The European Journal

ISSUE #3

New Direction

New Direction

Founded by Margaret Thatcher in 2009 as the intellectual hub of European Conservativism, New Direction has established academic networks across Europe and research partnerships throughout the world.

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The European Journal

EUROPE IN A CHANGING WORLD

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THE EUROPEAN JOURNAL
The European Journal is New Direction's opinion journal that gathers the thoughts of world-renowned experts on the crucial issues facing Europe today.

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Welcome to the third edition of the New Direction annual European Journal. For three years running, the European Journal has served as New Direction's flagship publication, devoted to current affairs, culture, and providing a conservative perspective on the events and trends that will shape the year ahead.

The first two years of the 2020s have so far been marred by the coronavirus, a pandemic that has changed everything about our societies, from the way we communicate with one another, to the way we do business, to how decisions are made in politics. However, hope arrived in the form of vaccines which have helped to restore a sense of normality.

And yet as restrictions around the world are lifted, and the virus is brought under control, we find ourselves in a very different world. This year, there have been major changes in leadership and direction in Germany and the United States, and we are due to see further shifts in France this year.

The Western Balkans are again in the spotlight, and so too is the Baltic region. And of course, China has become increasingly emboldened on the world stage, posing new challenges for the Western world both in Asia and in Europe.

In this edition of the European Journal, our writers – drawn up from the best of academia, journalism, and politics – address all these issues and more. Best-selling author Tim Marshall gives us his geopolitical analysis of the world in 2022. Chair of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee Tom Tugendhat writes about what Brexit means for UK-EU relations. Oxford historian Pratinav Anil looks at what comes next for India as it approaches its 75th birthday. And journalist Anne-Elisabeth Moutet presents some of the challenges in this year's French Presidential Elections.

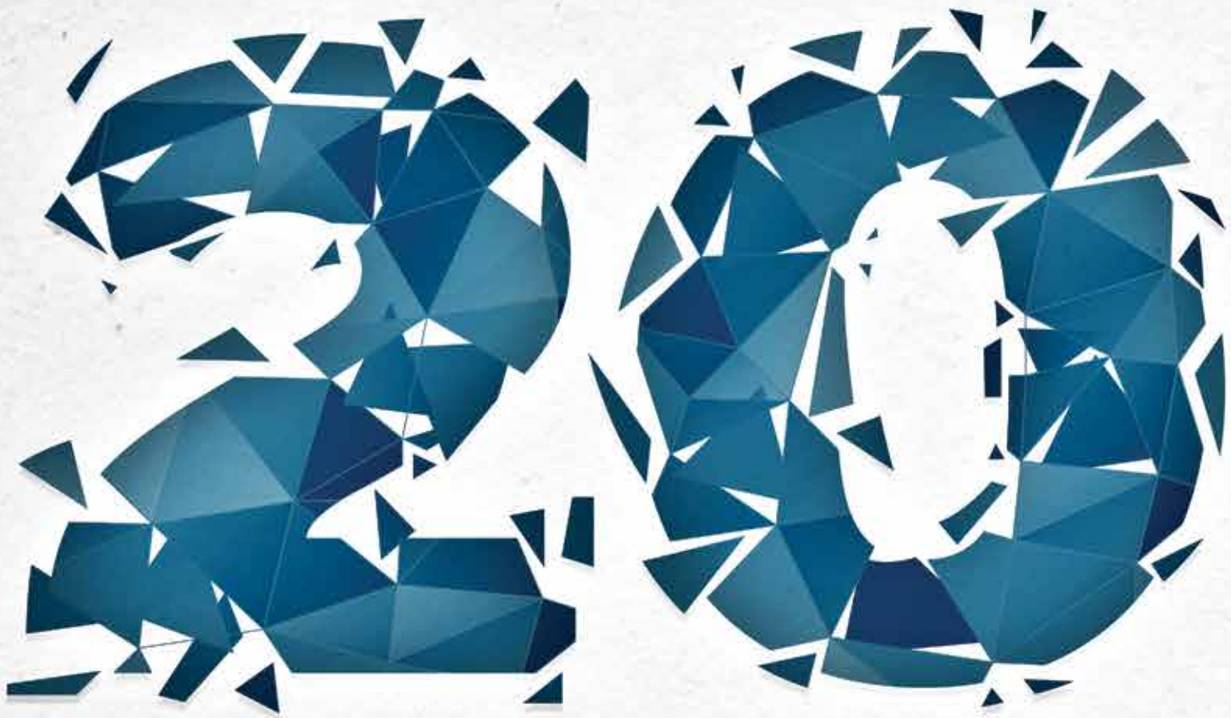
We have a special report on the history of conservative thought, from its origins in Islamic Spain, to the Scottish enlightenment movement and ending with the Austrian School of economic thought, with contributions from philosopher Mustaf Akyol, and economists Juan Soto and Julian Jessop.

As always, we have our culture section, rich in coverage of the latest films, TV shows, books, and exhibitions. As well as pieces on wine, travel, and opera.

Finally, we look back and remember those key conservative figures who left us in the last year, including two former US Secretaries of Defence, a French president, and Prince Philip, consort to Queen Elizabeth II.

We very much hope you enjoy reading this year's European Journal.

Tomasz Poręba MEP
President



January

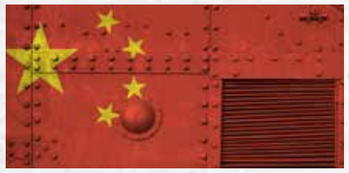
- Portuguese legislative election

February

- Beijing Winter Olympics
- Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee

March

- New Direction Conference on the Future of Cyprus
- South Korean presidential election



April

- New Direction Conference on Relations with China
- French presidential election

May

- New Direction Arctic Summit
- Australian federal election

June

- New Direction Conference on the Future of Conservatism in Europe
- G7 Summit in Germany
- United Nations Security Council election

July

- New Direction Conference on Agriculture in Central Europe

August

- European Space Agency's Jupiter Icy Moons Explorer launches

September

- New Direction Think Tank Central & Margaret Thatcher Dinner
- New Direction Summer University
- Swedish general election
- Austrian presidential election

October

- Brazilian general election

November

- New Direction Young Leaders Academy
- US midterm elections
- Qatar FIFA World Cup

December

- New Direction Fifth Annual Western Balkans Summit

Katja Hoyer

Germany
AFTER MERKEL

As the CDU relinquishes power, German conservatives must find a way to bounce back.

When Angela Merkel announced in 2018 that she would not run for the German chancellorship again, there should have been a collective sigh of relief among the rank and file of her Christian Democratic Union (CDU). In the course of her 16-year tenure, Merkel had systematically ensured that all of her political rivals were either sidelined or shackled to her brand of centrist politics. Dissenting voices in her party were silenced while yes-men and -women were promoted, such as the current President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

Yet ironically, the end of Merkel's long stranglehold over German conservatism caused uncertainty rather than hope as the question of her succession proved a difficult one in the election year of 2021. Even her chosen heir, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, who was once touted as the most likely candidate to continue Merkelist politics, struggled to build a profile in the chancellor's shadow despite serving as CDU leader and defence minister in her cabinet. She voluntarily relinquished her mandate for the German parliament last year, withdrawing from federal politics.

Bavarian exceptionalism has also posed another unique challenge to German conservatism, but never has this been as much of a stumbling block to electoral success as it was last year. The CDU's Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), runs exclusively in Bavaria and then pools its votes with the CDU at federal level where they form one "Union" faction in the Bundestag, the German parliament.

There has always been significant wrangling over the common direction the two conservative parties necessarily have to take in Berlin - ideas regarding personnel and political course aren't always perfectly aligned as the CSU tends to be the more right-leaning party of the two. Still, the biggest challenge to CDU dominance in this partnership is the question of the chancellorship. Should the CSU ever see one of their own into the central political office of the land, this would mark a significant power-shift southward, and the CDU has always viewed the idea with suspicion. There have only ever been two CSU candidates - Franz Josef Strauß in 1980 and Edmund Stoiber in 2002. Both were extremely polarising characters competing against the affable Social Democrats Helmut Schmidt and Gerhard Schröder, respectively. Both lost their elections, and cynical voices have suggested that they were set up to fail, giving the CDU time to regroup.

2022 will be a rocky year for Germany as the country struggles to find ways out of the stagnation of the last 16 years.

In 2021, however, the CSU wanted to field an extremely popular candidate in the Bavarian Minister-President, Markus Söder. He achieved dream polling results of around 40% at the beginning of 2021 - seven points higher than Merkel's last result in 2017. But given the longevity of German chancellors in office, a clear CSU victory smacked of a permanent power-shift within the conservative Union. The CDU decided it would rather risk defeat in the election than a long-term loss of power in its own camp. They nominated the deeply unpopular Minister-President of North Rhine-Westphalia, Armin Laschet, and as a result, lost the election.

Like the Republicans in the US, German conservatives should view their electoral defeat as a chance to regroup and rethink. Infighting has combined with their political dominance of post-war politics in (West) Germany to blur their profile. A certain complacency has crept into conservatism as election victories were taken for granted and the urgency to tackle Germany's slow economic decline faded. The CDU/CSU were punished for this with the worst election result in their history by some margin

Photo: dpa picture alliance / Alamy Stock Photo

Photo: Friedrich Stark / Alamy Stock Photo

and handed over power to a left-wing coalition with a radical political manifesto.

The man who has taken over from Merkel, Olaf Scholz, won the election on a continuity ticket, despite representing the Social Democratic Party (SPD). He had worked as Germany's vice chancellor and finance minister by Merkel's side, missing no opportunity to appear shoulder to shoulder with her in public. He even adopted the famous Merkel rhombus, the ex-chancellor's trademark hand position.

But voters who expected a continuation of centrist Merkelism under Scholz were shocked to see the programme he hammered out with the junior coalition partners of the Greens and the Free Liberals. Under the slogan "Dare More Progress", an adaptation of the first post-war SPD chancellor Willy Brandt's "Dare More Democracy", the coalition wants to drive a "paradigm shift" in German politics. And this is not an empty phrase. The roadmap for the next four years squarely points left.

Domestically, the catch-all phrase of "modernisation" encompasses welcome and much-needed investment into digital infrastructure, public transport and technology. This should bring about more efficient governance through the digitalisation of Germany's Kafkaesque bureaucracy as well as the long-overdue availability of fibre-optic connections across the country. Money will also be made available to explore new technologies in space, air-travel and artificial intelligence - all areas where the once-famed German engineering was beginning to fall behind.

But "modernisation" to a left-leaning government also means far-reaching changes to society. The coalition's domestic policies are very likely going to create social tension as many are deeply unpopular with the majority of the German public, such as lowering the voting age to 16, legalising cannabis and increased migration with easier access to German citizenship. Pushing such policies against public opposition will fan the winds of extremists and conspiracy theorists who thrive on the idea that mainstream politics has abandoned ordinary people.

Like the Republicans in the US, German conservatives should view their electoral defeat as a chance to regroup and rethink.

Also worrying for Europe and the world is the open question regarding Germany's commitment to collective security. Yes, the Greens have been admirably robust in their rhetoric regarding Chinese aggression against Hong Kong and Taiwan, and the co-leader of the Greens, Robert Habeck, is particularly passionate about hemming in Russian aggression in Ukraine. But instinctively, all the key players of this new government are pacifists who have built their careers on disarmament-orientated foreign policy and, in Scholz's case, even with direct attacks on NATO. In his radical days as deputy leader of the Young Socialists, Scholz even spoke of "aggressive-imperialist NATO strategies". While he now affirms that NATO is an important instrument of German foreign policy, the UN seems to be envisioned as the main tool for conflict resolution in the world.

In the long run, the coalition aims for a "nuclear-free Germany" despite the fact that lip-service is paid to obligations regarding shared security under the NATO umbrella. Currently, the US has an estimated 20 B61 bombs stationed at the Büchel Air Base in the south west of Germany. But they would require authorisation from Germany in the event that they had to be used. They would also need to be carried by the Luftwaffe's ageing fleet of Tornado jets, which are in urgent need of updating. How a Green coalition partner will manage to pledge the millions of Euros necessary for such an undertaking against the vociferous opposition from its grassroots members remains to be seen. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg was worried enough to visit Berlin personally at the end of 2021 to impress on the new government how important collective security is to Europe and the world. He made it clear that the fourth-largest economy on earth must play its part or risk losing its place at the table.

Given the staggering problems ahead, and the likely disaffection that the radical changes proposed by Scholz's coalition might cause, conservatism in Germany has a unique chance to do some soul-searching. It needs to refresh its personnel after 16 years of stagnation and find a raison d'etre that addresses the needs of Germany and its people without ideological blinkers.

If it can find a way to reset and sharpen its edge, it stands a great chance of providing effective opposition for the next four years and take over the helm again in 2025. If infighting and uncertainty prevail, conservatives will lose their place on the political spectrum to more radical forces. 2022 will be a rocky year for Germany as the country struggles to find ways out of the stagnation of the last 16 years.

Katja Hoyer is a German-British historian and journalist. She is a Visiting Research Fellow at King's College London.

Walter Ellis

France
AT A CROSSROADS

The 2022 presidential election could prove to be a seismic event that reshapes the battleground of French politics for the next decade.

As they look ahead to the presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for the spring and early summer of 2022, the French are not happy.

Covid-19 –newly made sorse by the Omicron variant – has taken its toll not just on the elderly and the vulnerable but across the national psyche. There is little obvious optimism left in the public square. The feeling is that the nation is bumping along the bottom of an endless trough, waiting for a recovery that may never arrive.

The people are wrong, of course. They usually are. France is not done any more than Italy was "done" in 2019 or Greece in 2008. Countries, like individuals and families, come back from disaster. All that is needed is an acceptance that the past cannot be changed, only built upon, and that the future may require both sacrifice and steadfastness of purpose.

For France, the challenge - though heightened by the pandemic and the resulting economic slump - is much the same as in 2017 when Emmanuel Macron arrived in the Élysée Palace almost as a *deus ex machina*. The Jupiter President was supposed to kickstart the economy and push through a raft of necessary reforms. Instead, he found himself the latest victim of a recurring democratic paradox – the refusal of key sections of the electorate to endorse the changes for which a substantial majority of their fellow citizens have voted.

Macron, like Francois Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy before him, has ended up as the punchbag not so much of those – from the extreme left and the far right – who oppose his world view as of the millions of currently cosseted workers who understand the need for reform but are prepared to back it only on condition that it in no way adversely affects them.

Thus, little progress has been made on public sector pension reform and the related questions of a longer working week and delayed retirement. First, the high-viz *gilets-jaunes* took to the streets, then the railway workers, finally the trade unions, backed by anarchists and extremists from both ends of the political spectrum.

Macron does not cave in easily and in the first two years of his presidency he did what he could to remain more or less on course. It was the emergence of Covid in the spring of 2020 that put everything on hold. Having determined early on that the coronavirus would pass through France like a bad flu season, deadly for the elderly perhaps but no threat to his presidency, he made little attempt to get people to mask up or to establish a programme of mass vaccination.

Fortunately for France, Macron was quick to realise his error and came back strongly in 2021 – so much so that, following a sequence of lockdowns and the setting up of vaccination centres in every town, village and commune, both the death toll and the rate of hospitalisation were kept in check, better overall than in the UK and most of the EU.

The fear at the end of 2021 was that another lockdown was in prospect, undermining the economic recovery then underway and stripping away what remained of the President's veneer of competence in the midst of crisis.

If the 2022 election cycle had been postponed to 2023, Macron's political fortunes could have been very different. As it is, the first round of the presidentials is due to take place on April 10, with the decisive second round following on April 24. No date was fixed for the accompanying elections to the National Assembly, but the assumption is that voting in the constituencies will take place in late May or early June.

Last time out, Macron's notional party, La République en Marche, won by a landslide, securing 308 of the 577 seats. It is safe to say that this victory will not be repeated in 2022. En Marche has been revealed for what it was, a tribute band for Macron, made up of new and old politicians who felt themselves riding the crest of a wave. Five years on, voters are asking themselves what did the new lot achieve and what right do they have to a second bite of the cherry.

As for Macron himself, he is up against an entirely redefined national polity. In 2017, the centre-right candidate, François Fillon, of whom much was expected, ended up not only a loser in round one, but under arrest, along with his wife, on charges of embezzlement of state funds. The Socialist candidate was wiped out at the same time, so that the second round was between Macron, the upstart, and Marine Le Pen, the not-so-new face of the National Front. Macron won easily, later celebrating his victory with an address to the En Marche-dominated Assembly delivered from the King's dias in the Palace of Versailles.

But hubris brings nemesis, and the battle this time will be harder fought, with an outcome that no one dares to predict with any pretence of certainty.

The centre-right "Republican" candidate, chosen by party members at the end of a wearisome, but democratic process, is to be Valérie Pécresse, currently president of the capital region, the Île de France, centred on Paris. A daughter of privilege, raised in the country's wealthiest and most prestigous commune, Neuilly-sur-Seine, Pécresse, 54, is not only bright (and multi-lingual), but, like most top female politicians in France, good-looking and something of a fashion model. She saw off all three previously fancied candidates for the party, Xavier Bertrand, Eric Ciotti and Michel Barnier, and went on to announce, amid thunderous applause, that *La droite est de retour!* – the Right is back!

Pécresse – derided by opponents on the right as "Macron in a skirt" – is Old-School Conservative, but the rise of anti-immigrant sentiment across much of France has forced her to tack to the right. She will present Macron with the sort of challenge he isn't used to – a candidate as clever as he is and with longer experience as a political operator. Even if he manages to come out on top, he will know that he has been in a fight.

On the Left, Anne Hidalgo, the Spanish-born mayor of Paris, is seriously up against it. She, like Pécresse, is a seasoned administrator, who in the capital has turned the Socialist cause distinctly green. But the party of Mitterrand remains in the doldrums nationally and, like the Left overall, is not expected to put up more than token resistance to the real big beasts in the race.

What is new this time round is the grim struggle between Marine Le Pen, looking to contest her third presidential campaign on behalf of the renamed National Rally, and Éric Zemmour – "Z" or "Zezu" – a far-right maverick, eyeing the prize on behalf of himself and his hardline, populist agenda, centred on ending immigration, making life hard for Muslims and generally offering French voters whatever it takes to win their support on April 10.

Zemmour is a phenomenon – a creation of the right-wing TV channel Cnews – who is entirely in love with himself and his ideas and expects the nation to share his enthusiasm. Not the least of his achievements has been to successfully present himself, born into a family of Sephardic Jews in North Africa, as the number one defender of white, Christian civilisation. Highly intelligent and effortlessly empathetic (so long as the empathies in question are those of the far-Right), he has put the fear of God into Mme Le Pen, whose nativist credentials seem suddenly tired and old-hat.

What happens if Zemmour and Le Pen get involved in a fight to the death remains to be seen, but it must be obvious to both that in the end there can be only one.

Macron will be hoping that his enemies will be well and truly scattered by the time April draws near. All he has to do is win the centre ground in round one, gathering the single-highest number of votes, before going into a run-off against whichever of his opponents has managed to outscore the rest.

It could be that it will be Macron v. Pécresse or Macron v. Le Pen, or even Macron v. Zemmour. No other scenario looks plausible. But however it pans out, the deciding factors in the end will be three-fold: the economy – i.e. jobs and inflation – immigration (a bigger issue with each passing month) ... and Covid.

Macron has just about held the French economy together. At any rate, French industry appears to be in good shape to take advantage of the global recovery when it finally shows up. The problem is that, in spite of introducing a law that makes it mandatory for French Muslims to endorse *laïcité* – the separation of Church and State – the President is seen by many to be soft on immigration. He is also on borrowed time when it comes to controlling and, most of all, *ending* the pandemic.

Western electorates used to be predictable. The centre-left and the centre-right, with occasional jolts from the extremes, alternated and kept their governments just about on an even keel. But that is no longer true. Voters are jumpy these days. They are bad-tempered, angry and unforgiving. If he can hold off the challenge of Pécresse, and allowing for a dropped stitch or two along the way, Emmanuel Macron ought to have the presidential election sewn up. Though he may lose a hundred seats, or more, in the Assembly, he himself should just about make it home on April 25.

Or not. Is the French political landscape about to experience a seismic shift that changes the battleground for the next 10, or even 20, years? The truth is, nobody knows. 2022 may yet prove a turning point that academics and pundits will spend their careers examining.

Photo: Andia / Alamy Stock Photo

Western electorates used to be predictable. The centre-left and the centre-right alternated and kept their governments more or less on an even keel. That is no longer true.

Macron has ended up as the punchbag of the millions of cosseted workers who understand the need for reform but only if it in no way adversely affects them.

Walter Ellis is a France-based journalist who has covered politics across the EU for decades.

Anne-Elisabeth Moutet

Macron's threat from the RIGHT

As the April election approaches, the front-runners to challenge the President are moving ahead of the pack.

2022 was expected to be the most boring presidential election in the history of the Fifth Republic: a re-run of 2017, without the surprises or the suspense. The same old war horses, from Marine Le Pen to Jean-Luc Mélenchon, were expected to be trotted out, vociferate, and lose. Emmanuel Macron's re-election was certain. There was No One Else.

Photo: Frederic Legrand - COMEO

The incumbent himself affected Olympian detachment, secure in decent poll numbers, a good handling of the Covid Fifth Wave, and his own gift for political triangulation. After all, Macron's overuse of his "*en même temps*" ("at the same time") catchphrase, a rhetorical equipoise with which he dismissed the very notions of Right and Left, had stood him in good stead. Certainly, the parties of France's traditional Left and those of the centre-right were, if anything, in worse shape today than five years ago.

The first surprise came from the national-conservative Le Figaro journalist, cable news talk show host and best-selling author Eric Zemmour, 63, whose possible candidacy started being floated in late spring with cryptic "Zemmour Président" posters appearing overnight in Paris and in regional capitals. Zemmour himself denied knowing anything about them.

The man perhaps too slickly dubbed "the French Trump" is a slight, trenchant polemicist, whose two-year-old daily talk show pushed the hitherto lacklustre CNEWS cable news station all the way up the ratings pole. (It's been stopped, following a ruling of the broadcasting authority on candidates' equal time.) His pessimistic books, all describing France as a country in terminal decline, sell in the hundreds of thousands. In person, Zemmour has wit, self-deprecation, and an impish twinkle in his eye, none of which is especially Trumpian. But he is also obsessed with the loss of "French identity", which he sees as largely caused by unchecked immigration, and a kind of mental capitulation to woke tropes, from happy multiculturalism to the latest education fads imported from America.

When Zemmour finally declared, last November, his voting intention ratings for the first round of the election had shot up in four months from 3% to 18%, briefly overtaking Marine Le Pen for second place and a chance to challenge Macron in the runoff.

All polls predict that he, like her, would lose. Yet such an unprecedented rise from seemingly nowhere scared all the other candidates.

This explains the second surprise: the reshuffling of the deck among the Républicains, the party of Chirac, Sarkozy and, once, de Gaulle (who wouldn't recognise much in its current iteration), as well as among the atomised Left, whose factions, together, can't manage to scrape 25% of the predicted votes. The 2022 French presidential election is being fought on the Right, with the kind of discourse rarely heard until now. Marine Le Pen or her father Jean-Marie never managed to impact the public discourse. Eric Zemmour has changed it.

Valérie Pécresse, 54, the unexpected runoff winner of the Républicains primary, who's the respected president of the Paris region, the country's largest, was expected to run on her considerable economic achievements - and she did promise to shrink the public sector. But mostly, she won the nomination campaigning on immigration and the breakdown of law and order, never hesitating to link the former with the latter. Her strongest contender in the primary (he polled at almost 40% of the runoff vote) was Eric Ciotti, the relatively unknown MP for the city of Nice, who relentlessly pushed a hard-line, anti-immigration stance, and demanded a "French Guantanamo" for terrorists. Pécresse soon announced an almost indistinguishable system by which convicted terrorists would not be freed at the end of their sentence, but kept indefinitely in special custody as long as they were still considered radicalised. Her line of "restoring France's pride and protecting the French" could have been, like Eric Zemmour's, Trump-inspired.

That's a far cry from her image as an efficient, moderate technocrat, the class-swot product of top Parisian Catholic schools and of *École Nationale d'Administration*. An elegant woman with a slightly stand-offish manner, she was successively Secretary of State for Universities and for the Budget under Nicolas Sarkozy (who supported her in the primary, proving once again that while he's out of the actual running, he remains the true Godfather of the Républicains). An early December poll handed Pécresse victory in the presidential election second round by 52-48, the first time Emmanuel Macron was predicted to lose: she was seen to be snatching votes from both Zemmour and Macron. For that she needs to beat a crowded field to come second in the first round, which is not yet certain, even if the hard-right vote remains almost equally split between Marine Le Pen and Eric Zemmour, at around 15% each while Macron hovers at 25%. But the most recent trends favour her.

There were five challengers in the Républicains primary, including Michel Barnier, the EU's Brexit negotiator, who blithely took the opposite tack from what he'd demanded of Britain for four years: he swore that France would no longer abide by ECJ rulings "if they impugn our sovereignty" and promised a five-year moratorium on family immigration to France. But for the coming hundred or so days before the April election, Pécresse's only worry is Ciotti's support, mostly because the others have no identifiable troops or ideas. The Nice MP has become the guardian of the new Zemmour-lite line (the one voters will go to the polls to support), and will guard against any temptation Pécresse might have to revert to a more moderate type.

Will Marine Le Pen become the victim of the trend she was unable to predict? She staked her third bid for the presidency on 'detoxifying' the National Front. Yet she finds herself threatened by a newcomer courting controversies in an enthusiastic riff of the style for which she fired her father Jean-Marie from the movement he founded.

Will Marine Le Pen, 53, become the victim of the trend she was unable to predict? She staked her third bid for the presidency on "detoxifying" the National Front, which she renamed the National Rally. She softened her image, her slogans, her style. She posted pictures of her beloved cats on her Instagram feed. All this to find herself threatened by a newcomer courting controversies in an enthusiastic riff of the style for which she fired her father, Jean-Marie, from the movement he founded. (Zemmour, who is Jewish and has outraged public opinion by writing that French Jews were protected by Pétain's Vichy regime, used to visit the old Le Pen in his house outside Paris for long lunches in which they argued politics.) Marine still beats "Le Z" in two key groups, though: women, and the working (or, often, no longer working) classes. Her northern constituency in France's rust belt, many of whom used to vote for the Communist party a generation ago, are not the type who read Zemmour's books; a Parisian intellectual, he is alien to them in a way he isn't in Southern France.

No one from the rest of the field, not the Green, Yannick Jadot, 54 (8.5%), not the neo-Marxist Jean-Luc Mélenchon, 70 (8.5%), nor the Socialist Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, 62 (4.5%), have the slightest hope. They disagree on ideas, policies, style, and they dislike one another intensely. At this stage, even new entrants on the Left would not break the stalemate, because none could reach common ground.

This year's election will be a four-person race - two men, two women. It will be fought on the Right. And no one can reliably predict the outcome today. Boring, it is not.

Anne-Elisabeth Moutet is a columnist for the Daily Telegraph, for UnHerd, and for the French-German Television channel ARTE.

Tom Tugendhat

BEYOND BREXIT

If done right, Britain's split from the EU will help its friends and neighbours on the continent.

There are two lessons we have learned over the last five years of dealing with the Brexit process: shame and blame help no one.

The United Kingdom started its departure from the EU almost apologetic at the problems we had caused. It wasn't what others had chosen and it was down to us, and us almost alone, to fix them. That didn't work for anyone. We were blamed by Brussels and many of the member states for the problems and found our negotiations tramlined towards an end state that worked for nobody.

Since then, we've turned the tables. Instead of being our fault, it was theirs. Who "they" are has shifted but fundamentally the challenge remained: it was for us to decide and them to fix. That's not sustainable either. Both misunderstand what we all need from a partnership and how to rebuild our relationships.

The EU and UK need each other. The world - at home and abroad - has changed, and we can no longer afford the luxury of a family squabble.

In Paris, Berlin and other members' capitals a similar perspective has shaped unhelpful demands and approaches. Things have changed. Even Michel Barnier has campaigned – albeit unsuccessfully - for the French presidency on lines that wouldn't be out of place in a speech by his British counterpart, Lord Frost, showing a rethink in national debates from the centralising impulses of recent years.

We're seeing today that the time for a reset on both sides has arrived. We need each other. The world - at home and abroad - has changed, and we can no longer afford the luxury of a family squabble.

Over the past five years, politics across the UK and the European Union has moved a fair way from when we started the separation in 2016. In the UK, we have the second post-referendum leadership and this one, despite recent difficulties, has a commanding majority in Parliament. In the EU, the Merkel era is over, Barnier is no longer even a candidate in the French elections and the Irish government looks more vulnerable to its own populist flank.

In the east, Hungary and Poland have engaged in disputes with the Commission that challenge the foundational texts of the community. In the south, the stronger Greek and Italian administrations have replaced the chaotic past with a more predictable future.

And all of this comes as Covid has reasserted areas of national capability within member states. This virus showed that the European ideal doesn't work in every domain. Health, despite early attempts to change it, demonstrated the limits of cohesion in the face of a crisis as national needs trumped communal solidarity. Masks stopped crossing the borders and capitals competed for supplies of equipment.

Perhaps the biggest changes for the European talks are outside influences. We have seen how the pressure of a resurgent Russia and Belarus's criminal support for people trafficking has rebalanced the importance NATO, and Europe's military capabilities, alongside the economic partnership of the EU.

Wolf warriors in Chinese embassies have sharpened their teeth, uniting many on the continent and warning all. Czech, Lithuanian and many other smaller states' courageous stands against Beijing's pressure has contrasted with others' accommodation with the economic titan. That's reshaping EU foreign policy cohesion.

Even Washington's approach has changed. In the US, President Biden's team has a clear commitment to the EU, at the same time as a reassertion of the UK alliance through partnerships like the Australian, British and US AUKUS treaty.

All this means 2022 is a chance to think again about the way Britain and our European partners cooperate. Building off the past, we can see an offer that works for all.

Starting with what Britain brings to the party, defence is most obvious. We are France's most important defence partner and Germany's key intelligence ally. But that's only the start. Around the Baltic Sea, allies like Estonia, Poland, Denmark and the Netherlands have served in British brigades and naval formations for generations and they are increasingly aware that the current antipathy helps no one but Moscow.

Economically too, the UK is not just a rival now - it remains a partner and could be a better one. There isn't a realistic likelihood of another EU state leaving the club so those who still suffer from the anxiety of example can calm down. Brexit is really only British - there is no one else on the same path.

That means from an EU perspective the chance of watching these islands and seeing what we do is a huge opportunity. Britain will have to be radical and quick. The vaccine programme is one example that could have shown a lead but there will be more besides. That could allow EU members to learn the lessons of our policy experiments without all the costs we will have to face.

Over the next decade, if Britain gets this right, we will transform our economy by investing in the technologies that will get us away from dependence on untrustworthy partners. From hydrogen to batteries, we need to step up in energy, and the next stage must include everything from education to manufacturing.

Our decision to give up the European hinterland means we have to make these moves fast. But with these new experiments we won't just be serving ourselves. If we remember that we're friends, not just neighbours, the UK can lead a new way for all.

Tom Tugendhat is a British Conservative MP and chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee.

The Balkan TINDERBOX

Timothy Less

Ethnic and nationalist tensions are drawing the region back to the 1990s.

The Balkans appear to be reaching a crunch point as the multi-ethnic settlement imposed on the region in the 1990s finally breaks down. The region today comprises five fully independent states, the disputed entity of Kosovo, and half a dozen national groups which haphazardly straddle regional borders. Albanians make up the majority in Kosovo, a quarter of the population in North Macedonia and form an enclave in Serbia. Serbs live in Bosnia, Kosovo and Montenegro and Bosnia has a large population of Croats. This is a source of persistent tension. In the inhospitable environment of the Balkans, with its legacy of inter-ethnic conflict and weak tradition of constitutional liberalism, no one wants to be a minority in someone else's state.

When Yugoslavia collapsed 30 years ago, the various groups attempted to establish nation states in which their rights and safety would be assured, but this process was blocked by the West. In 1994-95, the US intervened in Bosnia to ensure the country remained intact, motivated by a wish to impose justice on the Serbs for their campaign of ethnic cleansing by denying them independence. Subsequently, the West was forced to defend the integrity of other states in the region to uphold its position in Bosnia, initially by means of NATO troops on the ground and subsequently by the soft power attraction of eventual EU membership. For a while, this was accepted by the locals, who saw integration with an internally-borderless EU as a quasi-solution to the unresolved national question.

However, these constraints are now falling away. The US is no longer practically committed to upholding the integrity of the Balkans, having signalled its wish, initially under Donald Trump and now Joe Biden, to disengage from peripheral regions where the US lacks core strategic interests. Meanwhile, years of crisis mean the EU is now too weak to integrate the Balkans without inflicting a potentially fatal blow to itself and, at a summit in Slovenia in October, effectively withdrew its earlier offer of EU membership. As a consequence, regional actors have little reason to abide by Western leaders' insistence that they suspend their national goals.

On the contrary, they are now reviving their unfinished business from the 1990s. In Kosovo, Albanians are trying to impose their authority on the Serb-populated north of the country, unfreezing a dispute which has remained frozen for the last two decades in which Kosovo has been functionally independent from Serbia, but the north has been functionally independent from Kosovo. Events turned ugly in September when Priština tried to consolidate Kosovo's border with Serbia, leading to demonstrations by Serbs on the Kosovo side. In October, a raid by Albanian armed police into northern Kosovo killed one ethnic Serb and injured several others.

This has caused alarm in Serbia which worries about the security of the Kosovo Serbs and refuses to allow the north to come under the sovereignty of Priština. In response, Belgrade has threatened to annex northern Kosovo, something which would have been impossible a few years ago but now constitutes a credible threat. There is little chance of the US retaliating, as it did in 1999 with its 78-day bombing raid on Serbia. Nor does Serbia have anything meaningful to lose from the Europeans now that the option of joining the EU has been taken off the table. In the meantime, Serbia has the backing of Russia and China.

The breakdown of the current regional settlement established in the 1990s has long had an air of inevitability about it, deferred only by the ability of the West to contain the Balkans' unresolved nationalisms.

Events in Kosovo are also drawing in Albania. As Serbia threatens Kosovo and the US and EU offer only passive opposition, Priština is looking to Tirana, its most reliable ally, for security and political support. For its part, Albania is content to provide this guarantee to fellow Albanians who are in obvious difficulty. Leaders in both countries now talk openly of national unification which would overcome Serbia's refusal to recognise Kosovo's independence and bring its people under Albania's protective fold. In October, Kosovo's prime minister said he would vote for unification in any referendum. In November, Albania's prime minister stated it was only a matter of time.

Meanwhile in Bosnia, the Serbs are making a decisive push to break their links with Sarajevo, by withdrawing from the shared institutions of government and threatening outright secession. They too have little to fear from the US and little to lose from the Europeans while seeing events in Kosovo as a new opportunity. By creating a *fait accompli* of their independence, the Serbs can hope to jolt a tired West into accepting a land swap between Republika Srpska, which wants to be part of Serbia, and Kosovo, which wants to break free of it, thereby solving the Serbian national question and the West's two biggest problems in the Balkans.

Other states in the region are not immune from pressure. Montenegro's large Serbian minority is trying to move the country closer to Serbia against the will of many ethnic Montenegrins. As the Serbs disengage from Bosnia, Croatia is demanding greater autonomy for the country's Croatian minority who do not wish to be left alone without the Serbs to balance against the Bošnjaks. Meanwhile, the prospects of Albania and Kosovo uniting is creating new pressures in North Macedonia and the Preševo Valley in Serbia where the local Albanian populations would like to be part of any new Albanian national state.

In the West, officials are viewing events with growing alarm, especially in those countries which played an important role in shaping the current regional settlement and fear renewed conflict if Serbia occupies northern Kosovo or Bošnjaks attack the Bosnian Serbs. In late 2021, the US, the EU and the UK all appointed special envoys to the Balkans, with the goal of containing the Bosnian Serbs and neutralising the dispute between Serbia and Kosovo. Its goal is an agreement in which Belgrade recognises the breakaway territory and Priština grants autonomy to the Serb population. Both the US and Germany have threatened sanctions against local revisionists.

Yet these expressions of resolve remain at odds with the political reality of a West which lacks the will or the wherewithal to uphold the integrity of the region. Even as American officials reinforce their position on the ground, the senior leadership continues to look to the EU to provide salvation for the region. Meanwhile, Europeans are openly divided about how to respond to the nationalist challenge. Liberal states such as Germany insist on the territorial integrity of the region while Hungary, Slovenia and other conservative-minded states have indicated their willingness to accept a reordering of the Balkans along national lines. If Germany imposes sanctions, it will have to do so unilaterally, setting back plans for greater EU cooperation in foreign policy.

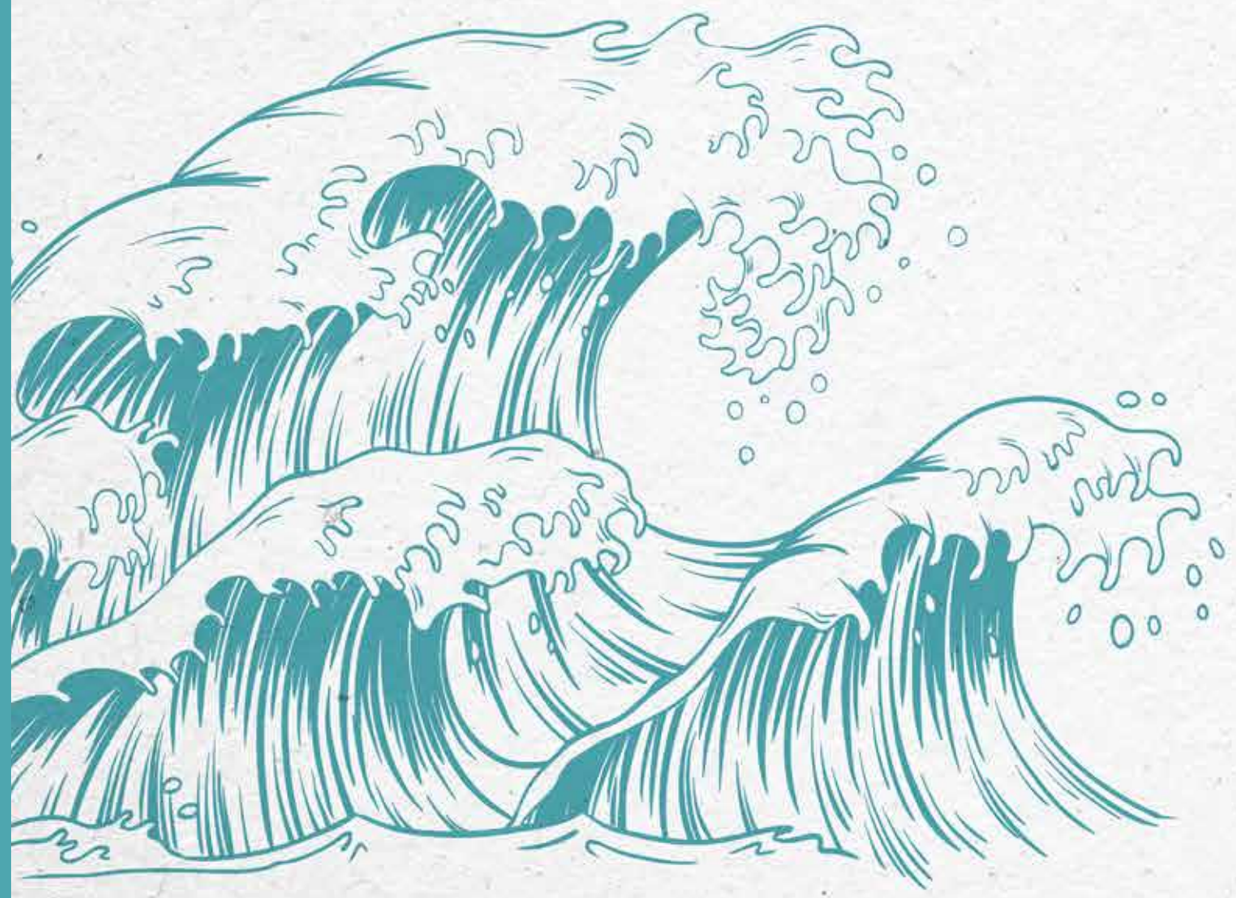
In Bosnia, the Serbs are making a decisive push to break their links with Sarajevo, by withdrawing from the shared institutions of government and threatening outright secession.

All this has two near-term implications. The first is that regional stability is likely to become even more precarious as revisionist groups test the resolve of the West by pushing matters to the brink. And the second is that events in the Balkans will put pressure on a West which is ill-prepared for an escalation of tensions in the region. The breakdown of the current regional settlement established in the 1990s has long had an air of inevitability about it, deferred only by the ability of the West to contain the Balkans' unresolved nationalisms. As that ability wanes, 2022 will reveal whether the region is now approaching its eventual moment of truth.

Timothy Less is leading the Disintegration Studies research programme at the Centre for Geopolitics at the University of Cambridge.

The THREE SEAS Initiative

BILL BOWKETT



The Three Seas Initiative (3SI) is a geopolitical forum aimed at improving dialogue between European Union (EU) member states in the area between the Adriatic, Baltic and Black Seas.

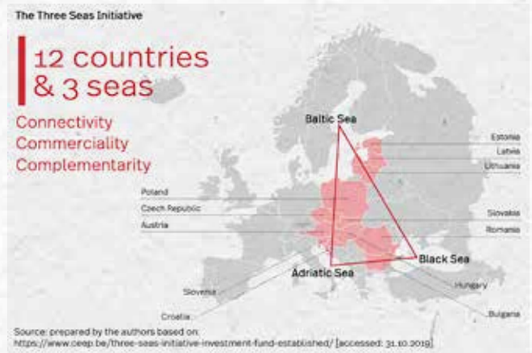
Twelve countries, covering a third of the EU's territory and home to a quarter of all EU citizens, are involved with the initiative: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

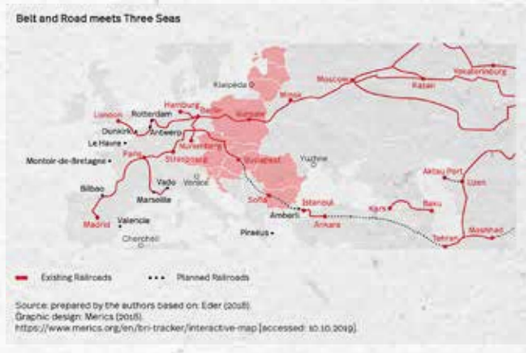
The 3SI, which produces 19% of the EU's GDP, was established in 2015 to advance the prosperity and security of the continent by investing in critical infrastructure programmes that integrates Western Europe with Central Europe.

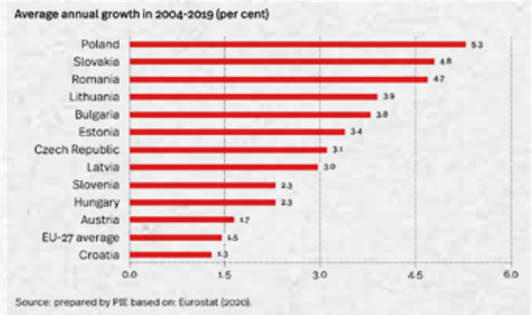
It is closely related to two major projects in the region: the Via Carpathia railway line extending from Northern Greece to Lithuania, and the expansion of natural gas infrastructure.

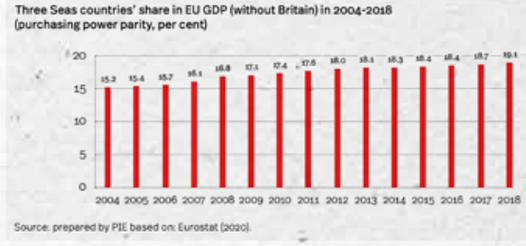
In 2016, the 3SI met for their first summit in Dubrovnik. Since then, the 3SI have held four more summits: Warsaw (2017), Bucharest (2018), Ljubljana (2019) and Tallinn (2020).

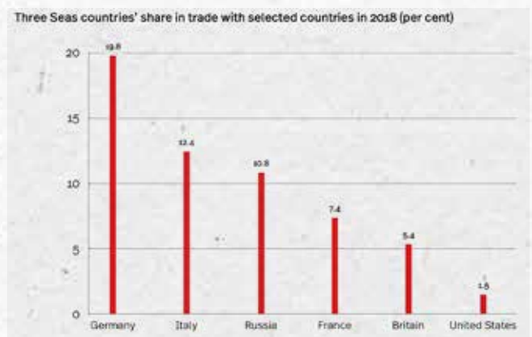
In 2018, Poland and Croatia, the two founding institutions, created the Investment Fund of the Three Seas Initiative. Open to other Three Seas countries, the supervisory board consists of representatives of development banks from the Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland and Romania. Private investors are also invited to the fund. Officials aim to raise up to €3 billion to €5 billion for the 3SI region. ⌐

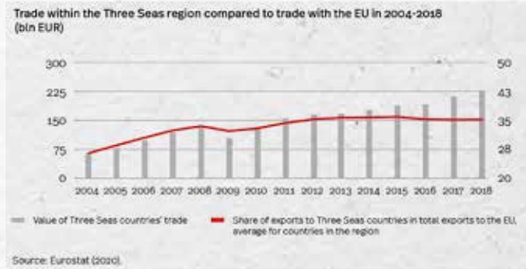












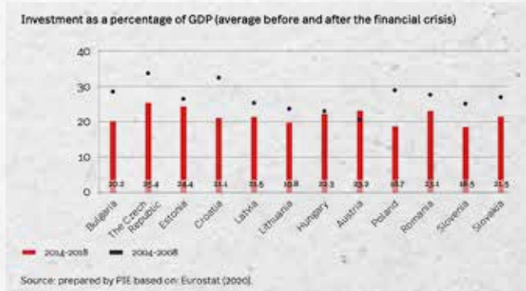


Photo: Simon Serdar / Alamy Stock Photo

Alexander Lukashenko's weaponisation of migrants isn't over yet. But Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland have demonstrated that liberal democracies can force authoritarian regimes to blink first.

Elisabeth Braw

BELARUS'S MIGRANT WAR

Until the spring of 2021, the global public wasn't paying much attention to Belarus. It is now. By weaponising migrants, Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko and his regime have demonstrated that it's possible to rattle the West at minimal expense and without risking soldiers' lives. But one thing hasn't gone according to Lukashenko's plan: the forceful response by Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. The three countries have, in fact, demonstrated that decisive – if sometimes unpopular – action can get even devious aggressors to change their plans.

In May, after the EU had imposed sanctions on Belarus following its abduction of opposition journalist Roman Protasevich and his girlfriend Sofia Sapega from a Vilnius-bound Ryanair flight, Lukashenko threatened to flood the EU "with migrants and drugs". Few people took him seriously. Who would do such a thing? Turn a blind eye to a bit of drug-smuggling perhaps, but to launch government-coordinated people-smuggling as a way of harming other countries? Not even an angry dictator would openly use such dirty means against other countries, if only because it would mean immediate ostracism by the international community. But Lukashenko, angry with the West for challenging the legitimacy of his rule and for supporting Belarusian democracy activists, didn't mind barring himself from Western capitals' prestigious corridors of power. He wanted to get even, and he knew that by using migrants as a weapon he'd put the EU and NATO in an acute dilemma.

Indeed, Lukashenko knew that migrants are an issue that profoundly divides Europe, and especially the EU. It pits primarily Western European countries that endorse relatively liberal policies for asylum seekers against primarily Central and Eastern member states that prefer a stricter approach. And migration bitterly divides individual countries. What better tool to use if one wants the EU to stumble and succumb to infighting and paralysis, and to stumble while a crisis is taking place at its borders, leaving the countries involved to tackle a massive and dangerous logistical task?

Lukashenko knows that migrants are an issue that profoundly divides Europe. What better tool to use if one wants the EU to stumble and succumb to infighting and paralysis?

When, in June, migrants began illegally crossing into Lithuania by the hundreds, it was obvious that something was afoot, though it wasn't obvious what exactly it was or who was organising it. Soon several thousand migrants had arrived at the border, which in a normal year sees fewer than one hundred illegal crossings. That, in combination with the discovery that Belarusian authorities were suddenly issuing large numbers of tourist visas in the Middle East, made clear that Belarus was using migrants to harm its neighbour. That was a radical change in behaviour by Belarus, given that for the past three decades Belarus and its Western neighbours have enjoyed excellent cooperation at their common borders, as Latvia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister, Artis Pabriks, told me in November. Indeed, no sooner had Lithuania managed to build a partial fence and station more guards at the otherwise peaceful border than Latvia found itself the next target. Then Lukashenko turned his aggression against Poland, which became the focus of his efforts.

What's happening at the three countries' borders is not a migration crisis. The now tens of thousands of migrants who have tried to cross into Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, many thousands of them successfully, arrived in those countries aided by a country that could equally have provided refuge if refuge was the objective. Belarus's aid didn't just include visas to citizens of Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries. Belarus's national carrier, Belavia, rapidly expanded its flights from Middle Eastern cities to Minsk; sadly, other airlines did so too. Upon arrival in Minsk, the migrants received government assistance travelling to the borders of Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. Once there, they were again assisted by Belarusian forces, who tore down sections of Poland's hastily erected border fence, directed lasers against Polish forces guarding the border, shot at the Polish forces (using blank rounds, but the Poles couldn't know what would be fired at them). To date, not only have thousands of migrants crossed into the three countries, but more than 10,500 have continued on from Poland to Germany.

By the end of the year, Belarusian forces were continuing their harassment of Polish counterparts at the border – but the Polish forces were standing firm. So were their Latvian and Lithuanian counterparts. Collectively, the three countries have managed to dramatically reduce the number of illegal crossings. According to the European Commission, at the beginning of December some 8,000 migrants were in Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, in addition to the over 10,500 who have continued to Germany. But 1,900 others had travelled home on repatriation flights, and Belarusian authorities had also moved many away from the border.

To be sure, the toughness adopted by Latvia, Lithuania and Poland has earned them plenty of scorn from Brussels and other Western European capitals, and some of the rhetoric from the Polish government has been in poor taste. It's also indisputable that by blocking migrants' access to their countries, Poland, Latvia and Lithuania have caused migrants to have to spend many hours, and sometimes nights, in freezing conditions. But that's exactly what Lukashenko was counting on. He was calculating that the three countries wouldn't risk criticism and that he would, as a result, be able to send many more thousands of migrants to the EU's territory, thus causing an EU-wide crisis. Indeed, it wasn't in the interests of Poland, Latvia, or Lithuania to stand firm, because the vast majority of the migrants were at any rate hoping to get to Germany or perhaps Sweden. The three countries could have let the migrants through and left Germany, Sweden and indeed Brussels to tackle an even larger problem.

Instead they stood firm, accepted some reputational damage – and forced Lukashenko to back down. "If Germans and Poles won't listen to me today, it's not my fault. I will do whatever you want, even if it harms Poles and others. But you need to realise we can't start a war to force a corridor through Poland to Germany," Lukashenko told a group of migrants in Belarus on 26 November. In other words, he's not going to try to break through the Polish forces protecting their border. They've won.

No, Belarus's weaponisation of migrants isn't over yet. Nor is its greyzone aggression against the West. Nor, of course, is Russia's or China's greyzone aggression against the West. But Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland have demonstrated that liberal democracies can force authoritarian regimes to blink first, even in a game that favours authoritarian aggressors. That's a lesson worth learning in every Western capital.

Elisabeth Braw is a Visiting Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI).

William Nattrass

LITHUANIA VERSUS THE WORLD

The country's "values-based" foreign policy has set it on a collision course with Minsk, Moscow and Beijing.

In the struggle against authoritarianism, an unlikely champion has emerged on the EU's eastern fringe. Since taking power in October 2020, Lithuania's government, led by the Homeland Union party, has implemented what it calls a "values-based" foreign policy aiming to promote democratic values around the world. Yet in doing so, it has also made Lithuania an example of the inevitable sacrifices resulting from an uncompromising stance towards powers such as China and Russia.

The term "values-based" is a loaded one, bearing the implication that most countries are all too ready to sacrifice their values for the sake of more pragmatic concerns when dealing with other nations. This latent sense of criticism became stronger throughout 2021, as the West's appetite for conflict with Eastern authoritarian regimes was put to the test on multiple fronts.

While Lithuania's stance against the Eastern powers is certainly bold, without stronger support from abroad it may come to appear quixotic.

As most in Europe tiptoed around delicate geopolitical issues such as energy dependence on Russia and the question of Taiwanese sovereignty, Lithuania hurled itself into the debates with little apparent heed for the diplomatic or economic consequences.

Relations with China deteriorated particularly dramatically, reaching a new low in November when an official "Taiwanese Representative Office" was opened in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius. The move was incendiary: countries around the world with Taiwanese diplomatic offices tend to name them after the city of Taipei to avoid ruffling feathers in Beijing.

Such "diplomatically" named offices embody the balance which most Western countries strike in their relations with China: conscious of their responsibility towards promoting democracy and human rights, yet careful to avoid moves which would lead to a significant diplomatic rift. Indeed, Lithuania's Foreign Minister, Gabrielius Landsbergis, has noted how China's enormous sensitivity on such issues often leaves foreign governments with a sense that a "sword of Damocles" is hanging over their heads, ready to drop at the slightest misstep harmful to the international reputation of the Chinese Communist Party.

True to form, Beijing responded to Lithuania's move by drastically cutting trade links with the country. For other nations this would have spelt catastrophe. But Lithuania is in a unique position to resist the deterrent effects of China's economic might. Unlike other EU countries, Lithuanian trade with China has remained largely undeveloped – before relations plummeted in 2021, China accounted for only 2.5% of Lithuanian exports, compared to a whopping 16.8% in Germany.

Of far greater significance to the domestic economy are authoritarian regimes much closer to home, in Minsk and Moscow. Negative relations with Belarus and Russia carry far greater risk to Lithuania – and as such, it's here that the values-based approach is at its most admirable.

Lithuania refuses to engage with Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko, while playing host to the Belarusian opposition in exile led by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. When the migrant crisis at the Polish and Lithuanian borders in the second half of 2021 brought relations to a dramatic new low, Foreign Minister Landsbergis said free and fair elections in Belarus were a precondition for dialogue to begin on the matter.

As Europe looked set to become even more dependent on Moscow for gas, cutting back on imports from Russia became a key policy priority for Lithuania.

The Lithuanian government has been quite clear in suggesting patience is the best bet when it comes to Belarus, arguing that growing civil unrest against Lukashenko will eventually make his rule impossible to sustain. Yet until that day Lithuania will be among the states bearing the most significant consequences of the present confrontational atmosphere: as a large market on Lithuania's doorstep, Belarus was for a long time a key economic partner with cross-border travel and trade forming an integral part of the Lithuanian economy.

There is a paradox in that, while unilaterally ending dialogue with the Belarusian regime and encouraging the EU to cut its remaining economic ties with Minsk, Lithuania laments Lukashenko's drift further into the arms of Vladimir Putin. As an ex-Soviet state, Lithuania is keenly attuned to any increase in the Kremlin's influence in Europe. It was one of the loudest voices in opposition to the German-US deal on the Nord Stream 2 project, pushed through with almost brutal pragmatism by Angela Merkel in her final weeks as German Chancellor. As Europe looked set to become even more dependent on Moscow for gas, cutting back on imports from Russia became a key policy priority for Lithuania.

This stance on Belarus and Russia is causing an economic headache for Lithuania. And while not calamitous at present, the rift with China could also turn into a significant handicap if other nations pursue a more pragmatic course in their relations with Beijing (some, such as Hungary's Fidesz government, have already expressed a desire to do so) and little Lithuania is left making a lonely stand against the Chinese giant.

Lithuania's government is driven by a visionary impulse. Yet the economic sacrifices inherent in Lithuania's uncompromising stance could become political ones too. Without stronger support from abroad, many Lithuanians may start to wonder why their country is taking an economic hit for the sake of values which are not being promoted with the same zeal by other EU members.

The political difficulties of putting principle above prosperity have already been foreshadowed by a dramatic fall in support for the ruling party as international tensions built in the second half of 2021, dropping an average of 9% in opinion polls from its 25% vote share in the 2020 election.

The long-term success of its values-based policy also depends to a large extent on support from allies which is far from guaranteed. Calls for the diversification of supply chains to reduce dependence on Beijing will likely receive short shrift in countries where high levels of trade with China are already entrenched – while moves to offset Russian energy influence will be a drop in the ocean if Nord Stream 2 finally becomes operational.

While Lithuania's stance against the Eastern powers is certainly bold, without stronger support from abroad it may come to appear quixotic. The short-term economic and political sacrifices now being faced by the country show why this support is desperately needed. Yet the same ill winds are also deterring other nations from charting the same brave course.

William Nattrass is a Prague-based Visegrád Four current affairs commentator.

Tim Marshall

EUROPE'S ENERGY CRISIS

The EU's "strategic autonomy" is a pipe dream as long as Russia uses its gas supplies to fuel territorial tensions.

There are two strands to the EU's dream of "strategic autonomy" - military and economic – and neither are helped by the Union's reliance on Russian gas.

Anxiety about energy supplies does not mean the EU cannot take robust military and/or economic action against Russia if it felt it was required, but it is a strong incentive to gloss over Russian aggression and water down sanctions. 2021 saw signs that the EU has woken up to the dangers of depending on Moscow's pipelines. 2022 will see what, if anything, is done about it. The key issue is likely to be the Nord Stream 2 gas line which bypasses Ukraine and, if approved, will deliver gas directly to Germany via the Baltic Sea.

This dependency is partially self-inflicted and, in some ways, unavoidable. Many of the EU countries (and the UK) are among the global front runners in the race to decarbonise. Positive advances have been made. However, the pace of installing renewable energy facilities has not kept pace with the phasing out of coal and nuclear power or building terminals to take Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) supplies from Qatar, the US, Malaysia and other providers. The British and Norwegian gas fields are in decline, leaving Europe ever more reliant on Russian gas.

The 2006 and 2009 gas crises, when Russia cut gas supplies, set the alarm bells ringing, especially in 2009 when several countries ended up rationing gas and shutting factories. The demonstration that Moscow could turn down people's radiators caused some of the more vulnerable countries to plan for LNG terminals and to connect their pipelines to the multi-state grid, to speed up reverse flows in the event of one country experiencing shortages. It has not been enough.

Nord Stream 2 is crucial to Moscow's strategy to not only keep Europe dependent on Russian gas, but also to force Ukraine back into its sphere of influence.

Without sufficient green alternatives to Russian gas, and the still-limited effect of LNG and the grid system, Europe remains at the mercy of energy demand and price spikes, as we saw in the autumn. Moscow retains the tools required to pressure Europe and make profits, especially as, in a bid to reduce reliance on Russia, the EU had changed its buying policy from long-term contracts to bidding on the open market. In trying to relieve one problem it created another.

Last year, as economies began to open following Covid-19 lockdowns, demand for gas began to surge as did the price. There had been a long winter and many countries' supplies had run low. There was a lot of gas available, but also a lot of competition for it. Unlike the EU, many Asian countries are tied to long-term contracts and so received deliveries. China and a few other countries then paid whatever it took to buy supplies which might otherwise have gone to Europe.

Russia, which supplies 40% of Europe's gas needs, saw this coming. Over a period of months, Gazprom reduced the amount of gas it sold on the open market and failed to book additional capacity in the pipelines. This resulted in many European countries struggling to fill gas storage facilities and contributed to soaring prices. The year began with gas prices at €20 per megawatt-hour, by October they were at €162. When European countries complained, President Putin replied that the termination of long-term contracts was the problem. He was partially right, but the part missing from his response was that he had taken advantage of the situation.

Then Moscow played a card which it hopes is its "ace". Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said that if Nord Stream 2 were to be approved by the German energy regulator, then this "could cool soaring European gas prices". Nord Stream 2 is crucial to Moscow's strategy to not only keep Europe dependent on Russian gas, but also to force Ukraine back into its sphere of influence. You could call this sensible hard-headed realpolitik, or you could call it blackmail.

With or without Putin as leader, Russia will never be reconciled to the loss of Ukraine. Having been invaded so many times via the mostly flat land in front of it, Russia views the region as a buffer zone between it and potentially hostile forces. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia believed the former Eastern Bloc countries would remain neutral. Moscow was horrified as it watched state after state elect governments bent on joining both the EU and NATO. In 2014, its view of the Ukrainian revolution, which overthrew an anti-Western president, was that it was a coup designed to eventually bring NATO forces to the Ukrainian/Russian border. The response was to engineer the uprising in the Russian speaking Donbass region to create a mini buffer zone and to invade and annex Crimea to safeguard its (leased) warm water port on the Black Sea.

Moscow has not finished yet. Diplomatic negotiations on a solution to the conflict in the Donbass have faltered, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is working to undermine pro-Russian oligarchs in his country, and his military is growing stronger each year, partially armed and trained by several NATO countries, including the US and the UK. In October, Putin commented that although Ukraine was not in NATO, "military development of the territory is already underway. And this really poses a threat to Russia." Last year, Russia massed troops on the Ukrainian border in the summer, insisted they were only on exercise, but kept most of them in the region and moved them back towards the border in the late autumn.

If there is an invasion of Ukraine, it is difficult to see Nord Stream 2 getting approval and that would throw Putin's long-term strategy out of the window.

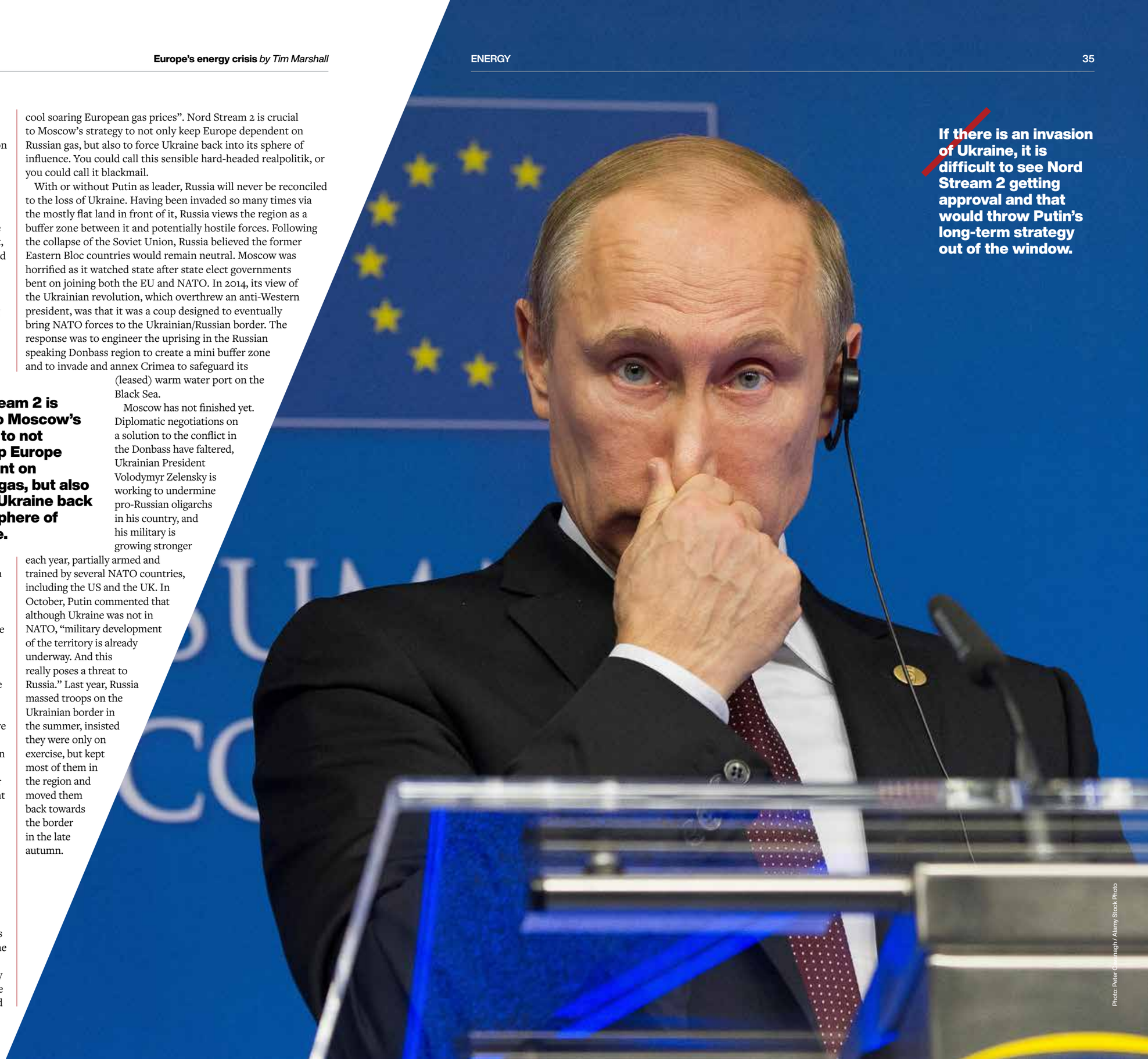


Photo: Peter Cavanagh / Alamy Stock Photo

In November, the German energy regulator temporarily withheld approval for Nord Stream 2 on technical legal grounds. It is an independent body but it is difficult to believe the decision was not a response to warnings that Russia was about to invade Ukraine. Putin may be bluffing, or the German regulator's decision may, at the time of writing, have stayed his hand. If there is an invasion, it is difficult to see Nord Stream 2 getting approval and that would throw Putin's long-term strategy out of the window. If he can wait a few months, and reduce tensions, final approval could be granted in the spring.

The probability is that Putin is signalling to the Americans that they should not challenge the status quo in the region.

And if he can't? The probability is that Putin is signalling to the Americans that they should not challenge the status quo in the region and certainly should not set a foot on the road to integrating Ukraine into NATO. However, Moscow's hawks can argue that one way to ensure this does not happen is not just to threaten war, but to invade now. As argued above, Russia sees the Ukrainian issue as an existential one.

In the event of a major border crossing there are various scenarios. Russia could just occupy the parts of the Donbass the separatists currently hold and then, presumably after fighting off a Ukrainian advance, annex the territory. Yet the structure and posture of the forces moved to the border, and into Crimea, give options for more ambitious plans. The 100,000 troops now in place include special forces, paratroopers, amphibious assault troops and amphibious landing craft. They are positioned along the Donbass border, further south in the Voronezh region of Russia, and in Crimea.

Theoretically, the forces in Crimea could advance north and link up with those coming south and together encircle Ukrainian troops in the Donbass. The 35,000 men and women in the Ukrainian Joint Forces Operation would then be cut off from reinforcements. The advance from Voronezh would probably be involved in taking the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol on the Sea of Azov. This would mean Russia would have linked Crimea and Donbass, thus creating contiguous territory forming a much larger "buffer zone" between it and NATO forces if Ukraine was ever admitted into NATO.

It is argued that if relations with Russia can be returned to an even keel, then the pipeline will be a positive thing because Russian gas is plentiful.

In a recent Russian military exercise, troops rehearsed an advance of almost 100 miles. It would not be easy. Ukraine's forces are better trained and armed than in 2014, and now have a (limited) supply of portable Javelin fire-and-forget missiles which could be deployed against Russia's tanks, and some of the Turkish made Bayraktar drones which smashed the Armenian heavy armour in the 2020 war with Azerbaijan.

There is an even more ambitious scenario in which Russian forces also advance along the Black Sea coast and either take or blockade Ukraine's ports. On the wish list scenario, they even go past Odessa and into Moldova's breakaway Transnistria region which already hosts Russian troops. None of this can be ruled out and in late November Putin raised the stakes. He said Russia would be forced to act if its "red lines" on Ukraine were crossed by NATO. Those lines included the stationing of certain types of "offensive" weapons in Ukraine.

Reasons to be anxious are legion. But so are the reasons to believe that Moscow is only testing American resolve post the Afghanistan debacle and signalling the dangers of supporting Ukraine. Putin was not impressed with June's NATO summit in Brussels, when the organisation reiterated its position that one day Ukraine should become a member, even if President Biden did then say that he was not in favour of this happening any time soon.

So, changing the situation through military force remains an option for the Russian leader. However, at the time of writing, his "ace" is still in play. If Nord Stream 2 is eventually approved, and Ukraine bypassed, Kiev will over a period of just a few years lose out on roughly $10 billion in pipeline transit fees. That will undermine President Zelensky's efforts to improve living standards and to root out the rampant corruption which plagues his country. As he struggles with these challenges, Moscow can continue to work with the powerful alliance of pro-Russian oligarchs to undermine him and suggest that Ukraine is better off looking east rather than west. A poor and corrupt Ukraine will be in no position to join the EU or NATO.

An example of the pressures Moscow can bring to bear is seen in Moldova. Russian troops are in the separatist region of Transnistria, as is the Russian electricity power station which supplies 70% of Moldova's electricity. A Gazprom subsidiary supplies most of the gas. Moscow wants Moldova back under its control. In 2020, when the government was run by pro-Russians, an extension of supply contracts was considered a formality. In 2021, with a reformist and European-leaning government in power, the contracts are in doubt and Gazprom threatened winter gas cuts. Russia is in no hurry for Transnistria to pay several billion dollars debt it owes Moscow but wants a swift resolution to the $700 million the Moldavian government owes it.

The Americans and others have long warned that Nord Stream 2 will increase Europe's reliance on Russia, but powerful German business interests and Russian economic influence kept the project alive until the pipeline was completed last September. It is argued that if relations with Russia can be returned to an even keel, then the pipeline will be a positive thing because Russian gas is plentiful, almost always available, and, in most years, cheap. It also means that even if Russia is quarrelling with Ukraine, and cuts supply, the line direct to Germany can remain open. That first "if" is quite a big one.

A hybrid way forward could be that in return for approving Nord Stream 2, and possibly a reduction in sanctions, Russia agrees to extend its transit agreements via Ukraine by several years. That would be difficult to negotiate because it undermines part of Russia's strategy to undermine Ukraine. That would require Moscow to play the long game. The problem there is that in the long run, Europe will do what it should have done more quickly in the past – it will try to get more LNG in, it will look at hydrogen as part of its supply of energy, and it will continue to invest in renewables. It would also be prudent to fill the storage tanks or, in the UK's case, to actually have some storage tanks.

Without further measures, the EU's "strategic autonomy" is a pipe dream, and Russia's pipes are a potential EU nightmare.

Tim Marshall is a journalist, broadcaster and author of the bestselling books "Prisoners of Geography" and "The Power of Geography."

Sam Hall

The power of GREEN POWER

Free markets are key to European nations seizing an unprecedented opportunity to improve the continent's energy security and lower its energy costs.

Energy prices are spiking across Europe. In nearly every part of the continent, energy consumers face higher fuel bills this winter, with surging prices predicted to stretch well into this year. Energy touches nearly every part of our economy and our lives, and so record-high prices are having a major impact on household finances and industrial competitiveness.

The price spike has been predominantly driven by international gas prices. As Asian economies rebounded from Covid earlier this year, the supply of gas, particularly LNG from the Middle East, struggled to keep pace with demand. Furthermore, the state-owned Russian giant Gazprom, which supplies about a third of Europe's gas, did not increase supply to Europe in response to the higher prices - in a naked attempt to apply pressure on the EU to approve the controversial Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

Gas markets in Europe are now pricing in further supply constraints due to the build-up of Russian troops on the Ukrainian border. In the event of a Russian invasion of Ukraine, it's a safe assumption that Putin would weaponise European dependence on Russian gas by ordering Gazprom to limit supply.

Although other factors have contributed to higher prices, such as lulls in wind power or interconnectors and nuclear power stations being offline, gas is the principal price setter in the European energy market. It is, after all, the only element of energy bills that has rocketed over the past year.

Just as we saw in the 1970s with the OPEC crisis, the price of fossil fuels is especially volatile, as it is sensitive to the geopolitical whims of autocratic petro-states. With the exception of Norway and the UK, Europe has few oil and gas reserves, and so is dependent on imports. Strikingly, every single EU member state is a net importer of energy, with 96% of oil demand and 90% of gas demand met by imports.

Unconventional oil and gas production may be superficially attractive in this context. However, in this densely populated, environmentally-conscious continent, and with the sun setting on the fossil fuel age, the prospects for kick-starting a fracking revolution to exploit shale gas reserves are minimal. The local environmental problems create too much political opposition and risk for investors.

We've long known that burning fossil fuels is the root cause of climate change, a primary threat to the economic and security interests of Europe. And with Europe's dependence on them providing leverage to our competitors, the answer cannot be to double down on fossil fuels. That route just locks us into an increasingly expensive, volatile, and unsafe energy system.

Instead, Europe must accelerate the transition to home-grown renewable energy. Through creating an even more attractive market for renewables investment, European nations can seize an unprecedented opportunity to improve the continent's energy security while also lowering its energy costs.

The rapid deployment of renewable energy does not need to be delivered through cumbersome state intervention and nationalisation. On the contrary, this endeavour is most likely to succeed if it harnesses the power of the free market to innovate, scale up, and drive down costs.

There is no trade-off between prioritising home-grown renewables and economic competitiveness either, as renewables are already cost-competitive with fossil fuels. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, in the space of a decade the cost of solar power has fallen by more than 85%, while onshore wind prices have fallen almost 56% and offshore wind by almost 48%. They also found that, globally, 62% of new renewable energy projects could undercut up to 800 gigawatts of coal plants on cost.

There is also a big economic opportunity for EU member states in developing their own renewables industries. According to one academic study, global renewable energy jobs are projected to grow fivefold to 22 million by 2050, while jobs in the fossil fuel sector are due to fall by a quarter to 3 million by the same date.

Thanks to announcements made around COP26, around 90% of global GDP is now covered by net zero targets. These commitments will spur on vast investment into renewable energy projects around the world. With world-leading companies like Siemens, Ørsted, and Statkraft headquartered here, Europe can establish itself as the renewables capital of the world and a major exporter of clean tech.

With world-leading companies like Siemens, Ørsted, and Statkraft headquartered here, Europe can establish itself as the renewables capital of the world and a major exporter of clean tech.

Market mechanisms, such as reverse auctions which the UK has used to great effect to build the world's largest offshore wind sector, can help nations develop renewables quickly and cost-effectively. The cost of British offshore wind has tumbled from over £140 per megawatt hour in 2015 to less than £40 per megawatt hour. The UK government has achieved this through reducing risk for investors, because the auctions award contracts to generators with guaranteed minimum prices for 15 years, while unleashing fierce competition between projects.

But what about when the wind doesn't blow or the sun doesn't shine? Doesn't this approach leave us once again dependent on gas back-up generation, and therefore at the mercy of volatile international fossil fuel markets? Firstly, the intermittency problem shouldn't be overstated. Solar energy is increasingly efficient and predictable, capable of generating energy even when there are clouds. Similarly, modern offshore wind turbines, which are now as tall as the Shard in some cases, are able to generate electricity more consistently.

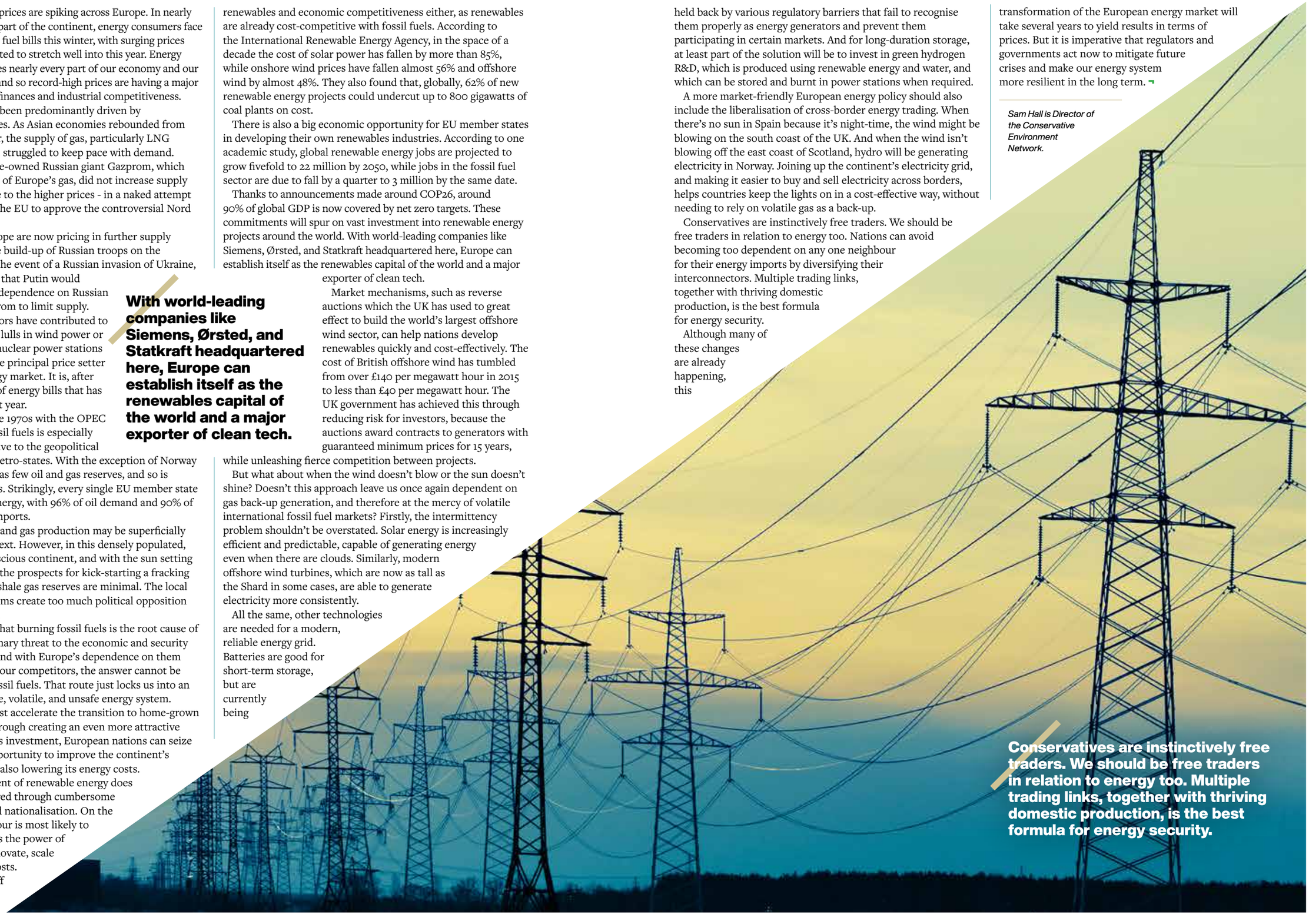
All the same, other technologies are needed for a modern, reliable energy grid. Batteries are good for short-term storage, but are currently being held back by various regulatory barriers that fail to recognise them properly as energy generators and prevent them participating in certain markets. And for long-duration storage, at least part of the solution will be to invest in green hydrogen R&D, which is produced using renewable energy and water, and which can be stored and burnt in power stations when required.

A more market-friendly European energy policy should also include the liberalisation of cross-border energy trading. When there's no sun in Spain because it's night-time, the wind might be blowing on the south coast of the UK. And when the wind isn't blowing off the east coast of Scotland, hydro will be generating electricity in Norway. Joining up the continent's electricity grid, and making it easier to buy and sell electricity across borders, helps countries keep the lights on in a cost-effective way, without needing to rely on volatile gas as a back-up.

Conservatives are instinctively free traders. We should be free traders in relation to energy too. Nations can avoid becoming too dependent on any one neighbour for their energy imports by diversifying their interconnectors. Multiple trading links, together with thriving domestic production, is the best formula for energy security.

Although many of these changes are already happening, this transformation of the European energy market will take several years to yield results in terms of prices. But it is imperative that regulators and governments act now to mitigate future crises and make our energy system more resilient in the long term.

Sam Hall is Director of the Conservative Environment Network.



Conservatives are instinctively free traders. We should be free traders in relation to energy too. Multiple trading links, together with thriving domestic production, is the best formula for energy security.

European ENERGY POLICY

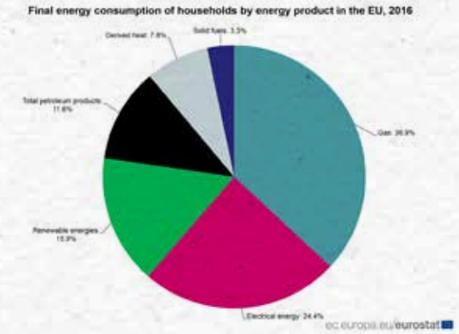
BILL BOWKETT

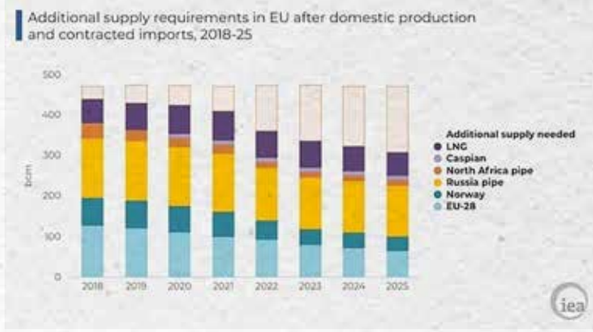
Over the past decade, the European Union (EU) has made significant progress in promoting energy efficiency action and developing renewable energy sources. In total, renewables contribute around a quarter of all electricity, a sixth of heating and cooling, and around 5% of transportation across the bloc. Spain has more electricity suppliers than any other country in Europe at around 230, with Poland in second place with 146.

Wood pellets are the main source on renewable energy (60%), with much of the energy going towards heating. Other sources include hydropower, solar power and wind power. Nuclear is growing in popularity, which runs a quarter of all electricity lines. In 2016, nuclear reactors were in operation in half of all member states, with France accounting for half of all electricity generated.

In total, the EU's renewable energy share has increased from 8% to 20% in the decade to 2019. As a result, greenhouse gas emissions have reduced by a quarter between 1990 and 2019. And from 2018 to 2019, emissions declined by 3.7%.

However, Europe's energy vulnerabilities being exposed due to increases in worldwide gas price. Russia has a grip on supplies via the Nord Steam export gas pipeline. But prices are also soaring due to net-zero commitments set out by governments.





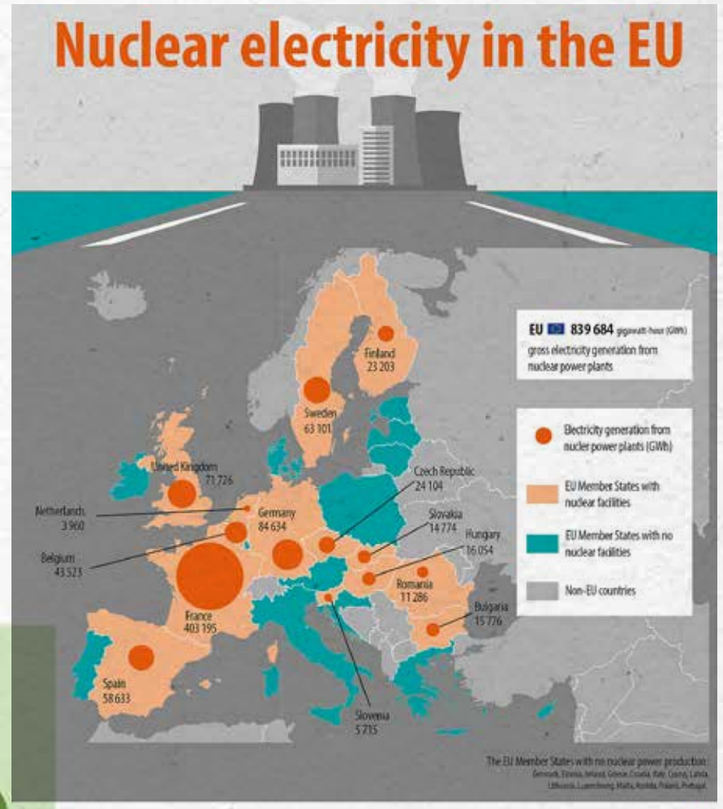


Photo: American Photo Archive / Alamy Stock Photo

A loss of control of the House of Representatives would likely prove fatal to the President's hopes to run again, if he harbours any seriously. His candidacy would offer a rocky road to ruin for Democrats in 2024, when Biden will be 82.

Gerald Malone

Bye bye Biden?

The President's dire approval ratings bode ill for the midterms - and beyond.

Remember *WinRed* and *ActBlue*. Focus. Screen out Biden and Trump. Look away from lurid headlines to understand the likely ebb and flow of American politics in 2022. Important midterm elections shimmer on the fall horizon.

WinRed and *ActBlue* are where the real action is. They are the gruesome twosome, online social media based fundraising platforms of Republicans and Democrats. Their fortunes will prove a more reliable bellwether of shifting popular support than swinging polls responding to here today, gone tomorrow triumphs or missteps.

The Donald Trump will rant, perhaps on his new social media platform, GETTR. GETTR, apparently, is meant to imply "Getting Together". Good luck working that one out. Joe Biden may nod off at summits, as he did at COP 26 in Glasgow. Pundits on FOX or CNN will froth.

Under the boiling sea of media talking heads, steadier fundraising currents will flow. Less drama, but more impact on parties' efforts to get the vote out in the crucial tight races.

The Democrats were first to the punch in the smart tapping of social media, recruiting a dependable broad base of small donors. They have been on the case for 14 years. Over that period $2.5 billion was raised. Then the Republican National Committee (RNC) woke up.

WinRed kicked off in 2019 and has already passed that $2.5 billion blue finish line. The Republican late starter is fast overtaking the Democrat veteran.

These apps are controversial. They clip a 1% fee from donations and pass the balance on to the party. Gerrit Lansing, the RNC's former funding guru, founder of the technology that underpins *WinRed*, and the platform's president, was accused of conflict of interest in taking a nearly $1m fee from the firm he co-founded, REVV, which provides the technology. He severed ties with the RNC and Trump's White House in 2018, before *WinRed's* launch.

But the apps are now a permanent feature on the landscape. As special interests become increasingly wary of ever-stricter disclosure donation rules and back off from overtly supporting either party, small donors are coming to the fore.

They respond to every turn in the political tide. When liberal icon Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg died in September 2020 a record $30m was raised by *ActBlue* the following day.

Biden v. Trump in 2024?

Time to confront the two elderly elephants blundering around America's political drawing room. Will President Joe Biden run for a second term? Will former President Donald Trump seek re-election?

I bet on both maintaining their "Will he, won't he?" equivocation until the midterms are over. Biden has already put the issue on ice by failing to rule candidacy out, or really in. A terse, non-committal, White House third party statement about seeking another term - "He is," immediately downplayed to "That is his intention" - was as po-faced as these holding statements come.

Asked the same question in 1987, Margaret Thatcher famously declared she hoped to "Go on and on". For the record, within three years she was toast.

The President's team is faced with a disastrous 40% approval rating following the Afghanistan retreat fiasco and a flood of immigrants across the Rio Grande that make it look like the English Channel. Biden will not be a midterm vote winner for Democrats.

At the equivalent time in his Presidency, Barack Obama was scoring 69% approval, yet in his first midterms in 2010 Democrats lost control of the House of Representatives and nearly lost control of the Senate, with the Republicans winning seven seats. The Democrats also lost six gubernatorial elections and 20 state legislatures flipped. This was a Republican wave in defiance of a still popular president.

At 40% approval, Biden offers Congressional candidates no coattails. A loss of control of the House of Representatives would likely prove fatal to the President's hopes to run again, if he harbours any seriously. His candidacy would offer a rocky road to ruin for Democrats in 2024, when Biden will be 82.

It would be the ultimate irony of American history if, after dumping George III in 1776, Americans allowed the British monarchy to sweep back to office in 2028 in the shape of Duchess President Markle and First Muppet, Harry.

What of The Donald? Trump is a mere stripling at 75. He will play a canny game, hates losers, thinks he won in 2020 and will not want to risk the inevitable loss in 2024 should the Democrats be on course to pick a sane, middle of the road candidate. Don't discount him failing to reach the start.

The dilemma for Republicans is that Trump holds the nomination in his own hands. After his ruthless dismantling of the opposition slate in the 2016 primaries, volunteers to raise their heads above the parapet and face Trump-fire will be few.

Look out for clever manoeuvring from GOP candidates. Being a Trump denier loses "base" votes and invites challenges against incumbents in primaries. But blind Trump loyalists risk losing the middle ground they need to win elections. There must be a better way.

There is. The new "Elections for Dummies" manual has been written recently by newly elected Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin. He handily beat Democrat veteran and former Governor Terry McAuliffe to the governorship in September. He fronted a surprising sweep of all major offices – Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General, and control of the House of Delegates.

Youngkin fought on issues and cannily sidestepped the Trump question. Neither subservient nor disloyal, he pilloried McAuliffe for opposing Virginia's right-to-work law and trashing education standards. On McAuliffe's watch no school received a failing grade. He banged on about the appointment of parole board members who became mired in controversy. Things that mattered to the ordinary Joe.

Tapping into the rich vein of disdain for controversial critical race theory, the emasculated role of parents in their kids' education, and school safety paid huge dividends. Middle America is waking to the woke agenda and does not like what it sees.

Youngkin boxed clever. The Trump administration's achievements were lauded. The man himself left on the political sidewalk. Trump boxed clever too. Old – pre 2020 - Trump would have weighed in on any sign of lack of enthusiasm for his MAGA (Make America Great Again) memes from Youngkin. Non-conformist candidates, especially in primary elections, used to be ruthlessly thrown under the bus.

New, controlled, Trump - well, Trump as self-controlled as he is ever likely to be - remained surprisingly shtum.

Democrats have much to fear in 2022. To the horror of the woke, the GOP is making strong headway among voter cohorts they long considered their own – the working class, Latinos and African Americans.

He and his groupies clocked that Youngkin's nimble footwork won the Republicans a governorship in a state Biden won handily by 10.1% only a year ago.

Aspiring GOP candidates will have noticed and will seek to press home the advantage of that winning strategy across the board. Being a Trump puppet will not be a winning strategy in 2022.

The Republican party is a mean machine. Like its UK Conservative counterpart, it is ruthless in the quest to win, and my guess is Trump will grudgingly go along with a winning narrative if the Youngkin strategy works for candidates in the midterms. So long as he is not pinned into that "loser" corner.

Presumptive heirs

By December 2022, the realities of a seismic electoral shift and the absurdity of either Trump or Biden as a credible leader of the free world – a role America still aspires to - will have sunk in. The candidacy of either may seem only a bad dream.

To gain some perspective, it's worth recalling that the much-mocked doddering Soviet Leader, Leonid Brezhnev, died at the ripe old age of 76.

The public mood will likely be, why provide more good material for satirists? "The Slugfest of the Gerontocrats" would be a neat follow up novel to Tom Wolfe's "The Bonfire of the Vanities." Sadly, Wolfe is no longer with us to oblige. Talking to political friends from both sides of the aisle in the US, I sense an overwhelming urge to turn the page.

Kamala Harris's inconsequential White House presence makes her a non-starter for 2024. In primaries she would be scorched as she was in 2020.

Behind the tapes on the Democratic starting line are – in no particular order: Pete Buttigieg, former Mayor of South Bend with a decent showing in the 2020 stakes; Cory Booker, Senator, New Jersey; Joe Kennedy, Representative from Massachusetts, with a winning pedigree; Amy Klubachar, Senator from Minnesota, respectable first 2020 outing; Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Representative from New York, winner in the Woke Handicap, but likely to crash and burn early in the 2024 Cup.

Missing from my list is Kamala Harris, Vice President. Her inconsequential White House presence makes her a non-starter. Scratched. In primaries she would be scorched as she was in 2020.

On the Republican side expect: Greg Abbott, Governor of Texas; Ted Cruz, Senator from Texas; Ron de Santis, extrovert Governor of Florida; Nikki Haley, former Ambassador to the United Nations; Mike Pompeo, former Secretary of State; Rick Scott, Senator from Florida; and, if he enjoys his newfound limelight, Glenn Youngkin.

One observation. Governorship prepares candidates for electoral runs better than service in either house of Congress. My hot tip to win out in the Republican race for nomination is a serving governor. In the Democratic camp there is a dearth of governors with a national profile, save for New York's recently disgraced Andrew Cuomo.

The shifting midterm battleground

Virginia proved the coming campaign will likely be "all about issues", not posturing. Democrats have much to fear in 2022. To the horror of the woke, the GOP is making strong headway among voter cohorts they long considered their own – the working class, Latinos and African Americans. Polling agency, Pew, found in 2020 that 81% of Hispanic Trump voters were working class and he won 41% of the under-30 Hispanic vote. This used to be exclusive Democratic territory.

Sure, most Latinos still support the Democrats – 61% voted for Biden – but Trump secured an 8% swing, and that trend seems set to continue. That's not all. The swing to Trump in the African American vote was 6%.

Why the tectonic shift? There is growing intolerance of tin-eared Democrat politicians who bang on about their liberal agendas which are of little interest to the average American.

The level of self-deception is stunning. Do I hear echoes of Jeremy Corbyn, "One more push, comrades and socialist victory will be ours," just before the Boris landslide?

According to Jesse Ferguson, a veteran Democratic strategist, "This time, our agenda is popular, and voters are scared of the damage that would be done by putting Republicans back in power."

Tell that to the family I met in November, decamping from Chicago, Illinois, to Nashville, Tennessee. In their case, it was for the future of their children.

Fed up with education battles against an establishment determined to set an agenda of gender awareness, teachers wearing "Black Lives Matter" apparel while protesting political neutrality – try wearing a MAGA hat to school – and the debunking of conventional teaching of history, now mocked as a white supremacist narrative, this family is voting with its feet.

Others are fleeing a Chicago plagued by lawlessness, fuelled by police defunding. It's not about the money. Illinois and Tennessee share state levels around 7%.

Theirs is not an untypical story. High taxes coupled with an increasingly alien political culture are just two reasons for a California population rush to Texas. Over the last decade the number was 687,000. In the last two years it has risen to 87,000 annually.

I am told it now costs twice as much to rent a U-Haul removal trailer on the trek east than on the return trip to the Golden State. The market has spoken.

The same tale is told in many US cities. In San Francisco, before the onset of Covid, I was shocked to be told by my hosts not to walk in downtown Union Square. "Take a cab straight to the concert hall". Drug addiction and aggressive panhandling ruled the San Fran streets.

The same goes for Portland, Oregon, where George Floyd riots turned the city into a no-go zone. In New York, Madison Avenue high-end stores tolerate ram raiding of Gucci handbag displays because the losses are cheaper than hiring security – and New York's finest rozzers simply turn their ample backs.

A fair fight in the fair land?

Watch out for "salting the political battlefield". Rude folk call it gerrymandering. Sharp politicos dub it re-districting. The process of changing boundaries of voting districts to reflect drifts in population is underway. In Ohio for Thanksgiving, I learnt that new boundaries proposed by Republicans who hold sway there will produce an expected bonus of probably one seat.

Republicans already hold 12 of the 16 districts, with 57% of the popular vote. Democrats hold only four, but tally 43%. It's a scandal, until you look at Democratic controlled California. Democrats hold 46 districts with 66% of the vote, Republicans only 7 with 34%. Truth is, they're all at it. The hand that draws the map controls the outcome.

Photo: Geopix / Alamy Stock Photo

There is mumbling about independent commissioners being appointed to determine boundaries, as in the UK, but as they would be appointments endorsed by incumbent politicians the same result would be likely, only by a more convoluted and legally contested route.

Redrawn maps have always been fought over tooth and claw. Both parties try to twist the process to their advantage and there is room for legal appeal to local courts against unfairness. That's a long game and while litigation is underway, elections - the upcoming midterms – will take place on the proposed new boundaries.

An assessment by The New York Times (NYT) predicts that re-districting will deliver five seats in the House of Representatives to Republicans, enough to flip control without winning any other contests. The NYT, no fans of the GOP, sportingly concedes that both sides resort to gerrymandering, but points out Republicans are the better practitioners of the dark art.

And now for something completely different

Lift your spirits and consider Meghan Markle's mooted bid for a Californian Senate seat in 2028. It must be true. The Spectator World December edition cover screams, "President Markle. How Meghan Wins the White House". The World edition of The Speccy circulates widely in the US.

"Friends" are quoted. "The duchess' sights are set higher than celebrity. Has she already started her run?" Well, probably not. Oprah Winfrey took one look at the scrutiny celeb candidates attract and passed the poisoned chalice by.

That said, Markle has been forging connections with senior Democratic Party figures to "explore her options". She is chummy with the sisterhood of Kamala Harris and Hillary Clinton. It would be the ultimate irony of American history if, after dumping their much-maligned king, George III, in 1776, Americans allowed the British monarchy to sweep back to office in 2028 in the shape of Duchess President Markle and First Muppet, Harry.

Fortunately, for those who wish America well and believe in its relentless capacity for self-renewal a Markle makeover of the White House is some way off.

I prefer the less roller-coaster prediction of Susan Eisenhower, granddaughter of Ike, at a luncheon lecture I attended at The University Club of New York in November.

She pointed out that President Eisenhower, a military man more than a conniving politician, was faced with unknown policy issues in the post-war era. How to handle nuclear weapons. What to make of the Soviet Sputnik challenge. Forging the NATO alliance to confront the Cold War threat. Shaping the United Nations to prevent another global war.

Hers was the hopeful reminder for Americans in despair for their political future. "Cometh the hour, cometh the man". For the United States, in the persona of Eisenhower in peace time, just as it had been for Britain at a time of war in the persona of Winston Churchill. And now....? She did not say.

Time to jump off the fence. Cometh December 2022, Republicans will control the House of Representatives, the Senate will be gridlocked and fresh-faced candidates for both parties will be emerging for the 2024 presidential race.

Gerald Malone is a British writer, businessman, former Conservative MP and Government Minister.

Notions of a justice thwarted and unfulfilled lie at the heart of most insurgencies.

The problem lies in expecting adversaries to behave as you would wish or predict.

Robert Fox

Zombie WARS

Our commanders, strategists and politicians mustn't be too prescriptive about the particular kinds of war they expect to fight.

Towards the close of 2021, Vladimir Putin appeared to be preparing for all-out war on the borders of Russia and Ukraine. An army expected to swell to 175,000 by New Year had been assembled in four groups across Russia's western borders and in Crimea – the biggest operation ground force fielded by Russia since 1945.

Ostensibly, Russia was preparing to repel the threat to its security and sovereignty from Ukraine, now armed to the teeth by Nato allies who, according to the Kremlin, had broken previous agreements by posting their own forces right up against the border with Russia. This was a threat of state on state open warfare on a grand, if very outdated, scale and style.

In London, a new head of the forces, Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, just a week in office, gave his first major speech about British defence and strategy, and what his forces needed to prepare for and do. They had to get ready for inter-state warfare in different parts of the world, fighting alongside allies old and new.

Though his presentation deferred to authorities such as the naval strategist Alfred Mahan, and the more modern nostrums of Francis Fukuyama and Samuel P Huntington, in looking at contemporary conflicts he might have adopted the playbook of Uncle Remus's Brer Rabbit, who relied on low cunning and sayin' nuffin' unless he had to.

The problem lies in expecting adversaries to behave as you would wish or predict, or even as you might respond. The problem, too, is that while there is high risk of inter-state wars and battles, most actual and dormant conflicts in the world today are not symmetric state versus state contests of arms.

Wars and circumstances of conflict, insurgency, and uprising are highly individual and unpredictable. Many are "frozen conflicts" that unexpectedly erupt into violence and action. Some have called them "ghost wars", reflecting their shadowy on-off nature. I prefer to call them "zombie wars" because they are exotic entities which burst into life from the corpse-like disputes left behind, and forgotten, from diplomatic failure. They are like the zombies of lore and legend that suddenly stir to unpredictable malevolent deeds.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union has left a fair share of zombie disputes, and potential zombie wars, for Russia. Vladimir Putin seems to understand this, though he may not mention it out loud. The obvious examples are the separatist revolts in Chechnya and Dagestan, the war with Georgia over South Ossetia in 2008, and the fight between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the enclave of Nagorno Karabakh in 2020. As much as anything, the way this nasty communal war was fought took Moscow by surprise, though it had been ally and patron to both countries. Azerbaijan acquired new capabilities with an arsenal of Turkish drones, and highly sophisticated loitering munitions and targeting equipment from Israel. Despite the surprise of stand-off weaponry, much of the hard conclusive fighting was in the close battle – physical, intimate, ground combat.

According to the self-styled Journal of Peace, there are currently at least 42 major "frozen conflicts". I think there are many more, and quite a few may be zombies about to wake, or who have never really gone to sleep. The obvious sleeping zombies are the division of Cyprus along the Attila Line established in 1975, the still fractious setting of one of the earliest deployments of UN peacekeepers in the clashes of the 1940s. Another point of UN deployment for nearly 70 years is Kashmir, and here there are regular flare-ups, bombings and massacres. The same goes for the dispute in the Western Sahara.

Some of these hot spots are points of contest between mighty military powers and their client networks. In the dispute across the Line of Control in Kashmir, and across the unrecognised Durand Line which marks the border between Pakistan and Taliban Afghanistan, always present are the looming shades of the Pakistan and Indian militaries in their ineluctable strategic chess game.

But much of the fire and fanaticism that ignite the zombie wars does not come from loyalty to state, as much as loyalty to tribe, a sense of identity and belonging. One of the longest-running fights over water, grazing and land rights, across the Fergana Valley stretching across central Asia to the north of Afghanistan, is based on a sense of locality, ethnicity and tribe. As the effects of massive floods and droughts are felt increasingly across the region, due to global warming and the melt of the bulk ice in the great glaciers of the Hindu Kush-Himalaya-Karakoram mountain chain, the communal violence will worsen. There is very little that states, or state power, can do about it.

Tribal loyalties and complex ethnic ties and battles for identity lie behind what may appear to be ideologically driven; the fights of the insurgents and militias in Libya, the al Shabab, Boko Haram, Tuareg liberationists, are as much about territory and turf as the salvation and purging of souls. Even the rebellion of the Kurdish Marxist Peoples Workers Party, the PKK, is about territory and tribe as much achieving the socialist millennium.

Some of the fighting is almost hidden in plain sight. The Naxalite Marxists insurrection has been running for half a century in India, with large tracts of territory in central India under the control of the insurgents preaching their own brand of Maoism. Yet this gets only the rarest mention in international media.

The explosions of communal violence inside the territories of Russia and China, of which we get glimpses mostly by reports in underground media, have characteristics of zombie war. They come from old grudges, slights of tribe and community. There are by all accounts many more of these wars than appear in the pages of the international press.

In the contest over Ukraine, and especially the areas of Russia-loyalists such as Donetsk and Luhansk in the Donbas, there are elements of a need for recognition of identity and belonging. Popular military and geopolitical jargon today is littered with terms like "asymmetric" and "hybrid" warfare. They are pretty threadbare and meaningless – after all, most warfare is a very mixed-form experience; bayonets and stand-off bombs, rockets and cyber strikes work together or against each other in most modern forces' order of battle.

In looking at the communal and identity triggers to the newly awakened zombie wars and conflicts, two venerable historical terms might be deployed more usefully than militaro-babble use of "asymmetric" and "hybrid". The first is *irredentism*, which is based on an idea of redeeming a piece of territory or historical birthright. It comes from the later stages of Italian unification, where nationalists talked of "L'Italia irredenta", Italy not yet fully redeemed. A similar notion of a justice, divine or earthly, thwarted and unfulfilled, lies at the heart of most insurgencies.

The second term is *jacquerie*, the spontaneous explosion of deprived and starving peasants in France in the middle years of the so-called Hundred Years War, which saw a string of failed harvests, and with them flood and famine. It denotes spontaneous uprising, a rage against authority with no programme and leadership, an expression of violent despair. Many actual and potential zombie conflicts are true *jacqueries*.

Much of this old form of fighting in our new context will be fought with crude but effective means, where the sophisticated tools of our armed forces for the space and cyber age are all but useless. This is fighting below what is known as "the threshold of sophistication". This was elegantly explained by General Sami Sadat, of the 215 Maiwand Corps, as to why his Afghan Army troops were crippled once there were no foreign contractors to service the drones, helicopters and aircraft bequeathed them by the Americans. All the contractors and maintainers quit between January and June. "The Taliban fought with snipers and improvised explosive devices while we lost aerial and laser-guided weapon capacity," Sadat wrote in the New York Times.

This is the kind of war armed forces such as Britain's must be prepared to fight, for allies and friends and even for their own national self-interest. Our commanders, strategists and politicians mustn't be too prescriptive about the particular kinds of war they expect, or wish, to fight, and – to be fair – try to prevent.

The zombie wars litter the past, and they are sure to litter our future. ⌐

Much of the fire and fanaticism that ignite the zombie wars does not come from loyalty to state, as much as loyalty to tribe.

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Tribal loyalties and complex ethnic ties and battles for identity lie behind what may appear to be ideologically driven.

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Gerald Warner

NATO is far from finished

Calls to dissolve the Alliance are deluded. Despite its problems, NATO is the cornerstone of Western security and must be preserved.

We live in interesting times, which is a euphemism for a period in the historical cycle when conflicting geopolitical interests create dangerous tensions. This happens with monotonous regularity over centuries and the challenge for statesmen and women is to defuse the situation or, failing that, ensure there is a credible defence structure in place to protect the populations for which they have responsibility. So far as Europe is concerned, for the past 73 years the guarantor of security has been the North Atlantic Treaty Organization: NATO.

The North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington on 4 April, 1949 for two main purposes: to prevent any re-emergence of nationalist militarism in Europe and to contain the Soviet Union. With the USSR by then armed with atomic weapons, NATO's founders established a principle of robust response to aggression. Article V of the Treaty stated: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all." That very effectively embodied the principle of collective security, recalling how, in the 1930s, Hitler had picked off one by one the countries on which he preyed.

Subsequently, this principle was reinforced by the strategic doctrine of "Massive Retaliation", whereby any attack by the Soviet Union would be met with nuclear weapons. This doomsday scenario proved an effective deterrent. When West Germany joined NATO in 1955, the Soviet Union retaliated by creating the Warsaw Pact, which mimicked the Alliance by grouping the satellite states already under the full control of Moscow in a cosmetic pact to confront the union of free nations assembled in NATO.

NATO weathered confrontations of varying degrees of magnitude, the most serious being the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, which was basically a bilateral confrontation between Washington and Moscow, though with the Alliance inevitably involved. In the event, NATO outlived the Soviet Union, though that had the consequence of creating more problems than it solved. In the aftermath of the Cold War, many delusions arose in the West, epitomised by Francis Fukuyama's proclamation of the "End of History".

The disintegration of states that were artificial constructs, peacefully in Czechoslovakia, violently in former Yugoslavia, drew in NATO in 1995 to end genocidal conflict. Then came 9/11 in New York and a startled awareness of the threat of Islamist terrorism. As the 21st century progressed, the potential threats posed by Russia and China began to reshape NATO.

What is the future of NATO? Does it have a future? Most definitely it does. Some people have canvassed the nuclear option of dissolving the Alliance. What would that achieve, other than to create a security vacuum in Europe? And what could a successor security organisation accomplish that could not be done more effectively by NATO – revamped, if necessary – with its experience and established defence mechanisms?

The question whether NATO should operate outside its European/North American theatre, originally a reasonable concern, now sounds naive. NATO had a legitimate locus in Afghanistan because terror groups were using that country as a base from which to attack NATO member states. NATO did not fail in Afghanistan; it was let down by the catastrophically poor judgement of the American President. That highlights the unexpected problem that confronts NATO today: its collective relationship with the United States.

NATO's birth in 1949 was made possible by America's abandonment of its traditional isolationism in the wake of the Second World War. Determined not to repeat Woodrow Wilson's mistakes of 1919, America firmly engaged with Europe; the legacies of that engagement were the Marshall Plan and NATO, both designed to prevent Communism from overrunning the entire continent. Since then, America has been the backbone of NATO. Even under Donald Trump, NATO's future was not in question: the President simply made the not unreasonable demand that member states should pay their financial dues to the Alliance.

European defence is further complicated by the French drive to create some kind of European army. What for? Each member state has its own armed forces to assert national sovereignty and for collective security it has the umbrella of the Alliance.

Determined not to repeat Woodrow Wilson's mistakes of 1919, America firmly engaged with Europe; the legacies of that engagement were the Marshall Plan and NATO, both designed to prevent Communism from overrunning the entire continent.

Since the debacle in Afghanistan, however, America has become an unexpectedly problematic member of the Alliance, with President Biden giving the impression to Vladimir Putin that he would tolerate a "minor incursion" by the Russian military into Ukrainian territory – a far cry from the "Massive Retaliation" doctrine that successfully contained the Soviet Union.

Another problematic member state is Turkey. Some commentators claim that NATO should concern itself with the domestic policies of member states, but that is not the business of the Alliance. In the case of Turkey, however, the situation is different because President Erdogan's "neo-Ottoman" ideological tendencies have an external geopolitical significance not necessarily compatible with NATO's principles.

Today, NATO is reconfiguring its defence strategies to cover a multiplicity of contemporary threats, including terrorism, nuclear proliferation (Iran), cyberattacks and disruption of energy supplies. But the real challenge will come from the need to confront Russia and China simultaneously, requiring a dual defence posture. The obvious division of labour is for responses to China to be led primarily by the US, with NATO leading in the containment of Russia.

Unfortunately, on that front NATO is not a free agent. Some of the means of response are in the control of the European Union. In fact, the leading EU countries are creating more problems for NATO than they are solving. The posture of appeasement that Germany and France have adopted towards Russia, largely due to energy dependence, provokes the question: why did they make themselves dependent on Russia? Even now, the German political establishment remains supportive of Nord Stream 2.

European defence is further complicated by the French drive to create some kind of European army. What for? Each member state has its own armed forces to assert national sovereignty and for collective security it has the umbrella of the Alliance. Why create a third military entity, amounting to a vanity project, when Europe is hard pressed to respond effectively to the threat posed by Russia?

We cannot know what the future holds in relation to Russia and China, but it is obvious our primary defence strategy must be embodied in NATO, a tried and effective protection for three-quarters of a century and still our best resource.

It was significant that NATO responded to the 9/11 attack on America by invoking Article V, a redefinition of collective security in the 21st century that effectively implies global outreach by the Alliance. With NATO members Britain and France building up a naval presence in the Indo-Pacific theatre, the Alliance should develop the cooperation it began in Afghanistan with non-member states, such as Australia, Singapore and South Korea. In counter-piracy operations it has already cooperated with India.

In a dangerous world, NATO needs to cultivate all the friends it can, without incurring additional political commitments. We cannot know what the future holds in relation to Russia and China (not natural geopolitical allies), but it is obvious our primary defence strategy must be embodied in NATO, a tried and effective protection for three-quarters of a century and still our best resource.

Gerald Warner is a newspaper columnist, author, broadcaster, commentator, and former policy adviser to Michael Forsyth when he was the UK's Secretary of State for Scotland.

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Suzanne Raine

What next for AFGHANISTAN?

Poverty, terrorism and regional politics will drive the Islamic Emirate further away from the society its people spent 20 years building.

For Afghanistan, it is unlikely that this year will be better than the last. In any case, there are incompatible views of what that better should look like. The fact that the country has collapsed into humanitarian disaster so quickly is a damning indictment of Western intervention: it was barely surviving before the Taliban took over. After 20 years Afghanistan is still an aid-dependent economy which has ceased to function because the West cannot reconcile itself to funding the Islamic Emirate. It is forecast that more than 95% of the population will fall below the poverty line, leading inevitably to further disorder, refugees and radicalisation.

What do the Taliban have to deliver to survive? In basic terms: food, access to speedy justice, stability. But it is not as simple as that, because there is no easy alternative or route to a more inclusive Afghan government. There is not going to be another great undoing; the Taliban will not be ousted although they may fray and tatter at the seams. From all of this an Afghan-shaped future will emerge. It will not be one which raises the Afghan people out of poverty through education and trade. It will fall back on local power centres and age-old rivalries, and play out slowly.

We can divide states and actors into three categories: those who want to see the Taliban succeed; those who don't (but don't have a better plan); and those who simply don't want to think about it anymore. The West's problem is that it is flip-flopping between the second and third categories.

If the debacle of the American withdrawal taught us anything, it was that even with such enormous resource in the country for so long, we didn't really understand it.

The West will need to resolve its relationship with political Islam, and work out how to enable a financial mechanism without breaching counter-terrorism sanctions. The trouble is that the Taliban embody a different way of ordering the world; their re-taking of Afghanistan is the closing chapter on Tony Blair's 1998 Chicago speech about the rules for intervention and the allure of democracy. The Taliban spokesman who highlighted the contradiction of a Western position which was demanding secondary education for girls but was not allowing humanitarian aid for the starving exposed the bind for Western governments.

Who are the Islamic Emirate's friends now? Some Middle Eastern states have traditionally been sympathetic, and have a long history of providing humanitarian and political support.

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The Taliban spokesman who highlighted the contradiction of a Western position which was demanding secondary education for girls but was not allowing humanitarian aid for the starving exposed the bind for Western governments.

Qatar is still trying – it has a special role as the home to the Taliban negotiating team. But for the UAE and Saudi Arabia, the risk/benefit calculation is different to that of the 1990s. Both are now fiercely orientated towards a vision of the future and the Taliban smack of a past they'd rather forget, and model a form of Islamic governance which they find threatening. The Taliban may find that they get less than they expect.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's closest neighbours will continue to be devious, trade in rumours and half-truths, act in self-interest, stuck in an "enemy's enemy is my friend" posture which creates illogical and self-defeating alliances. The Taliban takeover is a clear win for Pakistan in its endless war of attrition against India: many of the new leaders of Afghanistan (including the Interior Minister, Sirajuddin Haqqani) lived for many years in Pakistan and were educated in its madrassas, particularly the Dar ul Uloom Haqqania near Peshawar. They are of the same Deobandi school of Islam as many of Pakistan's approximately 30,000 seminaries. This is a double-edged sword for Imran Khan's government in Pakistan, which has long tried to balance the demands of the devoutly Islamic portion of its population with the ambitions of a modern state. Pakistan's own fortunes will be tied to the Taliban's, because a strengthening of Daesh activity in Afghanistan will inevitably spill over into Pakistan, complicated by an emboldening of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has conducted devastating terrorist attacks in Pakistan since 2007.

The space – not a vacuum – left by the West's departure, will be filled by others in a way that suits them, not the West. Iran has strong cultural, linguistic and historical links, not least because much of Afghanistan was once part of "Khorasan", the land of the rising sun which still exists as Iran's eastern province. It can coexist with the Taliban and will need to in order to support Shia communities, especially against continuing dreadful terrorist attacks by Daesh. It will enjoy poking the West in the eye and will expand local influence. Much has been written about avaricious China's eyes on minerals, but China is not that needy and will tread carefully, just as it has done in Pakistan. Beijing will be careful about what it is buying. Similarly, any logic which says that Chinese financial influence will moderate the Taliban – or keep a lid on extremism - just needs to look at the example of Pakistan. Russia will use it simply to annoy America.

The issue of terrorism is complicated by the number of different terrorist groups still in Afghanistan. On the one hand, Al-Qaeda and Lashkar e-Tayyiba were and remain intricately connected with the Taliban, and will continue to live there. It is unlikely that in the immediate future the Taliban will sanction the export of terrorism, but it is inevitable that Afghanistan will again provide space for training, networking, planning and will draw in the curious and impatient. For countries with a large Pakistani Kashmiri diaspora (such as the UK), there is an increased difficulty of not knowing who may be tempted to travel, get experience, and return with a plan. On the other hand, Daesh-Khorasan Province (Islamic State's Afghan branch, founded in 2015), will continue to undermine stability and conduct attacks. It has become consistently one of the network's deadliest branches. It will feed off discontent with Taliban governance and grow in capability and support as the Taliban struggle to reduce its attractiveness to their own people.

All this means that the West will find it increasingly difficult to know what is really happening. If the debacle of the American withdrawal taught us anything, it was that even with such enormous resource in the country for so long, we didn't really understand it. It is so much harder now: the number of sources of information will shrink, and they are already self-selecting. Conversations are taking place in languages few Westerners speak. The English-language voices will sing a particular song. Even with scores of intrepid journalists, where is the reach to listen to the Pushtu, Dari, Uzbek, Urdu, Turkmen, Balochi, Pashayi, Nuristani voices? Western judgements about the correct course of action will be shaky. This is exacerbated by personnel turnover: many of the soldiers and diplomats from Western countries who served in Afghanistan are no longer serving. Learning someone else's lessons is always harder than learning one's own.

It will be NGOs, not states, who can hear these voices best. This of course requires them to be able to operate, for them to be able to communicate back to the Western governments and for them to be heard.

Meanwhile, we now have two Afghanistans: the Islamic Emirate and that represented by the new diaspora of exiles, many from Afghanistan's educated classes who invested 20 years in building a different Afghanistan, and had no option but to leave. It is vital that they are given opportunities to contribute their skills freely, to shape the debate, and to prosper. But the real danger is that the longer they are away from home, the further away it will become: the two Afghanistans will grow apart as did the two Irans after 1979.

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Pratinav Anil

INDIA TURNS 75

As the world's largest democracy celebrates 75 years of independence this year, its resilience is being tested.

History has come a full circle. India is once again a one-party state. Only this time Prime Minister Narendra Modi appears as a pumped-up version of India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, as if bionically-enhanced in some bad sci-fi film: more popular, more powerful, more authoritarian.

Where the founding father and Congress leader failed to secularise the country, the republic's renovator and India People's Party (BJP) supremo unabashedly declares himself a Hindu nationalist. Where Nehru, the son of one of India's wealthiest lawyers, periodically reined in capital, the tea-seller's boy Modi beds big business. Where the first prime minister reckoned he was an exemplary democrat, India's latest ruler often acts like a dictator. Immediately, Indians learned that the former wasn't the case. Belatedly, the soi-disant *chowkidar* - watchman - is learning, as Dylan sang, that he's gonna have to serve somebody. All of these, admittedly, are minor differences. Substantively, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

In one crucial respect, though, Modi's India is a world removed from Nehru's India. Economically, the country has made huge strides since independence, even though around 6% of its population still live in extreme poverty. The pandemic biennial apart, India has year after year posted GDP growth north of 5%, likely touching 9.5% in the year ending in March 2022. Exports are booming. The World Bank now ranks India at 63 in its "ease of doing business" index, up from 142 in 2015. FDI is welcome as never before. Indian shares at the end of the year were a quarter as large again, making them among the world's top performing asset classes. Gone are the days when the vagaries of the Fed could send Indian capital markets crashing in a "taper tantrum". Today, India's central bank is happily secure.

The new year kicked off with the first lumps of the Indian conglomerate Adani's Queensland coal setting sail for the Subcontinent, the heirs of the Raj now imperially extracting resources from the settler colonies. A raft of recent and upcoming fintech and app IPOs in New York and Mumbai also bear confident testimony to the growing heft of Indian business: the digital payment platform Paytm, food delivery app Zomato, hotelier Oyo, EdTech start-up Byju's, makeup retailer Nykaa — for India's upper crust, household names all. The middling sort, it seems, will follow in their footsteps in good time: there are now some 750 million mobile internet users in the country. In 15 years' time, nearly as many are set to join the teeming and streaming masses.

As with the economy, so with politics. Reversing received wisdom, time, for Modi, hasn't been a cruel mistress. Typically for elected politicians, longevity equals disillusionment. Tony Blair took office with 43 per cent of the popular vote, and left after having whittled it down to 35 per cent in his final election. Helmut Kohl: 49 to 35 per cent. Silvio Berlusconi: 43 to 14 per cent. Further back but closer home, Nehru, and then his daughter: 45 to 35 per cent. Not Modi. Rather, he's going from strength to strength. At 31 per cent in 2014, the BJP gained 37 per cent in 2019, adding substantial working-class support to its largely bourgeois base. Victory in 2024 seems a foregone conclusion.

What's more, the BJP enjoys full-spectrum dominance - just as the Congress once did. Only the political arm of a much larger Hindu nationalist constellation, it is joined by the country's largest trade and student unions, women's wing, and network of schools and charities in the Sangh Parivar, a collection of Hindu nationalist organisations. Recent years have seen it doubling its membership to 180 million. Every morning, in metropolises and the *mofussil* alike, the BJP's cadres, decked in white shirts and khaki skirts, can be found entranced in prayer and punitive calisthenics, sweating the Hindu nation of their dreams into existence.

Midway into his second term, Modi can reflect on how swimmingly India's second republic is coming along. Congress Raj, just like the British Raj, has finally been consigned to the dustbin of history. Hindu Raj is here. That Modi feels sufficiently self-assured to rename the world's largest cricket stadium after himself is hardly surprising. One can view the vanity with sympathy, if one suspends belief in karmic reincarnation. Canonisation, after all, is of little comfort to the dead.

Few Indians view the Modi government as an unalloyed positive. Job prospects for the 12 million entering the workforce each year are becoming progressively dimmer. A clutch of tycoons has prospered, but business at large hasn't.

But this is an incomplete picture. Modi is not entirely his own master. Testament to this is the defeat handed to him by the landed interest, who frustrated his market-friendly farm reforms last year after mass protests across the country. "Keep your government hands off our state subsidies", they seemed to say. Nehru had learned the hard way that the "kulaks", as India's cosseted large landholders are sometimes pejoratively called, are a constituency one would be unwise to cross. He, too, had to row back on his equally wide-ranging rural reforms in the 50s. India remains kulakistan.

Few Indians view the Modi government as an unalloyed positive. Job prospects for the 12 million entering the workforce each year are becoming progressively dimmer. Welfare spending is up, but much of it is unsustainable cash handouts taking the place of public spending proper. A clutch of tycoons has prospered, but business at large hasn't. A mere 20 companies account for 70 per cent of formal sector earnings, up from 40 per cent in 2014. A crisis in the shadow banking system, predating the pandemic, has left millions of small businesses with no access to credit.

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India is a thriving nation that aspires to greatness. The 75th anniversary of independence finds the country in a small club of veteran democracies. Meanwhile, regimes have come and gone, either imploding or altering beyond recognition.

For others, the toll of Modi's government has been considerably grimmer. Mass unemployment and starvation caused by the imperious cash ban of 2016 and bungling lockdown of 2020 had migrants hitchhiking home and bodies piling up. Possibly tens of millions have perished from Covid thanks to the sluggish vaccine rollout, not to mention non-existent healthcare that had citizens crowdsourcing oxygen cylinders on Twitter and WhatsApp.

India in the 50s, as the Nobel prize-winning economist Gunnar Myrdal put it, was a "soft state", an attenuated affair scarcely capable of feeding its unlettered citizenry. Today, with one in three adults footloose labourers in near slavery and almost a tenth of the workforce child labourers, large parts of it resemble a failed state.

And on the world stage, there's still a great discrepancy between the country's grand ambitions and its actions. At the WTO, India has earned a reputation for intransigence, going for broke by demanding the complete abolition of intellectual property protection rather than reaching a deal with the US, lately committed to a vaccine waiver. Joining China in eleventh-hour objections at the recent COP26 summit, India insisted on watering down the pledge from "phasing out" to "phasing down" coal, with the result that, as is already the case, fewer and fewer Indians will enjoy their three score years and ten. India's neighbours, first Pakistan and now Nepal and Sri Lanka, are hitching their wagons to China. Hankerings for great power status and national rejuvenation are worthy goals, but the simple truth is that India has a long way to go.

Even so, unrealised ambition is still ambition, and ambition is a mark of some eminence. India is a thriving nation that aspires to greatness. The 75th anniversary of independence finds the country in a small club of veteran democracies. One of the first of Du Bois' "darker nations" to throw off the yoke of colonial rule since Latin America's early 19th century decolonisation, India has remained mostly free of turmoil and upheaval. Meanwhile, regimes have come and gone, either imploding or altering beyond recognition: the French Fourth Republic, the Soviet Union, post-Tiananmen China. Indians can take comfort in the fact that their democracy is too old, and too resilient, for it to be laid waste by its latest besieger.

Pratinav Anil is a historian of postcolonial India and co-author of "India's First Dictatorship: The Emergency, 1975-1977."

David Howell

Japan a new global player

In the face of Chinese expansionism and a shifting geopolitical terrain, Japan must rethink its role on the world stage.

The Japan dilemma is acute, as is the dilemma for almost every major nation facing the unfamiliar challenges of a substantially rearranged world order.

The simplicities of the post-Second World War half of the 20th century have melted away, and the necessary re-positioning on a new and constantly shifting world stage is intensely difficult, highly controversial and very disruptive.

After 1945 the challenge was huge but straightforward. America the victor had become America the indispensable ally, as well as the architect and overseer of national reconstruction from the ruins. Security, such as was needed, could be left to them.

While other powers, such as Britain, wrestled with the agonies of imperial wind-down, war-induced bankruptcy and bitter ideological legacies, for Japan that had all gone up in the smoke and horror of defeat and Hiroshima. This left Japan free to rebuild - from the ground up - a new economy, a substantially (although not totally) new social structure and a kind of democracy which suited the Japanese penchant for mixing tradition with unceasing innovation very well. A staggeringly vigorous new industrial power arose, which for a time even fazed the Americans themselves.

Fast forward to the 2020s and it all looks different. The big neighbour China, which for decades after the War was obsessed and paralysed by internal conflict, emerges as an uncomfortably assertive economic giant, with uncomfortably advanced technology and uncomfortably large defence spending, and talking about its "historic mission" to re-absorb Taiwan into the motherland.

Across the Pacific, America begins to grapple with "post-primacy", as the concept of world leadership becomes far harder to hang on to in a networked world, and the digitally-empowered march of populism divides and distracts internally. The power shift to Asia which seemed purely economic begins to turn geopolitical and intertwined with global security.

How does Japan take its place in this new multipolar and hyper-connected global landscape? Pacifist Japan, which had taken such a deep hold after the disasters of militarism and world war, and could survive happily under the American umbrella, has now to adjust to a Japan in the front line of defence cooperation against China's expansionism.

This is a task far removed from the simplicities of the Cold War. Today's big economies have become woven into a cat's cradle of supply chains and cross investment on a scale never known before (Japan's trade and investment links with China being an outstanding example). The whole nature of conflict and the battlefield line-up has moved on from troops and military hardware to cyber warfare, unmanned intrusion, information dominance and distortion, and new kinds of intelligence penetration.

It is true that these mainly China-driven security dilemmas confront Europe, too, where Sinophobic and Sinophile impulses and interests battle out which way to go.

But for Japan, what seems a faraway geopolitical conundrum is a right-next-door everyday challenge. Missiles over Japanese waters from the maverick Kim Jong-un add to the immediacy of the threat.

For a generation or more, well-wishers have been urging Japan's return to being "a normal country". Has that journey at last, after three quarters of a century, truly got under way? It depends of course what is meant by "normal". If it means becoming a nuclear power - as is technologically achievable - of that there is zero chance.

If it means giving up all pacificist inclinations, and changing the "self-defence" character of the constitution radically, that too may still be too much to expect of the Japanese nation.

But if it means a much greater readiness to join in security pacts in practical ways, and take a far more forward role in global institutions generally, then that is already happening. Japan has been quietly branching out with new security arrangements with Australia, India, Germany and the UK. Its self-defence warships have been escorting and working with, for the first time since 1945, non-American vessels. Its participation in weapons development and trade has been growing fast.

For a generation or more, well-wishers have been urging Japan's return to being 'a normal country'. Has that journey at last got under way?

So while big constitutional change may be out, smaller step-by-step adjustments and removal of some of the sillier and more obviously outdated Japanese restraints on global security cooperation can be, or have already been, circumvented. The normalcy role becomes the only option.

It means, too, that Japan can no longer stand back from the complexities, and the agonies, of Middle East politics, leaving problems to frustrated and baffled Western allies. Nor can it avoid taking a much more forward role, commensurate with its industrial and economic weight, not just in development in Africa and the emerging world, but in active promotion of stability and freedom from Chinese domination, all too easily slipped into by smaller nations.

All this is good news for the rest of us.

European nations - including Britain - have a lot to learn from Japan, a distinctly ageing nation that has somehow turned this aspect into a positive and socially binding force. For instance, clearer thinking is to be found in Tokyo than in many other developed countries on the management of overseas aid, as the emerging age of "Africa beyond aid" sets the whole endeavour, and its decades of patchy success, in a new context.

We could be entering a different era, one in which the middle-sized nations (in population terms) all play an increasing geopolitical and linked role in stabilising the planet and addressing its key concerns, notably preparing for the oncoming climate change impact and the ever-mounting mass migration of peoples. Japan is set to be a key player in this brave new world.

Lord Howell is a British Conservative member of the House of Lords. He is the author of The Japan Affair, which tells the story of the evolving relationship between the UK and Japan.

Douglas McWilliams

Key global trends 2022

Inflation looms large as the world economy shifts to a post-Covid age.

The Omicron variant of Covid suddenly appeared just as we forecasters were polishing off our crystal balls to prepare our outlooks for the coming year. It has proved a helpful reminder that Covid hasn't gone away and could well still shape the economic outlook both for 2022 and years beyond.

It is likely that the travel sector in particular will have to cope with the consequences of Covid well into the future. Combined with the pressures from the green lobby, this could reshape tourism and business travel especially, which together - pre-pandemic - had made up 10% of world GDP.

Despite Covid, the big economic issue that seems likely to dominate 2022 is inflation. Fed chairman Jerome Powell's suggestion that the word "transitory" should be "retired" shows the rising degree of concern amongst central banks who for most of 2021 had seemed dangerously complacent about the pace at which prices were rising.

Inflation is probably the biggest potential impediment to growth. But there are plenty of forces driving growth forward and even if the inflationary outcome is on the less cheerful side, 2022 is likely to be a year when the world grows more strongly than usual.

Inflation is an international phenomenon, driven initially by the supply problems that followed the pandemic-driven dislocation. With highly expansionary fiscal and monetary policies adding fuel, inflation has either passed or is close to the critical 5% level in much of Europe, the UK and in particular the US. Even in the East there are inflationary signs – although China's consumer price inflation remains low, wholesale price inflation is well into double digit territory.

There have been signs in late 2021 that shipping, commodity and oil prices have started to top out but there still remains inflationary potential if growth remains strong.

On top of the built in inflationary pressures, governments around the world have committed themselves to what could prove an expensive transition to net zero emissions. To prevent the cost increases from this multiplying up their impact through accelerating an inflationary boom and bust, governments will need to phase them in carefully.

What makes the difference from inflation being essentially short term and gradually disappearing and it starting to build itself into the system is the extent to which wages react.

When inflation has become fully endemic, rising prices drive rising wages which then add to costs that push up prices starting a whole new spiral. Getting out of such a spiral seems only really possible by creating a recession – our back of the envelope maths is that if inflation gets to about 10% there needs to be a 4% cut in output relative to potential to squeeze it back down.

And the news on wages and the labour market is not exactly encouraging.

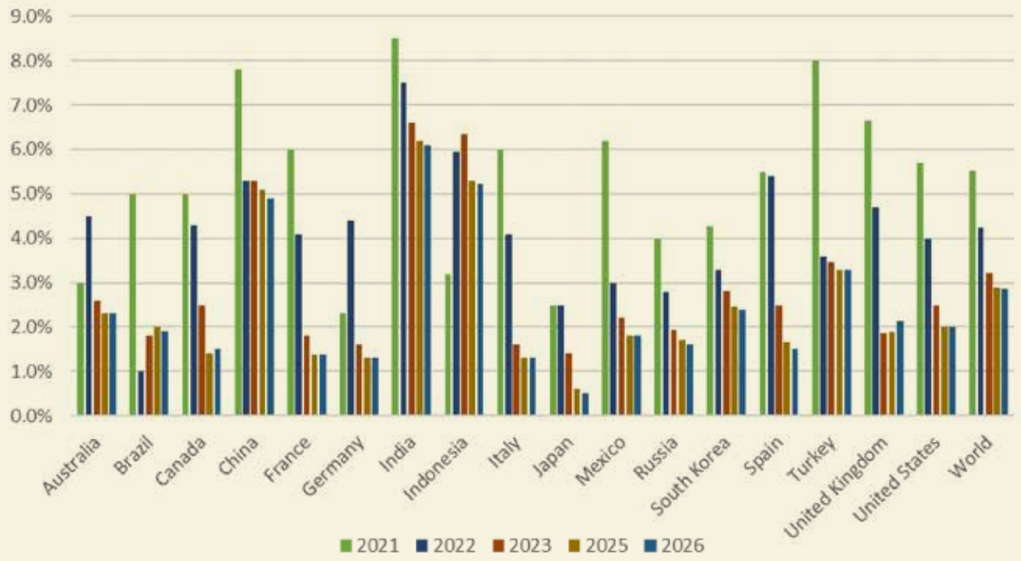
The pandemic and associated measures seem to have had a knock on effect on the labour supply, particularly for older workers. In the US, the Eurozone and the UK unfilled vacancies are running well above previous record levels even though output is only just close to (and in some cases below) its previous peaks. Signs of a start to rising wage inflation are pervasive.

The inflationary story will play itself out during 2022. It might be that with demand growth slowing, the dislocation in the shipping lines and at ports coming to an end, reduced demand for fossil fuels and commodities and a new generation of workers deciding not to retire too early, the supply-demand imbalances that have caused inflation could ease during 2022 with only a modest rise in interest rates and tapering of monetary growth.

If that were the case, inflation will subside gradually and the world could be set for technology-fuelled growth for the rest of the decade. That would be the favourable outcome and if so, the world's central banks will have the right to pat themselves on the back, and those of us who called wolf will have egg on our faces. We are so far away from past experience that this outcome cannot be ruled out, though it is the one I least expect.

More likely, though, is that the different inflationary pressures reinforce each other and the 5% inflation figure starts

Cebr world GDP growth forecasts



edging towards the psychologically frightening 10%. If that happens, expect at some point that the central banks will panic and raise interest rates sharply. If this occurs, it is likely to happen mid-year or later. The authorities will be trying to burst a balloon and this is always a always a tricky procedure, though the Chinese are giving them a fairly successful (so far) example of how to calm an overblown property market. By far the best way of limiting the damage from deflationary policies is to start early and it looks as though the authorities will lose that trick.

Inflation is probably the biggest potential impediment to growth. But there are plenty of forces driving growth forward and even if the inflationary outcome is on the less cheerful side, 2022 is likely to be a year when the world grows more strongly than usual. Some of 2021's growth has been frustrated by supply shortages and will spill over into 2022; my colleagues and I have carried out substantial research into the technological prospects and it appears that most areas of tech have jumped forward by a few years as a result of the pandemic-induced disruption. A wide range of applications are starting to embed themselves in the economy and it is likely that these will create further opportunities for technology-fuelled growth.

According to my Cebr colleagues the fastest growing large economies in 2022 are likely to be India (7.5%) and Indonesia (5.9%). But Chinese growth is forecast to be much in line with many Western economies at 5.3%. It would be wrong to suggest that the Chinese growth dynamic has disappeared completely – but the Chinese authorities have moved earlier to deal with overheating and inflated asset prices and this will reduce growth in 2022 and probably 2023 as well. This in turn will have knock on effects on the other key Asian economies.

In the West, the fastest growing economies are likely to be the UK and the US, though the EU's Mediterranean zone, for many years held back by the impact of being in the Euro, is likely to do a lot better than hitherto as the barriers to fiscal and monetary restraint are lifted. All this stimulatory activity, though, comes at a price, which is the risk of inflation highlighted above.

It would be wrong to suggest that the Chinese growth dynamic has disappeared completely – but the Chinese authorities have moved earlier to deal with overheating and inflated asset prices and this will reduce growth in 2022 and probably 2023 as well.

The big political event of 2022 is likely to be the US midterm elections. On current projections, the result could be a major rebuff to President Biden. But (as Harold Wilson didn't quite say) ten months is a long time in politics and this could change.

The prospects for the 2024 US Presidential election could have serious implications for world stability. It appears that China is watching very carefully. President Xi has an ambition to reunite Taiwan and China. So if the 2022 midterms make it look as though Donald Trump might become president again in 2024, China may decide to make an early move before there is a chance that he gets in. Ironically, this could precipitate the precise electoral result they don't want. And of course President Putin is also looking and may well be making similar calculations.

But both may see that the prospect of a return of Trump makes early aggressive action a risk worth taking.

Douglas McWilliams is deputy chairman of the Centre for Economics and Business Research and the author of The Flat White Economy.

Inflation, debt and banking crises are all looming for the Eurozone because the ECB has manipulated interest rates which it cannot row back from without dire consequences.

Tuomas Malinen

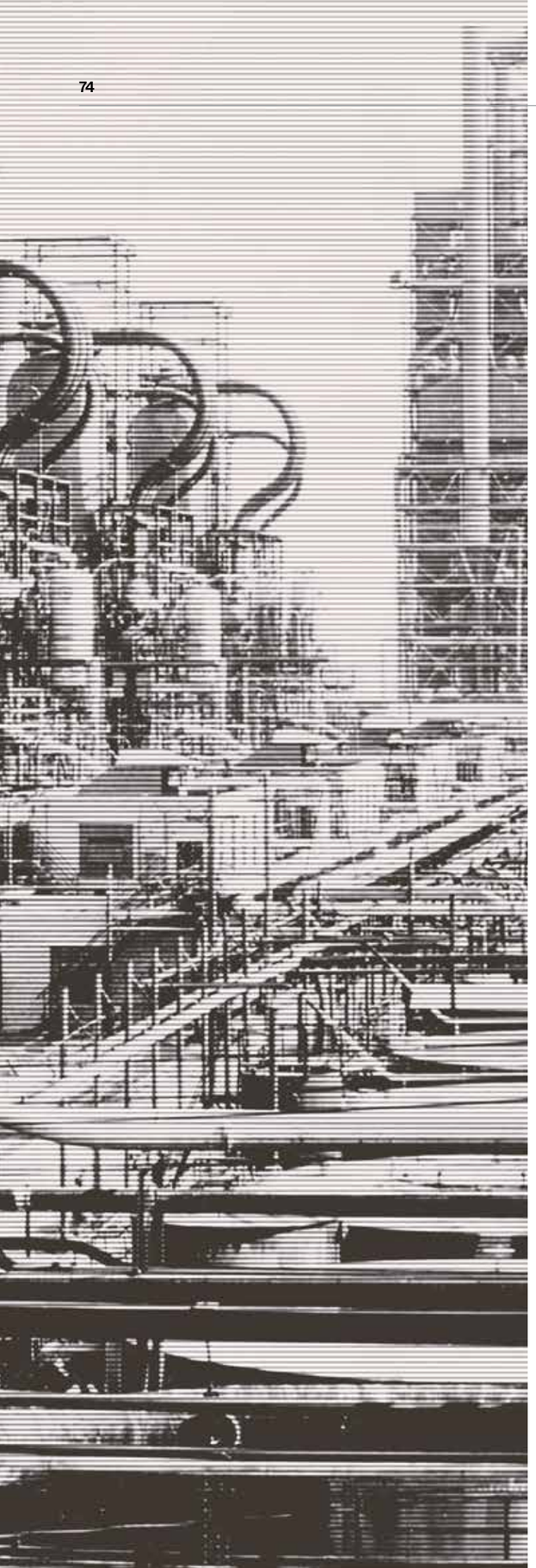
Breaking the Bank

Will 2022 mark the beginning of the end for the ECB?

The European Central Bank has been aiming for higher inflation for years – "around 2%". It has pursued this through extremely low – even negative - interest rates and by running an asset purchase programme, where it buys (mostly) sovereign bonds pushing their yields to unnatural lows. During the autumn of 2021, it became clear that the ECB had succeeded in its quest.

In November, inflation in the Eurozone surged to a record of 4.9%. In Germany, the first estimate for inflation in November was 5.2%, which would be the fastest pace since early 1992. To put things into perspective, in 1992 the key interest rate of the Bundesbank was 8.6%. At the time of writing - early December 2021 - the deposit facility rate (which banks use to make overnight deposits at the ECB, thus setting the interest rates banks use in their lending and borrowing) was -0.5%.

Now the ECB is likely to have fallen seriously behind the curve in its efforts to control inflation. Where could this lead? Two historical examples provide some guidance.



The oil crisis of the 1970s and the remedy

In the 1960s and 1970s it was thought that there was an inverse relationship between inflation and unemployment, or the Phillips curve. The higher the inflation, the lower the unemployment. Thus, to maintain low unemployment, the central banks were assumed to keep interest rates relatively low to fuel inflation. However, the 1970s turned this hypothesis on its head.

US oil production peaked in 1970, which led the world's leading economy to become more dependent on oil from the Middle East. In 1973, as a result of the Yom Kippur War, fought between Israel and a coalition of Arab States led by Egypt and Syria, the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries proclaimed an oil embargo against Western states supporting Israel. In six months, the price of oil rose by nearly 300% globally, but the prices in the US rose even higher. Many products of that time were heavily oil-reliant, so prices of a multitude of products sky-rocketed. While US wages were slow to respond at first, they started to rise quickly in summer 1974. Thus, inflation in the US reached 12% in 1974, and unemployment grew.

By late 1976, the inflation rate had dropped to little over 5% but then, in 1979, the Iranian Revolution started, leading to instability in the Middle East which stirred a panicky reaction from the markets. The price of oil doubled within 12 months. In 1980, the Iran-Iraq war began, which led to further declines in oil production and even higher prices.

By late 1970s, the public had learned to expect high inflation pushing wages higher. As a result, the annual inflation rate in the US rose to over 14% in the early 1980s.

The President of the Federal Reserve, Paul Volcker, lifted the interest rate of the Fed from around 11% in 1979 to 20% in June 1981. This led to a recession, but it also killed inflation, which fell below 3% in summer 1983.

The inflation/devaluation cycle of Finland

The second example is Finland, which put strict price and wage controls in place after the Second World War – a conflict it had lost. Finland also tied the value of her currency, the markka, to the US dollar.

Extensions of price controls, put in place after shortages that plagued Finland post-war, ended in late 1955. This caused a spike in prices in 1956, leading to a general strike as labour unions demanded high wage increases. After inflation had flared up, exports deteriorated dramatically in 1957, which led to a diminution of the foreign exchange reserves of the Bank of Finland (BOF). The country devalued its currency by 39.1% against the USD in mid-September 1957.

Economic boom years in the 1960s led to demand that exceeded the production capabilities of Finland. The BOF also kept rates low in accordance with the Phillips curve doctrine. The result of this, as well as the strong negotiation power of the labour unions pushing wages higher, was that consumer prices

Higher interest rates would crush over-indebted companies and households, most likely triggering a global banking crisis.

As energy and freight prices remain elevated, consumers will continue to feel the pinch of inflation, and it will start to affect their expectations about inflation going forward.

rose by 14%, on average, between 1958 and 1967. To remain competitive, Finland devalued the markka against the USD by 31.25% on October 6, 1967.

This created a "devaluation cycle", where devaluations, used to solve problems of competitiveness and the balance of payments, trigger a new inflationary spiral that consumes the competitive edge from devaluation. This leads to notable pay increases, which feed back into the prices and the cycle repeats itself. After the 1944 Bretton Woods Agreement, which provided the framework to create fixed international currency exchange rates, the markka was devalued three times - in 1977, 1978, and in 1982. During that period, the average inflation rate of Finland was around 10%. After the banking crisis of early 1990s, the markka was "floated" and the BOF started to follow the stable prices mandate.

As these examples show, easy monetary policy and shocks to expectations feed high inflation, and drastic action is needed to bring them down. How far are we from such a situation in the Eurozone?

In the Eurozone, pressures are mounting

In Germany, the major labour unions have demanded 5.5% wage rises. While the increase won't be this high, wages are likely to increase by more than they have in years. Moreover, the new government of Germany has agreed to increase the minimum wage by 25%. If enacted, it will surely feed into production costs of companies, pushing prices higher.

While wage pressures have remained muted in the Euro area, that may change drastically in the coming year. As energy and freight prices remain elevated, consumers will continue to feel the pinch of inflation, and it will start to affect their expectations about inflation going forward. If the example set during the first oil crisis in the US holds true, we would start to see notably elevated wage increases and continued acceleration of inflation in early 2022.

The ECB is trapped, with no way out

Why has the ECB been so reluctant to raise interest rates and run down asset purchase programmes in the face of record-breaking inflation? Because the banking sector of the Eurozone is unlikely to be able to cope with higher interest rates, and the European sovereign bond markets would collapse without the support of the ECB. Or is someone willing to lend to an unsupported Italian government for 10 years at 1% interest? The answer is a resounding: no.

Higher interest rates would crush over-indebted companies and households, most likely triggering a (global) banking crisis. Higher sovereign yields would, most likely, lead to a renewed and worse debt crisis in the Eurozone as, for instance, both Italy and Greece are even more indebted now than they were in 2011.

All of these - an inflation crisis, a banking crisis and a debt crisis - are looming around the corner because the ECB has massively manipulated interest rates which it cannot row back from without dire consequences.

Thus, 2022 may very well be the year that people of the Eurozone finally realise the colossal mistakes made by the ECB. As with every politicised institution, that will be its undoing.

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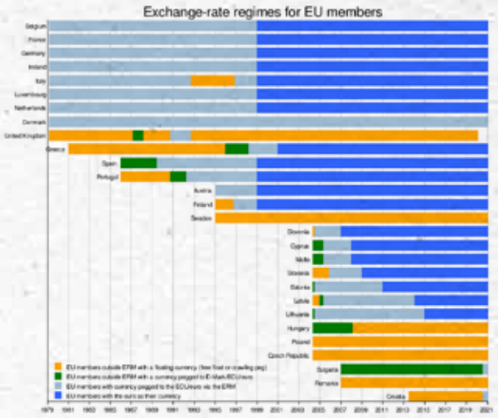
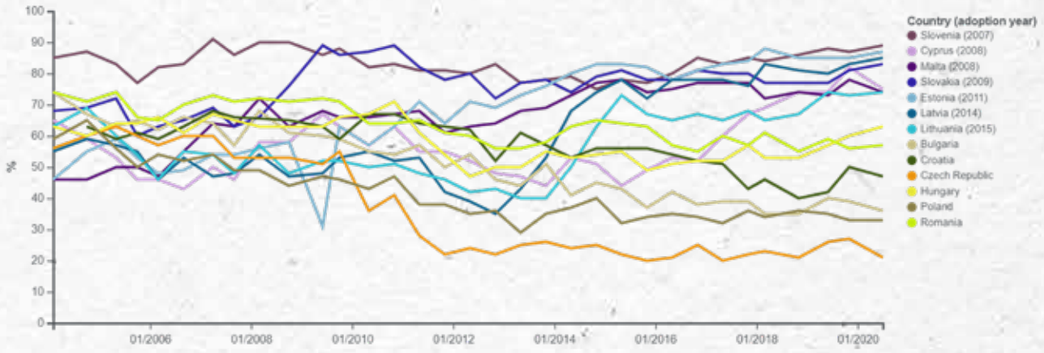
Eurozone EXPANSION

BILL BOWKETT





First established in 1999, the Eurozone is made up of 19 EU member states, with Denmark having opted-out from joining three decades prior.

Those wishing to join must meet specific conditions and laws, agreed under the Maastricht Treaty, known as the convergence criteria. They are: price stability, sound and sustainable public finances, durability of convergence, and exchange rate stability.

Seven other states are on the enlargement agenda: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Sweden. Of these, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland are the biggest economies outside of the Eurozone.

Czech president Andrej Babiš is against euro adoption in the near-term and prefers to keep the koruna, while Hungary's Victor Orbán has declared that his government does not entertain the idea of replacing the "stable and strong" forint. The Ruling Law and Justice Party has also expressed a desire to keep the zloty over the Euro, citing the relative strength of the Polish economy when compared to neighbouring countries that have adopted the currency.

Bulgaria and Croatia are already involved in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM II), which helps provide economic stability within the single market, a pre-condition for joining the Eurozone.

Sweden is theoretically obliged to adopt the euro, but maintains it has freedom over whether it wishes to join ERM II. As for Romania, it was scheduled to adopt the currency by 2014, but the deadline has been pushed back numerous times. ¬

Get real about China

Rana Mitter

The West must regain its confidence and compete with China's economic might.

In November 2021, Xi Jinping held the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). The message, delivered via video link, was warm but also had a warning within it. Rather than the extensive use of loans from China's major development banks, China's private sector was instead expected to make up a growing part of the Chinese investment in sub-Saharan Africa. The Western world has become increasingly concerned about a seemingly endless flow of Chinese funding for projects in the Global South. In fact, Xi's message appeared to be that, from now on, China would no longer be the cashpoint for the development loans that have characterised its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) over the last decade. Just six years ago in Johannesburg, Xi offered the continent some $60 billion as direct loans. In 2022, China's banks will lend less, not more.

It's become commonplace to argue that the primary purpose of BRI is to allow China to trap countries in debt. There is no doubt that the BRI is China's strategy for gaining greater geopolitical influence, but in fact, some of the countries where China does best don't need to be trapped in the first place. In Pakistan, China is developing the Gwadar port which will link East Africa and South Asia, and may provide future military access for the growing Chinese navy. But China's relationship with Pakistan has been warm for decades, even as its links to the US have become scratchier. The poster child example of a Chinese loan that is impossible to service is the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka. But it's worth noting that only 10% of Sri Lanka's debt overall is owed to Chinese entities; the vast majority will have to be paid back to other lenders, many from the West. Beijing is becoming increasingly frustrated at projects, such as the planned East African railway link between Kenya and Uganda, which look unlikely to make their money back. Far from forcing these rail links onto these countries, China's development banks are getting cold feet and demanding cost projections before handing out any more funding.

Of course, China is entirely serious, and entirely unsentimental, about using its financial muscle and control over supply chains and rare earths to consolidate its interests. The development of light rail systems in Southeast Asia are also likely to be lossmaking in the short term, but serve a strategic purpose in creating a new ecology that binds South China and Southeast Asia together. Within a few years, Vietnam and Myanmar may be accessible to the south of China via a two or three-hour high-speed train ride. The Greater Bay Area of southern China will use that connectivity to increase the role of Shenzhen as one of the most innovative hubs for tech development in the world. This links to China's planned fate for Hong Kong: the city will continue to lose its cherished freedoms of speech and artistic and creative production, but will grow in strength as a pool of capital and centre for commercial law for China's "southern powerhouse." Since every country in the Asia-Pacific region has China as its largest trading partner, the force of economic gravity will be hard to resist.

China is entirely serious, and entirely unsentimental, about using its financial muscle to consolidate its interests. Since every country in the Asia-Pacific region has China as its largest trading partner, the force of economic gravity will be hard to resist.

Does this mean that the West should simply give up now? Not at all. There's a unifying factor that brings the emerging societies of South and Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa together: they want development, and they want a choice of providers. China has done well with its vaccine rollout in parts of Asia, but so far, Western vaccines are more effective and popular, when they are available. Chinese 5G provision is cheap and reliable, but it comes with the fear of political control. Ethiopia is just one example of an emerging economy that has chosen a US-backed 5G system rather than a Chinese one, even though China has supported the African state's freight rail system and built a metro in Addis Ababa. In fact, the majority of vaccine provision and economic development in the Global South is still supported by the West (including actors such as Japan), a reminder in the exasperated phrasing of Ryan Haas, former China director for the US National Security Council, that "China is not ten feet tall." But the West seems to have lost confidence in telling that story.

That's in part because Western governments have become ambivalent about their own values. In 2017, European politicians were muted about the prosecution of illegal, but mostly nonviolent, Catalonian separatists for "secession" in holding a wildcat independence referendum. But Chinese commentators were quick to pick up the parallels with Hong Kong, asking why a European country could prosecute its secessionists but Chinese authorities were condemned for doing so. Shortly afterwards Beijing imposed a draconian National Security Law on the city. Politicians in liberal countries also need to respect their own institutions. It can sometimes appear as if the two major voices in the world demanding silencing of the BBC are activists from the Chinese Communist Party and commentators linked to the British Conservative Party. Liberal societies need to start acting, once again, as if they welcome diversity and dissent rather than regarding it as an inconvenience to elites. The latter position, after all, has already been taken by Beijing.

China now seeks global influence and it has to expect commentary on its actions from around the world. It cannot logically argue that the world should praise the higher living standards it has brought to millions in the countryside, but studiously avoid mentioning repression in Xinjiang. But the wider world needs to answer the challenge from the Global South. We all need green energy, high-speed rail transit, and reliable 5G - and Argentina, Malaysia or Uganda don't see any reason why they should wait for those goods. For reasons that combine security, economics and values, the West does not want China to develop the monopoly that it seeks in those technologies. That is an entirely valid political aspiration. But it is the West's job to turn it into reality.

Rana Mitter is professor of the history and politics of modern China at the University of Oxford. His most recent book is "China's Good War: How World War II is Shaping a New Nationalism."

China's VANISHING Muslims

Georgia Gilholy

Xinjiang province is the black jewel in Beijing's bloodstained crown.

Since 2017, at least a million Uyghurs and members of other Turkic Muslim minorities have been transferred into a leviathan of "transformation through education" camps in China's north-western province of Xinjiang.

Detainees are subjected to political indoctrination, forced labour, coerced into renouncing their religion and culture and are, in many instances, subjected to torture, rape and organ harvesting. Women in and outside the camps are regularly the victims of forced sterilisation and abortion.

As Newcastle University expert Joanne Smith Finley, who was sanctioned by the regime earlier this year, told the Associated Press in 2020: "It's not immediate, shocking, mass-killing on the spot type genocide, but slow, painful, creeping genocide...These are direct means of genetically reducing the Uyghur population."

Atrocities in Xinjiang, and under the Chinese state apparatus more broadly, are no longer in question. What remains uncertain is how these issues are set to change in the coming year and beyond, and how the international community can deal with them, if at all.

While European opinion polls have displayed a marked plummet in the perception of the erstwhile Middle Kingdom since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in Wuhan, the stance of our governments to the question of fencing in Beijing is diverse to the degree of approaching incoherence, meaning that a continuation of the status quo is more than likely moving forward.

Nor is the matter expected to feature as a priority in 2022, as states grapple with rising inflation and living costs, energy supply issues, tensions in the Balkans, Belarus and Ukraine, not to mention the widespread continuation of coronavirus restrictions.

While the question of Xinjiang has proved a key flashpoint for many observers, the situation there is almost certainly fated to get worse before it gets better.

In November, Beijing announced more restrictive rules for the province, set to be rolled out from January 1, 2022. Under these, every community will be divided into "grid" units to be monitored by officials 24/7. Notably, these guidelines were mandated from the very top echelons of the Party, including by President Xi Jinping himself.

The new rules also call for tighter control of the already tightly restricted media reports out of the province, and further limitations on internet use. Severe punishment of officers not judged to deliver the expected level of enforcement on locals is also mandated. Just as the situation is set to further deteriorate, the world's sources of information are scheduled to become yet more scarce.

The Uyghur Tribunal, a non-governmental body that has held hearings in London regarding the allegations of atrocities in Xinjiang, has published damning transcripts of leaked Chinese state documents likely dating back to 2014.

Adrian Zenz, an American researcher on Chinese ethnic policy, said the new material shows how "the pesonal influence of Xi on many details of this atrocity is significantly greater than we realised". With Xi's consolidation of power having no end in sight, it is difficult to imagine an internal or external reaction with the authority to cut short his dangerous vision.

Just as when it came to grappling with the horrors of the 20th century, it may be that the tragedy of Xinjiang is only fully dealt with when it is too late for its victims.

The documents lay out the Party's official contempt for what they deem "religious interference" in matters of "secular life"; in other words, the perfectly legitimate and public role of transcendental faith in rites of passage such as marriage, funerals and matchmaking.

In one previously confidential speech, Xi claimed that "population proportion and population security are important foundations for long-term peace and stability", a phrase that was repeated verbatim in 2021 by a senior Xinjiang official complaining that the Han Chinese population of southern Xinjiang was "too low" at 15%, an allusion to the CCP's use of targeted migration and forced marriage in its quest to eliminate the area's unique culture.

But being prone to paranoia and global PR concerns, as most expansionist regimes are, why does the Chinese state continue to commit such grave acts against its Uyghur minority?

Finance is just as high on Beijing's agenda as its distaste for minority ethnicity and religion. China's mismatched approach to countless other religious and ethnic groupings, which often face the same brutal persecution as Uyghurs when they are judged to be inconvenient to the CCP project, is evidence of this.

Indeed, Beijing's landmark "Belt and Road" initiative is set to invest more than $8 billion in a transcontinental "belt" of overland economic corridors over the coming years. The project itself is littered with instances of debt diplomacy and forced labour, which experts have characterised as a response to growing wage demands that threaten China's competitive edge in low-cost manufacturing. Xinjiang is no exception but is in fact the black jewel in Beijing's bloodstained crown.

Even prior to Nato's heavily criticised withdrawal from the region, China had begun constructing a road through the Wakhan Corridor, a narrow, mostly mountainous strip of territory that links Xinjiang to north-east Afghanistan, and onward to Pakistan and Central Asia, complementing the region's existing road networks.

Upon completion, these new thoroughfares will enable Beijing to pursue increased trade and the extraction of Afghanistan's wealth of natural resources. While more than half of all existing rare earth mineral supplies - materials required for the manufacture of high-tech devices - are currently mined in China, Beijing is keenly aware of the finiteness of these reserves and is aware that Afghanistan may possess almost a trillion dollars' worth.

Photo: Lumiereist / Shutterstock.com

Yet China's political masters are well aware that they will be incapable of achieving regional, never mind international, hegemony if they fail to keep Xinjiang under the yoke. China would even fail to achieve its self-evident aim of domestic mastery if the province were to become a serious contender for independence or major dissidence. It is even possible to see Xinjiang's network of oppression as the Party's myopic and inexcusable reaction to two suspected Islamist terrorist attacks in China in 2013 and 2014, at the same time as conflict in Syria and Iraq was birthing ISIS.

However, when it comes to Europe's willingness to stand up to Beijing even within our own borders, there are more questions than answers.

Our approach lacks coherence at every level. Take the case of Maureen O'Bern, a former local council employee in Greater Manchester who was fired in July after highlighting her concerns over plans to award a £135 million development contract to a Chinese state-owned company, Beijing Construction Engineering Group International.

During the council vote on the proposals, which have since been approved, O'Bern was ejected from the public gallery after displaying a poster comparing the complacency during the Holocaust with the Chinese government's persecution of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. If European public institutions can permit such brazen overreactions to those critical of their links with China, how can we expect the entanglements of bigger bodies, both private and public, to disentangle themselves?

Meanwhile, we continue to lean on alliances with actors such as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, whose own records on religious equality and labour coercion remain dismal.

Moreover, if Europe is to approach a comprehensive strategy, we cannot do so without the leadership of the United States. But America's policy in response to the Chinese threat continues to be mired in confusion. There is no consensus among DC policy-makers on whether to reduce the US's economic reliance on China or to launch an all-out containment campaign. Nor is there any proposed strategy to mitigate the atrocities against the Uyghurs and other minorities, which most international institutions have predictably failed to acknowledge.

Just as when it came to grappling with the horrors of the 20th century, it may be that the tragedy of Xinjiang is only fully dealt with when it is too late for its victims. Moves such as the forthcoming diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics by a handful of western nations are important, but backed by little concrete policy change, they simply reek of tokenism.

In his introductory remarks at the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann, head prosecutor Gideon Hausner remarked: "In this trial, we shall also encounter a new kind of killer, the kind who exercises his bloody craft behind a desk and only occasionally does the deed with his own hands."

While the threat of tyranny from political pen-pushers has long since failed to be "new", our failure to develop adequate mechanisms to prevent their genocidal atrocities under regimes such as Beijing's will remain just as prescient as we enter 2022.

Georgia L. Gilholy is Editor-in-Chief for the Foundation for Uyghur Freedom. The views expressed in the article are the author's personal opinions.

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Azeem Ibrahim

CHINA'S CONSERVATIVE COMMUNISM

The Uyghur genocide is something we must learn from if we are to salvage the West and our moral standing in the world.

As the Uyghur genocide continues apace in Xinjiang, China, Western conservatives must stand up and take note. There is much more peril, and opportunity, in this situation than first meets the eye.

The first impulse conservatives have demonstrated towards this humanitarian crisis came from the then Trump administration in 2019-2020, when Washington regarded it as just an international embarrassment for the Chinese, which they hoped to leverage in their negotiations with Beijing for Trump's trade deal.

Trump, as always, was a bull in the china shop on this issue as he was on many others. But more measured leaders in the West might have had a fundamentally similar first response to the news of what was happening in Xinjiang: this shows Beijing in a bad light, and this is something that could be exploited.

However, we can only get to be on the right side of history by highlighting the human rights abuses perpetrated by the Chinese Communist Party, something that Trump and former secretary of state Mike Pompeo came around to in the last month of the administration, long after the China trade deal fell through. It is generally a win when a rival political ideology is demonstrated to produce atrocious results for ordinary people.

For another, this should hamper the growth of Beijing's influence in Central Asia, as the Party's policies in Xinjiang are specifically designed to eradicate the identity of people just like them, and here we are talking not just about the Uyghurs, but about many Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Tajiks who live within China's borders. And to the extent to which the genocidal policies of Beijing target these people specifically for their Muslim identity, the worse the situation gets in Xinjiang, the more difficult it should be for governments in the Muslim world to continue to get closer to China.

The US and the West have a very difficult history with this pivotal region of the world after a century and a half of colonialism and war, but in all that time we have not carried out deliberate, concerted genocides against any of the local people. After the Iraq war, in particular, many regional countries have looked to move away from the US, but the Uyghur genocide should show them that Beijing is an even worse power to be beholden to. And in principle, this should aid our standing and interests in the region to recover, if not immediately, at least in the medium term.

An insistence on cultural homogeneity and the assimilation of other groups specifically into our own culture, if pursued to the extreme, naturally leads to genocide.

Whatever else the leaders of these countries think about the US, it should now be clear to them that China is not the benevolent partner that they presented themselves as in the 1990s and the 2000s, and that the Communist Party will match and exceed all the worst anti-Muslim instincts and rhetoric among the far-right in the West with actual "re-education camps" designed specifically to eradicate Muslim identity.

But this was always a naive point of view. While Western countries have not carried out genocides against Muslims, local Muslim leaders and majority ethnic groups within these countries have not always had similar scruples against their fellow Muslims. Just since the 1990s, we have had the genocides against the Kurds and the Marsh Arabs in Iraq by Saddam Hussain, the wars of sectarian and ethnic eradication led by the Syrian government of Assad, as well as by ISIS, and a plethora of similar but more localised ethnic and sectarian conflicts in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Libya, Morocco, and Egypt, to name just a few.

Photo: VY Shots / Alamy Stock Photo

Some Muslims don't have much issue with the mass murder of other Muslims, at least not so long as those other Muslims are the "wrong kind" of Muslims. And it is relatively easy to designate other Muslims as the "wrong kind" for reasons of political expediency, just as the Taliban, for example, have completely dissociated themselves from the Uyghurs just across the border in Xinjiang in order to curry favour with Beijing in their plans to retake control of Afghanistan.

No, the real challenge, and indeed opportunity, for Western conservatives here is ideological.

The reason why criticism by the Trump administration of the events in Xinjiang was batted away by Beijing is because, ideologically, the criticism was not backed by any meaningful action.

The issue here for conservatives all around the world is that the actions of the CCP in Xinjiang are not designed to make the Uyghurs better communists. They are designed to make the Uyghurs Chinese - not ethnically, of course, but culturally. And not a strictly secular (in the sense of ethnically agnostic) kind of Chinese, but specifically Han Chinese. They are "re-educated" to speak Mandarin, to dress and groom like good Han citizens, and to eat like Han Chinese, including to eat pork and drink beer, evidently not something required of a communist, but typical of the Han. In other words, the goal of the CCP in Xinjiang is to *assimilate* the Uyghurs into "mainstream Chinese culture", which is to say into the culture of the Han majority. Does that sound familiar? Who in the West is generally sceptical or even outright hostile to multiculturalism and those who would "come to live in this country" but will not "assimilate"? Sprinkle a bit of "war on terror" flavour on top because the group to be assimilated are Muslims, and there is no wonder the Chinese government thought that the criticism of their actions in Xinjiang was a bit rich coming from the West.

But this project of forced assimilation is part of a broader political programme that the CCP has engaged in since Xi Jinping came to power: the project is to rediscover and reassert, for lack of a better phrase, "Chinese pride". Xi and his loyalists in the CCP belong to a strand of political thought that describes the century between the First Opium War with Britain and the ultimate success of the CCP in the Chinese Civil War as the "Century of Humiliation", a century during which the largest, and oldest continuous civilisation on the planet was brought to its knees by the West through violence. The restoration of "Chinese pride", therefore, demands the aggressive assertion of Chinese identity at home, by cracking down on non-Chinese social, political and cultural factors, whether the separatist leanings of the Muslims of Xinjiang, the suppression of Christianity both as a pillar of Hong Kong cultural difference, but also, in the case of Catholic Christianity, as a parallel hierarchy that answers to a non-Chinese power beyond Beijing's control. And equally, abroad, by the trend we have seen in "wolf warrior diplomacy", the increasingly determined colonisation of the South China Sea, the increasingly aggressive chequebook diplomacy along the Belt and Road, and the belligerent pronouncements on the annexation of Taiwan. All these changes have come in with the rise to power of Xi in 2012. You might call this political project, overall, "China first" – except that it precedes its American counterpart, and it is being implemented rather more competently as well.

The problem for Western conservatives, therefore, is that the Uyghur genocide in Xinjiang is being carried out by the CCP for what they call *conservative* reasons, as part of a broader *conservative* political project of national self-assertion by a conservative, nationalist wing of the CCP. To point out that this genocide is carried out by people who call themselves "communists" and to pretend that this, therefore, does not have anything to do with conservative thought, or indeed with conservative rhetoric in the West, is to either deliberately bury our heads in the sand, or to be consciously disingenuous.

As to why the Chinese political elite have taken this turn in the early 2010s, the reasons are myriad. Having abandoned much of their communist ideological commitments in order to liberalise their economy since the 1980s, China has reaped huge economic rewards, bringing the country to the internationally prominent position it finds itself in today. But maintaining the rapid growth rates that have served to legitimise Party rule for three decades is becoming increasingly difficult, as the economy is maturing, as the problematic allocations of capital resulting from both Party corruption and from Beijing's mixed private-state model of investment are mounting up, and as the demographic bust following the One Child Policy is looming. In the next decade or two, China's economic progress will only slow, and the Party desperately needs other sources of legitimacy. Communist ideals have obviously been long sold down the river. National pride and Han identity politics might be the only things left to cultivate as the basis of power for the Party.

So how is this an opportunity for conservatives? China's rapid shift towards certain kinds of political conservatism over the past decade is a learning opportunity for Western conservatives. Bound as we are by our perspectives, we, as ordinary human beings, can lose track of the bigger picture in the heat of our everyday debates with liberals and leftists in our own countries, as it relates to the consequences of some of our beliefs and policy preferences. We are sufficiently removed from China to see it from an outsider's disinterested, and therefore more objective, perspective. And that gives us the opportunity to observe the consequences of certain things that we would normally argue for in our own countries, in something more akin to laboratory conditions.

Communist ideals have obviously been long sold down the water. National pride and Han identity politics might be the only things left to cultivate as the basis of power for the Party.

The first thing to learn is that an insistence on cultural homogeneity and the assimilation of other groups specifically into our own culture, if pursued to the extreme, naturally leads to genocide. "Re-educating" people does not even sound that bad when we think that others should be educated to see our own point of view. But just how bad it actually is becomes rather more evident when people are being "re-educated" by a group such as the CCP, and "re-educated" to (cultural) extinction. At the very least we should be able to agree that assimilation, even if it is overall desirable, should always be voluntary for every individual concerned.

The second main thing to learn is that obnoxious, "me first" posturing on the international stage can feel good in the short term when you force yourself on smaller countries who cannot fight back immediately, but is more difficult in the longer term when you need international partners to trust you in order to cooperate. China's international influence was growing at an immense pace in the 1990s and the 2000s while it was presenting itself as a friendly and accommodating partner to other developing countries. Just as American influence grew immensely in the aftermath of the Second World War, when the US went around rebuilding the world under a banner of peace and goodwill to all (non-communist) nations. Since Xi's "China first" policy has become entrenched in Beijing, even natural friends and allies of China have been much more circumspect about Beijing's actions, and more suspicious of its motives. And the same goes with the Western alliance in the aftermath of Trump's "America first" policy. It is one thing to look after your own country and community as a matter of priority. It is another to make a show of it and to seek to diminish other countries on the international stage while you do so.

We should, therefore, unambiguously look towards and denounce the atrocities of Xinjiang, as well as challenge China's other domestic and international excesses, and we should do so regardless of any scepticism of our own motives. But if our critiques are to land, if they are to be meaningful, and if they are to be of any benefit to us, we must also learn, and acknowledge, what they say about us, about our own thinking, about our own policy positions, and about our own demands upon the world. Because the Uyghurs are not being eradicated by communism. And us pretending that that is the case will not serve anyone, not a people who are being "re-educated" out of existence, not ourselves, and not our standing domestically or on the global stage. It is the character of conservatism to always learn and evolve. The Uyghur genocide and China's turn to certain kinds of reactionary conservatism more broadly is something we must learn from at this moment in history if we are to salvage the West and our moral standing in the world. ¬

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The Taiwan GAMBLE

Tim Marshall

As China's military grows ever stronger, President Xi faces a dilemma over whether to invade the island. The stakes couldn't be higher.

Photo: Islemount Images / Alamy Stock Photo

It could be worse. At least there are "guardrails". That was about the only positive to take from the three-and-a-half-hour virtual summit in November 2021 between President Xi Jinping and Joe Biden.

In diplomatic terms the relationship between China and the US is the most important of the 21st century. As we head into 2022 there remain numerous bones of contention between them, including trade. But the one which potentially is the most combustible is Taiwan. Recognising the possibility of war, the two leaders had agreed to the direct video talks after which the American spoke of setting "common sense guardrails" to "ensure that the competition between our countries does not veer into conflict". That is to be welcomed and surely better than the vow of pursuing "extreme competition" that Biden made upon taking office.

The problem is that the guardrails are mostly about intellectual property theft, cyberattacks, and trade issues - not China's plans for Taiwan. On that, Xi has been explicit that the re-unification of Taiwan by force of arms is an option. The American position remains, in legal terms, that it does not support Taiwanese independence, although in practice it mostly treats it as a sovereign state.

The US also retains the policy of "strategic ambiguity". In essence this means it will come to Taiwan's assistance if China attacks it, unless a Taiwanese declaration of independence triggers the attack. What is left unclear is what form American assistance would take.

Last year President Biden made several statements hinting that Washington would intervene militarily. For example, when asked by ABC if America would respond if there was an action against a NATO ally he replied: "We would respond... same with Japan, same with South Korea, same with Taiwan". The White House was quick to say there was no change in policy, but the remarks seem likely to have been a signal to China that the US was serious and might even take military action if China stopped short of invasion but tried to blockade Taiwan to force it back under Beijing's control.

China spent 2021 becoming increasingly aggressive, sending waves of jet fighters and bombers into Taiwan's air defence identification zone. This is part of a policy in the "grey zone" of warfare and appears designed to wear down the island's resolve until, through sheer exhaustion, it agrees to reunification.

There's little sign of that so far. The relationship between China and Taiwan has taken a downturn in the past few years. Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen has stopped short of declaring de jure independence, but says the island is de facto already an independent country and has unveiled the government's biggest ever defence budget to deter China from trying to prove her wrong. Tsai intends to build more domestically produced military equipment, including submarines, whilst also buying more weapons from the US.

However, Taiwan's military budget and armed forces are dwarfed by those of China. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is on course to complete the modernisation of its forces by 2035 but long before that will be capable of mounting an attempt at invasion. Last year the outgoing commander of the

Invading Taiwan would require a massive amphibious assault across 100 miles of rough sea. China could gamble everything and send in the People's Liberation Army – possible, but incredibly risky.

US Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral Philip Davidson, said China would be ready within six years. His replacement, Admiral John Aquilino, suggested it could be well before that.

Before considering China's options, it is worth looking at why Beijing and Washington both place such importance on the island.

From the American perspective if Taiwan was ruled by Beijing, China would go on to control all the South China Sea and then the Western Pacific. Given the volume of global trade which passes through the region, this would be a threat to supply chains. If America was seen not to come to the aid of an ally (Taiwan), it would lose credibility and other allies in the region would begin to at least hedge their bets and lean towards China.

The Chinese leadership - along with most of the population - view Taiwan as an integral part of the Motherland. Losing it was part of the "century of humiliation" caused by colonialism. That hurt cannot be healed until reunification is complete. At a strategic level China looks out into the ocean and sees in front of it a wall of US allies in the shape of the "first island chain" which includes Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines. If it can take out the biggest "brick" in the wall – Taiwan - the danger of China being blockaded is massively reduced, and the route to the ocean lanes is clear.

China has choices: Wait for what some see as the inevitable decline of the US – that could be a long wait. Wear down Taiwan through constant threats of invasion, harassment, and diplomatic bullying which it is already doing – but there are no signs this is working. It could gamble that taking some of the small islands off the coast of Taiwan would not bring in the Americans, bank their gain, and wait another decade. That is a plausible scenario given that the Americans would prefer not to fight, and this halfway house of an invasion could give them an excuse to stop short of a military response. Or China could gamble everything and send in the PLA – possible, but incredibly risky.

Invading Taiwan would require a massive amphibious assault across 100 miles of rough sea. Beijing now has eight marine brigades and at least two hundred amphibious vessels capable of beach landings. In the weeks it took to assemble the force, it would be seen gathering, giving time for Taiwan to fine tune its defences, and the Americans to begin moving. Taiwan has recently accepted it cannot match China as a military peer and its strategy has shifted to asymmetric warfare involving the entire population and what is called the "porcupine doctrine". It aims to exploit the weaknesses in the initial attack, whilst trying to evade its strengths, and retain the island' s defences so that they continue to "bristle" if the battle comes inland.

Taiwan will know where the enemy is coming from and where it's going. On the way across the strait the Taiwanese military would harass China's ships using long-range missiles, fast attack stealth craft, helicopter gunships, mines, submarines, and airborne and underwater drones aided by America's advanced surveillance technology. At the same time the land-based defences would be attempting to avoid a massive aerial bombardment and cyber-attacks, including on space-based assets. As it approached the coast the Chinese armada would be met by a wall of fire which would continue as troops attempted to land.

A military defeat over Taiwan would not just be a tragic loss of life, a national humiliation, and an economic disaster, it would probably end the leadership of President Xi.

War is not always logical. Emotions, pride, and arrogance can also be factors. The 68-year-old Xi may not be able to resist trying to cement his place in history.

Photo: Pictorial Press Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

Ahead of the 1944 Normandy landings the German defences were stretched thinly along 2,000 km of coastline and the Allies had numerous choices of where to come ashore. Taiwan's western coast is only 400km long and there are only a handful of beaches upon which troops could be delivered. If beachheads are established, the next line of defence as the PLA moves inland is to fight in the towns and cities to slow an advance, and finally fight from the island's mountainous terrain and conduct guerrilla warfare. Taiwan's professional army is about 165,000 strong but it has 3.5 million reservists trained to various abilities and who would be engaged in a whole of society struggle which could last years and require Beijing to sustain a huge occupation force.

This scenario assumes the Americans have not arrived in time, in which case they would have a difficult decision about whether to invade to take back the island. If some Americans were already there, and the US Navy was engaged, the Chinese crossing would be an even bloodier affair. The Americans have two aircraft carrier groups which could reach the region within a couple of weeks, although they would need to stand off the immediate conflict zone due to China's formidable shore-to-ship missile systems.

It is also feasible that Japan, Australia, the UK and other countries would join the Americans in either trying to deter the initial invasion or provide assistance in retaking the island. The presence of the British aircraft carrier Queen Elizabeth II near Taiwan last year was meant as a statement of intent. Even clearer was the warning from the Australian Defence Minister Peter Dutton. Responding to US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken's comment that the US and allies would take unspecified action if China used force, Dutton said: "It would be inconceivable that we wouldn't support the US in an action if the US chose to take that action." Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Dutton was "spot on". Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe followed up saying that Japan could not stand by if Taiwan was attacked because it would constitute a significant threat to his country. The Japanese ambassador was then summoned to the foreign ministry in Beijing for a dressing down. Tokyo explained that the government was not responsible for the views of a former Prime Minister.

China's brutal take over in Hong Kong, aggressions in the South China Sea against the Philippines and Vietnam, the killing of Indian troops in the Doklam Plateau, and its 'wolf warrior' diplomacy, are among the reasons why its reputation has taken such a battering recently.

Nevertheless, his remarks are part of a growing consensus among many major powers that China is a malign actor that threatens stability in the South China Sea.

This consensus has become more apparent during the Covid-19 crisis and looks set to harden in 2022. The Beijing Olympics will again throw the spotlight on the country's human rights abuses including "crimes against humanity" involving the Muslim Uyghurs and other minorities. Its brutal take over in Hong Kong, aggressions in the South China Sea against the Philippines and Vietnam, the killing of Indian troops in the Doklam Plateau, and its "wolf warrior" diplomacy, are among other reasons why its reputation has taken such a battering recently. Even the often risk-averse EU is beginning to show public anger with Chinese policy in several areas.

So, as it contemplates military action, the Communist Party leadership in Beijing must be asking itself several questions. Does it risk more reputational damage? At a time when its economy is slowing, does it risk a massively expensive military adventure and more economic sanctions? After all, it wants to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. An invasion would scupper that, or if it had joined, it would be kicked out. Is it prepared to lose possibly tens of thousands of troops in taking Taiwan? The Americans lost 7,000 men taking the 8km-long island of Iwo Jima in 1945.

Taken together those questions should result in the answer "No", especially as there is another question the Politburo must ask itself - what if we lose? A military defeat would not just be a tragic loss of life, a national humiliation, and an economic disaster, it would probably end the leadership of President Xi. It might even end the leadership of the Communist Party. China has imploded several times; it may do so again, and a military defeat followed by economic sanctions could hasten that. The interior of China remains poor and there is often resentment against the overlords of the eastern seaboard.

And yet, war is not always logical. Emotions, pride, and arrogance can also be factors. Therefore, although the better argument seems to be to bide his time, 68-year-old Xi may not be able to resist trying to cement his place in history. He already sees himself in the pantheon of great leaders. This is a chance to go beyond even Mao, but then again, does he want to risk going down as the man who lost Taiwan?

Is he a gambler? To date he does not show signs of that. But he may be running out of time. By the end of this decade the alliances which are forming against Chinese expansion will be coming to fruition - the AUKUS agreement, for example. China has only gone halfway past Deng Xiaoping's version of the Chinese phrase which he formulated as "Hide your capacities, bide your time". Now it is too powerful to hide its capacities, but despite the temptation to act early it still has the choice to bide its time. That's Xi's choice, and Xi's dilemma.

Tim Marshall is a journalist, broadcaster and author of the bestselling books "Prisoners of Geography" and "The Power of Geography."

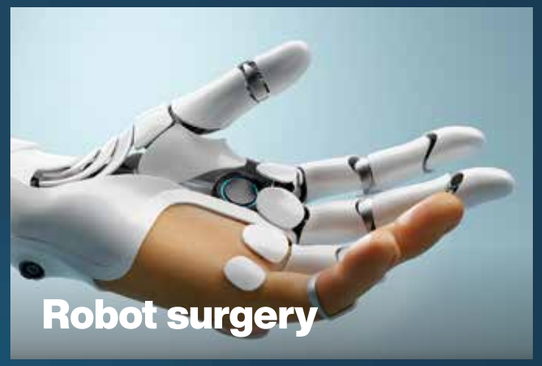
Future of medicine

Shafi Ahmed

The pandemic has turbo-charged developments in medical tech. Here are the most exciting innovations to look out for in 2022.

AI and machine learning

Artificial intelligence and deep machine learning have been heralded as the most important fields of technology for the future of healthcare. Patient data has already been used extensively to train algorithms to predict eye damage from retinal scans, abnormalities from images like X-rays and CT scans, cancerous skin lesions as well as organ dysfunction. Automating diagnostics is extremely useful, and now the technology is being used in the real world. Google's DeepMind has used AI to develop a solution to understand protein folding which could be revolutionary for designing new drugs and understanding disease processes better. Indeed, AI has already been deployed in drug development and clinical trials. AI-powered digital twins - virtual humans designed to accurately represent a real person - could help researchers to define the type of patients that should be included in a clinical trial and those who should be excluded based on certain characteristics, helping to predict outcomes and side effects in real patients. The end result would be trials requiring fewer participants.



Robot surgery

There has been a flurry of activity in the previously closed field of robotic surgery in the last few years. Since 2002, and until very recently, the Da Vinci surgical robot was the only player in town. It has been used in seven million procedures so far and helped cement the use of robots in surgical operations. Robots offer surgeons better visualisation and fine motor control, making complex surgeries more manageable. Now, the robot wars have finally begun with a number of surgical robots entering the market. Cambridge Medical Robotics and its Versius system offers a smaller and more modular device taking up less room in the operation room and offering portability. The question of how small can we go is answered by Medical Micro Instruments with its Symani robot – an advanced system that facilitates microsurgery with wristed micro-instruments designed to improve a surgeon's ability to access and suture small, delicate anatomy.

Connectivity

The world, and in particular healthcare, needs reliable and superfast connectivity to offer accessibility and new models of care. Starlink, an arm of Elon Musk's SpaceX, aims to connect the world with satellites and has already deployed over 1,700, allowing us to think seriously about global health and democratisation of medicine. Download speeds of almost 400Mbps, around 16 times base level broadband speed, are becoming more and more widespread. A more terrestrial solution has been the rapid introduction of 5G across parts of the world with a latency of 0.1ms (the time it takes data to start being transferred following a request) and download speeds of up to 1GB/s. Together with edge computing – computing conducted near a data source to minimise processing in a remote data centre - these advances have led to connected smart ambulances in Italy, enabling the paramedic at the scene to transmit live information from a patient using a mixed-reality device.

Remote medicine

We have seen the rise of telemedicine over the last two years which has enabled a remote medical service to be implemented at scale. During the pandemic, the number of remote consultations rose by around 8000% in the US. Terms like telehealth, telecare and total triage have become commonplace in medical settings because of the necessity of treating patients at home. Care is being moved into the community which is more cost effective and more convenient for patients. The question is: will we still need bricks and mortar in the future? More care will be remote with the use of digital sensors and wearable devices to monitor patients' vital parameters. The Apple watch and AliveCor - which act as electrocardiograms - have been used to monitor atrial fibrillation and have become the first real cases of a wearable device being used routinely in clinical practice. Diabetics are already using digital continuous glucose monitoring systems like Libre, and self-monitoring their condition. They will now have access to the new artificial pancreas that can change glucose levels by infusing insulin automatically. These are the hallmarks of truly personalised care.

Virtual and augmented reality

Both virtual reality and augmented reality are playing an increasingly important role in healthcare. It's looking like virtual reality will be prescribed as a therapy in the near future. In the US, EaseVRx has obtained FDA approval and uses behavioural therapy techniques to reduce chronic pain. The platform consists of a VR headset and a controller, along with a "breathing amplifier" attached to the headset that directs a patient's breath toward the headset's microphone for use in deep breathing exercises. VR is also being used to treat anxiety, PTSD and even as a substitute for an epidural or opioid analgesia during labour. We have even seen a surgical operation being performed using sedation and hypnotherapy in virtual reality. Wearable VR medical tech is also harnessing the technology's potential. The development of haptic suits and gloves – which provide virtual touch feedback to the wearer - will allow rehabilitation for patients with mobility problems. And the range of smart glasses already on the market (with more on the horizon) could persuade us to eventually give up our smartphones for an augmented heads-up display. Doctors are using these glasses for remote training and we may see them being used in the clinic to interrogate patient data. We may even see a leapfrog onto smart contact lenses like those already being developed by Mojo vision.

Shafi Ahmed is an award-winning cancer surgeon working at The Royal London Hospital and co-founder of Medical Realities, a VR education company. He was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2020 for his humanitarian work and global surgical education programmes.

Maggie Pagano

BREAKING UP Big Tech

The crusade to tame the tech giants' far-reaching tendrils is heating up.

In the US they have a new name for the movement sweeping the country, championing the break-up of monopolies whether they be the Big Tech behemoths or the big food corporations which dominate their industries.

This progressive movement is known as "hipster antitrust" and its queen is Lina Khan, a 32-year-old Yale law graduate. Khan first came to prominence a few years ago when she published a paper titled "Amazon's Antitrust Paradox" which argued that the unparalleled power of Silicon Valley's monster tech companies such as Amazon, Google and Facebook showed that the US's antitrust laws had irretrievably broken down and why new regulations were needed to control their dominance.

She went straight for the gullet, claiming that Amazon - which has nearly half of the US e-commerce market - was only able to price products so cheaply because it was able to keep making billions and billions of losses for years at a time, thus crushing its rivals out of the market. Put simply, Amazon's strategy was a clear-cut case of the "winner takes all" business practice.

Khan's paper went viral, bringing her to the attention of many other critics of Silicon Valley's influence. It also brought her to the attention of Democrat politicians - who had been arguing for years that Big Tech should be broken up into Little Tech - and then direct to President Joe Biden.

In June this year Khan was appointed to the chair of the Federal Trade Commission, the government agency responsible for ensuring consumer choice and protection.

It was a remarkable appointment, not only because of her young age, but one which showed that Biden appeared to be serious about the threat to small businesses and consumers which the monopolistic behaviour of Big Tech was having on society and, therefore, on the fabric of democracy.

Khan's rise to power was cheered to the rooftops by some of the country's most vocal anti-trust campaigners such as Matt Stoller, the director of research at the anti-monopoly think tank, the American Economic Liberties Project, and Elizabeth Warren, the Democrat senator, who has also been one of the most outspoken critics of the dangers of monopoly power.

As Stoller said at the time, Khan's elevation was "earth-shattering" while Warren said: "Giant tech companies like Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon deserve the growing scrutiny they are facing and consolidation is choking off competition across American industries."

David Cicilline, a Democratic congressman from Rhode Island and the chair of the House Committee on the Judiciary's Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial, and Administrative Law also hailed her appointment, saying: "She understands profoundly what monopoly power means for workers and for consumers and for innovation."

What Khan - and other critics - have managed to do over the last few years is turn on its head the orthodoxy of the last few decades which has meant that the US courts have basically taken the view that so long as prices were low for customers, then it showed that markets were working.

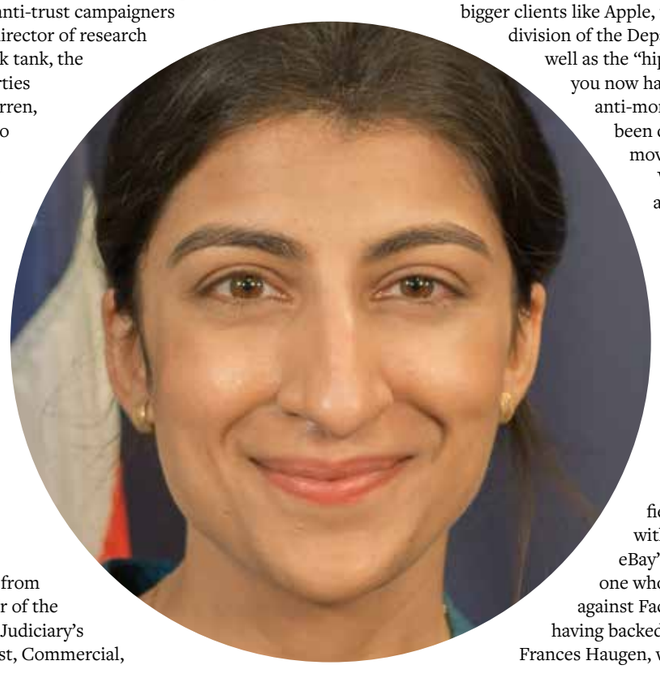
But in her earlier work for the Open Markets Program - part of the New America think tank - in Washington DC, Khan showed the reverse: that the tech companies have used predatory tactics to force smaller rivals out of business, and that under competition laws, this should be illegal. In a recent interview with the New Yorker, Khan said: "There's a growing recognition that the way our economy has been structured has not always been to serve people. Frankly, I think this is a generational issue as well."

Amazon was able to sell electronic books by pricing them at a loss so that it would encourage customers to buy its Kindle e-book readers. It wasn't long before it dominated the e-book market with a more than 70% share.

For example, in the work she did on the book publishing industry which was in crisis, she showed that Amazon was able to sell electronic books by pricing them at a loss so that it would encourage customers to buy its Kindle e-book readers.

It wasn't long before Amazon dominated the e-book market with a more than 70% share, thus forcing out any smaller competitors. Bad for competition, and eventually bad for prices.

Khan is not the only hardliner appointed by Biden. Earlier this year the President brought in Tim Wu, a Columbia Law School professor and an anti-monopoly advocate who has argued that Facebook should be broken up, to head of competition policy at the National Economic Council, a new position and one which advises Biden directly on economic policy. He has also appointed Jonathan Kanter, a former antitrust lawyer whose defence of smaller businesses was annoying his law firm's bigger clients like Apple, to head the antitrust division of the Department of Justice. As well as the "hipster antitrust" activists, you now have another group of anti-monopoly activists who have been dubbed the New Brandeis movement.



Wu, Khan and Kanter are so named after the Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, who at the turn of the 20th century worked on dozens of legal cases under President Theodore Roosevelt to break up the big trusts running the railroads and oil companies such as Standard Oil.

Some of Silicon Valley's fiercest critics come from within Silicon Valley itself. eBay's Phillippe Omidyar is one who is leading the charge against Facebook, most recently having backed the whistleblower, Frances Haugen, who testified to Congress about the ways in which Facebook - where she worked – harms its users.

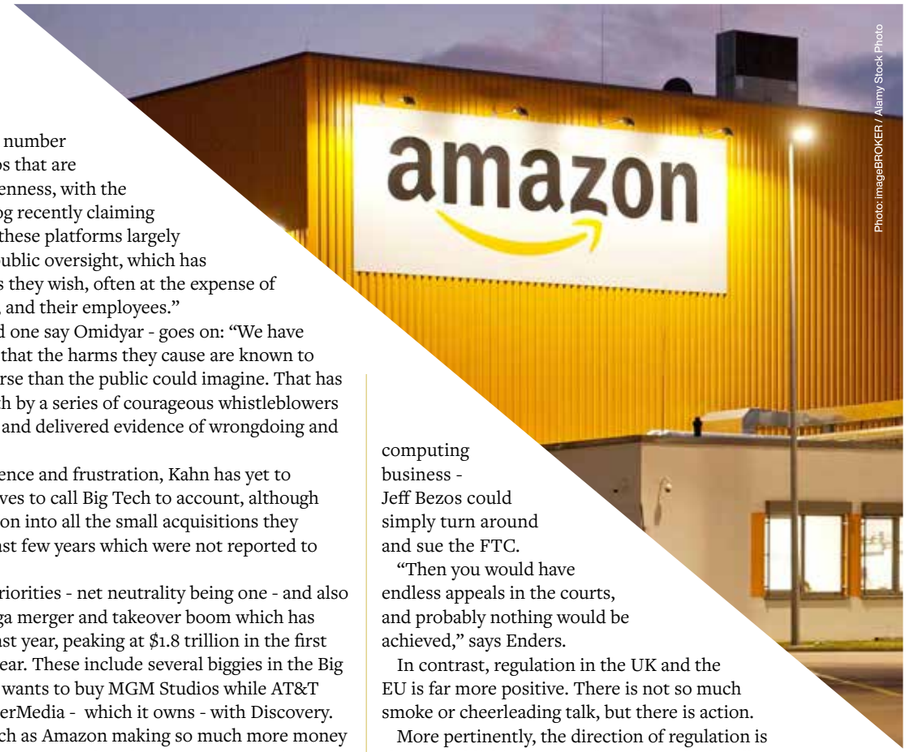


Photo: imageBROKER / Alamy Stock Photo

Omidyar also gives financial support to a number of campaigning groups that are lobbying for more openness, with the Omidyar Network blog recently claiming that: "Until recently, these platforms largely avoided meaningful public oversight, which has allowed them to do as they wish, often at the expense of consumers, start-ups, and their employees."

The blog - or should one say Omidyar - goes on: "We have had a nagging feeling that the harms they cause are known to them - and are far worse than the public could imagine. That has been validated as truth by a series of courageous whistleblowers who have spoken out and delivered evidence of wrongdoing and misconduct."

Despite all the evidence and frustration, Kahn has yet to announce any big moves to call Big Tech to account, although there is an investigation into all the small acquisitions they have made over the last few years which were not reported to government.

But she has other priorities - net neutrality being one - and also the impact of the mega merger and takeover boom which has intensified over the last year, peaking at $1.8 trillion in the first eight months of the year. These include several biggies in the Big Tech space - Amazon wants to buy MGM Studios while AT&T wants to merge WarnerMedia - which it owns - with Discovery.

With companies such as Amazon making so much more money during the pandemic, many fear that the economy emerging post-Covid we will see even more of a consolidation of a few top industries than before with the inevitable squeeze on prices and disappearance of small businesses.

While Kahn, and the new Biden administration, might have the will to tame Big Tech, they may find the levers of control more difficult to handle. One of the problems with cracking down on monopoly power in the US is that there are several layers of regulation, making it difficult for policy makers to come up with new legislation.

With companies such as Amazon making so much more money during the pandemic, many fear that the economy emerging post-Covid we will see even more of a consolidation of a few top industries than before.

For example, the Department of Justice, which is more akin to the UK's Competition and Markets Authority, has the remit to look at monopoly issues and is already scrutinising Google and Facebook for alleged abuses of power.

Over at the FTC, Khan is responsible for consumer protection, and is investigating Amazon and its impact on prices. Then you have the attorney-generals of the different states which, in turn, have the power to take class-action against companies they believe to be abusing competition. Sometimes this ends up with crossed wires with the national agencies.

What this leads to, says Alice Enders, director of research at Enders Analysis, is "a lot of smoke but not much power.

"If there is to be powerful, meaningful regulation, that would require a concerted push by Congress and that's highly unlikely. There is also the likelihood that Biden loses at the next election and nothing will have been achieved."

Enders adds that organisations such as the FTC by themselves will find it tough to take constructive action against Big Tech. For example, if Khan were to recommend the breakup of Amazon – say, by splitting off its most profitable cloud computing business - Jeff Bezos could simply turn around and sue the FTC.

"Then you would have endless appeals in the courts, and probably nothing would be achieved," says Enders.

In contrast, regulation in the UK and the EU is far more positive. There is not so much smoke or cheerleading talk, but there is action.

More pertinently, the direction of regulation is about establishing codes of conduct which will attempt to create better ways of business going forward rather than always catching up. In the UK, for example, the Competition and Markets Authority is deciding whether to force Apple and Google to make it easier for phone users to switch between platforms to ensure that consumers have a greater choice of search engine in their devices. The regulator, which describes their "vice-like grip" and duopoly over the smartphone market as one that stifles innovation, will report back by the summer.

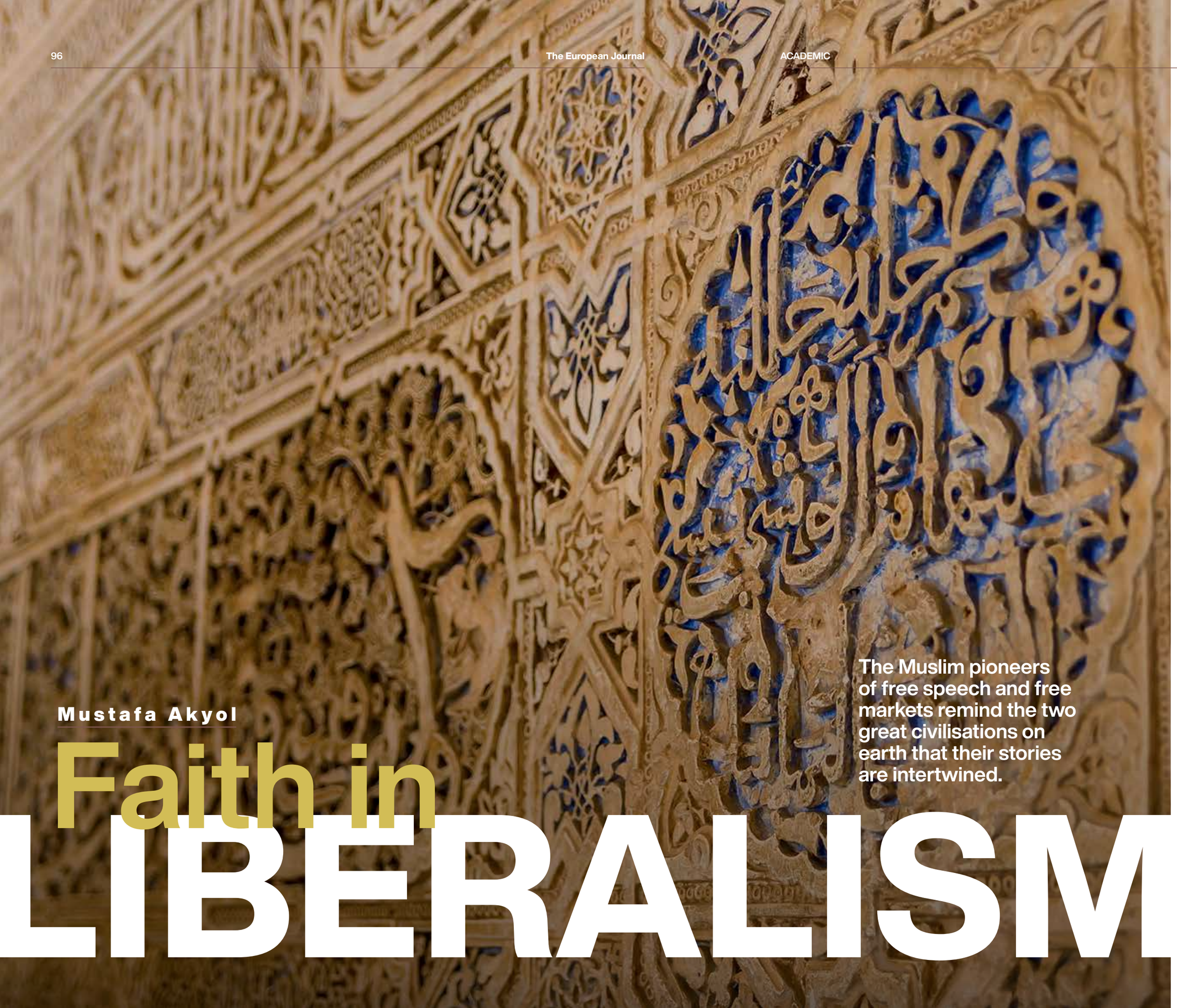
As Enders points out: "The problem has been that most regulation has been ex-post but what we need is ex-ante. By setting high standards of codes of conduct, the Europeans and the Brits are doing a much better job than the Americans at getting concrete regulation through."

After years of debate, the EU is now forging ahead with antitrust plans to rein in Big Tech with the Digital Markets Act and its sister legislation, the Digital Services Act. These two acts clamp down on the use of personal data and would also require social media platforms to do far more policing of user-created content.

Whether legislation will go through as drafted has yet to be seen as Big Tech, with its highly-paid lobbyists, is fighting tooth and nail to water down the new legislation which has yet to go before the European Parliament and the Council for a vote.

To date, it is by far the most vigorous attempt to weaken Big Tech's dominance and influence. Khan will be watching with some envy from across the Atlantic to see how far the Brussels bureaucrats have managed to push their luck in their attempt to tame Big Tech's far-reaching tendrils into every aspect of our lives.

Maggie Pagano is executive editor of Reaction and a Daily Mail columnist.



Mustafa Akyol

Faith in LIBERALISM

The Muslim pioneers of free speech and free markets remind the two great civilisations on earth that their stories are intertwined.

At the dawn of the 21st century, proponents of liberal democracy, including myself, were optimistic about the future. The two great totalitarian evils, fascism and communism, were finally defeated, and the rest of the world seemed inclined towards freedom. There were endless debates on whether Islam was an outlier, as the late Samuel Huntington had controversially claimed, but there were also hopeful signs. Turkey, my home country, appeared to be heading towards the European Union, even at the hands of a religious government, to show us all how Islam and democracy went together.

Today, two decades later, the world seems less rosy. In Russia and China, communism was replaced only by more efficient dictatorships that are smart enough to enlist not just markets but also "traditional values". Dreams for a liberal Turkey failed dramatically, as well as hopes about the Arab revolutions of the early 2010s. Even Western liberal democracies are being challenged by illiberal forces within, ranging from the far-right to the far-left.

I still believe that this is not "the end of liberalism", as some think, but a setback which calls for new efforts. I also believe that the big question over Islam, my faith, is still a pivotal matter, and for two different reasons. First, Muslims who reject liberalism in the name of their religion often create and sustain authoritarian regimes and oppressive societies, making the Muslim world, on average, the least free part of the globe. Second, the ensuing "fear of Islam" leads to illiberal nativism in the West which, just like the McCarthyism of the past, is prone to suffocating freedom while claiming to defend it.

Yet a way forward is still possible, and it partly lies in a better sense of history and understanding that these two great civilisations, Islam and the West, share a lot in common and have enriched each other for centuries.

More specifically — and to many, surprisingly — Western liberalism had some Islamic roots that we can see, in a nutshell, in the stories of two great Arab thinkers, Ibn Rushd from 12th century Muslim Spain, and Ibn Khaldun from 14th century North Africa.

The philosopher of Cordoba

Let's begin with Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), the towering Muslim judge, jurist and philosopher of Cordoba, who is often known in the West as Averroes. The reason why he has this Latinised name is that he had a big impact on late medieval Europe, beginning in the 13th century, when his massive commentaries on Aristotle were translated into Latin and caused an intellectual earthquake within the Catholic Church. Mainly thanks to Ibn Rushd, Western Europe rediscovered the Greek legacy, and created a legitimate space for philosophy, besides religion, as an independent path to truth.

This was not because Ibn Rushd was irreverently secular. Quite the contrary, he was a pious Muslim. But he represented a unique religious rationalism that emerged in the early Islamic civilisation, which considered reason and revelation as equally authoritative divine gifts. And since reason was a faculty of all humans, not just Muslims, Muslims could learn from all cultures and civilisations. "We ought not to be ashamed of appreciating the truth and of acquiring it wherever it comes from," a forerunner of Ibn Rushd, al-Kindi (d. c. 870), put it. "Even if it comes from races distant and nations different from us."

Thanks to this universalist vision, Muslim falasifa, or "philosophers", studied the works of Greek masters such as Aristotle, Plato, Galen and Plotinus, which had been preserved by Eastern Christians, some of whom also helped translate them into Arabic during a massive "translation movement". In the words of an expert, Dimitri Gutas, it was a world-changing event which "demonstrated for the first time in history that scientific and philosophical thought are international, not bound to a specific language or culture".

This movement had begun in Baghdad in the 8th century, but it reached its zenith in Cordoba four centuries later, with the works of Ibn Rushd. He not only wrote the most authoritative commentaries on Aristotle, but also transmitted them to Christian Europe. He pioneered a new approach to knowledge as well.

A precursor to free speech

In the age of Ibn Rushd, as in much of human history, knowledge was neatly divided into religious truth versus heresy, with silencing of the latter seen as fully justified if not absolutely necessary. This included the conviction that heresy should not be given much airtime, even while being condemned. Hence, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), a champion of dogmatic faith in early Islam, reproached his companion, al-Harith al-Muhasibi, for simply writing a refutation against the rationalist theologians — the Muʿtazila — which they both saw as heretics. "The problem with even writing against the heretics," Ibn Hanbal explained, "you first give an account of their false doctrines and afterwards a refutation of them. How can you be sure what men will do?"

Two centuries later, Imam al-Ghazali (d. 1111), a more sophisticated defender of the same orthodoxy, would add a nuance. "Ahmad's observation is justified," he wrote, "but it applies to false doctrine which is not widely and generally known." In his famed work, The Incoherence of the Philosophers, he not only opposed certain doctrines of the Muslim philosophers, but also condemned them for "apostasy", which came with a license to kill, a damning verdict that has delegitimised philosophy in the eyes of many Muslims.

Yet Ibn Rushd, who wrote his own rebuttal to al-Ghazali in his smartly titled The Incoherence of Incoherence, shows a different approach to knowledge. Whenever he opposes something as erroneous, he doesn't shy away from depicting it. When he makes pages-long quotations from al-Ghazali, he doesn't fear that readers will fall for his opponent's arguments. He rather trusts in the power of his own arguments.

What is most remarkable is that this unusual approach to knowledge didn't remain buried in the books of Ibn Rushd and left a trace on the world's intellectual history. I learned this from the late, great Jonathan Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi of Britain and also a prominent public intellectual. In one of his books, Sacks pointed out that Ibn Rushd's spirit of fair and open argument influenced one of his successors, Rabbi Judah Loewe of Prague (d. 1609), a distinguished scholar of Judaism and also a philosopher in his own right. In one of his works, Rabbi Loewe shared a quote from Ibn Rushd: "You should always, when presenting a philosophical argument, cite the views of your opponents. Failure to do so is an implicit acknowledgement of the weakness of your own case." Taking this as an inspiration, the Rabbi went on to argue:

"[Averroës'] words hold true for religion as well... It is not proper that we despise the words [of our adversaries], but rather we must draw them as close as we can.... Even if [their] beliefs are opposed to your own faith and religion, do not say [to your opponent], 'Speak not, close your mouth'. On the contrary, you should, at such times, say, 'Speak up as much as you want, say whatever you wish, and do not say later that had you been able to speak you would have replied further'."

This is the opposite of what some people think, namely, that when you prevent someone from speaking against religion, that strengthens religion. That is not so, because curbing the words of an opponent in religious matters is nothing but the curbing and enfeebling of religion itself.

This was quite a remarkable defence of freedom of speech, which would influence later generations. Rabbi Sacks traced it to the English intellectual John Milton (d. 1674), who famously argued: "Let [Truth] and Falsehood grapple... in a free and open encounter?" Then, two centuries later, there came John Stuart Mill (d. 1873), who made the most rigorous argument for free speech, condemning "the evil of silencing the expression of an opinion".

You should always, when presenting a philosophical argument, cite the views of your opponents. Failure to do so is an implicit acknowledgement of the weakness of your own case.

All this progression showed us, in the words of Rabbi Sacks, how "first a Muslim, then a Jew, then a Christian, then a secular humanist come together to agree on the importance of free speech and making space for dissent."

This progression also suggests that when we discuss the importance of free speech today, Westerners should not think it is an exclusive value of their civilisation. And Muslims, mirroring such nativism, should not dismiss free speech, thinking that it is "theirs".

A precursor to free markets

Ibn Rushd was the last great philosopher of classical Islam, as his passing closed the Aristotelian chapter in Muslim thought. However, about two centuries later, there came another towering Muslim thinker, who stood back from philosophy, which had become a suspicious field, but advanced rationality on what we would call "social sciences" today. His name was Ibn Khaldun.

Born in Tunisia in 1332, Ibn Khaldun observed the social and political dynamics of North Africa, which he expounded in his magnum opus, Muqaddima or "Prolegomena". It was such an extraordinary work of history, sociology and economics that the late British historian Arnold Toynbee would define it as "undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place."

A particularly interesting insight in this book was a critique of what we would today call "big government". Ibn Khaldun explained that as dynasties stay more and more in power, they grow opulent, employ bigger armies and bureaucracies, and impose higher taxes to finance all of these assets. But these taxes, he noted, "weigh heavily upon the subjects and overburden them". As a result, "business falls off, because all hopes (of profit) are destroyed, permitting the dissolution of civilisation and reflecting upon (the status of) the dynasty. This (situation) becomes more and more aggravated, until (the dynasty) disintegrates."

In contrast, when rulers act with "kindness, reverence, humility, respect for the property of other people, and disinclination to appropriate", Ibn Khaldun observed, things got better for all: "When tax assessments and imposts upon the subjects are low, the latter have the energy and desire to do things. Cultural enterprises grow and increase, because the low taxes bring satisfaction. When cultural enterprises grow, the number of individual imposts and assessments mount. In consequence, the tax revenue, which is the sum total of (the individual assessments), increases."

These views of Ibn Khaldun influenced a few Arab scholars who immediately followed him in the 15th century, and a few Ottomans reformers in the 17th century. Yet still, Ibn Khaldun won the fame he deserved only in the 20th century, in part thanks to some Westerners who found his work intriguing. Among them was Arthur Laffer, whose famous "Laffer Curve" about optimal tax rates clearly goes back to Ibn Khaldun, as he himself noted. Another was the World Bank, which hailed Ibn Khaldun as "the first advocate of privatization".

Another admirer of Ibn Khaldun was Ronald Reagan, the 40th president of the United States, who surprised reporters in a press conference in 1981 by saying: "In college, I studied economics, and learned about a man named Ibn Khaldun." Then the American president shared the famous observation of the Arab scholar: "At the beginning of the empire, the tax rates were low and the revenues were high. At the end of the empire, the tax rates were high and the revenues were low."

A dark hour

The ideas of Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldun are much deeper than these snapshots. Also much deeper is the contribution that the Islamic civilisation has made to Western liberalism, as I argue in my new book, Reopening Muslim Minds. Yet it is also true that these proto-liberal ideas within Islamic civilisation often remained as the roads not taken. The widespread rejection of philosophy as an independent source of wisdom besides religion was the key problem, as it amounted to nothing short of intellectual suicide. When there remained no independent ethical wisdom — which Ibn Rushd had wisely defined as sunan ghayr maktuba, or "unwritten laws" of humanity, akin to natural law — there remained no obstacle to religious problems such as blind literalism and violent fanaticism. And when there remained no curiosity about the world beyond Islam, the latter inevitably stagnated.

One of the rare conservatives who realises and admits this problem, the prominent American Islamic scholar Hamza Yusuf, defines it as "the divorce between Athena and Medina". He adds that it "explains much of what went wrong with Muslim civilisation".

Yet civilisations can change and evolve. And they often begin to do that when they are at their darkest moments. Such was the state of Christendom back in the 17th century, when horrific religious wars and persecutions finally gave rise to ideas of freedom, toleration and limited government — the key ideas, so to speak, of classical liberalism.

The great Islamic civilisation has lately been going through such a dark moment, with oppressive regimes, militant groups, myopic clerics, and bigoted ideologues. Meanwhile, calls and campaigns for human rights and liberal regimes often fall on deaf ears, because they seem too associated with the West, whose colonial history is still too fresh.

And that is why the Muslim pioneers of Western liberalism matter. They remind the two great civilisations on earth that their stories are quite intertwined. They also call on Western societies to be humbler, while inviting Muslim societies to be more open-minded.

First a Muslim, then a Jew, then a Christian, then a secular humanist come together to agree on the importance of free speech and making space for dissent.

Mustafa Akyol is a senior fellow on Islam and modernity at the Cato Institute, and the author of "Reopening Muslim Minds: A Return to Reason, Freedom, and Tolerance."

Juan Soto

The Economic ENLIGHTENMENT

The intellectual roots of modern liberalism can be traced back to the Hispanic scholastics.

Modern liberalism is often said to have emerged from the Scottish Enlightenment. However, it has some genealogical debts that must be known and put into perspective. Among other forefathers of the intellectual lineage of this political philosophy, the outstanding legacy of the Hispanic scholastics of the School of Salamanca stands out, in particular when it comes to classical liberal economics.

We live in a point in history in which affirming moral superiority is immediately branded intolerant or bigoted, at least if such claims come from the wrong messenger. If it is put forward by, for instance, leftism or wokeism it is aligned with political correctness and it is thus seen as acceptable and worthy of praise.

The same argument for moral superiority or, on the contrary, moral relativism, affects civilisations like a virus that spreads through every inch of a living organism. This is the era of equating civilisations as if they were all the same, morally speaking. However, we must be adamant in affirming that, whereas all civilisations have some good aspects - some more than others - not all civilisations are the same, certainly not instrumentally speaking, but neither in a normative way. They all have good things, but there are some that are superior to others.

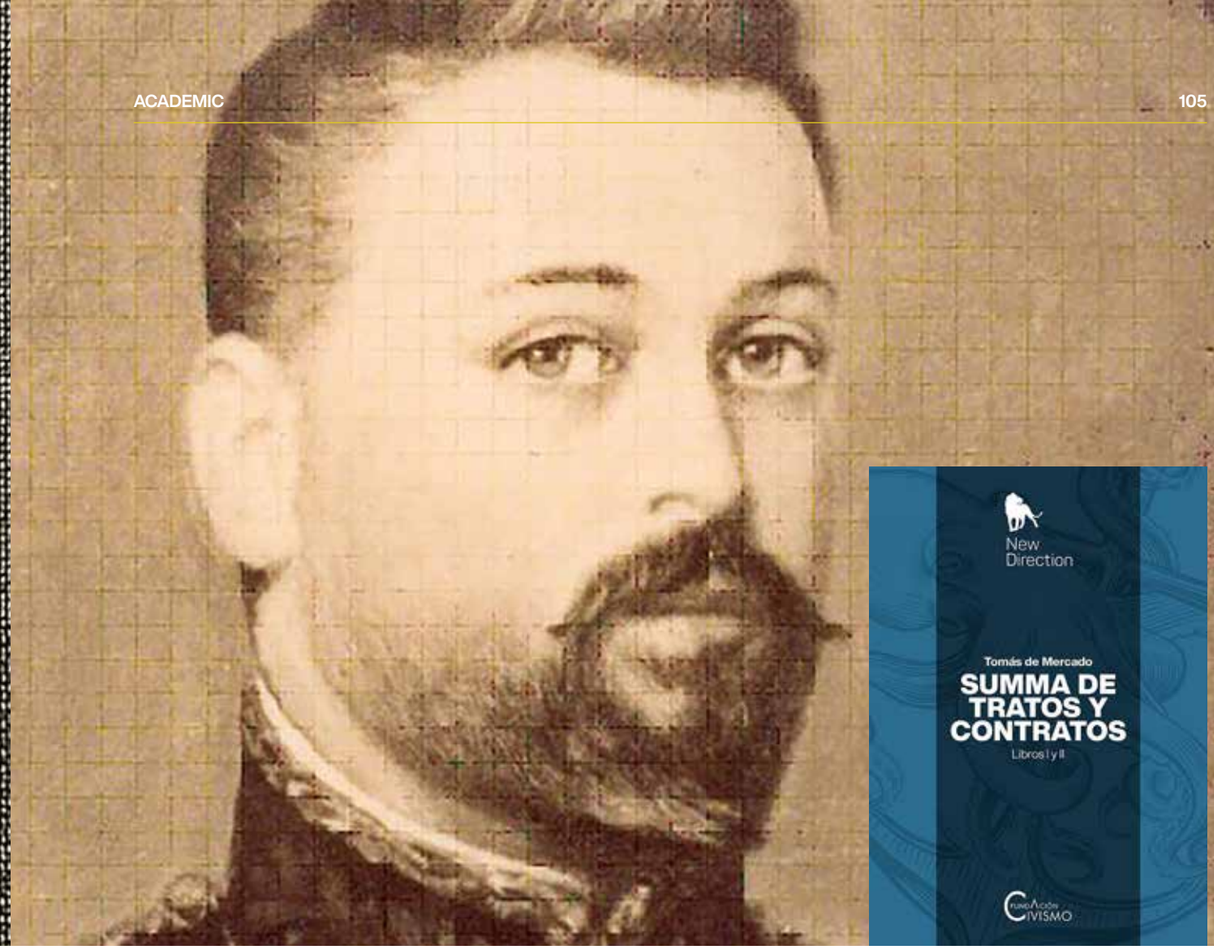
And so I believe Western civilisation to be superior, both morally and instrumentally, to any other civilisation the world has ever seen. But what is this claim based on? In a nutshell, because it has brought about the greatest wealth creation and poverty reduction and because it has achieved the greatest recognition and protection of rights and liberties in history. All other civilisations do not come even close to the achievements of this one. For that reason, it ought to be protected against external threats and internal weaknesses. However, that leads us to wonder what it is that is worth protecting. What does this Western civilisation consist of? The overwhelming majority of the literature - both academic and prosaic - accepts and pushes forward that the masterpiece recipe is essentially made by three main ingredients; Greek philosophy, Roman law and Christian ethics. That is particularly the case in Europe.

How these three came together and became compatible and beyond - as each seemed to strengthen and complete the other two - is a complicated story. As a matter of fact, history provides us with many examples of happy coincidences and unexpected bridges from one to another. One particularly interesting example is the crucial role some Muslim thinkers played during the Middle Ages in rediscovering the Greek legacy. (Mustafa Akyol has provided a brilliant account of the big impact Muslim thinkers, such as Ibn Rushd, had on late medieval Europe, beginning in the 13th century, when massive commentaries on Aristotle were translated into Latin and caused an intellectual earthquake throughout Christendom.)

Western civilisation is a distinct and unique set of values and ideas that crystalised under the Christian faith.

However, the coronation of the idea of liberty and the consecration of reason as the true foundation for human flourishing are not the result of any civilisational melting pot that some believe can be found in Europe and the West as a whole. This is something that, I would argue, comes in very handy when one wants to establish multiculturalism as the essence of the West. But that is not the case. Quite the contrary, and despite the unexpected bridges between civilisations mentioned before, Western civilisation is a distinct and unique set of values and ideas that crystalised under the Christian faith. Indeed, some argue that the Enlightenment and, a couple of centuries later, liberalism were two revolutionary earthquakes that happened despite Christianity's best attempt to suppress them. I, on the other hand, affirm that these were not born in spite of Christianity but because of it.

And the main reason to hold such a position is that the intellectual roots of liberalism and, in particular, economic liberalism, can be traced back to the Spanish scholastics who formed what is often referred to as the School of Salamanca. During the mid-16th century through to the 17th century, these theologians provided a corpus of political, legal and economic commentaries through a merging of Thomist theology and Humanist philosophy, to create a body of natural, international and economic law. Among many other notable scholars, the forebears of this school of thought were Francisco de Vitoria, Francisco Suárez, Domingo de Soto, Martín de Azpilcueta, Luis de Molina and Tomás de Mercado. Their treatises provided not only theoretical dissertations but also practical advice in those hectic times, filled with discoveries and moral and political crossroads, in particular those brought about by the discovery and conquest of the New World.



For instance, during the 16th century inflation caused mainly by the overflow of precious metals from the Americas, they laid down the foundations for commercial and monetary good practices and focused on practical notions of the public good. Martín de Azpilcueta's *Comentario Resolutorio de cambios* (1556) is considered to be the starting point of the quantity theory of money, a decade before Bodin and two centuries before Hume's critique of mercantilism. A similar line was followed by other prominent members of the Salamanca School such as Tomás de Mercado in his *Summa de tratos y contratos* (1571).

They also critiqued Duns Scotus's conception of the just price which, according to him, should consist of the cost of production plus the merchant's utility. Luis de Molina, in his *Teoría del justo precio* (1593), holds that the just price comes from societal estimation, defending that both buyers and sellers act with purpose and that both benefit from exchange, and warned against monopolies. Azpilcueta had argued similarly, only subordinating the price determined by supply and demand to that which emanated from authority.

It is clear that classical liberal economics emanates to a great extent from, and owes a great debt to, the works of the School of Salamanca.

The uninterrupted intellectual lineage from the Scholastics to the Scottish Enlightenment and then on to the Austrian School of Economics is also defended by some of the most notable representatives of the latter. In his thesis and Chapter 4 (The Late Spanish Scholastics) of his monumental *Austrian Perspective on the History of Economic Thought,* Professor Murray N. Rothbard showed that the pre-history of the Austrian School ought to be sought not in Scotland but in the Spanish Golden Century. Dutch scholar Hugo Grotius quoted extensively Leonardo Lessio, who had been a pupil of Francisco Suárez. Grotius remains a recognised authority on national and international law, but the seed of the *ius gentium* belongs to the Hispanic discussion around the rights of the peoples in the Americas. Hayek shared Rothbard's position, especially after meeting Bruno Leoni, who persuaded him that the roots of classical economic liberalism were of Catholic origins and not Protestant, thus arguing against no less than Max Weber's thesis on the origins of capitalism, masterfully depicted in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.*

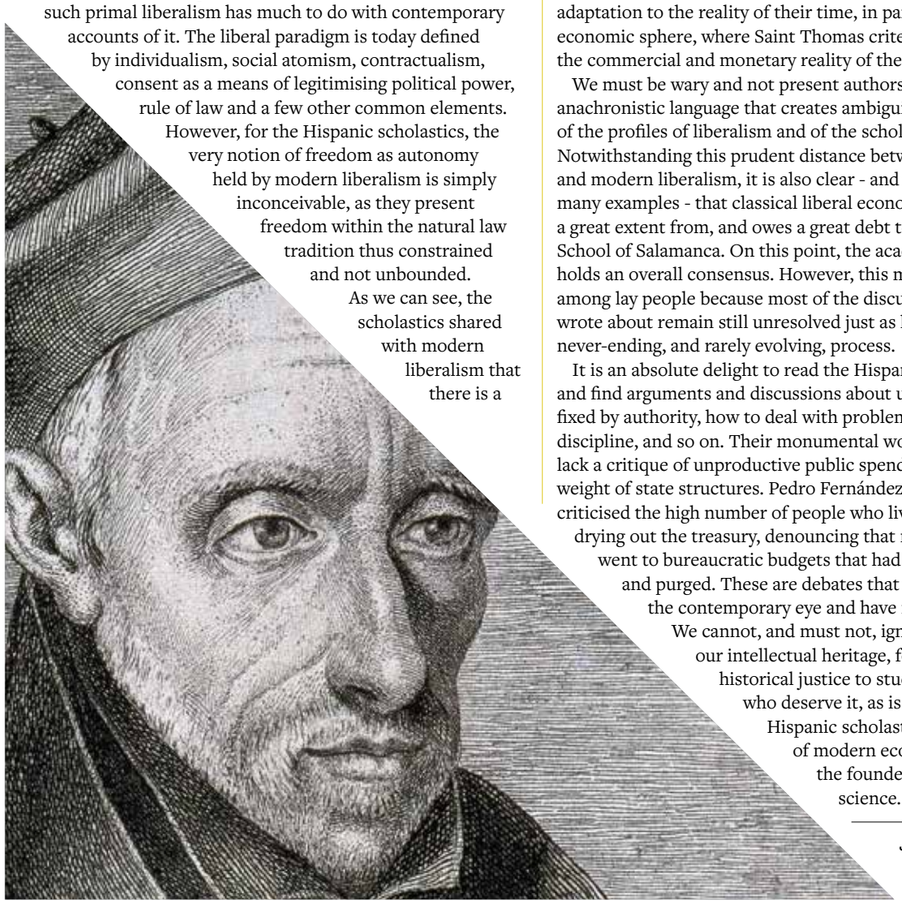
It is indeed remarkable and surprisingly not yet very well known that these Dominicans or Jesuits were able to articulate the subjectivist and dynamic tradition on which, 250 years later, Carl Menger and his followers of the Austrian School would erect modern economic liberalism. As a matter of fact, one could even argue that they did not just coin economic liberalism but economics as a science, as Schumpeter himself affirmed.

The prolific work of the Hispanic scholastics was not limited to economics, but various other topics that were paramount at their time. One example is the notion of freedom, as explored by Jesuit Luis de Molina in his *Concordia,* where he elaborates on Catholicism and free will in contrast to Lutheranism and Manichaeism.

Their work was also extensive on political authority. Whereas Dominicans focused on economics and ethics, Jesuits helped bridge the transition between early Scholasticism and natural philosophy. For instance, Francisco Suarez claimed that political authority rests on human consent rather than divine right,

arguing that government is of a contractual nature, formed by a consensus of free willed individuals. In fact, Suarez, a prominent Spanish banker and a leading figure of the Spanish economic miracle recalled in some of his essays that it is generally acknowledged that the Puritan clergyman, Thomas Hooker, one of the founders of the State of Connecticut, decisively influenced the content of the founding texts. And he referred to the hypothesis - relatively extended - that the source would be no other than Francisco Suárez. In 1613, he published *Defensio fidei catholicae,* which was ordered to be burned by absolutist kings such as James I in England or Louis XIII in France. However, Hooker would have known the work while studying at Cambridge years before emigrating to Holland and then moving to Massachusetts. As a result, the ideas that Hooker later expressed in relation to civil society and political authority coincided with those of Francisco Suárez, who affirmed that power was not derived from the king but from God, who assigned that power to the people. Only through an act of free will do they transfer it to those who have to exercise it.

We must be cautious, however, to identify this intellectual legacy with categories or labels that vastly misrepresent the former and lead to confusion. In that spirit, when I call for the identification of some of the seeds of the liberal tradition in the works of the Hispanic scholastics, I also contend that such primal liberalism has much to do with contemporary accounts of it. The liberal paradigm is today defined by individualism, social atomism, contractualism, consent as a means of legitimising political power, rule of law and a few other common elements. However, for the Hispanic scholastics, the very notion of freedom as autonomy held by modern liberalism is simply inconceivable, as they present freedom within the natural law tradition thus constrained and not unbounded. As we can see, the scholastics shared with modern liberalism that there is a universal reason with a moral content, which is present in each person and allows him to be fully free and, in turn, to decide based on his own interests while respecting other people's rights. However, contrary to today's liberalism, the scholastics affirmed that natural law is universal and is accessible to all and thus can be known by all. That is, even if there was no written law that contained it, we should respect it. As we can see, this differs greatly from today's positivist position towards the law and how profoundly relativistic liberalism has become in regard to moral issues.



Regarding economics, the School of Salamanca's doctrines were also different from today's capitalist paradigms. For the former, the person must be the centre of all economic activity since it is at their service and not the other way around, as seems to be the system today. As for societal dynamics, for the scholastics the importance of the community - especially the family - was paramount, unlike modern liberalism's atomising design that results in free-floating individuals, not only morally (at least, that is the aspiration) but also in terms of social and family ties.

Their monumental work does not even lack a critique of unproductive public spending and the excessive weight of state structures.

Most of these differences come from the fact that the scholastics were Thomists and, therefore, the Aristotelian tradition had a special relevance, since Aquinas relied heavily on this author to defend his ideas. However, they made a more adequate adaptation to the reality of their time, in particular, in the economic sphere, where Saint Thomas criteria had no place in the commercial and monetary reality of the 16th century.

We must be wary and not present authors and notions with an anachronistic language that creates ambiguity and indeterminacy of the profiles of liberalism and of the scholastics themselves. Notwithstanding this prudent distance between the scholastics and modern liberalism, it is also clear - and we have reviewed many examples - that classical liberal economics emanates to a great extent from, and owes a great debt to, the works of the School of Salamanca. On this point, the academic literature holds an overall consensus. However, this must also be known among lay people because most of the discussions they held and wrote about remain still unresolved just as human nature is a never-ending, and rarely evolving, process.

It is an absolute delight to read the Hispanic scholastics and find arguments and discussions about usury, prices being fixed by authority, how to deal with problems of scarcity, fiscal discipline, and so on. Their monumental work does not even lack a critique of unproductive public spending and the excessive weight of state structures. Pedro Fernández de Navarrete criticised the high number of people who lived off the state, drying out the treasury, denouncing that much of the spending went to bureaucratic budgets that had to be cleaned up and purged. These are debates that are not foreign to the contemporary eye and have much to offer us. We cannot, and must not, ignore this treasure of our intellectual heritage, for it is a matter of historical justice to study and praise those who deserve it, as is the case with the Hispanic scholastics, the forefathers of modern economic liberalism and the founders of economics as a science.

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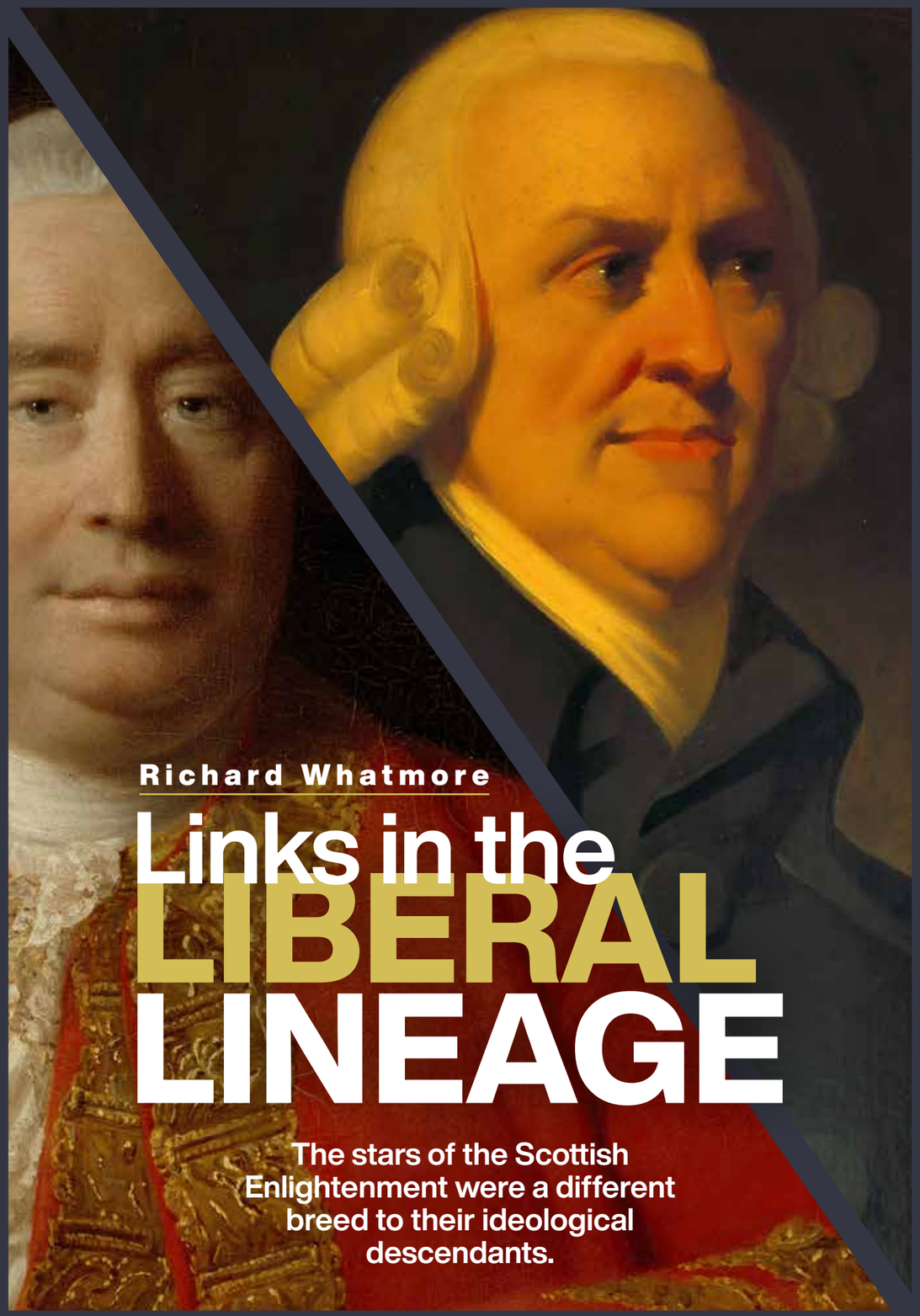

Richard Whatmore

Links in the LIBERAL LINEAGE

The stars of the Scottish Enlightenment were a different breed to their ideological descendants.

Liberalism used to be different. This becomes clear when we contrast the meaning today with the distinctive concerns of the first generation of liberals. There are messages for present politics if we recapture the voices of those involved.

Many of us, at some point in time, search for origin stories depicting lineages. The same goes for ideologies. A case has frequently been made that the first liberals could be found during the Enlightenment era, among Lockeans, Founding Fathers and Scottish political economists. There were unquestionably links between the first figures who called themselves liberals and the Scots. Benjamin Constant was educated at Edinburgh in the 1780s and remained a friend to liberal Whigs, such as James Mackintosh. Jean-Charles-Léonard Simonde de Sismondi, who, like Constant, was a member of Madame de Staël's circle that gathered at Coppet on Lake Geneva in the early years of the 19th century, also studied Scottish authors intensively, especially David Hume and Adam Smith.

What is wrong then with liberal lineages from the Enlightenment to the present? Surely they were all advocates of freedom and toleration, concerned with defending civil liberties and some form of political liberty in addition to being advocates of free markets? When you scrutinise the meaning of each of these terms you find division. More significantly, the worldview of the 18th century was entirely different to that of the 19th, the time when the words "liberal" and "liberalism" began to be used in politics to identify actors of a particular persuasion. Recognising the level of discontinuity between the centuries necessitates reconstructing Hume's and Smith's concerns and comparing them to those of Constant, de Staël and Sismondi. The distinctiveness of the early 19th century has a lot to do with the French Revolution, but not for the reasons usually given.

Hume and Smith were certain that during their lives the grand aspiration of creating governments of laws rather than men had become a pipe-dream.

Eighteenth-century Scotland saw a grand political experiment, one of the most ambitious in modern history. A bankrupt and weak state, economically and militarily, gave up its parliament in return for union with rapidly commercialising England/Wales. Scots worried after 1707 that their larger neighbour would take their wealth, ruin their culture, diminish their laws and challenge their religious establishment. The latter fact is of fundamental importance. Scotland had suffered from religious warfare throughout the 17th century. In the 18th century, Jacobite rebellions were launched against the new British Hanoverian dynasty in 1716 and 1745. Jacobite Catholicism and Stuart-supporting Anglican Toryism threatened to renew the wars of religion in Scotland, threatening the collapse of the presbyterian Church of Scotland first and the British state thereafter.

Scottish Enlightenment writers and philosophers like Hume and Smith were a post-war generation that recalled the sufferings of families, neighbours and communities. Hume and Smith were concerned about the re-emergence of superstition, fanaticism and enthusiasm. Religious belief could turn everything upside down when communities followed what contemporaries called a "projector", a figure who promised a transformed future easily achievable by following the said messiah, often someone who claimed that the word of God was flowing through them.

Fanatic enthusiasts were not exclusively to be found among the godly. The excessive love of money and luxury could turn enthusiastic, weakening social bonds and reducing the industry necessary to keep a nation's products competitive. Equally, the fanatic love of power inspired individuals to turn themselves into Caesars, ruling communities for their own benefit rather than that of the whole. Hume and Smith were certain that during their lives the grand aspiration of creating governments of laws rather than men had become a pipe-dream. Rather, contemporary politics, especially in Britain, were characterised by selfishness and corruption. George III, dominating the House of Commons by giving sinecures and honours to his servants, was turning tyrant. British merchants had become addicted to the wealth extracted by force through exploiting the peoples of India and Ireland. The riches of the nabobs were so enormous that they could bribe politicians to pass legislation for their own profit.

Smith famously called the British Empire a mercantile system in which a corrupt class of businessmen and legislators made money at the expense of the public good. Neither Hume nor Smith believed that the British constitution would last because Britain's rulers were addicted to wars for empire. Large markets were the key to commercial success and helped to generate revenues to cover the costs of expensive military technology. Few 18th century commentators, including Montesquieu or Voltaire, expected Britain to survive the century. Britain was Carthage; France looked much more like Rome. Britain's mercantile system was so monstrous that it would fall by bankruptcy, civil war or defeat by a rival. Britain's version of commercial society was itself the product of fanaticism, underpinned by religious enthusiasms translated into everyday politics.

There was a further form of fanaticism that Hume and Smith worried about. The excessive love of liberty could easily turn fanatic. This too, they felt, occurred after the end of the Seven Years' War. When the people turned enthusiasts for liberty, mob rule might follow, projectors and demagogues would hold sway and terror was likely to lie ahead. Although they were dead by the time it occurred, there was nothing surprising in the French Revolution. The shock that depressed Burke before he died was that a fanatic people in arms should not be so good at warfare as the French in the mid-1790s. When Bonaparte emerged to restore order, it signified the return of normal politics because republican populism always descended into civil war and ended with a Caesar.

The first liberals were worried by the possibility of fanatic populists returning in the name of sacred liberty. They were more concerned by two facts that Hume and Smith had rejected out of hand but which had nevertheless come to pass. The first was that Britain had become a model state for Europeans because it had been victorious in the Napoleonic Wars; the second was that the mercantile system was the reason for Britain's success. Liberals such as de Staël, Constant and Sismondi were obsessed with strategies and tactics that would prevent the lust for markets, war and empire from turning fanatic.

Hume and Smith did not think this to be compatible with the Britain's economy and society. The liberals faced a different world because the Enlightenment of the Scots had failed and ended. A new era had begun in which excess, crisis and wild opinion were the norm. Constant tried to find solutions in the history of religion; his 19th century saw 17th century passions return in secular guise.

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Julian Jessop

Reviving the AUSTRIAN SCHOOL

The state's huge post-Covid expansion means the country's perspective has rarely been more valuable.

The Austrian School of economics emerged in the late 19th century and has been in and (mostly) out of fashion ever since. Its early proponents were aristocratic technocrats, who probably would have floundered on Twitter, while many later had to flee their home country to escape the Nazis. One rival once joked that the main reason the Austrian economy was so successful in the 1950s and 1960s was that so many of its economists had left for the United States.

The School's emphasis on the economic benefits to be gained from individual choices and free markets is certainly out of tune with the collectivist and interventionist ideas that are far trendier today. But the issues raised by the huge expansion of the state in the wake of the Covid pandemic means the Austrian perspective has rarely been more important – and valuable.

A little history first. The Austrian School can be traced back to the theories of Carl Menger, a professor of political economy at the University of Vienna from 1873 to 1903. Originally, the focus of the School was on the development of a theory of value, based on the subjective benefit that each individual consumer expects to gain from a good or service.

This contrasted with the more classical view that a good or service has some objective or intrinsic value, usually derived from the costs of the inputs used to make it. In the case of the Marxist school, this value largely comes from the labour required.

Menger and his colleagues also disagreed with the supporters of the German Historical School, who, as the name suggests, favoured a more historical and empirical approach.

Menger's followers, particularly Friedrich von Wieser and Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, developed the subjective theory of value to explain the role played by costs and prices in the allocation of resources, and the role of the time value of money in determining the rate of interest.

These were all important contributions to economic theory, but, frankly, rather dry. It was the work of two later giants, Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich von Hayek, that brought the ideas of the Austrian School to a wider audience.

Mises is arguably best known for his early critique, in the 1920s, of socialist economic models that used state planning and pseudo-democratic processes to allocate scarce resources, rather than relying on market forces.

Hayek developed this into a general critique of government intervention in the economy. His ideas were the intellectual inspiration for the founding, in 1955, of the Institute of Economic Affairs, the UK's leading free-market thinktank. Hayek went on to win the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1974 for his work on monetary theory and on the role of the price mechanism.

The Austrian approach is often allied with a healthy scepticism about econometrics and forecasting. In particular, Austrians are usually wary of claims that the workings of the economy can be broken down into a few mathematical equations, which can then be handy tools for state planners.

For Austrians, sound theoretical analysis is more useful than empirical modelling. Put another way, Austrian economists like to think problems through, using deductive reasoning from first principles, rather than stating "the model says this," or "history says that." This intellectually rigorous approach may not appeal to everyone.

The Great Depression and the expansion of the state during the Second World War led many macroeconomists to put more faith in the benefits of "big government" and in the ideas of other thinkers, notably John Maynard Keynes.

Over time, the teaching of microeconomics has also become dominated by mathematical models – the Austrian School has been squeezed from both directions.

This has often brought Austrian thinkers into conflict with mainstream Keynesians, who see a far more active role for state intervention and government spending in managing the economy and business cycles. Instead, followers of the Austrian School would argue that booms and busts are usually caused by poor government policies.

These arguments resurfaced after the US housing market crash of 2007 and the global financial crisis that followed. Many mainstream economists viewed the latter as a failure of regulation: if only the state had intervened earlier and further, the crisis could have been avoided.

The Austrian perspective is very different. It argues that most booms are fuelled by excessive expansion of the money supply – something still largely controlled by the government and central banks.

The US housing crisis was, they argue, therefore caused by too much cheap money, not by a lack of regulation, and the subsequent bust was the inevitable consequence of the bursting of a bubble. If the housing market had been regulated differently, the problem would simply have popped up somewhere else.

Austrian thinkers are pushing back, arguing that individual choices and free markets are still the best way to allocate resources.

These issues have come to the fore again in the wake of the Covid pandemic. The state had to step in to support businesses and jobs when large parts of the economy were locked down, but many advocates of "big government" have seen this as a template for increased intervention in more normal times as well. Austrian thinkers, and many others, are pushing back against this, arguing that individual choices and free markets are still the best way to allocate resources.

The recent surge in global inflation is a new battleground too. Many commentators see this pick up as a transitory phenomenon, as demand rebounds while supply is still constrained by the pandemic. But Austrians, again with others, put more emphasis on the rapid expansion of the money supply, as central banks around the world have created more cash to buy government bonds.

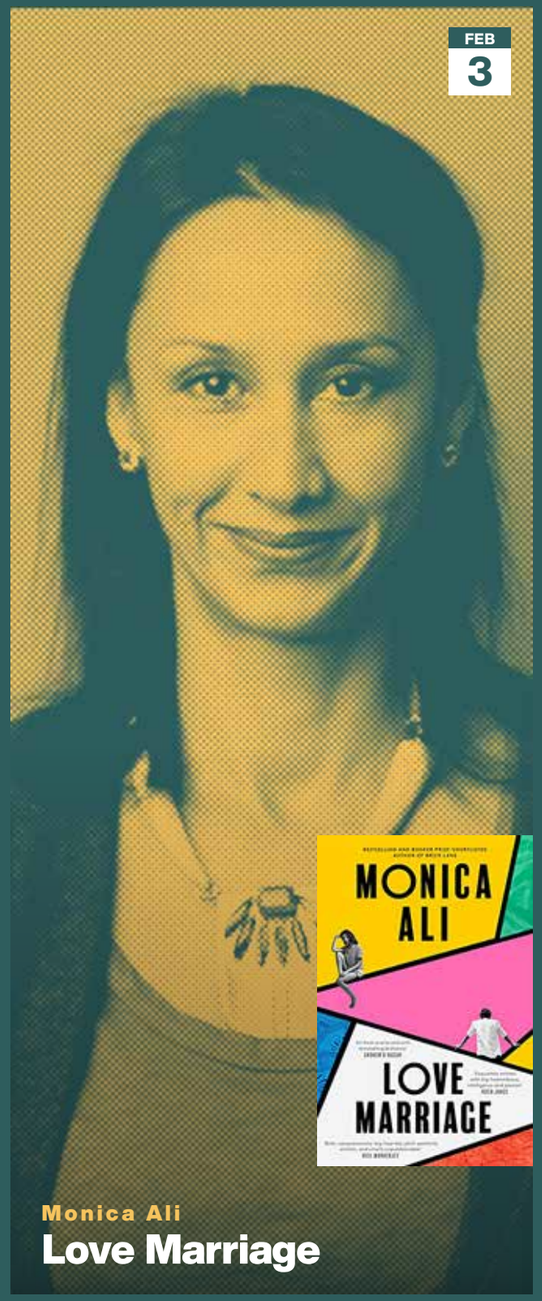
In short, many believe that more state intervention and "big government" is now the way ahead, financed, if necessary, by money printing. The lesson taught by the Austrian School is that this will lead to worse economic outcomes, including more waste and higher inflation, than if markets are allowed to work properly again.

Julian Jessop is an independent economist and a Fellow at the Institute of Economic Affairs.

Emma Gannon

(Dis)connected: How to Stay Human in an Online World

For better or for worse, our world is more digital than ever and large chunks of our lives are lived online and at the mercy of the algorithm. With this new age comes a constant need to "scale" or "optimise" and a dangerous disconnect from what it means to be human. That's why Emma Gannon, bestselling author, speaker, novelist and host of the careers podcast, Ctrl Alt Delete, has written *(Dis)connected*, a manifesto of sorts on how to enjoy the internet without becoming trapped in it. "This book is for everyone," Gannon writes. "It's about being more human, and more ourselves, in a world that seems to be interrupting and distracting us from that path constantly."



Monica Ali

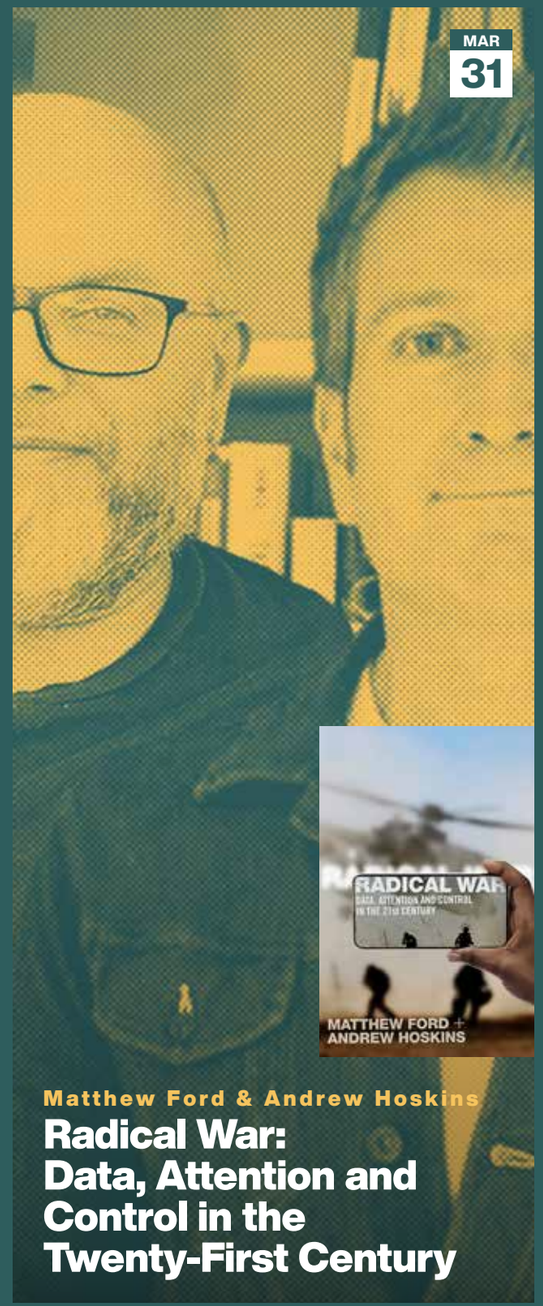
Love Marriage

Lovers of *Brick Lane* will be pleased to hear that Monica Ali has written her first novel in a decade. *Love Marriage* is the heart-breaking story of a young couple from different cultures and their attempt to unite their two families through marriage. As the wedding draws nearer, Yasmin faces the difficult task of asking herself what she wants in a relationship and what a "love marriage" really means. This journey of self-discovery transforms a light-hearted social comedy into a gripping story of two individuals and two cultures and a tale of love in modern-day Britain.

Fatima Dass

The Last One

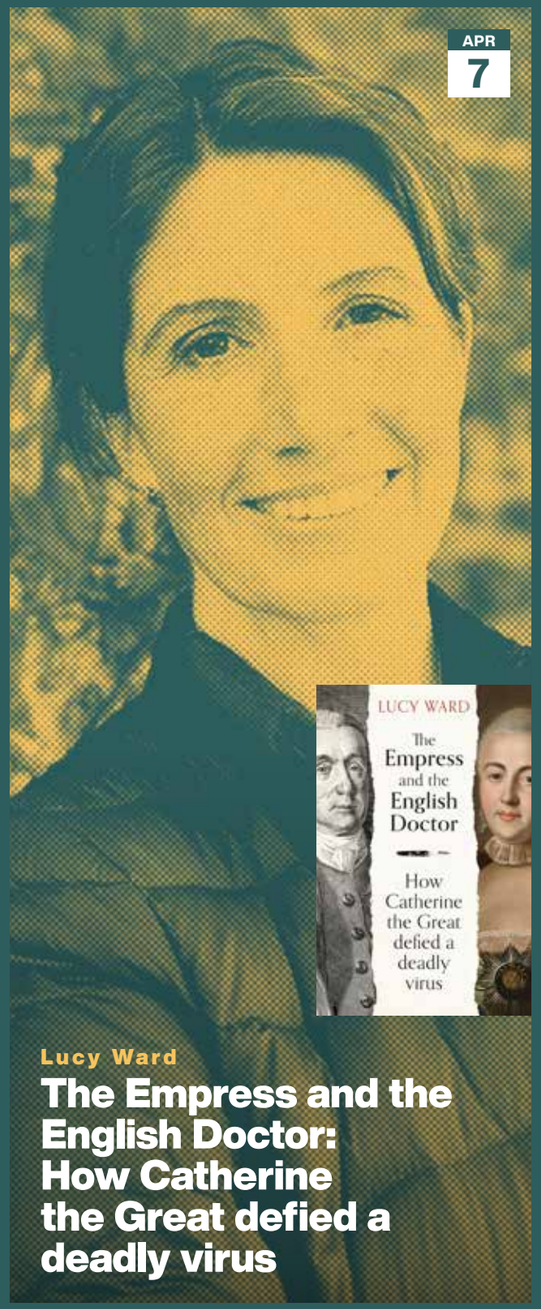
The daughter of Algerian parents living in the majority-Muslim area of Clichy-sous-Bois in France, Fatima Dass grows up to think love and sexuality are taboo and signs of affection are to be avoided. As a young student, she escapes to Paris on public transport, sometimes spending more than three hours a day in the city, observing Parisian manners from afar. But as she grows older and embarks on a four-year journey of therapy, Fatima begins to grapple with her attraction to women and question how her sexuality fits into her religion. Then, she meets Nina and whilst she is not quite sure what she needs, she realises that something crucial has been missing in her life. Drawn from the author's experiences growing up near Paris, this novel explores one woman's struggle to accept her conflicting identities.



Matthew Ford & Andrew Hoskins

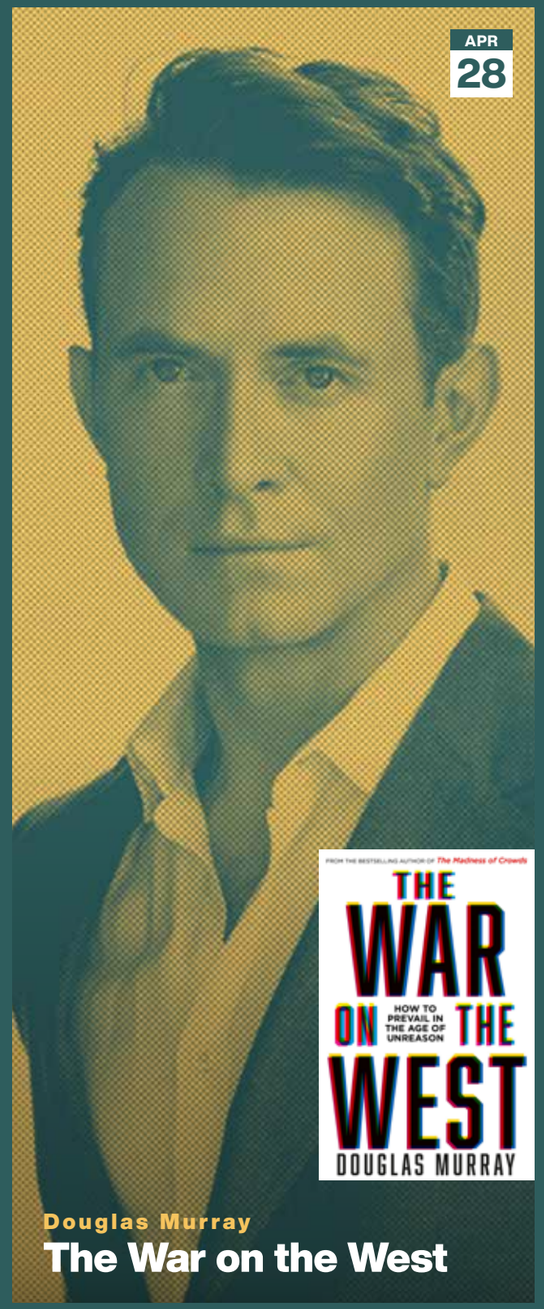
Radical War: Data, Attention and Control in the Twenty-First Century

Written by Matthew Ford, Senior Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Sussex, and Andrew Hoskins, Professor of Global Security at the University of Glasgow, this book examines the way the digital world has changed our experience of war. Smart devices, apps, archives and algorithms have polarised us all into categories of victim and perpetrator, making everyone a participant. Ford and Hoskins explore how war is legitimised, planned, fought, experienced, remembered and forgotten in our "dystopian new ecology of war".

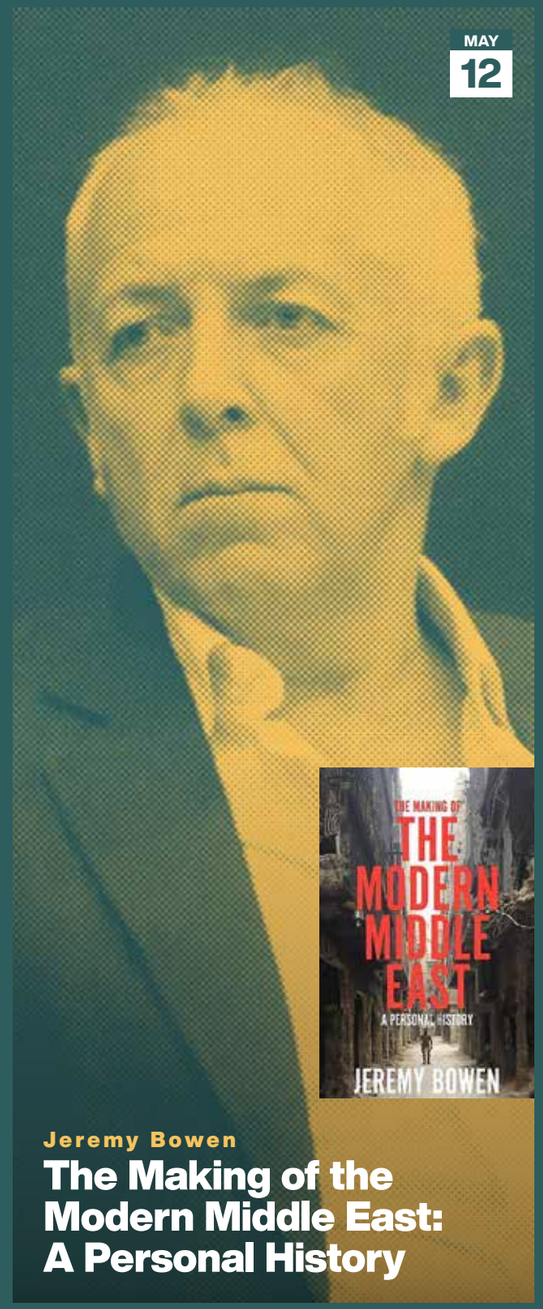


In this timely history book, Lucy Ward revisits the deadly smallpox epidemic in the 18th century. The virus killed millions of people across the world until a mysterious method, inoculation, was presented as a miracle - protecting the inoculated from smallpox for life. The problem, however, was the same faced today, how to convince people to undergo this small needle prick? The empress's solution was to summon a Quaker doctor, Thomas Dimsdale from Hertfordshire, to St Petersburg and undergo inoculation herself to set an example. This true story of female leadership and science over superstition has never been more relevant.

Maria Ressa was co-recipient of the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize for her work tracking disinformation networks seeded by the government in her native Philippines. Her courageous dedication to holding the powerful to account has landed her in trouble with President Duterte and she faces a potential 100+ years behind bars. *How to Stand Up to a Dictator* is Ressa's story of a life-threatening investigation into the invisible digital war that has affected everything from Duterte's drug wars to America's Capitol Hill, Brexit, Russian and Chinese cyber-warfare, Facebook and Silicon Valley.



Bestselling political writer Douglas Murray thinks it is high time anti-Western revisionists had their ideologies revised back. It has become, he argues, celebrated to discuss the flaws and crimes of Western culture but a hate crime to celebrate them. In *The War on the West*, Murray argues that we are living through an attack on reason, democracy, science and progression with discourse straying from its original goal of justice and equality in Europe and America. A political title to look out for in 2022, Murray deconstructs inconsistent arguments and activism, and calls for the defence of enlightenment views.



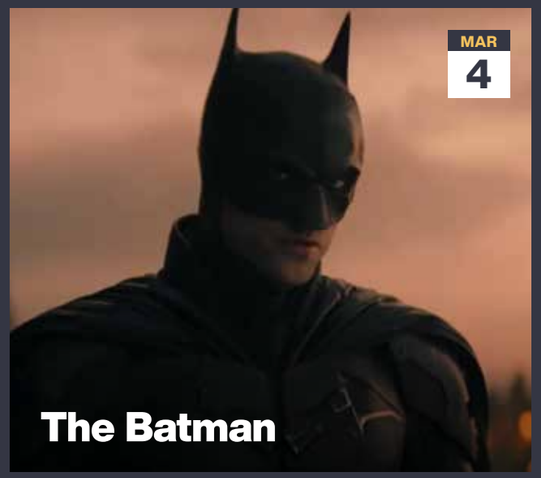
Jeremy Bowen has been covering the Middle East for the BBC since 1989. In his new book, based on his podcast, Bowen takes us on a journey through the past and present of the Middle East alongside the men and women on the frontline that he has met over the years. The BBC's Middle East Editor is an expert on the power games that wreck civilian populations and the constant battles for political, religious and economic control. From Erdogan's Turkey to Assad's Syria and Netanyahu's Israel, Bowen provides a gripping and insightful guide to the modern Middle East and a look to its future.

DIRECTED BY: Adrian Lyne
STARRING: Ana de Armas, Jacob Elordi, Ben Affleck, Lil Rel Howery

Based on the 1957 novel by Patricia Highsmith, *Deep Water* is an erotic psychological thriller about a couple trapped in a loveless marriage in the small town of Little Wesley. Vic (Affleck) and Melinda (de Armas) decide to keep their marriage afloat by a precarious arrangement whereby, to avoid the messiness of divorce, Melinda is allowed a stream of affairs as long as she does not desert her family. Eventually, Vic becomes the prime suspect when Melinda's lovers go missing.

DIRECTED BY: Kenneth Branagh
STARRING: Kenneth Branagh, Gal Gadot, Tom Bateman, Rose Leslie, Emma Mackey, Armie Hammer, Russell Brand, Letitia Wright, Jennifer Saunders

Based on the 1937 novel of the same name by Agatha Christie, the upcoming mystery thriller stars Branagh returning as detective Hercule Poirot set against the backdrop of Egypt. The tranquillity of a cruise on the S.S Karnak along the River Nile is shattered upon discovering that the young and stylish Linnet Ridgeway (Gal Gadot) has been murdered. The Belgian detective is entrusted with the task of identifying the killer before they kill again. In a sweeping mystery of love, jealousy and betrayal, *Death on the Nile* is among Christie's best-loved and most famous works.



DIRECTED BY: Matt Reeves
STARRING: Robert Pattinson, Colin Farrell, Paul Dano, Jeffrey Wright, Andy Serkis

This upcoming American superhero film will spotlight Batman (Pattinson) in his early years. Set in his second year of fighting crime, the film sees Batman uncover corruption in Gotham City whilst pursuing the Riddler (Dano), a serial killer who targets elite citizens of Gotham. During his investigation, he uncovers further corruption connected to his own family and is forced to make new allies to catch the Riddler and seek justice.

DIRECTED BY: Andrew Dominik
STARRING: Ana de Armas, Adrien Brody, Bobby Cannavagle, Jessica Chastain

A biographical drama based on the 2000 novel of the same name by Joyce Carol Oates. *Blonde* depicts the life of Marilyn Monroe (de Armas), the world's most glamorous movie star and cultural icon of the 1950s and 60s. Few details are available on the exact plot of the film, but the novel begins with its protagonist being shunted between foster homes and longing for her absent father, concluding with her rumoured assassination after her affair with JFK.

DIRECTED BY: David Yates
STARRING: Eddie Redmayne, Mads Mikkelsen, Jude Law, Ezra Miller, Katherine Waterson

The sequel to *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*, the film follows Professor Albus Dumbledore (Law) who knows the powerful dark wizard Gellert Grindelwald (Mikkelsen) is trying to seize control of the wizarding world. Unable to stop him alone, he entrusts Newt Scamander (Redmayne) to head up an intrepid team of wizards, witches and one fearless Muggle baker on a risky mission. Along the way, they encounter new and old beasts and clash with Grindelwald's growing cadre of followers.

DIRECTED BY: Robert Eggers
STARRING: Alexander Skarsgård, Nicole Kidman, Ethan Hawke, Anya Taylor-Joy, Willem Dafoe

A historical thriller set at the turn of the 10th century in Iceland. Amleth (Skarsgård), a Viking prince, sets out on a mission to avenge his murdered father. Although not much else is revealed about the plot, it has been confirmed to be a part of the spiritual trilogy with New England period epics *The Lighthouse*, and *The Witch*, and so is likely to follow suit and capture a character's slow descent into madness.

DIRECTED BY: Baz Luhrmann
STARRING: Tom Hanks, Austin Butler, Olivia DeJonge, Maggie Gyllenhall, Alton Mason

A biopic (currently untitled) about the life and music of rock-and-roll legend Elvis Presley (Butler), seen through the prism of his complex relationship with his enigmatic manager, Colonel Tom Parker (Hanks). Spanning more than two decades, the film will delve into the nuanced dynamic between Presley and Parker, from Presley's rise to glittering stardom against the backdrop of a changing cultural landscape to the loss of innocence in America. Core to that journey is one of the most influential people in Elvis's life, Priscilla Presley (Olivia DeJonge).

DIRECTED BY: Olivia Newman
STARRING: Daisy Edgar-Jones, Taylor John Smith, Harris Dickinson, David Strathairn, Jayson Warner Smith

The drama, based on the hit novel of the same name by Delia Owens, traces the story of a young woman called Kya (Edgar-Jones), who's left to raise herself in the marshes of North Carolina after her family abandons her at a young age. Finding friends in the gulls and lessons in the sand, Kya grows up yearning to be loved. When two young men from town become intrigued by her wild beauty, Kya tries a new life – until the unthinkable occurs.

Photo: Brion / lesechos.fr

Europe's theatres and concert halls are staging many hidden gems among the traditional big-scale productions in 2022.

Opera's OTHER VOICES

Gerald Malone

Europe's 2022 opera sweetshop is groaning with goodies. Released from onscreen lockdown, directors who tuned their talents to the once unfamiliar virtual environment are bringing a raft of new productions back main stage. Singers, stifled by dodgy Zoom connections, will soon be blowing audiences away. Here are some tasters of what's on offer, off mainstream repertoire piste.

Start your 2022 in Bordeaux, at the wonderful Gran Teatro de Burdeos, "bigger than Paris, 'cos Bordeaux was richer than Paris", my friends told me on my 2020 visit.

Jean Baptiste Lully's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* – based on Molière's play - is being staged by Jerome Deschamps' production company. Deschamps is a master of comedy, having sharpened his craft with the great French filmmaker Jacques Tati back in the 1960s.

This is one of a flood of Molière tributes next year, the 400th anniversary of his birth. A healthy dose of Molière satire courtesy of Deschamps and Les Musiciens de Louvre, plus the dazzling costumes of Vanessa Sanino. Wow! She and Deschamps are regular collaborators and bring zing and zest to everything they do. Not every "gentilhomme" sports a monkey hat.

On to the future. *Les Éclairs* from Opera Comique, Paris, is about Elon Musk. Well, not quite, but the next best thing, Nikola Tesla, Musk's muse. Gregor, a (slightly) fictionalised Tesla, is an idealist who wants to revolutionise the uses of electricity. He is not interested in profit. Cue rolling Musk eyeballs.

This should be compulsory viewing for anyone who thinks opera is frippery, irrelevant to today's headline crises.

This is the third opera by veteran French composer Philippe Hersant. Conducting the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and the Chœur Aedès, Ariane Matiakh draws out poetry from this scientific adventure which shouts "Space X", "Starlink", and "Tesla". *Les Éclairs* is currently available through May 2022 on the estimable OperaVision platform.

Fresh from a stunning Handel *Parténope* at Teatro Real, Madrid, I resolve to be back for their 2021- 2022 season, celebrating a double anniversary: 100 seasons since Teatro Real opened in 1850 and the 25th since its reopening in 1997. Any excuse!

Photo: PA Images / Alamy Stock Photo

Composers ranging over opera's timespan will feature: Rossini, Händel, Mozart, Puccini, Wagner, Verdi, Purcell and Debussy favourites, alongside a dazzling cornucopia of the avant garde - Luis de Pablo, *The Letter Opener*; Prokofiev, *The Angel of Fire*; Honegger, *Joan of Arc at the Stake*; Giordano, *Siberia*; and Rufus Wainwright, *Hadrian*.

What a journey through five centuries of opera. Repeats of golden oldies are usually the order of the day at big houses. Ten new titles are being added to the Real's repertoire, including world premiere, *The Letter Opener*. Tragically, de Pablo died in October aged 91, so the premiere will be a fitting homage to the "world" Spanish composer.

If cutting edge bonkers stirs the juices, look no further than La Monnaie De Munt, Brussels.

For topical tragedy, Lviv Opera's *When the Fern Blooms*, by Ukrainian composer Yevhen Stankovych, takes some beating. With Soviet troops massing on his homeland's borders and a mounting daily death toll in Donbas, Stankovych has created a compelling, historically-founded masterpiece.

Part folklore, part opera-ballet, this féerie fantasy presents local pagan traditions on the day of the summer solstice permeating historical events from Cossack times up to the more recent 2014 "Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity" which, of course, was not so dignified for the 130 dead civilians, cynically picked off by government snipers during the Maidan protests.

This opera should be compulsory viewing for anyone who thinks opera is frippery, irrelevant to today's headline crises.

After 40 years of oblivion and ban by the Soviet authorities, Stankovych's opera-ballet finally premiered at the Lviv National Opera in 2017. Unique in its genre, this impressive performance combines millennia-old folk traditions with expressive musical language, choral singing and contemporary choreography set against spectacular scenery. It is available until February.

Staatsoper Berlin is offering some interesting premieres. Italian composer Lucia Ronchetti's puppet opera, *Pinocchios Abenteuer*, has five solos instruments taking on the role of the human voice, incarnating the characters in the fabled Carlo Collodi story who accompany Pinocchio in his long-nosed travel from wood-born being to little boy.

Also in Berlin, Roland Schimmelpfennig's topical play *Die Arabische Nacht* is the basis of composer Christian Jost's theatrical fantasy of escaping the anonymous urban jungle, which speaks to the parallelism of encounters and dreams that send an apartment building's residents into the kingdom of the *Arabian Nights*. Think lockdown syndrome!

Jost underscores a loosely-woven, somnambulant narrative with his signature shimmering, levitating, iridescent soundscape in a tightly delivered chamber opera, proving the medium need not always be on a grand scale to achieve emotional impact.

In the autumn, La Scala, Milan, brings soprano Sonya Yoncheva to the role of Fedora in Umberto Giordano's opera of the same name. The opera is a fantastical verismo romp replete with secret letters, gunfire, drowning lovers, a hidden Byzantine Cross. OTT. A neglected work. Good to see it at La Scala.

If cutting edge bonkers stirs the juices, look no further than La Monnaie De Munt, Brussels. *Here's the Woman* follows part one of a story, *Is this the End,* from Jean-Luc Fafchamps.

The remorseless double work focuses on the character of a woman whose journey we are following towards the highest love, struggling to extract herself from her last earthly attachments. It could be written off as self-indulgent abstraction, but the opera hands out hammer blows if you want to leave your comfort zone.

There are probably 40 opera houses clamouring for your attention across Europe in 2022. Of course, they feature familiar repertoire. Broaden your horizons, too. Celebrate European opera that is alive and well, not just honouring its great past, but pointing the way to a compelling future.

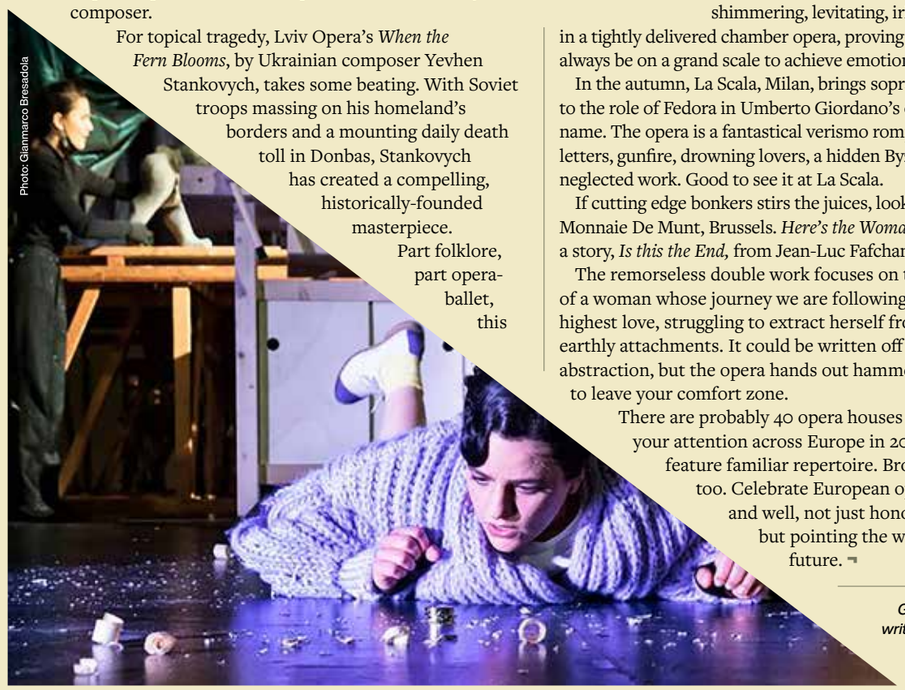
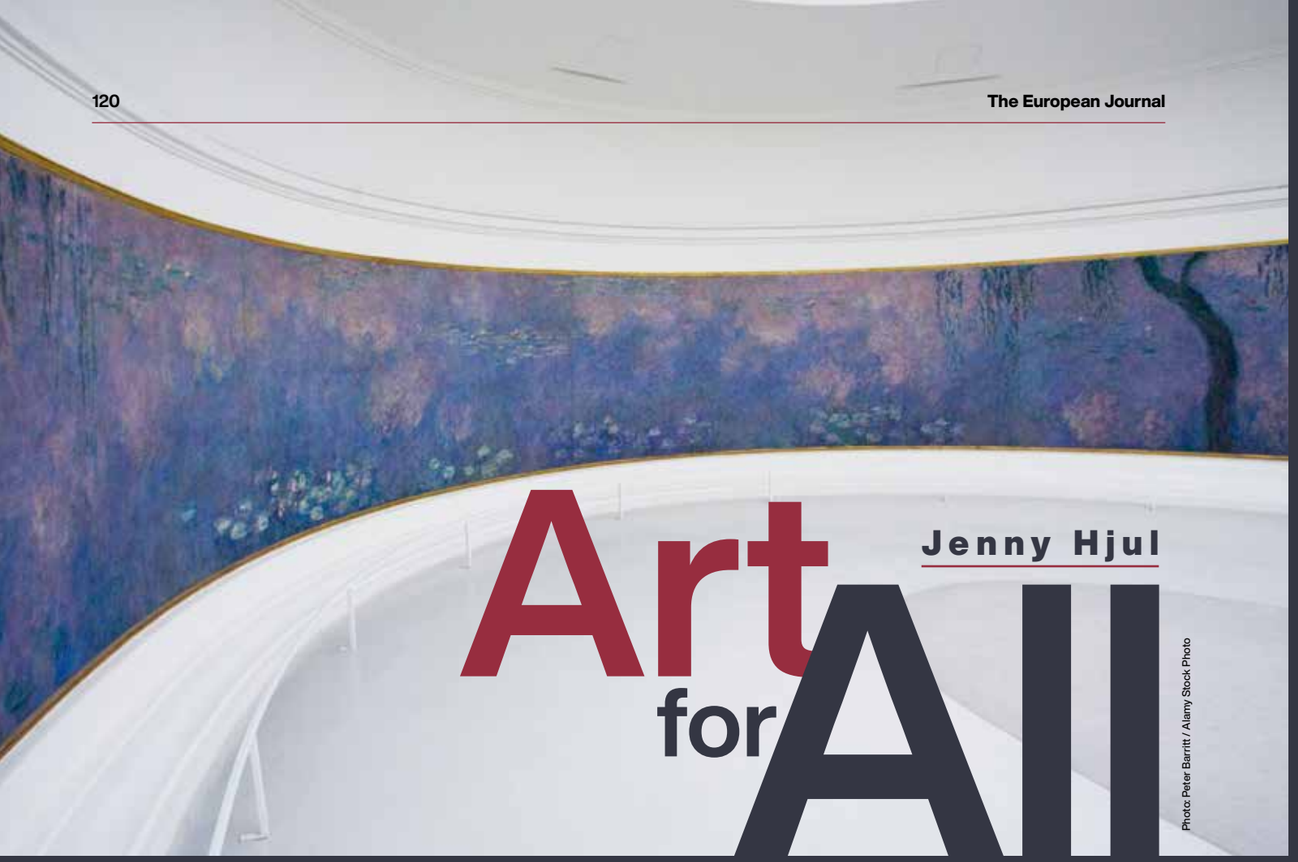


Photo: Gianmarco Bresadola

Gerald Malone is a British writer, businessman, former Conservative MP and Government Minister.



Art for All

Jenny Hjul

Photo: Peter Barritt / Alamy Stock Photo

Gallery-lovers have a lot to look forward to as Europe's curators see off Covid.

Europe's art galleries and museums have planned for 2022 as if there will be no interruptions, with once-in-a-generation blockbusters, plus some more niche exhibitions, opening across the continent (Covid permitting) throughout the year.

Starting in Paris, the Musée d'Orsay has the first major show of Antoni Gaudí's work in the city for 50 years, focusing on the Catalan architect's creations of palaces, hotels, parks, and churches, including the Sagrada Familia, which occupied much of his career, and featuring items of his furniture that have never been seen before in France. (April 12 to July 17, 2022.)

Also at the Musée d'Orsay, *The Quest for Harmony* is a retrospective of the work of early 20th century sculptor Aristide Maillol, whose monumental female nudes can be seen not only in the Orsay's permanent collection but also in Tuileries Garden next to the Louvre. (April 12 to August 21, 2022.)

At the Musée de l'Orangerie, the purpose-built home for eight of Monet's water lily murals, 80 paintings, ceramics, fans, and drawings by Cassatt, Cézanne, Degas, Monet, Renoir, and other late 19th century artists go on display in *At the Source of the Water Lilies: The Impressionists and Decoration*. The works demonstrate the extent to which these artists pioneered art for its decorative qualities. (March 2 to July 11, 2022.)

In Berlin, the Alte Nationalgallerie examines Gaugin's myth of the savage artist in *Paul Gauguin – Why Are You Angry?* A contemporary perspective is provided through works by artists such as Angela Tiatia (New Zealand/Australia), Yuki Kihara (Samoa/Japan) and Nashashibi/Skaer (UK), along with the Tahitian activist and multi-artist Henri Hiro (French Polynesia). (March 25 to July 10, 2022.)

The Gemäldegalerie brings *Donatello - Founder of the Renaissance to Berlin,* the first time in almost 40 years – and the first time ever in Germany – that a major exhibition will be devoted to the Florentine sculptor. Inspired by ancient and medieval art, Donatello was an innovative and experimental sculptor who influenced the development of Renaissance art as a whole. (September 2, 2022, to January 8, 2023.)

Modern art is centre stage in Vienna in 2022, with *Teaching Klimt* at the Mak revealing the influence of the Austrian symbolist painter's time at the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts on his later work. (November 3, 2021, to March 13, 2022.)

Around 60 masterpieces by Edvard Munch will go on display at the Albertina, alongside works by those modern artists later influenced by his approach. (February 18 to June 19, 2022.)

And at the Belvedere, *Dalí – Freud* examines the association between the two and how the father of psychoanalysis influenced the surrealist's work. (January 28 to May 29, 2022.)

David Hockney is also in Vienna in 2022, in the Bank Austria Kunstforum Wien's major retrospective, with many works from the UK's Tate collection. (February 10 to June 19, 2022.)

From Austria to Italy, where a feast of Venetian old masters moves from the Kunsthistorisches Museum to Milan's Royal Palace. *Titian and the Image of Woman: Beauty, Love, Poetry* is a celebration of the female ideal viewed through the eyes of 16th century painters such as Tintoretto and Veronese, as well as Titian. The exhibition features some 60 international loans from institutions including the Met, the Prado and the Uffizi, together with works from the collection of Venetian paintings in Vienna. (February to May, 2022.)

Later on in the year, the National Gallery of Denmark (SMK) will bring *Henri Matisse — The Red Studio Exhibition* to Copenhagen in collaboration with the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, where it goes on show first. The core of the exhibition will feature The Red Studio painting, owned by the MoMA, alongside the surviving six paintings and four sculptures depicted in it. The huge canvas (larger than the average double bed) shows Matisse's studio in the Parisian suburb of Issy-les-Moulineaux filled with his own paintings, sculptures, furniture, and decorative objects. The most remarkable feature of The Red Studio is Matisse's decision to saturate the painting's surface with monochrome red covering walls, floor, and furniture of the interior. (October 14, 2022, to February 26, 2023.)

London celebrates two 20th century icons in 2022, kicking off with *Francis Bacon: Man and Beast* at the Royal Academy in January (already selling out fast). This explores Bacon's fascination with animals and how they shaped and distorted his approach to the human body, often blurring the lines between man and beast. The exhibition spans his entire career, with some of his earliest works, as well as his last-ever painting, Study of a Bull, 1991. (January 29 to April 17, 2022.)

Freud will be the showstopper in the autumn and winter when the National Gallery presents *Lucian Freud: New Perspectives*. This landmark exhibition brings together important works from Freud's seven-decade career, from intimate pictures to large-scale canvases, and includes more than 60 loans from museums and private collections around the world. Stand-out pieces include the Girl with Roses, as well as Reflections with Two Children. The exhibition aims to showcase the artist behind the celebrity to mark what would have been his 100th year. (October 1, 2022, to January 22, 2023.)

The Royal Academy's Francis Bacon exhibition explores the artist's fascination with animals and how they shaped and distorted his approach to the human body, often blurring the lines between man and beast.

Jenny Hjul is a London-based journalist and columnist, writing about politics, current affairs and the arts.

Photo: JAUBERT French Collection / Alamy Stock Photo

Guy Chatfield

All roads lead to Rhône

Look beyond the obvious and you'll find plenty to discover in this fascinating region.

When we reach for the restaurant wine list, or spend time pondering the shelves of our favourite merchants, in the world of wine there are some "known knowns" as Donald Rumsfeld once opined. Rioja, Sancerre and Chianti continue to enjoy widespread distribution as their "soft brand" recognisable status hold enough credibility for the average wine drinker to feel comfortable selecting. Apropos of this, the Rhône Valley strikes me as a region that many people drink from, but possibly few really know.

The river Rhône itself begins as streams of meltwater high in the Rhône Glacier in the Swiss Alps, flowing for just over 500 miles south emptying into the Mediterranean Sea; the wine-producing section of the valley is located in the bottom fifth of the river's length, deep in the south of France.

The valley itself is the result of a clash of two "local" geological entities – the Alps and the Massif Central mountain ranges – 300 million years ago. It was the meeting of these two bodies that exposed the various soil types that define the wines. With the demarcation line sitting between the towns of Montelimar in the south and St Peray in the north, the wine region is neatly divided into two; granitic rocks define the wines of the Northern Rhône, and the ancient marine sediment helps create the signature style of the south. The region is further split into smaller identifiable areas or "communes" differentiated more by their soil structure than the village they surround. This trait is widespread in the other French wine regions.

Although vines had naturally existed in the region it was around the fourth century BC that cultivation occurred properly through the Greek colonists around what is now the city of Marseille. Production was stepped up considerably during Roman occupation in the first century AD, so much so that the quality was said to even rival the wines of the mother country. Interestingly, the peripheral business of making amphorae to transport the wine also blossomed in the Rhône, and it was through archaeological finds and research of these vessels it has been proven that the region has some of the oldest vineyards in continual use in the world.

There are tangible differences between the two sections of the region; firstly, although by no means definitively, it can be said that the volume end of the market comes from the south, and the value end comes from the north.

Accounting for just under 60% of the total volume of Rhône wines produced, the household name of Côtes du Rhône hail from the southern section, which is also home to the über-famous Chateauneuf du Papes – arguably one of the best-known "soft" brands of red wine available. Both these wines are dominated by the Grenache grape, a variety that blossoms here to produce wines of heady fullness with warm, rich tones of blackcurrant and spice. The mouth-drying tannins are not so stark here and these medium to full bodied blends – regularly containing the other Rhône stalwart grapes like Mourvedre and Cinsault – are deliciously round and generous, hence their wide appeal.

It is the Northern Rhône, dominated by the Syrah grape, that is home to wines of structural elegance that can command a higher selling price. Sometimes confused for its New World sibling, Shiraz (essentially the same plant), the expression of the grape found in the Rhône is a bigger, more muscular beast; deep in colour, rich in flavours of blackberry, blueberry and violet with a tannic structure that is superb for ageing but can often knock the proverbial socks off. What sets it apart from the New Wold "pretender" is the signature notes of spice and often earthy ground pepper. My own personal recommendation is that the wines from the vineyards of St Joseph are the ones to seek out to experience how utterly superb the Syrah grape can be.

The wines from the vineyards of St Joseph are the ones to seek out to experience how utterly superb the Syrah grape can be.

The complexity, elegance and regional differentiation of wines in this beautiful region have had me enthralled for years; their drinkability in so many different situations emphasise their versatility and I can only implore you to stray from the wonderful "known knowns" to the superb "known unknowns" – they will reward you handsomely if you do.

Guy Chatfield is a wine columnist with 26 years experience working for industry-leading wine merchants and international alcohol brands in the UK.

Photo: adam eastland / Alamy Stock Photo

Charles MacLean

RAISE A DRAM in 2022

With the whisky trade booming, there is a wealth of high quality malts to choose from.

The past 20 years has been an era of unprecedented growth in whisky distilling worldwide. Currently, whisky is being made in 87 countries and capacities – the amount of spirit which can be produced - have rocketed. While Scotch retains its position as the leading category, selling almost twice as much as American whisky and slightly less than twice as much as the three other major categories - Irish, Canadian and Japanese - combined, the Scotch whisky industry cannot afford to be complacent.

Since 2004, 40 new distilleries have been commissioned in Scotland, and I know of 30 more currently under construction or proposed. Many well-known sites have been expanded, several doubling capacity and three – Macallan, The Glenlivet and Glenfiddich – have built massive new distilleries on their existing sites. Over the past 10 years, production capacity has increased by a staggering 60.25%.

Such optimism is based upon the anticipated global demand for Scotch whisky – and in the case of many of the new distilleries, demand for single malt whisky – over the coming decades. But evaluating demand for a product which must be produced at least three years ahead of its release – Scotch spirit cannot be labelled "whisky" until it has been matured for three years – requires a crystal ball. It is also vulnerable to factors beyond the industry's control, including the global economy and international politics, not to mention sale-of-alcohol restrictions, pandemics, duty and fashion in over 200 markets.

Already new brands of Scotch have entered the market and the number will increase this year and beyond as whiskies reach maturity. The first problem facing the newcomers is creating distinctive flavours. In this regard, the smaller players are able to be more agile and experimental than traditional companies. Some are exploring different yeast strains and barley varieties from the past; some are looking at aspects of process (fermentation and distillation times); many are finishing their whiskies in a bewildering range of ex-wine and ex-spirit casks. While this offers consumers an increased range of styles and flavours, the very fact that many of the newcomers are comparatively small prohibits economies of scale and leads to higher prices for younger whiskies.

Following the global financial crisis, investors started to look for alternatives to stocks and shares. Scotch malt whisky brands have been ranked as the best performing "alternative investment" (by a long margin) – ahead of gold, fine art, vintage cars, and fine wine.

The second problem confronting the industry is distribution. Competition for shelf-space is fierce - indeed distillers tell me that finding effective distributors in such a crowded marketplace is even more difficult than raising the cash to build a distillery and run it for three years without income.

Online sales have helped and the rapid growth of the internet since 2000 has made information about Scotch – especially malt whisky - easily accessible and fast-flowing. Online clubs and tasting groups proliferate; consumers are more educated, discerning and - where they feel appropriate - critical; bloggers reach international audiences and are taken seriously by the industry; as much whisky (by value) is sold online as through traditional channels.

However, a key channel pre-Covid - global duty free – which formerly accounted for around 20% of sales by volume (and considerably more by value) has suffered drastically and is unlikely to return to its previous pre-eminence.

This will especially impact on rare and high-value whiskies, but to an ever-increasing extent these are acquired - either from specialist retailers, online or at auction - by investors, who approach whisky as a commodity to be bought and sold.

Following the global financial crisis which began in 2008, investors started to look for alternatives to stocks and shares. Among others, they turned to Scotch and Japanese whisky. Knight Frank's *Wealth Reports* 2019 and 2020 ranked some Scotch malt whisky brands as the best performing "alternative investment" (by a long margin) – ahead of gold, fine art, vintage cars, fine wine, etc. Many investors have very deep pockets or funds to draw from, and as a result some of the prices achieved at auction in recent years have been astronomic, squeezing out traditional collectors and consumers.

The number of whisky auctions has grown to meet demand: while the UK remains the largest, the major international auction houses now hold sales in New York, Hong Kong and beyond, and they have been joined by regular auctions from local auction houses – some achieving very high prices – augmented by the fact that most rare whisky retailers now have auctions running in parallel to their traditional retail businesses.

Predictably, such interest has driven up the price of some brands exponentially. The number of bottles of "collectable" single malt Scotch sold at auction in the UK between 2015 and 2019 rose by 44% and their value rose by 58%. I don't think the top of the market has yet been reached, as more brands join the current handful of "investment quality" malts.

The world of Scotch is an exciting place to be at the moment and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future, but the industry's history is cyclical. The boom era of the 1890s finished abruptly in 1900 and that of the post-war period terminated in the early 1980s. In both cases, several factors played a part in this – fashion, the world economy, competition, prohibition - but also in both cases production levels were massively out of line with demand. Are we heading in this direction?

I am often consulted by people who want to buy or build a distillery. I say "wait five years. I bet there will be a number of distilleries which have misjudged their markets, notwithstanding the quality of their products". I might also have answered the question: "How do you make a small fortune out of whisky?" with "Start with a large one"!

The world of Scotch is an exciting place to be at the moment and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future, but the industry's history is cyclical. The boom era of the 1890s finished abruptly in 1900 and that of the post-war period terminated in the early 1980s. Are we heading in this direction?

Charles MacLean is considered Scotland's leading whisky writer and a world authority on the subject. He is the author of "MacLean's Miscellany of Whisky."

At the end of the day – indeed, at any time of the day! – whisky is for drinking. Here is a handful of new releases I have enjoyed recently:

Brig o'Perth 14YO 125th Anniversary

(Premium Blended Scotch)

This was the original "house blend" of Matthew Gloag & Son, Perth, the creators of *The Famous Grouse*. An independent bottler now owns the brand and has based his recipe for the blend on the 1896 original.

J.G.Thomson & Co Rich Batch No.01

(Blended Malt)

From the Scotch Malt Whisky Society, whose HQ is in the ancient Vaults building in Leith, former home of J.G. Thomson, the wine & spirits merchant founded in the 1700s. A flavour led by dried fruits, including dates and figs.

Ardnamurchan AD/04.21:03

(Single Highland Malt)

Ardnamurchan is Britain's most westerly peninsula. Founded in 2014, with its first release in 2020, the whisky is truly a "spirit of place" with light West Highland smokiness and maritime characteristics.

GlenDronach 50YO

(Single Highland Malt)

The first release at this milestone age from an Aberdeenshire distillery which has won a deservedly high reputation for its big sherry-influenced whiskies. Bottle No.1 achieved £40,000 at a charity auction in December 2021.

Glen Grant 60YO Dennis Malcolm Anniversary Edition

(Single Cask Single Malt)

Dennis Malcolm OBE has worked for 60 years in the whisky industry, mainly as Master Distiller at Glen Grant Distillery. The cask yielded only 360 bottles of this exquisite malt.

On nights when the Aurora Borealis are especially strong, they are visible throughout the city.

Top travel destinations in 2022

EVE WEBSTER

Reykjavik

Iceland is a country where the elements meet head-to-head in the most breath-taking manner. Perhaps the most astounding example of this is the Aurora Borealis, the Northern Lights, which light up the night sky during winter months. On nights when the Aurora are especially strong, they are visible throughout the city but your best bet is heading somewhere which has less light pollution, with the Grótta Lighthouse, an hour's walk away from the town centre, being a favourite.

The Aurora is not the only thing lighting up the night sky. Reykjavik has a brilliant nightlife and one which is yet to be overturned by rowdy tourists. While the city's tiny size might limit what it can offer tourists in some respects, when it comes to bars and breweries, being on the smaller side is nothing but a plus. The streets hosting the city's best bars (Laugavegur, Hverfisgata and Austurstræti) are only a short walk from each other so hopping between establishments is a great way to enjoy a bite-sized experience of a range of venues, atmospheres and music. Although prices are a little higher in the Icelandic capital, there is usually no entry fee. As you head home, you can enjoy what has been called the unofficial national dish of Iceland - a hot dog. They are sold from stalls open all day and night and are made from variety of meats, but lamb remains a firm favourite.

For some of the most spectacular sights in Iceland, you do need to venture out of the city centre. What with its whale-watching, frozen waterfalls, thermal springs and enormous glaciers glaciers, Iceland has an air of the supernatural.

Michelin-starred Loco is at once relaxed and yet refined and with brilliant attention to detail— much like Lisbon itself.

Top travel destinations in 2022

Lisbon

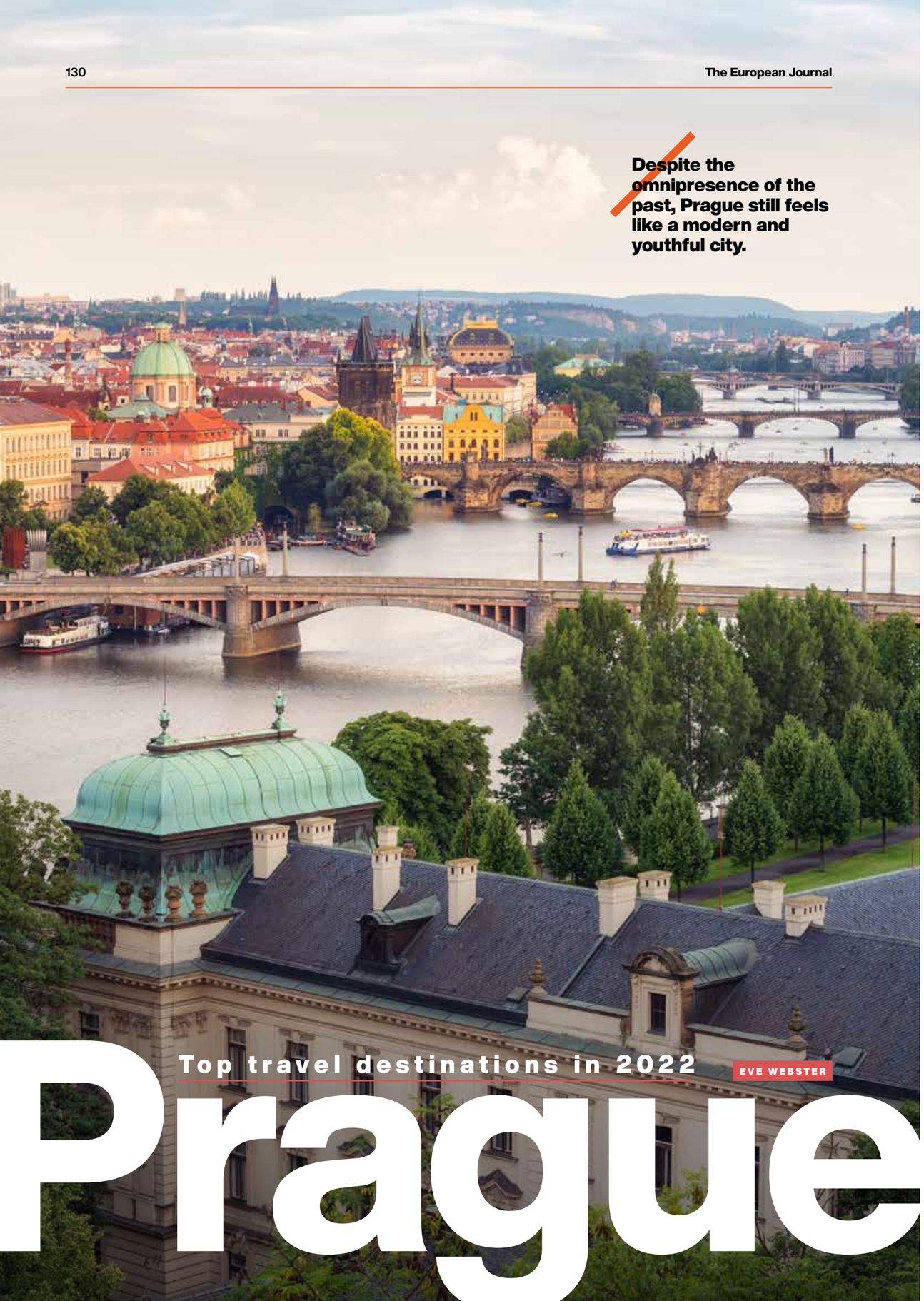
EVE WEBSTER

It's obviously impossible to get a real understanding of a city in one trip alone but a €2.85 ride on the number 28 tram line through Lisbon does give you a real taste of Portugal's capital. The garishly yellow 1930s trams meander through the city's narrow streets and up its steep hills, allowing passengers to soak in Lisbon's laid-back charm. You have the option of taking a tourist tram, where a guide will fill you in on the city's history, but a simple ride on a public tram is enough to appreciate its atmosphere.

It's a good idea to hop off at Bairro Alto, especially if it's towards the end of the day. Trendy Bairro Alto becomes a hive of activity as its bars and restaurants fill with locals and tourists and the air fills with fado. Fado music can be traced back to the Lisbon of the 1820s but is likely to have much earlier origins. It follows a strict traditional structure and usually invokes a haunting melancholic tone, with its lyrics discussing the life of the poor and the sea. It seems strange that such a sunny and colourful city's soundtrack is tinged with a mournful sense of loss, but enjoying an atmospheric drink at Bairro Alto is too good to resist.

When it comes to food and drink, Lisbon is an underrated gem. At the lower end of the budget, its bakeries are universally brilliant, but head to the neighbourhood of Belem to taste the best pastéis de nata. While the famous Pastéis de Belém is excellent, it can get rather crowded. If you want to avoid the wait, Mantegairia is a delicious alternative. At the pricier end of the scale, Michelin-starred Loco is at once relaxed and yet refined and with brilliant attention to detail— much like the city of Lisbon itself.

Despite the omnipresence of the past, Prague still feels like a modern and youthful city.



Top travel destinations in 2022

Prague

EVE WEBSTER

Although Bratislava may have overtaken Prague for selling the cheapest pints in Europe, the Czech capital still has much to offer. With the architecture ranging from the Gothic St Vitus cathedral to the Baroque Wallenstein Palace, Prague's history weighs down as you walk along its pastel streets and through its medieval squares.

Despite the omnipresence of the past, Prague still feels like a modern and youthful city. It is littered with strange statues, including a collection of rubber ducks overlooking the river. Perhaps the best example of the bizarre is the Lennon wall. What was once an unexceptional facade has become, since the 1980 assassination of John Lennon, a place for the young people of Prague to express their hopes for freedom and peace, most notably during Gustáv Husák's Communist regime. You can leave your own message today, so long as you use one of the government-approved mediums: chalk, paint, a marker or a pencil. Vive la revolution.

Prague's stunning blend of buildings is best appreciated from above. While the cathedral and the towers bookending the Charles Bridge are more popular options, the view offered by the Petřín Gardens and Lookout Tower on the outskirts of the city is unparalleled, far less crowded and, most importantly, significantly cheaper.

Come evening, if you're looking for a refreshment but have had your fill of beer, try the Hemmingway bar found in the Old Town. The bar offers a huge range of expertly crafted cocktails and décor and moody lighting which transports the drinker back to the 1930s. Try the Gasoline (whisky, sherry, Campari, infused with walnut-bitter) to get the most for your money.

It's worth visiting the Jewish Quarter. Despite concerted antisemitic efforts throughout the centuries to destroy what was once the Jewish ghetto, the Josefov (now a museum) has endured, and its Old Cemetery is one of Prague's most interesting sites.

While Vienna might claim to be the king of European café culture, Krakow certainly gives it a run for its money.

Top travel destinations in 2022

Krakow

EVE WEBSTER

The old capital of Poland remains its academic, cultural, and artistic hub. The city is perfectly composed with a delightful balance of medieval churches, meandering cobbled lanes, vast open squares, occasional bursts of post-modernism and enormous Romanesque castles, all tied together by the bends of the Vistula River.

Cracovians are avid devotees to culture, regularly attending art shows, theatre, and jazz concerts. And visitors reap the rewards - it seems that with every week there is a new festival or event showcasing Krakow's rich cultural scene, be it a folk music, dramatic or pierogi festival, so there's more likely to be an event on during your visit.

While Vienna might claim to be the king of European café culture, Krakow certainly gives the Austrian capital a run for its money. The numerous cafés on the Old Town square offer you ample occasion to people watch but for something very special, try to find the Café Camelot, hidden behind a theatre of the same name. The Lonely Planet called it Krakow in a nutshell. Kitsch and contradictory yet charming, the café is filled with artisan crafted statues depicting both religious and folkloric scenes.

Heading down a mine might not be an obvious holiday pastime but an afternoon at the Wieliczka Salt Mines is a fascinating way to understand Poland's economic and industrial history. Far from being a series of cramped tunnels (although there are plenty of those), the mines include an underground lake and four stunning subterranean chapels, all carved out of salt rock.

HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, KG

10 June 1921 – 9 April 2021

The longest-serving consort in British history, described by the Queen as "her strength and guide."

GERALD WARNER

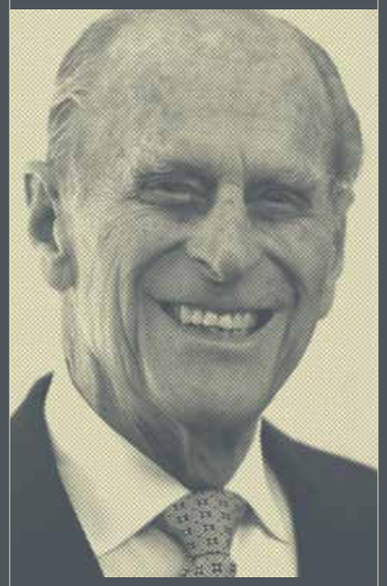
Prince Philip of Greece and Denmark, a member of the royal house of Glücksburg and son of Prince Andrew of Greece, was born on a dining-room table in a Corfu villa in 1921. The following year, when his parents were evacuated from Greece during revolutionary unrest, Philip's makeshift cradle was an orange box.

That was the precarious start to an adventurous life. After being educated in France, England, Germany and Scotland, he joined the Royal Navy in 1939, distinguishing himself as a high performer in examinations and later on active service, most notably at the Battle of Cape Matapan. During the invasion of Sicily, as second in command of HMS Wallace, he saved his ship from a night bomber attack and, at the end of the Second World War, was present in Tokyo Bay when the Japanese surrendered.

In 1947 he became a naturalised British subject under the name Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten and married Princess Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of King George VI and heiress to the British throne, and was given the title Duke of Edinburgh. After his wife succeeded as Elizabeth II in 1952, Prince Philip set about the dual task of supporting the Queen to the utmost of his ability, while simultaneously crafting a separate role for himself since, as consort, he was constitutionally excluded from affairs of state.

He began by playing a key part in the planning of the coronation, most notably by insisting, against much establishment opposition, the event be televised. His view prevailed and the broadcast was an enormous success, bringing the monarchy closer to its subjects, especially to those in Commonwealth countries.

His work rate was exceptional. Prince Philip was never content to be a figurehead in organisations of which he was patron: he devoted personal participation to them.



That was the start of a career of public service, performed unremittingly from 1952 until 2017. During that period Prince Philip undertook 22,219 solo public engagements, in addition to those he performed in attendance on the Queen. Sometimes these events were enlivened by his irreverent humour, as on the occasion when he announced: "I declare this thing open, whatever it is..."

The media liked to highlight his "gaffes", but these were generally manufactured by the press from innocuous remarks he had made. The Prince was a man of broad culture and cosmopolitan background, at home in any society and sensitive to the nuances of other countries' ways of life – very different from the "Colonel Blimp" figure elements of the media occasionally tried to represent him as being.

His work rate was exceptional. He was patron of around 800 organisations, focused mainly on sport, industry, conservation and education. Most notable was the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, founded in 1956 to encourage service and physical activities among young people. By the time of his death, it had been gained by six million youngsters in the UK and eight million worldwide. Prince Philip was never content to be simply a figurehead in organisations of which he was patron: he devoted personal participation to them.

But his chief role was as the mainstay of his wife Queen Elizabeth. Through the various traumas that affected the royal family, most notably the crisis surrounding Diana, Princess of Wales and her subsequent death, Prince Philip was the Queen's chief support. In a speech on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee in 2012, the Queen described him as her "constant strength and guide."

As those words indicate, the Prince provided his wife not only with emotional support but also, on occasion, within the constraints of constitutional propriety, advice on how she should act. Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, became a much-loved figure in Britain and greatly respected around the world; his death came as a loss to millions. ¬

George Pratt Schultz

13 December 1920 – 6 February 2021

The US secretary of state's most successful achievement brought Gorbachev and Regan together to help end the Cold War.

GERALD WARNER

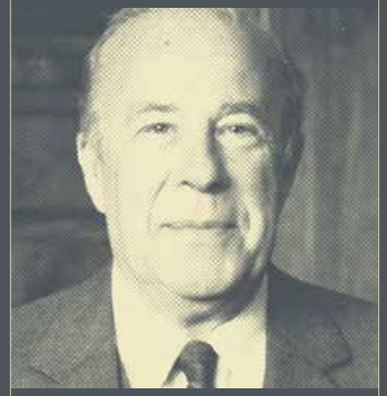
George Pratt Schultz was born in New York in 1920, into affluent circumstances. After graduating from Princeton University he served in the Marine Corps in the Pacific during the Second World War. In 1946 he married Helena Marie O'Brien, an Army nurse, and they had five children. His early career was as an academic, teaching at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and later at the University of Chicago graduate school of business, specialising in industrial relations.

Schultz's political career began in 1969 when President Richard Nixon appointed him secretary of labor, then director of the office of management and budget, and finally secretary of the treasury, from 1972 to 1974. As secretary of labor, Schultz was the first to employ federal racial quotas to enforce the admission of African-American members into Pennsylvania construction unions.

As treasury secretary, Schultz supported the "Nixon shock", which tried to revive the underperforming economy, partly by abolishing the gold standard – the convertibility of US dollars to gold – and presided over the ending of the Bretton Woods system of monetary management. Schultz was defensive of his integrity and, as treasury secretary, refused a White House request to audit the tax returns of Nixon's enemies, causing the President to say caustically: "What does that candy ass think I sent him over there for?" But Schultz's integrity enabled him to escape the Watergate scandal unscathed by the time he left office in 1974.

From 1974 to 1982 Schultz returned to business, most notably as an executive at Bechtel, an engineering and construction corporation. The most significant period of

Schultz was defensive of his integrity and, as treasury secretary, refused a White House request to audit the tax returns of Nixon's enemies, causing the President to say caustically: 'What does that candy ass think I sent him over there for?'



his career began in 1982 when President Ronald Reagan appointed him US secretary of state, a position he held until 1989, his term in office coinciding with the last phase of Soviet communism. Schultz's chief concern was the danger posed by the Cold War nuclear balance of terror.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had marked the end of Henry Kissinger's policy of "détente" and US-Soviet relations were markedly frigid. But in 1985 Schultz identified the opportunity afforded by the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev to the Soviet leadership. He persuaded Reagan to put out feelers to Moscow. The approach was successful and in 1987 Reagan and Gorbachev signed a treaty banning all intermediate-range nuclear missiles from Europe – the first time an entire class of weapons was excluded.

Schultz and Reagan deserved credit for this concrete achievement, which also had psychological benefits in US-Soviet relations. Schultz was pragmatic by temperament, Reagan more ideologically anti-communist; but the president allowed himself to be guided by Schultz, to the dismay of Republican hard-liners.

Schultz was less successful in his other policy endeavours: he failed to advance a settlement in the Middle East, though his agreement, in his final week in office, to talks with the Palestine Liberation Organisation paved the way for the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and later peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians. US policy in Central America, aimed at bringing down the Marxist regime in Nicaragua, was unsuccessful and led indirectly to the Iran-Contra scandal, though Schultz personally was undamaged since he had opposed any such schemes.

George Schultz's subsequent role was as a businessman, academic, and Republican elder statesman. He informally advised George W. Bush and helped formulate the Bush Doctrine of pre-emptive war. He was a member of the Hoover Institution and other prestigious bodies. In 2013 he argued for a revenue-neutral carbon tax as the most economically reliable means of opposing climate change. An active academic to the end, he died, age 100, at his home on the Stanford University campus on 6 February, 2021. ¬

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing

2 February 1926 – 2 December 2020

The longest-surviving former head of state in French history spearheaded a more integrated European Union.

WALTER ELLIS

Tall, haughty, a patrician to his impeccably manicured fingertips, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing was president of France as if to the manor born. He led his country during a particularly difficult period in which it transitioned abruptly from *les trente glorieuses* – three decades of unbroken economic growth – to the shock and decline that followed the global oil crisis of 1973.

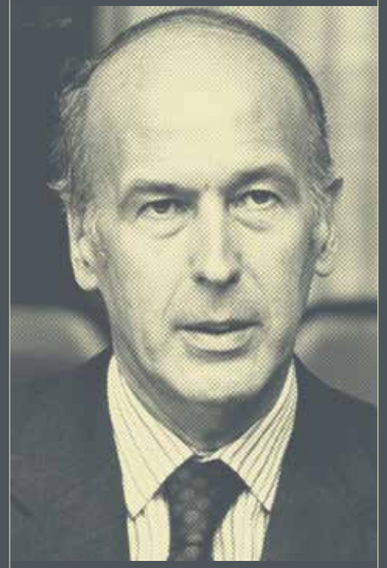
A committed Gaullist, with a modernist streak, he was elected president in May 1974 following the death in office of Georges Pompidou and the brief interregnum of Alain Poher. He served a single seven-year term devoted mainly to economic recovery and European integration before being supplanted by the veteran Socialist François Mitterrand – a defeat that rankled him for the rest of his life.

He lived for another 31 years, the longest-surviving former head of state in French history, constantly looking for things to do consistent with the sense of his dignity and standing that was never far from his thoughts. He returned to the National Assembly for a time, and later secured election to the European Parliament, but was bored by both. For 18 years, he served as head of the regional council of Auvergne, extending his brief in 1997 to the presidency of the Europe-wide Council of European Municipalities and Regions.

The undoubted highlight of Giscard's long retirement was his chairmanship of the Convention on the Future of Europe, established by the heads of government of the EU to devise a constitution consistent with the governing principle of "ever closer union."

The resulting text was both densely-worded and controversial, looking

He would, perhaps, have been surprised to find that his achievements in the face of adversity were, in fact, appreciated.



ahead as it did not just to political and monetary union, but to a reduced role for the states in favour of an aggrandised European Commission and all-powerful European Parliament. When the document was put to a referendum in France, it was rejected by 55% to 45% on a turnout of more than two-thirds of the electorate. A second defeat followed at the hands of Dutch voters. The result was a somewhat watered-down version subsumed into the 2007 Treaty of Lisbon.

Giscard, as ever, took the setback as a personal affront, thereafter retreating from public life, only emerging from time to time to issue waspish critiques of his successors in the Élysée. He would, perhaps, have been surprised to find that his achievements in the face of adversity were, in fact, appreciated and that he has come to be recognised as one of the more impactful presidents of the Fifth Republic.

Born in 1926, the son of a top-level *fonctionnaire* whose own father had added d'Estaing to the family name in a shameless bid to appear of noble birth, Giscard never doubted he would reach the heights of any field he pursued. He joined the Resistance, then the French Army in 1945, just in time to deploy his credentials as a war hero, and went on to study at the École Polytechnique and the newly-created École Nationale d'Administration before winning a place at the prestigious Inspection Génèrale des Finances.

From then on, there was no stopping him. First elected to the National Assembly in 1956, he went on to serve a total of nine years as minister for the economy and finance.

Scandals, usually to do with his many sexual dalliances, were shrugged off. There was also comedy, as when he and his brother bought a castle known as the Chateau d'Estaing, with which they had no ancestral connection but which they presented to the world as their family seat.

He was undone as president by rising unemployment and lost orders in the wake of the oil crisis. But he will be remembered, too, for his efforts, alongside the West German chancellor Helmut Schmidt, to confirm the status of the Franco-German motor in European affairs and for his support for a more integrated European Union. ¬

Frederik W. de Klerk

18 March 1936 – 11 November 2021

The last apartheid-era president of South Africa was a key figure in the country's historical transition to democracy.

GERALD WARNER

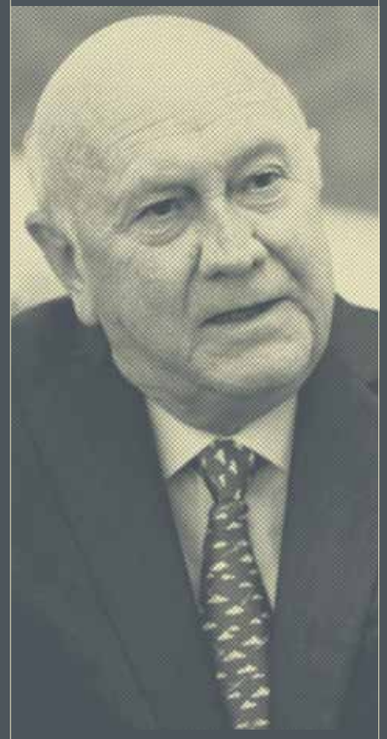
Frederik Willem de Klerk was born in 1936 into a prominent Afrikaner family with a long tradition of participation in politics: his great-grandfather had been a senator, as was his father, Jan de Klerk. He was 12 when the apartheid system was officially instituted in South Africa; most of his life was conditioned by the assumptions of segregation. His family belonged to the strictest branch of the Dutch Reformed Church.

From 1954 to 1958 de Klerk studied for both an arts and a law degree at Potchefstroom University, graduating successfully in both disciplines. Shortly after, in 1959, he married Marike Willemse, daughter of a professor at the University of Pretoria. After serving as an articled clerk, in 1962 de Klerk set up his own law partnership, which he built up over 10 years.

He entered politics in 1972, when he was elected for the National Party to the House of Assembly. He held various party roles and became a senior member of two select committees. In 1978 he was appointed minister of social welfare and pensions and then minister of post and telecommunications. Later, as minister of home affairs, in 1985, he presided over the repeal of the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act.

On 2 February 1989 de Klerk became leader of the National Party and on 20 September he was elected as state president for a five-year term. Known as a conservative, he surprised opposition activists by declining to ban protest marches. In October he agreed to meet three anti-apartheid activists – Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak and Frank Chikane – and in December he had a three-hour discussion with Nelson Mandela in

Of his contribution to change in South Africa, his former opponent Desmond Tutu said: 'Give him credit, I do.'



his prison on how to move away from minority rule.

What had caused this revolution in de Klerk's thinking was not simply the embattled situation of his country, but the collapse of the Soviet Union, which removed the fear of Soviet domination of South Africa and control of the Cape route. Following de Klerk's crucial speech to parliament on 2 February 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from jail and a wave of reforms introduced.

The racial segregation of public facilities was abolished, membership of the National Party was opened to non-whites, the Natives Land Act of 1913 and similar legislation dating from 1936 were repealed, as was the Population Registration Act, which was the basis of racial classification. In 1992 de Klerk held a referendum of the white population on ending apartheid, receiving landslide approval. On 30 April 1993 he officially apologised for apartheid.

Negotiations were rocky, but progress towards majority rule continued until South Africa held its first universal elections in April 1994, when the African National Congress won 62% of the vote. De Klerk became deputy president in a national unity government, under President Nelson Mandela. Earlier, in December 1993, Mandela and de Klerk had shared the Nobel Peace Prize for their work in uniting South Africans.

There remained disagreements, however, and in 1996 de Klerk withdrew the National Party from the coalition government. From 1997 de Klerk was out of politics, embracing a career in public lecturing instead. He was saddened, in 2001, by the murder of his ex-wife Marike; in 1999 he remarried, to Elita Georgiades.

Frederik de Klerk died of complications arising from mesothelioma at his home in Cape Town on 11 November 2021. Of his contribution to change in South Africa, his former opponent Desmond Tutu said at the beginning of the process: "Give him credit, I do.". ¬

Colin Powell

5 April 1937 – 18 October 2021

A highly-decorated military officer, diplomat, and the first black US secretary of state whose career was derailed by his approach to the Iraq War.

WALTER ELLIS

Even the greatest of political and military figures can make misjudgements in the midst of crisis. What matters is that they bounce back and learn from their mistakes.

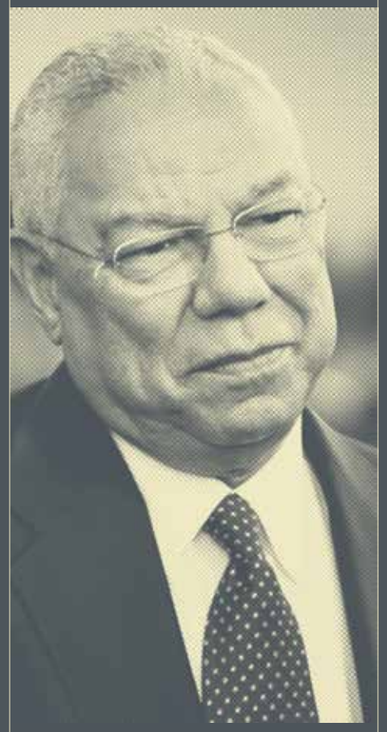
But when Colin Powell, as US secretary of state, held up a model vial of anthrax to an emergency session of the UN Security Council on February 5, 2003, citing it as "proof" that the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein "has biological weapons and the capability to rapidly produce more, many more," he was not so much in error as promoting a version of the facts that, as he would later concede, were "wrong" and in some parts "deliberately misleading".

According to Powell, there was "no doubt" that Iraq was working to obtain key components to produce nuclear weapons. "Every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we're giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence." His conclusion was as grim as any diplomatic assessment since the 1962 Cuban crisis. "Leaving Saddam Hussein in possession of weapons of mass destruction for a few more months or years is not an option, not in a post–September 11 world."

The impact on his audience was immediate and startling. Six weeks later, with the support of 49 world leaders, including most notably Britain's Tony Blair, the United States led an armed "coalition of the willing" into Iraq, toppling Saddam and laying the foundations for eight long and bloody years of military occupation.

In fact, as events would prove, Saddam had no weapons of mass destruction and Powell's reputation went into freefall. In November, 2004, immediately following the re-election of George W. Bush as president, the former four-star general was dumped in favour of Condoleezza Rice, previously the holder of another of Powell's old jobs, that of national security adviser.

He became known for his opposition to any foreign adventures that did not directly affect US interests, citing what was dubbed the 'Powell Doctrine'.



In later years, he would pop up from time to time in his guise of elder statesman, most recently to condemn the "disgraceful" policies and actions of President Donald J. Trump. But there would be no way back to any position of prominence.

It really was a shame. The son of Jamaican parents of part Scots ancestry, Powell was born in New York City on April 5, 1937. He was educated locally, going on to earn a college degree while at the same time obtaining a commission by way of the Reserve Officers Training Corps. Over the next 30 years, wherever there was conflict, he was there, from Vietnam, where he was wounded while leading an infantry platoon, all the way to the first Gulf War, in which, as chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, he oversaw the first invasion of Iraq, withdrawing his forces, on the instructions of President H. W. Bush, when he had both Baghdad and Saddam at his mercy.

From then on, high politics – oscillating between Republican economics and Democratic support for the rights of minorities – would dominate his career, embracing the White House and the State Department as well as the Pentagon. He became known for his opposition to any foreign adventures that did not directly affect US interests, citing what was dubbed the "Powell Doctrine"; the conviction that only overwhelming force and certainty of success could justify boots on the ground.

He died, a two-time holder of the Congressional Medal of Honor, on October 18, 2021, aged 84. His funeral was a roll-call of America's great and good. Donald Trump did not attend. ¬

György Schöpflin

24 November 1939 – 19 November 2021

The controversial and unflinching Hungarian nationalist dedicated his later years to pushing back on EU encroachment.

WALTER ELLIS

Like his party leader Viktor Orbán, György Schöpflin divided public opinion not only in his native Hungary but across the European Union. An acclaimed academic, steeped in learning and love of literature, he was at the same time, especially in his later life, an unflinching opponent of "too much Europe" and a champion of Hungarian sovereignty.

The European Parliament, of which he was an influential member from 2004 to 2019, was the principle platform from which he conducted his defence of the Orbán premiership, including its refusal to endorse Muslim immigration and its adherence to the concept of "Christian" civilisation.

Schöpflin was convinced that the European Union, in seeking to impose its liberal values on each of the member states, was unwittingly beginning to acquire the characteristics of an authoritarian regime. Just last year, months before his death at the age of 81, he reminded his political opponents of Nietzsche's famous warning: "Beware, when fighting monsters, that you yourself do not become a monster". Those who participated in regular condemnations of Hungary had, he said, come to believe that they were doing battle with a monster, the monster that questioned the legitimacy of their version of liberalism.

"But why, then," he wrote, "do those who fight the Hungarian monster not engage with its arguments? We have seen that they do not, so why keep repeating the same propositions in the same way? ... If it were a political debate, then the arguments would have changed, the evidence would have been evaluated, not ignored, the lion would lie down with the lamb, conjecture and refutation would flourish and everyone would be putting flowers on the grave of Karl Popper."

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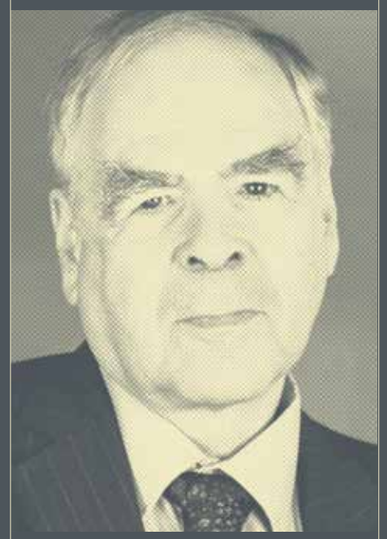


Schöpflin's allusion to Popper, the Austrian-born philosopher known for his devotion to liberal democracy, reflected both the range of the Hungarian's intellectual inquiry and the fact that he was a student in the UK at a time when Popper's ideas were at their height.

Although born in Budapest two months after the outbreak of the Second World War, Schöpflin was raised from the age of 10 in Britain, to which his father, Gyula, a noted author and former ambassador, had retreated with his family in 1950 after falling foul of the Soviet puppet regime led by Mátyás Rákosi.

Young György – who used the name George when writing in English – was a prodigy, who in the 1960s studied at the University of Glasgow, the Royal Institute of International Affairs and the newly-established College of Europe, in Bruges. As a teacher, speaking out on issues affecting national identity and the power of the state, he made his reputation at University College London, the LSE, the School of Slavonic and East European Studies and the University of Bologna.

But it was his return to Hungary – newly admitted to the EU – in 2004 that brought him to prominence outside academic circles. Elected to the European Parliament on behalf of Fidesz, the conservative movement headed by Orbán, he saw his role as standing up for what Americans would call states' rights against the ever-encroaching powers of the unelected European Commission.

Over the next 15 years, until his retirement in 2019, he continued to hammer away at the Commission, never letting up on his support for Fidesz, constantly warning that the EU was turning into its own worst enemy.

He will be remembered as a polemicist for whom the 20th century was a terrible warning of what can go wrong when a nation is bent to the will of forces outside its control. While his detractors cited his alleged propensity "to defend all the rotten stuff that oozes out of the Orbán regime," supporters were quick to recall his "outstanding dedication on behalf of the homeland". ¬

Linda Whetstone

17 November 1942 - 15 December 2021

The libertarian Brexiteer and daughter of the IEA founder was a stalwart defender of free-thinking and individual rights.

WALTER ELLIS

A Brexiteer who campaigned for the UK to make a clean break with the EU; a climate change sceptic and hardline opponent of the concept of net zero emissions; an ardent supporter of privatisation, to include the abolition of the National Health Service. Linda Whetstone was all of these things.

Her death, which was unexpected, occurred suddenly while she was attending a Liberty Forum and Freedom Dinner in Miami, Florida, on 15 December 2021. She was 79.

The daughter of the late Sir Antony Fisher, who in 1955 co-founded the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and, later, the US-based Atlas Network, Whetstone was raised to be not just a conservative but a proselytiser for libertarian opinion, particularly in the fields of economic development and the rights of the individual.

She worked tirelessly for many years to persuade governments, political institutions and business to eschew socialist dogma and to embrace the principles of self-help, free-thinking and the pursuit of profit.

One of her primary concerns was the untrammelled expansion of Islamic influence across the globe. She opposed what might be thought of as Muslim triumphalism and sought to replace it with a different way of interpreting the Prophet based on reason, free will and economic liberalism. She toured the Middle East and Africa, giving talks, conducting seminars and distributing CDs containing précis of the works of such political economists as Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek.

Ed Feulner, founder and former president of The Heritage Foundation,

She toured the Middle East and Africa, giving talks, conducting seminars and distributing CDs containing précis of the works of such political economists as Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek.

a Reaganite think tank headquartered in Washington DC, paid tribute, saying that her impact "ripples across the globe". It was visible, he said, in the work of entrepreneurs who could sell their wares on the street "without the harassment of corrupt officials," in private schools for the poor, in academics joined together in a worldwide network and in the raising of funds and resources that "spread the ideas of liberty".

Throughout her life, Whetstone remained true to her father's ideals, becoming chair of both the Atlas Network and the International Policy Network. She also served on the boards of the IEA and the Islam and Liberty Network.

Whetstone was born in the prosperous town of Binfield, Berkshire, on 17 November 1942, and educated privately, taking a degree in economics by correspondence course from London University. A keen horsewoman, she rose to be chair of the British Equestrian Federation Council, with a particular interest in dressage.

She was married to Francis Whetstone, a Lloyd's underwriter, with whom she had three children, including public relations executive Rachel Whetstone, well known for her roles at Google, Facebook and Netflix, and as former political secretary to then Conservative Party leader Michael Howard.

According to Robert Boyd, a trustee of the IEA, Whetstone "applied herself with enthusiasm, wisdom, strength of character, humility, kindness, generosity and good humour". Those who were fortunate to have known her held her "in both the highest esteem and the warmest affection". ¬

Donald Rumsfeld

9 July 1932 – 29 June 2021

The politician helped persuade President Bush to attack Iraq – with calamitous consequences.

GERALD WARNER

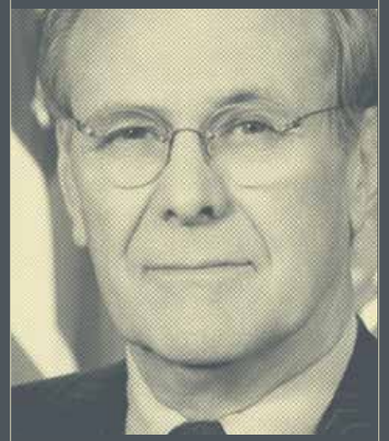
Donald Rumsfeld, one of the most controversial figures in American politics, was born in Chicago in 1932 and educated at Princeton University on a naval scholarship. He served in the Navy as an aviator and flight instructor between 1954 and 1957, then sought election to Congress, winning a seat in 1962, aged 30. In the House of Representatives, Rumsfeld was a prominent co-sponsor of the Freedom of Information Act.

In 1969 President Richard Nixon appointed Rumsfeld to head the Office of Economic Opportunity. Nixon subsequently appointed him counsellor to the president (1970-1971), director of the cost of living council (1971-1973), and finally ambassador to NATO in 1973. The following year he was recalled by President Gerald Ford, who made him White House chief of staff. He held this position for 14 months before being appointed in 1975 as secretary of defense. He was, at 43, the youngest incumbent to occupy the post.

It was a sensitive time, with fears of Soviet advances after America's humiliation in Vietnam. Rumsfeld oversaw the transition to a fully volunteer US military, the development of cruise missiles, the acceleration of the B-1 bomber programme and Ohio class nuclear submarines, and promoted cooperation between the Department of Defense and NASA, leading to the Space Shuttle programme. A qualified aviator, he personally flight tested the prototype of the B-1 bomber. His crowded tenure as defense secretary ended in January 1977 with the inauguration of Democrat Jimmy Carter as president.

Rumsfeld returned to the private sector for the remainder of the 20th century,

Rumsfeld supported claims that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction; when challenged about evidence he produced his notorious rambling remark about 'known unknowns'



serving as chief executive, president and then chairman of G. D. Searle & Company, a pharmaceutical firm, between 1977 and 1985. He subsequently served as chairman and chief executive of General Instrument Corporation, a broadcasting technology company which he took public and returned to profitability between 1990 to 1993.

Rumsfeld also continued public service part-time. He was appointed special envoy to the Middle East by President Ronald Reagan in 1983, when he had a prolonged discussion with the Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, at that time seen as a potential US ally. But it was in 2001 that the most contentious period of Rumsfeld's career began when, for a second time, he was appointed defense secretary, this time by President George W. Bush – at 68, he was the oldest individual to be appointed.

Less than nine months into the Bush presidency came the profound shock of the 9/11 attacks. Rumsfeld, who was in the Pentagon, rushed to the scene and helped stretcher and carry away an injured victim. His notes from that day show he was already planning to use the outrage as a pretext to crush America's enemies, beyond Osama bin Laden. US air and ground attacks on the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan were supported by Americans – but then Rumsfeld helped persuade Bush to turn on Iraq.

Rumsfeld supported claims that Hussein had weapons of mass destruction; when challenged about evidence he produced his misunderstood remark about "known unknowns" which undermined his credibility. The ruinous consequences of the Iraq War, the consequent destabilisation of the Middle East, the Abu Ghraib prison scandal and his blundering approach all wrought further damage. This catalogue of disasters, reinforced by bad results for the Republicans in the 2006 mid-term elections, the discontent of American generals over military equipment, and Rumsfeld's signing of condolence letters with a stamp, ended his career on 18 December 2006.

Rumsfeld continued to assert the rightness of his actions until he died, on 29 June 2021. He was a man whose talents were incontestable, but his achievements sporadic. ¬

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