

# EUROPE DIPLOMATIC

MAGAZINE

CHANGE  
COMES TO  
CZECHIA

**Former NATO general Petr  
Pavel in charge of a former  
Communist country**



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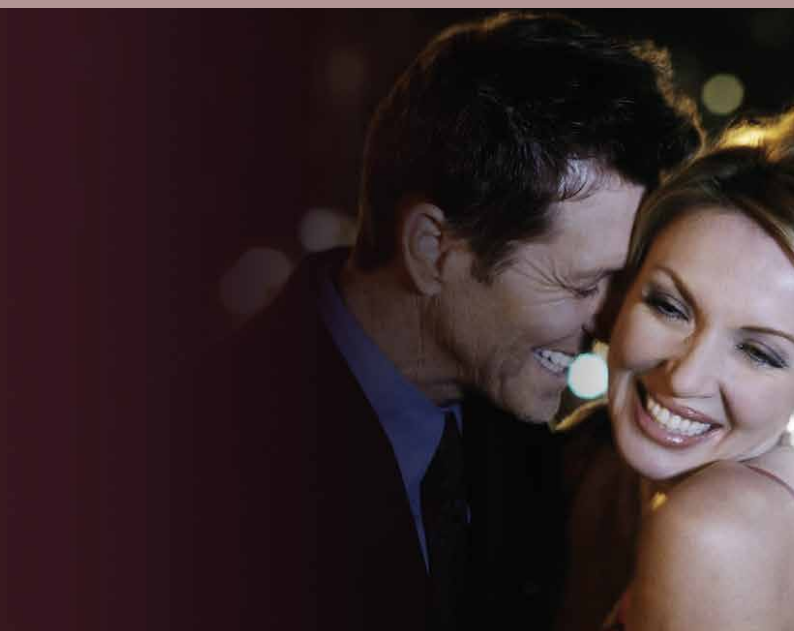


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# IN THIS ISSUE

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## **6 CHANGE COMES TO CZECHIA**

A landslide electoral victory puts a former NATO general in charge of a former Communist country

## **14 NEWS IN BRIEF:**

From around the World

## **20 START STOPPED**

The Treaty to control the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction is in deep trouble

## **28 SURROUNDED BY GOLD - BUT WHOSE?**

The blame game gets under way as Lebanon's central bank governor comes under investigation

## **34 RIGHTING HISTORICAL INJUSTICES**

A Lithuanian MEP continues her life-long battle against cruel and rapacious regimes

## **40 THE FUTURE OF AFRICA**

A work in progress

## **46 MULTIPURPOSE AERIAL SURVEILLANCE**

In 2022, Frontex planes supported the rescue of 24 000 people

## **50 6 MONTHS OF DYNAMIC TESTING IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

The new generation of TGV M high speed train

## **54 NOTHING MUCH TO CELEBRATE**

Anniversaries – birthdays – are normally celebrated with parties, fancy food and alcoholic drinks. Not this one

## **60 ARTS DISCOVERY**

Paul Gervais

## **62 BOOKS**

Our selection



*Nikola Hendrickx*

# EDITORIAL

## A BLOODY YEAR, BUT ONE WITH A SILVER LINING

As Ukrainian forces face a new Russian advance in the Donbass, Western leaders meeting in Munich for the annual security conference wanted to send a message of unity and resolve to Russia on Friday 17 February. The message they wanted to convey was essentially “we are facing headwinds and now is not the time to weaken”. However, it was a message accompanied by the observation that this conflict will be protracted and that we must be prepared for it.

In the week leading up to the first anniversary of the Russian invasion, this unity was evident by the number and rank of those present: US Vice President Kamala Harris, along with a bipartisan congressional delegation, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Polish President Andrzej Duda, and Baltic leaders, accompanied by their ministers.

The European Union was also strongly represented with Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Council President Charles Michel and several Vice-Presidents and Commissioners. Not to forget NATO, represented by its Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

So far, the EU has adopted nine sanctions packages, including a comprehensive ban on oil imports, export bans worth more than 35 billion euros, the exclusion of major Russian banks from the SWIFT banking system and the blacklisting of numerous military officers, oligarchs and propagandists.

French President Emmanuel Macron expressed his willingness to “intensify” Western support for Ukraine in order to help the resistance of the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian army and enable them to carry out the counter-offensive that alone will allow “credible negotiations on the terms chosen by Ukraine, its authorities and its people”.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called on countries that can supply battle tanks to Ukraine to “really do it” as deliveries from allies are slower than hoped. Military support for Ukraine must continue and “this presupposes that all those who can deliver such tanks actually do so”, Scholz said at the Munich Security Conference.

In parallel, EU Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders announced that the Hague-based International Coordination Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression Committed by Russia in Ukraine will begin its work in July. Its purpose is to collect and preserve evidence of the crime of aggression and to facilitate discussions between prosecutors not only on investigations but also on possible prosecutions.

In addition to his surprise visit to Kyiv to mark the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine, US President Joe Biden met with President Zelensky on the day Ukraine commemorated the deaths of 107 people during anti-government protests nine years ago.

The fact that the US President met the Ukrainian leader in the heart of the Ukrainian capital in the midst of a full-scale conflict is significant and symbolic; from Kyiv, and on the following day from Warsaw, he sent a strong and clear message to Vladimir Putin that America and the West won't shy away from supporting Ukraine and will continue doing so for as long as it takes.

The Pentagon also said that a first group of more than 600 Ukrainian soldiers had undergone US-led training on the M2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicle at a US military base in Germany, including large-scale manoeuvres that could help Ukraine in its upcoming operations against Russia.

Whichever way you look at it, Russia is losing. In its hubris, Russia believed it could simply overrun Ukraine and the EU and the world would accept the outcome, as it did in all of Putin's previous bloody military adventures, such as in Chechnya, Crimea and Georgia.

But in reality, Russia is losing not only in Ukraine, but also on the world stage. Russia is not only losing the war on the battlefield, but its economic blackmail of the European energy sector has also backfired. Before the invasion, we wrote in these pages about the need for Europe to rethink the Nord Stream project... and now, after Putin's brutal war, Europeans have finally woken up to the threat Russia poses on the energy front.

Beyond the sanctions, all economic opportunities will disappear, leaving Russia even more isolated on the world stage by its exclusion from the G8.

In 2021, 83% of Russian gas was exported to Europe. Russia's total global oil and gas exports accounted for about half of its government revenue each year. Europe was dependent on Russia for 46% of its total gas supply, and a similar dependence existed for other Russian products. Moscow's decision to weaponise the energy industry and blackmail Europe backfired.

Europe is now stepping up its efforts to free itself from dependence on Russian hydrocarbons, building LNG infrastructure at a rapid pace to boost imports from the United States, Australia and Qatar. It is expected that within 3 years or less, Europe will no longer need Russian oil or gas. Instead of resisting NATO, Russia drove more countries into the arms of NATO. Sweden ended 200 years of military neutrality without much discussion after seeing Russian brutality in Ukraine; Finland also quickly abandoned its years of military neutrality when it began to be threatened by the Russian bear.

Ukraine is now more militarised and more entrenched in its desire for a European future than ever before. The European Union approved Ukraine's application to join the Union in June 2022, granting the country candidate status to join its European supporters.

Russia is losing the war in Ukraine and the Kremlin is willing to endanger and kill innocent Russians to prolong an increasingly unpopular war. Putin has recruited hundreds of thousands of unwilling civilians and sent them to fight in Ukraine. If a second round of mobilisation occurs this spring, thousands more face death, disease and horrific injuries. Russia's male population of military age fell by 35% between 2010 and 2021.

Who would have bet a year ago that 12 months after Vladimir Putin's army invaded Ukraine, 52 European countries together with NATO would actively support Ukraine with humanitarian and military aid?

How long will Putin continue to kill innocent people... how long will NATO, the United States, Germany, Poland and other European countries stick together to offer Ukraine additional tanks, weapons and humanitarian aid?

Europe's determination to support Ukraine has by no means weakened, but has actually grown over the past year. And it seems to be the first time in history, after WW II, that a majority of European nations have agreed on such an important political consensus.

**Trajan DEREVILLE**

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# CHANGE COMES TO CZECHIA

**A victory puts a former  
NATO general in charge  
of a former Communist  
country**





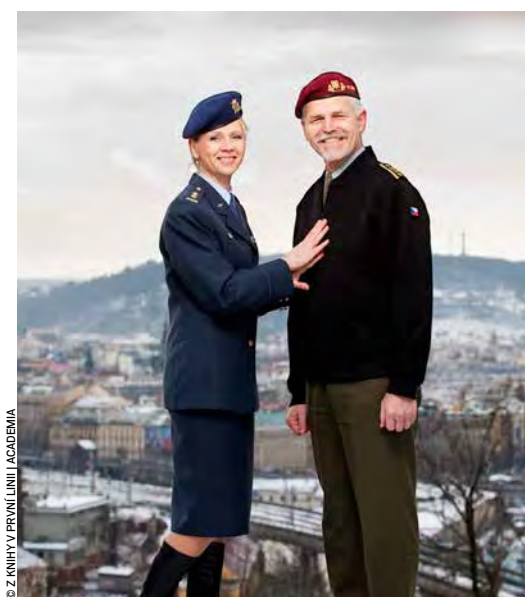
Petr Pavel at the 177<sup>th</sup> Military  
Committee in Chiefs of  
Defence Session - NATO HQ,  
Brussels - 17 May 2017

CHAIRMAN



Petr Pavel is a man who is not afraid to speak his mind, even if it sometimes makes his friends and allies nervous. Twice married and with three children, two boys by his first wife, Hana, and one by his current one, Eva Pavlová, who also holds the ranks of Lieutenant Colonel in the Czech army. She is an interesting woman: a professional soldier and mediator who has previously stated that she wants to be more active in her new role than her predecessor. Pavel is a polyglot who speaks not only Czech but also French, Russian and English, with some reports claiming he also speaks Chinese; he believes talking is more important than fighting and can solve more problems. He is a retired Czech army general who rose to become a military commander in NATO. Now he wants to return his country to the international stage following years of isolation. "Values like truth, dignity, respect, and modesty have won," he said in a speech acknowledging his landslide victory. "I am ready to return these values not only to the Prague Castle (*the Czech President's official seat*) but also to our republic through my service." He is described as "non-religious". His electoral success and his overwhelming majority will not have been welcomed as good news in Moscow. He has clearly stated that he is on Ukraine's side in its war with Russia. He swiftly demonstrated his priorities as President immediately after his election by making his first phone calls to the Presidents of Ukraine and Taiwan.

He is suspicious of China and has warned EU countries not to have any illusions about Beijing, saying that his country would no longer "behave like an ostrich" where Beijing is concerned. Its interests and the West's don't coincide. He has been quoted in the Financial Times as warning that: "China and its regime is not a friendly country at the moment, it is not compatible with Western democracies in their strategic goals and principles," adding: "This is simply a fact we have to recognise." Ignoring Beijing's angry response, Pavel told the Financial



General Petr Pavel with his wife



Marketa Pekarova Adamova

Times that the Czech Republic stands to gain more from Taiwan than it will from China. His unexpected call to the Taiwanese leader, President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), drew a scathing response from Beijing, which urged Prague to "change tack to avoid irreparable damage". This is in line with the Moscow and Beijing playbook: do or say anything that stands in the way of our imperialist ambitions and the consequences will be your fault, not ours. Everyone must agree with them about their territorial ambitions. In Petr Pavel they may have met somebody determined to resist the propaganda. He wants Czechia to expand its cooperation with Taipei, which Beijing wants other countries to regard as part of China. Beijing punished Lithuania for taking a pro-Taipei stance by targeting its exports and was challenged for it by the EU at the World Trade Organisation. Now the speaker of the Czech lower house of Parliament, Marketa Pekarova Adamova, is set to visit Taipei, which will annoy Beijing even more.

China doesn't recognise Taiwan, but it regularly threatens it. Taiwan recently scrambled fighter jets, put its navy on alert and activated missile systems in response to nearby operations by 34 Chinese military aircraft and nine warships that are part Beijing's strategy to unsettle and intimidate the self-governing island democracy. China instigated its large scale deployment as part of its preparations to deploy a blockade or other military action against Taiwan, which has led to increasing concern among military leaders, diplomats and elected officials in the United States, which is Taiwan's most important ally.

What do we know about Pavel? Born in Planá in what was then Czechoslovakia, he joined both the army and the Communist Party after graduating from the Military High School of Jan Žižka from Trocnov in Opava, then he continued his studies at the Military Institute of Ground Forces in Vyškov, finishing in 1983. After that, he studied at the Antonín Zápotocký Military Academy of Technology in Brno between 1988 and 1991 and then took part in study visits to the Staff College in Camberley, in the UK, the Royal College of Defence Studies and King's College London where he studied international relations. His courage as a military man has been proven several times, and he has won a number of awards for bravery, including France's Croix de Guerre, a major and much-respected honour, earned when he was an elite paratrooper during the Bosnian war of 1993. He led a unit of Czech soldiers during the evacuation of Karin base, a French military base, to liberate a





Petr Pavel receiving the Légion d'Honneur from French Ambassador in Prague M. Pierre Lévy

group of 53 French troops (plus the corpses of two more) who'd become besieged by the Serbs, with much of the local infrastructure destroyed. Pavel went to the isolated base with just 29 soldiers from the combined Czech and Slovak Battalion, aboard two OT-64 SKOT armed transports. They faced danger from many sides and were obliged to remove trees that had been brought down to block their way while under heavy mortar fire. Paris also awarded him the Legion d'Honneur medal for bravery in 2012 after "Demonstrating extraordinary courage by interposing himself between Serbian and Croat belligerents," according to the citation, shown on the website of the French Embassy in Prague. His force also brought back the bodies of the two French soldiers killed in the fighting.

A retired Czech general who served with him in Croatia, Ales Opat, told the media: "We got into several tense situations and he always managed them with deliberation and calm." Opat clearly admires Pavel's unruffled approach to danger. "Once, Petr was off our carrier, talking to locals...it is never good when mortar shells start falling around you. With a calm head he finished what he was doing and came back."

He went on to serve as Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Czech Republic's armed forces and was promoted to Chief of the General Staff in 2012. In that rôle he organised cooperation between the army and academics, as well as various fora on defence and security issues. While serving as a general (and a much-decorated general), he was nominated by the Cabinet of Bohuslav Sobotka, a Czech lawyer and politician, to chair the NATO Military Committee, being elected to the position in Vilnius in September 2014. He became the first senior officer from a former Warsaw Pact country to hold such a position.

## An extraordinary man for extraordinary times

In the election, his victory was overwhelming: He won 58% of the votes cast, which is the largest margin of victory since direct presidential elections were first held in 2013. It had been a tough campaign against Andrej Babiš, a wealthy populist, who had labelled Pavel "a warmonger" for backing the Czech government's support for Ukraine, but it tallies with the attitude of the Czech government and reflects Pavel's desire to clarify Czech attitudes towards Russia and China, as well as to establish more clearly Pavel's own rather hawkish views of them both.

The turnout for the election was more than 70%, which is also

a record. Pavel's campaign slogan was "order and stability": a clear break with the populism of previous presidents. The idea of "order and stability" clearly struck a chord with the Czech people and Pavel could be the ideal man to fulfil such a promise. The victory also suggests closer ties will be established with Czechia's Visegrad Group (V4) neighbours.

He ran his campaign for the presidency on a platform of closer cooperation with his country's NATO allies, support for Ukraine and closer links with the EU. He had a reputation for trying to win people over by talking to them and he studied local languages to make it possible. He led the Czech army's general staff from 2012, during his country's involvement in Afghanistan, becoming chair of NATO's military committee in 2015, a position he held until his retirement in 2018. He stood for election as an independent, not linked to any of the various political parties, but with the support of the centre-right cabinet. It was his leadership qualities, demonstrated in Croatia, that ultimately propelled him from being an officer in a Warsaw Pact army to his senior rôles in NATO. He is determined to see Czechia holding influential positions in NATO and in the European Union, and that sets him very much at odds with the man he's replacing, Milos Zeman, who would have preferred closer links with China and Russia instead.

Pavel's victory was popular with most Czechs, many of whom chanted "President! President!" as the results were announced. He called his win a victory for: "truth, dignity, respect and humility". Despite a bitterly fought election campaign against the wealthy populist Andrej Babiš, he urged his supporters to take a peaceful approach to Babiš and his supporters: "We have different views on many things, but that doesn't make us enemies," he told the victory celebration, "We have to learn to communicate with each other." At the event, Pavel received the congratulations of Zuzana Caputova, the President of Slovakia who had travelled to Prague to join in the celebrations. Pavel's own appearance at the event did, at least, disprove one part of the fake eve-of-poll propaganda circulated by his rival, which claimed



Czech Republic Army Gen. Petr Pavel, chairman of the NATO Military Committee in Germany, Feb. 25, 2016



Former Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Andrej Babiš and former US President Donald Trump at the White House in 2019

Pavel was dead. He's very clearly not, but the fake news that he had died was circulated on a counterfeit version of his campaign website.

Babiš tried to capitalise on Pavel's one-time membership of the Communist party, which Pavel himself admits but regrets. It's a very dishonest bit of propagandising since Babiš had been an informer for the secret police back in the days of the Communist regime. Pavel's campaign slogan was "order and stability", which is what most Czech voters longed for after Miloš Zeman's rule.

Pavel's victory has been heartily welcomed by a former British Conservative MEP, Sajjad Karim: "Petr Pavel's election is a brick knocked out of a wall that has been constructed by populists in East and West," he told me. "We have all seen the harm caused to countries by populists and nationalists. By Czechs placing such confidence in a centre-right pro-democracy, albeit new, politician, Pavel's victory now counts for much more than for the Czech Republic alone. His vast defence experience means he brings deep rooted expertise to the EU political table at a much-needed juncture." Karim used to be an executive member of the European Movement UK as well as being Chair of Conservative European Forum for Trade, being that rare creature: a senior British Conservative politician opposed to Brexit. He now devotes his time to his day job as a director of Haider Global corporate consultancy but campaigned against Brexit when the issue filled the headlines. He wanted the UK to stay in the alliance.

Pavel attracted many younger voters with more liberal social beliefs, who were attracted by his stated support for such rights as gay marriage and abortion. A Czech president's powers are limited but Pavel will be able to appoint a prime minister as well as members of the judiciary and the central bank. Few will miss the controversial figure he replaces, Miloš Zeman, whose sympathies over Ukraine lay with Russia. Jiri Pehe, a political analyst and director of the New York University in Prague, was quoted as saying: "Pavel will be a huge change – this cannot be over-estimated." The fact of that change is becoming clearer, too. "We've had in the last ten years a president who was in many ways a disgrace for the Czech Republic." Pehe explained how: "He was pro-Russian, by-passed the constitution and was rude and offensive." Hopes for Pavel's rule are clearly high: "Pavel will try his best to somehow represent the whole of society. He is someone who has respect for the rules of the game."

## Bringing peace (and heavy weapons)

Pavel is ambitious for faster progress into and within the Western ranks, not only for Czechia but for others caught in Russia's web. He told the BBC that Ukraine, for instance, would be "morally and practically ready" to join NATO as soon as the current conflict ends. After Russia's menacing criticism of Western support for Ukraine, Pavel told the BBC: "There should be almost no limits" to what third countries can send to help in Ukraine's defence. As far as he is concerned, delivering western fighter planes, such as America's F-16s was "not taboo", although he was unsure if they could be delivered in time to be useful to Kyiv. In the interview, Pavel said: "I am proud of my country being one of the first to provide Ukraine with significant military help." Czechia was the first Western (or Western-sympathising) country to provide tanks and infantry fighting vehicles (they were Soviet-designed T-72s and BMP-1 amphibious vehicles) to Kyiv, part of a series of deliveries of heavy weapons that reportedly began as early as March 2022, according to the BBC. Other, larger Western countries are now following suit: Leopard 2 tanks from Germany, M1 Abrams tanks from the US and Challenger tanks from the UK. "Probably very few people," Pavel told the BBC, "could imagine that Western countries would be willing to provide Ukraine with modern main battle tanks or long-range artillery, or anti-aircraft systems." Now, he said, it's a reality. "But at the same time, we see it's still not enough." He would like to see Ukraine equipped with American F-16 fighter aircraft, which would give the Ukrainians the edge against Russia's larger, faster Sukhoi aircraft. The F-16 may be smaller, lighter and not quite so



Jiri Pehe





F-16 Fighting Falcon launching AGM-65D Maverick

fast but those who've flown them say they can outfly the Sukhoi. It seems unlikely, however, that President Joe Biden would agree to the transfer, despite Poland being prepared to lend some to Kyiv with which to tackle the Russians.

In some parts of Europe, especially Berlin, the provision of large-scale weapons of war worries politicians that it could be seen as “escalation”, especially with Russia warning that supplying weapons could drag the NATO countries involved into the conflict, even though the war (which Russia still calls, fairly pointlessly, “a special military operation”, whatever that is meant to mean) was instigated entirely by Russia as a simple land-grab. You will recall that Putin told his troops when it all started out that they'd be “welcomed” by the Ukrainians for driving out the Nazis, even though there were none there and in any case Ukraine's leader is Jewish, so hardly likely to be pro-Nazi. Some Russian soldiers, then, were surprised to see elderly Ukrainian ladies throwing themselves in front of Russian vehicles to halt their advance. Pavel brushes aside such concerns over supplying weapons to Kyiv. “We have no alternative,” he told the BBC, “If we leave Ukraine without assistance they would most probably lose the war.” He added the warning: “If they lose, we all lose.”

Pavel retired from the army in 2018, becoming a lecturer and consultant, but he remained very conscious of the dangers posed by ambitious Russia and its voracious president. He was personally commended by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, to whom Pavel was a senior advisor, for leading NATO's Military Committee with such distinction. This led to him being awarded Commander of the Legion of Merit for his work there. He certainly didn't trust Moscow or Beijing. In April 2020 he launched a new initiative, Spolu Silnější, which means “Stronger Together”, in a bid to bring people closer to fight together against the COVID-19 pandemic in the Czech Republic, especially through crowd-funding financial help for volunteers helping out at hospitals and creating medical tools, as well as ensuring the country would be better-prepared to face future crises. He brought together a number of experts in various fields, such as Dana Drábová, from the State Office for Nuclear Safety, a top businessman, Martin Hausenblas, the President of the Czech Society for Emergency Medicine and Disaster Medicine, Jana Šiblová, as well as Jan Březina, former governor of the Olomouc region. Pavel even presented a copy of their report, the result of their work together, to Andrej Babiš, the man he would go on to defeat in the presidential election. Their views seldom if ever aligned.

## I A closer future?

What sort of future can Pavel offer to the Czech Republic and its allies? It rather depends on what is happening close to its borders.

During his campaign to get elected, he described himself as “right of centre, with a strong social emphasis”. He also believes in a fairer distribution of his country's wealth, with rich people paying higher taxes to help ease the burden on the rest of us, citing Scandinavian countries as his inspiration. He admitted to journalists that in the 2021 legislative election, he had voted for the centre-right Spolu alliance. The party (or rather group of parties that agree on some issues) is made up of the Civic Democratic Party, KDU-ČSL, and TOP 09 and ever since the 2021 Czech election it has governed the Czech Republic in a coalition with the Pirates and Mayors alliance. Don't expect to see eye patches and cutlasses in evidence; it's just a name.

Pavel has promised to bring “order” to the Czech Republic, which has been struggling with economic



Changing of the Guard at the Presidential Castle in Prague

turmoil and high inflation, mainly caused by the war in Ukraine. Pavel stated on his campaign website that people in the Czech Republic are increasingly feeling “chaos, disorder and uncertainty”, and that the state has somehow ceased to function. It needs to change, he has said, and it also needs to play by the rules, which will be applied equally for everyone alike. He added that the country needs a general sweep. Russia, meanwhile, is living down to its reputation, allegedly involving itself in acts of torture and executions without any criminal proceedings first. There have also been documented cases of Russia firing rockets that carry PFM anti-personnel mines, also known as “butterfly mines” or “petal mines”. Local healthcare professionals have reported having to treat a large number of severe injuries inflicted by the mines, roughly half of them involving amputations of the foot and lower leg, consistent with injuries caused by PFM blast mines. Russia has repeatedly denied deploying such weapons.



© MARTIN STRACHO

Petr Pavel during a rally in support of Ukraine in Brno, March 2022

Pavel appears to fear a virtual race between Russia, keen to assure its victories, and Ukraine, keen to defend its people from slaughter, with the victory depending on the West supplying Kyiv with modern high-tech battlefield tanks that are capable of repelling Russian forces. What Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy would really like is a squadron of F-16 fighters, but President Joe Biden has ruled out the idea, despite Pavel's claim that there should be "no limit" to the supply of arms to Kyiv. Furthermore, French President Emmanuel Macron has stated that "nothing is excluded". It was Chechia, however, that was first off the mark and Pavel would like its contribution to include F-16s, because Russia has at its disposal significant resources of men and materiel. Russia has warned that by supplying arms to Ukraine, Western countries are directly involving themselves in the conflict. Ukraine needs something, however, capable of punching holes in Russia's armoured formations.

## Famine and misunderstanding

Tension between Russia and its near neighbour, Ukraine, is nothing new. Much of it stems from Stalin's plans for collectivisation, which didn't work. The targets imposed by Moscow led to food shortages, referred to in Ukraine as Holodomor, the great famine. Ukrainians have painted it as a deliberate attempt by Stalin to kill Ukrainian peasants, although the effects were equally devastating in parts of southern Russia and in Kazakhstan. Stalin certainly wanted as much grain as he could get and he accused the Ukrainians of "acting a famine": pretending starvation. If it was pretence it was certainly convincing; it's thought that upwards of five million people there died of hunger, although Russia denied it for decades. It was only admitted during perestroika, on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic that party secretary Volodymyr Scherbytsky even admitted that the famine had happened. Such a history is rarely, if ever, the beginning of a close and amicable relationship.

And, of course, in the late 1960s, Czechoslovakia, as it was known then, had been one of the most pro-socialist and pro-Soviet countries in the Soviet Bloc when it came under the control of a reformer, Alexander Dubček, who wanted to introduce "Socialism with a human face". Russian leader Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev was determined to keep a firm grip on the Soviet "empire", even though Czechoslovakia wasn't trying to leave the bloc at the time. Brezhnev was determined to stop Dubček's moves towards great press freedom, freedom of thought and expression, and the planned rehabilitation

of the victims of Stalin's political purges. On 20 August Soviet armed forces invaded the country, quickly taking over control, putting hard-line Communists back in positions of power and ending the brief period of freedom. Dubček was deposed the following April. On arms controls, Brezhnev succeeded, firstly in discussions over Berlin in 1971, then with an agreement on strategic arms limitation and the start of arms control talks between East and West through the SALT treaties. But you don't overcome such deeply-felt bitterness overnight; it still continues. Brezhnev's insistence that the members of the bloc must stay in it offended the Czechs in particular, and he continued to build up his weapons stock while talking of détente. The promising moves towards détente stalled in the late 1970s.

Given its history, it's not surprising that the Czechs are very wary of Russia and its leaders, who seem to view aggression as a necessary attribute. But that was then and this is now. Petr Pavel has positioned himself as devoted to peace and prepared to take risks to secure it. He certainly wants to see Ukraine inside NATO and he is deeply suspicious of imperialists like Putin. "Our cities are being destroyed by Russian artillery and missiles," he told his fellow European leaders, "But our future could be destroyed if we don't support Ukraine to a successful end to this conflict." He denies claims made by his opponent in the recent election, Andrej Babiš, that his known support for Ukraine would "close the door on diplomacy". He still favours a peaceful settlement. "Once there is even the slightest chance of peace talks, let's support it," Pavel said. "But there are no signs of it from the Russian side. What needs to be said is this: the end of the war is entirely in Russian hands. It would take only one decision from President Putin to withdraw his forces from Ukraine and the war is over." Of course, Pavel doesn't underestimate Putin's war-mongering stance. But neither should Putin underestimate his newest political opponent. Pavel doesn't back down.

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© PRAGUE MUSEUM

Czechs resisting Soviet troops invading Czechoslovakia in 1968





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

# NEWS IN BRIEF

## A NEW BICYCLE PARKING IN AMSTERDAM



Two large underground/underwater bicycle parkings have been inaugurated close to the the Amsterdam Central Railway Station. These new parkings can accommodate up to 11,000 bicycles. These large infrastructures which will contribute to shifting mobility even more away from polluting means of transport have been financed in part by the CEF Transport programme, which helped finance the digitisation & automation of the two parkings (think automated check-in and payment systems and more).

Another considerable success story for the European Climate Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency Transport programme, totally aligned with the overarching objective of contributing to the implementation of the EU Green Deal.

## EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY OPENS 2023 DEFENCE INNOVATION PRIZE COMPETITION



The European Defence Agency (EDA) issued its call on February 15 for applications for the 2023 edition of the Defence Innovation Prize, which this year is dedicated to technologies for situational awareness and technologies for communication and information systems. A total of two prizes (one prize per category) will be awarded for the best innovative ideas. The prize-winners are expected to propose ideas which would, if implemented between now and 2030, contribute to improving and enhancing specific EU defence capabilities.

The winning ideas or concepts will each be awarded €30,000.

The EDA Defence Innovation Prize aims to stimulate defence technological innovation in Europe by supporting non-defence Research and Technology (R&T) communities and innovators who are set to play an ever-bigger role in developing and producing Europe's future defence capabilities.

From 2023, the EDA Defence Innovation Prize is now under the umbrella of the Hub for EU Defence Innovation (HEDI), a new platform for innovation lead by EDA that was established in March 2022 by the EU's Strategic Compass for Defence and Security. The innovation prize complements other HEDI's services such as the EDA Research, Technology and Innovation Papers Award 2023.

How to apply? The deadline for submitting applications is 15 June 2023.

The contest rules and application criteria/details can be found at: <https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/documents/rules-of-contest-eda-defence-papers-award-20235081bd3fa4d264cfa776ff000087ef0f.pdf> and <https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/research-technology/innovation-prize>

The prize will be awarded during EDA's annual conference in Brussels in December.

What is expected from applicants? Submitted innovations must be the applicants' own intellectual property. However, submissions may include improvements of existing ideas, new combinations, or adaptations thereof and which are applicable in a different context. The applicants must demonstrate the innovative added-value of their ideas, compared to what already exists.

Proposals must be innovative, implementable through a collaborative project and financially affordable in terms of future development and exploitation.

The contest is especially, but not exclusively, aimed at non-traditional defence industries, including civil or dual-use producers, and researchers as they play a growing role in inventing and creating the disruptive capabilities that Member States' armed forces will need tomorrow. No specific defence background is required to be considered for the prize, and consideration is open to innovators from all types of industries and research institutions in EDA Member States, including defence and civil/commercial producers, large companies, start-ups / SMEs, and civil research communities.



## EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL: COMMISSION PROPOSES 2030 ZERO-EMISSIONS TARGET FOR NEW CITY BUSES AND 90% EMISSIONS REDUCTIONS FOR NEW TRUCKS BY 2040



The European Commission has proposed ambitious new CO<sub>2</sub> emissions targets for new heavy-duty vehicles (HDVs) from 2030 onwards. These targets will help to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the transport sector - trucks, city buses, and long-distance buses are responsible for over 6% of total EU greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and more than 25% of GHG emissions from road transport. These strengthened emissions standards would ensure that this segment of the road transport sector contributes to the shift to zero-emissions mobility and the EU's climate and zero pollution objectives.

The Commission proposes phasing in stronger CO<sub>2</sub> emissions standards for almost all new HDVs with certified CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, compared to 2019 levels, specifically:

- 45% emissions reductions from 2030;
- 65% emission reductions from 2035;
- 90% emissions reduction from 2040.

To stimulate faster deployment of zero-emission buses in cities, the Commission also proposes to make all new city buses zero-emission as of 2030.

In line with the European Green Deal and REPowerEU objectives, this proposal will also have a positive impact on the energy transition, by lowering demand for imported fossil fuels and enhancing energy savings and efficiencies in the EU's transport sector. It will provide benefits for European transport operators and users by reducing fuel costs and total cost of ownership, and ensure a wider deployment of more energy-efficient vehicles. It will also improve air quality, notably in cities, and the health of Europeans.

Moreover, this is a key sector to support the European clean tech industry and boost international competitiveness. The EU is a market leader in the production of trucks and buses and a common legal framework helps to secure that position for the future. In particular, the revised standards provide a clear and long-term signal to guide EU industry investments in innovative zero-emission technologies and boost the rollout of recharging and refuelling infrastructure.

### Background

Emissions in the HDV sector have been increasing year-on-year since 2014 with the exception of 2020 due to the

COVID-19 pandemic. Especially in the freight sector, emissions are increasing rapidly. This is mainly due to growing road transport demand, which is expected to keep rising in the future. In 2019, freight emissions were 44% higher than emissions from the aviation sector and 37% higher than maritime transport emissions.

The vast majority of heavy-duty vehicles in the EU fleet (99%) currently run on internal combustion engines, fuelled largely by imported fossil fuels such as diesel. This adds to the EU's energy dependency and current volatility of the energy market.

## EFCA 'S NEWLY-CHARTERED EU FISHERIES PATROL VESSELS ARE READY TO GO AT SEA

The European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) has presented the three new EFCA's chartered patrol vessels, which will serve as additional platforms for EU fisheries inspections in European and international waters.

Following the mandate from the EU institutions to strengthen EFCA's operational capacity for assisting the Member States and the European Commission in the monitoring, control and surveillance of fisheries, as required by the Common Fisheries Policy, EFCA has reinforced its fleet with three new offshore patrol vessels, following the award of a public call for tender. These are the only patrol vessels whose operations are managed by an EU Agency. They have been named as Ocean Guardian, Ocean Protector and Ocean Sentinel.

All three vessels fly the Portuguese flag, and will be deployed primarily as fisheries patrol vessels to support MS in the different EFCA joint deployment plans from the Mediterranean and Black Sea to the Western Waters, North Sea, Baltic Sea, NAFO and NEAFC.

The vessels will also be deployed as fisheries patrol vessel in the scope of multipurpose operations in the framework of European cooperation on coast guard functions. The three vessels, during their operations will also be available for supporting other coast guard functions, inter alia, providing support during search and rescue situations, maritime surveillance and pollution response.



In addition to seaborne means, EFCA has also contracted an aircraft to carry out aerial surveillance services for fisheries control, thus providing an additional tool to support MS in the different EFCA joint deployment plans.

"Today is an important milestone in the history of the Agency. The chartering of three inspection platforms marks a turning point and materializes our strong commitment to support Member States authorities and the European Commission promoting compliance with the fisheries rules, as well as contributing for safe, secure and sustainable sea. The vessels' modern facilities and technologies ensure a safe and comfortable stay onboard. Their deployment could be seen as a specific oceans safeguarding measure which enhances the EU capacity to improve the effectiveness of fisheries control operations in the EU and beyond " said Susan Steele, EFCA Executive Director.

## THE RECON ULTRALIGHT MULTICOPTER AIRCRAFT NOW FOR SALE

Ryse Aero Technologies has started reservations for prospective buyers for its Ryse Recon, the company's first electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft for advanced air mobility.

Customers can expect their delivery in the fourth quarter of 2023,

The Ryse Recon is a personal eVTOL multicopter aircraft with a top speed of up to 63 mph (101 km/h) and a range of 25 miles (40 km). The vehicle weighs less than 300 lb (136 kg) and has the ability to operate on both land and water.

It features an open cockpit, open-framed fuselage, and six independent propulsion systems – each one of which will, in turn, be powered by a removable battery pack. Also, the battery packs are specially designed to work like your box store electric lawnmowers; they are removable and rechargeable, so you can have spare sets.

The Recon is designed to be easily mass-produced, inexpensive to maintain, and easy to fly. The patent-pending removable battery and vehicle operation systems were designed to be operated by an individual with minimal training, featuring advanced artificial intelligence and simple control systems. Without extensive training, the operator can operate the device over any terrain, whether it be to locate a lost calf or be of assistance to a lost boater.

The Recon eVTOL aircraft will be sold as an ultralight vehicle, no pilot's license is needed.



## FRENCH MAYOR BEGS MADONNA TO LOAN PAINTING THAT BELONGED TO HER CITY

The mayor of the French city Amiens, Brigitte Fouré, has "begged" in a video the American star Madonna to "lend" her a painting from her personal collection, similar to a work of art in the city that disappeared during the First World War, so that the inhabitants can "see it again":

*"A recent article in the newspaper Le Figaro enabled us to discover that the painting, which was stored before the Great War in the Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Amiens, now the Musée de Picardie, and which disappeared after an episode of bombing, could have been found in the United States in the personal collection of the famous singer Madonna.*

*As part of our city's bid to become the European Capital of Culture in 2028, I am sending this message to Madonna so that she will agree to lend us this work! She could then, for a while, come back to Amiens and be seen by thousands of Amiens inhabitants!*

*Amiénoises, Amiénois, you too have a role to play: share massively this message so that it reaches Madonna! I'm counting on you!"*



Brigitte Fouré, mayor of the French city of Amiens

In 1989 at an auction in New York the American performer Madonna paid \$1.3 million (equivalent to \$2,841,852 in 2021) for a painting believed to be 'almost identical' or the missing Diana and Endymion itself, but undated and without Langlois's signature. The painting Madonna purchased is 3 cm smaller than the original and could be either a copy or the original painting with the date and signature removed. It was identified by an art curator from.

Diana and Endymion is an 1822 painting by Jérôme-Martin Langlois. The painting depicts the Roman goddess Diana, one of the twelve Gods and Goddesses of Olympus, falling in love with Endymion and is painted in the Neoclassical style.

The painting was displayed to acclaim at the Paris Salon of 1819 and was completed in 1822 having been commissioned by Louis XVIII for his Salon of Diane at the Palace of Versailles

Jérôme-Martin Langlois - Diana and Endymion

It was believed that the work was destroyed in the bombing





Jérôme-Martin Langlois - Diana and Endymion

of Amiens in 1918 during World War I. The painting had been part of the collection of the museum that had been evacuated to the Louvre in Paris for safekeeping

## GAS DISCOVERY IN THE NORWEGIAN SEA

Equinor and partners Wintershall Dea and Petoro have made a commercial gas discovery in production licence 1128 estimated at between two and eleven billion standard cubic metres of recoverable gas, or about 12.6-69.2 million barrels of oil equivalent.



Grete B. Haaland, Equinor's senior vice president for Exploration and Production North

Exploration wells 6605/1-2 S&A in the Norwegian Sea were drilled by the Deepsea Stavanger drilling rig.

The Obelix Upflank discovery was made some 23 kilometres south of the Irpa gas discovery, and 350 kilometres west of Sandnessjøen.

This is the first discovery made on the Norwegian continental shelf (NCS) in 2023, and the first wells in the Equinor-operated production licence awarded in the APA award in 2020.

"We need to find more gas on the NCS. Discoveries near existing infrastructure requires less volume in order to be commercially developed, and can be quickly put on stream with low CO2 emissions. We will together with our partners consider tie-back of this discovery to Irpa, for which we recently submitted a plan for development and operation," says Grete B. Haaland, Equinor's senior vice president for Exploration and Production North.

Irpa is a subsea development that will be tied back to the Aastad Hansteen platform. Irpa will extend the life of Aastad Hansteen by seven years, and contribute to more activity at the supply base in Sandnessjøen, for the helicopter base in Brønnøysund, and for the operations organisation in Harstad.

Partners: Equinor 70 %, Petoro 20% and Wintershall Dea 10%.

## PORT OF ANTWERP WELCOMES OFFICIALS FOLLOWING CONTINUED RISE IN COCAINE SEIZURES

European Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson has visited the Port of Antwerp, following the continued rise in the quantity of cocaine seized at the port. The Commissioner was accompanied by Belgian Minister of the Interior Annelies Verlinden, EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel and Europol Executive Director Catherine De Bolle. In recent years, Belgium has become the country seizing the largest quantities of cocaine in the EU.

Most cocaine seized in Europe arrives in maritime shipping containers. The Port of Antwerp, Europe's second-largest container terminal, has been in the spotlight since 2018 as a prominent entry point for illicit drugs shipped to Europe from Latin America. Last month, data reported to the EMCDDA from the Belgian authorities indicated that cocaine seizures in Antwerp had risen from 91 tonnes in 2021 to close to 110 tonnes in 2022, making Antwerp the leading port for cocaine seizures in Europe.

In some EU Member States (Belgium, Spain, France, Netherlands), competition between criminal networks has intensified, resulting in an increase in violent clashes. This includes a rise in homicides, kidnappings and intimidation, with violence spilling over to those outside the drug market (e.g. bystanders, lawyers, government officials, journalists).

EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel commented today: 'High levels of cocaine production in South America have resulted in record quantities being seized in Europe, with Belgium seizing the largest amounts of the drug in the EU. The exceptionally large cocaine seizures made in Antwerp, and in other European ports, indicate that the growing flow of cocaine now threatens the entire European Union'.

Goosdeel continues: 'I am deeply concerned that the expanding EU cocaine market is bringing a rise in violence



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**Annelies Verlinden, Belgian Interior Minister, Institutional Reforms and Democratic Renewal with Ylva Johansson, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, visiting the Port of Antwerp-Bruges**

and corruption and a strain on public institutions and governance. It also increases the risk of crack and cocaine use in all EU Member States. Based on available data and scientific evidence, we must adapt our responses to reduce drug supply and demand. This requires a more holistic and strategic analysis to capture the complexity of the drug market's transformation in recent years and to design new and innovative approaches to the problem'.

He added: 'We stand together with the European institutions and national authorities to reduce the availability of cocaine, protect our neighbourhoods and communities, and keep our citizens and their families safe from this drug's harmful health and social effects'.

In his address to the authorities of the country on 31 January 2023, His Majesty King Philippe of the Belgians underlined the 'need to address the root causes of addiction, invest more in prevention, and protect young people from the false promises of drug use'.

Most of the cocaine shipped to Antwerp comes from Colombia, via the port of Guayaquil in Ecuador.

(Source EMCDDA)

## SPANISH MUSEUM RETURNS 2 PAINTINGS LOOTED BY NAZIS TO POLAND

A Spanish museum has returned two 15<sup>th</sup> century painting to Poland. Attributed to the school of the Dutch painter Dieric Bouts, the masterpieces had been stolen by the Nazis during World War II from the Czartoryski collection in Gólułow.

When these masterworks representing Christ and the Virgin were claimed by Poland in 2020, the museum immediately made the choice to return them. It took more than 2 years to complete all the official formalities.

The paintings "Mater Dolorosa" (Mother of Sorrows) and "Ecce Homo" were handed over to a delegation from Poland's culture ministry at the Museum of Pontevedra. "We are saddened by the departure of this work from the museum. For us, it was very important, but we will have the satisfaction of being able to continue to appreciate it in another museum, even thousands of kilometres away," said the Museum director, Xosé Manuel Rey.

The Nazi occupying forces stole the works from a collection



in Poland. They were acquired by a Spanish private collector after the war who sold them to the Pontevedra museum in 1994 in Madrid in 1973 where they have been on display before their restitution to Poland.

## US FORCES IN EUROPE TO TAKE PART IN EXERCISE ARCTIC FORGE

Activities began in February 2023 in Finland and Norway as part of exercise Arctic Forge.

Arctic Forge 23 is a U.S. Army Europe and Africa-led umbrella exercise for U.S. contributions to partner-hosted exercises in Finland and Norway, focused on building Arctic military capabilities and cooperation.

"Whether we are campaigning, competing, responding to crisis or in conflict, winning matters," said U.S. Army Europe and Africa Commanding General, Gen. Darryl A. Williams. "And we must win in any engagement, including and especially the Arctic, where over-the-pole exercises like this with the Total Army and with our Allies and partners not only protect U.S. national security interests, but ensure a safe and secure region."

Arctic Forge 23 includes Finland's Defense Exercise North, and exercise Joint Viking in Norway.

The goal of Defense Exercise North is to demonstrate readiness by deploying a combat-credible force to enhance



power in NATO's northern flank in support of our partner Finland, an aspiring NATO member.

Defense Exercise North began when U.S. Army personnel from the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, deployed from Alaska to Finland. This portion of the exercise included an over-the-pole flight. They were augmented by personnel from the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division and Virginia Army National Guard, deploying from New York and Virginia to Finland. The 280 U.S. Army personnel will train alongside approximately 550 military personnel from Finland, focusing on commanding and controlling a multinational force at the battalion level, modernization and experimentation.

Approximately 730 U.S. Marines from II Marine Expeditionary Force and 200 U.S. Army personnel were participating in exercise Joint Viking alongside more than 10,090 combined military personnel from Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom.

"This is an incredible opportunity to team up Marines and Sailors from across the Marine Air-Ground Task Force with our U.S. Army and NATO European Allies and partners," said Lieutenant General David A. Ottignon, commanding general, II Marine Expeditionary Force. "Our relationships with our Nordic partners and Allies have never been better. We learn so much from training with them and enhancing our ability to sustain ourselves and operate in the high north. We are more survivable and lethal in austere environments because of exercises like Joint Viking."

During Joint Viking, U.S. Army personnel participating were conducting winter warfare and maneuver training with their multinational counterparts providing indirect fires from the 41st Field Artillery Brigade, and air defense integration from the 10<sup>th</sup> Army Air and Missile Defense Command, into Norwegian Land Forces operations. Additionally, staff augmentation from the 56<sup>th</sup> Artillery Command and the 21st Theater Sustainment Command integrated with their Norwegian counterparts to assist with the joint fires process, and train on winter warfare logistics.

The U.S. Army trains and equips its forces to operate in extreme cold, high altitude, and variable weather conditions and operates alongside Allied and partner Arctic nations, which demonstrates our resolve to securing national interests in the Arctic region.



U.S. and Italian soldiers ascend a mountain during Steel Blizzard, a multinational mountain and arctic warfare training exercise, in Usseaux, Italy

## A CHINESE COMPANY WITH OFFICES IN BEIJING AND LUXEMBOURG IS PROVIDING SATELLITE IMAGERY OF UKRAINE TO THE MERCENARY WAGNER GROUP



A Spacety satellite

Changsha Tianyi Space Science and Technology Research Institute Co. LTD (Spacety China) a People's Republic of China (PRC)- based entity is accused of providing synthetic aperture radar satellite imagery orders over locations in Ukraine to Terra Tech, a Russia-based technology firm that supplies space imagery acquired by commercially active satellites, as well as aerial images acquired by unmanned systems.

The companies, as well as another Russian space entity, BARL, have been sanctioned by the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) for sharing foreign high-resolution satellite imagery in order to enable Wagner combat operations in Ukraine.

In addition, OFAC took action against Spacety Luxembourg S.A. (Spacety Luxembourg), Spacety China's Luxembourg-based subsidiary.

Spacety Luxembourg has denied any support of the Russo-Ukrainian War and the Wagner Group.

On its website, Spacety China claims to « be the world 1st commercial company to provide SAR imagery data of every point on earth accessible and affordable to users all over the world ».

The Wagner Group is playing a significant role in the Russian invasion of Ukraine, where, among other activities, it has been reportedly deployed to assassinate Ukrainian leaders, and has widely recruited prisoners and convicts for frontline combat. In December 2022, it has been claimed that the Wagner group has 50,000 fighters in Ukraine, including 10,000 contractors and 40,000 convicts.

After years of denying links to the Wagner group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, a businessman with close links to Putin, admitted in September 2022 that he "founded" the paramilitary group.



President Nixon and General Secretary Brezhnev signing the (SALT 1) ABM Treaty (Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems) on May 26, 1972

# START STOPPED

**The Treaty to control the  
use of Weapons of Mass  
Destruction is in deep  
trouble**



Leaders of the United States and what used to be called the Soviet Union have spent years trying to find ways not to kill each other. The idea was proposed by US President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1967 and the negotiations that followed became known as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, normally shortened to its acronym, SALT. The resulting treaty limiting the arsenals of nuclear weapons on both sides was finally signed in 1972 and, being the first of its kind, is known as SALT 1. It was signed by US President Richard Nixon and, for the Soviet Union, by Leonid Brezhnev. Everyone at the time knew it was just the first tentative step along what was bound to be a long and tortuous road. They also knew it was very, very important. It's hard to believe it now but there was a genuine fear in the air of attack. At my primary school the teachers remembered the Second World War and were fearful of bombs and a sudden visit from the Luftwaffe. On a regular basis, the air raid siren on the school roof was tested (it was very loud and right above my classroom), although if there had been a real attack we kids would have had to hide under our desks. There was no air raid shelter. The noise of the siren was deafening, however.

In the 1960s – that decade of love, peace, sex and hallucinogenic drugs (and some very good rock music) – the idea of war was repulsive to us, but also unimaginable. So yes, we wanted the SALT 1 Treaty to work, although we didn't really think about it much. It looked promising, too: it was signed in Moscow. SALT 1 was an amalgam of several agreements, including the ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) Treaty. The deal restricted the siting of ballistic missiles to one deployment area each, containing no more than one hundred missiles, which meant that each side could defend only a small part of their overall territory. That, in turn, meant that both remained subject to the deterrent effect of the other's strategic forces. Both sides also knew, of course, that this was just the start, although START itself was still some years away.

The Interim Agreement was one more step along that path, restricting the numbers of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and Submarine-launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) at the levels pertaining at that time for five years. This was very advanced stuff from politicians more committed to the avoidance of war, it seems, than those we have today, probably prompted by scary memories.

Now the Treaty is just a memory, too: the "New START Treaty" is no more, although Putin told his audience that he wasn't "tearing up the Treaty", he was just "stepping away from it". His continual adjustment to the actual wording probably



The Russian Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) RS-24 Yars with a 10,500 km range



The US Titan II intercontinental ballistic missile became operational in 1963 at the height of the Cold War but was decommissioned in November 1982 following a nuclear treaty with the Soviet Union

means nothing much. It's just Putin's unending fiddling with the semantics of it.

In the year that SALT 1 was signed there was much celebration of our apparently peaceful future and so it was that negotiations began on the next phase, to be known as SALT 2. They went on for seven years, largely because the arsenals of the two powers didn't match, making it hard to strike a balance. The Soviet side had concentrated on building up its stock of missiles bearing large warheads, while the United States had been more interested in smaller missiles with much greater accuracy. The final version of SALT 2 also set limits on the numbers of "strategic launchers", which means missiles that can be equipped with what are called "multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles" (MIRVs), with the aim of deferring the day when eventually each side's ICBMs would be vulnerable to attack from such devices. The deal also placed limits on the numbers of long-range bombers, SLBMs, ICBMs and such like, limiting them to 2,400 each.



US President, George Bush and General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev signing the START I Agreement on 31 July 1991

It still sounds like quite a lot: more than enough of them to exterminate whole cities, even whole countries, and turn large regions in each other's territories into radioactive rubble. But it was still progress, of a sort. The deal was signed in Vienna in 1979 by US President Jimmy Carter and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, although Carter withdrew his plan to put the agreement before the Senate in January 1980 because of tensions between the superpowers, triggered by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Sound familiar? A peace treaty put on the back burner because one of the two parties involved had invaded another country. When I visited Afghanistan and met up with the Mujahideen, they were still earning a sort of pocket money by selling off the Soviet military materiel they'd gathered, the war having subsided somewhat. I still have a belt I bought from them, its cheaply-made buckle bearing the image of the hammer and sickle. One could also buy boots, military clothing and Kalashnikovs, although the Mujahideen hung onto the best of those if they still worked well.

Afghanistan aside, it was in 1982 that the two sides, Russia and the US, sat down again to come up with a solution, this time in Geneva and with a new name: the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks or START. Eventually, New START came into force in 2011 and in 2021 it was extended for a further five years. Theoretically, it caps the number of strategic nuclear warheads that either of the two superpowers can deploy, along with imposing a limit on how many land-based and submarine-based methods of delivery can be used. Together, the US and Russia are responsible for some 90% of the world's nuclear warheads.



US President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signing the New Start Treaty in April 2010

## I Start stops

It all looked so promising: two old rivals talking up ways to ensure they don't go to war against one another. It was all looking quite rosy when in February 2022, Russia went to war against Ukraine, formerly part of the Soviet empire. Moscow doesn't call it a war, of course; it's a "special military operation", but if you send a lot of soldiers with large weapons into another country with the intention of taking it over, it's hard to see it as anything other than "war". Next, Russia stood accused of breaching the terms of the New START Treaty by refusing to permit the mutual inspections that are part of the deal. It's a lot worse now, with Putin effectively rejecting more than just the inspections part of the deal. Russia said it couldn't allow Americans to check on its weapons stock because of the on-going "hybrid war" (which it has always blamed variously on the United States and on non-existent Nazis), even though it's really a war against Ukraine and Moscow started it. Of course, the United States banned certain senior Russian figures from visiting, introducing a travel ban that would have made it very difficult to reciprocate those inspections. There were, however, very good reasons to worry that Russia chose not to observe the terms of the New Start treaty, supposedly designed to rein in the warmongers of East and West and stop them from resorting to using weapons of mass destruction for other reasons. The last version of the treaty that they actually agreed, predictably called "New START", is what Russia was allegedly breaching, provoking the fear that Putin may be planning to resort to nuclear weapons in the war he launched against Ukraine because the conventional war hasn't been going well for him, or certainly not as well as he had predicted.

He may have expected a simple walk-over, such as Russia enjoyed when it invaded Crimea, but instead his troops found themselves facing a very angry populace and a large number of Ukrainian soldiers. He, of course, denies violating the terms of the treaty, but to be perfectly honest Putin is not noted for his truthfulness and



The Russian Borei-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine Vladimir Monomakh performed a salvo launch of four Bulava (SS-NX-32) sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) at targets over 5,500 km away during a planned exercise on December 2020



## Satan II, the world's 'most powerful' nuclear missile

The Satan II/RS-28 Sarmat/SS-X-30 was unveiled by Russian president Vladimir Putin on 1 March 2018. "The active phase of tests of the missile has begun said Russian president Vladimir Putin in his annual address to the Federal Assembly.

On 20 April 2022 Satan II made its first test flight. The Russian Defence Ministry published a video showing the Sarmat performing its second successful test-launch at the Plesetsk Cosmodrome, the Russian government claiming the missile would enter service in 2022.

After the test, Dmitri Rogozin, the head of Russia's state space agency Roscosmos, warned that 50 new Satan II/RS-28 Sarmat/SS-X-30 intercontinental nuclear missiles would soon be combat ready. In a New York Post report, Rogozin said, "I suggest that aggressors speak to us more politely."

While showing in a video the impact of a blank Satan-2 at the Kura Missile Test Range in Russia's Kamchatka region where the crater measured 26 feet deep and 66 feet wide Rogozin warned :

"When equipped with a nuclear warhead, such a crater at an enemy target would be ... very ... very large and very deep and radioactive. And not just one, but exactly as many as the most powerful nuclear missile in the world will deliver to the territory of a hateful enemy." (The hateful enemy being Ukraine).

The RS-28 Sarmat with a range of 18,000 kilometres, will be capable of carrying about 10 tonnes of payload, for either up to 10 heavy or 15 light MIRV warheads, and up to 24 Avangard hypersonic glide vehicles (HGVs) or a combination of warheads and several countermeasures against anti-ballistic missile systems. The Russian Ministry of Defense said that the missile is Russia's response to the U.S. Prompt Global Strike system.

Sarmat has a short boost phase, which shortens the interval when it can be tracked by satellites with infrared sensors, such as the U.S. Space-Based Infrared System, making it more difficult to intercept. The Sarmat is able to fly a trajectory over the South Pole, which would require Fractional Orbital Bombardment (FOBS) capability, and is claimed to be completely immune to any current or prospective missile defense systems.

According to various sources, RS-28's launch sites are to be equipped with the "Mozyr"[39] active protection system, designed to negate a potential adversary's first strike advantage by discharging a cloud of metal arrows or balls kinetically destroying incoming bombs, cruise missiles and ICBM warheads at altitudes of up to 6 km.



Sarmat missile test launch on April 20, 2022



The Satan II/RS-28 Sarmat/SS-X-30

honesty. One of the demands the Treaty places upon its signatories is that they allow inspections. The Treaty itself sets out its rules and obligations very clearly:

"The treaty contains detailed procedures for the implementation and verification of the central limits on strategic offensive arms and all treaty obligations", it said before Putin shredded it. "These procedures govern the conversion and elimination of strategic offensive arms, the establishment and operation of a database of treaty-required information, transparency measures, a commitment not to interfere with national technical means of verification, the exchange of telemetric information, the conduct of on-site inspection activities, and the operation of the Bilateral Consultative Commission (BCC)." NATO says Russia wasn't playing ball because it was refusing to facilitate inspections, while Russia claimed the Treaty itself is "a direct result of the hybrid war unleashed by the West against our country." Those are the words of Russia's

Ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Antonov, but they somewhat misrepresent reality. After all, the two sides have been edging towards an agreement on weapons stocks since 1968. New START is hardly a surprise, if the war itself is.

## Words v. actions

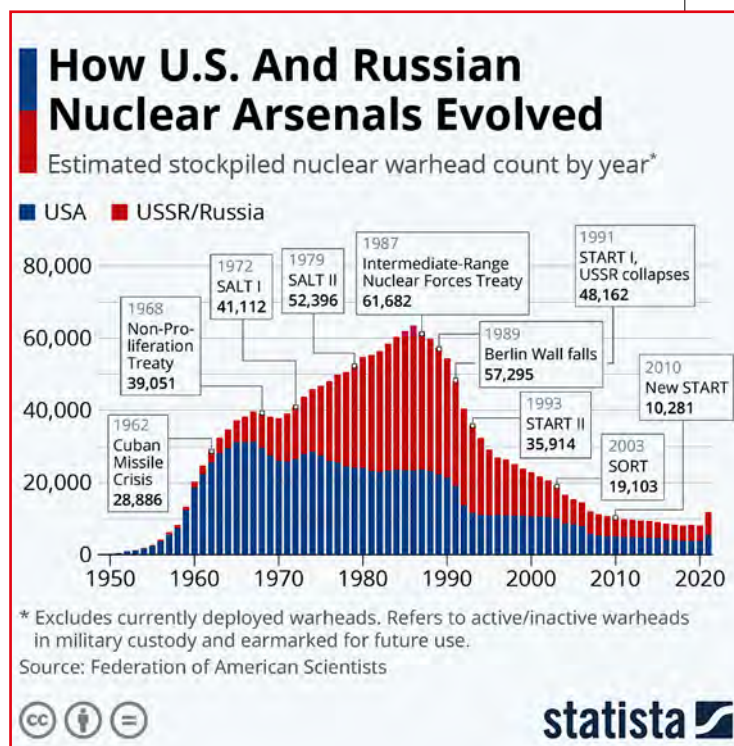
What came next was a row but, initially a fairly civilised one (albeit not for the citizens of Ukraine, of course). Nobody seems to be uttering immediate threats of unleashing Armageddon upon their opposite number, although Putin pointed out that he could. According to NATO, its allies agree that: "The new



Vladimir Putin visiting the Peter the Great Military Academy of the Strategic Missile Forces

START treaty promotes (I must say “promoted” now) international stability by deterring strategic nuclear forces from Russia and the United States. Therefore, we note with concern that Russia has not fulfilled its legal obligations under the New START treaty.” START, of course, stands for Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, even if it doesn’t make a perfect acronym (it should be SART, but that doesn’t sound so good). However, that means that Washington is choosing to ignore the obstacles it had placed in the way of compliance by banning some Russian experts from travelling there.

The arguments continue: Russia blames the US and the US, of course, blames Russia. Whatever the rights and wrongs it is undoubtedly true to say that the whole issue would not have arisen if Putin hadn’t taken it into his mind to invade Ukraine. We don’t know if



In August, Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation told the US Russia had “temporarily” suspended on-site inspections of its strategic nuclear weapons, under an arms control treaty known as New START and that US sanctions imposed on Russia over Ukraine had changed conditions between the countries

he believed that it would be as simple a walkover as it was when his troops invaded and seized Crimea? The first Russian troops to enter Ukraine found that they faced resistance even from elderly women in the street. Some of the troops wrote home that the reaction had surprised them; Putin had assured them they’d be welcomed with open arms, not face weapons. Russia has warned Washington that the Treaty could expire in 2026 without a replacement, while Moscow accuses the United States of refusing to discuss a broader agenda of “strategic stability”.

In fact, however, the Americans may also have their reasons for wanting to see the new Treaty fall. According to experts, in its present form the Treaty fails to address the issue of protecting and defending the US and its allies against strategic attack. At the very least, according to Baker Spring, a former Kirby Research Fellow in National Security Policy, a clause should be added to the Treaty stating that the US is committed to “defending its population, territory, institutions and infrastructure to the best of its ability”. Spring is also unhappy with the proposed reduction in US missile defence capabilities, as well as the difficulty the US would have in modernising its missile propulsion and warhead capabilities. Indeed, Spring provides a list of twelve major flaws in the agreement that he claims would leave the US weaker than Russia. “Article V of New START permits strategic nuclear modernization,” he points out, “but the U.S. strategic nuclear arsenal has aged, and the weapons enterprise that is necessary to pursue modernization has atrophied over the past two decades. This includes an alarm-ing weakening of the industrial base for solid rocket motors. These nuclear modernization problems are not in the text of the treaty or its interpretation, but exist only in relation to the treaty, which exacerbates these problems.” If so, that’s hardly Russia’s fault. Another of his concerns is that the verification regime is too weak. In part of its conclusion, Spring writes





A victim of the Russian shelling being evacuated from her destroyed apartment bloc

that: “The American people are depending on their senators to take the necessary actions to defend them against attack.” Spring believes that New START fails to do that and that the flaws he has discovered would be very, very difficult to put right.

The arguments continue: Russia blames the US and the US, of course, blames Russia. Whatever the rights and wrongs it is undoubtedly true to say that the whole issue would not have arisen if Putin hadn’t taken it into his mind to invade Ukraine. We don’t know if he believed that it would be as simple a walkover as it was when his troops invaded and seized Crimea? The first Russian troops to enter Ukraine found that they faced resistance even from elderly women in the street. Some of the troops wrote home that the reaction had surprised them; Putin had assured them they’d be welcomed with open arms, not deployed armaments. Russia has warned Washington that the Treaty could expire in 2026 without a replacement, while Moscow accuses the United States of refusing to discuss a broader agenda of “strategic stability”.

Whatever the White House might think, however, (and in the face of evidence to the contrary) Russia says it remains committed to the New START Treaty; even in his speech to the nation Putin didn’t repudiate it completely. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told the media that it was necessary to preserve at least some “hints” of continuing a dialogue with Washington. “We consider the continuation of this Treaty very important,” he said, although this was before Putin’s speech, of course, describing it as the only one that remained hypothetically viable. Some experts say that with Russia now clearly at war with Ukraine (whatever Moscow may call the conflict; “Special Military Operation” is very obviously a euphemism) the two rivals have been drawn closer to out-and-out war than at any time over the last six decades, and that makes the New START treaty more important than ever, so it’s not a great time to tear it up Moscow has blamed Washington for the travel restrictions it imposed in response to the Ukraine conflict but it also said (before Putin’s speech) that it remains committed to the Treaty itself.

Putin has repeated his original claims that his invasion was in response to neo-Nazis committing crimes in Ukraine. In a statement to the media, Putin suggested that the West is forgetting the lessons of history: “This is evidenced by the crimes against civilians, ethnic

cleansing and punitive actions organised by neo-Nazis in Ukraine. It is against that evil that our soldiers are bravely fighting,” he said. Putin’s supporters have accused Ukrainians of mistreating Ukraine’s Russian-speakers in a manner that he says is comparable with the behaviour of Nazi Germany. That’s why he staged his invasion: to “de-Nazify the country”, although the Ukrainian government and the country’s Jewish community have firmly denied that there were any Nazis there at all. Putin has suggested that underplaying the Soviet Union’s part in the defeat of Hitler “equates to justifying the crimes of Nazism and opens the way for it to return.”

## Forgetting to remember to forget

Every year, an event is held to mark the anniversary of the liberation: Holocaust Remembrance Day. Ironically, and somewhat inexplicably, no Russian representatives were

invited to attend the ceremony this year, exactly 78 years since the Red Army overcame the Nazis and set the prisoners free. They could do nothing, of course, for 1.1-million prisoners the Nazis had slaughtered there, mainly in gas chambers, the bodies being roughly cremated. Most of those victims were Jewish, but the Nazis also killed a great many Poles and Gypsies. Of course, it’s easy to remember Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which was recent, but somehow harder to recall that it was the Red Army that liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau and other concentration camps. It’s said that tough Russian soldiers were reduced to tears by what they had seen.

By comparison, the disagreement over the New

START treaty is of very little consequence, a mere footnote to history, one may think. Of course, Russia's view of the affair differs considerably from Washington's. According to the Russian news agency, TASS, all the war crimes (and TASS claims there have been many) have been committed by Ukrainians. Russia's ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Antonov, has argued repeatedly that Russia has been observing the New START treaty impeccably for years. He told the media that responsibility for breaches and for the escalation of tensions rests squarely with the United States. TASS also reported that Moscow has promised to punish any Ukrainians who have aided the Zelensky government, listing them all as "Nazis". Antonov is not alone in his allegations or his threats. "All faces, voices, telephones, whereabouts, IP-addresses and messages among all Ukrainian Nazis, who are responsible for humiliation and torture of our comrades are being identified and put on record. The same concerns the ringleaders of the Kiev regime and their minions, who call for torture of Russian soldiers in violation of the prisoners-of-war treatment convention. All of you will be tracked down and inevitably and properly punished," said Russian Defence Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov in what clearly was not a call for peace and reconciliation. The views of this war (and it is a war, not just a 'military operation', whatever the Kremlin claims) are so far apart that it's hard to see how they can ever be reconciled.

Russia has been repeatedly shelling and destroying civilian apartment blocks and residential streets, despite Russian Defence Ministry claims that "civilian areas are safe". Perhaps Putin should heed the advice given in the foreword of Aldous Huxley's dystopian novel, *Brave New World*, first published in 1932: "If you have behaved badly, repent, make what amends you can and address yourself to the task of behaving better next time. On no account brood over your wrongdoing. Rolling in the muck is not the best way of getting clean." I can't picture Putin doing much brooding or rolling in the muck, somehow, but then I can't picture Joe Biden doing it, either.

Looking at the current impasse, however, does give cause for concern. The New START treaty, which is formally known as the "Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms", was the last remaining arms control deal between the United States and Russia, and it was no longer being observed. Joe Biden has demonstrated that he wants to preserve New START after his predecessor, Donald Trump, tore up a previous arms control agreement, saying that no treaty was worthwhile unless it included China, even though China's known nuclear arsenal is a mere fraction of the size of those held by Russia and the United States. It's a simple fact that the two sides have to trust each other for the New START treaty to work, and they don't, as the belligerent wording of their press releases shows.

As a clear example of the suspicion surrounding arms limitation treaties, First Post reports that: "A



Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan signing the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), 8 December 1987

group of Republicans active on defence policy responded that Biden had 'naively' extended New START and said that Russia 'cannot be trusted to abide by any international agreement.' If that is really true, there would seem little point in talking about treaties of any kind, but surely even a treaty you don't fully trust is better than the total absence of one and a continuing conflict? "We urge President Biden to direct the Department of Defence to prepare for a future where Russia may deploy large numbers of warheads, well in excess of New START treaty limits," said a statement by Republicans including Representative Mike Rogers, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. The US State Department, however, said that the Treaty was intended to "make the world safer". If it can be implemented effectively, it should do that.

The New START treaty is the last remaining arms control agreement between the United States and Russia and its proper name is the Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. At least, that's how it's described on the website of the US State Department. It limits how many warheads and delivery systems each side may have, but it leaves enough fissile material hanging about to blow up the world and leave it poisonously radioactive for millennia. As First Post puts it: "It also limits the deployed Avangard and the under development Sarmat, the two most operationally available of the Russian Federation's new long-range nuclear weapons that can reach the United States. Extending New START ensures we will have verifiable limits on the mainstay of Russian nuclear weapons that can reach the US homeland for the next five years." That depends on compliance, of course. Feeling any safer? These treaties have always relied on the principle of "mutually assured destruction": you wipe us off the face of the Earth and we'll do it right back to you.

The Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces treaty actually reduced the numbers of weapons both sides were allowed to hold and put a ceiling in place. Signed in 1987, it held until August 2019, when Donald Trump decided the US should withdraw from it. He claimed that it failed to protect the US, although few experts agreed with his analysis. Russia has been warning that the existing treaty could expire in 2026 with no replacement in place or even on the drawing board; now it looks like being scrapped this year. At the same time, of course, Russia continues in its bid to take over Ukraine and rule it from Moscow, a prospect nobody in the West (or in Kyiv) would welcome. It will take a person with rare vision to see a way through the mess and to make the world safe again. Where is that person, I wonder?

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Riad Salameh

**SURROUNDED  
BY GOLD – BUT  
WHOSE?**

**The blame game gets under  
way as Lebanon's Central  
Bank governor comes under  
investigation**



My favourite press photo of Riad Salame, Governor of the Lebanese Central Bank, comes from the L'Orient Today newspaper and shows him smiling among the country's more-than-adequate bullion reserves in a Beirut strongroom. Surrounded by so much gold it would be very tempting to slip just one gold bar into one's pocket, wouldn't it? Surely, they'd never miss it? Well, they might, actually, especially with bankers from France, Germany and Luxembourg, plus one French judge, going through the books (and presumably counting those gold bars). The man at the centre of their probe is, as I mentioned, Riad Salameh, and what these scrutinizers are scrutinizing is what is most commonly labelled as 'embezzlement'. Riad Salameh and his brother both deny taking more than \$300-million (€276-million) from public funds. A Lebanese judge has charged Riad Salameh with what the charge sheet rather quaintly called "illicit enrichment" last March in a separate but related investigation.

The team now investigating this alleged misappropriation of funds apparently suspect that the money was taken in order to buy real estate in France and across Europe. According to Le Monde, "Anti-corruption lawyers in Lebanon and Europe are convinced that the opening of a money laundering trial against Banque du Liban (BDL) Governor Riad Salameh in several European countries, including France, is inevitable." But of course, that doesn't mean that either of the two brothers is guilty. Only a court of law can decide that. At the time of writing no formal charges have been filed and the two have challenged the seizure of assets in France, according to their lawyers. Now the visiting European prosecutors are closely examining bank records that list money transfers made by Raja Salameh – Riad's brother, you may recall – using Lebanese banks as the vehicle. The aim is to track the flow of money. Lebanese prosecutors are also looking into the same



"Salameh is a thief" and "Down with the Governor"

issue but have declined to share the data they have amassed; at least, up to now.

The Salameh brothers claim that they're the victims of a coordinated campaign to blame Riad for Lebanon's financial collapse in 2019. Salameh has been governor of Lebanon's central bank, the Banque du Liban, for more than thirty years but the financial collapse of 2019 caused huge problems for the country's economy, with banks paralysed and the entire country impoverished following the civil war of 1975 – 1990. Huge debts were racked up, although it's hard to see how Salameh was responsible for all of them. His French lawyer has said that the entire case has been "politicised", which looks very possible. The brothers argue that it's a set-up job. "In the case file I have access to," the lawyer told the newspaper Al Arabiya, "there is



no diagram of financial flows that would directly implicate Riad Salameh through a confusion of his assets and accounts, and those of the central bank.”

72-year-old Riad Salameh has claimed in the past that his wealth was built up through his earnings at Merrill Lynch, prior to him taking on the governorship in 1993. The investigating team were also scheduled to question various witnesses and former central bank employees. The Lebanese prosecutors who earlier gained access to banking records said they were prevented from sharing the data with the visiting investigators because Riad Salameh had mounted a legal challenge against the magistrate conducting the investigation, although he has since been removed from the inquiry with a new judge being appointed to take his place, so co-operation with the visiting European team can be resumed.

Salameh has (or had?) a Ukrainian mistress, named as Anna Kosakova, who was reported in the French journal Médiapart as having repeatedly referred investigators to Salameh during questioning. They had a child together in 2005, it was revealed, although Salameh wouldn't recognise it as his until two years later. L'Orient Today reports that the French judge Aude Buresi indicted Kosakova in June 2022 for “criminal conspiracy”, “laundering in an organised gang” and the “laundering of aggravated tax fraud” in the case dealing with allegations of embezzlement by the Banque du Liban to the detriment of the Lebanese state.

It's being alleged that almost €226.61-million was transferred to personal accounts belonging to Raja Salameh, the governor's brother. He was arrested last spring, then released on bail of €3.4-million. 46-year-old Kosakova referred to Riad Salameh as “the man of (her) life”, according to the report in Médiapart. She is the first person to be prosecuted by the French national prosecutor's office, which took over the case in July 2021 over complaints lodged last April by “the Group of Victims of Fraudulent and Criminal Practices in Lebanon” and by the French NGO Sherpa, which defends victims of economic crimes. According to the magazine Le Commerce du Levant, complaints against Kosakova included “money laundering”, “concealment”, “swindling”, “deceptive commercial practices”, “criminal association” and “lack of justification of resources” with aggravating circumstances. That's quite a list. Unsurprisingly, it has led to Kosakova being placed under “judicial supervision” and forbidden from leaving French territory. She was also suspended temporarily from the management of the companies BET, ZEL and Eciffice, which prosecutors claim were used for money laundering. I wonder if any of their former clients have now resorted to using piggy banks instead?

## ! The more the merrier?

It's now considered inevitable that Riad Salameh will face money laundering trials in a number of European countries, including France. But Lebanon is a financial oligarchy, which means it is effectively run by a very small number of extremely rich and powerful men. Forget democracy; in Lebanon it doesn't appear to exist, whatever its most senior oligarchs claim.



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That's why judges from Germany, France and Luxembourg travelled to Beirut together, gathering information and talking to all those involved. The existence of the oligarchy has hindered cooperation among interested authorities, according to the Swiss foundation Accountability Now, which has filed complaints against Salameh all over Europe. According to one of the organisation's lawyers, Zena Wakim, “Civil society and whistle blowers are getting involved like never before. The political class understands that despite their obstructions, there will always be ways to obtain information.” It has been especially difficult in this case, however, and Wakim believes the willingness of those involved to come forward and reveal details weakens Salameh's chances of emerging from it with a clean pair of hands. “This undermines Riad Salameh's defence that the file is empty,” she said. Certainly, the list of possible (I could say “probable”) charges he may face encourages those with inside knowledge to share it. Meanwhile, is the EU doing anything to alleviate the pain? Well, yes; quite a lot, according to L'Orient: “The European Union has allocated €229 million to “reinforce much needed reforms and economic development” in Lebanon this year, according to an EU. Total aid, according to SyriaConf2021, comes to €240-billion since 2011. There is, in addition, an assurance that the EU “continues to support Lebanon and its people during challenging socio-economic conditions” and notes that “several priorities were identified for this new financial package.” It certainly needs assurances; the statement went on to say that the first priority is to “enhance good governance and support reform,” meaning that the EU will assist Lebanon in implementing “reforms related to public administration



focusing on integrity, transparency, and accountability, in line with the opportunities identified by the recent IMF Staff-Level Agreement.” Some might say: “not before time!”. They may also ask, quite reasonably, where all this aid is going.

We should bear in mind that Salameh is the longest-serving central bank governor in the world and has been credited with maintaining the stability of the Lebanese pound from his initial appointment until 2019, even if it doesn't look very stable today! He now stands accused of corruption, money laundering and also running the biggest Ponzi scheme the world has ever seen. In a Ponzi scheme, investors are lured in and rewarded generously at first, using money from more recent investors to fund the pay-out. Although the system – which is a form of fraud, of course – is named after the Boston-based Italian businessman Charles Ponzi, who was running such a scheme in the 1920s, it's a very old type of fraud, forming a big part of the plot in two of Charles Dickens' novels: *Martin Chuzzlewit* in 1844 and *Little Dorrit* in 1857. Who was it who wrote: “There's nothing new under the sun”? Oh, yes: it comes from *Ecclesiastes* in the Bible. It's true, too. Anyone offered an investment that claims to be completely safe (there is no such thing as a “completely safe” investment, after all) and which offers strangely generous returns through its agents should suspect that it's a con, with a Ponzi scheme being the most likely explanation. Just ask *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

## I A tangled web

Riad Salameh is still denying his involvement in dishonest money-making schemes, although the evidence against him continues to build up. He is a key member of a Lebanese government team that has been in talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in a bid to work out a rescue deal for the country's battered economy. A Lebanese judge has charged him with “illicit enrichment”, the first charge to be brought against the country's central bank governor.

The judge, Ghada Aoun told Reuters that the case relates to the purchase and subsequent rental of Paris apartments, some of them to the *Banque Du Liban*. Salameh still denies the accusations and told Reuters that he has ordered an audit which shows categorically that his wealth didn't come from public funds, but more and more questions seem to be arising since the 2019 collapse of the financial system. The new charge



Judge Ghada Aoun



Beirut protests

would appear to exacerbate the tensions among Salameh's assorted backers and supporters. Judge Aoun said she had issued the charge after Salameh failed to attend a hearing.

At the time of writing, no arrest warrant for Riad had been issued, but the same judge ordered the arrest of Riad's brother, Raja, although Raja's lawyer dismissed the charge as “media speculation”. Riad has been banned from travelling, too, although security forces sent to bring him in failed to locate him. Like one of the country's coins, perhaps he's fallen down the side of a sofa? The same judge has expressed interest in a Paris office building on the Champs Elysees, apparently rented by the Lebanese Central Bank since 2010. Interestingly, the building appears to be managed by Anna Kosakova, who has now been charged with complicity in “illicit enrichment”, the same charge faced by Raja Salameh. Separately, the judge has frozen the assets of six banks while their links with the central bank are probed. It seems that negotiations for a rescue deal for Lebanon have got nowhere. It was Sir Walter Scott in his play “*Marmion*” who first coined the phrase: “Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.” Certainly, in the case revolving around the Salameh brothers the web would now seem to be very tangled indeed, with Salameh's wealth being investigated by the authorities of at least five countries, although that is not proof of guilt, of course.

The ordinary citizens of the Lebanon are far from happy. The Lebanese pound has lost more than 95% of its value, leaving the majority of people in serious poverty. There are also shortages of basic goods, including medicines, despite the country having been considered “middle income” by the standards of the time. According to the Deputy Prime Minister, Saade

Chami, speaking in a television interview last year, any sort of rescue seems unlikely. “Unfortunately, the state is bankrupt, as is the central bank, so we have a problem... the loss has occurred,” he said. Meanwhile, the central bank at the centre of this storm had been attempting to maintain an exchange rate of 1,500 Lebanese pounds to the dollar, until the summer of 2019, when it allowed the currency to fluctuate to whatever it seemed to be worth in terms of real buying power, having accumulated billions of dollars in losses. The World Bank has estimated that Lebanon’s economy contracted by almost 60% between 2019 and 2021. It has been described as one of the worst financial crises in modern times; the collapse of the Lebanese pound is very uncomfortable for the Lebanese people who are struggling to get by.

The effective exchange rate changes quite frequently but Lebanon’s central bank has recently set a new official rate of 15,000 Lebanese pounds to the US dollar, also allowing funds to be accessed in local currency. It was previously set at 8,000 pounds. The bank also set a limit on cash withdrawals of \$1,600 for those holding accounts, the sums being withdrawn in the local currency. Depositors have been unable to access their savings since the financial collapse of 2019. Officially – and incredibly – the central bank has been maintaining an official exchange rate, but goods invariably trade at the market rate, which is very different. At the time of writing, the Lebanese pound is trading at 54,000 to the dollar.

Politics in Lebanon is a long, slow, drawn-out game involving long negotiations among the various community parties to reach some sort



Speaker of the Parliament of Lebanon Nabih Berri



Damage after the Beirut explosion in 2020

of consensus, which isn’t always possible. Two of the country’s MPs are currently “occupying” the parliament building in Beirut. Najat Salioba and Melhem Khalef have spent the night there with no electricity or hot water after 3 o’clock in the afternoon. Some 30 sympathetic MPs came to show their support, bringing them meals and spending the night there. The idea is to shake up the political system, according to a report in *Le Monde*, which seems to cover events in Lebanon with more interest and dedication than other papers. “This currency collapse has had serious impacts on all aspects of life and the economy,” Khalef told the newspaper. “The people are suffering and no one is doing anything. Lebanon has no government, no president, and no parliament. Parliament’s only duty is to elect a president, but we have a group of politicians who are waiting to share power based on clientelist and communitarianist criteria.” That’s a fairly damning indictment from an elected member of that parliament. Khalef spoke to the media from inside the parliament building by telephone. The media were not allowed to enter.

## Little hope of change

No attempt to remove the two MPs has been made by Nabih Berri, who has been the parliament’s Speaker for three decades, although he shows no signs of conceding anything. He has said he’s not willing to call a new session in order to elect a president until, as *Le Monde* puts it, “a consensus is reached behind the scenes”. Decision-making in Lebanon among the political classes seems to be based on the principle of “you-scratch-my-back-and-I’ll-scratch-yours”. It sounds rather undemocratic. What’s more, the two MPs staging the sit-in protest are members of “Thawra”, very much a minority party – with only 12 out of Lebanon’s 129 elected MPs – and further weakened by internal squabbles. The group has been unable to agree on a presidential candidate and the two staging the protest don’t want to nominate anybody at all. Meanwhile, a former prime minister, Hassan Diab, has just been charged with homicide with probable intent, along with





Former Lebanese prime minister, Hassan Diab

the former interior minister and the former public works minister, over the bomb blast at Beirut port in 2020. Judge Tarek Bitar resumed his investigation after it had been paused for more than a year because of political resistance and legal complaints filed by senior officials Judge Bitar had been hoping to question.

Lebanon may not sound like the sort of place you'd choose for a holiday, but the much-admired French economist Thomas Piketty writes that it's a very interesting place for study. "First, there is a consensus about the fact that the level of wealth and income inequalities in Lebanon is high by both international and historical standards. However, there are few



Karim Merhej

studies to establish it rigorously. As in the rest of the Arab world, there is a major lack of data on poverty in Lebanon, according to the UN-Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 2005, from both national and international sources." According to Piketty, it's hard to draw any conclusions from official reports because they are all out of date. "The first and only countrywide study on the Lebanese income distribution is dated 1960," he wrote. He also pointed out that Lebanon's economic performance is atypical and hard to define: "The mediocre performance of the economy since 1990, together with political instability and the 2006 war damages further accentuated the need to undertake profound reform." Lebanon, however, is still waiting, and seems likely to go on doing so.

Meanwhile, income tax evasion continues to plague the country's economic planners. "This problem is particularly acute in Lebanon," writes Piketty. "Anecdotal evidence indeed suggests that consequent amounts of income or wealth continue to elude tax returns collection." In Lebanon's case, the government decided to relax exchange controls in 1948, opting for a "laissez-faire" system of foreign exchange transactions. That sounds very reliable, doesn't it?

Writing in *The Public Source*, researcher Karim Merhej points out that corruption among the political and economic elites is still a huge problem in Lebanon. "Since the end of the civil war, corruption within the political elites – which have used the state as a vehicle for self-enrichment and patronage-distribution – has undermined the country's recovery and development," he writes. After protests in 2019, various anti-corruption laws were introduced, along with the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, largely to pacify an angry populace and also to make it easier to obtain international funding, but there is a lot of scepticism over whether or not it will lead to real anti-corruption action and more accountability. To win back the trust of its people and greater trust internationally, Lebanon still has a long way to go. Merhej points out that: "As Lebanon continues to endure a multifaceted collapse, with UN data indicating that more than half of the population had fallen below the poverty line by May 2020, and with COVID-19 infection rates rising sharply in January 2021 (and remaining high for several months thereafter), confronting corruption has become a matter of survival for the Republic of Lebanon." The big question is: can any recovery measure come in time to save the country and its poor inhabitants?

Merhaj recommends that the Lebanese government should clearly demonstrate its commitment to anti-corruption measures, with a guarantee for freedom of expression and assembly. He writes that future funding must be transparent, with support for oversight agencies, the media, and watchdog groups. He also wants to see a civil society-led anti-corruption front and laws guaranteeing the right of access to information. It was Carl Sagan, the American astronomer, physicist and cosmologist, who wrote in his book *The Demon-haunted World – Science as a candle in the dark*: "One of the saddest lessons of history is this: If we've been bamboozled long enough, we tend to reject any evidence of the bamboozle. We're no longer interested in finding out the truth. The bamboozle has captured us. It's simply too painful to acknowledge, even to ourselves, that we've been taken. Once you give a charlatan power over you, you almost never get it back." Let's hope that doesn't apply to Lebanon, or at least not for long.

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# RIGHTING HISTORICAL INJUSTICES

**A Lithuanian MEP  
continues her life-long  
battle against cruel and  
rapacious regimes**



Rasa Juknevičienė has spent her life fighting political battles for the victims of tyranny. Her maternal grandfather was deported to Siberia where he suffered torture in a Soviet labour camp. Other members of her mother's family were deported merely for being teachers. Such injustices were common under the quixotic rule of Josef Stalin, who imposed draconian punishments for even minor infringements of his laws, according to Oleg V. Khlevniuk in his brilliant biography of the Soviet dictator, called simply "Stalin". Those parts that the Soviet Union had swallowed up suffered especially harshly. "For the years 1944 - 1952, according to incomplete official statistics," Khlevniuk wrote, "approximately a half million people were killed, arrested, or forcibly exiled from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, along with an equal number in the western provinces of Ukraine." Stalin imposed savage punishments, too, such as sentencing a parent to many years in a labour camp just for stealing a small amount of bread to feed to starving children, of whom the country had many. Khlevniuk writes that Stalin's actions "upended or utterly destroyed millions upon millions of lives." Now Vladimir Putin seems set on doing much the same in Ukraine and other territories once ruled from Moscow back in the days when the Soviet Union was a major political power.

It was the treatment of her maternal grandfather that set Juknevičienė on the road towards a life of politics. It also led her into working closely with Vytautas Landsbergis, the much-admired leader of Lithuania's Reform Movement. He invited her to work as a press secretary for the centre-right Homeland Union political group in the Lithuanian Parliament when she was still working as a paediatrician. After that, she wrote, "the real school of politics began". She was elected to the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian Republic in 1990 and in that same year she voted for the restoration of



© RASA JUKNEVIČIENĖ

Juknevičienė in the Lithuanian Parliament on the night of 12 January 1991, preparing to defend it against Soviet armed forces

Lithuania's independence. She was able to watch the collapse of the Soviet Union from 'up close' and became her country's first female defence minister, going on to become the first woman ever to serve as President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

Juknevičienė has admitted being influenced by the writings of Nijolė Alfonsa Gaškaitė-Žemaitienė, an historian, prose writer, poet, and essayist much disliked by the Soviet authorities who ultimately executed her, although not before torturing her first. I have not been able to source her influential book, *Zuvusliuju Prezidentas*, which translates as *President of the Dead, or of the Fallen*, and which in fact records the biography of Jonas Žemaitis, Chairman of the Presidium of the Council of the Lithuanian Freedom Struggle Movement. It includes documents from the country's archives and photographs of people and events associated with the freedom movement, which for many years he led, sometimes under his nom de guerre, Vytautas. He led a group of anti-Soviet partisans known as "the Forest Brothers", because they lived in underground bunkers, deep in the forests, always hunted by the Russian army. It was a very difficult time for Lithuania and its people, and it was clear throughout that Moscow was in charge. However, Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas is still seen as a national hero, having led his little group against the mighty Soviet Union. The only way to show defiance to the Soviet forces in occupation was by joining a partisan group, so it comes as no surprise that Rasa Juknevičienė is a modern-day admirer of his principled stand against the Soviet occupation that followed the Second World War.

## Some countries never change

It would appear that Vladimir Putin's ultimate aim is the subjugation and occupation of Ukraine, just as his country occupied Lithuania after the War. He apparently believes it's really part of Russia and should not have an independent existence. Standing up to Moscow is only a little easier now than it was in the 1940s. A fairly large number of Lithuania's partisan heroes have been commemorated with statues, or by having streets or schools named after them. Quarter of a century ago few people had even heard of Jonas Žemaitis, even among native Lithuanians. In fact, his heroism is debatable; it is the triumphalist war stories that create legends, not always justly.

Jonas Žemaitis has been described as pompous with an inflated ego

Finally, Europe is waking up to its moral obligation to fully evaluate, recognise, and condemn Soviet crimes.

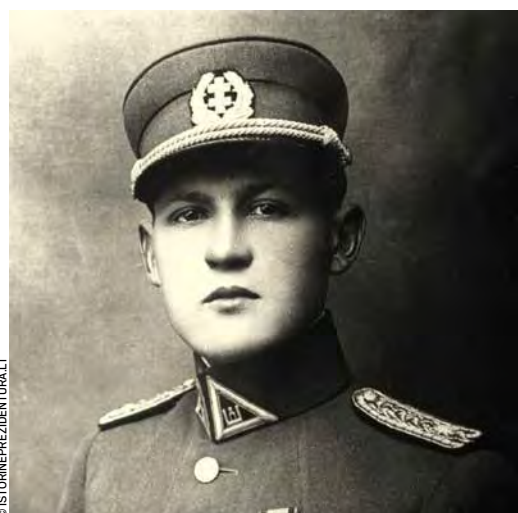
Rasa JUKNEVIČIENĖ  
MEP



when he became an officer. He also became involved in street-fighting, which hardly seems very heroic. He may also have been one of a group of deserters who surrendered himself to the Germans, but that's not something that Lithuanian patriots like to talk about. And it may not even be correct, of course. It's also true to say that even if people like Žemaitis-Vytautas were not the flawless heroes the stories like to convey and even if he swore undying allegiance to Adolf Hitler when he joined the Auxiliary Police Service Battalion, in the end his service to his country and its independence was valuable, which is presumably why he still has the admiration of Juknevičienė, who would clearly never have aligned herself with the Nazis.

Neither, of course, would she ever align herself with Putin and his acquisitive greed and cruelty. She made that clear in a speech at the European Parliament in January, when members debated setting up a special tribunal to deal with war crimes in Russia's continuing aggression towards Ukraine. "The European Parliament will adopt the right and necessary resolution on a special tribunal for Kremlin crimes of aggression," she told her Parliamentary colleagues. "But will there be enough courageous heads of state who will establish such a tribunal without delay? Let us hope so." That's a fairly widespread hope, but she knows it's not universal. "We have shown incredible unity," she said, "but every time the Russians hit the Ukrainian people's homes with horrific missiles, I feel guilty that we are not doing enough. We need to overcome our own fears and act with much more determination. Are we so weak that we cannot allocate enough weapons and resources and make the terrorists in the Kremlin stop? No, we are not weak. Let us do everything we can." It remains to be seen if her hopes will be realised.

Juknevičienė is also very angry with the President of Belarus, who is certainly on Putin's side in the conflict, even if his country is (thankfully) not doing much about it. Juknevičienė has made it clear that Lukashenko should not be in a position of power.



Jonas Žemaitis



The company commander of the Belarusian "Kastus Kalinoŭski battalion Pavel "Volat" who died in the war in Ukraine in May 2022

In a debate at the European Parliament about Ukraine in January 2023, she reminded her fellow-MEPs: "there is the war criminal and usurper Lukashenko, and there are the people of Belarus on the other side." Juknevičienė reminded MEPs that a majority of the citizens of Belarus don't agree with their President and are consequently paying the price for it. "Thousands of them are imprisoned; most of them are silenced in captivity, but it will not always be like this. Belarus will be free because Ukraine will win. That is why the Kastus Kalinoŭski Regiment (made up of Belarusian volunteers opposed to their country's government and to Vladimir Putin) is fighting on the Ukrainian front against Russia, and that is why Belarusia's President-elect Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and other leaders of the Belarusian people are working actively through diplomatic means. Many Belarusians – perhaps a majority – believe she won the 2020 election but it was rigged and she was unable to take office. Since she cannot take that post, she now fulfils the rôle of "National Leader", supported by a United Transitional Cabinet, representing Belarus in international organisations. Tsikhanouskaya, who is a teacher in Belarusia, is the leader of the Belarusian democratic movement. She ran in the 2020 Belarusian presidential election as the main opposition candidate after her husband Sergei Tikhanovsky was arrested in Hrodna by Belarusian authorities. He remains behind bars, regarded by Lukashenko as an enemy to his rule through his video blogs on YouTube, and also his long-term campaigning against Lukashenko's very questionable rule. Amnesty International, however, regards him as a "prisoner of conscience". It's worth reminding ourselves that the Kastus Kalinoŭski Regiment, formerly known as the Kastus Kalinoŭski Battalion, is made up of Belarusian opposition volunteers, formed to defend Ukraine and repel Russia's



Belorussian President Alexander Lukashenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin

invasion. By March 2022, it was claimed that more than a thousand Belarusians had applied to join. The unit is named after Konstanty Kalinowski, a Polish-Belarusian historical hero who led an uprising against the Russian (Tsarist) empire in Belarus in 1863.

Juknevičienė remains convinced that Ukraine will ultimately win, and she wants the European Parliament to be ready to deal with the consequences. “Both war criminals, Putin and Lukashenko, will be convicted in a special tribunal,” she told the House. “I believe that in my lifetime, Belarus, a nation with an honourable European history, will become part of the EU family. However, before that, Lukashenko and Putin have to be completely isolated and the EU has to continue to support the democratically elected leaders of Belarus, who are the real representatives of the people of Belarus.”

## Heroes and villains

Back in March last year, the battalion’s deputy commander, Aliaksiej Skoblis, known by his *nom de guerre*, “Tur”, was killed when his unit was ambushed while attempting to defend Kyiv. In April 2022, Ukraine’s President, Volodymyr Zelensky awarded Skoblis the posthumous title ‘Hero of Ukraine’, “for personal courage and heroism in defending the state sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, loyalty to the military oath.” Zelensky and the Ukrainian people are aware of the courage shown by volunteers from other countries, who are determined to resist Putin’s aim to conquer neighbouring lands. Incidentally, Ukraine is far from being Juknevičienė’s sole concern. She is also one of the leading signatories of a motion condemning Iran’s barbaric treatment of its own citizens unless they support the country’s brutal leadership. Unsurprisingly, Juknevičienė is very outspoken about the cruelty of the Iranian government and its inclination to punish anyone not agreeing with its support for the brutal treatment of opponents and willingness to use the death penalty. In fact, Iran has the world’s highest per capita rate for executing its citizens, despite that line in the Qur’an (2:191-193) which states plainly that: “Allah is forgiving and merciful”. The Iranian courts are certainly not. But perhaps we should recall that the verse immediately preceding the reference to forgiveness and mercy urges Muslims to treat unbelievers rather severely: “Kill them wherever you find them,” says the Qur’an. The Iranian courts seem to follow that instruction quite strictly.

At present, of course, Juknevičienė is most concerned with Russia’s unwarranted and irresponsible war in Ukraine, which Putin seems to believe should belong to him. Much of her wrath is also directed at Lukashenko, too. In a debate at the European Parliament, Juknevičienė reminded the House that: “Lukashenko and Putin are holding the Belarusian nation captive and terrorised.” She went on to condemn the Belarusian leader for his apparent ambivalence about Ukraine. “Lukashenko



Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya

is responsible not only for stealing the elections,” she told the House, “But also for giving Belarus’s sovereignty away to Russia. Lukashenko and the Iranian regime are helping Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine. They are responsible for the war crimes. They must be sanctioned and face justice in an international tribunal.” She told her fellow-MEPs that “Lukashenko feels vulnerable and scared. He would have opened a second front against Ukraine, but he knows the true will of the Belarusian people – they are against the Russian aggression, they seek to be good neighbours for Ukrainians. The Kastus Kalinoŭski Regiment in Ukraine, formed of Belarusian volunteers, is the true expression of that will.” Slava Ukraini, in other words. It means “Glory to Ukraine”.

The problem usually is that leaders who find themselves with their backs to the wall can sometimes resort to violence because they can see no other way out. It’s certainly not fun for the Belarusians either, Juknevičienė told the House. “There are nearly 1,500 political prisoners of Lukashenko’s regime. The number is growing. I invite each one of you to become a godparent to one of the political prisoners. Your postcards, your telephone call to their family will be a precious signal of support.

Let’s make sure not one of them is forgotten.” It sounds like a very good idea, but then Juknevičienė is seldom short of those. And there is hope, she stated. “I also invite the European Parliament to formalise relations with a democratic Belarus, led by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. Free and democratic Belarus is possible, but we have to help Ukraine to win this war. Ukraine’s victory will bring victory for free Belarus and free Russia. Let’s do our utmost to achieve this victory.” There’s no doubt that Juknevičienė is nothing if not ambitious and eager to deal with cruel dictators as they deserve.



Rasa Juknevičienė during an OSCE Election Observation Mission to Georgia in 2018



## Holding criminals to account

In speeches she has given at the European Parliament, Juknevičienė has described both Putin and Lukashenko as war criminals and Lukashenko as someone who is “holding the Belarusian nation captive and terrorised”. She has also questioned their political legitimacy. “Lukashenko is responsible not only for stealing the elections, but also for giving Belarus sovereignty away to Russia.” Belarus and its leader are not alone in their actions against the people of Ukraine through their support for Russia, even if many Belarusians don’t agree with their leader. Juknevičienė has also linked Lukashenko with Iran. “Lukashenko and the Iranian regime are helping Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine. They are responsible for the war crimes. They must be sanctioned and face justice in an international tribunal.” She may have a long wait for that.

She is unlikely to move the Iranian government from its fixed and brutal position, apparently keen to retain its record for executing the greatest number of citizens. She is concerned about Georgia, too, which has expressed a wish to join the EU but which recently jailed a television journalist and media owner who had been critical of the government and clearly supported the opposition. In today’s interconnected world it would be easy to think that such politically motivated actions were matters from the past. They are not, it seems. “Georgia is Europe,” Juknevičienė tweeted, “But Georgia’s European path is put in question due to politicised justice in the country”. Juknevičienė is in favour of Georgia’s EU membership, but not at any price. The resolution on Georgia joining has been amended, but she still fears Russian influence.

“First of all, we have to look at the full content of the resolution, because it has a lot of positive notes saying that we are in favour of the future of Georgia,” Juknevičienė said when commenting on the annual report on the implementation of Georgia’s Association Agreement. She said the MEPs supported having Georgia inside the European Union and also the country being granted candidate status. “The resolution was strengthened with amendments, among them were important (concerns) about Bidzina Ivanishvili’s possible ties with Russia and asking for the institutions to elaborate on that and if



Bidzina Ivanishvili



Rasa Juknevičienė during an EPP Helsinki Congress in Finland in 2018

it is like that to impose sanctions not only on him but also on his closest surroundings (allies).” Georgian politician Ivanishvili is a businessman and philanthropist who was his country’s Prime Minister from October 2012 to November 2013, returning home from Russia in 2003, having made a fortune out of the privatisation craze. Some Georgians want to see the future develop in a pro-Western direction (presumably Ivanishvili does), while others – such as Putin and Lukashenko, of course – want to freeze it in its tracks.

Lukashenko has also adopted a worrying tactic to his anti-Lithuanian stance. He seems to be deliberately ferrying refugees into Lithuania in the hope of stressing the economy and arousing animosity towards the newcomers. Juknevičienė has warned that the migrants are being leveraged as a hybrid warfare tool in an effort to incite chaos, get revenge and turn the Lithuanian people against their government. “I am convinced that it is essential for Lithuania to currently maintain a strong value-based policy,” she said, “one that would have a clear final strategic goal for our neighbours to be democratic.” There have already been negative reactions to the influx of migrants, brought in from Turkey, Iraq and other countries, presumably willingly, with some local mayors condemning government policy. Juknevičienė and others believe the policy was thought up by Putin before it was implemented by Lukashenko. Links have been identified between the migrant policy now affecting Lithuania and France’s far right. Hitler may have been defeated but there are still a lot of people – far too many, one could say – who would like to implement his much-derided policies again and are happy to use migrants as a weapon of policy, having chosen not to view them as individuals with rights and opinions of their own.

Juknevičienė wants the EU to develop a clear vision for its security, she told *The Parliament Magazine*. Certainly, her political career has taken her a long way, but she says she most enjoys being in her home town of Tiltagaliai, near Panevėžys, where she looks after her mother and spends time with her family. She also enjoys gardening and reading when she has time. *The Parliament Magazine* asked her what single item she would save if her house caught fire. The answer was her very beautiful white cat, Princess. I don’t blame her. At least cats are unaffected by policy decisions and political machinations. But the risks won’t melt away. As Khlevniak wrote in his biography of Stalin: “A significant portion of Russian society seeks recipes for the present by looking to the Stalinist past. Popular images of the greatness of the Stalinist empire – of equality and the fight against corruption, of the joy and purity of this distant life undone by ‘enemies’ – are exploited by unscrupulous commentators and politicians. How great is the danger that a blend of historical ignorance, bitterness, and social discontent will provide fertile ground for pro-Stalinist lies and distortions to take root”. Juknevičienė is determined that they won’t take root in Lithuania to turn back the clock to a blood-soaked past, nor anywhere in or near the EU. With the right support, she may well succeed.

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Maasai giraffe, the tallest animal in Kenya at the Nairobi National Park with Nairobi, Kenya in the background

# THE FUTURE OF AFRICA

**A work in progress**



Africa, the land of incredible sunsets and magnificent wild landscapes has occupied a unique place in human history, often being considered the 'cradle of humanity'. Africa is where the oldest evidence of the existence of Homo sapiens was discovered. Africa is also the second largest and second most populous continent in the world. It covers about one-fifth of the Earth's surface and has a population of nearly 1.4 billion people. In comparison, Africa is 2.97 times larger than Europe. According to the United Nations, there are 54 countries in Africa today. Algeria is the largest African country by area (although about 90 percent of it is desert) and the tenth largest country in the world.

The reality is that Africa is a resource-rich area. Gold, diamonds, oil, gas, copper, uranium - almost every country in Africa has a deposit of natural resources. Since ancient times, all this has attracted various peoples like a magnet. Greeks, Romans and Arabs founded colonies on the African continent, some of which lasted for centuries. Later, 'modern colonisation' led by Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and Italy shaped the face and fate of Africa. In almost all African countries today, the official language of government is the language imposed by a colonial power, although most people also speak their native African language.

Cape Town in South Africa is officially the oldest modern city founded by Europeans in Africa (founded by the Dutch East India Company in 1652). At first, the major European maritime powers (Britain, France, Spain, and Portugal) quickly claimed large coastal areas of the continent, controlling mainly the Mediterranean coast and the far south, but did not venture deep into the interior. That came later. In 1885, at the Berlin Conference, initiated by Otto von Bismarck, the European



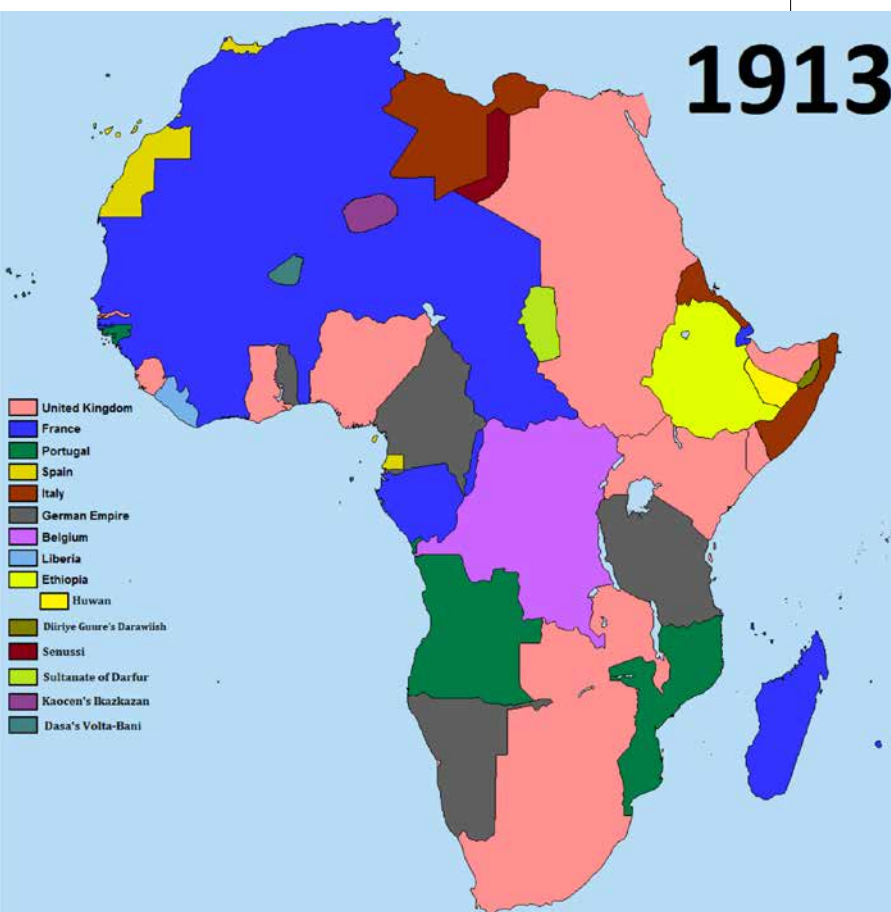
Bust of Leopold II, King of the Belgians and sovereign / owner of the "Congo Free State". Foreground: Tusks of elephants hunted in the "Congo Free State"

powers decided to establish some international guidelines to avoid possible violent conflicts between them regarding Africa. It was this 'new imperialism' that enabled them to penetrate the interior of the country.

By 1913, almost all of Africa had been colonised and extensively exploited for European prosperity. The two countries that owned the most land on the African continent were France and Britain. The French, the Portuguese, the Germans and the Belgians ruled the colonies in a very centralised way, while the British controlled their territories by forcing local rulers to administer them for the benefit of the British. Belgian King Leopold II designated the Congo as his private colony (Congo Free State), which he brutally acquired and then barbarically administered, much to the indignation of the other European powers, who eventually forced him to relinquish control of the colony to the Belgian Parliament in 1908. It was estimated that forced labour, torture, harsh punishments and killings led directly or indirectly to the death of 50% of the local population.

During his official visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2022, King Philippe of Belgium apologised for these atrocities: "I wish to reaffirm my deepest regrets for those wounds of the past". During the colonisation period, Africa was an important source of raw materials for European factories. Europe's technical superiority enabled rapid conquest and total control. But raw materials and natural resources were not the only focus in Africa. The continent was largely exploited and robbed of its human resources, which proved to be at least as valuable.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese were the first to buy slaves from West Africa and transport them across the Atlantic. Other Europeans soon followed and traded in humans as a simple commodity. As part of the Euro-American





**Ferreira's Gold Mine in 1886. The mine was named after Colonel Ignatius Ferreira who was a founder of Johannesburg. The mine is an extension of the Main Reef**

slave trade, enslaved Africans were transported mainly to America, where they worked on the large cotton and sugar cane plantations. The vast majority of people sold as slaves by the Europeans came from Central and West Africa. Current estimates suggest that more than 12 million Africans were shipped across the Atlantic for over 400 years, with Portugal, Britain, Spain, France, the Netherlands and Denmark being the 'masters' of this trade.

The loss of life and the atrocities inspired a wealth of literature on the subject. Slavery was abolished in the late 1800s, but regardless, the Allies used African labour and soldiers extensively on the battlefields during the two world wars. After World War II, thanks to a growing independence movement, a gradual decolonisation of Africa began, leading to the liberation of most of the continent by 1980. However, in some areas, especially South Africa, many people of European origin still live. The United Kingdom tries to maintain its influence over the former African colonies through the Commonwealth (a political union of 56 member states, most of which are former territories of the British Empire). Today, 19 African countries are part of the Commonwealth, including some with no former colonial or constitutional ties to the UK (such as Rwanda or Mozambique).

Africa has about 40% of the world's gold reserves and about 90% of its chromium and platinum deposits. It also has the world's largest reserves of cobalt, diamonds and uranium. 65% of the world's arable land and 10% of the planet's internal, renewable freshwater resources are in Africa.

But why is the most resource-rich continent today nevertheless the poorest on earth? Per capita income in African countries is among the lowest in the world. According to estimates, about half of the people in sub-Saharan Africa live below the poverty line, with women and children being the hardest hit. Internal conflicts,

terrorism, undemocratic governments, poor education, low economic growth rates and poor access to finance could be some of the causes.

The literacy rate in Africa is lower than on any other continent. Without knowledge, there can be no progress. 90% of people in Africa live in informal shelters, most of which lack basic human needs such as food, sanitation or clean water. The lack of proper hygiene leads to the transmission of diseases and the outbreak of epidemics.

The continent is largely characterised by high levels of poverty and inequality, strong patriarchal societies with low transparency, accountability and security, and high unemployment. Climate change also poses a major threat to Africa, as the continent is particularly vulnerable due to its weak adaptive capacity, heavy dependence on ecosystems for livelihoods and outdated agricultural systems. In fact, Africa is currently warming faster than the rest of the world and large parts of the continent are predicted to become uninhabitable by 2050.

All these factors mean that Africans remain poor. But there are some countries that are doing better than others. Economic growth in Africa varies from country to country and from region to region. It is the result of historical circumstances, cultural differences and access to resources, but also international traditional ties and relationships.

Today, Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa together generate about 60% of Africa's GDP.

Nigeria is the wealthiest country in Africa and the continent's largest producer in terms of GDP. In addition to its vast oil reserves, it also has significant reserves of coal, limestone, zinc, lead, natural gas and iron.

Nigeria is a major agricultural producer and a large source of natural rubber and cocoa. Its GDP has grown by 2 to 7% in recent years, partly due to its large population (projected to be nearly 400 million by 2043, making it the third most populous country in the world), which provides a large consumer market and supports the move towards a modern, technologised and digital society.

The country's rapidly expanding IT sector contributed to Nigeria's rise as one of Africa's fastest-growing economies. However, recent political turmoil and some socio-economic problems threaten to affect this steady trajectory. It is also



**The floating production storage and offloading (FPSO) Egina Operated by TotalEnergies off the coast of Nigeria**





predicted that Nigeria will soon overtake India in terms of the number of extremely poor people.

Egypt, this ancient territory in North Africa, was for many years considered the richest country in Africa. After the Arab uprising in 2011, the country's economy was hit hard. However, with a GDP of over \$390 billion, the Egyptian economy is now showing signs of stability, with lower unemployment and a move away from predominantly export commodities.

Oil and gas are still engines of growth, as is agriculture, which occupies an important place in the economy. Meanwhile, tourism is one of Egypt's most important sources of income. The thousands of years of history and the rich archaeological finds attract millions of tourists every year.

With a highly developed economy, excellent infrastructure and a GDP of more than USD 320 billion per year, South Africa is now considered one of the fastest developing countries in the world. According to Trading Economics, South Africa is the most developed country in Africa, with the service sector accounting for 73% of GDP.

Compared to most of its neighbours, South Africa does not rely on a single source of revenue. The mining industry (the country is a major exporter of gold, diamonds, platinum, coal and iron), manufacturing, financial services or tourism are all important components of South Africa's economic success. Despite all this, inequality in the country is at an all-time high. Going forward, it is imperative that the country addresses this issue.

The recent economic growth on the continent is largely due to an increase in the sale of goods and services, but also in manufacturing. Despite its social and political problems, Africa is striving to become a world leader in natural resource production and innovation. Many African countries have rapidly developing economies that have the potential to be among the richest in the world. So it is clear why all eyes are on Africa these days. This is where the money of the future is!

Economic activity in Africa is expected to grow by a moderate 2.7% in 2022 and 2.4% in 2023, following a 5.1% increase in 2021 (source: [www.unctad.org](http://www.unctad.org)). Given the current political and economic realities in the world, food and energy shortages, as well as the Ukraine-Russia conflict, all eyes are on Africa as a possible solution. Everyone wants a seat at the table.

Europe's approach has long since changed from being a dominant power to a more subtle form of political and economic influence. China is now a major player in Africa, with quick loans and massive infrastructure projects. The USA is also very important in the region. Russia is also trying to assert its influence, although it tends to be a disruptive factor on the continent. Africa needs the support of the whole world in order to move forward.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set a series of international targets that governments have committed to meet by 2030. As might be expected, they face their greatest challenge in Africa. Some of the key targets, such as eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health, appear to be particularly challenging for most African countries. Without decisive action to accelerate progress, at least 350 million people will live in extreme poverty by 2050 (source: [undp.org](http://undp.org)). *"The economic slowdown is leading to further setbacks in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,"* said Agenda 2063 is Africa's new 50-year development plan. Underlying Agenda 2063 is the recognition by the African political elite that a reorientation of the African agenda is needed to prioritise inclusive social and economic development, continental integration and regional cooperation through democracy and the rule of law, and to make Africa a dominant player on the global stage, capable of taking charge of its own destiny and defending its own interests.



UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan

A longer-term plan is needed because Africa needs to review and adjust its development agenda; it needs deep structural changes, democratic elections (most of Africa is not under democratic leadership today), securing peace on the continent, economic growth and social progress, attention to people and equal opportunities. Africa is a young continent with

immense human potential, but these young people need to be properly educated. Africa should also promote technology, including artificial intelligence, to boost its economic growth.

But despite the bold goals and initiatives, the reality in Africa today is different. Nearly 60% of Africa's low-income countries are heavily indebted, and millions of Africans are falling back into poverty. More than half of African countries remain dependent on external food aid, and food insecurity is likely to worsen in the near future. With higher fertiliser prices and low grain supplies from Ukraine, the situation will become even more difficult, especially in parts of East and West Africa, where drought, as well as ongoing conflicts, are damaging local harvests. As everywhere, prices are rising and this is hitting the most vulnerable and poorest.

The World Bank predicts that annual inflation will exceed 10% in many African countries. Despite unbeatable economic advantages (the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, has 70% of the world's production of cobalt, a rare metal essential for making smartphone batteries), the gap between Africa's GDP and that of the rest of the world is widening.

I was recently invited to a panel discussion on the future of Africa, organised by the ECDPM (European Centre for Development Policy Management) in Brussels. The discussion was moderated by the author of the book 'The Future of Africa', Jakkie Cilliers, a well-known Africa analyst, founder and former director of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS).

He introduced his latest project: a website entitled [futures.issafrica.org](http://futures.issafrica.org), that models possible progress towards the African Union's

Agenda 2063, based on the individual and combined impact of different scenarios on Africa's future. Basically, it presents different scenarios of possible development on the African continent, analysing each of the 54 African states based on different factors and external conditions. Depending on these factors, the forecast turns out to be more optimistic or less optimistic.

The main idea of the discussion was that the future is not fixed and can change radically depending on the international context, and how the great powers of today will act. Unfortunately, in each of the scenarios presented, Africa's GDP will still be significantly lower than the rest of the world.

Scenarios are not predictions. However, if done well, they can reveal structural trends and effects of various policies. Future relations between the US and the EU are crucial for Africa. The same is true for relations between China and the Western world. China is expected to be the leading economic power by the middle of the 21st century, even though the Western economies together will still be stronger. Analysts assume that in the future there will no longer be any great powers, but more regional powers and that the gap between rich and poor will only widen. The possible democratisation of China and Russia will also most likely lead to major disruptions in global stability at some point.

Despite its large population, Africa remains a small global player. Its status has temporarily increased due to various situations such as the East-West competition, the war on terrorism, the increased international demand for oil and gas, or now the war in Ukraine, which has once again shifted the European agenda towards Africa. The continent should take advantage of this dynamic.

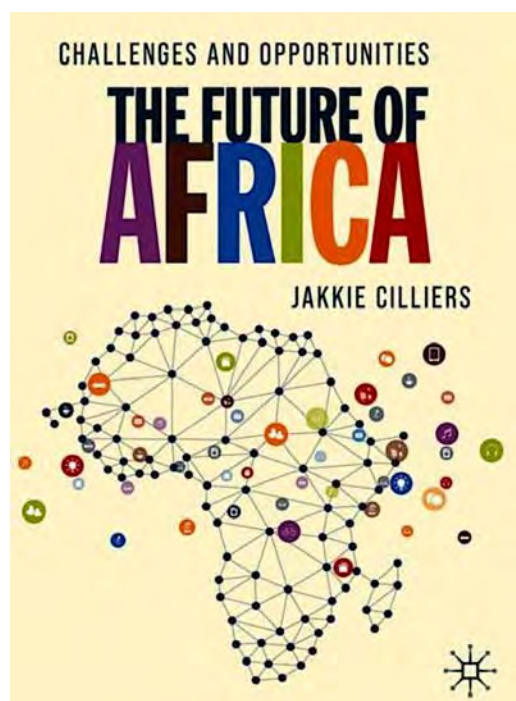
Africa's development depends in part on a more favourable international environment. Globally, economic power is shifting towards Asia. In recent years, Africa has been an area of competition between the West, China, Russia and also Turkey. *"It is more about business than partnership and aid,"* says Jakkie Cilliers.

Among the various scenarios presented, the 'World at War' scenario is the worst, because everyone would have to lose. The 'Growth World' scenario would bring better economic results, but with negative effects on the climate. The 'Sustainable World' scenario maximises Africa's economic potential but is the most difficult to achieve and the most unrealistic.

Major political disasters, such as the implosion of a major power like China, the US, or the EU, or enlargement (in this case of the EU) would accelerate the changes in the different scenarios. Either way, the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement should lead to stronger and more stable cooperation among African economies. Meanwhile, it would also cause the largest increase in greenhouse gas emissions. Although per capita emissions in Africa are relatively low today, this will change as the continent's population grows rapidly and electricity consumption increases.

By 2063, Africa will produce more carbon than the European Union. Only real and effective global cooperation can counter the negative effects of climate change and possible natural disasters. There is now an opportunity for a global reboot and action for Africa's future.

Europe in particular needs to rebuild trust in light of historical events and the way it has treated the African continent in the past. The 79<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2024 is seen as 'the moment to agree on concrete solutions to the challenges'. It is hoped that the







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Coal mine in the Arbor community outside Delmas in Mpumalanga

document will be a 'pact for the future' that will restore trust between states and enable a global push towards the 'sustainable world' scenario.

But for now, the trend is still towards a more divided world, which limits Africa's development opportunities. Determined efforts are needed to rebuild relations between the West and China on the basis of mutual respect and recognition of differences.

Europe should act as a mediator between the US and China. Traditionally, Africa votes with the West (e.g. at the UN), but there are no guarantees for the future. *"Europe can learn a lot from how China implements its own agenda in Africa"*, says Cilliers. He adds that *"Europe should not move away from what has made it a pioneer in soft power"*. Europe should adapt its approach in Africa, making it more flexible and project-oriented. Moreover, investments on the continent should always be based on local needs. Basic infrastructure should be a priority. The Mediterranean is compared to a 'great highway' between advanced Europe and Africa.

One idea that supports Africa's development is that the continent should consider a two-speed approach, with some countries committing to high standards earlier than the rest. Agriculture should be the focus for at least the next 10 years, as it is the closest source of GDP growth. Africa needs an



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Africa analyst, Jakkie Cilliers

agricultural revolution. It can also largely benefit from the African Free Trade Area, which would also help the smaller countries on the continent. The EU could set a good example here. Stronger, more efficient continental institutions that support and uphold Africa's aspirations and values, as well as coordinated positions among African leaders on key issues, would only benefit everyone. Strengthening Africa's own investment and financing models, with external support where necessary, would enhance the continent's development.

Labour, capital and technology are the three key factors for growth. Africa has labour in abundance, but it needs to be better trained. The continent also desperately needs investment, which should be targeted at projects because of the high risk of corruption. In addition to US efforts under the 'Build Back Better World' programme, the EU's 'Global Gateway' and the G7's 'Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment', analysts say more substantial financial support is needed, similar to the Marshall Plan that rebuilt Europe from the ruins after WW II.

Africa needs strong institutions, more and better education and must also address climate change, which is one of the main causes of migration and the huge exodus of people. Migration will then be an even more important item on the international agenda, especially as Africa will have a population increase of 1.5 billion people.

Prosperity in the region will not come anytime soon, no matter how optimistic we may be. Yet geopolitical stability is key to Africa's prosperous future. The continent's future depends on the inclusion of all factors. Africa's future is being written today.

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## MULTIPURPOSE AERIAL SURVEILLANCE

**In 2022, Frontex planes supported the rescue of 24 000 people**





Migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea are rescued by a Belgian ship

## How search and rescue works

Every year, smugglers send hundreds of thousands of people on treacherous journeys across the sea to reach the European Union. They cram people into unsafe boats with hardly any life vests, food, water, or fuel, with little concern for their safety.

This is why it is crucial to spot people in distress at sea before it is too late. Frontex aerial surveillance plays a vital role in this. Just last year, Frontex planes monitoring the Mediterranean Sea supported the rescue of 24 000 people.

Frontex planes and drones patrol selected areas beyond the EU external borders as part of the agency's multipurpose aerial surveillance (MAS). The goal is to better understand what is happening and establish an early warning mechanism. If any of the Frontex planes or ships see a boat in need of assistance, the agency informs the national authority responsible for the rescue activities in the area and follows its instructions in line with international maritime law.

### Search and Rescue regions explained

The world's seas and oceans are divided into areas of responsibilities, with each assigned to a national maritime rescue coordination centre. In these centres, national coast guard receives information about emergencies in their rescue zone and coordinate the rescue. This is part the International SAR plan established in 1979 that aims to make sure that there is always a maritime coordination centre responsible for any rescue operation. In the Central Mediterranean Sea, the rescue zones are divided between Italy, Malta, Libya, and Tunisia. It is the responsibility of anyone who discovers or learns about an emergency at sea to immediately alert the rescue centre responsible for that area. Neighbouring rescue centres are also notified about the boat in distress.

### How it works

Frontex planes frequently encounter overcrowded boats in peril within the internationally recognised Libyan Search and Rescue (SAR) Region. In accordance with international law, search and rescue operations are always coordinated by the national rescue centres. While the agency does not cooperate with Libyan authorities in any capacity, it is obliged by the law to inform the country's rescue coordination centre (RCC) of any boat in distress within their SAR zone.

Every time a Frontex plane comes across a boat in distress, it immediately alerts all the neighbouring RCCs: Italy, Malta and Tunisia to potentially speed up the rescue operation and improve the coordination. Other actors in the area, including commercial ships and NGOs, follow the same protocol.

Locating a small boat in the middle of the sea is a daunting task, which is why once a Frontex plane comes across one, it remains vigilant and continues monitoring the area until rescue arrives or until the

plane is forced to leave because of low fuel. All this time, it remains in contact with the rescue coordination centres to update them on the boat's location. This is especially important because people smugglers often orchestrate simultaneous departures, leaving other boats in need of help nearby.

Based on information provided by Frontex, the relevant rescue centre - usually the nearest one- initiates a rescue operation. Frontex shares the boat's location, its condition, estimated number of persons aboard, any navigation and communication equipment, along with the weather and sea conditions in the area.

The rescue centre dispatches boats that are either the closest to the scene or best equipped to do the job. These may include national specialised coast guard, commercial, military, or private vessels, as well as those deployed by Frontex. Throughout the rescue operation, the coordinating rescue centre stays in constant contact with boats and aircraft involved.

### Mayday relay

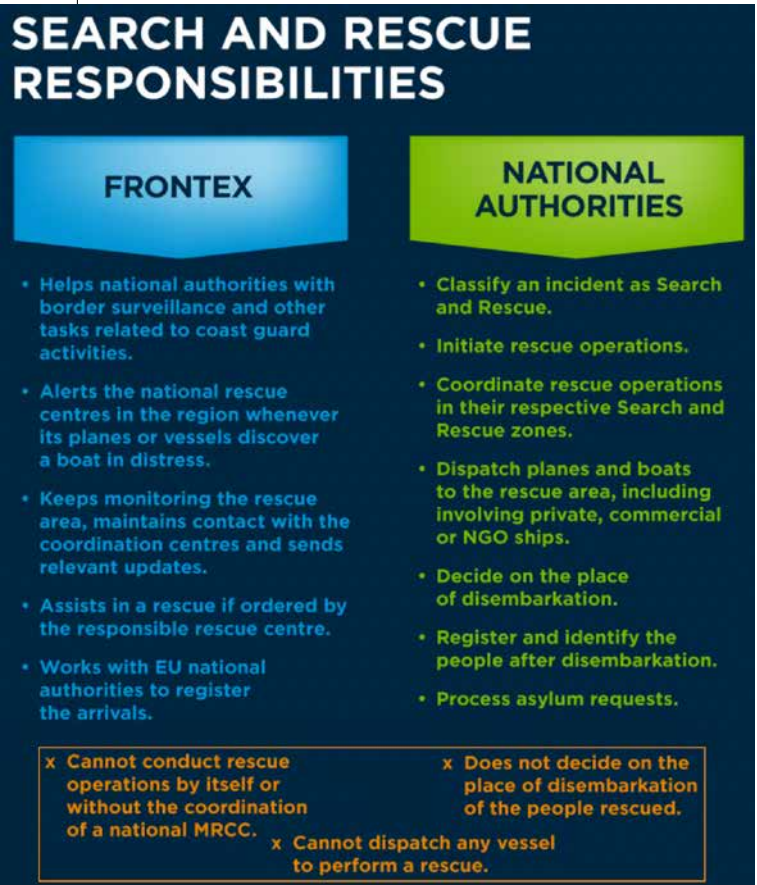
The Central Mediterranean Sea region has an estimated area of approximately 500,000 square kilometres, making it roughly equivalent in size to countries like France or Spain. This makes discovering a boat the size of a van or a small bus in the vast sea extremely difficult and puts a premium on the time for a rescue vessel to reach it.

In an emergency, where lives are at stake, Frontex issues a mayday call to alert all vessels nearby of the imminent danger.

Based on international law, a mayday relay can be triggered by any aircraft or boat witnessing an emergency when the boat is adrift, when there is fire on board, when the boat is sinking or when people are in the water.

Any misuse of a mayday call, especially amid ongoing rescue operations elsewhere in the area, could create dangerous confusion and jeopardise more lives.

Source : Frontex





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## 6 MONTHS OF DYNAMIC TESTING IN THE CZECH

The new generation high speed train TGV M to join the French railway network soon for additional testing at 320 Km/h in spring 2023





Since December 7, 2022, the first TGV M test train, from Alstom's Avelia Horizon range, has been at the Velim test site in the Czech Republic. This test campaign will last almost 6 months and is part of a long series of tests for this new generation of High Speed Trains.

## Decisive test campaigns for the admission of the train and its reliability

The TGV M test programme consists of the following phases:

### 1. Static and quasi-static testing:

Each piece of equipment on the train was first assessed separately to validate its own performance and service life. Then, once assembled, the test train was tested at Alstom's Bellevue site (in France) at a standstill and then at a speed not exceeding 30 km/h. The operation of all the equipment integrated into the train was checked, as were the interactions of this equipment with each other.

### 2. Pre-validation testing:

The pre-validation tests are first conducted on the Velim site. This is a closed circuit where traffic is less constrained than on the national railway networks and, above all, there is no interaction with commercial traffic. The objectives here are to validate the overall operation of the train, to remove the risks that appeared during the design phase in relation to the regulatory requirements and to adjust the digital modelling accordingly. This phase takes place at speeds of up to 200 km/h.

On the basis of this sequence, the tests will then continue with traffic on the French national network. The overall operation of the train will be tested up to 320 km/h.

### 3. Admission tests:

They consist of testing the operation by reproducing the configurations and contexts that the train may encounter throughout his entire life (degraded modes, weather conditions, obstacles on the network, etc.). They will be carried out on the French national network, with traffic up to 320 km/h by an accredited organisation. The admission tests will make it possible to obtain the Commercial Service Authorisation issued by the ERA (European Railways Agency).

### 4. Endurance tests:

Over a long period prior to commercial operation, several trainsets will run throughout the French national network to test the reliability



of the train under real operating conditions. All functions will be tested, in particular those relating to passenger comfort. These tests will also be an opportunity for SNCF Voyageurs drivers and conductors to familiarise themselves with this new train and its innovations.

At the end of all these tests, the TGV M will have benefited from a total of 350 weeks of testing and will have covered more than a million kilometres before the first customer experiences the high-speed train of tomorrow.

The Velim test site, equipped with high-performance infrastructure, consists of a ring where rolling stock can run at up to 200km/h. On arrival at Velim, the TGV M began its tests and a gradual increase in speed to 200km/h was successfully achieved in less than a week. A very short time, well under the forecasts. Once this stage was over, the first phases of functional development tests began: braking without load and under load, pantograph tests, signalling tests (communication between the train and the ground infrastructure), etc.

Still in progress, this key sequence aims to ensure compliance with the safety requirements for railway operations and to submit the Request for Authorisation to Run a Test Train on the French National Railway Network (RARTT).

This test campaign also allows SNCF Voyageurs drivers to take charge of the train and discover their working environment. The driver's cab was carefully designed with the support of SNCF drivers to ensure that it meets their needs in terms of comfort, space and ergonomics.

## Next steps

### Climatic tests in Vienna in early March

Another power car dedicated to climatic tests will leave the Alstom site of La Rochelle in mid-February for the test site in Vienna, Austria.

These tests are crucial in the current context of global warming/disruption. The aim is to evaluate energy efficiency. Indeed, the creation of optimal thermal comfort inside a vehicle leads to high energy consumption by auxiliary systems (ventilation, air conditioning).



From the beginning of March, tests in a climatic chamber will begin on site. They will be conducted over a temperature range of -20°C to +40°C. The programme includes:

- Simulation of sunshine up to 800 W/m<sup>2</sup>
- Wind simulation up to 160 km/h
- Tests of heating, air conditioning, insulation of the undercarriage as well as the driver's cab and passenger cars.

Not only is this part of the train qualification process, but it will actively contribute to the planned 20% reduction in energy consumption of the TGV M.

### Tests on the National French Railway Network in Spring

Thanks to the success of these various steps, the tests will be able to begin on the French National Railway Network: the train will be tested at 320km/h in Spring 2023.

## Higher capacity, more ecological, better connectivity, better accessibility

115 units have been ordered to date (100 domestic and 15 international trainsets). The TGV M will be used for both the INOUI and OUIGO TGV services and is characterised by major innovations:

- Unprecedented modularity, which makes it possible to adjust the number of cars as closely as possible to market needs (7, 8 or 9), to rapidly transform a 1st class space into a 2nd class space and vice versa, to reconfigure the interior by removing or adding seats, bicycle or luggage spaces, etc.
- A 20% increase in on-board space, i.e. a possible offer of up to 740 seats compared to the current maximum of 634.
- Ultra-competitive energy efficiency and carbon footprint per passenger: the TGV M's carbon footprint is the lowest on the market and 97% of the train's components are recyclable. With a 32% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the TGV M is fully in line with the SNCF Group's environmental commitments, as set out in the SNCF Voyageurs "Planète Voyages" programme, which aims to reduce the carbon footprint and energy consumption of all its activities.
- Access to evolving connected services that meet passengers' needs, such as on-board Wi-Fi, as well as complete information in real time in the different areas of the train.
- A highly "communicating" train set whose sensors continuously transmit thousands of pieces of data enabling the train to be examined in real time from every angle to optimise maintenance and availability,
- Increased accessibility on board, for the benefit of all passengers.

TGV M, a project supported by the French government through ADEME and the 'Secrétariat Général Pour l'Investissement' (SGPI), with the first train sets scheduled to enter commercial service at the end of 2024, has benefited from the knowledge of Alstom's top experts and SNCF Voyageurs' Matériel and TGV-INTERCITES departments, brought together on a common platform.



© ALSTOM

## The TGV M

More capacity, more ecological, more connected, more accessible...

- Unprecedented modularity, which makes it possible to adjust the number of cars as closely as possible to the market's needs (7, 8 or 9), to quickly transform a 1st class space into a 2nd class space and vice versa, to reconfigure the interior by removing or adding seats, bicycle or luggage spaces, etc.
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A Ukrainian oil depot hit by a Russian missile

**NOTHING  
MUCH TO  
CELEBRATE**

**Anniversaries – birthdays  
– are normally celebrated  
with parties, fancy food and  
alcoholic drinks. Not this one.**



"We in the European Parliament, across party lines, stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and their courageous fight against this war of aggression, totally unjustified, started by the Russian Federation," said David McAllister as the first speaker in a seminar designed to mark one year since Vladimir Putin sent his forces, without any provocation, into a sovereign country in an act of out-and-out invasion. He has always said – and still does – that it's not a war his troops are waging (however much it may look like one), it is instead a "special military operation". However, it involves soldiers using powerful weapons to destroy cities, flatten people's homes and kill unarmed civilians. So it looks very much like a war. "This is not only a war of aggression, totally unjustified and illegally started by the Russian Federation," McAllister continued, "This is a very, very sad anniversary." In case anyone needed reminding, he also said this is not only a war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. "The European Parliament has supported all the activities of the Member States and the Commission in supporting Ukraine," McAllister said, also pointing out that MEPs are pressing the Commission to open accession negotiations for Ukraine this year. This is clearly not, nor ever was, Vladimir Putin's intention when he launched this vicious, destructive war. Indeed, his motivation remains obscure, unless it is purely self-love and concomitant self-delusion. If so, he would seem to have sacrificed the lives of thousands of young Russians on the altar of his overweening ambition and self-absorption. McAllister repeated his group's call for a special tribunal to be set up to try Putin's minions and his military leadership, "And also we call for a full set of sanctions against all companies and individuals that are still trading with Russia."

Putin had claimed – falsely and without any supporting evidence – that his aim was to fight Naziism, on the untrue basis that Ukraine was a Nazi and antisemitic country. As the New York Times put it recently, "He has characterised the war in Ukraine as a fight against Nazis' who are backed by the West." He also claimed that it's a kind of 'holy war' for 'Russia's very identity', arguing that the country was,



© OLAF KOZINSKY / KOZINSKY.EU

MEP David McAllister

in the words of the New York Times, "fighting to prevent liberal gender norms and acceptance of homosexuality from being forced upon it by an aggressive West." As for ending this war, "Peace will come with Ukraine's victory," said Nathalie Loiseau, the French MEP who chairs the Parliament's Sub-Committee on Security and Defence (SEDE). A member of the RENEW political group, she was participating in the Strasbourg seminar. "There is no alternative," she said, "for Ukraine to recover its sovereignty, its territorial integrity."

Territorial integrity is not the only source of concern in Putin's ever-more-conservative Russia. To put some meat in his spurious claim that the West is seeking to undermine what it means to be "Russian", Putin's tame and obedient parliament has introduced laws intended to make life tougher for those not complying with his idea of what being a Russian means. For example, a young man who calls himself Danya is emigrating to France because newly-passed laws ban "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations" – and Danya makes a living from a drag act. He couldn't afford the huge fines his work could bring him. He told a Western journalist that he is now very frightened and that the concomitant 400,000 rouble (over €5,325) fine would be beyond his reach. He also said that living in a country where it's illegal "just to be yourself" makes him very afraid.

The progression of Communism as a political ideal was always slow and irregular. Many of its famous faces met untimely ends, like Leon Trotsky, a brilliant Marxist thinker who split with Lenin in a bitter, long-lasting dispute, although they healed the rift in 1917, only to be murdered later, on Stalin's orders. When he was living a life that he found embarrassingly luxurious in a dacha in Gorki (probably too large and luxurious to qualify as a normal dacha), that was not far from Moscow, Lenin had a staff of four bodyguards on permanent duty, plus three domestic staff. Among them, cooking for him and Nadya, was Spiridon Putin, whose grandson, Vladimir, would one day come to rule Russia. It's not clear if Lenin would have approved of that grandfather's politics (which probably mirrored his own) although he may not have had much objection to the grandson's methods, however unpopular.

## I Donations can vary

"Right now, more than €3-billion have been dedicated to sending military equipment to Ukraine," Nathalie Loiseau told the seminar, "and the European Union is committed to go further." Some of the financial costs are being met from surprising sources, too. According to journalist Will Lockett, writing for the Medium website.

He says that examining the sources will throw up some surprises. Ukraine has made itself open to donations of crypto currencies, which allows totally anonymous donations to be made. Not all those donations are being spent on military hardware; quite a lot is going to Ukrainian citizens in need of humanitarian aid. Such donations are supposed to be largely anonymous and untraceable, but in reality they seldom are. Putin is, of course, famously brutal towards his dissidents, which encourages those who have money to spare to send it Ukraine's way. Ukraine has received more than 100,000 individual crypto donations, with sums ranging from a few dollars to billions. Some of the money was sent from Russia. "Some Russians were donating to us significant sums," said Alex Bornyakov, a deputy minister in the Ukrainian government. The same article mentions data from UK intelligence, suggesting that many Russians are growing tired of Putin. Mothers are noting, of course, that conscripted sons aren't coming home, while adolescents have been fleeing to Kazakhstan to dodge the draft.

This does not mean, however, that Russia aims to end this war any



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US High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (Himars)

time soon. Arguments inside the Kremlin are not over whether to persecute or simply end the war. They're about how best to take it forward. A minority that doesn't support Putin's imperialism won't bring the fighting to an end, although it may plant a small seed of opposition that may possibly grow. Eventually. "Our message from the European Parliament to the Member States," said Loiseau, "is that they should decide faster and without hesitation on their military support for Ukraine, because the current situation is a difficult situation. Every delay costs human lives in Ukraine." It's a sobering observation. But could the EU – especially the European Parliament – do more? "Europe is defending our common values," said Vsevolod Chentsov, the Ukrainian diplomat who heads the Mission of Ukraine to the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community. "This is a fight for democracy, and yes: Ukraine is bearing the highest cost. We must ready ourselves to withstand another type of Russian aggression, of Russian attack, on the east of Ukraine." Chentsov also reminded those taking part of an essential message to Russian industry: "You cannot be part of the Russian offensive and at the same time build nuclear plants and service nuclear plants in Europe".

Definitely, we need new solutions for ammunition and for arms supplies, and in that context, we definitely support the idea of our Estonian colleagues



© NRE

Dead civilians in a shelled Ukrainian city

to set up an additional and substantial financial vehicle to accelerate production of ammunition and the target is, as far as I know, to produce another one million rounds of 155 calibre ammunition over six months. We need huge resources; we're talking about a few billion euros." It's worth bearing in mind a clarification made by Loiseau: "We are not at war with Russia. We are not sending troops to Ukraine. That has been clear from Day One, but Ukraine is in a situation of self-defence." So far, of course, it has been resisting Russia's aggression remarkably successfully. If Putin thought his troops would simply march in and take over as easily as they did in Crimea, he has been very clearly proved to have made a completely wrong judgement. On his recent unannounced visit to Kiev, US President Joe Biden promised a further \$500-million of weapons, including artillery ammunition, anti-armour systems and air defence radar systems, as well as tighter sanctions against Russia.



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US President Joe Biden and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv

McAllister mentioned the fact that training Ukrainian troops in the effective use of the new, more powerful battle tanks the EU is now supplying is a slow process. It takes time, if their presence is not to be wasted. "In the end," he said, "it's about helping Ukraine to use its legitimate right to defend its own territory and sovereignty." I asked the panel how much the EU can legitimately do to defend friendly countries when the body was set up to deliver a peaceful future in the aftermath of a world war. It was Loiseau who replied: "If you want to defend peace, you have to have a strong European defence, and that is what Europe is building now." We mustn't forget that tyrannical regimes in central and eastern Europe are not supporters of the EU or NATO, with one right-wing columnist in a Hungarian newspaper describing the EU as: "an evil empire and the most inhumane tyrannical regime in history." The writer had similar views about NATO, apparently favouring Putin as an example of fairness and misunderstood innocence, just trying to free Ukraine from Nazis. If it was true, the EU would have had no problem defending Ukraine. Simply bombing Moscow could have been suggested and could have made a difference. But the EU doesn't work that way.

## I Keep hoping

There are other options, however, flagged up in dogged determination. "Ukraine will survive," said Chentsov, "Because we have no other choice." "We have shown, within the EU 27 and with our Western allies, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom,





German Army Leopard tank such as the ones that several European countries will provide Ukraine

just to mention three,” McAllister said, “that we have sanctioned the Russian Federation for this outrageous war; nine sanction packages have been adopted, the tenth will be adopted soon. And on the other hand, the support we have given to the brave men and women in Ukraine, to the country, the financial support, the economic support, the unitarian support, the military support through the member states, and if you add all the support the European Union and its member states have given, you’re up to around €50-billion.” He also mentioned that the EU is now more than ever engaged in its own defence. Putin has turned a peaceful organisation into a more warlike one, prepared to defend itself, which is presumably the very opposite of what he intended.

Writing in the New York Times, Aleksandr Daniel, an expert on Soviet dissidents echoed that view. “A new system of values has been built,” he wrote, “Brutal and archaic public values.” I’m not sure if that counts as progress. Another activity in which the EU has had to become involved is the closing of loopholes through which Russian goods can evade the various sanctions. There have been cases in which, for instance, Russian gas has reached European markets under the guise of being from some other country.

There were two separate panels to discuss the problems thrown up by Russia’s war and the European Union’s reaction to it, the second one dealing with energy issues. That’s important because Russia had been such a major source of the energy Europe consumes. It was clearly impossible for the EU to simply sit back and do nothing in response to Russia’s unprovoked aggression. “The first thing we did, to mitigate the economic and the social impact,” said Margarida Marques during the second of the two on-line seminars chaired from Strasbourg. She is Vice-Chair of the Budgets committee and a member of the S&D Group, “was to give member states the chance to change, to adapt their national recovery and resilience plans.” It clearly meant a change of direction after they had already adjusted their plans once to confront the threat posed by the COVID pandemic. “Energy is very relevant in the current context,” warned Cristian-Silviu Buşoi, the Romanian Chair of the European Parliament’s Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE Committee), speaking to the seminar from Bucharest. “The crisis started a little bit before the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and this situation was exacerbated by the war, by this illegal and unprovoked invasion.”

The EU has been obliged by Russian aggression to take a more warlike stance on the world stage and to deal with unforeseen consequences arising from Putin’s territorial ambitions. The EU budget was agreed before Putin sent his troops to invade Ukraine, so financially things will have to change. “We need to invest a lot



Cristian-Silviu Buşoi

to support the Ukrainian people arriving in EU countries,” said Marques, “and this budgetary line is completely empty. And there are new strategies, for example, and know that we need to consolidate, to increase our strategic autonomy.” Remembering my many years as a journalist following the European Parliament in Brussels and (as in this case) Strasbourg, I recalled how difficult it had often been to build a consensus on any contentious point, even within a single political group, and I asked if it was possible to get sufficient agreement for the Parliament to take unified and effective action. “I think there is a strong determination in most of the EU leadership to support Ukraine,” Buşoi replied, “This is very clear. And to sanction Russia. Sometimes of course there are disagreements. I mentioned sanctions related to the oil products and petroleum. Some of the member states were in a very difficult position, others are like Hungary of course, who are playing us political games here, but finally the sanctions were imposed, and they will harm Russia’s ability to finance the war and their ability to keep Europe in a sort of dependency.” It’s generally agreed (although perhaps not in Hungary) that being dependent on Russia for anything that is essential is not a good idea. Marques agreed that it’s important (if not necessarily easy) for the EU to stick together. “Yes,” Marques agreed, in reply to a question I had posed



Margarida Marques

about the difficulty of keeping the different political factions singing from the same song sheet and, most importantly, in the same key. “Unity is a key point for our strategy.” She stressed the point in a debate in the Chamber but also pointed it out during this seminar that her co-rapporteur (co-writer of the report that was under debate) is from the EPP, the Centre-Right group; Marques sits with the Socialists. The two groups seldom agree completely on political points but in response to Putin’s aggression they do. Their cooperation and agreement on key points is very significant.

## I War talk

Putin is certainly trying to capitalise on the illicit war he started by invading Ukraine. He is using it as an excuse to withdraw from the New START treaty which aims to limit the numbers of nuclear weapons in circulation. That may not be a surprise, given that Russia has the greatest number. Meeting the terms of the New START treaty would mean giving some up. Although the war began when Russian troops invaded Ukraine, using Putin’s claim that he was eradicating Nazis (who didn’t exist) as his excuse. He told his people that the war is the West’s fault and that the Ukrainian people are being used as cannon-fodder. One is forced to wonder if that includes the Ukrainians living in tower blocks Russian missiles have flattened. He accused the West of normalising paedophilia and sexual deviancy and even of promoting it. It’s frankly hard to understand where his claims come from. I do not recognise the West he portrays, characterising it as morally corrupt. It’s certainly not what Loiseau meant when, during the seminar, she referred to member states undergoing “a cultural revolution”. The EU has been, since its foundation, a peace project, seeking to unify nations, certainly not the bestial and amoral civilisation Putin characterised in his very strange (and belligerent) speech.



French MEP Nathalie Loiseau

Pastors in the protestant Church of England will not recognise their church as Putin portrayed it. “As it became known, the Anglican Church plans to consider the idea of a gender-neutral God,” he told his audience. “Millions of people in the West understand they are being led to a real spiritual catastrophe.” No, they don’t, because they are not. The main difference between East and West is that people are free to argue their point of view without fear of arrest or execution. In Putin’s strange and unrecognisable version of “reality”, that would not be the case. The only real danger, perhaps, is that people listening to his rambling speech might actually believe it. One of my old school friends became a Church of England pastor and he in no way fits within Putin’s description. In it, he claimed that priests are “forced” to perform marriages for same-sex couples. Sorry, Vlad: they’re not. I do believe the parts of his speech in which he talked about building new industry in those parts of Ukraine he has “liberated” and made into just another part of Russia. Hitler made similar claims when he was trying to take over Europe for the Nazis that Putin claims to be fighting.



Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv

According to the France 24 news site, the Ukrainian government says Russia has deported more than 16,000 children from territories it occupied in the wake of last year’s invasion, including orphans who were taken without the consent of their legal representatives.

Ukrainian officials say they have succeeded in bringing back more than 300 children. But it’s a long and arduous process, according to journalists who have visited the area. Putin’s speech has been met with a cold response in areas not under direct Russian control. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni described it as “propaganda” and said she had hoped for something more constructive. “A part of my heart hoped for some different words, for a step ahead. It was propaganda,” Meloni said.

She was visiting the Ukrainian city of Irpin at the time. NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg echoed US concerns that China may supply Russia with weapons to help it pursue its war against Ukraine, though to what end is hard to tell. Russia invasion has not gone well, and Putin’s forces have suffered many reverses, but Putin still claimed that a victory over Ukraine is “inevitable”. Even so, one Ukrainian presidential aide said that Putin’s speech merely served to prove that he has “lost touch with reality”. We just have to hope that his index finger has also lost touch with the nuclear launch button. It would appear that the only conclusion to be drawn from what Putin said is that he has no intention of halting his aggression or entering into peace negotiations. It’s going to be a very long war.

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# ART DISCOVERY

## THE NOT WELL KNOWN FRENCH ARTIST AND HIS MASTER-PIECES AMONG WHICH THE UNPURCHASABLE MONACO GEM



© EDM

The three Graces - The Naiads - The Hesperid Gardens

Blessed gourmet customers of the restaurant of the Hotel de Paris, in Monaco,

You are peacefully dining, while a pictorial masterpiece as majestic as it is discreet, looks at you from above, with all the benevolence of a Museum Painting...

Indeed, this painting of impressive dimensions sits on the wall of the Empire Room of the Restaurant, between the gilded frames, the sculptures, the columns and the Napoleonic symbols which seem frozen by the centuries.

This painting is the work of the painter Paul Gervais, in 1909, entitled "The Three Graces: The Garden of the Hesperid".

Paul Gervais (1859-1944) studied in 1879 at the Beaux-Arts in Paris. Member of the Salon of the French Artists, he won numerous awards there.

In order to perfect his knowledge and skill, he visited Spain in 1891 where he frequented the museums in observing the work of painters Murillo, Goya, El Greco, Rubens, Titian, Velázquez, among others.

Painter of history, allegorical subjects and genre scenes, having at the time a great fame, he received many commissions for public and private mural compositions: Ministry of the Colonies in Paris, casino of Monte-Carlo, municipal casino of Nice, Capitol of Toulouse.

Paul Gervais sent two large paintings to the

Universal Exhibition of 1900: The Judgment of Paris, for which he was awarded a silver medal, as well as The Folly of Titania.

Thanks in particular to the support of Gaston Doumergue, who was President of the French Republic during the interwar period, he obtained several other public commissions, including for the Elysee Palace.

In 1904, he became a professor at the School of Fine Arts in Paris. He was promoted to Officer of the Legion of Honor in 1908 and painted in his studio rue Victor-Massé in Paris.

"The Naiads", or "The Three Graces in the Garden of the Hesperid", is a painting presumably commissioned by "the Société des Bains de Mer et du Cercle des Etrangers de Monaco": this was founded by Prince Charles III in 1863, when the Gambling business was granted to the businessman François Blanc, who, between 1864 and 1866, within the new district of "Monte Carlo", will build the Casino and the Hotel de Paris, inside which you find the painting by Paul Gervais. The goal being without any doubt, by this work, to create cultural links between the French capital and the Principality of Monaco.

The Garden of the Hesperid dominates the Empire Room of the Hotel de Paris, in Monaco: it depicts a scene from Greek mythology, the Hesperid, who are the nymphs of Sunset, daughters of Atlas.

Three in number: Églé, Érythie and Hespérie, they reside in a fabulous orchard, located at the western limit of the world, the same where Hercules will go to seek the Golden Apples, fruit of immortality.

The Painting depicts the 3 Graces, under the tree with golden apples, symbol of eternal life; lustful Naiads seem to be playing with two panthers and a peacock. The bodies are naked, the colors pastel,





**La Fontaine de Jouvence 1908 - Paul Gervais**

drapes shimmering. The atmosphere is joyful and carefree.

But let us leave Mythology to return to our time; a question arises: why has such a powerful work of art which has been seen by the most influential people of our time who have visited this Monegasque Restaurant, remained so unknown to the general public (even if a Collection Stamp «The Naiads» was printed from this painting)?

Everyone of us has a special and personal relationship to Art, and above all to the big figurative paintings which decorate some Museums, public buildings, theatres or private properties. We find them wonderfully executed, faithful to the reality of the sceneries or true to the myths they depict... and yet, we are totally unaware of who the creators are.



**Paul Jean Gervais**

Indeed, if the media coverage of very famous artists (Picasso, Van Gogh, etc.) has enabled non-enlightened amateurs to have a fairly good knowledge of their main paintings, including their prices which often make headlines in the news, there are hundreds of talents like Paul Gervais who are unfairly unknown to the general public.

However, people take real pleasure in admiring these works, all the more so when it is accompanied by a starred meal; Terrestrial and pictorial nourishment then go perfectly together.

The staff of the Hotel de Paris enlightens us: "The dimensions of this painting impress our clients! It is more than 5 meters long and covers the entire wall of the great hall. People don't dare to come and watch it closely. And this painting immediately creates an atmosphere: you are having lunch with the Naiads, in the Garden of the Hesperid!

The international clientele rightly remarks that the style of painting is indeed that of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in France, but on a subject of ancient Greek mythology: gastronomes are often excellent art connoisseurs.

Time passes, the dishes follow one another, and the delicate mixture has its effect: Art in the Restaurant transforms the experience into a trip out of the real world. It channels the gaze, attention, and even creates topics of conversation;

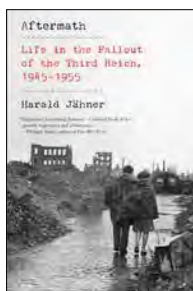
It makes people focus on it, they pay attention to it and they even start discussing it. The Golden Apple Tree situated beyond the Hercules Columns has played its part: the two hours spent here, next to the Naiads, are out of Time like a precious little piece of Eternity.

*David Laurent-Coppee*



**Femme coiffée à l'Antique 1907 - Paul Gervais**

## BOOKS



## | Aftermath

Life in the Fallout of the Third Reich, 1945-1955

By Harald Jähner

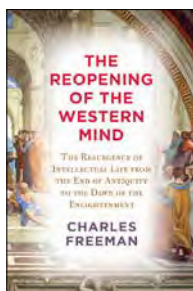
Translated by Shaun Whiteside

How does a nation recover from fascism and turn toward a free society once more? This internationally acclaimed revelatory history—“filled with first-person accounts from articles and diaries” (*The New York Times*)—of the transformational decade that followed World War II illustrates how Germany raised itself out of the ashes of defeat and reckoned with the corruption of its soul and the horrors of the Holocaust.

Featuring over 40 eye-opening black-and-white photographs and posters from the period.

The years 1945 to 1955 were a raw, wild decade that found many Germans politically, economically, and morally bankrupt. Victorious Allied forces occupied the four zones that make up present-day Germany. More than half the population was displaced; 10 million newly released forced laborers and several million prisoners of war returned to an uncertain existence. Cities lay in ruins—with bodies yet to be found beneath the towering rubble.

*Aftermath* received wide acclaim and spent forty-eight weeks on the best-seller list in Germany when it was published there in 2019. It is the first history of Germany's national mentality in the immediate postwar years. Using major global political developments as a backdrop, Harald Jähner weaves a series of life stories into a nuanced panorama of a nation undergoing monumental change. Poised between two eras, this decade is portrayed by Jähner as a period that proved decisive for Germany's future—and one starkly different from how most of us imagine it today.



## | The Reopening of the Western Mind

The Resurgence of Intellectual Life from the End of Antiquity to the Dawn of the Enlightenment

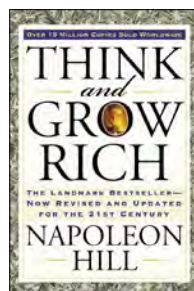
By Charles Freeman

A monumental and exhilarating history of European thought from the end of Antiquity to the beginning of the Enlightenment—500 to 1700 AD—tracing the arc of intellectual history as it evolved, setting the stage for the modern era. With more than 140 illustrations; 90 in full-color.

Charles Freeman, lauded historical scholar and author of *The Closing of the Western Mind* (“A triumph—*The Times* [London]”), explores the rebirth of Western thought in the centuries that followed the demise of the classical era. As the dominance of Christian teachings gradually subsided over time, a new open-mindedness made way for the ideas of morality and theology, and fueled and formed the backbone of the Western mind of the late Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and beyond.

In this wide-ranging history, Freeman follows the immense intellectual development that culminated in the Enlightenment, from political ideology to philosophy and theology, as well as the fine arts and literature. He writes, in vivid detail, of how Europeans progressed from the Christian-minded thinking of Saint Augustine to the more open-minded later scholars, such as Michel de Montaigne, leading to a broader, more “humanist” way of thinking.

He explores how the discovery of America fundamentally altered European conceptions of humanity, religion, and science; how the rise of Protestantism and the Reformation profoundly influenced the tenor of politics and legal systems, with enormous repercussions; and how the radical Christianity of philosophers such as Spinoza affected a rethinking of the concept of religious tolerance that has influenced the modern era ever since.



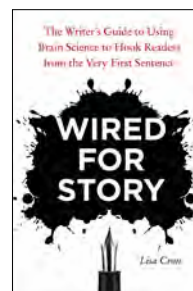
## | Think and Grow Rich

The Landmark Bestseller Now Revised and Updated for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

By Napoleon Hill

Think and Grow Rich has been called the “Granddaddy of All Motivational Literature.” It was the first book to boldly ask, “What makes a winner?” The man who asked and listened for the answer, Napoleon Hill, is now counted in the top ranks of the world's winners himself. The most famous of all teachers of success spent “a fortune and the better part of a lifetime of effort” to produce the “Law of Success” philosophy that forms the basis of his books and that is so powerfully summarized in this one.

In the original *Think and Grow Rich*, published in 1937, Hill draws on stories of Andrew Carnegie, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and other millionaires of his generation to illustrate his principles. In the updated version, Arthur R. Pell, Ph.D., a nationally known author, lecturer, and consultant in human resources management and an expert in applying Hill's thought, deftly interweaves anecdotes of how contemporary millionaires and billionaires, such as Bill Gates, Mary Kay Ash, Dave Thomas, and Sir John Templeton, achieved their wealth. Outmoded or arcane terminology and examples are faithfully refreshed to preclude any stumbling blocks to a new generation of readers.



## | Wired for Story

The Writer's Guide to Using Brain Science to Hook Readers from the Very First Sentence

By Lisa Cron

This guide reveals how writers can utilize cognitive storytelling strategies to craft stories that ignite readers' brains and captivate them through each plot element.

Imagine knowing what the brain craves from every tale it encounters, what fuels the success of any great story, and what keeps readers transfixed. *Wired for Story* reveals these cognitive secrets—and it's a game-changer for anyone who has ever set pen to paper.

The vast majority of writing advice focuses on “writing well” as if it were the same as telling a great story. This is exactly where many aspiring writers fail—they strive for beautiful metaphors, authentic dialogue, and interesting characters, losing sight of the one thing that every engaging story must do: ignite the brain's hardwired desire to learn what happens next. When writers tap into the evolutionary purpose of story and electrify our curiosity, it triggers a delicious dopamine rush that tells us to pay attention. Without it, even the most perfect prose won't hold anyone's interest.

Backed by recent breakthroughs in neuroscience as well as examples from novels, screenplays, and short stories, *Wired for Story* offers a revolutionary look at story as the brain experiences it. Each chapter zeroes in on an aspect of the brain, its corresponding revelation about story, and the way to apply it to your storytelling right now.



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