / 925 gal
Range	2,500 km / 1,550 mi
Altitude	20,000 ft
Speed	200 km/h / 125 mph

© DRONAMICS

kg (770 lb) at a distance of up to 2,500 km (1,550 mi) up to 80% faster, 50% cheaper and with up to 60% lower emissions than alternative modes of transport, including airfreight. This enables same-day shipping over very long distances for a variety of industries: from pharma to food, from e-commerce to spare parts. The company's fast-growing team includes some of the most experienced aerospace and logistics experts. Dronamics is Europe's first licensed cargo drone airline and IATA's first Strategic Partner for drones worldwide.

### About the European Innovation Council

The European Innovation Council (EIC) was established by the European Commission in 2021 following a three year successful pilot phase. It has a mission to identify, develop and scale up breakthrough technologies and disruptive innovation. It has a budget of over €10 billion for the period 2021-2027

*James Lookwood*

### NEW WEBSITE FOR THE EUROPEAN HYDROGEN REFUELLING STATION AVAILABILITY SYSTEM

The recently launched website (<https://h2-stations.eu/>) includes a real-time information system on the availability of hydrogen refuelling stations in Europe and a common data repository framework for static information, such as addresses, dispensing capabilities and means of payment. All this data can be shared through an open-source export API to any third party who requests access to support the development of the sector.

The website was commissioned by the Clean Hydrogen Partnership as part of the new European Hydrogen Refuelling Station Availability System to help HRS Owners and Operators to connect to the system and share real-time availability of their stations with customers across Europe.

"The HRS availability system is a unique service that provide users with updates regarding the status of the stations in Europe. It is the only real time availability system collecting data across Europe. Being an open source, the information is available for further uses and developments for free. We believe that it will help eliminate potential anxieties over a lack of infrastructure and will enable more drivers to opt for fuel cell vehicles. We encourage all operators to submit their data regularly and be part of this ambitious project, for the benefit of the citizens and the industry". Bart Biebuyck, Executive Director, Clean Hydrogen Partnership

The system is solely funded by the European Union. The aim of the initiative spearheaded by the Clean Hydrogen Partnership is to assemble a reliable database on the state of the hydrogen refuelling infrastructure in the Union and share it for free. To that effect, the platform centralizes information from operators all over Europe and issues tokens to users interested in the data to assess non confidential data. By disseminating this crucial information at no cost, the E-HRS-AS helps foster the rise of a credible, easy-to-use component of the zero-emission transport revolution.

There are a variety of applications already using E-HRS-AS data, such as the TENtec Interactive Map Viewer, European Alternative Fuels Observatory, FillNDrive, h2.live & Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Observatory.

Visit the new website to learn more about: Where to fuel? How to add a station? How to receive data?

The development, implementation and operation of the E-HRS-AS was subcontracted to Spilett, Element Energy (an ERM group company) and ENDA. They conduct the day-to-day operations of the system in close coordination with the Clean Hydrogen Partnership.



© CLEAN-HYDROGEN/EUROPA/ELU

### GERMANY TAKES THE LEAD FOR NATO'S HIGH READINESS FORCE

**Germany has taken the lead of NATO's highest-readiness military force, placing thousands of troops on standby and ready to deploy within days.**

NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) was created in 2014 at the core of a strengthened NATO Response



© BUNDESWEHR

Force, following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and crises in the Middle East. Germany takes over from France, which led the force in 2022. In response to Russia's full-fledged invasion of Ukraine in February this year, NATO deployed elements of the VJTF to Romania on the unit's first ever collective-defence mission

"Germany is an important Ally and we thank Germany for leading the VJTF in 2023", said NATO Spokesperson Oana Lungescu. "As Russia's illegal war in Ukraine continues to threaten peace and security in Europe, there must be no doubt about NATO's resolve to protect and defend every inch of Allied territory. The VJTF is NATO's first responder and a key part of our collective defence. Germany's leadership is a strong display of its commitment and capabilities," Ms Lungescu said.

The VJTF is the highest-readiness element of NATO's Response Force. VJTF leadership and membership rotate annually among Allies. In 2023, VJTF land forces will comprise around 11,500 thousand troops, with the Panzergrenadierbrigade 37 at its core. In total, nine NATO Allies (Belgium, Czechia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia) will contribute. Among the major units are Germany's Panzerbataillon 393, Artillerielehrbataillon 345, Versorgungsbataillon 131 and Transporthubschrauberregiment 30. For the first time, Germany also leads the VJTF's designated Special Forces command.

## THE TALIBAN'S MINISTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, ABDUL BAQI HAQQANI UNVEILED THE MADA 9 PROTOTYPE SUPERCAR

Taliban officials have unveiled what they call the first sports 'supercar' designed and built in Afghanistan. The 'Mada 9' prototype is said to be the result of five years of work by some 30 engineers from ENTOP and the Kabul Technical Institute.

Presenting the car to the media, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid proudly announced that "the construction is an honour for the whole country".

The body of the the 'Mada 9' is comparable with a Bugatti luxury car. Under the hood, is the engine of a Toyota Corolla.

The 'Mada 9' is set to be presented in other countries at a later date and Muhammad Raza Ahmadi, CEO of ENTOP, promised to unveil more specifications.



TWITTER@ABDULLAHSARWANJ

## THALES AND NUKKAI TO DEVELOP AI-BASED DATA FUSION SOLUTION FOR MILITARY APPLICATIONS



© THALES

Military analysts in operations centres face significant challenges in extracting relevant information from the huge volumes of data generated by multiple sources such as video and audio streams, websites, Twitter feeds, satellite imagery, social media and telephone conversations. Real-time data analytics will enable them to develop advanced military strategies with greater efficiency.

Thales, an expert in artificial intelligence, plans to implement NukkAI's solution in a number of its military data processing programmes. When operators are swamped by information, the solution will use real-time data exploitation and fusion methods to automatically review the knowledge available so that analysts can focus on elements of interest.

The explainable AI technology developed by NukkAI was put to the test during the world bridge tournament in March 2022, successfully beating eight human world champions at the well-known card game. The demonstration confirmed the potential of this approach for the development of innovative applications in various sectors of industry.

David Sadek, Vice President for Research, Technology & Innovation, who is in charge of AI projects at Thales, said: "This pilot project represents a real technological milestone for military applications of AI, enabling analysts to focus on the tasks where human beings can provide the most added value. The partnership with NukkAI is fully in line with our Thales TrUE AI approach, which favours the use of AI solutions that are trusted, safe, secure, explainable and responsible."

Jean-Baptiste Fantun, co-founder and CEO of NukkAI, added: "There are multiple use cases for our solution in cybersecurity, education, industry, banking and insurance and in any other area where data from multiple sources needs to be combined, where outcomes need to be explainable and where human operators need to retain control at all times."

### New-generation AI

NukkAI's solution relies on the use of hybrid, explainable, collaborative and energy-efficient artificial intelligence methods, unlike the "black box" algorithms in widespread use today, which lack transparency and raise issues of human-machine interaction and high energy consumption.

**Hybrid:** NukkAI's AI uses a combination of modules relying on different paradigms of artificial intelligence, symbolic AI and digital intelligence.

**Explainability:** For the bridge tournament, NukkAI developed a tool to analyse game play and explain the strategy used, making it possible to transfer the robot's skills to the human or show human how their strategy was inferior to that of the robot.



David Sadek

Jean-Baptiste Fantun

**Collaboration:** While “black box” AI is not designed for human-machine interaction, NukkAI’s solution can interact with humans and explain the reasons behind its choices and decisions. And it is the human who makes the decision, following suggestions made by the machine.

**Energy efficiency:** Developed with the support of the CNRS, which provided access to the Jean Zay – the most powerful supercomputer in France – the NukkAI solution that won the bridge tournament in March 2022 consumed 200,000 times less energy than the AI used to beat the world Go champion.

## WI-FI COULD HELP IDENTIFY WHEN YOU’RE STRUGGLING TO BREATHE

Wi-Fi routers continuously broadcast radio frequencies that your phones, tablets and computers pick up and use to get you online. As the invisible frequencies travel, they bounce off or pass through everything around them — the walls, the furniture and even you. Your movements, even breathing, slightly alter the signal’s path from the router to your device.

Those interactions don’t interrupt your internet connection, but they could signal when someone is in trouble. NIST has developed a deep learning algorithm, called BreatheSmart, that can analyze those minuscule changes to help determine whether someone in the room is struggling to breathe. And it can do so with already available Wi-Fi routers and devices. This work was recently published in IEEE Access.

In 2020 NIST scientists wanted to help doctors fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Patients were isolated; ventilators were scarce. Previous research had explored using Wi-Fi signals to sense people or movement, but these setups often required custom sensing devices, and data from these studies were very limited.

“As everybody’s world was turned upside down, several of us at NIST were thinking about what we could do to help out,” says Jason Coder, who leads NIST’s research in shared spectrum metrology. “We didn’t have time to develop a new device, so how can we use what we already have?”

Working with colleagues at the Office of Science and Engineering Labs (OSEL) in the FDA’s Center for Devices and Radiological Health, Coder and research associate Susanna Mosleh advanced a new way to use existing Wi-Fi routers to measure the breathing rate of a person in the room. In Wi-Fi, the “channel state information,” or CSI, is a set of signals sent from the client (such as a cellphone or laptop) to the access point (such as the router). The CSI signal sent by the client device is always the same, and the access point receiving the CSI signals knows what it should look like. But as the CSI signals travel through the environment, they get distorted as they bounce off things or lose strength. The access point analyzes the amount of distortion to adjust and optimize the link.

These CSI streams are small, less than a kilobyte, so it doesn’t interfere with the flow of data over the channel. The team modified the firmware on the router to ask for these CSI streams more frequently, up to 10 times per second, to get a detailed picture of how the signal was changing.

Complete setup for the experiment using an off-the-shelf Wi-Fi router and receiving device. Using these commercial devices, NIST and its FDA collaborators were able to measure the manikin’s simulated “breathing,” differentiating between troubled and normal respiration.

Credit: S. Mosleh/NIST

They set up a manikin used to train medical professionals in an anechoic chamber with a commercial off-the-shelf Wi-Fi router and receiver. This manikin is designed to replicate several breathing conditions, from normal respiration to abnormally slow breathing (called bradypnea), abnormally rapid breathing (tachypnea), asthma, pneumonia and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, or COPD.

What alters the Wi-Fi signal is the way the body moves as we breathe. Think of how your chest moves differently when you are wheezing or coughing, compared with breathing normally. As the manikin “breathed,” the movement of its chest altered the path traveled by the Wi-Fi signal. The team members recorded the data provided by the CSI streams. Although they collected a wealth of data, they still needed help to make sense of what they had gathered.



Jason Coder sets up an experiment in an anechoic chamber to use Wi-Fi to sense breathing. The manikin is used to train medical professionals, and simulates a number of breathing scenarios

“This is where we can leverage deep learning,” Coder said.

Deep learning is a subset of artificial intelligence, a type of machine learning that mimics humans’ ability to learn from their past actions and improves the machine’s ability to recognize patterns and analyze new data.

Mosleh worked on a deep learning algorithm to comb through the CSI data, understand it, and recognize patterns that indicated different breathing problems. The algorithm, which they named BreatheSmart, successfully classified a variety of respiratory patterns simulated with the manikin 99.54% of the time.

“Most of the work that’s been done before was working with very limited data,” Mosleh says. “We were able to collect data with a lot of simulated respiratory scenarios, which contributes to the diversity of the training set that was available to the algorithm.”

There has been a lot of interest in using Wi-Fi signals for sensing applications, Coder says. He and Mosleh hope that app and software developers can use the process presented in the work as a framework to create programs to remotely monitor breathing.

“All the ways we’re gathering the data is done on software on the access point (in this case, the router), which could be done by an app on a phone,” Coder says. “This work tries to lay out how somebody can develop and test their own algorithm. This is a framework to help them get relevant information.”

Source : Nist

IN NEED OF THE  
UNKNOWN (AND  
MISUNDERSTOOD)

**Europe considers  
instigating a digital  
currency, even if very  
few people know what  
that means**





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The European Central Bank headquarter in Frankfurt am Main, Germany

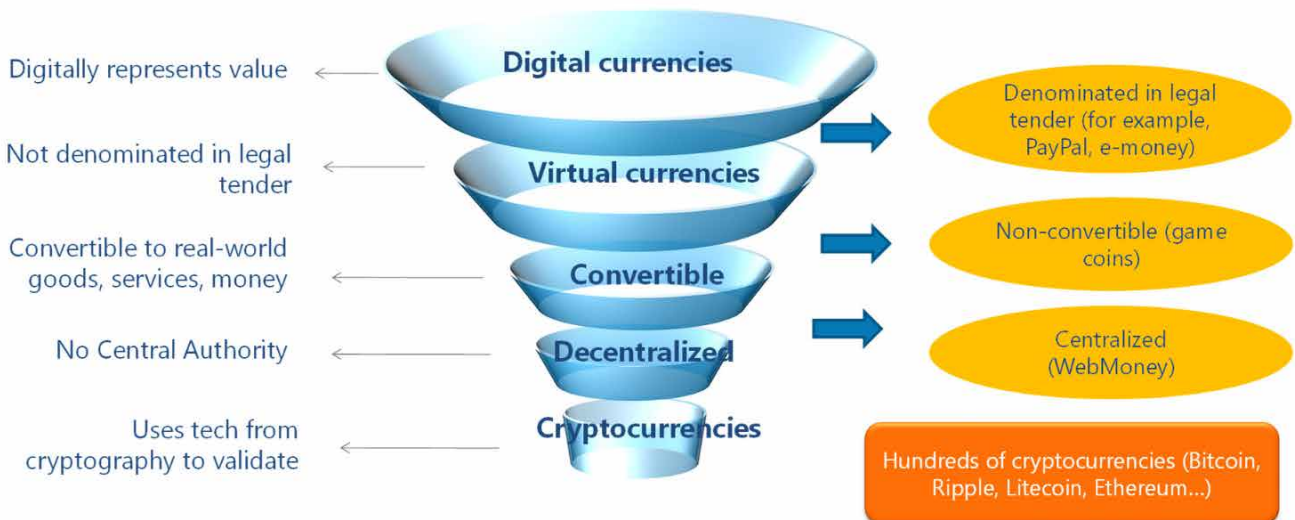
We already use two types of money in the Euro area: central bank money, which basically means the banknotes and coins we carry around, and what's known as "private money", which is any money you may have borrowed from your bank, but it's also the money shown as being yours on your bank statement and the payments you make using your credit or debit cards, because it's money created by your bank.

Yes, I know it's all yours and only a banker or an economist would be interested in the finer points of detail. It's your money and you spend it, without generally considering whether it's central bank money or private. If you suffer the unfortunate fate of being mugged in the street, your attackers are not going to differentiate anyway. It was yours; now it's theirs (unless the police get it back for you).

The European Central Bank (ECB) says it is creating digital euros as (and I quote) "an anchor of stability for our money in the digital age". It would, says the ECB, "complement banknotes and coins, giving people an additional choice about how to pay". That's assuming we need one, of course. The Bank says a digital euro would offer an electronic means of payment that anyone could use "in the euro area." The idea springs from a perceived demand for new "safe and trusted electronic payments" systems. How does it differ from other payment methods available to us? Well, there are no notes or coins, for a start. The ECB says that this allows for almost instantaneous transactions. However, as digital currencies are not issued by a governmental organisation, they are not actually legal tender, either, although they enable ownership to be transferred across what governments regard as their borders. Confusing, isn't it? The ECB, in its 2015 publication, "Virtual currency schemes – a further analysis", points out that a virtual currency can, in certain circumstances, be used as an alternative to money, in order to pay for specific goods or services over the Internet.

According to the ECB, digital money has no physical equivalence in the real world, although it acts like it in as much as you can receive, transfer, or exchange digital currency for the more traditional kind. It has no geographical or political borders. In its 2015 report, the ECB makes clear the fact it does not regard "virtual currencies" (such as crypto-currencies) as being at all the same thing, even though it uses the terms almost as though they are interchangeable. The ECB argues that virtual currency is not money or currency from a legal perspective, choosing to define it rather as a digital representation of value that has not been issued by a bank, a credit institution, or an e-money institution. In order for a digital currency to work, it needs a "virtual currency scheme" (VCS), a type of transactional body that has been developing for the last few years. The ECB has been looking closely at how they work and at how it might be possible to improve them.

Figure 1. Taxonomy of Virtual Currencies



Source: IMF staff.



According to the ECB, the VCS system mainly consists of new categories of actors, not previously involved in financial transactions. The Bank also mentions that new business models are starting to emerge, based upon obtaining, storing, accessing and transferring units of virtual currency, although the ECB admits that the purpose of some of them at present remains unclear. It is a very new field and payments using VCS are not widely accepted, as yet. VCS have their drawbacks for users, too: there is a distinct lack of transparency, as well as clarity and continuity, none of which helps instil certainty. People and companies prefer transparency and clarity when parting with large sums of money.

It would appear that some of the VCS that have been created have no obvious purpose at all, which leaves potential users uncertain and lacking in confidence.

## More tulips, anyone?

People are naturally even less trusting following the collapse of the crypto-currency boom, even though “central bank digital currencies” and crypto currencies are not the same. The big collapse happened with the sudden, unpredicted disappearance of FTX, the crypto-currency exchange which was, with a theoretical value of \$32-billion, the third largest in the world. Up to that point, its owner and mastermind, Sam Bankman-Fried, was thought to be on his way to becoming the world’s first-ever trillionaire, with personal wealth estimated at \$16-billion already. It’s all gone, leaving him being pursued by a million or so creditors. It turned out that FTX had lent some \$8-billion of its assets to another of Bankman-Fried’s companies, despite such activity being expressly forbidden by FTX’s own terms of service. Not surprisingly, it left an \$8-billion hole in the balance sheet, and investors don’t like that. Additionally, and very worryingly



Sam Bankman-Fried



© ECB

A digital euro would be central bank money made available in digital form for use in retail payments

for investors, as soon as FTX declared its bankruptcy, millions of dollars started to flow mysteriously out of its accounts. It began to look less like a financial failure and more like a criminal conspiracy, although it may not be, of course. Reporting on FTX’s woes, The Economist magazine put the issue neatly into historical context: “Big personalities, incestuous loads, overnight collapses – these are the stuff of classic financial manias, from tulip fever in 17th century Holland to the South Sea Bubble in 18th century Britain to America’s banking crises in the early 1900s.”

History has a habit of repeating itself, especially where greed is concerned. Obviously, the ECB will be running its new digital currency with the sort of care and caution that such an ambitious operation demands. It can’t afford to let things go wrong. But making a fast buck was never the intention when the idea of digital euros was first floated.

The ECB points out that technological advances have triggered a rapid growth in virtual communities. Some of these communities have even created and circulated their own currencies (or at least tokens of exchange), providing a unit of account that’s all their own. As the ECB points out, we must bear in mind that these currencies (since that is how we must regard them) resemble money and also come with their own dedicated retail payment systems. They are really what a VCS is. The ECB defines three types of VCS: one is closed, such as the type used in an on-line game. The second type has a financial flow in only one direction with an established conversion rate for buying virtual currency with which to buy virtual goods or services (and sometimes real goods and services). The third type is more akin to real money, allowing a flow in either or both directions and effectively available to use to buy goods and services. A VCS may be set up to lock a customer or potential customer into a system through which they can obtain goods or services from one source only. Transactions using a VCS are recorded on what’s known as a blockchain, a vital facility that provides a secure decentralised record of such transactions.

It seems clear that virtual currencies are the future. A recent survey among sixty-six central banks conducted on behalf of the Bank for International Settlements revealed that more than 80% of them are working on developing their own digital currencies. But these are a bit special, because they are (or will be) central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), run by a central bank. The European Central Bank is one of them. The ECB denies that this is an attempt to keep up with fashionable trends, so why is it doing this? The Bank says it’s because it “has to be ready”. Ready for what? “Ready to embrace financial technological innovation which has the potential to transform payments and money faster, and in more disruptive



© TWITTER.COM/ECB

**Yves Mersch, Vice-Chair of the ECB's Supervisory Board**

ways, than ever before.” This statement formed part of a speech given at a virtual conference in 2020 by Yves Mersch, Vice-Chair of the ECB's Supervisory Board. In his speech, Mersch foresaw a change in people's behaviour concerning payments and spoke of the need to retain a direct link to the owner of the currency in question by maintaining their access to central bank liabilities in euros. He stated that cash gets a bad press – a fact that you, like me, probably find hard to credit – but also pointed out that demand for it remains high.

## Cash in hand (or not?)

Mersch put it to his virtual audience that the bank should be looking ahead to a future in which central banks will be expected to provide the public with some form of digital currency. He said that electronic payments are already taking the place of cash in some countries whose own currencies are less appealing than the euro. Within the euro area itself, around 76% of transactions are carried out in cash. In fact, the demand for cash in the euro area, Mersch said, “currently outstrips the rate of nominal GDP growth.” Furthermore, he warned that: “In crisis times, the demand for cash surges even higher.” In fact, around mid-March 2022, the weekly increase in the value of banknotes in circulation almost reached the historical peak of €19-billion.

The ECB, it seems, is still not certain about the need for CBDCs; the current research is primarily analytical, and the outcome will depend on the preferences of households. Mersch assured his audience that the ECB is always keen to respond to the wishes of the euro's users. He said that if the public suddenly expressed a desire for plastic or polymer banknotes in place of paper ones, the ECB “would happily accommodate them”. Although it remains uncertain if the ECB will opt for a digital currency, an appropriate design is already being drawn up so that the bank could do what is required quickly. A task force has been created to prepare the way.

Forbes Advisor website claims that a lot of countries are exploring the possibilities that CBDCs might offer them. On Forbes' website it says: “More than 100 countries are exploring CBDCs at one level or another, according to the IMF. But as of 2022, only a handful of countries and territories have CBDC or have concrete plans to issue them.” However, the way people are choosing to pay for things is changing. Financial technology firms have begun to offer new forms of money and new ways to pay, and central banks (including the ECB, of course) are looking to see if it's an avenue worth exploring. Certainly, there could be new opportunities, but also new risks. The Bank of England, for instance, is looking at the possibility of launching a CBDC of its own, which would operate alongside traditional banknotes. It has already switched to using polymer banknotes because they make counterfeiting harder, and they last longer in circulation. The Bank of England is already in talks with the Bank of International Settlements and various finance ministries



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**The front facade of the Bank of England building, in London**

to research its possible effects and how it would interlink with other countries' economies.

The ECB points out that if the CBDC were to operate on a wholesale basis, only interacting with a limited number of financial counterparties, its effect would be minimal. It also points out, though: “However, a retail CBDC, accessible to all, would be a game changer. So a retail CBDC is now our main focus.” There remain a number of questions, such as “should it (the new digital currency) have the status of legal tender?” If not, its legal basis would require clarification. It's been suggested that a retail CBDC could use digital tokens, but they would function very much like cash, which could mean there would be little change. The ECB has estimated that if the CBDC were to be based on deposit accounts with the central bank, it would mean increasing the number of current deposit accounts on offer from around 10,000 to a figure somewhere between 300- and 500-million. This would allow for the registration of financial transfers between users whilst offering protection against money laundering and other criminal activities. There are a lot of question that remain to be answered, including how technology could be used to facilitate it. “We do not serve technology,” the ECB writes on its website, “technology serves us.” It will certainly need to, while the rest of us will have to knuckle down and learn how to use it. As to whether or not it will offer an improved monetary system, only time will tell.

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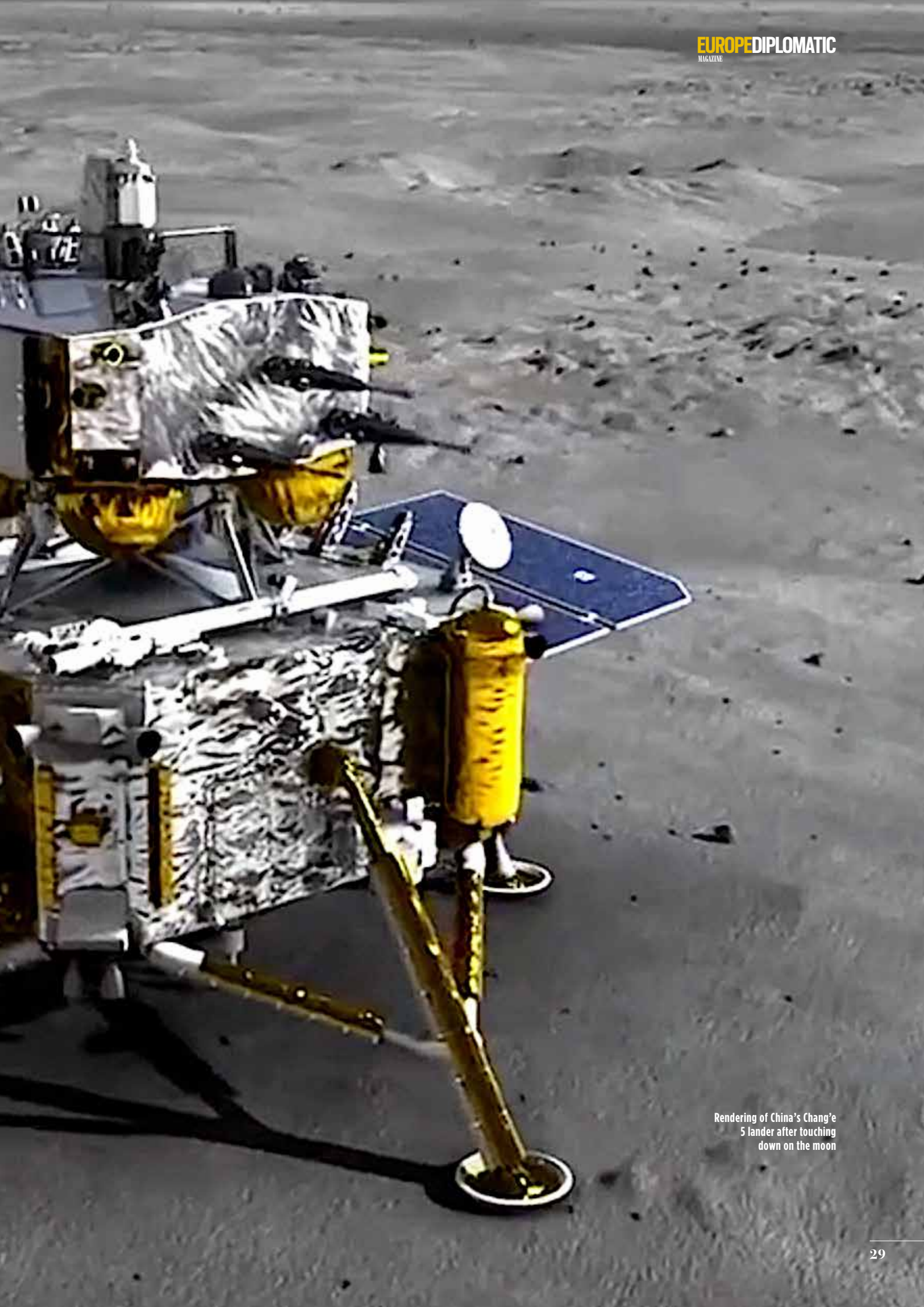
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# THE ODDBALL OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM

**China's moon goddess, Chang'e, rewards Chinese scientist-explorers with a promise of more to come from our oddball Moon**



Rendering of China's Chang'e 5 lander after touching down on the moon

Earth's Moon is rather unusual. It's too big, for one thing. Its diameter is almost 28% that of the Earth, making it proportionately the largest satellite our solar system can boast. The next biggest, in proportion to its host planet, is Neptune's largest moon, Triton, which comes in at just 5% of the diameter of the planet it orbits. So here we are, only the 5th largest planet of our solar system, encircled by what is, coincidentally, the system's 5th largest moon, proportionately. This has led to a lot of speculation about its origins. Charles Darwin's son, George, believed it had been spun off the Earth, leaving a big hole that we know as the Pacific Ocean. A more popular belief today is that it was caught unawares (as if a planet could ever be aware of anything anyway) by a slightly smaller, perhaps more Mars-sized planet which astronomers refer to as Theia. In that version, known as the "Giant Impact Hypothesis" (GIH) the two bodies collided and sent up a huge mass of debris which coalesced into our Moon. That, they argue, is why it is less dense than Earth and has an oddly undersized core. Its surface is covered with geological features that Earth-based scientists have given very poetic, even atmospheric-sounding names. That's odd, because, of course, the Moon has no atmosphere at all. It would not be a good place for a romantic tryst with your loved one. Earth, however, is denser than our neighbouring planets, which has led to suggestions that the heaviest parts of Theia stayed close to Earth, eventually merging into it. The lighter parts were thrown further out and formed – eventually – into the Moon, which, as a consequence is much less dense than Earth, and, as samples brought back from the Apollo missions showed, have a slightly different mix of oxygen types. Computer simulations suggest that the Moon is mainly made up of material from Theia, if it existed.

This would suggest that the Moon, containing so much of Theia, should be made of the same



Lunar samples collected through China's Chang'e-5 mission

© CHINA MEDIA GROUP

material almost exclusively, but China's space researchers would beg to differ. They have now discovered a new lunar material – the sixth so far. And there could well be more. In a joint statement, the China National Space Administration and the China Atomic Energy Authority have announced the discovery of what they call Changesite – (Y), which was found amongst samples that were brought back to Earth by the Chang'e 5 robotic mission.

It was named after careful examination at the Beijing Research Institute of Uranium Geology and it was subsequently certified by the International Mineralogical Association and its Commission on New Minerals, Nomenclature and Classification. Changesite – (Y), which comes under the heading of 'lunar merrillite', comes in the form of a single-crystalline particle with a diameter of 10 microns, and it was separated out from other material that was formed of some 140,000 tiny particles before being analysed through a series of very advanced mineralogical means, according to the Beijing Research Institute of Uranium Geology, which is one of the most important institutes to come under the China National Nuclear Corporation. The chief scientist for lunar sample research at the Institute, Li Ziyang, has said it will help researchers trying to learn more about the history and true geological nature of the Moon. It's been there all this time, seeming to smile down on us humans, yet we know relatively little about it.

Li told the media that the location upon which the Chang'e 5 – 5 probe landed and from which it gathered its samples is younger than the landing sites of earlier US and Russian missions, which could mean new characteristics not seen on earlier visits. Furthermore, scientists at the Institute have also measured the contents and characteristics of soil samples brought back on earlier US and Soviet missions. They have measured the helium-3 that the probe found which could provide the perfect fuel for future nuclear fusion power plants. "The results will facilitate the prospecting and assessment of the resource on the Moon," Li said. Using the Moon's vast supplies of helium-3 as a potential power source is not a new idea but it has never seemed like quite such a realistic prospect before. According to one estimate, more than a million tons of helium-3 ( $^3\text{He}$ ) has been deposited on the surface of the Moon which has left the concentration level at between 1.4 and 15 parts per billion (ppb) and may even contain concentrations as high as 50 ppb in areas that remain permanently in shadow. Obtaining the required  $^3\text{He}$  would not be easy. According to Wikipedia, the comparative concentration on Earth is closer to 7.2 parts per trillion (ppt), which is one reason, perhaps, why nobody has yet come up with a functioning small fusion plant. The very low concentrations mean that –



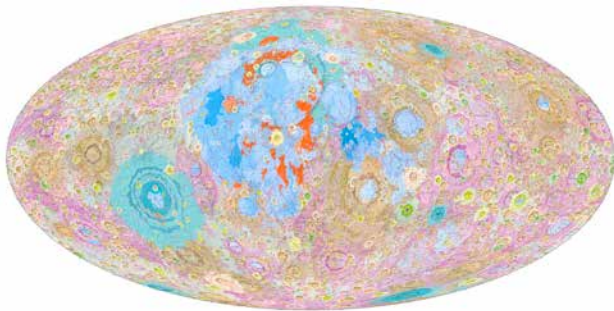
An artist's depiction of the hypothetical impact of a planet like Theia and the Earth

© NASA

according to one estimate – obtaining 1 gram of helium-3 would require the careful processing of 150 tons of regolith. Regolith is, of course, the weathered debris of soil and sediment that has been mixed together and is normally found above bedrock. Processing the volume required would offer a very small return for a lot of effort. Furthermore, by no means all scientists think the idea is even feasible. Even if it proved possible to extract  $^3\text{He}$  on the Moon, no fusion reactor yet designed would appear to produce more power than the amount required to make the extraction process work, which would appear to render the exercise somewhat pointless.

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**THE MOST DETAILED MAP OF THE MOON**



Chinese scientists from multiple research institutes and universities have created the high resolution topographic map based on data from China's lunar exploration Chang'e project and other data and research findings from international organizations. The map includes 12,341 impact craters, 81 impact basins, 17 rock types and 14 types of structures, providing abundant information about geology of the moon and its evolution

## I The energy of hope

One optimistic note is the sheer volume of  $^3\text{He}$  to be found on the Moon. Experts have estimated that only some 15 to 20 metric tons of Helium-3 are to be found on Earth in total. This paucity of supply would appear to hamper its usefulness as a fuel, but experts have suggested that there could be a million tons or more on the Moon. It would appear, perhaps, that Theia got the lion's share of the stuff when it separated from Earth (assuming it existed at all). The Chinese spacecraft that made this historic discovery was launched from Wenchang Space Launch centre in South China's Hainan province on 24 November 2020, landing just seven days later. On its return to Earth on 17 December, it brought back 1,731 grams of rock and soil, a remarkable achievement and the first load of Moon rocks to be brought to Earth for roughly 44 years. Once back here, according to the China National Space Administration, the samples, weighing a total of around 17.5 grams, were divided up into 21 separate lots which were later (quite a lot later) shared out among thirteen separate domestic research organisations working on 31 different scientific projects.

So, everybody happy and excited? Perhaps they should be, but if two wolves come across a single deer carcass out in the wilderness, it's not in their nature to share. The US has been issuing warnings that China wants to "claim" parts of the Moon for itself. "It is true that we better watch out that they don't get a place on the Moon under the guise of scientific research," warned NASA administrator Bill Nelson, adding: "And it is not beyond the realm of possibility that they say, 'Keep out, we're here, this is our territory.'" Nelson went on to warn that he believes Beijing's interest in space would in some way be to claim ownership over the Moon and stop other countries from exploring it or



Long March 5 Y2 used for Chang'e-5 mission

conducting missions where its space stations are located. He was effectively reiterating the concerns already expressed by International Space Station (ISS) commander Terry Virts, who has also issued warnings about what he called Beijing's "potential mischief" in trying to make the Moon a part of China. I'll start worrying when a first bar opens there offering crispy seaweed or chicken chop suey opens in Copernicus Crater or the Sea of Tranquility. Not a lot of passing trade, I would imagine, but if one did open for business, I'd lay odds it would be American-owned.



Expedition 43 commander and NASA astronaut Terry Virts



A « Chinese Dream » propaganda poster with Chinese President Xi Jing Pin

Still, if you can use those supposedly cheap-fuelled nuclear fusion heaters to cook the stuff, I don't rule anything out. I love Chinese food (despite being a vegetarian) but the Moon is a very long way to go for a snack. Still, America seems worried: in a detailed 196-page report, the US Department of Defense (DoD) underlined China's persistent attempts to step up its space programme with the aim of landing a spacecraft bearing China's flag on some new site on the Moon where neither human nor robot has ever ventured before. Virts had already told the newspaper Bild that by 2035 China will complete the construction of a Moon station and will also launch several space flights to, as he alleged, "hijack the Moon". Do we shout out "bring it back!" now or later? China has already managed to get seeds to sprout on the Moon, which is more than any other country has done so far, and China is running second only to the US in the



© NASA/KIM SHIPLETT

NASA scientists work on the rocket that is proposed to take humans back to the Moon on a mining mission

space race. It is a source of considerable national pride there, a part of what Chairman Xi Jinping has called "China's Dream" (could it also be Washington's nightmare?) and part of his plan to build a powerful and prosperous China. Perhaps someone should ask the Uighur people what they think about that.

Back in 2019, China became the first country to land a space craft on the far side of the Moon. It was the Chang'e 4 lander, bearing the Yutu 2 rover that touched down in the Von Kármán crater. It also set a longevity record with both lander and rover active for more than one thousand Earth days while the rover explored almost 840 metres on the far side, incidentally capturing some stunning photographs and also overtaking the record set by the Soviet Union's Lunokhod 1 rover of 321 days of work on the lunar surface.

America's assertion that China has territorial ambitions on the Moon have been dismissed by the Chinese government as "a lie". In a statement, China said: "Some US officials have spoken irresponsibly to misrepresent the normal and legitimate space endeavours of China. China always advocates the peaceful use of outer space, opposes the weaponization (of space) and arms race in outer space, and works actively toward building a community with a shared future for mankind in the space domain." Wonderful sentiments, if true.

## Come quickly. Bring a bucket

We've talked quite a lot about helium-3 without mentioning the new mineral that Chinese scientists have found, changesite-(Y). For a start, it contains helium-3, which makes it interesting straight away. Helium-3, by the way, is a heavier isotope of helium, while changesite-(Y) takes its name from Chang'e, China's mythological moon goddess, who also gave her name to China's first lunar rover designed to collect samples from the moon's surface, a job it fulfilled admirably. In appearance, changesite-(Y) forms a transparent and colourless column, a mere 10 microns in radius, which is less than one tenth of the diameter of a human hair. It could provide a very rich source of nuclear fusion energy, so there may prove to be quite a heavy demand for the stuff, if anyone can find a way to harvest it in sufficient quantities. The changesite-(Y) that has been returned to Earth was found near Mons Rümker, a volcanic formation on the Oceanus Procellarum (Ocean of Storms), a primarily basalt area. As Wikipedia explains, basalt is a fine-grained igneous rock formed in the rapid cooling of a form of lava rich in magnesium and iron, close to the surface of a rocky planet or moon. More than 90% of all the volcanic rock on Earth is basalt. The region from which the changesite-(Y) was recovered was formed during lunar volcanic eruptions billions of years ago, which means that the samples came from deep inside the Moon a very, very long time ago when there were still active volcanoes on the Moon. For those with a chemical inclination, the formula is  $(Ca_8Y)□Fe^{2+}(PO_4)_7$ . Changesite-(Y) is a Merrillite mineral, which means it's made of calcium phosphate and has the chemical formula  $Ca_9NaMg(PO_4)_7$ . It is also rich in sodium.

As for those volcanoes on the Moon, they are currently regarded as "dead", having burned out and inevitably cooled down. Many scientists would like to take a closer look at the Moon's mineral riches, since knowing more about how that





**Dmitry Rogozin (right) with Russian President Vladimir Putin**

**Zhang Kejian, Director of the China National Space Administration**

cooling down took place should give us a glimpse of what lies in store for the planet Earth at some distant future point. Politicians involved with the space research of the United States are rather more concerned about political outcomes. After all, back in 2009, Zhang Kejian, the head of China National Space Administration (CNSA) and Dmitry Rogozin, General Manager of Russia's space research body, Roscosmos, signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the construction of what was intended to become the International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) on the Moon. The facility was intended to be capable of long-term operation either on the surface of the Moon or on-board a spacecraft in orbit around it. This fits into the prediction by Terry Virts that China would complete the construction of its own "Moon station" by 2035. That's why China planted and grew plants from potato seeds, rapeseed and rare types of cotton seed, all sprouted on the Moon. I wonder who waters them? They must have needed a watering can with a very long spout. The West must stop drawing the wrong conclusions, says Beijing and "amend the negative comments", and it should also "make the due contribution of the US to maintaining continued peace and security in outer space." Let's face it: a real war being fought among the planets (we can forget the stars in this context) would be very unlike the spaceship-to-spaceship battles of the kids' comics of our youth. Poor old Dan Dare wouldn't get a look-in.

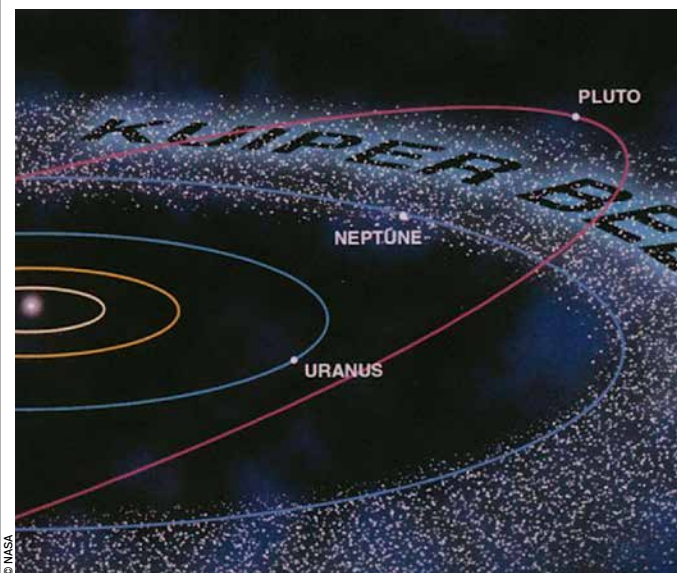
## Home sweet home

It would be worthwhile to look at our home planet and its immediate neighbourhood. Our particular planetary system is in an outer spiral arm of the Milky Way galaxy, comprising the Sun and the various lumps of rock bound to it by gravity: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune, along with a clutch of dwarf planets of which the most famous is Pluto, whose diameter of 2,368 kilometres means it's smaller than our Moon, at 3,476.

It's a strange place, the solar system. In addition to those dwarf planets, we have the Kuiper Belt, a disc of matter going around the Sun and stretching from the orbit of Neptune at 30 astronomical units to some 50 astronomical units. An astronomical unit is roughly the distance between Earth and the Sun: around 150-million kilometres (or 8.3 light-minutes if you prefer). Beyond the Kuiper Belt – quite a long way

beyond – we have the Oort Cloud, thought to be the most distant part of the solar system with even its nearest elements many times further out from the Sun than the outermost parts of the Kuiper Belt. It is thought to comprise billions – or perhaps even trillions – of icy pieces of space rock ranging in size from pebbles to rocks the size of large mountains. In fact, the Oort Cloud is believed to form a massive thick-walled shell around the rest of the solar system. There may be more, extending out even further from the Sun towards its nearest solar neighbour within our home galaxy.

Now, the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) has photographed countless thousands of other galaxies, stretching away not only in space but in time. It has delighted and surprised the scientists involved in its deployment with photographs



**The main part of the Kuiper Belt begins at Neptune's orbit**

of galaxies so far away from us that they must date from a time when our universe was young. Positioned around 1.5-million kilometres away from where it could suffer interference from Earth, it has been looking into galaxies so distant that they must have begun to form just a few hundreds of millions of years after the so-called "Big Bang" that set the whole thing in motion. In astronomical terms, that's hardly any time at all. We can now look back at the origins of our place among the stars and, indeed, at those earliest of stars themselves.

The December 2022 edition of Scientific American shows images taken by the JWST of, for instance, the Carina Nebula, where many hundreds of hitherto invisible new-born stars are beginning to twinkle some 7,600 light-years from Earth. Whatever Beijing, Washington or Moscow may say, no-one will ever be able to claim them, although Washington can certainly be able to claim that it got the first photographs. The images taken by the Hubble Space Telescope,



NASA's James Webb Space Telescope reveals emerging stellar nurseries and individual stars in the Carina Nebula that were previously obscured

launched into low Earth orbit in 1990, and now by the JWST, launched on a European Space Agency Ariane 5 rocket on Christmas Day 2021 (The Ariane 5 was chosen as the launch vehicle because of its reliability) have allowed us to peer through billions of kilometres of space dust into what is, as far as we're concerned, the dawn of time. In terms of the numbers of galaxies revealed and the clarity of their reproduction, the pictures from the JWST surpassed all expectations. It makes a trip to the Moon seem almost trivial by comparison, although of course it certainly isn't.

## Far away and even further



The Galileo spacecraft took these images on December 7, 1992 on its way to explore the Jupiter system in 1995-97. The distinct bright ray crater at the bottom of the image is the Tycho impact basin. The dark areas are lava rock filled impact basins: Oceanus Procellarum (on the left), Mare Imbrium (center left), Mare Serenitatis and Mare Tranquillitatis (center), and Mare Crisium (near the right edge)

It has to be hoped that the JWST doesn't need any repair or servicing. The Hubble has an altitude of just 600 kilometres, which is reachable. The JWST, on the other hand, is at the Sun-Earth Lagrange point at an altitude of 1.5-million kilometres, and there are currently no plans to design or construct a space vehicle that could give engineers access. Incidentally, Lagrange Points, named in honour of the Italian-French mathematician Joseph-Louis Lagrange, are positions in space where two large masses exert matching gravitational pull, so that a space vehicle can remain in position without using fuel to stay where they need to be. In this case, the gravitational attraction comes from the Sun and the Earth.

Getting the photographs is no easy matter, however rewarding. For instance, the galaxies known as Stephan's Quintet, some 290-million light-years from Earth, occupy an area of space equivalent to around 20% of our Moon's diameter, so the photograph (also reproduced in *Scientific American*) is made up of almost a thousand separate images, but together they reveal details of the galaxy group that have never been seen before. When we consider the vast distances involved, and the eons of time, the influence of one Earthly country over the planet's Moon would seem to be a trivial matter, of relatively little importance. Our Moon may be bigger than it should be in relative terms but it doesn't come near to the size of just one of the many galaxies now being revealed by the JWST. Squabbling over who it belongs to begins to look rather silly, but that's politics for you.

All the same, it would be wrong to downplay China's great achievement in getting its rover onto the Moon and bringing back rock samples that include a totally new mineral. Finding changesite – (Y) and successfully identifying it by giving it a name is an amazing thing to have done. Of course, there is much more still to do and it would be better for all of us if the various space-venturing nations worked together instead of competing – China, the United States and even (if it stops its pointless but bloody war in Ukraine) – Russia. Imagine what they could achieve through cooperation. That, however, may be a goal that's more difficult to reach than a distant part of the Oort cloud, or even those distant galaxies discovered so magnificently by the JWST. Trying to out-do each other in the space race – as in other endeavours involving national pride – is a fairly pointless endeavour. I think Mahatma Gandhi had a valid point when he said: "An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind." With so much that's new to look at and so much more yet to see, that would be a terrible waste.

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# DANCING AROUND THE ISSUES

**How some women are  
silenced by the uneasy  
trans controversy**

© ROSE KAY





Where modern dance is concerned, I have all the poise, grace and elegance of a 3-legged toad with rheumatism. My total lack of terpsichorean skill was an undoubted handicap back in those distant days of attending dances and chatting up girls. Most were not keen on having their toes trodden into a pulp by the lummoX opposite them while attempting to display skills that were clearly lacking. My attempts at dancing left me resembling a hippopotamus with haemorrhoids. It was not a pretty sight, but it meant that I was always full of admiration for those with grace and skill who are capable of conveying a mood, a feeling, even a narrative through the skilful use of their bodies, arms and legs. It is a skill that one has to be born with and then to train through long months and years of exhausting practice under expert guidance. There are few who can match the skill and grace of Scottish-born Rosie Kay, who has danced from a very early age and displayed to the world just how wonderful she is as a dancer.

Let's start with a little background. She graduated from the London Contemporary Dance School in 1998 before beginning a career as a dancer which saw her perform in Poland, France, Germany, and the United States. She returned to the UK in 2003 and set up the Rosie Kay Dance Company. Her performances to date have drawn rapturous reviews and also won her many awards. Her "Absolute Solo II" tour in 2021, for instance, contained three personal solos on her part. It was chosen by The Observer newspaper for a National Dance Award in 2022 for her "Outstanding Female Performance (Modern)". Kay conducted research with the British Army, including undergoing military training exercises, in developing one of her performances. Her multi-award-winning "5 Soldiers", being performed from 2010 to the present day she further developed into "10 Soldiers" (first performed in 2019) and she has toured it to Birmingham Repertory Theatre, the Theatre Royal in Norwich, and Salisbury Playhouse as well as making regular tours in Europe and the United States.

Her pure dance work, "Fantasia", a celebration of beauty, was named as being among The Guardian newspaper's "Top 10 Dance of 2019" performances. There have been many others, such as "Hope" (2012) which looks at religion, and also one entitled MK ULTRA, created for a Guardian Newspaper competition, concerning conspiracy theories and pop and made in collaboration with Adam Curtis, a BBC film-maker. Other works include "Motel" (2016), "Sluts of Possession" (2013), which involved using rare archive material from Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum, and also "Hope" from 2012, which examined religion.

With so many accolades heaped upon her one might imagine the dance company she founded being desperate to hang on to her, but she resigned from it in December 2021 claiming constructive dismissal and discrimination. It was especially ironical because it happened at a dinner party she had organised at her home to smooth over any problems of differences of points of view just ten days before the première of her huge, very contemporary version of "Romeo and Juliet", upon which she had been working for some five years, on and off. She had set it in present-day Birmingham with feuding families replaced by knife gangs. The dinner party was intended to address what she called "a funny vibe" in the studio; she wanted to show her very young dancers that she cared. It all went well, with a lot of wine being consumed, until they asked her what she planned for her next show. She said she was putting out audition notices for an adaptation of the Virginia Woolf novel, Orlando, in which the eponymous hero starts out as an aristocratic man but then, halfway through, turns into a woman. Kay told her putative cast that the leading rôle had to be danced by someone extraordinary but that somehow turned into a discussion about sex and gender and rapidly became quite heated.

Kay thought it would blow over; she felt she had been defending women's rights and she feared that the views being expressed by her dinner guests could pose a threat to women and to children. The row got to the ears of the management, the board became involved and although Kay was exonerated in the first inquiry, one of the dancers appealed and suddenly there were costly lawyers involved (all paid for by her dance company), along with other consultants of various kinds. Kay lost her faith in her own company and after getting two separate legal opinions she resigned, citing "constructive dismissal". Kay had expressed her opinion that if anyone can simply claim to be of one gender or the other, based on personal choice, then it



© USDB.EDU

5 SOLDIERS, The Rosie Kay Dance Company show



would mean that people could enter into single-sex spaces (such as toilets or showers) according to preference and without having to offer some form of proof of their entitlement to be there. Kay cited a joke by the comedian Ricky Gervais in which a woman who is raped would have to call her attacker “she” in court. She was completely taken by surprise at the response she encountered from her young dancers. In a television interview she pointed out that she is a middle-aged woman who very nearly died in childbirth herself. She points out that some aspects of her life had been shaped by the fact that her body is female and that childbirth is an experience that is uniquely feminine. No man will ever have to undergo the extreme pain of giving birth nor really understand it. Evolution has been extremely unkind to human females. Kay feels that it is wholly wrong to find that suddenly it is an issue that cannot even be talked about.

## Things remembered differently

The discussion in the early hours deteriorated very quickly, Kay told the Brendan O’Neill show podcast, and she was greatly surprised that her dancers made clear that they felt she needed some kind of re-education. She felt she had been the only one standing up for women.

“Even if it has not been your habit throughout your life so far” wrote Ina May in her “Guide to Childbirth, “I recommend that you learn to think positively about your body.” It must be extremely difficult for any woman to think positively about the experience of extreme pain that she is suffering. Other women



who have been through the process must surely wonder if any man has earned the right to give himself equal access to a room supposedly reserved for women. Just in case Kay didn’t get the message, they have now accused her of jeopardising their future careers by going public. Kay has described the upshot of a row over gender as an “unfair, opaque and horrific investigation process that’s still ongoing”. The dancers involved have accused Kay of transphobia. Kay herself spoke to the media because, she said, she could not endure the humiliation any longer, which leads one to imagine that things were said at that dinner that simply could not be later withdrawn, nor easily repeated. Kay is on record as having stated her firm belief that nobody can change their biological gender. In a letter sent by the dancers to the dance company’s management they wrote that they “respect her viewpoint”, although they also made clear their view that: “No-one, no matter how big their platform, has the right to create a hostile work environment.” They make the claim that in their view, Kay had: “abused her power as our boss. Furthermore, she is now using her power as someone that has a louder voice than we can hope for.”

Descriptions of what actually happened at the dinner vary, according to who is telling the story. Kay insists she was merely standing up for women’s rights but others who were present insist that quite a lot of alcohol was consumed and that Kay crossed the line and spoke in a hostile manner. Whichever version you choose to believe there is no doubt that a cheery and slightly boozy dinner party turned into something much nastier, with things being said that could be neither withdrawn nor forgiven. In the letter the dancers sent, which is quoted by the BBC on its website, Kay is supposed to have spoken about “the cake of rights” (a very strange analogy, if true) and to have pointed out that women have fought for a slice of that cake but that now men pretending to be women want a portion, too. “This is a deeply offensive analogy,” the letter goes on, “and due to the fact that two trans non-binary people had a seat at the table, it felt very pointed.” It seems to have been the sort of row that in days gone by might have been described as “a storm in a teacup”, except that it has shattered a very successful dance company and separated the troupe from their highly-admired founder, choreographer and extraordinarily talented lead dancer.

The young dancers who made the complaint have said that she asked them to justify their existence, displaying their genitalia as proof, which Kay denies. “This was a dinner in my own home,” Kay has stated, “at which I was attacked by six individuals. The hostility was directed at me and has lasted for nearly four months.” Kay is clearly still distressed by the experience. “I make no apology for standing up against this treatment,” she has said, “using the ‘power’ that I have earned through a 20-year career.” On-line, the BBC has



© GARAZI

Rosie Kay

quoted her response. “Other women do not have this power,” she said, and so: “cannot stand up like I have done. This is not aimed at the dancers, but at the toxic nature of a culture that will see women lose their livelihoods for believing that sex is real.” Kay has apologised for any offence she may have caused but some of the dancers wrote to the BBC to argue that, as one of them put it, they didn’t feel that the apology had been made “with true ownership of the fact that she made transphobic comments”. The letter writer further clarifies her position, saying: “By refusing to use the dancers’ correct pronouns and rejecting their trans non-binary identities, Rosie is denying that a trans non-binary person can exist. This is transphobia.” At least, it was to them, although it’s not clear if that’s the view that would be taken by the man or woman in the street.



© INRE

Rosie Kay, CEO and artistic director of the female-led dance company, called K2CO

## A little too sensitive?

Rosie Kay hotly denies that she’s trans-phobic and the on-line response to the whole affair suggests that she has fairly widespread public support. As one person posted: “The pathetic

immaturity of some of the dancers in Rosie’s previous company is embarrassing. Imagine accusing a woman of sexual harassment because she used the words penis and vagina at a party in her own home? The pettiness is revolting.” The writer of that post dismissed the reaction of the young dancers as “crybullying”. Kay is still very much involved with professional dance, and is now CEO and artistic director of another female-led dance company, called K2CO. She said afterwards that the evening had been going well – she’d provided many different foodstuffs to satisfy a variety of dietary needs and preferences – until some time between midnight and 1 am, when it: “became a discussion around sex and gender and it got quite heated quite quickly. I felt like I was the only one who was actually standing up for women, considering the repercussions of these ideas. And the more I tried to explain why I thought these ideas could be a danger to women’s rights and to children, the worse it got. I was genuinely shocked at how far down the ideological road they had gone.” An article about the incident in Breitbart drew her support from the Harry Potter author, J.K.Rowling, which, Kay says, saved her from a deep bout of depression. Rowling wrote: “Rosie, you proved you were ready to lose everything



© J.K. ROWLING/PHOTOGRAPHY DEBRA HURFORD BROW

J.K. Rowling

in this fight and I couldn’t admire you more”, adding three clapping emojis.

The dancers who wrote to complain about Kay and her views says that they respect her right to hold to her belief that a person’s biological sex is immutable, but they strongly dispute her right to create a “hostile work environment”. In their letter, the dancers claimed that Kay: “abused her power as our boss. Furthermore, she is now using her power as someone that has a louder voice than we can hope for.” The next point of their argument is less easy to comprehend for those of us who were not present. They stress that Kay’s point about ‘the cake of rights’ is a deeply offensive analogy, for some reason that is not clear to me. The group also allege that Kay was aggressive and had made the dancers feel uncomfortable by showing them her child’s bedroom during a tour of her Birmingham home. How and why such actions left them feeling uncomfortable is





© INSTAGRAM/GABYCONNPHOTOS

**Iona Lily McGuire (they/them) a non-binary dance artist from Birmingham**

not made clear.

Kay has cited the events at this most unhappy-sounding dinner party as an example of a woman who stands up for women's rights being accused of transphobia. Despite the claims made in the dancers' letter, she denies having deliberately sought to offend the two gay dancers who were present who identify as "non-binary trans" and she firmly rejects claims that she demanded that they justify their existence. "I said, and it is correct to say," she later claimed, "that women are losing rights to males who identify as women. These include the right to access single sex spaces (such as toilets and showers). This is not an analogy, it is a statement of fact, and I do not apologise for it," she told the BBC. Through her lawyer, Kay found out her managers had decided that she "would need to be re-educated" to bring her thinking more into line with theirs. The dancers talked about sending her to re-education programs such as those offered by an organisation called Mermaids and another called Gendered Intelligence.

Among the things Kay is alleged to have said to her dinner guests, as reported in the letter of complaint they later sent to the management, was this: "Permitting trans individuals to take chemical blockers is making eunuchs," and also that "recognising as non-double is a cop-out". No, I don't know what that means either. One of the members of what was formerly the Rosie Kay Dance Company was Iona McGuire, who declines to define her gender as either male or female. She seems to have been present when the alleged "transphobia" incident took place. McGuire doesn't like the use of words like he, she, male or female and prefers the generic and gender-neutral "they", which could be a source of confusion in conversations.

Kay described the nightmare she struggled through during an interview with Winston Marshall on the on-line Spectator TV service. She had convinced herself that she was male until a psychiatrist persuaded her otherwise. It must have been an extreme feeling. For her own creation, "5 Soldiers", she trained with an army unit to gain insight into how fighting men think and how they approach physical fitness. The army made her very welcome and convinced her that dance is so important to her very existence that she would still try to dance even if she lost an arm or a leg. She had to fight then,

too: the Ministry of Defence tried to stop the performance of "5 Soldiers" from taking place for security reasons. Her Romeo and Juliet was, of course, William Shakespeare's classic old tale of difficult love, moved from Verona to modern-day Birmingham, with knife gangs taking the place of posh feuding families.

Kay told Marshall that an odd mood developed in rehearsals, with her dancers proving less collaborative than usual. It came in the wake of the big COVID-19 scare, which undoubtedly played into this sense of unease. Her dancers, she said, "were not very generous", even before she broached the subject of staging Orlando and many felt uncomfortable. Orlando, written by Virginia Woolf, was almost certainly a kind of love letter to her close friend, Vita Sackville-West, whom she greatly admired. In it, the eponymous hero falls asleep as a man and wakes up as a woman. Disagreements erupted over the wording of an audition notice, but that was just the start. She had faced up to sexism in one form or another even when she was still at school. There she found herself dismissed from the school football team, because of her gender, despite being the best player.

Next came the repercussions from the big row at her dinner party, with bitter disagreement over the differences between sex and gender. She told Marshall on Spectator TV that it was the worst possible nightmare for a choreographer. Kay became convinced she was going mad and found herself facing legal counsel opposing her and yet entirely funded with the money belonging to the company she had personally founded. It was like being attacked by herself. It turned into a witch hunt, she said, and it left her feeling unwell, unable to eat properly whilst feeling the need to vomit. She found false stories about herself posted on-line in a manner known as "deep fake" and it brought back to her the memory of the family members she had lost to the Nazis in Poland.



© WINSTON MARSHALL

**English musician and podcaster Winston Marshall**

## Confusion = discomfort?



Rosie Kay interviewed by FAIR PERSPECTIVES, the UK official podcast of the pro-human movement

Not everyone feels uncomfortable with discovering that their physical shape doesn't match the gender with which they identify. It is only if such feelings cause distress that the condition is identified as gender dysphoria.

As Psychology Today points out in an excellent article, a person with, say, female sex characteristics may privately identify as a man but continue to present themselves to the world as a woman, while another may choose to dress in clothes associated with the gender with which they identify. Another may seek hormone treatment. All may experience discomfort with the gender nature has allotted them. Gender dysphoria can cause significant distress and discomfort. People with the condition often feel socially isolated and can find themselves ostracised. The condition was first reported in 1948 and first named in 1973, although clearly there had been many previous cases long before.

Many adults with gender dysphoria will not seek specialist medical intervention, and the number of cases is probably underestimated. According to the Mind Diagnostics website, as of 2017, somewhere between 0.5% and 1.3% of people said they identified with a different gender than their body would suggest and which they were assigned at birth. A recent U.S. survey found that 1.4 million people identified as transgender. However, because of the social stigma involved, researchers believe that the accurate number is likely to be much higher. Treatment is complicated.

In Rosie Kay's case, however, the disagreement was over definitions, more than biology. At that notorious dinner, Kay is alleged to have said she did not believe that anyone could "change their sex" and is accused of have asked her guests – all dancers – to prove their genders by revealing their genitalia. It sounds like the

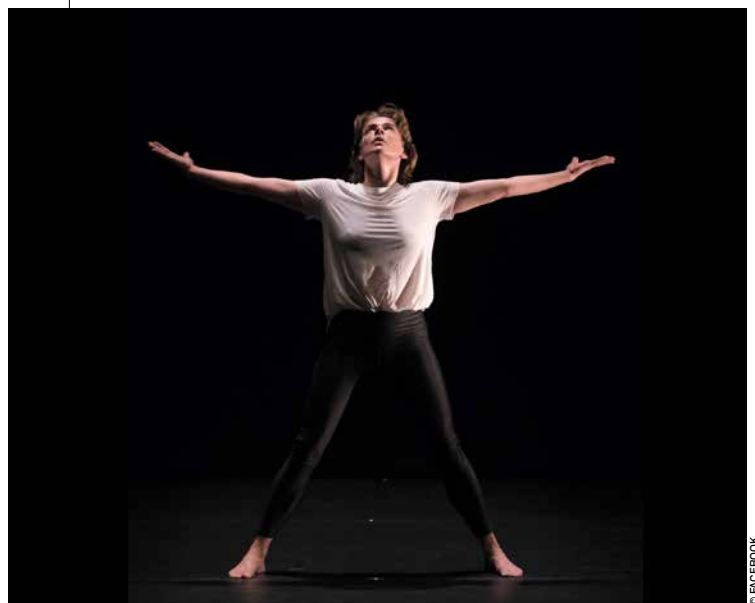
sort of argument that owed its origins to too much wine. She has since insisted to the BBC that she "is not transphobic". Referring to her planned production of Virginia Woolf's Orlando, in which the central character changes from a man into a woman, she allegedly said: "Woolf knows anyone can change sex in their imagination but that you can't change sex in your actual body." She also allegedly said that "identifying as non-binary is a cop-out" and that "allowing trans people to take hormone blockers is creating eunuchs".

Following the dinner, some of the dancers filed a complaint to the board of the Rosie Kay Dance Company, first founded in 2004. Kay has apologised profusely but it became impossible to continue and "Orlando" was closed down. The dancers said Kay had "marginalised" them and in their letter they wrote that: "they wish to set the record straight and to ensure that any dancers under the supervision of Rosie Kay do not undergo the same marginalisation that we have suffered". They also wrote that they: "respect Rosie's right to hold the belief that biological sex is immutable. However, no one, no matter how big their platform, has the right to create a hostile work environment." They accused her of abusing her power as their boss. Exactly what this has to do with dancing seems unclear to me, but then I'm not a dancer. The dancers, in their letter to management, stressed that two trans non-binary people had been sharing the table and said that the whole things had caused: "potential detriment to our careers", but without explaining how.

Now that Kay has left her own highly-regarded dance company, one might imagine the whole affair would be quietly forgotten. Kay has a new dance company, and we must assume that the original one will be renamed to distance it from the woman who founded it. With her remarkable talent the new company will soon be experiencing the sorts of plaudits her old one enjoyed. I certainly hope so. More can be done these days to address gender dysphoria. I'm just hugely pleased that it's not a condition I ever experienced. I hope Rosie Kay regains her position at the very top of the dancing profession.

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Rosie Kay



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**SUCK IT  
AND SEE**

**How young Europeans  
and others are feeling the  
lure of nicotine pouches  
to suck as an alternative  
to smoking**



Switzerland's first snus shop opened in June 2020 in St. Margrethen

Has anyone ever offered you a Röda Lacket, a Generalsnus or an Ettan? Or how about a Swedish Match? Or a Zyn? It's a new and increasingly trendy way to consume tobacco that is catching on amongst young consumers and spreading across Europe. Actually, when I say "new", that's not strictly true; the tobacco companies have only just started to market snus heavily across Europe, but they've been a popular way to consume tobacco, especially in Scandinavian countries, for a long time. In Sweden, for instance, it was more common to see somebody using snus than smoking a hundred years ago. The snus is a traditional product but it's just starting to catch on, especially among young people, across the rest of Europe. What is it? You may well be wondering. Clearly, it's a tobacco-based product, which would seem to go against government policies based on the idea of having "tobacco harm reduction" (THR) as an aim, but Sweden is claiming a good measure of success, with smoking rates having dropped to 5.6%. Within the European Union (and in the UK) if a government can get consumption below 5% it can claim to be "smoke free". I write from experience, having given up cigarettes, then a pipe and finally snuff (which is messy and gets everywhere) many years ago. I certainly do not miss the taste of tobacco, so I'm not attracted by the idea of sucking the stuff.

Snus is a tobacco product, sold in small pouches after the tobacco itself has been ground up very finely, then packed into a small porous pouch. Whether the word "snus" is singular or plural is a matter of on-line debate, it seems. The user tucks the little bag under his or her top lip, pressed against the gum between the lips and the teeth, from where they can get it to release a strong 'kick' of nicotine (the manufacturers claim). It may sound revolting (at least, it does to me) but sales in Belgium and Switzerland are picking up fast.

The pouches contain a bulking agent mixed with nicotine and are thought to be growing in popularity because they don't cause bad breath, nor do they stain the teeth, qualities that are both popular selling points when compared with other forms of tobacco use. The "Big Four" tobacco companies are now engaged in fairly aggressive marketing campaigns to boost sales further and the global market for the product is now predicted to reach \$21.84-billion

(€20.35-billion) by the end of 2027. It's easy to understand why the tobacco companies are so keen on it and I suspect that enthusiasm has little to do with THR policies, other than in finding a way to sell the product that doesn't break the law.

Snus is distributed to Germany and many other EU countries. An on-line promotion boasts that one German vendor has over 20 years of experience and expertise "in the online distribution of smokeless tobacco products, tobacco-free nicotine pouches, snus (similar in a way to chewing tobacco) and chewing bags". It's certainly catching on in a big way: the Swedish government has confirmed that actual smoking rates have fallen to just 5.6%, from 40% in 1976. That's getting close to being able to claim the country is "smoke free", which only requires the figure to drop to 5% or below (at least, in the EU and the UK). In the UK, cigarettes are most frequently being replaced by e-cigarettes. In this case, instead of a paper tube filled with tobacco which the smoker lights, drawing the smoke into their lungs, they inhale from a tube containing tobacco derivatives that are heated to release the fumes of combustion. The problem is that with ordinary cigarette smoking, along with the tobacco smoke, the user inhales more than 4,000 different chemicals, none of which have any health benefits and in fact are potentially harmful to the smoker. Clearly, then, bad for the user's general well-being, or at least offering no health benefit.

An e-cigarette, on the other hand, doesn't contain tobacco and neither does it involve the burning of tobacco or any other substance. Instead, e-cigarettes are filled with a liquid that most often (but not always) contains nicotine. Inside each of them there is a small battery-powered heating element which turns the liquid into a vapour. This is what is then inhaled through a mouthpiece. As a consequence, there's no combustion, so there's no smoke. Using e-cigarettes is called "vaping" and it has caught on mostly in the UK. Usually, there is a choice of flavours available. Snus, of course, is a quite different product, but where they have caught on – chiefly in Scandinavia – cases of lung cancer and heart disease have dropped, quite considerably.



Snus Pouches

## | Smoke signals

The consumption of snus which is already popular in Scandinavia is now on the increase elsewhere, especially in the United States and increasingly in Finland. Research at Oxford University has shown that as the popularity of snus has increased, so has the nicotine content. The researchers found that the average amount of nicotine per gram of snus sold in Norway, for instance, increased from 16.3 milligrams per gram of snus to 24.1 between 2005 and 2020. Meanwhile,



Killa's Extra strong Nicopods containing nicotine

Sweden's leading producer of snus, Swedish Match, has now obtained approval from the US Food and Drug Administration to market eight snus products in the US as "Modified Risk Tobacco Products". It's not modified to the point at which medical practitioners might describe it as wholly "safe". One on-line advertisement, for White fox snus, describes its products as "mainly made for the experienced user, this is due to the higher nicotine levels." Those words will undoubtedly attract some potential buyers, as will the following, for the same producer: "KILLA Snus is extremely popular and is mainly used by experienced users. All Snus that KILLA Snus produces contains only high nicotine levels." We must assume that the name "KILLA" is not to be taken literally?

Norway has seen a massive growth in sales, from 286 tons per year in 1985 to 1,487 tons in 2019, and that's without counting snus bought over the border in Sweden or from tax-free and other sources. There has also been a massive proliferation of products available on the market, with new flavours and more elaborate packaging to attract buyers. This ended in 2017, when a new law was brought in, enforcing plain packaging on all tobacco products. Manufacturers have proved quite inventive in their ways of marketing snus. A study published in 2007 showed that both nicotine content in milligrams per gram and nicotine yield, measured in smoke generated by a smoking machine based on the Massachusetts smoking regimen, increased in all major cigarette brands from 1997 to 2005, but there have been no market-based studies of changes to nicotine content for Swedish snus.

In Belgium, the most recent data shows the number of deaths from smoking each year to be 18,736. Of those, in round figures, 13,200 were men and 5,500 women, which means that Belgium has 2.4-million smokers. 26.9% of men smoke, as do 23.1% of women. Belgium has no specific law on the use of heated tobacco products like snus. It's illegal to sell them to anyone younger than 18. Strangely, buying or selling snus is illegal in Belgium, but it's legal to use the product if you can obtain it in some way that doesn't contravene the law. In fact, it is illegal to buy or sell snus anywhere within the EU except in Sweden. The law is ridiculously complicated. While it is against the law to import snus for trade or to buy the product on line, it is legal to import it for personal use. However, Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) can be bought legally in Belgian pharmacies and the market in Belgium is worth €18.7-million. In case you're wondering, US Daily Med explains it on Wikipedia like this: "Nicotine replacement therapy is a medically approved way to treat people with tobacco use disorder by taking nicotine through means other than tobacco. It is used to help with quitting smoking or stopping chewing tobacco. It increases the chance of quitting tobacco smoking by about 55%." This includes things like stick-on skin patches to reduce cravings.

## | Snus and health

According to Marjut Salokannel from the University of Helsinki and Eeva Ollila from the Cancer Society of Finland and University of Tampere, Helsinki, Finland : « It has been argued that it is less harmful for young people to use snus than to smoke. A systematic review found few primary studies investigating the possible association between snus and changes in smoking behaviour. However, it is noteworthy that (1) snus may serve as a gateway for smoking, at least among Finnish adolescents (2) many school children end up as dual users (3) nicotine is also harmful in itself, especially for the developing body, including the brain and (4) that snus carries considerable health risks»

In a study published The BMJ Peer-reviewed journal published by the trade union the British Medical Association, the now deceased President of the British National Heart Forum, Alexander W Macara wrote in 2008 : « the expert group of the International Agency for Research on Cancer has concluded that smokeless tobacco is carcinogenic to humans, and the European Commission report cites studies by the Swedish Institute of Public Health and the Karolinska Institute as evidence that snus is carcinogenic ».

Control of tobacco and tobacco product sales was introduced across the EU under the EU Tobacco Products Directive (TPD) in 2014. The law made it illegal to buy on-line and also imposed health warnings in Dutch, French and German, while advertising is banned. The TPD may exclude Sweden, but it is applied vigorously elsewhere, with the following wording: "The prohibition of the sale of tobacco for oral use should be maintained in order to prevent the introduction in the Union (apart from Sweden) of a product that is addictive and has adverse health effects." So, you cannot buy it or import it, but if you can get hold of it there is nothing to prevent you from using it. As one website puts it: "There is no specific law on heated tobacco products and the situation is quite complicated for snus." It then causes further confusion by adding that: "While it is illegal to import snus for trade or buy the product



online, it is possible to import it for personal use.” As an old aunt of mine used to say, that makes it as clear as mud. Another website, run by “Global State of Tobacco: Harm Reduction”, says: “No information about regulation of HTP is available for Belgium. HTP is illegal to be marketed.” In its own report, the University of Bath states clearly that: “With the exception of Sweden, the sale of snus is prohibited in the European Union (EU).”

The EU ban on snus dates from 1992 and it came in response to aggressive attempts to introduce into Europe US-style smokeless tobacco known as “Skool bandits”. According to a report by University of Bath in the UK, the US Smokeless Tobacco Company (UST), in partnership with British American Tobacco (BAT) began to market the product in several European countries, including the UK and Ireland. The report states that: “A peer-reviewed study from the University of Bath, analysing internal tobacco industry documents, demonstrated that tobacco companies saw smokeless tobacco as having the potential ‘to generate new profits without cannibalising existing profits from cigarettes’ in Europe, and that young people were a key target.” The health concern that seems to interest the producers most would appear to be their bottom line.

## Trying to ban a ban

All of the ‘big four’ tobacco companies: BAT, JTI, Imperial Brands and Philip Morris International have invested in certain types of smokeless tobacco, and that includes the production of snus, a key product of Swedish Match, a tobacco company that doesn’t sell cigarettes. It’s worth noting, though, that Swedish Match was acquired in 2022 by Philip Morris International.

Bizarrely, the promotion of Skool Bandits in the UK mainly employed students to encourage their peers to try them. A 1985 BAT internal memo referred to the method as “working the universities”, which included paying students to promote them to other young people. In view of these tough sales tactics, the European Parliament called for an EU-wide ban on the sale of “oral tobacco” in

September 1987. Just before this, the World Health Organisation (WHO) urged countries with no history of smokeless tobacco being consumed to ban it pre-emptively. In 1998, Ireland became the first country to do so, followed two years later by the UK and Belgium. In 1992, an EU-wide sales ban was imposed on oral tobacco, and it was reimposed in 2001 and again in 2014. Suddenly, the big tobacco companies started to sit up and take notice, questioning the legality of legislation to restrict sales of tobacco products.

The tobacco industry was slow to respond to the proposed ban, initially dismissing the idea and probably because the big companies had very little investment in smokeless tobacco, although that changed. Despite this apparent lack of concern, the tobacco companies did get together to found the European Smokeless Tobacco Council (ESTOC), which briefly lobbied members of the European Parliament’s Legal Affairs Committee to question the legality of the proposed new Labelling Directive. In a series of complex manoeuvres, the issue came before the European Court and a bitter and, at times, divisive row ensued as some groups tried to get the snus ban lifted. The national bans on smokeless tobacco in Ireland and the UK were overturned, but the challenge to the ban in Germany and the UK, brought by Swedish Match and the German cigar maker Arnold André (Swedish Match is one of its



shareholders) failed to convince the European Court of Justice (ECJ) that the ban was in breach of the EU principle of subsidiarity. The Court upheld the ban, and Swedish Match decided to make it an EU-wide political issue, claiming that it was a violation of the principles of free trade. “The scope of the Directive should be reviewed so that all tobacco products are treated in the same way on the internal market regardless of nationality,” said the submission to the court. The argument was that it amounted to an export ban on snus, leading to cross-border market distortion. The submission also claimed that the insistence on plain packaging infringed the makers’ rights to use their trademarks. That, they argued, undermined their intellectual property rights. Despite a threat of “all-out war” by Sweden’s Trade Minister of the time, Ewa Björling, in June 2013 the Swedish government abandoned its efforts to get the snus ban lifted. The big tobacco companies have made other attempts to get the EU’s decision lifted, but so far without success.

For now, that’s where we are, although things could yet change. With public concern mainly focused on measures to keep people – especially the young – healthy, it seems likely that the current rules will stay in place. That doesn’t mean, of course, that the big manufacturers won’t come up with a new product and try to get that past the legislators and onto the market. They may claim that they won’t, but that could be just a smokescreen.

*Jacob Bright*



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# How to avoid MOBILE SIM SWAPPING?



## WHAT IS A SIM SWAPPING ATTACK?

In a SIM swapping attack, an attacker takes over your mobile phone number by asking the mobile telecom provider to link your number to a SIM card under the attacker's control.



**1 Collect victim's personal data**  
Via phishing, data breaches, social media searches, malware



**2 Carry out the fraudulent SIM swap**  
In-store, contacting company's representative over the phone or online through the provider's app or portal



**3 Exploit the swapped SIM**  
The fraudster receives calls or messages addressed to the legitimate user to make bank transactions and accessing email accounts, sites and social media

## WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS?

- **Before the attack:** You receive strange phone calls asking you to share codes or SMS messages that you have received from your mobile telecom provider.
- **During the attack:** Your phone loses network connection for a longer period, and you are not able to make or receive phone calls.
- **After the attack:** You may see suspicious transactions in your banking accounts, or lose access to your social media or email accounts, or see other activity you do not recognize.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE A VICTIM?

If you experience any of the above signs, contact your telecom provider as soon as possible.

If it confirms the SIM swap, immediately contact your bank and change the passwords to your online accounts. Furthermore, report the fraudulent activity to the police.

## HOW TO PREVENT THE ATTACK?

- Avoid providing any personal information to someone pretending to be representative of the telecom provider.
- Never communicate, over the phone, the one-time passwords you receive from your mobile operator.
- Choose app-based 2-factor authentication, instead of two factor via mobile phone or SMS.
- Be cautious with the personal information that you share on websites and social media.
- Do not open suspicious hyperlinks or attachments received through email or SMS





# GLIDING ON THE SLOPES

**When will the ski season  
open?**





**SKIING / 'SKI:ɪŋ/ NOUN - THE SPORT OR ACTIVITY OF MOVING OVER SNOW ON SKIS (OXFORD DICTIONARY) '**

**Bunderspitz, Adelboden,  
Switzerland**

Gliding down the slopes, seeing the breathtaking landscapes, being above the clouds, feeling the fresh air on your face, and hearing the wind blowing around your ears... Skiing is the definition of pure pleasure. I often say that there is nothing that gives you the feeling of ultimate freedom more than skiing.

I am a passionate skier and have just returned from my annual skiing holiday. I had a great time, the French Alps were beautiful, but the snow... not so much... and it seems that this is not going to change anytime soon... on the contrary; it could get worse in the next few years. Global warming is real, it's here and it affects us in many ways, some of them unexpected. Skiing is one of them.

A 'white sport' as it is often called today, skiing has a long history of at least eight millennia. The Sámi people, who lived in Scandinavia in the Middle Ages, were the first thought to have ever skied. The earliest archaeological finds of skis were made in Russia and date from around 6000 BC. Wall paintings dating back some 5000 years also show the use of skis in ancient China. The word 'ski' comes from the Old Norse word 'skíð', meaning "wooden stick", which was later adopted into Norwegian in the 19th century and then adapted into English, French, and German, each with different specific pronunciations.

The earliest Scandinavian examples of skiing date back to 3000 or 4000 BC, with primitive Norwegian carvings showing a skier holding a long stick with both hands. The first primitive Scandinavian ski was found in Sweden (dated 4500 BC). In 1938, another ski was found in Finland (dated 3245 BC). A total of 20 ancient, well-preserved skis have been found in Norway,



© GIBBSSON/NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NORWAY

Young women of Oslo (then Christiania) skiing association, about 1890



© FACEBOOK.COM/IDSTATEHISTORICALSOCIETY

The Roundhouse and Ridge Lift in Sun Valley, Idaho, USA

indicating that skis were widely used since prehistoric times and have also been found in ancient graves.

Skiing was an important and efficient means of transport, especially among the Nordic peoples in northern Europe, where winters were long and the ground was covered with snow for many months. Skis were used regularly by Scandinavian farmers, hunters, and warriors throughout the Middle Ages. Parts of the Swedish army were also trained on skis in the 18th century. The first ski races were organised by the Norwegian and Swedish military in 1767, while the first non-military ski races took place in the 1840s, also in Norway.

Originally purely utilitarian, skiing has increasingly become a popular sport. Nowadays, skiing World Cup competitions are held annually, and the Paralympics and the Olympic Games are also part of the sport. Olaf Rye was the first known ski jumper in 1809, and the first public ski competition took place on 19 March 1843 in Tromsø, Norway. At the "Exposition Universelle" in Paris, the Norwegian pavilion presented skis for the first time and attracted a lot of attention. The first team competition on skis was held in 1922 (between teams from Oxford and Cambridge), and the International Ski Federation was founded in 1924.

Since 1936, when a combined competition was held in Garmisch-Partenkirchen (Germany), alpine skiing has been represented at every Olympics. The first skiing competitions for women were introduced in 1950. Today, alpine ski racing is divided into speed and technical competitions.

Due to the increasing popularity of the sport, it slowly became a recreational sport as well. Previously, skiers had to first climb the mountain and then ski down, but the introduction of ski lifts (the first was built in Idaho, USA, in 1936) led to the development of skiing as a mass sport. Norway once again led the way in this area, but the trend spread quickly. As mountains became more accessible by rail, people discovered mountain destinations and newly established ski resorts that were now considered attractive in winter as well.

Over the years, different types of skiing have emerged. Downhill skiing is probably the most popular. Cross-country skiing, also known as off-piste skiing, is a type of skiing on unprepared snow and is usually only recommended for advanced skiers. Cross-country skiing takes place on flat terrain and skiers focus more on covering long distances and less on going up and down. Freestyle skiing is a form of downhill skiing that involves a series of stunts, jumps, and acrobatic flips and is not for the faint-hearted. Snowboarding is another winter sport that came along much later but is especially popular with the younger

generation. The first commercially successful snowboard, the so-called 'snurfer', was only introduced in 1965.

As the sport has grown in popularity, the equipment used has diversified and improved. It has certainly come a long way from the old wood-carved, heavy skis with camber. New and more sophisticated technologies came into use, revolutionary, more resistant, but also lighter materials were used.

In Finland and Sweden, asymmetrical skis were used until the 1930s: On one leg the skier wore a long straight ski for gliding and on the other a shorter ski for pushing off. Early skiers also used one long pole instead of the two poles used today. The first illustration of a skier with two ski poles dates from 1741. In the past, ski bindings generally consisted of leather straps that were fastened over the boots. In the 1800s, they were replaced by metal clips that provided a better hold on the boot. Originally, ski boots were made of leather rather than today's sophisticated, durable materials with memory foam that retains heat and protects the feet.

Of course, many argue that skiing has always been a very costly and somehow elitist sport. Effectively, today's equipment is extremely expensive, and each year, the ski fashion industry tries to tempt people into buying new and, at least in theory, more powerful ski equipment that is used only for a few weeks a year. Today's equipment is also adapted to the level and experience of the skier, with equipment for beginners being different and somewhat cheaper than that for advanced skiers.

Skiing was introduced to the European mountains in the 1880s but only became fashionable in the 1960s and 1970s, with the mass market gaining importance in the 1980s. The 20th century saw a great deal of development in this area, and over the years the range of ski resorts has also diversified greatly, with entire mountain regions going from poor villages to thriving ski resorts almost overnight. Skiing became a trend, and royalty and celebrities became enthusiastic about skiing and promoted fancy destinations to a wider audience. Switzerland, France, Austria or Italy were considered the best destinations for a great skiing holiday. With the increasing popularity of the white



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An advertisement for the Snurfer



Skiing children

sport, new ski resorts for all tastes but also for all budgets (more or less) emerged, with entire ski resorts specialising in family skiing or skiing and partying at the same time. The concept of 'après-ski' is probably best in Austria, where skiers can party in ski outfits and boots until late at night with especially loud music and drinks outside.

In many European countries, schools have introduced special programmes (usually one week per year) where children ski together with the whole class and learn this sport. At the same time, organised ski holidays and ski camps have become common in many places in Europe, although they are not affordable for all parent

Traditionally, the ski season in Europe generally lasts from the end of November to the end of April, depending on the resort, altitude, and specific snow conditions. Glaciers are usually not so weather-dependent and some of them have good amounts of snow all year round.

The highest winter sports area in the Alps, with altitudes between 2500 and 3900 metres, is Zermatt, the largest in Switzerland. The Matterhorn Glacier Ride is currently the highest cable car in the world, carrying 2000 skiers per hour to an altitude of 3883 metres, where skiing is possible all year round. In addition, a high-performance and innovative ski guide app,



The highest 3S cable car in the world, the Matterhorn Glacier Ride

based on GPS, helps skiers navigate between the mountain slopes, adapting time and routes to the specifics of the user. Zermatt is known for its family-friendliness: children up to the age of nine can use all mountain lifts for free when accompanied by an adult with a multi-day pass.

St. Moritz, also in Switzerland, is one of the oldest and most famous winter sports resorts in the world and has twice hosted the Winter Olympics, in 1928 and 1948, as well as numerous Olympic ski jumping competitions and other international skiing events.

Val Thorens is part of the larger French Three Valleys ski area, with 600km of pistes and off-piste options to suit all levels. A purpose-built ski resort, Val Thorens lacks the traditional charm of an old village but offers a large variety of restaurants, bars, hotels, and activities. On the other hand, Chamonix is one of the oldest ski resorts in France and one of the best ski resorts in Europe, hosting the first Winter Olympics in 1924.

Méribel is also a traditional Alpine town with chalet-style hotels, particularly popular with families as it has numerous ski schools and a family-friendly atmosphere.

Les Arcs was the first ski resort in France built specifically for this purpose. It offers some charming car-free villages and a breathtaking view of the snowy summit of Mont Blanc.

Lech, a chic Austrian ski resort, is considered the most luxurious ski area in Austria, combining world-class skiing with the usual large amounts of snow.

Kitzbühel is a small, mediaeval town with cobbled streets and a pedestrian zone full of brand shops. It is probably best known for the legendary Hahnenkamm downhill race, which has been held here every year since 1931.

Sölden in Austria has a bit of everything to offer. The ski resort in the Tyrolean Ötztal offers great skiing conditions, lively 'après-ski', and a James Bond atmosphere, as the town served as the film set for the James Bond film 'Spectre'. At



A snow making machine

an altitude of over 3000 metres, there is now a breathtaking cinema installation called 007 Elements, where visitors can immerse themselves directly in the world of the world's most famous spy on around 1300 square metres, mostly underground, through various galleries. 'Video installations, sound effects, interactive stations, and original Bond gadgets inspire all the senses' ([www.soelden.com](http://www.soelden.com)). At the top of the mountain, culinary delights can also be enjoyed in the famous Ice Q restaurant.

With its magnificent view of the Matterhorn and proximity to the famous Zermatt in Switzerland, Cervinia is a popular Italian ski resort, especially for beginners and families.

Cortina d'Ampezzo is a sophisticated resort, one of the most luxurious in Italy, with a great atmosphere. Known as the 'Queen of the Dolomites', it is one of the most famous Italian ski resorts, renowned for its sunny weather and friendly atmosphere. Cortina will host the 2026 Winter Olympics.

Skiing is an expensive sport. Besides the high prices of ski equipment and clothing, the average day ski pass in most European ski resorts costs around 60 euros (still cheaper than on the other side of the Atlantic, where a day pass can cost up to 99 USD).

Unfortunately, the rise of skiing as a popular winter sport has begun at a time when the consequences of climate change are also being felt. Global warming has caused the average snow depth in many European countries to decrease by 8.4 per cent every decade between 1971 and today. So the future of skiing is seriously in doubt in many places due to the increasing lack of snow. Most ski resorts are struggling, especially this winter. The Dachstein glacier in Austria recently announced that it will remain closed to skiing for the entire 2022-23 winter season due to extreme heat in the summer months and a general lack of snow. The future of this ski area will be decided in spring. In general, many ski resorts across Europe have been forced to suspend or limit their operations as the continent experiences some of the highest January temperatures ever.

Especially in the last decades, artificial snow seemed to be the perfect solution to the difficult natural winter conditions in some ski resorts. In 1952, the first large commercial snowmaking system was inaugurated at Grossinger's Catskill Resort, NY, USA. Since 1990, artificial snow (spray water formed into snow-like ice balls a few tenths of a millimetre in diameter) has been used in all major ski resorts and a growing number of smaller ski resorts in Europe. In general, the presence of snowmaking equipment is considered to ensure the financial success of a ski season, which is why most ski



Cervinia

resorts have invested heavily in this equipment. For example, in the 2020-2021 ski season, about half of the Swiss ski slopes were covered with artificial snow.

Although such an investment is quite large and the process is not very environmentally friendly or sustainable, artificial snow contributed and continues to contribute to supplementing natural precipitation, especially at the beginning and end of the ski season. However, the consistency of artificial snow is somewhat different and the conditions for skiing on artificial snow are not exactly ideal. It is, however, a wonderful invention... provided the temperatures are low enough for these snow cannons to do their job in optimal conditions. Even though its use is expected to increase in the short term, there are still obstacles: high implementation costs, water scarcity in some areas, and the associated harmful emissions.

The end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023 brought temperatures of 14-15 degrees in the middle of the day in many ski resorts in Europe, which made the existence of artificial snowmaking completely irrelevant. France ended the year with some of the highest temperatures in the last 25 years and more than half of its ski slopes closed, while Adelboden in Switzerland hosted its traditional World Cup ski race in January entirely on artificial snow.

The Christmas holidays, which typically account for about one-fifth of many ski resorts' annual revenue, were not very

It has been estimated that ski resorts at lower altitudes have lost an average of one month of their ski season over the last 50 years, with the season now starting an average of ten days later and ending 20 days earlier. Ski operators around the world now fear that global warming will soon make snowy, cold winters a distant prospect and that skiing will disappear altogether in most of the Alps by the end of the 21st century. Skiers will most likely congregate in the higher, inner areas of the Alps. According to a very pessimistic assessment by some researchers, the high gas emissions could cause 95 per cent of European glaciers to melt by the end of this century, so the higher-altitude ski resorts would not be affected by the threat of a shortened ski season and lack of snow.

"It's just a question of how much warmer and how fast - it's quite obvious that we are going to have less snow," Christoph Marty (Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research) told Times Magazine.

What will happen in the next few years if the situation continues? When temperatures rise, so do prices. Apart from the fact that ski passes



enjoyable. Ski resorts faced cancelled holidays or modest revenues for everything from ski passes to equipment rentals to after-ski entertainment.

Let us not forget that there are entire communities that depend mainly or exclusively on the income from the ski season. For all of them, the current weather situation is really dramatic, and this is not the first year that ski resorts have had to deal with an unusually warm winter. Some resorts have only partially opened the slopes, others are offering discounted ski passes, while others have even opened bike trails for the summer, regardless of the month in the calendar. I saw the result with my own eyes last week when, on a ski slope through the forest, I encountered a group of cyclists coming from the opposite direction. Me on skis, them on two wheels...same time of year, same place... there is no doubt, the world is changing.

will become more and more expensive due to the enormous costs of maintaining snow on the slopes, many jobs will disappear and many ski resorts at lower altitudes (below 2000 metres) will have to close. Their survival will most likely depend on their flexibility and their ability to reinvent and diversify their offer of entertainment and relaxation for tourists.

Will our grandchildren still have white winter holidays on the slopes? ... Will we still wonder every winter when the ski season begins? We will see.

Until then: enjoy skiing while you can!

*Alexandra Paucescu*  
*alexandra.paucescu@europe-diplomatic.eu*

# TO VISIT



Geoffrey and Christopher Herringham, 1889 double portrait by Annie Swynnerton

## The exhibited works of Annie Swynnerton at Tate Britain

Swynnerton (1844–1933) initially studied in her home city at the Manchester School of Art. But she became frustrated by the limited curriculum it offered. Women students were prevented from working from nude models. She went on to study at the more progressive Académie Julian in Paris (1878–9). Returning to the UK, she co-founded the Manchester Society of Women Painters in 1879.

Swynnerton was also involved with the fight for women's political rights, joining the Manchester Society of Women's Suffrage in 1880. She lived to see women gain the vote on the same terms as men in 1928. Her sitters and supporters included leading figures in the women's suffrage movement.

Working in various genres, Swynnerton combined aspects of different artistic styles. But her work always kept its own distinct character. Artists as diverse as mythological painter Edward Burne-Jones and society portraitist John Singer Sargent admired it. She exhibited with various galleries and societies. During her lifetime, her work entered public collections around the world.

In 1922, Swynnerton was elected to the Royal Academy of Arts. She was the first woman member since its founding in 1768. Laura Knight (1877–1970) followed Swynnerton into this bastion of

the British art establishment. She paid tribute to Swynnerton: 'Any woman reaching the heights in the fine arts had been almost unknown until Mrs Swynnerton came and broke down the barriers of prejudice.'



Annie Louisa Swynnerton, Count Zubov c.1908–9



Miss Elizabeth Williamson on a Pony - 1906

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# TIMELESS CHIC

## STANDOUT FASHION AND BEAUTY TRENDS

### VIVA MAGENTA!

For its 2023 Color of the Year, Pantone (\*) has adopted a new shade:

“Viva Magenta”, a vibrant red with pinky undertones.

It’s all we need to energise us and to illuminate the grayness of winter.

### Symbol of strength and optimism

According to the Pantone® Color Institute Executive Director Leatrice Eiseman “Viva Magenta vibrates with vim and vigour. It is a brave, fearless and a pulsating colour whose exuberance promotes a joyous and optimistic celebration, writing a new narrative. Invoking the forces of nature, Viva Magenta galvanises our spirit, helping us to build our inner strength”.

### Add Viva Magenta to your life !



© SWAROVSKI

1 Necklace with a single square-cut stone (swarovski.com)



© LOEFFLER RANDALL

2 Pleated frame with bow clutch (Loeffler Randall, spotted on zalando.be)



© STUART WEITZMAN

3 Suede high heeled pumps (eu.stuartweitzman.com)



© MAX MARA

5 Soft wool and cashmere coat with notched lapels and a belted waist (Max Mara spotted on mytheresa.com)



© N.PEAL

4 Mock-neck cashmere jumper (N.Peal spotted on farfetch.com)

6 Nail lacquer « Maraschino Cheer-y » (opi.com)



© OPI



© M.A

7 Powder Kiss Velvet Blur Slim Stick “Ruby New” (maccosmetics.com)

### How to wear Viva Magenta

Viva Magenta is great for providing an eye-catching pop of colour.

It’s up to you to combine it with other colours, to create a plain or sophisticated look.

- Wear it with the “all over”, total look for a gorgeous silhouette.
- With white or off-white: for a soft and smooth contrast.
- With black: to add depth and intensity to your outfit.

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



## Valentine selection

As with the seasons, each month has its own particular charm. Here are the three most tempting gifts to offer – to oneself or to others - in this month of love.



© INSTAGRAM @HAYAVENREWHERE

© ACNESTUDIOS

### | A maxi scarf

Oversized scarves are all the rage this winter. They will not only keep you warm but will ensure you'll stand out. Brands such as Acne Studio, offer cosy and fuzzy options in a range of vibrant colours and patterns – the perfect antidote to a neutral-coloured outfit.

The difficulty is choosing one among the range of checked scarves elegantly wrapped around the necks of the most prominent fashion influencers.

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

### | Make your feelings crystal clear

Looking to buy a lovely piece of jewellery for someone special? Not sure what to pick?

Let yourself be tempted by Swarovski's "Romantic Collection". There are bracelets and a whole range of romantic, heart-shaped earrings that also come in the form of knots.

Explore "Wear-forever jewellery" – perfect for Valentine's Day, proposals, or just for fun.

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



© SWAROVSKI



© JO MALONE

### | Say it with a perfume

Ensure love is in the air with these romantic rose-scented presents by Jo Malone: Cologne, candle, body creme, and body and handwash foaming gel ([jomalone.eu](http://jomalone.eu))

# BOOKS



## Devotion (movie tie-in)

**An Epic Story of Heroism, Friendship, and Sacrifice**

By Adam Makos

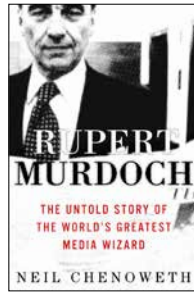
*Devotion* tells the inspirational story of the U.S. Navy's most famous aviation duo, Lieutenant Tom Hudner and Ensign Jesse Brown, and the Marines they fought to defend. A white New Englander from the country-club scene, Tom passed up Harvard to fly fighters for his country. An African American sharecropper's son from Mississippi, Jesse became the navy's first Black carrier pilot, defending a nation that wouldn't even serve him in a bar.

While much of America remained divided by segregation, Jesse and Tom joined forces as wingmen in Fighter Squadron 32. Adam Makos takes us into the cockpit as these bold young aviators cut their teeth at the world's most dangerous job—landing on the deck of an aircraft carrier—a line of work that Jesse's young wife, Daisy, struggles to accept.

Deployed to the Mediterranean, Tom and Jesse meet the Fleet Marines, boys like PFC "Red" Parkinson, a farm kid from the Catskills. In between war games in the sun, the young men revel on the Riviera, partying with millionaires and even befriend the Hollywood starlet Elizabeth Taylor. Then comes the conflict that no one expected: the Korean War.

*Devotion* takes us soaring overhead with Tom and Jesse, and into the foxholes with Red and the Marines as they battle a North Korean invasion. As the fury of the fighting escalates and the Marines are cornered at the Chosin Reservoir, Tom and Jesse fly, guns blazing, to try and save them. When one of the duo is shot down behind enemy lines and pinned in his burning plane, the other faces an unthinkable choice: watch his friend die or attempt history's most audacious one-man rescue mission.

A tug-at-the-heartstrings tale of bravery and selflessness, *Devotion* asks: How far would you go to save a friend?



## Rupert Murdoch

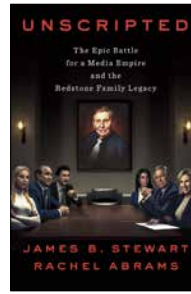
By Neil Chenoweth

Rupert Murdoch is the man everyone talks about but no one knows. He's everywhere, a larger-than-life media titan who has spent a lifetime building his company, News Corporation, from a small, struggling newspaper business in Australia into an international media powerhouse. Rupert Murdoch charts the real story behind the rise of News Corp and the Fox network: the secret debt crises and family deals, the huge cash flows through the offshore archipelagos, the New York party that saved his empire, the covert government inquiries, the tax investigations, and the bewildering duels with Bill Gates, Ted Turner, Gerry Levin, Ron Perelman, Newt Gingrich, cable king John Malone, Michael Eisner, Tony Blair, and televangelist-turned-diamond-miner Pat Robertson.

Murdoch's story, however, is more than just how one man built a global business. Rupert Murdoch is both a biography of Murdoch the man (including the divorce from his wife, Anna; his remarriage to a woman young enough to be his granddaughter; and the struggle between his two sons for eventual control of the family holdings) and a "follow the money" investigation that reveals how he has managed to have such a huge impact on the communications revolution that promises to utterly transform life in the twenty-first century.

The investigation concentrates on Murdoch's three great campaigns: in the 1980s, when his determination to launch an American television network overturned the media industries of three countries; in 1997, when Murdoch took on every broadcasting group in America; and the process of reinventing himself since then, culminating in his bid to win DirecTV from General Motors.

This is the saga of the man who has stalked, infuriated, cajoled, threatened, and spooked the media industry for three decades, whose titanic gambles have shaped and reshaped the media landscape. Win or lose, Murdoch is the man who has changed everything. And Neil Chenoweth is the right person to tell the story: In 1990 he wrote a magazine article that prompted a secret Australian government inquiry into Rupert Murdoch's family companies, and he's been on the Murdoch case since then. Chenoweth reveals what no person ever has about the man (and the company) who is probably the most significant media player of them all.



## Unscripted

**The Epic Battle for a Media Empire and the Redstone Family Legacy**

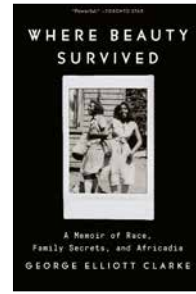
By James B Stewart and Rachel Abrams

**The shocking inside story of the struggle for power and control at Paramount Global, the multibillion-dollar entertainment empire controlled by the Redstone family, and the dysfunction, misconduct, and deceit that threatened the future of the company, from the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists who first broke the news**

In 2016, the fate of Paramount Global—the multibillion-dollar entertainment empire that includes Paramount, CBS, MTV, Nickelodeon, Showtime, and Simon & Schuster—hung precariously in the balance. Its founder and head, ninety-three-year-old Sumner M. Redstone, was facing a very public lawsuit brought by a former romantic companion, Manuela Herzer—a lawsuit that placed Sumner's deteriorating health and questionable judgment under a harsh light.

As one of the last in a long line of powerful media moguls, Sumner had been a relentlessly demanding boss, and an even more demanding father. When his daughter, Shari, took control of her father's business, she faced the hostility of boards and management who for years had heard Sumner disparage her. Les Moonves, the popular CEO of CBS, felt particularly threatened and schemed with his allies on the board to strip Shari of power. But while he publicly battled Shari, news began to leak that Moonves had been involved in multiple instances of sexual misconduct, and he began working behind the scenes to try to make the stories disappear.

*Unscripted* is an explosive and unvarnished look at the usually secret inner workings of two public companies, their boards of directors, and a wealthy, dysfunctional family in the throes of seismic changes, from the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists James B. Stewart and Rachel Abrams. Through the microcosm of Paramount, whose once victorious business model of cable fees and ticket sales is crumbling under the assault of technological advances, and whose workplace is undergoing radical change in the wake of #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, and a distaste for the old guard, Stewart and Abrams lay bare the battle for power at any price—and the carnage that ensued.



## Where Beauty Survived

By George Elliott Clarke

**A vibrant, revealing memoir about the cultural and familial pressures that shaped George Elliott Clarke's early life in the Black Canadian community that he calls Africadia, centred in Halifax, Nova Scotia.**

As a boy, George Elliott Clarke knew that a great deal was expected from him and his two brothers. The descendant of a highly accomplished lineage on his paternal side—great-grandson to William Andrew White, the first Black officer (non-commissioned) in the British army—George felt called to live up to the family name. In contrast, his mother's relatives were warm, down-to-earth country folk. Such contradictions underlay much of his life and upbringing—Black and White, country and city, outstanding and ordinary, high and low. With vulnerability and humour, George shows us how these dualities shaped him as a poet and thinker.

At the book's heart is George's turbulent relationship with his father, an autodidact who valued art, music and books but worked an unfulfilling railway job. Bill could be loving and patient, but he also acted out destructive frustrations, assaulting George's mother and sometimes George and his brothers, too.

*Where Beauty Survived* is the story of a complicated family, of the emotional stress that white racism exerts on Black households, of the unique cultural geography of Africadia, of a child who became a poet, and of long-kept secrets.

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