

EUROPE DIPLOMATIC

MAGAZINE



ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE

**The promise, the
power and the peril**



May 2024

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Misinformation on vaccines prevents you from making healthy decisions



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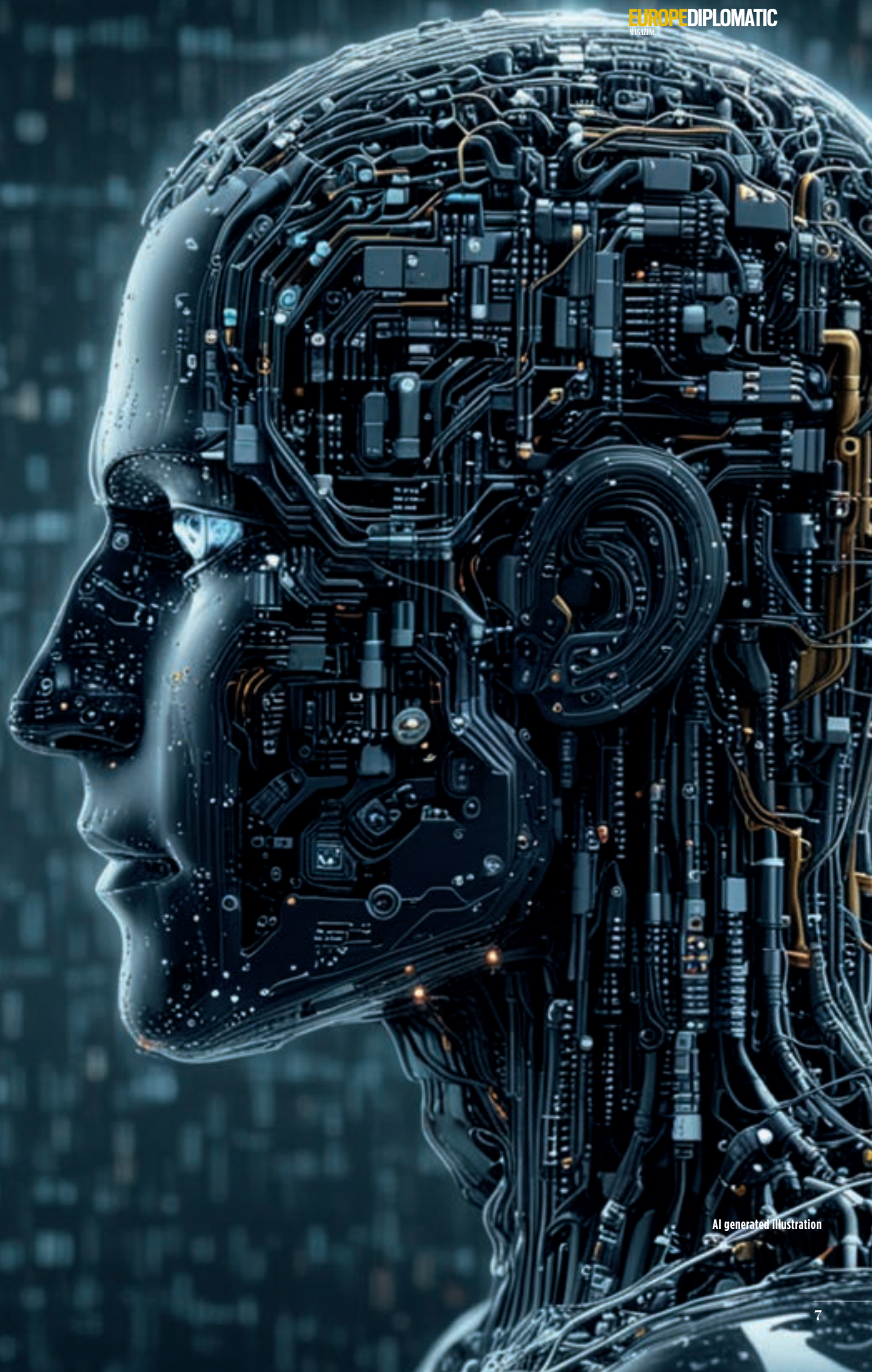
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Nikola Hendrickx

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

**The promise, the
power and the peril**



AI generated illustration

Artificial intelligence, commonly referred to as AI, has seamlessly integrated into our everyday lives and is changing the way we live, work and interact with technology. But how did it originate, and who were the masterminds behind the development of this ground-breaking technology that has changed our lives so much?

The idea of artificial intelligence has roots that go back to antiquity, where great thinkers and inventors pondered whether it would be possible to construct machines that could mimic human cognition. Despite these early considerations, it wasn't until around 1900 that significant progress was made in the field of AI.

The term "artificial intelligence" was first introduced by John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester and Claude Shannon in the United States during a summer workshop and extended brainstorming session that took place at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire in 1956. This event marked the beginning of artificial intelligence as an independent academic discipline and brought together prominent scientists and mathematicians to explore the possibilities and hurdles of developing intelligent machines.

One of the early pioneers of AI was the British mathematician and computer scientist Alan Turing. Turing is known for his "Turing Test," with which he proposed a method for determining whether a machine can exhibit intelligent behaviour that corresponds to that of a human being. His contributions formed the basis for later AI research.

In the years that followed, AI research made remarkable progress, characterised by the development of expert systems, machine learning algorithms and neural networks. These discoveries opened the door to the use of AI in various fields, including speech recognition, image processing and natural language processing.



Alan Turing

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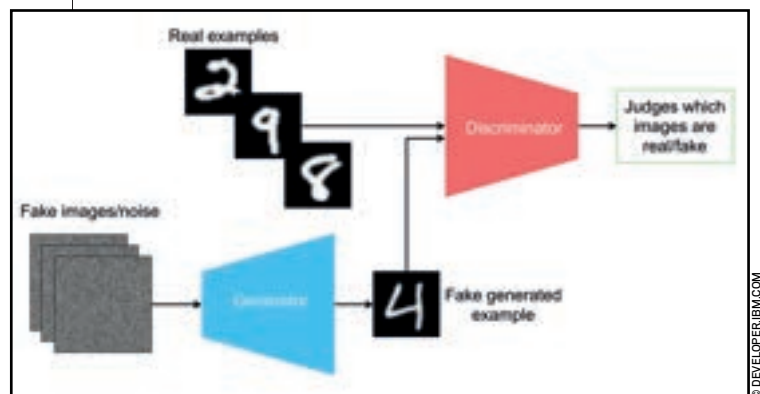


Claude Shannon - John McCarthy - Marvin Minsky

Even if there is no clear answer to the question of who exactly invented artificial intelligence, the collective efforts of numerous scientists, mathematicians and visionaries have undeniably brought the field to its current form. From the thinkers of antiquity to the researchers of today, the quest to understand and emulate human intelligence remains a strong driving force behind the progress of artificial intelligence.

Emerging threats in a technological utopia

The 21st century brought with it a revival of interest and investment in artificial intelligence, fuelled by significant advances in computing capabilities and the accessibility of vast datasets. This era, often referred to as the "AI renaissance," has seen extraordinary achievements in various AI applications, including machine learning, natural language processing and computer vision.



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The remarkable progress being made today in the field of artificial intelligence is truly astonishing. AI has become a multi-billion dollar industry, attracting significant investment in research and development from technology giants such as Google, IBM and Microsoft, leading to major advances in areas such as autonomous vehicles, virtual assistants and medical imaging, as well as other innovative technologies that were once considered science fiction.

The field of artificial intelligence is being driven by a diverse group of individuals, including researchers, engineers, entrepreneurs and thought leaders. Some of the most influential people in AI include CEOs and founders of major technology companies, leading scientists and innovators who are helping to shape the future of AI. These individuals are contributing to the development of AI through their research, the development of AI models and algorithms, and the application of AI in various industries.

Generative AI, which has experienced a spectacular boom in recent

years, refers to a type of artificial intelligence that is able to create new content such as images, text, music or videos that resemble content created by humans. It uses machine learning algorithms, in particular generative models, to generate new content based on patterns and examples learnt from training data.

Computers with generative AI programmes such as DALL-E 2 and ChatGPT from OpenAI, the Stable Diffusion programme from Stability AI and the Midjourney programme are capable of generating content based on text requests from users. These programmes are trained by exposing them to a huge amount of existing works such as essays, images, paintings and other artworks.

A popular type of generative model is the Generative Adversarial Network (GAN). GANs consist of two main components: a generator and a discriminator. The generator's task is to generate new content, while the discriminator's task is to evaluate the generated content and distinguish it from real content. The generator and the discriminator play a game in which they try to outperform each other, with the generator continuously improving its performance based on feedback from the discriminator.

However, the question naturally arises as to whether generative AI results can be protected by copyright, although most legal systems presuppose human creativity. Proponents of generative AI material argue that significant human involvement in processing the requests or input justifies entitlement to copyright protection.

Now, generative AI systems work by recognising and replicating patterns in data, similar to most machine learning programmes, but the data they rely on for training is predominantly human-generated and in many cases is subject to copyright protection, which inevitably lead to content that clearly infringes copyright laws. These are the four main reasons why the results of generative AI lead to legal difficulties:

1. Ownership of generated content: when a generative AI system generates content such as images or text, it can be difficult to determine who owns the rights to that content. Traditionally, intellectual property rights are assigned to human creators, but in the case of generative AI, the lines can become blurred. Different countries may have different laws and regulations regarding the ownership of AI-generated content, leading to legal uncertainties.

2. Copyright infringement: generative AI models are trained on large data sets that often contain copyrighted material. There is therefore a risk that the generated content may infringe existing copyrights. For example, a generative AI model trained on a dataset of copyrighted images may generate new images that are very similar to the copyrighted images, which could infringe the rights of the original creators.

3. Plagiarism: generative AI models can be trained to produce text, such as articles or stories. In some cases, these models can produce content that is similar or identical to existing works, leading to accusations of plagiarism. This becomes problematic when the generated text is used for commercial purposes or presented as an original work without proper attribution.

4. Right of publicity: the use of generative AI to create deepfake videos or images can raise legal issues related to the right of publicity. Deepfakes involve superimposing a person's face on another person's body or altering their appearance in a realistic way. If these deepfakes are used for malicious purposes, to spread false information or to defame people, for example, this can lead to legal consequences.

Generative AI offers a wide range of potential applications for companies and private individuals, but it is unfortunate that the promise of improved automation and autonomy is inherently linked to criminal activity.

Criminals adapt very quickly to new technologies and integrate them into their methods, which poses a major challenge for law

enforcement agencies and the judiciary. Intellectual property (IP) crime is no exception, as generative AI can provide criminals with a variety of tools to support their illegal business models.



Geoffrey Hinton

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Immense challenges ahead

AI has changed the way we live and work, but it has also brought with it new concerns about disinformation and manipulation, as well as a range of other potentially negative effects on the organisation and behaviour of human society.

The risks posed by these technological advances emphasise the need for responsible AI development and the introduction of robust safeguards to protect against potential misuse. As artificial intelligence continues to develop at a dizzying pace, the voices warning of the potential dangers are getting louder and louder.

Geoffrey Hinton, the British-Canadian computer scientist and cognitive psychologist who is referred to as the “Godfather of AI” laid the foundations for machine learning and neural network algorithms in 2013, issued a stark warning in a sobering reflection: *“These creations may one day surpass our intellect and dominate us, and it is up to us to urgently develop a strategy to thwart such an outcome.”* In 2023, Hinton made the bold decision to leave his post at Google, fuelled by a burning desire to “shed light on the dark side of AI” while struggling with a sense of regret about the work that had defined his career. Hinton’s premonitions reverberate through the halls of the scientific community and resonate with many of his colleagues.

Elon Musk, the visionary entrepreneur behind Tesla and SpaceX, stood shoulder to shoulder with



AI generated Elon Musk

an impressive coalition of over 1,000 tech luminaries when they released a highly publicised open letter in 2023. With unwavering conviction, they asked for a pause in the pursuit of grandiose AI experiments and sounded the alarm on the potential of this powerful technology to unleash profound dangers to society and the very nature of humanity.

From the increasing automation of certain professions, to the emergence of algorithms tainted by gender and racial bias, to the advent of autonomous weapons that function independently of human oversight, there are a multitude of concerns.

These fears are just the tip of the iceberg, as we have only begun to scratch the surface of AI's true potential. The tech community has been discussing the potential dangers associated with artificial intelligence for some time now. Among the biggest concerns are the automation of workplaces, the spread of fake news and the dangerous arms race with AI-controlled weapons, all of which are among the biggest threats posed by AI.

I The dark side

It is an undeniable fact that popular platforms like Google and Facebook have a deeper understanding of their loyal users than their closest family and friends. These technology giants amass colossal amounts of data for use in their artificial intelligence algorithms. A striking example of this is Facebook "likes", which amazingly can be used to accurately predict a variety of personal characteristics of Facebook users: from sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious and political beliefs to personality traits, intelligence, happiness, addictive behaviour, parental separation experiences and even demographic factors such as age and gender.

This revelation, uncovered through a comprehensive study, offers just a glimpse into the vast amounts of information that can be extracted from the web of search terms, online clicks, posts and reviews. The implications are staggering and

paint a vivid picture of the depth and breadth of knowledge being amassed by proprietary AI algorithms.

This problem goes beyond large technology companies. When AI algorithms play an important role in people's online activities, it can be risky. For example, while the use of AI in the workplace can increase a company's productivity, it can also lead to lower quality jobs for employees. Furthermore, AI decisions can be biased and lead to discrimination in areas such as hiring, access to bank loans, healthcare, housing and more.

The use of AI to automate workplaces is a growing concern as it becomes more prevalent in industries such as marketing, manufacturing and healthcare. According to McKinsey, up to 30% of labour hours in the US economy could be automated by 2030, with black and Hispanic workers particularly affected (Source: <https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/our-research/generative-ai-and-the-future-of-work-in-america>). Goldman Sachs has even predicted that 300 million full-time jobs could be lost due to AI automation. (Source: <https://www.goldmansachs.com/intelligence/pages/generative-ai-could-raise-global-gdp-by-7-percent.html>).



AI generated illustration

As AI robots become increasingly intelligent and powerful, fewer human workers will be needed to perform the same tasks. Although it is estimated that tens of millions of new jobs will be created by AI in the coming years, many workers may not have the necessary skills for these technical positions and could be left behind if companies do not provide training and development opportunities.

According to Chris Messina, the American technology strategist and inventor of the hashtag, areas such as law and accounting are likely to be heavily affected by AI, with medicine among the most impacted. Messina predicts that law and accounting will be next, with the legal sector facing a major upheaval. *"Think about the complexity of contracts, and really diving in and understanding what it takes to create a perfect deal structure," he said in regards to the legal field. "It's a lot of attorneys reading through a lot of information - hundreds or thousands of pages of data and documents. It's really easy to miss things. So AI that has the ability to comb through and comprehensively deliver the best possible contract for the outcome you're trying to achieve is probably going to replace a lot of corporate attorneys"*.



Chris Messina

Opacity key to success?

AI and deep learning models can be difficult to understand, even for people who use the technology regularly. This leads to confusion about how AI arrives at its decisions and what information it uses. It also makes it difficult to understand why AI sometimes makes unfair or risky decisions.

One potential danger of AI is its ability to manipulate human behaviour, which has not yet been sufficiently investigated. Manipulative marketing tactics have been around for some time, but the combination of AI algorithms and the vast amount of data collected has greatly enhanced the ability of companies to influence users towards more profitable decisions. Digital businesses can now shape the context and timing of their offers and target individuals with manipulative strategies that are more effective and harder to detect.

A striking example is provided by the American retailer Target; it has used AI and data analytics to predict whether women are pregnant in order to send them discreet adverts for baby products



AI generated illustration

(Source: <https://www.driverresearch.com/market-research-company-blog/how-target-used-data-analytics-to-predict-pregnancies>). Uber users have reported that they have to pay more for rides when their smartphone battery is empty, even though battery level is not officially a factor in Uber's pricing model. Large technology companies have often been accused of manipulating search results to their own advantage. One well-known example is the European Commission's decision against Google's shopping service in 2017 when the company was fined €2,42 million for abusing its dominance as a search engine. Facebook was also fined a record amount by the US Federal Trade Commission for violating the privacy rights of its users, resulting in a lower quality of service.

Social manipulation through algorithms

This fear has become a reality as more and more politicians use social media platforms to spread their messages. TikTok is just one example of a social media platform that uses AI algorithms and displays content to users based on their previous usage behaviour. However, the app has been criticised for its algorithm's inability to filter out harmful and inaccurate content, leading to concerns about TikTok's ability to protect its users from misinformation.

The situation has become even more complicated with the advent of AI-generated images, videos and voice changers, as well as deepfakes in the political and social sphere. With these technologies, it is easy to create realistic photos, videos and audio clips or replace the image of a person in an existing image or video with a different one. As a result, malicious actors now have another way to spread misinformation and propaganda, which can make it almost impossible to distinguish between reliable and fake news.

Social surveillance with AI technology

In addition to the potential existential threat, many are also concerned about the negative impact of AI on privacy and security. For example, China is actively using facial recognition technology in various places such as offices and schools, which not only tracks a person's movements but could also allow the government to monitor their activities, relationships and political views.

In the US, police departments use predictive policing algorithms to predict where offences will be committed. However, these algorithms are influenced by arrest rates that disproportionately affect black people, leading to excessive policing and raising the question of whether democracies can prevent AI from becoming an authoritarian tool. Many authoritarian regimes are already using AI, and others will certainly also use it, but the question is: to what extent will it infiltrate Western democracies and what restrictions will be imposed on it?

The lack of data protection when using AI tools is also a major problem. If you have interacted with an AI chatbot or used an AI face filter on the internet for example, your data is being collected - but do you know where it is being sent and how it is being used? AI systems often collect personal data to customise the user experience or improve the AI models used, especially if the AI tool is free. Collecting this data is an important aspect of AI technology.



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Facial recognition feature on Samsung Galaxy Note 10 tablet

Weakening of ethics and goodwill

Now, religious leaders are also expressing concern about the potential dangers of AI. At a meeting in the Vatican in 2023 and in his message for the 2024 World Day of Peace, Pope Francis called on countries to conclude and implement a legally binding international agreement to regulate the development and use of AI.

Pope Francis warned of the possibility that AI can be manipulated and *“generate statements that appear credible at first glance but are unfounded or reveal prejudices.”* He emphasised how this could contribute to disinformation campaigns, mistrust in the media, election interference and more, ultimately increasing the likelihood of *“fuelling conflict and hindering peace.”*

The rapid emergence of generative AI tools underpins these fears as numerous individuals use this technology to avoid writing assignments, jeopardising academic honesty and originality. In addition, biased AI could be used to assess a person's suitability for employment, mortgage, welfare or political asylum, which could lead to unfair treatment and discrimination, Pope Francis said.

“The distinctive human capacity for moral judgement and ethical decision-making is more than a complex set of algorithms”, he explained. “And this capacity cannot be simplified by programming a machine.”



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Pope Francis

AI-Powered autonomous weapons

Unfortunately, technology has often been used for warfare, and the advent of AI is no exception. In 2016, over 30,000 people, including AI and robotics researchers, expressed their concerns about investing in AI-powered autonomous weapons in an open letter which emphasised the critical choice facing humanity: to prevent or initiate a global AI-driven arms race. It warned that an arms race would be likely if a major military power were to push ahead with the development of AI weapons, with autonomous weapons being the weapon of choice in the future.



Former Google engineer Blake Lemoine

This prediction has come true in the form of lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS) that can identify and attack targets autonomously with minimal regulatory oversight. The proliferation of advanced weapons has raised fears among powerful nations and led to a technological cold war.

While these new weapons pose a significant risk to civilians, the danger escalates when autonomous weapons fall into the wrong hands. Given the capabilities of hackers in carrying out cyber attacks, it is not difficult to imagine that malicious actors could infiltrate autonomous weapon systems and cause catastrophic consequences.

Uncontrolled political rivalries and aggressive tendencies could lead to the malicious use of artificial intelligence. Some people fear that the pursuit of profit will continue to drive research



A robot warrior. AI generated illustration

into the possibilities of AI, despite the warnings of influential figures. After all, the mentality of pushing the boundaries and monetising technology is not unique to the AI sector, but a recurring pattern throughout history.

Self-aware ai and loss of human influence

Excessive reliance on AI technology risk diminishing human influence and compromising certain aspects of society. For example, the use of AI in healthcare can lead to a decline in human empathy and critical thinking. Similarly, the use of generative AI for creative activities could undermine human creativity and emotional expression. Excessive interaction with AI systems may even lead to a decline in peer communication and social skills. While AI can undoubtedly help with the automation of routine tasks, there are concerns about its potential to compromise human intelligence, skills and the importance of community.

There are growing fears that AI intelligence will advance to the point where it becomes sentient, beyond human control and potentially malicious in its behaviour. Reports of alleged cases of AI sentience have already surfaced, including the well-known account of a former Google engineer, Blake Lemoine, who in 2022 claimed to have had conversations with the AI chatbot LaMDA, which he perceived as sentient and conversing like a human child. As AI progresses towards artificial general intelligence and eventually artificial superintelligence, calls are growing louder to stop these developments altogether.

Developing legal regulations



If AI systems are developed by private companies with the main aim of making a profit, there is a risk that these systems will manipulate user behaviour to the company's advantage instead of putting the user's preferences first. To protect the autonomy and self-determination of humans in the interaction between AI and humans, it is crucial to establish guidelines that prevent AI from subordinating, deceiving or manipulating humans. In 2019, a high-level expert group on AI presented the European Commission's Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI. According to the Guidelines, AI should respect all applicable laws and regulations, respect ethical principles and values and be robust from a technical perspective.

To ensure human autonomy in AI interactions, the first crucial step is to improve transparency regarding the functions and capabilities of AI. Users should have a clear understanding of how AI systems work and how their information, especially sensitive personal data, is used by AI algorithms. Although the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) aimed to increase transparency through the right to explanation, it was not totally successful.

It is often claimed that AI systems are like a "black box," which makes transparency difficult. However, this is not entirely true when it comes to manipulation. The creators of AI systems can introduce certain restrictions to prevent manipulative behaviour, so it is more a question of design and the objective function. Algorithmic manipulations should in principle be explainable by the designers who developed the algorithm and monitor its performance.

According to experts in the field, three important steps should be taken to ensure that the transparency requirement is met by all providers of AI systems:

1- Introduce human oversight: the European Union's draft Artificial Intelligence Act (AIA) proposes that providers of AI systems should establish a human oversight mechanism to monitor the performance and output of the system.

2- Establish an accountability framework: Human oversight should include a robust accountability framework to incentivise providers to comply.

3- Provide clear information: Transparency should not be provided through complex messaging that confuses users. Instead, there should be two layers of information about AI systems: a concise, accurate and easy-to-understand summary for users and a more detailed version available to consumer protection authorities upon request.

There is no doubt that artificial intelligence has become a transformative force that is revolutionising industries and reshaping the way we live, work and interact. Its potential to increase efficiency, drive innovation and solve complex problems offers immense benefits - from improving healthcare and education to tackling climate change and beyond. However, the advancing development of AI also raises important ethical, social and economic questions. But we must also be aware of its potential dangers. These include concerns about privacy, job displacement and the risk of AI systems being manipulated for profit, malicious intent or even promoting pro-war policies.

To navigate this complex landscape, it is essential to create a solid ethical framework, promote transparency and foster collaboration between governments, businesses and society at large. In this way, we can harness the power of AI to create a more prosperous, equitable and sustainable future for all.

Hossein Sadre

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NEWS IN BRIEF



© KLEIN VISION

SLOVAKIAN AIRCAR DEVELOPER SIGNS A MANUFACTURING DEAL WITH CHINESE COMPANY

Klein Vision, a Slovakian company, has announced that it sold its flying vehicles' production and sales authorization for the Chinese market to Hebei Jianxin Flying Car Technology, a firm situated in Cangzhou, North China's Hebei province.

"We are pleased to announce the sale of the license for our certified flying car technology to the esteemed Chinese company," stated Stefan Klein, Chairman of the board of Klein Vision to China Daily. "This partnership represents a significant step in our mission to expand global access to revolutionary mobility solutions and drive progress in the industry," noted Anton Zajac, co-founder of Klein Vision.

The car, built for ground and air use, can transform from a vehicle to an aircraft within 3 minutes, with a flight speed of up to 300 kilometers per hour and a flight distance of over 1,000 kilometers.

AirCar has been conceived as a shape, evocating dynamic and attractive form predominantly built from an advanced composite material. In the car mode, the object generates downforce using spoiler and elevator pitch whereas in the aircraft mode the entire surface generates lift. Lift body concept includes future development for the spacious interior and for the variety of models: three and four seaters, twin-engine, and amphibious version.

The deal, finalized for an undisclosed amount, marks a strategic move in the advancement of innovative mobility solutions.

The car was issued the official Certificate of Airworthiness by the Slovak Transport Authority 2022 after it completed 70 hours of rigorous flight testing, which was compliant with European Aviation Safety Agency norms.

AirCar does not take off and land vertically, it needs a runway.

EUROJUST HELPS TACKLE MASSIVE FRAUD OF EUR 645 MILLION WITH MEDICINAL CANNABIS PLANTS ACROSS EUROPE

Eurojust has assisted national authorities across Europe in tackling a massive fraud involving fake investments in cannabis plants for medicinal use. Two linked criminal organisations that advertised the scheme online and laundered the profits, which are estimated to be approximately EUR 645 million, have been dismantled. In a coordinated action, nine suspects have been arrested. Eurojust supported authorities in Germany, Spain and France in setting up a joint investigation team (JIT) into the fraud.

In Germany, France and Spain alone, over 4 500 victims have lodged formal complaints against the fraudsters, who set up a crowd-funding programme to raise a minimum of EUR 50 per investor for the development of medicinal cannabis plants. In reality, no cannabis plants were ever bought, although the organisers of the scheme pretended to work with legitimate and licensed enterprises that would cultivate them. The fraud ran from at least January 2020 to July 2022.

The entire scheme had the character of a pyramid or 'Ponzi fraud' and promised extremely high returns on investment. Investigations in Germany and Spain, later followed by counterparts in other countries across Europe, showed that investors had been only partially paid.

Most of the invested money was used to pay affiliates, keep the scheme running and expand the fraud through extensive online campaigns. For this purpose and to launder the proceeds, a web of international enterprises was used. The scheme itself appears to have been run by a Russian criminal network, with an affiliated German-based crime group.

Victims in Germany and Spain claim to have lost at least EUR 51.5 million, but the total investment is estimated to be close to EUR 645 million. In total, around 550 000 participants worldwide were registered as online investors, most of them



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Cannabis plants

European citizens. Around 186 000 participants transferred funds, either via cryptocurrencies or bank transfers.

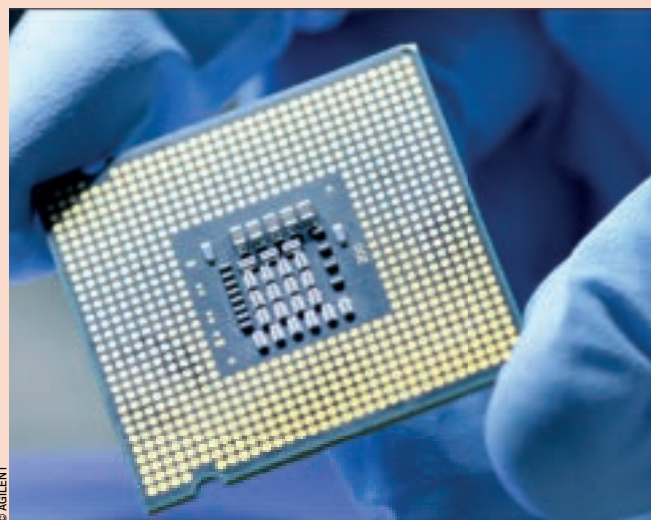
Since 2022, Eurojust has been extensively supporting the national authorities, including assisting the German, Spanish and French authorities in setting up and funding the JIT. This led to a successful Joint Action Day coordinated at Eurojust.

At the request of the German and Spanish authorities, in recent days operational actions against the criminal networks were also carried out in Estonia, Latvia, Italy, Malta, Poland, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the Dominican Republic. The French authorities made a decisive contribution to the analysis of crypto flows during the investigations and took part in searches in Germany and Spain on the action day.

Europol supported this massive cross-border investigation from the outset, taking the lead in operational coordination and providing tailored analytical support. Furthermore, Europol shared results of the financial investigations as well as other intelligence with the involved countries. On the action day, Europol deployed officers with mobile offices to various locations worldwide.

During the action days, over thirty places were also searched and for several millions of Euros in crypto assets and bank accounts were frozen. Also real estate properties, luxury vehicles, artwork, cash and various luxury items were seized, as well as large numbers of electronic devices and documents.

CHIPS JU CONCLUDES THE SELECTION OF FOUR NEW PILOT LINES TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN EUROPE



Chips Joint Undertaking (Chips JU) announces the successful evaluation of the submitted innovative semiconductor pilot line proposals and has started negotiations with four consortia, aiming at signing the relevant agreements later this year. The step promises to catalyse innovation in the region and reinforce Europe's technological leadership on the global stage.

The Public Authorities Board of the Chips Joint Undertaking has selected the Hosting Consortia that – provided that negotiations will be successful – will implement each of the four pilot lines, and will receive grants for the set-up, integration and process development, and for operational activities. The pilot lines will be funded jointly by the EU, from the Horizon

Europe and Digital Europe Programme, the Member States and private contributions.

Kari Leino, Chair of the Chips JU Public Authorities Board, emphasises: “The selection of these pilot lines marks a pivotal moment for Europe's semiconductor industry, showcasing the collective commitment of European states to drive technological innovation.”

These calls relate to the operational objectives of the “Chips for Europe Initiative,” the first pillar of the European Chips Act. This Initiative aims to enhance technological capacity building and foster innovation in cutting-edge chip technology on a substantial scale. The Chips JU plays a pivotal role in facilitating a significant part of this investment, ensuring its success and impact across the region.

Welcoming the awarding of the new pilot lines, Jari Kinaret, the Executive Director of the Chips Joint Undertaking, remarked: “This decision represents a significant milestone for Europe's semiconductor industry, and we look forward to the realisation of these pilot lines. Through collaboration and innovation, we aim to drive progress and excellence in Europe.”

The pilot lines will accelerate process development, test and experimentation, and validation of design concepts. Their implementation is expected to bridge the gap from lab to fab and will be available to a wide range of users, including academia, industry and research institutions.

Following this announcement, the next steps include negotiations with the consortia to finalise the Hosting Agreements, Joint Procurement Agreements and the related Grant Agreements, marking the beginning of a new era for the European semiconductor ecosystem.

About Chips Joint Undertaking

Chips Joint Undertaking supports research, development, innovation, and capacity building in the European semiconductor ecosystem. Launched by the European Union Council Regulation No 2021/1085 and amended in September 2023 via Council Regulation 2023/1782, it contributes to reinforce the competitiveness and resilience of the semiconductor technological and industrial base, engaging a significant EU, national/regional and private industry funding of nearly €11 billion. The Chips JU is funded by the European Union, Chips JU Participating States and the Private Members.

EU COUNCIL ADOPTS €1 BILLION MACRO-FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO EGYPT

The EU will provide €1 billion of urgent short-term macro-financial assistance to Egypt to help stabilise its economy.

The aid is meant to address the deteriorating macro-fiscal situation and financing needs of the country over the recent months, notably after the outbreak of the Gaza war, the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and the repercussions of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

The €1 billion of short term assistance is part of a package of two proposals to provide macro-financial assistance to Egypt. The second part of the operation, still to be adopted, would provide € 4 billion over the period 2024-2027.

The overall macro-financial assistance accompanies a revamped support programme concluded with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), of up to € 8 billion, which will be made available provided several conditions are met.

The macro-financial assistance will be provided in the form of loans made available in one instalment. A precondition for



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granting the assistance is that Egypt continues to make concrete and credible steps towards respecting effective democratic mechanisms (including a multi-party parliamentary system) and the rule of law and guaranteeing respect for human rights.

Next steps

The decision will enter into force on the day following that of its publication in the Official Journal of the EU.

Background

On 15 March 2024, the Commission proposed a macro-financial assistance operation to Egypt for an overall amount of € 5 billion in loans, following the request of Egypt on 12 March 2024.

The proposed macro-financial assistance would provide € 1 billion in the short-term and € 4 billion over the period 2024-2027. The differentiated approach aims to make it possible to disburse the first part of the aid before the end of 2024, to respond to Egypt's urgent financing needs.

In accordance with the Financial Regulation, the loans would be provisioned in the EU budget at a rate of 9 % (€ 90 million) under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI – Global Europe).

ESA AWARDS THREE CONTRACTS FOR SATELLITE NAVIGATION MISSIONS



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Genesis, one of ESA's FutureNAV missions, will provide an improved reference frame for navigation and Earth science applications

The European Space Agency has awarded three contracts worth a quarter of a billion dollars to develop a pair of navigation missions, including one to test the feasibility of a low Earth orbit satellite constellation.

ESA announced the award of the contracts for its FutureNAV program March 19, with a combined value of 233.4 million euros (\$253 million). The contracts cover two missions, called Genesis and LEO-PNT.

"With Genesis and LEO-PNT we are responding to rapidly growing needs for more resilient and precise navigation and ensuring Europe leads global satellite navigation," Javier Benedicto, ESA's director of navigation, said in a statement about the contracts.

One contract, valued at 76.6 million euros, went to a consortium led by OHB Italia to develop Genesis. That spacecraft will carry a suite of instruments to improve the International Terrestrial Reference Frame (ITRF), which provides a coordinate system for use in navigation systems and in Earth science. That system is based on the center of mass of the Earth, including oceans and atmosphere.

Genesis will refine the ITRF with several geodetic instruments, like laser ranging and very-long-baseline interferometry, with a goal of providing an accuracy of one millimeter. Genesis is scheduled to launch in 2028.

Two other contracts, each valued at 78.4 million euros, were awarded for LEO-PNT, an effort to demonstrate the viability of LEO constellation to provide positioning, navigation and timing (PNT) services. One contract went to GMV Aerospace and Defence, partnered with OHB System, while the other went to Thales Alenia Space.

The goal of LEO-PNT is to deploy a set of small satellites in LEO to test how such spacecraft could augment Galileo and other navigation systems operating in higher orbits. There is growing interest in LEO navigation satellite systems that could produce stronger signals that could improve service in urban areas and be more resistant to jamming. LEO-PNT will also test the use of 5G and 6G communications protocols that could combine navigation with applications like Internet of Things services.

ESA did not disclose how many satellites will be deployed for LEO-PNT, although Thales said in a separate statement it plans to launch five spacecraft as part of an "end-to-end solution" funded by the contract. ESA said the first LEO-PNT satellite is expected to launch by late 2025 with the entire system in orbit in 2027.

PREVENTING CORRUPTION IN FRANCE : GRECO CONCLUDES THAT FRANCE IS NOT IN SUFFICIENT COMPLIANCE WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council of Europe's anti-corruption body (GRECO) has just published a report evaluating the measures taken by the French authorities to implement the recommendations from 2019 on preventing corruption and promoting integrity in central government (top executive functions) and law enforcement agencies. GRECO concludes that France is not in sufficient compliance with the recommendations.

With regard to top executive functions, more than half of the recommendations have been partly implemented and some positive developments have taken place.

The Anti-Corruption Agency (AFA) and the High Authority



Hôtel Matignon is the official residence of the Prime Minister of France

for Transparency in Public Life (HATVP) have strengthened their co-operation regarding persons holding top executive functions (PTEFs).

A self-assessment questionnaire on conflicts of interest was handed out to members of Government when they first took office in July 2023. HATVP's prior vetting of the appointments of members of ministers' private offices and staff of the President of the Republic from the private sector has been effective but should be extended to all advisers. While there are registers of withdrawals for members of ministers' private offices and offices of the Presidency, these are not made public.

The preparation of the next national anti-corruption plan (2024-2027) is under way and will include a focus on preventing breaches of probity in the public sphere, particularly affecting PTEFs.

However, a number of recommendations have still not been implemented and require stronger action, in particular to increase the transparency of PTEFs' contacts with lobbyists. The declarations of assets and interests of the presidential candidate who has been elected should be subject to scrutiny.

Lastly, the composition of the Court of Justice of the Republic has not changed, and sufficient consideration has not been given to the issue of reporting to the Executive of information in cases concerning PTEFs.

As regards law enforcement agencies, GRECO welcomes the adoption of an updated version of the commentaries on two articles of the code of ethics of the National Police and the National Gendarmerie.

Other positive developments have been noted, such as the explicit inclusion of lack of integrity in the National Police's risk catalogue and the National Gendarmerie's implementation of a professional conduct action plan in 2022. The whistleblower protection system has also been strengthened.

On the other hand, there is still no global strategy focusing on the prevention of corruption risks within law enforcement agencies, no security checks whose frequency would depend on risk exposure and, within the National Police, no specific rotation system in the sectors identified as most vulnerable to corruption risks.

In the light of the foregoing, GRECO concludes that France has satisfactorily implemented or dealt with in a satisfactory manner two of the 18 recommendations set out in the 2019

Evaluation Report. Of the 16 remaining recommendations, 10 recommendations have been partly implemented and six recommendations have not been implemented. France is therefore asked to provide a report on the progress in implementing the outstanding recommendations by 31 March 2025.

The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) is a Council of Europe body that aims to improve the capacity of its members to fight corruption by monitoring their compliance with anti-corruption standards. It helps states to identify deficiencies in national anti-corruption policies, prompting the necessary legislative, institutional and practical reforms.

NORWAY PLANS TO TRANSFER F-16 FIGHTER JETS TO UKRAINE

Norway is preparing to deliver 22 F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine as part of an air coalition. However, it is noted that not all of these fighter jets were fully operational.

Some of them can be used as a donor of spare parts for the repair and maintenance of other Norwegian F-16s that will be transferred to the Ukrainian Air Force.

In addition to the aircraft themselves, Ukraine can also receive jet engines for fighter jets, auxiliary materials, training equipment, spare parts, and other equipment from Norway.

Twelve F-16s that Norway planned to sell to the American company Draken International under an agreement signed in November 2021, could be airworthy.

It is not yet known when Ukraine may receive the Norwegian F-16s, but it is assumed that this would not happen before the NATO summit in Washington in July.

In early April, the Ukrainian Air Force announced that several groups of Ukrainian pilots had advanced their F-16 training in allied countries.

Previously, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis approved the training of Ukrainian pilots on F-16 fighter jets at a training center in Romania.

The Pentagon has outlined "red lines" regarding the use of Ukrainian F-16s during the Russian-Ukrainian war. Western countries see the use of these aircraft only within the sovereign territory of Ukraine.



© MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OF NORWAY

Lockheed Martin F-16AM/BM Fighting Falcon fighters from the 331st Squadron of the 132nd Air Wing of the Norwegian Air Force

AMMUNITION SEIZED BY THE US TRANSFERRED TO UKRAINE



Thousands of Machine Guns and Sniper Rifles and Over 500,000 Rounds of Ammunition Seized En Route from Iran to Yemen Transferred to Ukrainian Armed Forces

The United States has transferred over 5,000 AK-47s, machine guns, sniper rifles, and RPG-7s, and over 500,000 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition to the Ukrainian armed forces. These armaments were seized by U.S. Central Command and partner naval forces from four flagless vessels in the Arabian Sea enroute from Iran to Yemen, where sanctioned groups including Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) directly support the Houthi movement. The Department of Justice then filed a civil forfeiture action against the seized munitions, resulting in a Dec. 1, 2023, order by the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia transferring title to the United States.

"With this weapons transfer, the United States government is both disrupting Iran's destabilizing efforts and supporting Ukraine's fight against Russia's brutal, unprovoked invasion," said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. "The Justice Department will continue to use our legal authorities, including forfeiture, to support the Ukrainian people in their fight for freedom, democracy, and the rule of law."

"As we see Russia and Iran engaging in conduct to undermine global security, the Department of Justice is taking deadly weapons out of the hands of terrorists and putting them into the hands of Ukrainians defending their homeland," said Assistant Attorney General for National Security Matthew G. Olsen. "We will continue to use the full reach of our authorities to disrupt the Iranian government's efforts to undermine stability and to support the Ukrainian people's stance against tyranny."

According to court documents in the civil forfeiture action, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command seized the weapons from four interdictions of stateless dhow vessels: two from 2021 and two from 2023. These interdictions led to the discovery and seizure of four large caches of conventional weapons, including long arms and anti-tank missiles, and related munitions – all of which were determined to be primarily of either Iranian, Chinese, or Russian origin.

This action followed the US government's successful March 2023 forfeiture action against over one million rounds of

ammunition en route from Iran to Yemen, which were also transferred to the Ukrainian armed forces. These forfeiture actions addressed the illicit trafficking of advanced conventional weapons systems and components by sanctioned Iranian entities that directly support military action by the Houthi movement in Yemen and the Iranian regime's campaign of terrorist activities throughout the region. The forfeiture complaints alleged sophisticated schemes by the IRGC to clandestinely ship weapons to entities that pose grave threats to U.S. national security.

SIEMENS HEALTHINEERS HAS DEVELOPED AN AUTOMATED, SELF-DRIVING C-ARM SYSTEM FOR INTRAOPERATIVE IMAGING IN SURGERY

Siemens Healthineers has developed an automated, self-driving C-arm system for intraoperative imaging in surgery. Ciartic Move is equipped with holonomic, omnidirectional wheels that allow precise movements even in the smallest of spaces and allow easy and accurate positioning. Using a remote control, the system can be moved to previously stored positions with the touch of a button. This relieves the burden on technologists, who previously had to set these manually. In addition, the automated process saves valuable time as the



automatic adjustments are more precise and thus can reduce imaging times². Ciartic Move enables around 50 percent time savings in intraoperative imaging during spine surgery, pelvic surgery and distal radius surgery by allowing the default positions and settings to be saved and recalled during the procedure.

"In conversations with our customers, the urgent need for a fully automated C-arm system to reduce the burden on surgical staff in the field of trauma surgery became apparent again and again. We have been developing this system over the past ten years and are very pleased to be able to introduce Ciartic Move," said Carsten Bertram, head of Advanced Therapies at Siemens Healthineers. "The automation of intraoperative imaging, complete remote control and ease of use ensure fast and accurate workflows."

Ciartic Move focuses on several challenges facing healthcare systems. Due to the drastic shortage of medical staff worldwide, it is not uncommon for medical interventions to have to be postponed. This leads to inefficiencies in the clinical process and is associated with longer and unplanned waiting times

for patients. In surgery, minimally invasive procedures have also established themselves as the method of choice as far as possible, as they are gentler on patients. However, this increases the demands on clinical staff. Surgical teams tend to be tightly scheduled, with several of these image-guided procedures routinely performed per day. In addition, the work in the operating room is physically demanding. During procedures, the C-arm, which can weigh up to half a ton, must be repositioned repeatedly to give the surgical staff the exact anatomical views they need in real time. With conventional mobile C-arms, this repetitive manual positioning can be time-consuming and prone to error. Controlling and moving the device within the operating room (OR) and between rooms also requires a great deal of physical effort.

Ciartic Move returns to previously stored positions and settings at the touch of a button at any time during the procedure. Up to 12 process-specific 2D or 3D C-arm positions can be stored – along with the associated image parameters. The system also has an active sensing technology that offers collision protection for greater safety. Touch-sense handles on the back and detector allow for effortless, motor-assisted movements during the procedure and make it easier to steer the system within the OR as well as moving it to another room. In addition, a single person can operate the system remotely, even from the sterile area¹. This makes it possible for appropriately trained surgeons or surgical teams to continue working even when personnel with special expertise in intraoperative imaging are not available.

“If surgical staff are absent at short notice, there is always the risk that procedures will have to be postponed,” said Dr Mario Perl, director of the department of Trauma Surgery and Orthopedics, Uniklinikum Erlangen, Germany. “Thanks to Ciartic Move we can relieve our staff and enable them to focus on patient-centered activities. The automatic return to the previously defined position that we used before allows us to save time and radiation.”

U.S. AND UK ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP ON SCIENCE OF AI SAFETY



U.S. Commerce Secretary
Gina Raimondo



Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media
and Sport – Rt Hon Michelle Donelan

The U.S. and UK have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which will see them work together to develop tests for the most advanced AI models.

Signed by U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and UK Technology Secretary Michelle Donelan, the partnership will see both countries working to align their scientific approaches and working closely to accelerate and rapidly iterate robust suites of evaluations for AI models, systems, and agents.

The U.S. and UK AI Safety Institutes have laid out plans to build a common approach to AI safety testing and to share their capabilities to ensure these risks can be tackled effectively. They intend to perform at least one joint testing exercise on a publicly accessible model. They also intend to tap into a collective pool of expertise by exploring personnel exchanges between the Institutes.

The partnership will take effect immediately and is intended to allow both organizations to work seamlessly with one another. AI continues to develop rapidly, and both governments recognise the need to act now to ensure a shared approach to AI safety which can keep pace with the technology's emerging risks. As the countries strengthen their partnership on AI safety, they have also committed to develop similar partnerships with other countries to promote AI safety across the globe.

“Because of our collaboration, our Institutes will gain a better understanding of AI systems, conduct more robust evaluations, and issue more rigorous guidance,” said U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo. “By working together, we are furthering the long-lasting special relationship between the U.S. and UK and laying the groundwork to ensure that we’re keeping AI safe both now and in the future.”

“This agreement represents a landmark moment, as the UK and the United States deepen our enduring special relationship to address the defining technology challenge of our generation,” said UK Secretary of State for Science, Innovation, and Technology, Michelle Donelan. “We have always been clear that ensuring the safe development of AI is a shared global issue. Only by working together can we address the technology's risks head on and harness its enormous potential to help us all live easier and healthier lives. The work of our two nations in driving forward AI safety will strengthen the foundations we laid at Bletchley Park in November, and I have no doubt that our shared expertise will continue to pave the way for countries tapping into AI's enormous benefits safely and responsibly.”

The U.S. and UK have always been clear that ensuring the safe development of AI is a shared global issue. Reflecting the importance of ongoing international collaboration, the partnership will also see both countries sharing vital information about the capabilities and risks associated with AI models and systems, as well as fundamental technical research on AI safety and security. This will work to underpin a common approach to AI safety testing, allowing researchers on both sides of the Atlantic—and around the world—to coalesce around a common scientific foundation.

SMARTPHONE MAKER XIAOMI STARTS SELLING ITS OWN EV

The Xiaomi SU7 is a battery electric full-size sedan. It is the first Xiaomi vehicle, and is manufactured under contract by BAIC Off-road in Beijing. The car was formally launched on 28 March 2024 in Beijing, with Xiaomi starting to take orders for the car on that day.



The Xiaomi SU7

Production of the SU7 started in December 2023. The standard version of costs CNY 215,900 yuan (US\$30,408).

The SU7 uses many international suppliers for its parts, including Bosch, Brembo, Continental, ThyssenKrupp, ZF Friedrichshafen, Benteler, Schaeffler Group and Nexteer Automotive and supports Apple's Car Play to interact with the iPad.

The SU7 Max uses a 101 kWh NMC battery produced by CATL and branded as Qilin mounted in a cell-to-pack format. The base, rear-wheel drive SU7 uses a smaller 73.6 kW LFP battery. Xiaomi also plans to release versions with 132 kWh and 150 kWh batteries. According to Xiaomi, the base SU7 is able to accelerate from 0–100 km/h (0–62 mph) in 5.3 seconds, while the SU7 Max goes from 0–100 km/h (0–62 mph) in 2.78 seconds. Speed is limited to 210 km/h (130 mph) for the base model, and 265 km/h (165 mph) for the SU7 Max.

Xiaomi founder Lei Jun disclosed that over 40,000 orders had been locked out of the 100,000 pre-orders received for the SU7.

A € 25.000 GRANT TO ENCOURAGE R&D AND DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE YACHTING

It was as part of Monaco Ocean Week that the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and Yacht Club de Monaco officially announced a new prize for the Monaco Energy Boat Challenge (<https://energyboatchallenge.com/>) that marks a new milestone in their partnership and was attended by Mike Horn and Bertrand Piccard, the event's sponsor

Under the aegis of the collective Monaco, Capital of *Advanced* Yachting approach and organised by YCM, this event brings maritime industry pioneers together with visionary engineers around a common goal: to promote alternative propulsion and sustainability in the yachting sector. On the programme, a unique convergence of boats already on or about to enter the market and innovative prototypes. *"Every year, students surpass themselves. They are an amazing source of ideas. It is fascinating to see their potential and we are happy to put them in contact with industry players who are a great support for these young engineers,"* says YCM General Secretary Bernard d'Alessandri

The Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, an active

Monaco Energy Boat Challenge partner, is adding another dimension to the partnership in launching the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation Sustainable Yachting Technology Award. The contest is open to universities anywhere in the world and on 6th July will reward the best technological solution that is applicable to yachting in terms of energy efficiency and/or carbon reduction. *"We are pleased to initiate this prize to help finance the development of a university's department with a grant of €25,000. We hope to encourage the winner to go further with its applied research and who knows maybe help those prototypes progress towards a more industrial solution,"* explains Olivier Wenden, Vice-President of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation. Once the grant has been awarded, the winner will be able to present progress on their project at the Monaco Energy Boat Challenge for three years starting in 2025.



SAS Prince Albert II of Monaco alongside Mike Horn (standing right), Bernard d'Alessandri (sitting left) and Olivier



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DEFENDING EUROPE (EDIS)

**Preparing Europe's
industry for possible
(probable?) conflict with
Russia or its friends**

Some things haven't changed since Roman times or even earlier. Take that old adage "Si vis pacem, para bellum", which was written by the Roman general Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus in his tract *Dē Rē Militārī*, and is usually translated as "If you want peace, prepare for war." It was originally written as "Igitur quī dēsīderat pācem, prāparet bellum," and its author's name is usually given simply as Vegetius. It was true then, as it had been for centuries, and it still is today. We know he lived in the late 4th century, towards the end of the Roman empire, and that he wrote two works that are quite highly regarded, but not much more is known about him. His rules on siege craft and on the need for discipline, were studied during the Middle Ages and his work became the go-to book on military tactics in Europe. George Washington owned a copy. And, of course, he was right on the money with that famous quote, even today. It's what underpins the EU's policy of its European Defence Industrial Strategy, or EDIS. According to the European Commission, the European Union needs to strengthen the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) and achieve industrial readiness for Europe's defence. This is, of course, a response to Vladimir Putin's aggressive posturing and his apparent desire for war, even if it's a war that nobody can ever truly win.

This is the first time that the European Commission has produced a European Defence Industry Strategy and it was announced by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during her 2023 "State of the Union" speech. This is serious stuff, setting out the vision for the European Defence Industrial Policy up to 2035, through increased and more collaborative investment by the EU's member states. Part of the overall policy is to improve the European defence industry's ability to respond quickly to a crisis, no matter what the circumstances or the restraints imposed by time. The policy calls for a culture of "mainstream defence readiness" across all EU plans, working together with strategic and like-minded international partners.



(From left to right), Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau - Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni - Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy - President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen

The EU was not, of course, ever intended to get involved in defence issues. It all began in May 1950, when Robert Schuman unveiled a French government proposal to place the coal and steel industries of the two countries under a single authority, to be known as the High Authority, "within the framework of an organisation open to the participation of the other countries of Europe" as Dirk



Jacques Delors

Spierenburg and Raymond Poidevin wrote in their brilliant history of how it all began, "The History of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community: Supranationality in Operation" (or in its original form "Histoire de la haute autorité européenne du charbon et de l'acier. Une expérience supranationale.")

If you want to know how it all happened, this is the only book to read. I know that because back in 1994 I worked with the authors to edit it and rewrite parts. Jacques Delors, arguably the most famous ever former President of the European Commission wrote the foreword, having been approached by Spierenburg about his idea back in 1987. You may think the title makes it sound dull, but I can assure you that is not the case. Once each week, Poidevin, Spierenburg and I would meet over a beer or two (or more) in a bar near to the European Commission in Brussels. It was great fun, a fact that I think is reflected in the text. The beer, being Belgian, was pretty good, too. Both men were a real pleasure to be with, charming and erudite, with a host of fascinating anecdotes about the heady start of what would grow up to become the European Union. As Jacques Delors wrote in his foreword to the book: "Today, as Europe searches for a new identity and as more and more nations are turning to the Community, it is more essential than ever to record historical events for posterity."

Sadly, since the UK's idiotic decision to leave the EU, many things have been going wrong around the world. We must simply accept, I suppose, that some world leaders long to smell the smoke of battle and hear the rattle of automatic fire (as long as they're personally far enough away to be in no direct personal danger). They are the sorts of military heroes who always prefer to lead from the rear, safely out of harm's way. We have to remember, of course, that Europe's working classes had been through some very tough times while their habitations and standards of living had been generally appalling. If that had not been true, the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels would have been ignored and there would have been no Communist Manifesto. There would have been no Soviet Union, either, but the mistreatment of those not born to privilege would have gone on.

New ways paths to the future



President John F. Kennedy and Chancellor of West Germany, Dr. Konrad Adenauer

While Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky were dreaming of a utopian future in which everyone would be equal (a sadly impossible state of affairs), the dreams of Robert Schuman (France's Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time) and the French political economist, Jean Monnet (now seen as one of the founding fathers of the European Community), were focused on the more achievable goals of extending cooperation, with the idea of some sort of "pool" of resources and effort gaining ground in post-war France. It also found favour in Germany, with Chancellor Konrad Adenauer describing the idea as being necessary to "sow the seeds of broad-based international co-operation in the field of coal and steel", a co-operation which seemed to him to be "highly desirable for Franco-German understanding."

It was this shared vision, together with the stated view of several of the historians that both men admired that led them to launch what became known as the "Schuman Plan". In the light of a decision whose effects would be revealed only over the years ahead, you will not be surprised to note that the greatest opposition to the idea came from the UK and, to a lesser extent, the Scandinavian countries. In Britain's case, there has long been a deep-seated if totally unjustified distrust of foreigners.



Signature of the Paris Treaty in 1951

And yet it was the fear of war, so soon after the end of a massive global conflict, that gave impetus to the moves towards a deeper co-operation and ultimately to the European Community (later the European Union). In the spring of 1950, with the Cold War heating up, Monnet was deeply worried, as were a great many other people, that Europe would be plunged into another war unless the problems plaguing Germany and its worried neighbours could be solved.

Monnet realised that the only solution was for France to overcome its fear of domination by German industry whilst also saving that industry from the discrimination born of Germany's recent defeat. That way, Monnet believed, the necessary economic and political foundations could be laid for the sort of mutual understanding Europe so desperately needed, without a fear of another shooting war beginning. If only he'd been around when Britain left the EU! Instead, certain popular newspapers (who apparently still hate Europe for no obvious reason) inexplicably failed to point out the possible effects that leaving might have on holidays in Europe, for instance, so holidaymakers are surprised by the long queues at Dover that the Remain campaigners had predicted. One of the leave campaigners has recently claimed that leaving the EU has boosted Britain's exports of honey. The honey industry says that's simply untrue, but the attachment to truth was never very strong among the "Leave" campaigners and the right-wing nationalist newspapers that supported them.

European defence industrial strategy

WHERE DOES THE EU WANT TO GO?

EU Member States need the defence industry to be capable of producing more and faster. This will require more cooperation and collective action as Europeans.

European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS) proposes several tangible indicators:

- By 2030, the value of intra-EU defence trade should represent at least 35% of the value of the EU defence market.
- By 2030, at least 50% of Member States defence procurement budget should be devoted to procurement from the EDTIB, and 60% by 2035.
- By 2030, Member States should procure at least 40% of defence equipment in a collaborative manner.

HOW DOES THE EU GET THERE?

- A new joint programming and procurement function, through the creation of a Defence Industrial Readiness Board, and a high-level European Defence Industry Group
- Financial support to EU Member States' cooperation in procurement from the EDTIB
- Structure for European Armament Programme

- (SEAP) facilitating EU Member States' defence cooperation
- Preparation for a European Military Sales Mechanism to enhance availability of EU equipment
 - Launch of European Defence Projects of common Interest
 - Supporting investment in responsive production capacities
 - Support the production of drones
 - Finance for SMEs and Small Mid-Caps through the Fund to Accelerate Defence Supply Chain Transformation (FAST)
 - EU Security of Supply regime to solve tensions along the supply chains and identify bottlenecks
 - Continuous support for research into future-proof defence capabilities
 - EU Defence Innovation Office in Kyiv
 - Inviting the EIB Group to review its lending policies this year
 - Promote defence industry across the financial sector.
 - Consider including or maintaining defence readiness security and resilience as an explicit objective under future relevant EU programmes.
 - Promote Ukraine's participation in the Union's defence industry programmes
 - EU-Ukraine Defence Industry Forum in 2024
 - Enhance staff-to-staff structured dialogue with NATO
 - Proposed European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP) with a budget of €1.5 billion
 - Discussion with Member States on the EU's financing needs in advance of the next MFF.

I Back in time

The institutional negotiations that led to the Treaty of Paris being signed were lengthy and complicated, but in the end, they preserved the three most important principles of Monnet's great vision. The agreement brought together his key requirements: an independence from governments and the collaboration of the main institutions, rather than having one lording it over the rest. The ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) Treaty further established supranational law, laying down the exact rules and establishing what parts the various component bodies would play and with exactly how much power. It's very different now.

According to NATO, Russia and its allies seem firm in the belief that if they do enough bullying, they'll get their way. When



Belgian Foreign Minister, Hadja Lahbib (left) with NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg cutting the 75th anniversary cake

NATO marked its 75th anniversary in early April, Moscow announced that it and NATO are now in "direct confrontation". It's a question of differing points of view. Moscow sees NATO's expansion as a deliberate policy to extend its borders towards Russia, while NATO says it is merely a defensive alliance and any independent country should feel free to apply for membership. Moscow is certainly opposed to Georgia and Moldova (both of them lovely countries, incidentally) having the right to do anything without Moscow's permission. The Russian bloc's view of independence of action is very, very different from the West's. BBC journalist Laura Kuenssberg has warned of a change of approach on Russia's part. The NATO chief, Jens Stoltenberg, explained it to her: "China is propping up the Russian war economy, delivering key parts to the defence industry, and in return, Moscow is mortgaging its future to Beijing." What's more, he warned, Russia is providing technology to Iran and North Korea in return for ammunition and military equipment. However, while Mr Stoltenberg said that military support was vital to repel Russian forces from Ukraine and force Putin to give up his goals of border-to-border occupation, he also suggested that Ukraine might ultimately have to make concessions too.



Russian President, Vladimir Putin with the Vice Chairman of China's Central Military Commission, Zhang Youxia and Russian Defence Minister, Sergei Shoigu in Moscow, November 2023

"At the end of the day, it has to be Ukraine that decides what kind of compromises they're willing to do, we need to enable them to be in a position where they actually achieve an acceptable result around the negotiating table," he said. Things would appear to be much more dangerous and uncertain now than they were when Monnet put forward his ideas for co-operation in two key industries. Then, Europe had just experienced an horrific war, but today people seem to have forgotten what it was like.

After all, they've only seen fictional representations of it in which nobody actually died and the goodies ultimately won. Putin, let's face it, will not stop stirring up trouble until somebody declares him the undisputed leader of the world. He is a narcissistic fantasist. If anyone really wants to understand the horror of it all, I would suggest a visit to the old Auschwitz death camp in Poland. The Soviet

photographer who recorded what the Russians found when they liberated it would speak to nobody for three weeks afterwards and was reduced to tears. Putin, it seems, lacks that man's sensitivity.

Speaking to mark the 75th anniversary of NATO's founding, Stoltenberg told Kuenssberg that the world is now "much more dangerous, much more unpredictable" and "much more violent" than it was back then. He also warned that Russia, Iran, China and North Korea are increasingly in alignment. Working together they could inflict a lot of damage on a world at peace. Their vision, after all, of a future world that they would find perfect would be a very different sort of place from that envisioned by most of the rest of us, and much more deadly.

Despite Donald Trump raving at NATO members for not spending enough on defence against Russian aggression, those countries claim to be paying what they can. As America's Business Insider newspaper reports: "We have no other options besides supporting Ukraine and ensuring it wins," Estonia's Foreign Minister, Margus Tsahkna told journalists, highlighting that NATO and the West "would pay" heavily should Russia win and expand its ambitions to conquering other neighbours.



Estonia's Foreign Minister, Margus Tsahkna

That seems to be Putin's ambition, after all. Europe certainly isn't rooting for Trump in the upcoming elections. He has already said that America's contribution to NATO funding might end unless those European countries most under threat do more, and it's a view that is gaining traction as the US Presidential election draws near. But NATO's newest member, Sweden, is already making militaristic noises towards Russia, talking about reinforcing the Baltic Sea island of Gotland, which would significantly strengthen the defence capabilities of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, and Poland. Russia is very annoyed about this development and has made blustering noises in response, although nothing more deadly – so far.

Trump would actually seem to be poorly informed about the NATO countries' readiness to face a Russian threat. France and Germany are already co-operating in the production of military equipment destined for Ukraine's war effort, even making the arms on Ukrainian soil. Latvia's Foreign Minister Krišjānis Kariņš emphasized how the Baltic countries are preparing to deter and counter Russia. "So, in Latvia, and in my neighbours, we go full out," Kariņš told the newspaper, "We invest in our own defence, budgeting 2.4% this year, it looks like we're going to hit 3% this year, and we will be going beyond that in the future as well." If Putin was betting on a rapid surrender by Ukraine and its neighbours when they come under Russian attack, he seems to have badly miscalculated. Similarly, a number of NATO countries are spending 2% or more of their gross domestic product on defence, with the remaining members under increasing pressure to match those figures. In 2023, Poland spent 3.9% of its GDP on defence, which puts its spending (in proportion terms) ahead of the United States with its 3.49% and Greece with 3.01%. Other nations bordering Russia or Belarus have done likewise: Estonia spent 2.73%, Lithuania 2.54%, Latvia 2.07%, with Finland, Romania and Hungary also spending above the 2% threshold.

Facing a new threat of war

EDIS, however, is something new. It's unlikely to inspire stirring poetry, but it may make victory more likely against an unpredictable foe with delusions of grandeur. The UK's United Services Institute (RUSI), for instance, has been urging European Countries to ramp up their preparations for a possible war with Russia – without the support of the United States. Until recently, Russia has been suffering from a shortage of vehicles and weapons, but it is overcoming that through standardisation, which has allowed it to step up production from around 40 long-range missiles per month to more than a hundred, whilst increasing its supplies of artillery shells by getting a hundred or more per month from North Korea and also setting up factories in Iran. According to RUSI: "Russia is settling down for a long war, aiming to grind down Ukraine and exhaust the capacity and will of its Western supporters to supply the vehicles, ammunition and weapons it needs to keep fighting successfully." Of course, it proves that Putin was lying outlandishly when he claimed his intention was a "small-scale military operation" to remove NAZIs. There weren't any. Back in the days of the Cold War, Russia's military spending was far higher, reaching 21% of its GDP by 1985. According to RUSI, "the Kremlin can leverage a formidable coercive information and security apparatus to maintain tight control over any forms of public or political dissent." What's more, public opinion seems largely to favour continuing or even stepping up the war, although it's not clear why the Russian public think that way. Then again, however, there are no opposition newspapers nor are contrary views permitted.

Meanwhile, Europe has failed to make the investments required for increased industrial production capacity and defence spending. Poland is a notable exception here, perhaps because it knows what Russia is capable of.

The most obvious example of underspending is Germany, which shortly after the Russian invasion made a public



commitment to spend 2% of GDP on defence by 2024, in addition to a one-off investment of €100 billion to revitalise the Bundeswehr's capabilities. However, only €1.5 billion from the fund had actually been spent by mid-2023, and the defence budget as a whole actually decreased slightly compared to 2022. The UK Defence plan following the Defence Command Paper refresh is already £16.9-billion (€19.7-billion) short of projected planned expenditure over the coming decade. Even so, most of the one-off £5-billion (€5.83-billion) that was granted in 2023 was allocated to long-term nuclear submarine and weapons programmes, with only £1.9 billion (€6.88 billion) of it going towards munitions resupply and purchases for Ukraine over two years. The European Defence Agency's multinational 155 mm artillery procurement programme is, in the view of RUSI, a solid plan along the required lines, but has been extremely slow to get going when compared with the pace at which Ukrainian requirements are outstripping supply. The EDA programme is

also still far from sufficient at its current scale to put Ukraine's war effort on a sustainable footing for the immediately foreseeable future, let alone replenish Europe's own defence stockpiles, which have been badly depleted.

And now we have the EU's latest plan: EDIS. It's based on that old adage I mentioned earlier: if you want peace, prepare for war. What it really means, of course, is "don't be caught out". If you want your country to stay peaceful you must always be ready to deal with those who have contrary ideas. Nobody, it seems, has more contrary ideas than Putin, whose love of going to war is legendary. So is his lack of morals. "Back when he was deputy mayor in St. Petersburg", says Mark Galeotti's scary book, "We Need to Talk About Putin", he reminds us, Putin's job was to act as a 'liaison' – essentially to cut deals with whomever he had to, to keep the city running and the local bigwigs happy. This included powerful crime gangs, especially the Tambovskaya group, an organisation so formidable that its leader, Vladimir Kumarib, became known as the 'night governor'. They were all big-time crooks, of course, and Putin was their influential facilitator. He was and remains a criminal, even under Russia's shaky laws. But he's not going anywhere; Russia is stuck with him; a country ruled by a gangster. We should remember Galeotti's final conclusions. "Even as we look to a future Russia after Putin," he writes, "that gives us another reason to talk about Putin. Because there could be another Putin, an even bigger one, waiting in the stairwell." I used to think Dracula stories were scary but Putin stories are scarier. And they're true.

Jim Gibbons

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European manufactured NH90 helicopter operated by the Bundeswehr



Interpol's Secretary General Ron Noble and
Fifa's President Sepp Blatter during the press
conference in Zurich in 2011 announcing
the Fifa Interpol deal (retouched photo)

CALLING FOUL

**How European law
enforcement found itself in
bed with suspicious sports
companies – and finds it
difficult to get away (and
avoid scandal)**



The headquarters of Interpol in Lyon and the headquarters of the Vienna Police, where the International Criminal Police Congress was held in 1923

Why doesn't somebody blow the whistle? Money intended, quite legitimately, to fund sports and big sporting events is slipping into the coffers of Interpol, and questions have been being asked about undue influence, bias, and corruption. After all, paying off the police is just not sporting, is it? In the UK it used to mean bribing a police officer to turn a blind eye to a crime, but since they were badly paid it wasn't all that shocking, even if the odd house breaker got away with a crime. The biggest problem today is on a whole different scale and concerns money from FIFA, "the Fédération Internationale de Football Association". It's the international governing body of association football, and also of a handful of related activities, all of which make fortunes for promoters whose interest in law and order stops short at finding ways to get around those same laws. Amazingly, FIFA came into existence in 1904 to keep things lawful in international football competitions involving Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. I can't help wondering how well those teams of long ago would have fared against today's extremely wealthy players, now traded for large sums between clubs and countries, and the clubs' multi-millionaire owners. FIFA has grown a bit over the years, of course, while its reputation seems to have shrunk. It often blows its own trumpet somewhat, with such claims as: "FIFA exists to govern football and to develop the game around the world. Since 2016, the organisation has been fast evolving into a body that can more effectively serve our game for the benefit of the entire world." It also seems to benefit – unintentionally (one hopes) – some of the sporting world's biggest and richest crooks.

Interpol wasn't created until 1923 but it was intended to promote enhanced cooperation among the various law enforcement agencies in existence at the time. It appears to be more greatly needed today, if somewhat under-appreciated, at least by those in charge. Interpol negotiated a deal with FIFA worth a staggering €20-million, although it was ended in 2015. Of course, there are corporate sponsors hoping to gain from a close relationship with Europe's (and the world's) favourite sporting entertainment – names like Visa and Samsung spring to mind – but FIFA, on the other hand, was helping to sponsor Interpol. Millions of euros flowed in that direction, which may appear to the mere layman (or laywoman) rather like having the police funded by the burglars' union. There are plenty of other donors, too, who are seen as "partners", such as the tobacco manufacturers and the big pharmaceutical companies. According to one report I have on my desk, the French investigative and public opinion publication, Mediapart, has slammed FIFA's (and Interpol's) links with the tobacco companies, too, while the German weekly, Die Zeit, has severely criticised similar links with the pharmaceutical industry. The report claims that the likes of Philip Morris, Sanofi and Kaspersky Lab have swollen Interpol's operational budget by

almost a third through their "generosity". However strange it may seem, however, Interpol's unsavoury-seeming relationships appear to have largely passed unnoticed by much of the media. When you've found a goldmine you do not ask the nuggets if the pick-axe blows cause pain.

This whole business is somewhat surprising – not to mention worrying – considering that Interpol now has responsibility for co-ordinating the policing operations of its 190 member countries. The cosy-seeming relationships are being probed, however, by the US Department of Justice and the office of the Swiss attorney general (Switzerland record in all this is not especially glittering). Eyebrows have certainly been raised, reports the news source City A.M., over the contribution by the massive Chinese e-commerce company Alibaba of €512,000 to help fund Interpol's investigations into the "illegal trafficking of illicit goods and counterfeiting" over the preceding four years. An Interpol spokesperson told City A.M. that it was a "one-off payment" in 2021, although some of that fund was still being used the following year. At the time of the City A.M. report, Interpol had not published its voluntary contributions for 2023.



Alibaba Group headquarters, Hangzhou, China

Interestingly, given the claimed reason for the donation, some of Alibaba's own sites stood accused of failing to clamp down on the sale of counterfeit goods. Since then, Alibaba has abandoned a planned "initial public offering" (IPO) of shares, offering instead to buy out its minority shareholders because the proposed move had failed to attract enough investors. The US Trade Representative has expressed her concern about the continuance of Alibaba's alleged dealings involving counterfeit goods and its likely effects on US commerce. "The widespread trade in counterfeit and pirated goods harms the economic security of American workers and undermines our work to craft equitable and inclusive trade policy," Ambassador Katherine Tai told City A.M. "The Notorious Markets List is an important tool that urges the private sector and our trading partners to take action against these harmful practices." The agency praised Alibaba's efforts to curb illegal transactions overall, but nevertheless pointed out two of its sites, AliExpress and Taobao, as arousing a suspicion of malfeasance.

I Of football and fantasy

In the very clever fantasy books of the late Terry Pratchett, the biggest city on his fictional Discworld is called Ankh-Morpork, where those who want to become thieves can obtain full (and legal) training at the Thieves' Guild. But they also need a licence, issued



FBI Director James Comey joins other federal officials, including Attorney General Loretta Lynch (left) at a press conference in New York regarding the indictments of nine FIFA officials and five corporate executives on corruption and racketeering charges

by the Guild, and if they're caught stealing without one, they are handed to the Guild for punishment, which is always severe and can be terminal. In the world of professional football, it seems, a similar system is in operation. It has been carefully crafted to take money from duped fans and to funnel it relentlessly into the pockets of those in charge, who are already extremely wealthy. In fact, the Thieves' Guild looks surprisingly innocent when compared with the apparent activities of FIFA and Interpol. One big scandal at FIFA that on this rare occasion made the newspapers was not uncovered by Interpol at all but by the FBI. Of course, the FBI is a fully funded law enforcement body, unlike poverty-stricken Interpol, which covers 192 countries on a budget just around one sixtieth the size of the sum at the FBI's disposal for just one (admittedly large) country. It means that the crooks and football club bosses (who in some regrettable cases may even be the same people) have more than a football at their feet; they have the world and all its riches. Whoever said "crime doesn't pay" had clearly never watched a football game.

Interpol also decided not to give evidence at a UK parliamentary hearing held at Westminster, choosing to send written evidence instead, claiming that whatever its representatives said would not be protected by the International Organisations Act of 1968, which was supposed to give immunity from legal action to named international organisations, although it's also true that Interpol was not one of those named. The inquiry mainly centred on the alleged abuse of the Red Notice system, through which legal investigations are launched at the request of individual member states. MPs were told that of 346 Red Notices (which can be issued by Interpol at the request of a member state to call for the subject's arrest, wherever he or she may be, but are supposed to be issued only when a member state has accused someone of a serious offence needing investigation). The accusations involve "state actors", and only 200 of those made were admissible as complaints. Interpol, of course, holds a substantial volume of sensitive police data. In fact, it seems that law-makers are more worried about the Red Notice system being abused than

about the abuses whose very existence was supposed to justify the issuance of a Red Notice in the first place. It all seems back-to-front: the system comes down less hard on the wrong-doers as it does upon those who report them for their illegal acts. There is an old saying: "Set a thief to catch a thief", but in this case that just seems to multiply the numbers of thieves, without catching any at all. However, the risks involved in the misuse of the Red Notice system are very real.

I Muddying the water

The abusers of the system who cause the greatest concern include China, Russia, and Turkey, possibly affecting a particular individual but also, very possibly, a close relative of that person. Nothing puts pressure on a person who is accused of a misdemeanor than the discovery that a close relative is under investigation for it. William Browder, for instance, of Hermitage Capital Management and a campaigner for Interpol reform, told MPs of his personal experiences: "Now, whenever I cross an international border, I have to be prepared that I could be arrested at any time on an abusive Russian request via Interpol channels," which is very inconvenient, although the story gets worse.



William F. Browder, CEO and Co-Founder, Hermitage Capital Management

Browder continued: "I have to restrict my travel and avoid going to countries that have warm political relations with Russia because if I was arrested and sent to Russia, I would almost certainly suffer the same fate as Sergei Magnitsky." Magnitsky was a whistle-blower on Russian corruption who died in a notorious Russian prison in 2009 after (correctly) exposing fraud by tax officials. The Swiss authorities ended their own investigation (it hardly deserves such a description) without bringing any charges either.

A decade after Magnitsky's death, the European Court of Human Rights found that Russia had violated Magnitsky's rights, and it also condemned Russia for medical negligence, overcrowding at the prison, and a posthumous trial that was unfair. It



UK Home Secretary, Suella Braverman (left) and Interpol Secretary General, Jürgen Stock in 2022

can be a very dangerous sport, football. If Russia is involved it's rather like playing Russian roulette when you know your own gun is unloaded. The UK inquiry was very critical of Interpol, pointing out that its secretariat had decided to take no action against Russia or China, despite powerful evidence of abuse. The UK remains one of the largest contributors to the Interpol budget, but Browder accuses its government and legal authorities of declining to warn him of Red Notices issued against him, nor informing him of places where he could be at risk. When schoolboys utter that old cheer from a poem by Sir Henry Newbolt: "Play up, play up, and play the game!" it would seem to be the game of chance, in which the body with the greatest funds cannot lose and the individual can never win. It's not very sporting, really. More tea and crumpets, anyone?

The numbers of Red Notices being issued is on the rise, of course. They're a useful weapon in this game of "war-through-sport". The numbers issued rose by a factor of five over the ten years to 2016. There is an accurate (albeit terrifying) documentary by video reporting group Slice which details Interpol's financial difficulties and lack of real powers to curb wrongdoing. It correctly points out that all police forces are short of cash and forced into austerity, although in Interpol's case this situation is worsened by fears that the organisation reflects a loss of sovereignty. It's an old, old device, much used by Brexit campaigners who never (to my knowledge) explained to voters what the expression "sovereignty" even means before they went off unknowingly to vote in favour of economic difficulties, travel problems and lower public revenue receipts. In Interpol's case, the resistance is all about handing responsibility for law enforcement to a foreign police force (whatever happened to the concept of cooperation against criminality?). It's worth recalling the involvement of Sepp Blatter in the negotiations.

Blatter is a Swiss former football administrator who served as the eighth President of FIFA from 1998 to 2015. He has since been banned from taking part in FIFA activities as a result of the 2015 FIFA corruption case, and he must stay out of the game until 2027. In case you have forgotten this long-ago scandal, towards the end of May 2015, fourteen people were indicted following an investigation by

the FBI and American tax investigators into wire fraud, racketeering and money laundering. The case also centred on the alleged use of bribery and fraud, as well as the corrupt issuing of media and marketing rights for FIFA games. All very sporting, eh? It's perhaps worth remembering that at a press conference Blatter said of Interpol that: "this might become the intelligence wing of FIFA". It's a very worrying suggestion to come from such a senior figure. Ron Noble, the Secretary-General of Interpol at that time, didn't respond to the idea. You may recall, Noble was an American law enforcement officer who served as the head Interpol from 2000 to 2014 and was the organization's first American leader.

But of course, we're not just dealing with sport here. The giant tobacco company Philip Morris denied Interpol access to a conference it organised on corruption in the tobacco industry. The sum of €1.25-billion was paid by the company to the EU to avoid prosecution over a related issue, while the big tobacco companies (including Philip Morris) took control of the "fight against cigarette smuggling", thought to be the reason for Interpol's exclusion. "No prosecutions, please; we're business-people," perhaps. The Ombudsman has found maladministration in the European Commission's failure to ensure transparency across all its departments when it comes to meetings with tobacco lobbyists as well as its failure to ensure that all departments systematically assess whether specific meetings with tobacco representatives are needed at all. As a signatory to the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the EU is obliged to limit its interactions with the tobacco industry and to make those interactions transparent.

It's true that Interpol was not intended to concern itself with political, military, religious or racial affairs, but it was soon caught up instead with illegality concerning alcohol, tobacco, the sex industry, and arms production. It also publishes Red Notices, despite the controversy over their seeming misuse by some authoritarian regimes keen to silence their critics (sometimes permanently). Any member state can issue a red notice, although an independent body, known as the Commission for the Control of Interpol's Files made up of lawyers and other legal experts has the right to scrutinise and even refuse them in the event of abuse. Even so, countries such as Russia and China have been accused of misusing Interpol's alert system for political purposes. Interpol Secretary-General Jürgen Stock has defended the agency's record in policing its own alert system. "When repeated non-compliance occurs," he told the media, "Preventative" and corrective measures are applied to those member countries to protect the integrity of our channels." It's not easy when some member states are deliberately trying to spread confusion to cover up their illicit (and immoral) activities.



Browder points out that in 2018 he was arrested in Spain on a Russian arrest warrant, although Interpol insisted that no Red Notice had been issued for him. In 2021, a member of China's persecuted Uyghur minority, Idris Hasan, was arrested in Morocco on a Red Notice issued by Interpol at the request of China. Interpol later declared the Red Notice in this case as "non-compliant", citing it as a case of "the inherent dangers of an international policing organisation cooperating with non-rule-of-law countries prone to abuse such instruments for persecutions that run counter to Interpol's constitution," said an internal report.

A senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, Ted Bromund, said Interpol works on the assumption that its member states act in good faith, although in some cases it's clear that they don't. He also said that Interpol is failing to prevent "questionable" Red Notices being filed by such countries as China, Russia, and Turkey, which usually have little or nothing to do with crime but a lot to do with the exercise of control and are usually unwarranted.

He who pays the piper

The €20-million deal between Interpol and football raised more than a few eyebrows when it began and few were surprised when it was ended in 2015, despite having been signed by Sepp Blatter and Ron Noble. There have been calls from Robert Barrington



Robert Barrington, Professor of Anti-Corruption Practice at the Centre for the Study of Corruption in the University of Sussex and former executive member of Transparency International

of Transparency International for Interpol to return the funds, although it would leave the organisation with a very small budget for crime-fighting. When the idea was put forward by the journal Politico it drew no response from Interpol. There are vast profits to be made from competitive sport and controlling them is no easy task.

Match-fixing, for instance, provides a wide range of opportunities for criminal profit, along with a fail-safe way to launder criminal proceeds. From Interpol's



Chart showing sources of Interpol funding for 2022

point of view, it means cooperation among those controlling the sport itself, public authorities, betting regulators, the gambling industry, and law enforcement bodies. Interpol also has a task force to tackle match-fixing, involving enforcement agencies from around the world. The international match fixing task force itself (IMFTF) has some 100 member units with more than 150 global Points of Contact. There is a separate body tackling illegal gambling and money laundering activities. The actions of Interpol and Operation SOGA (anti-gambling on soccer) have so far resulted in 20,300 arrests, the seizures of US\$ 64 million in cash, and the closures of some 4,000 illegal gambling dens which together handled more than US\$ 7.3 billion worth of bets.

It's curious to note that even at the time when Interpol and FIFA cosied up to each other, FIFA was already under investigation for corruption, which raises questions about Interpol's ability to select reliable partners wisely. Nor has Interpol responded to repeated questions by Politico as to why it took no part in an FBI-led investigation into FIFA's affairs. There has been a response to Interpol's search for funding. A US\$15-million donation from Philip Morris, for instance, led to Interpol being barred from a convention on tobacco control organised by the World Health Organisation (WHO). One simply cannot play in the mud without getting dirty, however well-intentioned one may be. Of course, Interpol could well respond that you can't tackle multi-millionaire crooks without enough money to fund your investigation. And we must not forget, of course, that soccer is not the only professional sport mired in accusations of criminal corruption. World Rugby, for instance, has taken legal action after the on-line abuse of match officials and players during the Rugby World Cup. One person in Australia has been prosecuted and other prosecutions are said to be pending in a number of countries, with more than 1,600 online accounts being flagged up for investigation or legal action.

In another, rather different case, the former president of China's Football Association has pleaded guilty to bribery, fifteen people in Taiwan have been indicted for allegedly fixing a basketball match and a French tennis player has been suspended for seven years and fined US\$5,000 for failing to cooperate with an investigation into match fixing by the International Tennis Integrity Agency. Where there's money to be had, people will cheat and connive to get their hands on it. Sadly, it's human nature, but that doesn't mean that law enforcement agencies should turn a blind eye to it. Football fans meaning to attend this summer's Euro 24 series of matches in Germany have been warned to steer clear of neo-Nazi thugs who intend to disrupt the matches with violence if they can. Some experts have suggested that the threats of violence have been exaggerated by a media that thrives on such things. As a member of the media myself, I find that very sad and – if true – completely inexcusable.



Interpol databases over 20 million times daily - equivalent to 250 searches each second

In the last century, INTERPOL has become one of the most well-known organisations globally.

Since its creation, the organization has carried out countless operations during which criminals have been arrested, children have been rescued, weapons, drugs and illicit products have been seized,” Interpol president, Ahmed Naser Al-Raisi, said during the opening ceremony of the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of Interpol.

Contrary to popular depictions of ‘INTERPOL officers’ making dramatic entrances in different countries as a global police force, the truth is that only national law enforcement has the authority to make arrests and seizures.

Instead, INTERPOL enables police to deal with crime that goes outside their national boundaries by exchanging and accessing information among the Organization’s 195 member countries, as well as utilising other technical and operational assistance.

In today’s world, where crime is more widespread than ever and criminals are increasingly active in online places that transcend borders, INTERPOL’s operational importance to law enforcement has been enhanced.

Typically, law enforcement officers access INTERPOL databases over 20 million times daily - equivalent to 250 searches each second.

(Source Interpol)

Parents should certainly be able to take their children to support a favourite team without the fear of violence erupting. Much of that problem seems to involve far-right gangs who view acts of violence as “part of the fun” of attending sporting events, and those same parents should also be confident that the match (or whatever game we’re talking about) is being played fairly without a pre-ordained outcome arranged to suit the gambling industry. Mainly, as with so many of today’s problems with public order, it comes down in the end to money and greed. However, tackling such social issues effectively would seem to be beyond the reach of today’s authorities. I certainly wouldn’t take a child to some of the more important fixtures if there were rumours of crowd violence because I’d prefer to be certain that I could get him or her home again safely. Where violence is predicted (certainly not in every game) that may not be the case. In Sir Henry Newbolt’s poem that I mentioned earlier, just when things look desperate: “the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks - Play up! Play Up! And play the game.” It’s a call for fairness, courage, and honesty that too few of today’s sports leaders and their sponsors would even understand, I’m afraid, let alone be able to follow.

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A group representing Transgender Health and Wellness carries a large transgender flag in the 2022 San Diego, USA Pride parade

**KNOWING
WHICH
WAY TO
TURN**

**The re-awakened row
over transgender issues
and attitudes**



© EDW/VI

There was a rather smutty joke in very poor taste that was circulating in my teen years, a long, long time ago. A boy and a girl go out on a date together and the boy lets slip that he's gay. "Oh, dear," says the girl, "I don't know which way to turn." I warned you it was in bad taste. Even so, it raised a giggle from my friends and me when we were about 13 or 14 years old, which speaks volumes about our sophistication (or the lack of it). I need not speak of our lack of good taste, which seems rather obvious, nor of our liking at that time for rude jokes. I had one school friend who I suspected was gay (back in those unenlightened times we referred to such people as "queer", not gay, and it was a much more insulting term, I'm afraid). It never bothered me at the time, nor any of my friends, I think. I actually felt rather sorry for gay boys (I knew nothing about gay girls) in that it added another tricky step in the great dance of courtship and life. Not only did you have to find someone whose appearance pleased you but also find out (by subtle means, no doubt) their preferred sexual orientation. For me, just trying to understand girls was quite a big enough challenge on its own, albeit one that was worth the effort.

When I was growing up, sexual orientation was not something that was much talked about. If we thought about it at all it was only in terms of "is he or isn't he?", with no real way of finding out the answer, short of asking the boy in question outright. And we didn't. Of course, we would not have dreamed of asking a female a similar question; that would have been completely taboo. I'm not sure we even knew back then that girls could be homosexual. I don't suppose we either knew or cared what activities they got up to behind the bedroom door (or in the back seat of a car or in a shop doorway if it wasn't raining). Back then, people – by and large – simply didn't talk about such things. A great deal has changed since then. These days some people seem to talk about little else. Now we even have transgender clinics offering advice and help to those who think they may have been born with the wrong body: girls who think they'd rather be (and perhaps should

be) men and *vice versa*. I'm glad I'm not young now; life is far too complicated. However, "gender dysphoria" as it's technically known is a recognised medical condition, in which someone identifies as a different gender from the one natured gave them at birth. Life does play these tricks on some people; they have my sympathy.

Life certainly hasn't always played kindly with those seeking to help. In the UK, for instance, the Tavistock Gender Identity Service in the west of England was forced to close its doors after 35 years. It came after a senior member of staff had claimed that the service was "failing to examine fully the psychological and social reasons behind young people's desire to change gender". That's all very well, but does anyone – inside the psychiatric services or anywhere else – fully understand a patient's desire to change their gender? It is, I'm told, an irreversible procedure, so the patient in question (often young, nervous and inexperienced with no family member with whom to discuss it) has to make what is, undoubtedly a life-changing decision, with no completely reliable advice available. You certainly can't ask your Auntie Fred or Uncle Mary. You may trust your doctor or your psychiatrist, but exactly how well does he or she know you? Could they have ulterior motives for the advice they give? Are you going to regret this later? These are questions to which no-one – literally no-one – knows the answer in an irrevocably certain way. If you undergo a sex change operation and have regrets about it when it's been done, they will last your whole life long. It's very, very difficult. And, of course, very, very final.

I No way back

The whole issue has been very much under scrutiny of late, with transgender clinics in England (not necessarily in other parts of the United Kingdom) facing inquiries into concerns that have been raised concerning the care they offer. According to the Guardian newspaper, NHS (National Health Service) England has announced a review into the operations of seven separate specialist units, looking into their records, and also into some misgivings expressed by staff, past and present.

This follows the recent publication of a 388-page report by Doctor Hilary Cass, a former president of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. That review recommended "sweeping changes", according to the Guardian and The Economist, in the way the service regards and treats those who



Dr Hilary Cass

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Professor Sir Simon Wessely, president of the UK Royal College of Psychiatrists

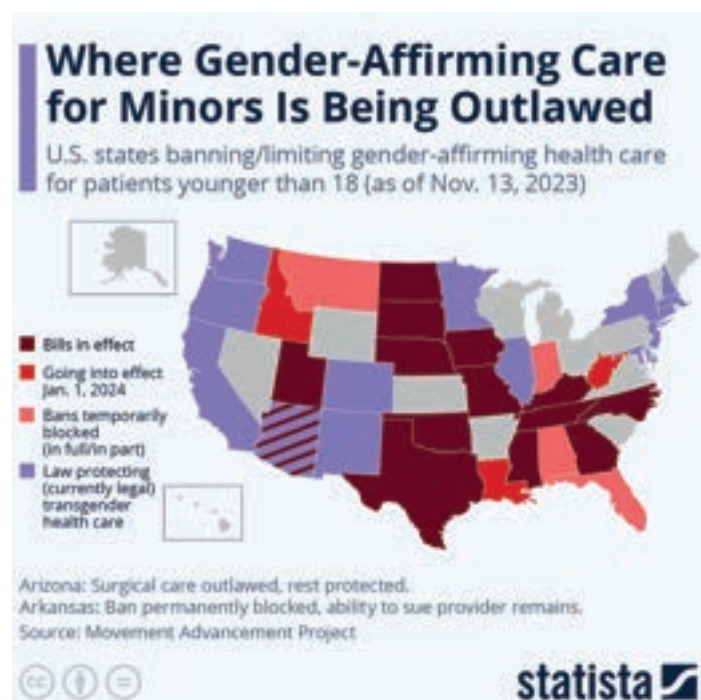
are unsure about their gender identity but who are under the age of 18. According to the Washington Times, the quality of published research was “poor” and for most young people, “a medical pathway will not be the best way to manage their gender-related distress.” The British author J.K. Rowling, who has been critical of the “gender-identity movement” and who has long called for “evidence-based treatment and improved mental health assessments” has said that the Cass Report “represents a vindication for sceptics of ‘gender-affirming care’ for minors”, a “watershed moment” and the laying bare of a tragedy. The review, published in early April 2024, has already led to changes. It led directly (and quickly) to the closure of the Tavistock facility and called for the setting up of two new gender services for children and young people, which will be the first of eight such centres. They will be based on a regional principle within specialist children’s hospitals to be established over the next two years. The services’ specifications, says the NHS, will reflect what it calls “the fundamentally different approach to the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of children and young people presenting with gender incongruence”, (a mismatch between their self-identity in terms of gender and the physical reality shown on their bodies).

There is also to be a new National Children and Young People’s Gender Dysphoria Research Oversight Board, to be chaired by Professor Sir Simon Wessely, to look into the services currently provided. The NHS stressed that the board and its appointee reflect the importance being attached to quality of care in a difficult area and the provision of such specialist care.

There will also be enhanced mental health support for all children and young people who are either on the waiting list but still under the age of 18 or who are still awaiting their first appointment with the specialists provided by the new services. The NHS promises a detailed implementation plan, which will include the detail and structure of the new approach to an old but often (in the past) overlooked need. The Cass review recommends

a shift away from medical intervention for trans-identifying children, which it describes as “an area of remarkably weak evidence”, to a model that prioritises therapy and considers the possibility that other mental-health issues are involved. The story is covered very concisely in America’s Wall Street Journal: “The National Health Service commissioned prominent paediatrician Hilary Cass in 2020 to study the NHS’s treatment of young people experiencing discomfort with their biological sex. The final result is a rebuke to the gender-industrial complex.” And to the United States, of course. As the World Economic Forum puts it: “Western Europe continues to lead the way in transgender rights, according to the Trans Rights Europe Map & Index 2016. The annual index and map, published in collaboration with the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), reflects the rapidly evolving legal situation for transgender people in Europe.” There has never been a safer time, it seems, to “come out” as the LGBTQI+ community might put it.

A new battle of the sexes?



Amnesty International estimates as many as 1.5 million people across Europe are transgender, meaning that their gender identity differs from the one indicated on their birth certificate. The Economist magazine, which has covered the Cass Report extensively, has long argued for calm discussion of the issue, which seems not to happen in the United States. Indeed, as the periodical points out, standards of care differ widely on either side of the Atlantic. The treatments being used differ widely, too, including the use of ‘puberty blockers’, cross-sex hormones and even – on rare occasions – surgery.

Existing treatments have included oestrogen, which causes males to grow larger breasts, and testosterone to grow female muscles, but the Cass review says there is insufficient evidence that such things help children. Studies made to date, says Cass,

have often been of “poor quality”. Her report has infuriated transgender advocates in the United States who have accused Cass of bending her report to please more conservative elements in society, something she firmly denies. Her opponents claim that such treatments as social transitioning and the use of puberty blockers and hormone replacement therapy can reduce suicides among undecided young people. The president of the American Medical Association, who is gay, has reacted with great anger and has sworn to oppose any bans imposed on particular types of treatment. Dr. Cass’s review claims that research to date on gender-affirming care has been “exaggerated or misrepresented by people on all sides of the debate to support their viewpoint” and that it has also been used to vilify various medical professionals on social media. She points out that such behaviour must stop so that the best solution can be found for young people struggling with “gender incongruence”. She has also criticised a number of peer-reviewed studies, including some promoted by the World Professional Association of Transgender Healthcare, which she said were often shown to not have been rigorously conducted.

Dr. Cass has come in for the strongest criticism in the United States, with the transgender journalist Arin Reed accusing Cass of including concepts in her report that had been rejected by more than sixty mental health organisations, including the American Psychological Association. You may have noticed that nobody engaging in this debate seems to lean gently one way or the other: it’s a battlefield for psychological carnivores, with fury and intolerance dominating the discussions.

The question of gender identity is exceedingly sensitive, and no-one benefits, I would surmise,



Transgender journalist Arin Reed



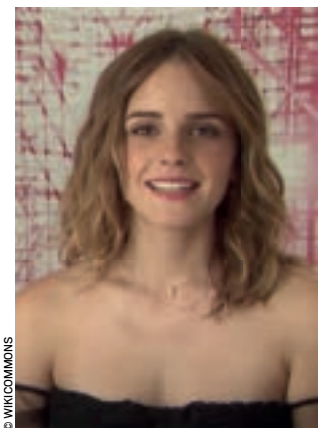
J.K. Rowling

from going at it bull-headed, although they do. No-one should be ultimately denied the treatment they need, but only once that need has been irrevocably established. If Johnny wakes up one morning and says he thinks he’d be happier if he was changed to Helen, surely there has to be some certainty before the surgeon applies his scalpel? There was another tasteless joke circulating in my teens about such “gender-correction” surgery: “one snip and Bob’s your auntie”. The LGBTQ community seems deeply disturbed by the Cass report but I can’t believe they would really advocate irreversible treatment at the first sign of incertitude as to the gender of choice or physicality. The patient – and the medical professionals – have to be sure they’re taking the right course of action

Certainly, the debate in the UK has been heated in the extreme. Some celebrities, such as Daniel Radcliffe and Emma Watson, have drawn hostile comments for egging on children to seek “transitioning” treatment, but the author of the Harry Potter books, J.K. Rowling, has criticised them both for lending their names to the practice, even going as far as to say she’ll not forgive them, even if they apologise. She has been accused of “trans-phobia” for her fairly uncompromising views on gender and dysphoria in general. She has been very clear about her attitude towards Radcliffe and Watson, saying she will never forgive their unkindness about her or (one suspects) their views on the topic, which she has described as: “Not safe, I’m afraid. Celebs who cosied up to a movement intent on eroding women’s hard-won rights and who used their platforms to cheer on the transitioning of minors can save their apologies for traumatised detransitioners and vulnerable women reliant on single-sex



Daniel Radcliffe



Emma Watson



© BILL CLARK/CO ROLL CALL

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., put up this sign after Rep. Marie Newman, D-Ill., put up a pro transgender rights flag across the hallway

spaces.” A compromise between the two points of view would seem unlikely. Writing in the oddly-titled “Ladbible”, Watson said: ““Trans people are who they say they are and deserve to live their lives without being constantly questioned or told they aren’t who they say they are. I want my trans followers to know that I and so many other people around the world see you, respect you and love you for who you are.” That view has been fiercely endorsed by Radcliffe and the other star of the Harry Potter franchise movies, Ron Weasley.

Of course, people should be free to identify however they wish. A lady I know who used to work in a shop selling art and artists’ supplies told me about one regular customer who was very clearly male but who wore make-up and women’s clothing, including a very ill-advised miniskirt (he had horrible legs, she said) but nobody commented or ordered him to stop. He wasn’t, apparently, demanding surgery and was always polite and fairly knowledgeable about his art interests, and so his chosen lifestyle was simply ignored. He would not have been so fortunate in some African or Middle Eastern countries, where any sign of homosexuality results in a long prison sentence or death. It’s hard to see how those countries’ leaders think such harsh punishments help anyone. Before the release of the Cass Report, NHS England had announced that it would no longer routinely prescribe puberty blockers. In the United States, 22 states had similarly restricted gender-transition treatment for under 18s. Among the report’s recommendations, is better training for gender clinicians, ensuring that any treatment for under 18s meets the required standards and that no sex-changing hormones should be prescribed for anyone under 16.

A woman who opened a massage parlour in Jinja in Eastern Uganda had her premises raided by police, who demanded: “Why are you not married? Why do you employ only women and where do you get your money?” She was jailed for allegedly encouraging homosexuality and just four months into her sentence her shop was trashed by thugs, seemingly with police support. It’s the kind of intolerance and brutality that deserves widespread condemnation. It surprised me, too; I have been to Uganda and I liked the country and its president, Yoweri Museveni, with whom I conducted a television interview in his beautiful garden and again later in Strasbourg, where he greeted me in a corridor like a long-lost friend. He impressed me as a fair and charming man, even if his government is generally seen as fairly strict and uncompromising, so his country’s present anti-gay hysteria surprises and disappoints me. Whatever the LGBTQI+ community may think, I’m sure that J.K. Rowling would not

condone such pointless brutality. The Cass report owes its origins to a British trial study conducted in 2011, based on the so-called “Dutch protocol, which pioneered the use of puberty blockers for people with gender dysphoria, but it displayed “a lack of any positive measurable outcomes.”

No gays allowed? why?

However, there are still 64 countries where homosexuality is illegal and can lead to very severe punishments. In my view, what goes on between two people with their mutual consent and in the privacy of their bedrooms is only their affair and nobody else’s. Why should the police take an interest? On the other hand, whilst I have nothing against transgender people and I sympathise sincerely with the trauma they must have gone through, I do not favour gender-adjustment treatment being given out to those too young to be sure in their own minds. That customer in an art shop that I mentioned is clearly not harming anyone and is thus able to lead his life as he pleases. Not everyone in his position is quite as fortunate. In Europe, it’s only Hungary that has made it completely illegal for people to change their genders. Britain comes 28th out of thirty countries for the proportion of people who agree that teenagers – as long as they have the consent of their parents – should be able to access “gender-affirming” care, as it’s called. Support for that freedom is lower in the United States than Britain’s 47%. The UK also seems not to favour protection for transgender against discrimination in such areas as housing, employment and access to shops and restaurants. One person out of every four questioned were either opposed to protection for transsexuals or were uncertain about it.



© WIKICOMMONS

Anti-gay demonstrators in San Francisco

I was brought up to believe the old adage “live and let live”, presumably even if you’re a man wearing women’s clothes or a woman driving a bulldozer. Who cares? Well, quite a lot of people, it seems. Would a woman who had been born as a man be welcomed in a toilet exclusively for females? Should she be? Transgender people, whilst welcome to their own chosen lifestyle must still be sensitive to the feelings and fears of others around them. It would seem we’re still a long way from widespread support for toilets that are not segregated according to gender. As a man, I’d feel uncomfortable in a public toilet through which women were walking while I was using the facilities. Call me old-fashioned (I admit that I am) but some segregation was imposed for a reason. I’m sorry if that offends transgender people but there are ways around this problem that are not beyond the wit of man (or woman or trans), so why create a problem nobody needs?

Daniel Radcliffe put out a statement through the Trevor Project, which was set up to counter suicides over gender issues, in which he wrote that “transgender women are women” and that anything else would “erase the identity and dignity” of people. That may well be true, but it surely doesn’t mean that a public women’s toilet should be open to someone who is clearly a man but who chooses to identify as a woman? Freedom of thought is all very well but it must have limits. Transgender people have every right to identify as male or female, according to their choice, but it doesn’t alter facts or even the human body, without some sort of intervention. I’m certainly not opposed to some form of medical intervention, but the person undergoing the chosen treatment must be fully aware of all the implications involved, especially its irreversibility.



© ADM RACHEL LEVINE

Rachel Levine, US Assistant Secretary for Health, the highest-ranking openly transgender government official in US history with openly gay White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre

The fact is that this is not merely an issue for those unfortunate people who feel they’ve been born with the wrong body. It’s much wider than that. How about the rights of women who were born as women and have not wanted nor needed gender reassessment? Rachel Levine, US Assistant Secretary for Health, the highest-ranking openly transgender government official in US history with openly gay White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre. It took a very long time – centuries – for women to win equal rights, so they can certainly be excused if they’re unhappy at men who perhaps might have preferred a female body (although not, one assumes, the agony of childbirth) who now want to enjoy rights that the male sex have enjoyed all along. Sorry, chaps; you can’t have it all ways. That would surely be unfair. It would also confirm the suspicion that women have long held that the world is mainly devoted to the advantages of being male. Men have all sorts of rights and opportunities that are denied to women and look likely to remain that way, while women continue to be treated less fairly.

Is there a solution? I’m not really certain. I certainly believe in women’s rights but I’m far less in favour of men being able to share them. Women must feel that every step forward finds their steps dogged by males, who want the perceived advantages but without – of course – any of the disadvantages (such as giving birth, for instance!). I’m very glad to be a man (albeit a fairly elderly one these days) and I can honestly say I’ve never wanted to be a woman, despite being raised in a house where my father and I were the only males, among five females. We are what we are, and I never had any desire to change that. As for transgender people, I can only say that they have my sympathy; growing up must have been tricky, with many difficult decisions to make and with even greater problems than the rest of us have when it comes to forming relationships. I wish them all well, most sincerely, but I won’t be lectured by those who favour rather severe solutions at the first sign of a problem. At least now, with Dr Cass’s report, people can look at ways to overcome the many difficulties. The Alliance Defending Freedom in the United States has called for bans on gender-transition procedures for minors and adds that “Children struggling with their sex deserve the best possible care and, as this independent review from Dr. Cass shows, that does not include rushing children to permanently alter their bodies.” All those afflicted by this condition deserve – and need – the very best possible care, leading to a solution that protects children from harm. Let’s hope they can find one.

Henry Carruthers

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



© ESA

The ESA/NASA Solar Orbiter is approaching the closest point to the Sun in its current orbit

REACHING FOR THE COSMOS

**A comprehensive guide
to the European Space
Agency**

***“Space, the final frontier”* - this iconic phrase from the opening sequence of the popular TV series “Star Trek” has often been used to introduce the idea of space exploration as the last great frontier for mankind.**

According to international space law, outer space itself is considered the “province of all mankind”, and the Outer Space Treaty (1967) stipulates that the exploration and utilisation of outer space should benefit all countries on Earth. The launch and operation of spacecraft, scientific research and the utilisation of space resources should be conducted in accordance with international regulations to ensure the peaceful, equitable and responsible use of outer space.

Throughout history, since ancient times, space has fascinated many peoples and inspired them to explore it more closely. People studied the movements of the planets and sometimes attributed mystical, religious or symbolic significance to them.

Ancient civilisations such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, China and India developed special systems for observing and recording celestial phenomena. Ancient astronomers drew maps of the sky, analysed the movements of the stars, predicted astronomical events such as solar eclipses and developed the first calendars based on the movements of the planets.

It is believed that the Babylonians were the first to have a type of astronomical record, the MUL.APIN, in which the positions of the stars and constellations were catalogued. It is also believed that the ancient Egyptians orientated their pyramids according to certain stars and planets. Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras, Aristotle and Ptolemy made significant contributions to the understanding of space. Hipparchus is known for his work cataloguing the position of the stars and introducing the idea of

equinoxes. In ancient China, astronomical observations were made for the purposes of timekeeping, agriculture and astrology. Chinese astronomers also mentioned special events such as comets or solar eclipses in their texts and developed advanced calendars based on lunar and solar cycles.



Yuri Gagarin on his way to the launch pad

All these ancient records and studies laid the foundation for the incredible development of astronomy in our modern age. Many nations have been professionally involved in space, and the amounts invested in this field today are staggering, a gratifying testament to the importance that space has and can achieve.

Today, planets, the moon, stars and galaxies are providing valuable insights into their composition, evolution and behaviour, improving our understanding of the universe and fundamental laws of physics. Space exploration is driving the development of new technologies and engineering solutions. Many technologies originally developed for space missions, such as satellite communications, GPS navigation or medical imaging, have found applications in everyday life, improving the quality of life for people on Earth. Space-based instruments and satellites allow us to monitor the Earth's environment, track climate change, detect natural disasters and manage natural resources more efficiently, which is crucial for environmental protection, disaster preparedness, agriculture and urban planning.

Today, it is also assumed that the exploration offers the possibility of tapping into and utilising extraterrestrial resources such as water, minerals and metals, perhaps enabling sustainable human settlements off Earth in the future. By exploring and possibly colonising other planets, we could reduce the risks of global catastrophes such as asteroid impacts or environmental disasters and ensure the continued existence of humanity.

However, it wasn't until the 20th century that humans succeeded in entering space for the first time. On 12 April 1961, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin orbited the Earth for around 108 minutes on board the Vostok 1 spacecraft, marking an important milestone in space exploration and the beginning of manned space travel. This was soon followed by the first landing on the moon by NASA's Apollo 11 mission. On 20 July 1969, astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin became the first humans to set foot on the moon. *“That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind,”* is a famous quote attributed to Neil Armstrong as he stepped out of the lunar module Eagle and onto the lunar surface. This historic event represents a monumental achievement in the history of mankind and is the result of years of endeavour, innovation and study. To date, only three countries have successfully landed on the moon:



One of the two MUL.APIN (the plough star) clay tablets with two columns of inscriptions

the United States, Russia (1966) and China (2013). In 2019, China followed with the Chang'e 4 mission, which enabled the first landing on the far side of the moon.



Astronaut Buzz Aldrin walking on the surface of the Moon, next to the Lunar Module Eagle, launched with the Apollo 11 spaceflight

In addition to Earth, there are two other planets that have been touched by human spacecraft or on which they have landed: Venus (the Soviet Union's Venera programme carried out the first successful landings on Venus in the 1970s and 1980s) and Mars. Several missions from different space agencies have successfully landed on "the red planet". NASA of the United States has carried out the most successful landings. The Mars rover missions Sojourner (1997), Spirit and Opportunity (2004), Curiosity (2012) and Perseverance (2021) have provided extensive data on the geology, climate and potential habitability of Mars. In addition, NASA's InSight lander (2018) is investigating the interior of Mars and seismic activity.

Today, there are several major players in the field of space exploration and activities. Among them, NASA is probably the best known. The US National Aeronautics and Space Administration is one of the world's leading space agencies, responsible for numerous ground-breaking missions that often make headlines and excite science fans. It invests huge sums in research and is a pioneer in many space-related fields. Roscosmos is Russia's federal space agency, the successor to the Soviet space programme. It plays an important role in manned spaceflight, satellite launches and international cooperation, including participation in the ISS programme. The China National Space Administration (CNSA) has quickly become a major player in space exploration, with missions to the Moon, Mars and beyond.

China has its own space station, Tiangong, and is planning further missions to the moon and Mars. India's ISRO has achieved milestones in space exploration, including the Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan) and the Chandrayaan Mission to the Moon. ISRO also operates a constellation of Earth observation satellites. The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) conducts a wide range of space activities, including satellite launches, robotic exploration missions and participation in the ISS programme. It has also contributed to the Hayabusa asteroid missions and the Akatsuki Venus orbiter mission.

The Canadian Space Agency (CSA) is active in satellite communications, Earth observation, robotics and space exploration. Canada has contributed robotic arms to the ISS and participated in missions such as the Mars rovers. While SpaceX, founded by Elon Musk, is not a traditional space agency, it has become a major player in space exploration and commercial spaceflight. The company has carried out numerous satellite launches and ISS resupply missions

and has bold plans for manned missions to the moon and Mars.

While the American NASA has achieved international renown and recognition, the European Space Agency (ESA) is at the forefront of space exploration and discovery on the European continent. Since its creation on 30 May 1975, its mission as an intergovernmental organisation has been to promote the development of European space capabilities and to ensure that investment in space benefits the citizens of Europe. ESA was founded by a group of European countries that joined forces to create a single space agency. The founding members of ESA were Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany (then West Germany), Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The UK's membership was not affected by its withdrawal from the EU, as ESA is not an EU organisation.



Chinese Tiangong Space Station

The European Space Agency currently has 22 members, is headquartered in Paris and employs around 2,200 people worldwide (as of 2022). Its annual budget for 2024 is set at 7.8 billion euros. Slovenia is an associate member, while ESA has also entered into formal cooperation with six other EU member states. Canada participates in some ESA programmes under a cooperation agreement. As already mentioned, ESA's headquarters are located in Paris. In addition, ESA offers services for start-ups at its sites ESTEC (European Space Research and Technology Centre) in Noordwijk (Netherlands) and ESOC (European Space Operations Centre) in Darmstadt (Germany) in cooperation with CESA (Centre for Satellite Navigation Hesse) in Germany.

From the depths of our planet to the furthest reaches of the cosmos, ESA's diverse portfolio spans a wide range of scientific disciplines, explorations and research endeavours. Whether it is analysing the planets of our solar system or distant galaxies, or simply monitoring the pulse of our own planet, ESA's activities offer a unique insight into the cosmos and our place within it.



The European Space Research and Technology Centre (ESTEC) in Noordwijk, The Netherlands

With such a wealth of missions, collaborations and scientific endeavours, ESA will continue to inspire people and push the boundaries of human knowledge and technological innovation to new levels.

The idea of international cooperation is at the centre of the ESA mission. ESA has entered into partnerships with other national space agencies in an attempt to find common solutions to global problems facing humanity, from climate change and environmental degradation to the search for alternative renewable energy sources.

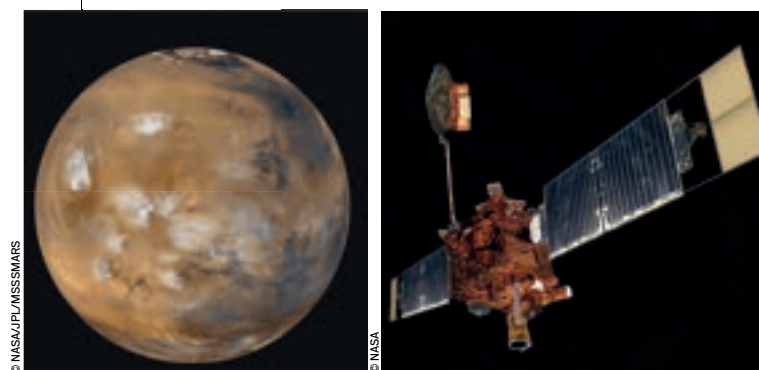
ESA was founded in response to the desire of European nations to pool their resources, expertise and infrastructure for space exploration. By working together on space projects, the member states wanted to achieve scientific and technological advances beyond what they could achieve alone. The creation of ESA was a significant milestone in European space exploration and laid the foundations for decades of successful co-operation and achievements in space.

By carefully coordinating the financial and intellectual resources of its members, ESA is able to launch and fund programmes and activities that go far beyond the scope and capabilities of any single European country. While many Western European countries also have their own space agencies, ESA is a combination of them all and often provides various instruments for NASA missions (both in Earth orbit and in space). Comparing the two agencies, the difference in philosophy is clear: ESA focuses more on near-future robotic exploration and looks for ways to improve space transportation

systems, while NASA focuses on human exploration, with Mars being a major goal. ESA's total budget is three times smaller than NASA's, and almost half of it is dedicated to Earth-related activities. Almost half of NASA's budget is earmarked for human exploration. However, ESA spends more on space transport than NASA.

ESA has been involved in numerous missions to explore our solar system and beyond, including missions to explore Earth, Mars, Venus and Mercury, comets, asteroids and the outer planets. ESA has collaborated with other space agencies on missions such as Mars Express, Rosetta and BepiColombo.

ESA is now an important partner in the International Space Station (ISS) programme, providing both a financial contribution and astronauts. ESA astronauts have participated in several missions to the ISS, conducting scientific research and technological demonstrations in a microgravity environment. Founded in 1990, the European Astronaut Centre (EAC) in Cologne, Germany, is the European centre of excellence for the selection, training and support of astronauts. It is also home to the ESA

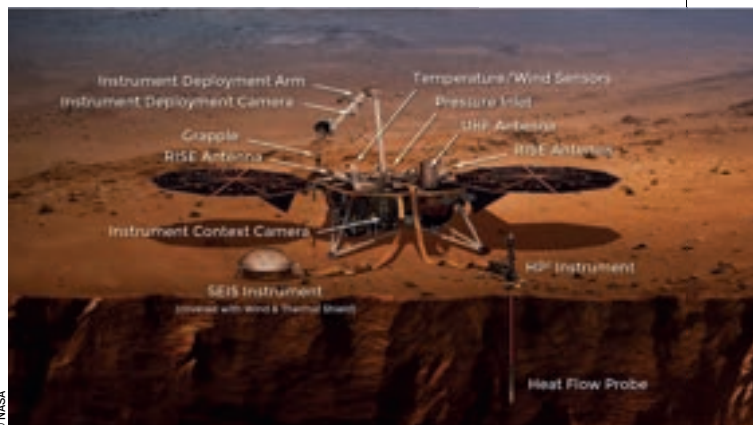


Twelve orbits a day provide NASA Mars Global Surveyor MGS wide angle cameras a global snapshot of weather patterns across the planet. Here, bluish-white water ice clouds hang above the Tharsis volcanoes

Astronaut Operations Team, where specialised EUROCOM (European Communicator and Medical Operations) experts are responsible for all European voice communications with astronauts on the International Space Station.

ESA operates a fleet of Earth observation satellites that collect data on various aspects of the Earth's environment, including climate change, natural disasters and environmental monitoring. These satellites provide valuable data for scientific research, climate modelling and applications such as agriculture, forestry and urban planning.

The European Space Agency develops and operates telecommunications satellites that provide services such as broadcasting, broadband internet access and mobile communications. These satellites play a crucial role in the development of global communication networks. EDRS is a public-private partnership between ESA and Airbus. Airbus is responsible for building and operating the infrastructure of the system. Airbus also implements the data transmission services and makes them available to ESA, while ESA finances the development of the infrastructure.



Artist's Concept of InSight Lander on Mars. InSight was the first mission dedicated to investigating the deep interior of Mars. The findings advance understanding of how all rocky planets, including Earth, formed and evolved



In 2022, France paid more than 1.1 billion euros to the European Space Agency (ESA) to support ESA's space exploration mission.

ESA is developing the launchers, spacecraft and ground facilities needed to keep Europe at the forefront of global space activities. Today, it launches satellites for Earth observation, navigation, telecommunications and astronomy, sends probes to the furthest corners of the solar system and participates in human space exploration. (Source: www.esa.int/Science_Exploration)

ESA does not operate its own launchers, but works with commercial launch service providers and other space agencies to put satellites into

orbit. ESA's main launcher is the Ariane family, which is operated by Arianespace, a European-based commercial launch services provider. The Ariane rockets, including Ariane 5 and Ariane 6, are used to launch satellites for ESA as well as for commercial customers, international space agencies and the member states of the European Space Agency. In addition to Ariane, ESA also works with other launchers such as SpaceX, Roscosmos and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to put satellites into orbit. ESA satellites support a wide range of applications, including Earth observation, environmental monitoring, climate research, telecommunications, navigation, scientific research and technology demonstration.

ESA also supports scientific research in many areas by funding projects and providing access to space-based data and facilities, and has several ambitious plans and projects on its agenda covering a wide range of scientific disciplines and exploration objectives.

ESA has expressed its interest in participating in lunar exploration and also contributing to NASA's Artemis programme, which aims to return humans to the moon by the mid-2020s. ESA could provide key technologies, scientific instruments or even European astronauts for lunar missions. ESA is also continuing its interest in Mars exploration, building on previous successes such as the Mars Express mission and the ExoMars programme. Future plans could include further robotic missions to Mars to further investigate its surface, atmosphere and potential for past or present life. ESA is planning future missions to study exoplanets, unravel the mysteries of dark matter and dark energy, explore the outer planets and their moons, and improve our understanding of fundamental physics.

Much of ESA's funding goes towards Earth observation programmes to monitor and research the environment, climate change, biodiversity and natural disaster management. ESA invests heavily in satellite-based telecommunications and navigation systems, supporting applications such as global



Image of the full Earth disc captured at 11 50 UTC on 18 March 2023 by the Flexible Combined Imager on MTG-I1

© EUMETSAT/ESA

internet connectivity, satellite navigation (Galileo) and secure communications networks for government and commercial users. It also finances the research and development of propulsion systems or autonomous robotics for the further exploration of space.

To keep pace with other space agencies and build a strong image as a major player in the field, ESA is present online and communicates its latest achievements and plans in an organised and rigorous way on social media. Its account on X (formerly Twitter) is very active.

Space exploration sparks curiosity and imagination and motivates people of all ages to pursue careers in science and technology. Educational programmes linked to space missions promote scientific literacy and encourage innovation and critical thinking. ESA employs a variety of recruitment strategies to attract talented people who contribute with their skills, expertise and passion to fulfil its mission of advancing space exploration, research and technological development. The agency offers students and graduates the opportunity to complete internships and traineeships to gain practical experience in space-related fields. These programmes provide valuable training, mentoring and networking opportunities for young professionals pursuing a career in space science and technology. In addition, ESA sponsors scholarship programmes that allow scientists, engineers and researchers to contribute to ESA's projects and initiatives. These scholarships provide financial support, access to ESA facilities and resources, and opportunities for professional development and collaboration with leading experts in the field.

Over the years, space exploration has also been associated with military purposes and interests. The relationship between space exploration and military activities continues to influence space policy and strategies. Satellites are essential for



Situated in Cologne, Germany, The European Astronaut Centre is responsible for the preparation, planning and scheduling of the European astronauts' tasks and flight assignments as well as coordinating astronaut activities with other countries



President Lyndon B. Johnson met with representatives from the UK and Soviet Union to sign the Outer Space Treaty on Jan. 17, 1967. Johnson pushed for and helped author the pact

both civilian and military applications. While many satellites are used for peaceful purposes, military organisations also rely heavily on satellite technology for reconnaissance, surveillance, intelligence gathering and communication. Military satellites provide critical capabilities for monitoring global security threats, conducting military operations and maintaining situational awareness. Many technologies developed for space exploration are dual-use, meaning they can be used for both civilian and military purposes. For example, advances in propulsion systems, materials science, remote sensing and robotics developed for space missions can also be used for military purposes, such as missile defence, surveillance and space-based weapon systems.

The strategic importance of space has grown significantly as nations increasingly rely on satellite-based services for their national security, economic prosperity and geopolitical influence. Space assets play a critical role in modern warfare, providing communication, navigation, early warning and precision targeting capabilities. As a result, military organisations are investing heavily in space capabilities to protect their interests, deter potential adversaries and maintain a competitive advantage in the space domain.

The potential for the weaponisation of space, including the deployment of anti-satellite weapons (ASAT), directed energy weapons and space-based missile defence systems, has been the subject of recent concern and debate. While international treaties such as the Outer Space Treaty prohibit the placement of weapons of mass destruction in space, there is an ongoing debate about the deployment of conventional weapons and defence systems in space and their impact on international security and stability.

Today, national space policies and strategies often reflect a combination of civil and military objectives, with governments balancing priorities related to space exploration, national security, economic development and international co-operation. While space exploration has many peaceful and beneficial applications, its intersection with military interests emphasises the complex and multi-faceted nature of space activities.

However, ESA's space programmes aim to expand our understanding of the universe, improve life on Earth and inspire future generations of scientists, engineers and explorers. ESA's collaborative, multidisciplinary approach to space exploration, its commitment to the peaceful exploration of space and its independent launch capabilities make it a unique and influential player in the global space community.

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TIMELESS CHIC

STANDOUT FASHION AND BEAUTY TRENDS

AZURE ALLURE

A dive into the world of
stylish blue jeans

In the mood for
something other than
regular, straight-cut
jeans?

There is a wide variety
of denim styles to
choose from, but here
we present the five most
popular denim trends
for this spring-summer
season, along with ten
inspirational shopping
ideas.

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© INSTAGRAM @ BELENHOTALET



© MIU MIU

Relaxed fit
denim
(Miu Miu)



© ARKET

Low, loose jeans
(Arket)

1. The wide- leg jeans

Low waisted, they are
reminiscent of the 90s
aesthetic, which is one of
the strong trends of the
season. High waisted,
they have the power to
define the waist and
lengthen the legs. You
can't go wrong with either
option.

2. The barrel- leg jeans

High-waisted barrel
leg jeans are usually
characterised by their
extremely tapered leg. They
are available in all kinds
of washes and, with their
narrow ankle and baggy
knee, seem to be the perfect
combination of casual and
slim.



© GANNI

Light blue barrel
jeans (Ganni)



© PINTEREST - WHO WHAT WEAR



© AGOLDE ON MYTHERESA.COM

High-rise
barrel-leg
jeans (Agolde)

3. The embellished jeans

Embellished jeans are back in fashion and we're more than excited to welcome them back. Rhinestones, beads, studs or sequins - nothing is too extravagant to turn your jeans into a classy and stylish garment, even when paired with your most basic pieces.



High waist jeans with studs (Samsøe & Samsøe)



Rhinestones jeans (Only)

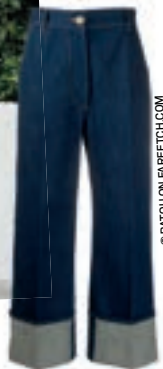


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© PINTEREST - SINCERLY JULES

High-rise cuffed jeans (Patou)



Cuffed Wide Leg Jeans (Alexander Wang)



© ALEXANDER WANG

4. The cuffed jeans

Applied to rigid denim, the result is casual and elegant — and so easy to try at home. Just take any pair of jeans that are too long, roll them up and wear them as you normally would. And if you'd rather keep the look permanent, choose jeans with pre-fabricated cuffs to make styling as easy as possible. This spring/summer season, they look endlessly chic with Mary Janes, ballerinas or kitten heels.

5) The cargo jeans

It's no secret that cargo pants with huge pockets have been trending in recent months and will continue to do so in 2024. The casual, grungy style has established itself as the go-to pants, best worn with sneakers or heels.



© INSTAGRAM @ JESSICASHARRIS



© LIU JO

High rise jeans with cargo pockets (Liu Jo)

Cargo jeans with mismatched pockets (Axel Arigato)



© AXEL ARIGATO

TO VISIT

DISCOVERING THE WONDERS OF POSTOJNA CAVE

An underground paradise



© POSTOJNSKA-JAMA

Postojna Cave

Postojna Cave, located in Slovenia's beautiful Karst area, is a geological marvel that attracts both explorers and nature lovers. Extending about 24 kilometres, it is one of the longest cave systems in Europe, including a complex network of chambers, passageways, and galleries. This underground wonder is famous for its captivating formations of stalactites and stalagmites, created over countless years by the gradual dripping of water rich in minerals.

Visitors begin a fascinating exploration of this underground world, led by knowledgeable experts who reveal the secrets of the cave. One of the main attractions of the excursion is coming across the "Brilliant," a stunning hall decorated with shimmering calcite formations that provide a feeling of extraordinary beauty.



© POSTOJNSKA-JAMA

Postojna Cave

The cave's ecosystem is equally interesting, harbouring special species adapted to the dark and damp climate, including the mysterious olm, a rare amphibian that cannot see. The extensive history of Postojna Cave goes back many millennia, with indications of people living and exploring the cave from ancient times.

Over time, it has been a place of safety, a secret location, and a wellspring of creativity for writers,

painters, and researchers alike. Although the cave has a long history, it provides contemporary conveniences such as a train journey that transports guests to its innermost areas, allowing them to explore its farthest reaches. Conservation efforts guarantee the preservation of this natural marvel for future generations, maintaining a delicate balance between tourism and safeguarding its fragile ecosystem.

For those who enjoy adventure, there are many chances to go cave exploring and discover hidden passages with the help of experienced guides. The appeal of Postojna Cave goes beyond its geological marvels, as adjacent sites like Predjama Castle contribute to the region's attractiveness.

Visitors depart Postojna Cave with a newly acquired admiration for the Earth's geological wonders and the significance of safeguarding these natural treasures. Essentially, Postojna Cave serves as evidence of the strength and attractiveness of nature, welcoming anybody who enters to explore a voyage through history and amazement. Whether you're an experienced adventurer or a relaxed visitor, a visit to Postojna Cave guarantees a remarkable



© POSTOJNSKA-JAMA

Predjama Castle

experience that will wow you with the Earth's concealed wonders.

Predjama Castle is located in the vicinity of the Postojna Cave and is the largest cave castle in the world. For over 800 years it has been guarding a rock face, 123 metres high. Mysterious underground tunnels connect it with the cave directly beneath. The castle, which has also been a film location, offered refuge to its legendary owner Erazem Predjamski in the 15th century. This robber knight resisted a siege for over a year in his castle with its incredible appearance and location. Visitors can take a bus between the Postojna Cave and Predjama Castle in order to see both of these attractions.

The Postojna Cave Park is located near the town of Postojna and is easily accessible by any means of transport.

By car the Postojna Cave Park can be reached via the A1 motorway from Ljubljana, Koper or Trieste (Postojna motorway exit No. 41, which is two km from the Park). Postojna is almost the same distance from Ljubljana, Portorož, Rijeka and Trieste. The journey to Postojna from Rijeka or Ljubljana takes less than an hour, from Venice and Zagreb about two hours and from Salzburg, Vienna, Budapest, Dubrovnik or Belgrade only a few hours.

For more information visit : <https://www.postojnska-jama.eu/en/>

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