A Time to FIGHT For

Corruption, Money Laundering and Murder: 
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Dear Readers,

Ours is indeed a time of fights. This Issue of BullsEye explores the fights currently ongoing around the world and those which we will need to pick up in the coming months and years to ensure a bright future for our societies.

In the last months, mass protests have broken out in countries from Lebanon to Spain and Bolivia. It is the biggest widespread outburst of protests since the mid-80s, when protests movements in different parts of the world contributed in bringing down the Berlin Wall, putting an end to the Cold War era. All are different fights - with distinct causes, methods and goals - but some common themes connect them. Inequality, corruption, political freedom and climate change are just some of the main reasons why these fights started, and the spark which generated them is far from fading out. Ours will also be a time to fight for new and sustainable solutions to these issues.

Protesters around the world are using technologies to organise, and new means of communications are emerging as an incredible tool of democracy. However, information technology also poses a serious threat to human rights and freedom. The concerns are vast and involve our personal life as much as global geopolitical and security issues.

The fight for women’s rights has also just knew a new start, and yet is already reshaping the organisation and culture of western societies. The question regarding feminism remains an open one, as even though much has been done to achieve equality, there is still a long way to go. We are proud to host for the very first time two articles investigating different aspects of this issue.

We did not forget to look at the international stage. As the world descends into greater instability and geopolitical competition, the space left to multilateralism erodes end, and at the same time, international and regional powers seems to have become less and less willing to separate the functioning of the global economy from political and security competition. Consequently, the liberal world trade system will jeopardise further and, with it, the set of shared values that aims to ensure high labour, environmental and social standards internationally.

These bleak trends call for an EU strategic awakening and for renewed efforts towards strengthening old alliances and partnership (or readapting them for the new times we live in). More than that, our times call for new ways to find innovative solutions to problems and write fresh paradigms to reach new agreements.

To paraphrase J. R. R. Tolkien, these are times that might look like certain stories from the past. Full of darkness and dangers, in which we might wonder how the world could go back to the way it was when so much bad happens. But in the end, if we are willing to fight, even the darkness must pass, and a new day will come. As Sam Gamgee puts it to Frodo Baggings in "The Lord of the Rings": "There’s some good in this world, Mr Frodo. And it’s worth fighting for.". This is our contribution to the fight.

Dear European Democrat Students Friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 78th edition of this magazine.

Let me start these forewords by quoting Ian Colin Taylor former British Chairman of EDS (1970-71’), on Brexit: “50 years ago I was the first UK chair of a centre-right European student group, now called EDS #EPPstudents, creating cross-border links helping UK join the EEC and bonds which then strengthened our role. Brexit is a strategic, economic, cultural and social setback. Sad.”

Brexit is now behind us; we have much to learn from the mistakes that led the British people to take such bold decision. I cannot but to express my sympathy for a people that has fought over and over for the freedom of our continent. We will wait for your return with open arms.

The history of BullsEye is a core part of the path that the students of the EPP undertook when they joined forces. Our organization will soon become sixty, an old age when compared to most of our current European institutions. This is an asset and a burden, as we have an important legacy to defend. In these years we fought first for the freedom of Eastern Europe, when it was under the rule of the USSR, then for the European enlargement and integration. Sadly, this will be the first issue after Brexit and thus it will be remembered by the generations to come.

In this issue, our editors analyze a broad set of issues that affect the present and the future of Europe. In this time of change and uncertainty new challenges are shaping the views of the public and our institutions need to bring certainty and answers. I am proud to know that our editors have faced in their articles these challenges without avoiding complicated questions.

Furthermore, this issue will be remembered by two contributions made by two EDS Alumni that have now developed a successful political career. Regarding the new Finnish government, you will be able to read an article written by Pentti Orpo, leader of the National Coalition Party and former Deputy Prime Minister. When it comes to analyzing the situation of corruption in Malta you will find a deep analysis by David Casa, MEP from the Maltese Nationalist Party.

Stay tuned on our social and let us know your thoughts!

Carlo Angrisano
EDS Chairman

Mattia Caniglia
Editor-in-Chief
Last December news spread out from Finland throughout the globe. Sanna Marin from the Social Democratic Party (S&D) was going to become the world’s youngest prime minister in a government coalition led entirely by women. Furthermore, four out of five party leaders are between 32 to 34 years old.

First of all, the sheer fact that this is possible in Finland, is something to be very proud of and it should not be taken for granted. Finland was the first country to grant full political rights to women in 1906 and ever since women have played an active role in developing our society. It is important that our children can grow up in an environment where they see that they can become the prime minister despite their gender. Also, the age can lead to false conclusions about a person’s abilities or the level of experience. Certain age is not a prerequisite for high office. People have individual sets of skills and experiences no matter the age or gender.

Equality of opportunity is profoundly a value of Kokoomus and EPP. We all must work towards ensuring its better realization in our societies. Your future should not be determined by your age, gender, or social background. However, the success of a government is also something that is not determined by someone’s gender or age. It is determined by actions and results.

To give a short background about the political situation in Finland: the last parliamentary elections were held in April 2019, after which a government coalition was formed by the Social Democratic Party (S&D), the Centre Party (RE), the Green League (Greens/EFA), the Left Alliance (GUE/NGL) and the Swedish People’s Party of Finland (RE). In the autumn, Antti Rinne, the Prime Minister at the time, lost the confidence of the Centre Party and thus the parliamentary majority because of his handling of the postal strike. Mr. Rinne had to resign and shortly after Ms Marin was sworn in. Prime Minister Marin’s government was formed by the same parties which also accepted the same government programme that was negotiated after the parliamentary elections. Ultimately the only change was a minor reshuffle of positions. Sticking with the same programme meant also sticking with its problems.

The positive side of the programme is that it includes investments to education, people’s wellbeing and security. The worrying part is that to fund these investments, according to the government itself, the most important individual element of the revenue base is to raise the employment rate to 75 per cent. With a rapidly ageing population and global economic insecurities that goal should be the very minimum.

Unfortunately, the government seems to have prioritised spending the money before figuring out how to create it. By the time of writing, all truly effective decisions on the labour market reforms have been postponed. Fortunately, the solutions do exist, and we have already provided many of them.

Firstly, in August we published our own list of actions which, according to a set of estimations, would bring 60 000 new jobs. Many of those ideas have been out there and discussed for a long time. There should be no excuse for postponing these vital decisions. Not all of them are easy to make, but if 60 000 new jobs could be achieved by easy and simple decisions, they would have been made a long time ago.

Secondly, it is a custom for Finnish opposition parties to draft an alternative budget in order to present their own solutions. In November, we demonstrated in our alternative budget that it is possible to make important investments in education and infrastructure, while taking care of the economy and securing a sustainable financial basis for our Nordic welfare model.

The key to everything is the employment rate. Our parliament’s independent information service provided calculations according to which our alternative budget would increase employment by 26 000 compared to the government’s budget, while the government’s budget for 2020 was calculated in fact to decrease employment by 5 000!

To conclude, the rapid and worldwide media interest showed us how important it is to have a widely representative political leadership and different kinds of people in high offices. However, what matters the most are the tangible results of government’s policies and actions. Our duty in the opposition is to challenge the government and to offer our own solution.
10 Years of Eastern Partnership: Between Geopolitics and Transformation

How it started?

10 years ago, as a part of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Eastern Partnership (EaP) was founded. Its aim was to accelerate political association, foster socio-economic integration and deepen relations between the European Union (EU) and its six Eastern neighbours: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, countries that are located geographically between Russia and the European Union.

The reasoning behind the Eastern Partnership was based on both the European aspirations towards post-Soviet countries and their lack of social, economic and democratic development, which could potentially worsen to become a threat to political stability and regional security.

From its beginning the EaP was seen as a tool for the convergence of eastern partner countries and the EU and it was not about getting a ticket for membership of the EU. This logic was based on the understanding that transformation would follow democratization. In this case, the EU relied on the assumption that the EaP could follow the same plan that led to democratic and economic change in Central Eastern Europe offering a kind of “light version” of EU enlargement. In reality, however, this scenario has proved quite difficult to replicate. By focusing more on the transformation process of the Eastern Neighbourhood, the EU has forgotten about the historical and cultural specifics of the region but more importantly, about Russia’s possible resistance to this project.

Where are we?

As a result, over the past 10 years EaP have experienced ups and downs, democratic deficiencies, protracted reform processes while being constantly targeted by Russia’s aggressive geopolitical interventions, aimed to stop the euro integrationist movements of these countries. The Euro Maidan event in Ukraine, Russia’s annexation of Crimea, the war in Eastern Ukraine, constant protest movements in Moldova and Georgia, the Velvet Revolution in Armenia are some of the most relevant events that have shaken the region during all this period.

Despite these challenges, since its establishment and until now, EaP has recorded a number of tangible achievements. This includes the Association Agreements (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) with Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, as well as visa liberalization for these three countries. This has led to the formation of a group of front runners making visible differentiation between partners according to the level of ambition in their relations with the EU, leaving behind countries like Armenia that agreed only on a new Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and Azerbaijan and Belarus that negotiate ‘Partnership priorities’.

However, even within the group of most advanced partner countries, the EU has become very cautious about designating countries as “frontrunners” in the reform process because the experience has shown that the pathway towards democratization is not irreversible. Of these three countries, Moldova, once considered the “success story” of EaP and a front-runner of EU integration has registered a considerable downgrade in its development toward democracy and the rule of law. While Ukraine currently faces a conflict and Georgia seems to be suffering a certain stagnation although currently showing the best results.

In all these countries, one of the biggest obstacles in the reforming process is the resistance of vested interests. Oligarchic structures are widespread across post-Soviet Eastern Europe (except Belarus) and, by acting outside democratic system and institutional checks and balances, they have control over economic assets, mass media, political parties and key state institutions. As a result, EaP registers limited performance in terms of democratic and socio-economic transition, facing constant difficulties in enforcing reforms aimed at strengthening the rule of law or combating corruption.

Having said that, within EaP countries European integration is no longer a topic of foreign policy, but rather of internal policy, representing a major source of legitimacy for most of their governments. The political developments in the region such as the government changes in Armenia, the victory of the Volodymyr Zelensky in Ukraine’s 2019 presidential elections, as well as the fall of Plahotniuc’s regime in Moldova, are all the signs that the transformation process, though slow and difficult, is to a certain extent taking place despite resistance from local elites and foreign influences. This evidence is not to underestimate, as in the long run, the EaP cannot succeed without delivering on its “transformational agenda”.

The last Eastern Partnership Summit (the main fora in which the heads of governments of EU member states and partner states convene) has shown a more realist and pragmatic EU approach towards the Eastern Partners, offering conditional assistance, according to the principle of ‘more for more or less for less’. But the question is what the EU can offer in exchange for these demands of reform? In the absence of a membership perspective, the only tangible short-term advantage was visa liberalisation, which has already been acquired by all associated partners. Other ‘carrots’ hardly seems to be available, and this could ultimately demotivate EaP countries to perform.

For the EU, the EaP is more about promoting development than about geopolitical interests, being considered as a form of “soft-power” influence, rather than an instrument of the “hard-power” competition with Russia. Russia, however, had always opposed the Western influence in its neighbourhood in general and the EaP in particular.

During the last 10 years, Russia registered a considerable loss of influence over EaP countries. Moscow understands that if the EaP project succeeds, democratic and economic
reform would stabilize its member countries, thereby strengthening them against external political interference and limiting Moscow capabilities to exert influence over its neighbours.

That is why exploiting EU weaknesses, Russia responded to EU soft power with instruments of hard power, as happened in Ukraine, combined with effective propaganda while the EU was distracted dealing with crises over the Euro, refugees, and, finally, Brexit.

Today the EaP faces a double challenge. The transformation it was meant to bring about has not yet fully been achieved, while a conflict with Russia for which it was not designed became a reality. An interesting fact is that this “Russian factor” is often used by most of EaP countries governments to justify reluctance to implement reforms that may threaten their hold on political and economic stability. As a consequence, the EU is facing an important dilemma: on the one hand, it might want to push on the “European aspirations” of EaP states and use them as the driving force behind a democratic reform process, while it is now fully conscious that those very European aspirations have resulted in geopolitical tensions and political instability which resulted in slowing down the reform process.

What next?

Ten years of the Eastern Partnership is certainly an important anniversary and a good opportunity to think about how much has been achieved and which are the direct or indirect results. Since the EaP’s establishment, many areas of cooperation have been explored and the EaP has delivered on many of its procedural objectives, at least with regard to the Association Agreement and DCFTAs. Through this project EU has offer blueprints and assistance but the responsibility for undertaking reforms still rest with local elites. Good governance should remain EU’s top priority in the EaP region, because the lack of progress in this area represents a considerable risk for the EU. Negative developments of social and economic situation, the prospect of state capture, and the disintegration of states could create direct threats to regional stability and to the security of the Union.

Understanding this, a new vision for the neighbourhood countries should be developed. Now it is maybe the right time for the EU to go beyond merely promoting reforms in the EaP and effectively take co-responsibility for them. This could mean upgrading the principle of conditionality and getting involved more directly in implementation.

Doing this would mean to renew the Eastern Policy finally make it bold, with clearer expectations, reachable aims and motivating rewards.
Von der Leyen’s Agenda for Europe

The new European Commission, which came into office on the first of December after an autumn of reoccurring candidate hearings and delays, has set out their agenda for their term. Ursula von der Leyen has chosen six different areas for the European Union to strengthen and focus on during the coming five years. What are they? Are they realistic? and what will Dr. von der Leyen be pushing hardest on?

**A European Green Deal**

Environmental reform is a big priority for the new commission and the European Green Deal, which was presented to the parliament in December, is an ambitious “roadmap” with the aim for Europe to become the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050. The package is widely stretched, covering a lot of areas from taxation to regulation to investments. In total funds of staggering 3 trillion euros will be put into the project over long-term.

The goals are ambitious and send a clear signal to the member states that they have to level up on climate action and investment in green transformation. It is a bold move to take such a strong leadership for the new commission. For sure it is one that will mobilise the member states and puts the EU in a more profiled position in a very central topic all around the continent.

**An economy that works for people**

The proposals on the economic area are a kit of several reforms stretching from business-friendly reforms and strengthening the single market to building the social pillar, evening taxation throughout the union and introducing policies for equality across the continent. The latter Mrs. von der Leyen has proven to hold close to her heart, being the first woman in the highest office in Brussels she pushed to have a completely gender-equal commission, a proposal she almost managed to carry through before the elections. The current commission is almost gender-equal which sends a strong message to member states and citizens that of gender equality.

Many reforms of this area can be very hard to get into legislation with some reforms breaking old praxis, like the sovereignty of member states for forming taxation policy. Some reforms have also been argued to be populist and left-wing, e.g. forcing corporate boards to be gender-equal and implementing a European minimum wage. Reforms which goes on the contrary to countries like the Nordics in which governments have held their hands away from the labour market, leaving salaries to unions and employer associations to form.

**A stronger Europe in the world**

Throughout autumn, Ursula von der Leyen has spoken many times about her ambition to strengthen Europe’s position on the global stage. In her first press conference after taking over the office in the Charlemagne building in Brussels from Jean-Claude Junker, she declared that her commission would be a geopolitical one. What impact this will have is still quite unclear. Mrs. von der Leyen says she will put “external action” as a point in the weekly meetings. What impact this will have is still quite unclear. Mrs. von der Leyen says she will put “external action” as a point in the weekly meetings.

The question is if it is not too late and too little that is done for competitiveness in the digital area. For sure it is one that will mobilise the member states and puts the EU in a more profiled position in a very central topic all around the continent.

**A Europe fit for the digital age**

The challenges facing the European labour market and economy in a digital age are in much new and different from what the union has dealt with in the past. When private companies are having more power over citizens than governments it is a completely new situation. To deal with this the commission president has proposed a package on legislation concerning AI, a “digital service act” that will take a full single market into the digital sector. Harmonisation of regulations in the digital sector within the EEA is much requested since the absence of which are today holding tech companies away from seeing Europe as a single market.

For Europe to be competitive with the digital superpowers of China and the USA this is vital and that the commission now lifts these issues is well needed. Europe has for the past few years lost grounds in the digital sector. In an analysis of the worlds unicorns within the tech sector that CNN made by the valuation 2017, it is mainly the UK and Sweden that has a presence at all. The centres of tech are based in western USA and eastern China, Europe has to catch up.

The question is if it is not too late and too little that is done for competitiveness in the digital area.

**Promoting our European way of life**

The title of this part may sound as if it were to protect cultural values, but the contents of it are focused on security and justice. The new commission says that they will start monitoring the upholding of the rule of law much closer, which has been made relevant by some member states who seem to be moving in a direction which is not compatible with the standards and values of liberal rule-based democracy, upon which the European Union is built. Additionally, changes to the Dublin treaty include stronger border protection by investments in Frontex and strengthening internal security to return to a functioning Schengen.

Free movement of people within the Schengen area has not been upheld since the autumn of 2015 when the migration crisis hit Europe. Still to this date, member states have passport controls at their borders, an inconvenience for commuters. For example, in the greater Copenhagen area trains over the Oresund-bridge now take up to half an hour longer in each direction. The new normal, without a working Schengen, cannot become the long-term normal.

It is welcomed that the commission connects these issues into one package as they are connected. The inner security cannot be upheld if the outer borders are not.

**A new push for European democracy**

From the batch of proposals presented by Ursula von der Leyen on the topic of democracy the most controversial and discussed one is to hand the right of initiative, which is now a privilege of the commission, over to the European Parliament. The right of initiative will allow MEPs to vote with a majority on a particular proposal; with the commission following up with legislative proposals within three months. This has been a praxis that has been more and more clear over the past few years. What is new in this proposal is that it is increases transparency in the process. Some argue that this idea was a last-minute method to convince MEPs to support the election of von der Leyen. Other initiatives that are being considered in the area focusing on strengthening transparency include reforming the ‘Spitzenkandidat’ system, amongst others.

The question to be answered about the agenda of Ursula von der Leyen is if she will manage to go through with all that she has promised. The question of whether - since she got elected - she has tried to promise everything to everyone has been raised many times around Europe. When taking a glance at the agenda put out in the run-up to her election this summer, it is easy to understand why doubts on whether she promised everything to everyone, rise. The agenda is far-reaching, both for the good and bad, covering many areas which will be crucial for Europe in the years to come. Digitalisation and security are two of these areas. But is there a red line going through it all? Ideologically it is not entirely coherent. The trillion-dollar fund for green investment as part of the European Green Deal will have to be paid for by someone, gender quotas on corporate boards should make most centre-right politicians turn backwards when risking women becoming trapped in a constant quotation.

As the agenda touches on points that are controversial to member states and threatens their sovereignty over certain areas and aspects, the term for the new commission will be one of a constant battle to push the agenda through. The doctor of medicine and mother-of-eight in its chair has declared that she is up for it. The question is if she will make her way through as a winner.
The (R)evolutionary Change. The Costs of the Chinese Economic Miracle

It was October 1949 when the founding of the People’s Republic of China was proclaimed. After the first decades of unsuccessful social experiments, the 70 years anniversary of Chinese communism were marked by the astonishing result of raising hundreds of millions of people from poverty and the life expectancy of Chinese citizens more than twice. China seems to have prospered by putting forward an alternative to Western values and principles, but it might be the case that Beijing spectacular success on an economic level is in fact blinding us from seeing the costs that had to be bore to achieve it.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) has been constantly building the legitimacy of its power since 1949. Firstly, by creating a New China of Mao Zedong and giving China it’s most desired, yet not economically successful, sovereignty. The deliberate economic success of Deng Xiaoping’s Opening Reform in 1978, made the CPC the only player capable of preserving China’s epochal leap for the people’s lives. Since then, life for the country’s majority Han ethnic group has stabilised, consumption and individual incomes rose significantly, giving to many the majority Han ethnic group has stabilised, consumption for the people’s lives. Since then, life for the country’s only player capable of preserving China’s epochal leap for the Soviet Union, China with its semi-colonial and semi-feudal society chose a very different revolutionary road. Such as Buddhism in the first Millennium, also Marx and Lenin’s ideas were sinicised and introduced into the context of Chinese history and cultural heritage. Socialism with Chinese characteristics made it possible over the last 40 years to outline and implement long-term plans, allowed for the distribution of capital to strategic projects, regardless of short-term obstacles and the social cost of enormous environmental degradation caused by industrialisation and urbanisation. Total control of the nation and economy made it possible to safely fuel into China giant foreign direct investment over the past 40 years. The concentration of power in the hands of CPC, made possible to concentrate almost infinite reservoirs of cheap, disciplined labour, which had not any bargaining power as to its human and trade union rights.

Since the crackdown on the democratic movement in 1989, the economic struggles of the workers were highly atomised and spontaneous. The socialism with Chinese characteristics allowed principals to ignore the growing social inequality resulting from differentiation in access to public life depending on party affiliation and the lack of opportunities for vertical social promotion. However, as long as the daily economic situation of the Chinese keeps on getting better, the population seems to be ready to tolerate and turn a blind eye to the problems related to freedom and human rights under the authoritarian regime.

Considering these elements, an important question is to be considered, as to what will happen in the event of an economic crisis or stagnation, especially as the economic growth is now the slowest in decades. This could open worrying prospect, also considering that the CPC control over state and economy is reaching levels never experienced since 1978. There are no potential competitors to the smallest extent capable to form an alternative to the CPC regime and therefore the only question remains how the views may eventually differ inside the party.

Starting in 2017 Xi Jinping has been concentrating an unprecedented amount of power into his hands. In search of new sources to upkeep CPC’s legitimacy, he passionately implemented the strategy of fuelling nationalism and the mentality of a besieged fortress. Protection of human rights is not a goal for the government despite the recent rule by law rhetoric. China, instead, places more emphasis on its international promotion and enhancing soft power. Beijing currently eagerly offers the developing countries a model of modernisation, introducing its achievements to the market as part of its global propaganda activities.

But, are the Chinese achievements in any way applicable to countries with other realities or with different ambitions with regards to human rights and equality?
Corruption, Money Laundering and Murder:
Malta’s Struggle for Transparency

Malta often comes with the disclaimer saying that it is the EU’s smallest member state. Indeed, all else considered, its smallness remains one of its most striking features to the continental European. Its smallness is not just a quirk, but a reality from which real implications flow for the socio-political reality on the island. One would do well to hold onto this idea while navigating the relatively monolithic saga that engulfed tiny Malta, because for a country of its size to be thrown into the powerful spotlight of international infamy means that, something had to have gone really and truly awry.

The beginning of this infamous saga precedes a car bomb that blew up on 16 October 2017. The bomb that propelled Malta into crisis seemed according to some the worst characteristics of a polarised nation embroiled in corruption at many levels. In many ways, the can of worms that that explosion opened did not just stop with the victim who was driving that car that fateful afternoon.

The victim was a woman and a journalist called Daphne Caruana Galizia. In Malta, mentioning ‘Daphne’ was enough for anyone to understand to whom you were referring. Her influence made her nothing less than a major player in Maltese politics, even when she had never contested an election. Her readership was wide enough that she could unilaterally match the most established publications on the island, reaching as many readers as that was supposed to be prosecuting. He was also on the board of the Financial Intelligence and Analysis Unit, a body infamous for the vast amounts of political pressure that rendered it ineffectual in successfully investigating political figures. Another investigator, Keith Arnaud, allegedly leaked information to Keith Schembri.

Case closed? We are getting closer, but serious institutional shortcomings are continually posing problems in the process. The ignition of just under half a kilogram of trinitrotoluene that dark day exposed significant and far-reaching problems with the rule of law in Malta. Joseph Muscat’s prolonged and involved role in the investigation has endangered the integrity of the trial. His judgement has been everything but impartial because his personal friends and colleagues were involved.

As of today, Keith Schembri is still allowed to go abroad. Police investigators were found to have serious conflicts of interest in the case, and in bad faith refused to step away. Silvio Valletta, the husband of an ex-cabinet minister, was filmed “fooling around” in the Rolls Royce of the man he was supposed to be prosecuting. He was also on the board of the Financial Intelligence and Analysis Unit, a body infamous for the vast amounts of political pressure that rendered it ineffectual in successfully investigating political figures. Another investigator, Keith Arnaud, allegedly leaked information to Keith Schembri.

More details on institutional failure are emerging, even today. The Venice Commission, the legal advisory body of the Council of Europe that deals with constitutional design, effectively a King. He appointed the police commissioner, the attorney general, and a range of constitutional bodies from the Electoral Commission, to the Malta Financial Services Authority, to the Public Service Commission, and more. Worryingly, he even appointed magistrates and promoted them to judges, a system that falls international standards.

Changes need to be made. Still, many notable voices argue that radical constitutional change is not the way forward. Indeed, our Constitution, while not perfect, has stood tall for over half a century (with some turbulence), and only now has Malta had to weather such a crisis. And, yes, conflicts of interest have never been uncommon in a place characterised first and foremost by smallness, but what is happening now is something else.

The Daphne Caruana Galizia case has important implications for the entire nation of Malta and its institutions. Giovanni Bonello, a Judge Emeritus of the European Court of Human Rights, is a respected voice who believes Malta’s Constitution was designed for gentlemen; problems break out in the hands of scoundrels. We will continue fighting for a strong Malta that does not succumb to such scandalous corruption, but stands firm on its principles and values.
Lebanese Revolution 2.0

As civil unrest and demonstrations across the world rage on, people at every latitude take the streets to defend their basic human rights, protest their governments and fight for better economic conditions. In this context one of the most impressive protest actions is taking place in Lebanon. The scale, motive and aims of what media are already calling a revolution are unprecedented, but the path towards political change does not seem to be an easy one for the land of the Cedars. 

A troubled history

Prior to the Lebanese Civil War of 1975, Lebanon was considered the Switzerland of the East, Beirut was as a major economic hub attracting investments from all over the world and international firms used to establish their regional headquarters in Beirut. The dream was broken by a bloody 15-year conflict ended with the Syrian occupation of the country. In the 90s Lebanon experienced the political control and influence of the neighbouring Syrian government, which almost systematically suppressed political opposition either jailing or exiling its most prominent public figures.

Only in 2005, the Syrian occupation finally withdrew from Lebanon, following the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. This allowed former opposition leaders to re-enter the political scene and start to play an active part in building a new order for Lebanon. Since 2005 till today, political parties bickered and fought for control over the executive and legislative branches of the country; however, some structural problems of the country persisted and were not even addressed so they can be reformed. A stagnant economy, a huge public debt and rising social divisions and conflict contributed in creating a difficult situation. In 2016, the election of President Michel Aoun promised the Lebanese people a new dawn and the illusion that the political establishment was finally willing to implement reforms and deliver change. The parliamentary elections of 2018, the first held in Lebanon in the past 9 years, even appeared to give a new legitimacy to a new political order, however, the president’s reform ambitions did not take shape in reality pushing the country back into its structural problems and starting a new season of political turmoil.

The Straw that breaks the camel’s back

In 2019, the Lebanese government came again under strong pressure to curb its budget deficit. Amid stagnant economic growth and slowing capital inflows, the late and inadequate government actions did not have the positive impact and resulted in breaking all the promises made by the political establishment during the 2018 elections. Once again, the people were promised transparency, jobs and a new era in the Lebanese politics, and on again their expectations were deluded.

In order to understand the contest of the events that followed, it is important to take a step back and underline some evidence regarding the country situation. Lebanon’s economy has been in a dire state for some time. According to the 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index drafted by Transparency International, Lebanon is the 138 least corrupt nation out of 175 countries. Corruption Rank in Lebanon averaged 115.25 from 2003 until 2018, reaching an all-time high of 143 in 2017 and a record low of 63 in 2006. This ranking put Lebanon on par with countries like Iran, Russia and Central African Republic. In 2018, Lebanon’s budget only allocated 8% for investment. A whopping 34% of the budget was allocated to wages. Additionally, Lebanon recorded a government debt equivalent to 151 percent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product in 2018. This is the third highest in the world behind only Japan and Greece. That is why 32% of the allocated budget was set aside debt interest in 2018.

With all this background and while discussing the 2020 Budget on October 17, 2019, the government announced a plan to introduce a 20 cents-per-day fee for internet calls, including Facebook and WhatsApp. It also proposed to raise VAT to 15 per cent by 2022. To put it bluntly, instead of cracking down on corruption and cut its unnecessary spending, the government decided to tax its people. And that was the last straw. Thousands of protesters took the streets, accusing leaders of corruption and mishandling the economy.

We can start a fire

From North to the South, the fires of protests spread, and people stayed on the street and blocked roads in order to force the government to reconsider its actions. Remarkably, for the first time since the Lebanese people demanded their independence, the population did not discuss or differentiated between religions or sects, but they acted as one, united people.

In answer to this massive wave of protests, the government tried to propose and enact a reform program; however, the protesters did not believe the officials could deliver on these offers. Demonstrations continued demanding the government’s resignation. On October 29, Prime Minister Saad哈里 resigned bowing to the new demands of the people. Since then, the protests have not stopped for one single day pressuring political parties and figures to form a government of independent experts.

However, most political parties have not heard these protests and have tried to reform the government in ways that will benefit them and keep them in power. As local papers and television reported, the major parties were quarrelling about cabinet positions more than discussing a serious agenda to deliver a real change. This sparked fresh protests which turned into riots between protestors and official security forces. The protesters have been demanding a government that will be able to solve the current economic crisis.

There is no doubt that the measures that need to be undertaken to bring Lebanon out of the current economic situation are tough measures, but these measures can be implemented by the officials if they have the intention to. Local and international economic experts discussed at lengths the actions and policies that the parliament and new government must implement in order to change the economic conditions of the country. Experts highlighted that crackdown on corruption and reform must be enacted.

One of the major reform project that experts talk about is the one of the public sector. The Lebanese public sector is sizeable sector accounting for almost $16 billion in 2018 that has been largely inefficient. There are government departments with little to no meaningful role. Economic experts have indicated that the first step to enact reform is to reduce the size of the public sector’s workforce. Other proposed solutions are related to industries like the electricity that take huge part of the government’s budget. The electricity industry is highly mismanaged and wastes government funds on inefficient projects. There are many solutions available to the official in charge in order to halt the economic crisis currently hitting Lebanon; however, the most important element to implement these solutions is the political will.

The past 3 months has been a turning point in the Lebanese modern history. The harsh economic conditions have united a Lebanese population across the country to fight for a better tomorrow. From Tripoli in the North to Jbeil, Jounieh, Beirut, Tyre, and Nabatiyeh to the South, protestors are still today fighting for better economic conditions for themselves and their children. However, even though we have crossed 100 days of protests, there are some people in power who refuse to abide and listen to the demands of the people. As Article D of the Lebanese constitution says “The people are the source of authority and sovereignty”. These protests are proving that some of the politicians are illegitimate because they do not hold the trust of the Lebanese people.
Algorithms of Repression: How Information Technology Could Impose a Threat to Human Rights

Communication and access to knowledge form the core of a free world. Whether it is used as tool in a still ongoing struggle for freedom or as medium of expression in an already established state, information technology constitutes one of the carrying pillars of democracy. Nevertheless, it could also become a reason for collapse as we blindly rely on it, while it bears the potential to temper with some of our most basic rights.

Algorithms and the threat to freedom of expression

A Eurostat study shows that already in 2017 almost three quarters of the interviewed adults stated to obtain their daily news from online sources. Whether that constitutes a conventional or more cutting-edge media outlet or just individual opinions, with this transition of media and news perception our society found a new form of freedom, however, it is a delicate one as it can be steered externally.

While the range of the very thought itself and hence the core of freedom of expression still remains untouched, the right to access slowly evolves to more of a grey area. Code did not only begin to govern what the vast majority of the audience eventually receives, but in the future might control what content is even deemed appropriate for upload.

Filter Bubbles

Following the theorem of social homophily, search engine and social media providers enhance user experience by targeting the inherited congenital tendency of humankind to surround themselves with like-minded people. While empirical data is rather difficult to gather and evaluate, we all remember incidences as Cambridge Analytica and gross data misuse or bots during political elections distorting the public opinion. Essentially, these severe allegations stand next to small-scale and everyday manipulations. As personalized user experiences patronise and control the news we receive, social media content and contacts that we find on our feed and of course the news we receive, social media content and contacts that we find on our feed.

Internet Blockades

Governments may decide to generally blacklist a number of websites or they can restrict access by simply slowing down the speed severely. As most radical measure they may order telecommunication companies to shut down their services completely and hence block all internet access. While in most countries, telecommunication providers could fight these measures before court, they often rely on governmental goodwill and therefore keep quiet.

Biorientics and the threat to freedom of religion

Biorientics is the science of analysing physical or behavioural characteristics specific to each individual to be able to authenticate their identity. While we all enjoy those little conveniences of unlocking our phones by face recognition or opening our front doors with the touch of a thumb, we should be aware of more questionable use of this information. This is because biorientics does not only enable a device to recognise a particular user, but it also allows singling someone out in a crowd.

Even though this may sound like a scenario taken from a conspiracy thriller, it has already turned into a horrific truth for the Wéi wú ěr zú (an ethnic minority of Uighurs) living in the province of Xinjiang and the rest of the People’s Republic of China. As they are of Turkic origin and Muslim belief, they constitute one of 55 officially recognised minority groups within the mainly irreligious P.R.C.

Due to the region’s continuous struggle regarding ethnic and national identity, the Chinese government installed a broad monitoring system with checkpoints, security cameras and so-called re-education camps. To justify these measures, Běijīng’s leaders are referring to the west’s notorious “war on terror”. As the government, however, does not limit surveillance to the presumably critical area of Xinjiang, it is clear that they are purposely targeting a specific minority, leaving the Uighurs with no chance to escape the ethnically and religiously motivated oppression.

China is the first known example of a government intentionally using artificial intelligence for racial profiling, experts say. It is allegedly used to spot and single out people of Uighur heritage all over the country, even in wealthy eastern cities like Hángzhōu and Wènzhōu, and across the coastal province of Fújiān. In central Chinese Sānménxiá alone, such software to screen inhabitants for Uighurs was supposedly used 500,000 times over the course of a month this past year.
Chinese Tech Companies have started to invest actively in the field of targeting so-called “sensitive groups”. The state-supported start-up Cloud Walk even publicly brags with the efficiency of their systems as they state on their website: “If originally one Uighur life in a neighbourhood, and within 20 days six Uighurs appear, it (editorial note: their surveillance system) immediately sends alarms.”

As the Western world is quick to condemn such unbearably dreadful impressions, we should not consider our principles safe either as a code can ever only be as ethical as its creator. As long as we are still facing issues of racism and prejudice as global challenges, it is not easy to ensure our software to be free from such injustices. Whether purposely incorporated or accidentally indoctrinated, the vast majority of programmers will most likely inherit stereotypical views of different kinds or be unconsciously biased. If not vigilantly monitored, such misconceptions or a lack of data and awareness can easily be transmitted to the product. As recent tests, for example, have shown, facial recognition systems made by companies as I.B.M. and Amazon are struggling in terms of accuracy concerning the identification of people with a darker skin tone.

Freedom or Downfall?

With crossing the threshold to the digital era, humanity has supposedly created a new kind of freedom for itself, designing tools to connect globally without any borders, access to never-ending knowledge and the power to truly express oneself in every possible way. On the other hand, however, we might find ourselves slowly easing into a continuous loss of rights that until now have been considered untouchable. Hence it is time to lift the veil of this so-called freedom and reveal its true form as being Janus-faced, so that we can take the measures needed.

Political leaders ought to introduce clear boundaries for the technology, we design, in order to stop human rights from being diluted. As John Locke put it, such guarantees only go as far as to the point where they begin to interfere with another individual or other rights. Essentially, what good does it do, if we create tools for global communication, however, we are not free in receiving and contributing the content? Or tools which intend to make us feel more secure, if they are being misused in a way that endangers democracy?

While nobody could or even should try to stop progress, it is a crucial time to start raising awareness for the issues at hand. Not necessarily because we are already going down the wrong path, but to ensure that we will continue not to do so in the future.

In view of global uncertainty and increasing protectionism, it is up to the European Union to take the lead in defending the liberal world trade system and, with it, the set of shared values that aims to ensure high labour, environmental and social standards internationally. A strategy that is designed to promote free trade worldwide should primarily strengthen and reform the role of the WTO as the backbone of a multilateral trade order, secondly promote the benefits of free trade throughout the world and thirdly deepen free trade with the USA and other countries and regions.

At the beginning of 2018, the USA, hitherto a champion of the liberal world trade order, caused great concern by raising tariffs on steel and aluminium. In the months that followed, a spiral of reciprocal protectionist measures developed. Fears of an escalation of the conflict up to a trade war were repeatedly raised, which would have a severe impact on international value chains and thus on the global economy. Almost two years later, the conflict between the USA and China has calmed down somewhat. In May, the two powers agreed on the exchange of tariffs, both powers reached a partial agreement. Despite this temporary success, the current state of free trade is worse than it has been for a long time. Around the globe, scepticism about globalization and trade has increased noticeably in past years. Recent figures from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank confirm a trend of increasing tariff and non-tariff trade barriers. Trade restrictions among the G20 countries have grown steadily in the last years, currently affecting more than 50% of exports, compared with 20% in 2009. This explains to a large extent why investments are declining and international trade as a share of global GDP has fallen to 58% since then, after rising from 39% to 61% in the period 1990-2008.

While the USA is adopting a protectionist stance and threatening to escalate trade conflicts it has itself instigated, the former Opening of China is increasingly being replaced by aggressive state capitalism. Through an increasing support and establishment of state-owned enterprises (99 of China’s 100 largest listed companies are majority-owned by the state), the government intends to stimulate the international competitiveness of its economy and at the same time create an uneven playing field at home.

The WTO should remain the foundation of world trade

Efforts to fight protectionist measures should start from the WTO system of multilateral rules, this applies all the more today as we see bilateral agreements undermining the WTO’s multilateral nature. The WTO is estimated to have generated a total annual increase in prosperity of USD 855 Billion for its members around the globe, which corresponds to an average gain in GDP of 4.5% per member country. However, without enforcement of rules, a rule-based system cannot exist for long. The erosion of the WTO’s dispute settlement mechanism is shaking the binding nature of rules in world trade. It must be defended and urgently adapted so that it can no longer be blocked by individual countries. In addition, far-reaching reforms are needed: The WTO regularly fails because of the divergent interests of its 164 members. For example, the Doha Round agreed in 2001 - a package of measures for multilateral trade liberalisation - has not yet been concluded. The biggest flaw in the WTO’s rules and regulations is that it is not designed to bring together the fundamentally different and, in many respects, incompatible economies of the West and the East. While China favours its state-controlled economy through subsidies, the rules of the WTO do not allow for an adequate and effective response from its trading partners. In addition to updating the WTO with respect to the exchange of environmental goods, climate protection, cross-border data flows as well as e-commerce, the EU should take precautions and advocate for setting up a core-WTO. A kind of club system of democratic market economies could intensify economic integration and provide sufficient leverage in dealing with incompatible economies in a world of systemic competition.

The EU must publicly counter misleading protectionist arguments and support the political forces that advocate an economically sound position

The European Union should unremittingly communicate the benefits of international trade and counter mercantilist
and populist rhetoric. Politicians like Donald Trump like to argue falsely that free trade is a zero-sum game, thereby ignoring that trade is instead the source of our global prosperity. As a result of the enormous intensification of global economic integration since the 1980s, prosperity has increased in almost all countries worldwide, while not only has the number of people living in poverty fallen globally, but inequality between countries has also decreased. Without the international division of labour, many of today’s achievements would be unthinkable. The global spread of technological progress has not only benefitted the West but has enabled people in developing countries to gain increasing access to innovation in, e.g., medicine, agriculture or education. Trump likes to base his rhetoric about the winners and losers of trade on the large trade deficit of the United States, which in his opinion reflects the country’s losses due to globalization. What Trump fails to recognise, however, is that the link between net exports and GDP that he refers to does not per se reflect a causal relation. Of course, higher exports would increase US GDP - but the opposite would be the case if additional tariffs led to a decline in imports of goods and consequently increased costs for firms and consumers.

After George W. Bush imposed tariffs on steel imports in 2002, some 200,000 workers lost their jobs - more than the entire steel industry employed. According to a 2018 study by the Peterson Institute of Economics, a 25% import tariff on cars and potential retaliation would put about 624,000 jobs in the US at risk. Granted, although international trade leads to the economic cake growing, there can still be losers whose piece of the cake is smaller than it would be without free trade. When an economy opens up to other countries, competition leads to lower prices and drives innovation and growth. An inevitable consequence, however, is that companies disappear from the market because they are no longer competitive. It is the responsibility of the government to compensate the losers, but also to increase the mobility of workers in order to achieve a better result for all. And it has all the resources to do so because, indeed, the cake does grow! In the US, where the social network is very permeable, efforts to compensate the losers were inadequate in the past, and that is why there is so much resistance in parts of the population against opening up trade today.

The European Union itself could make even greater use of the advantages of liberalising world trade. This applies to its relations with the USA as well as with other regions, such as India, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, the ASEAN states and the African states. Trump is not wrong in his criticism of the European Union’s sometimes high tariffs, for example on cars. In the broadest sense, this also includes efforts by individual member states to introduce a special tax on the revenue of digital companies, which can be interpreted by the USA as a protectionist measure. However, despite trade policy frictions, the USA is and remains Europe’s most important export partner. Transatlantic economic relations remain of particular importance not least because we are united by common values.
Questioning NATO’s Fifth Commandment and the struggle for a European Strategic Autonomy

 Thou shall not kill. Simple. Straightforward. Unmistakable. This forthright yet highly intricate instruction comprises the fifth of the Ten Commandments governing biblical principles. A foundational pillar of modern religions, it bears an uncoincidental resemblance to another norm of Western strategic and political culture that is not religious but might as well be given the pedestal it is held at. NATO’s Article Five – commonly known as the mutual defence clause – asserts that an attack on one Ally constitutes an attack on all Allies. This doctrine of transatlantic defence safeguarded the security of European and North American democracies against Soviet aggression. The once pious pact is now riddled with existential angst. The most recent NATO Summit that took place in the outskirts of London this past month was supposed to reaffirm Article Five as ironclad. Instead, the cacophony of bickering leaders left a vacuum at the very heart of European security.

The summit was supposed to be a triumphal celebration of the NATO’s 70th birthday offering credible security guarantees. With the average lifespan of defence alliances over the past half millennium spanning just 15 years, NATO has indeed not just survived but prospered as perhaps the strongest and most successful alliance in years, NATO has indeed not just survived but prospered exceptionally well.

Questions of Russian aggression across the eastern European frontier are constantly raised, and rightfully so. Russia’s revisionism since the Cold War in tandem with the risen Chinese economic expansionism have pressured Europe intensely. However, these are not the only threats to European security. The greatest ones, and those capable of dismantling the entire defence colossus, are those within.

President Trump’s decision to withdraw US troops from Syria working alongside French and British Special Forces was one of the most consequential decisions because it was done without proper consultation. So too was the decision to rescind support for the only Western ally on the ground in Syria, the Kurdish Forces and more recently, the killing of Islamic Revolutionary Guard commander Qassem Suleimani by a US drone. But no country has threatened to pull down the entire edifice of NATO more than Turkey’s autocratic President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Just in the past year Ankara has unilaterally decided to invade northern Syria and wage an offensive against Kurdish forces, without any prior warning. Further, Erdogan has been cuddling up to Russia President Vladimir Putin by disregarding NATO treatises through his purchase of Russian S400 air-defence systems. If that was not enough, Turkey also signed a memorandum of understanding with the UN-backed Tripoli government in Libya, demarcating a maritime sea border that outright ignores Greek and Cypriot sovereignty. All the while it has been conducting drilling tests for oil and gas in the Cypriot exclusive economic zone.

The French President rightfully asked how would NATO members behave if Syria were to retaliate Turkish aggression and Erdogan invoked Article Five. Why should other NATO states be called upon to protect a self-absorbed demagogue? In similar light, what outcome would not threaten the US through open competition, but would rather complement the defence alliance by strengthening its most fundamental pillar, the European frontier. To understand the future of NATO it is vital to break down the components that underpin the alliance. As Paul Taylor describes NATO consists of two central spheres. The first one entails NATO’s slick war machine capable of adopting to security or defence threat. Following Mr Trump scolding, European states’ spending on defence has risen by $130 billion the past four years, with troop numbers in the Baltic states and Poland now at the highest they have been since 1991 while a space force is currently in works as well. Suffice to say that NATO readiness to counter Russian or any aggression in this sphere is doing exceptionally well.

The second sphere which comprises the political alliance was put on full display at the NATO summit. Unity and coordination were front and centre of the goals for the summit. Indeed, over the past years we have become accustomed to a world where historical allies extort one another at moments of crises for monetary and self-interested trade concessions, and view NATO as a forum of zero-sum outcomes. The one NATO cannot survive without the other and currently the two seem grossly incompatible. If European states cannot know for certain the intentions of their allies, tackling the idea of strategic autonomy and collective defence is of utmost necessity.

At present coordination between NATO members has reached rock bottom. Twitter has now become the source of notification for US Presidential decisions that affect all member states. Whereas, the once proud forum of liberal norms has been infiltrated by Trojan horses carrying illiberal and authoritarian ideals which could not run further astray from the transatlantic ideals.

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The Promises of #MeToo Two Years Later

This past autumn marked two years since the #MeToo movement started. It shook industries and entire countries for months and changed the way we speak about sexual harassment completely. The movement is now the starting point of the “MeToo era”, where social rules shifted. February 2018 during the heat of the movement BullsEye hosted an article on MeToo. Now two years have passed, and we have to take on the challenge to define what we choose to take from it, what it leaves us with and how we are navigating the world post #MeToo.

__#MeToo was a shape shifter__

It came in all shapes and sizes and challenged all aspects of society. Moving from the glamorous Hollywood Hills to the Capitol Hill, and then overtaking the media attention of all international newspapers. The movement was fierce and moved fast, leaving little room to debate the seriousness of it or the challenges it brought with it. Many important changes were made, conversations were had that were long overdue, stories were told and for many the injustice they had faced for decades finally saw an end. The impact on how arts, politics and businesses have dealt with accusations of sexual assault have been far-reaching. A societal shift like this takes time and is inevitably a learning process for all. Now that this time has passed, and we are moving into the post-#MeToo era we are left with completely new challenges, where the choices we make will impact on the future of generations to come. It is now time to stop talking about it, take the stories that were shared and make the actual changes to how we live and work.

__New Standards and Global Change__

The #MeToo movement was the catapult needed to launch societies in the right direction, but it will all have been for nothing if the structural changes do not follow. By openly debating and speaking about women’s rights and harassment were rampant and unchecked. Individually, they told their stories are betting on that future and, in speaking up, the peace and justice that marked the ending of my story was shared publicly on social media. Only after the #MeToo movement followed home, inappropriate touching at public school events was then that I was allowed to put an end to stories of late-night encounters. It would never have been shared had there not been a promise from these episodes, although fundamental the stories of those who told the truth. These, the ones brave enough to stand and harassment at work for them, and all workers, on a global scale. And although there is still a long way to go, the changes are already visible.

According to a survey conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the software company SAP, one in three US part- and full-time workers changed their behavior in the office in the wake of the #MeToo movement. Adding to this, one third of workers also said they have talked about sexual misconduct in the workplace with coworkers in the past year. This shows change in the workplace, the arena where it is needed the most and where societal changes like these have been lacking. The global encouragement and attention brought to the issue has sparked debates and discussions on all levels that we should have had many decades ago. Or even better, that we should have never needed to have in the first place.

However, as positive as these results are, the study shows there is still a lot to be done, as only 4 in 10 working Americans say their employer has established new training on harassment in the workplace after #MeToo. Many of the acts of harassment could be avoided by offering proper training on harassment, management and workplace etiquette. These changes need to follow, and we all need to do our part.

The Dues Paid

As any major movement or historic change that comes, #MeToo also brought with it many faults and challenges. The person writing this article, five years ago, before the #MeToo movement had started, reported one of her university professors for sexual harassment after it had been going on for close to two years. After two years someone was finally willing to listen, but more importantly, someone was able to promise change. This promise of change was a requirement for telling my story, as it would never have been shared had there not been a promise of never having to encounter the professor in question again. It was then that I was allowed to put an end to stories of late-night sexual phone calls. University events spent hiding to avoid being followed home, inappropriate touching at public school events just to quote some of them. Only after the #MeToo movement started this story was shared publicly on social media.

However, the peace and justice that marked the ending of my story was never promised to all, and certainly was not what most of the survivors lived. They decide to come out with their stories just for the promise of a better future, a promise no one could give them, but that we all must live to build. Rebecca Traister said it best in her article for The Cut where she discussed the toll of #MeToo: “The women and men who have told their stories are betting on that future and, in speaking up, they have left a trace — of themselves, of their lived experience of a world in which power was distributed unequally, in which abuse and harassment were rampant and unchecked. Individual, they have almost uniformly been punished for it, have paid for it to one degree or another. But with their testimony, they have left their mark, an individual sacrifice offered up to a collective future, one in which we should all be worth more.”
The European Union and its way to a Sustainable Economy

The human impact on nature, which transforms the existing natural ecosystems and pollutes the basic elements of the environment, has led to a significant deterioration in the quality of the natural environment. The environmental response to a manifold increase in such impact, manifested in the form of threats to public health, changes in soil cover, depletion of mineral resources etc., has led mankind to new ecological thinking and a change in the model of consumer attitude to the environment on sustainable development model. The crisis phenomena of recent years have forced many countries and international organizations to intensify research on the quality of modern economic growth and the search for innovative models that ensure the harmonious development of nature and economic growth and the search for innovative models that ensure the harmonious development of nature and economic growth and the search for innovative models that ensure the harmonious development of nature and economic growth and the search for innovative models that ensure the harmonious development of nature and economic growth and the search for innovative models that ensure the harmonious development of nature and economic growth and the search for innovative models that ensure the harmonious development of nature and economic growth and the search for innovative models that ensure the harmonious development of nature and.

Climate change is not a unique EU problem; countries all around the world face it. However it the EU has to play a key role in struggling with it because neither USA, nor China, nor any other big international players seem to take a leadership in dealing with climate change.

It goes without saying that with growing population grows production and consumption which put a big pressure on resources. Nowadays few countries, that are considered to be rich, are responsible for more than a half of air emissions while the half of countries with less economic success are responsible only for 1/10 of the emissions. With further development of the countries consumption level will rise and will inflict more and more damage to the Earth. The goal of the European Union in this case should be to create a long-term policy regarding the issue which would include help in harmonizing the consumption level in this countries as well as sharing knowledge and technology, so that they could have a better way of living without damaging the planet very much. The goal of the European Union in this case should be to create a long-term policy regarding the issue which would include help in harmonizing the consumption level in this countries as well as sharing knowledge and technology, so that they could have a better way of living without damaging the planet very much.

Another pattern appears with climate change – lack of natural resources and competition for them. And the EU should be ready not only to prevent its own crisis but also to help to avoid conflicts for resources in other countries.

The European Union cannot resist climate change by itself, it should follow its values of unity and cooperation strictly and work shoulder to shoulder together with other world. The EU has to put its all economic and political weight on keeping the issue in agenda, especially when doing business with allies such as the USA.

Building a sustainable economy is not an easy task. And the European Union would never deal with it by itself, only via collaboration and cooperation this ambition goal can be reached. The best option for the member states, for sure, is to work hard using all necessary tools within the Union and to actively cooperate with other countries: advising and sharing with those who need and talking earnestly with those who did not understand the issue yet.
The EU Job Market Tech Revolution or the Fight for the European Labour Market’s Soul

The fight for the very soul of the European labour market is currently underway. As more decision-making powers are increasingly handed down to technologies such as AI-based algorithms, stakeholders across the board are becoming more conscious and curious about the intricacies of these technologies. The recent surge in demand for software-based recruitment protocols is giving rise to a paradigm shift in recruitment processes. Albeit, it’s a new paradigm that both precipitates a silver-lining and also raises risks of a grim future in the event where appropriate measures are not put in place. The significance of this new paradigm resonates across the fabrics of the EU society, affecting various industries and income brackets, and touching on hot-button socio-political issues.

The Evolution of Recruitment Processes in the EU Job Market

Advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning are fueling the widespread adoption of software for recruiting junior-level personnel. From filtering through CVs to rating the technical and non-technical skill sets of candidates, and even conducting online interviews, these robo-recruiters are lending themselves to use in a myriad of ways in the recruitment process. As such, the EU is at the cusp of an era where job seekers may have to practice to impress machines rather than HR managers.

This trend has grown more rapidly over the past few years, accompanied by the emergence of a plethora of tech startups offering various customizable software solutions for recruitment-oriented tasks. In Germany, for instance, a study shows that 7 out of every 10 of the top 1000 companies have indicated vested interests in the development and integration of automation technologies in their recruitment processes. In another similar study by CareerBuilder, a talent software developer company, some 55% of human resources managers in the US reported they believe AI would become essential to their toolbox within the next five years.

Recruitment software can mean anything from a simple algorithm for filtering search results to a sophisticated AI chatbot that rates CVs, organizes interviews, and generates a collection of insightful information about candidates. This software is often capable of analyzing CVs and cover letters, scheduling trial and interview sessions, rating candidates based on their level of education, technical or professional experience, soft skills, etc., and also guiding candidates closely through the recruitment process.

The final decision is always left to humans, often after the robots have performed a laundry list of tasks to narrow down the list of potential candidates. The expediency of these software helps save time on both the recruiters’ and candidates’ parts. Evidence also abound that show that these robots are less-inclined to bias than humans when it comes to hiring decisions. The bulk of this evidence is a result of a study published by the National Bureau of Economic Research, a U.S.-based research NGO. According to the publication, respondents who were recruited through a software-based process held their jobs 15% longer than those who were hired through a process devoid of algorithms.

However, the extent to which this software should be allowed to intervene in the recruitment process is currently a hot topic for debates.

The Pitfalls of Automation in the Recruitment Process

Many experts disagree on where to draw the line for robot intervention in the recruitment process. They argue that automation might actually reinforce the negative elements that detract from a credible recruitment process. Their concerns are mostly focused on two main points:

The Loopholes for Bias and Discrimination:

Discrimination against job candidates is still a thing in European job markets, as many recruiters are still beholden to prejudice against people they share little or nothing at all in common. For instance, in the 2015 Barometer survey undertaken by the International Labour Organization, 85% of the polled job seekers believe that recruitment bias is still commonplace in France.

Many studies show that robots have a lower tendency towards bias than humans, but that doesn’t rule out the possibility of bias on a robot’s part. A robot is only as good as its programming and can only determine who the best candidates are based on what it’s designed to identify as “good.” Though its design might not openly endorse discriminatory criteria, its machine learning capabilities are capable of picking up on the dominant characteristics of an existing workforce, which might have been borne out of biases.

A case in point is the defunct recruitment algorithm deployed by Amazon a few years ago. The software was programmed to make inferences based on data amassed from pre-existing employees over the previous ten years. Since the employees were mostly Caucasian males, the system struggled to access candidates in a gender-neutral, colour-blind way; downgrading resumes that featured words and phrases relating to women. This drew a lot of backlash and scrutiny from stakeholders, so much so that the program was completely abandoned in 2017 despite efforts by developers to correct the system.

In other similar cases, the tendencies to discriminate aren’t usually as blatant, and the companies are misled to wrongly assume the impartiality of their recruitment system.

The Loss of the ‘X’ Factor of Human Touch:

Building relationships is a crucial part of talent acquisition. According to a survey undertaken by the American Staffing Association in 2016, 77% of respondents who have been on a job hunt over the past five years reported that human interaction is a crucial factor in the recruitment process. The absence of human touch throughout most of the recruitment process can disenchant candidates. Robots fall short of the emotional intelligence and language skills that humans wield, and this might leave a negative impression on the job seeker.

As such, it can be misleading for HR departments to rely heavily on data generated by robots. Human agents still need to engage deeply and apply their instincts and sense of judgment thoroughly in the recruitment process to make credible decisions.

The Benign Potentials of Robo-Recruiters

By being critical about these downsides, companies can realise the benign potentials of automation in their recruitment processes. As it stands, the emerging workforce of millennials and Gen Z are predisposed to computing, even in job hunts. Most of them search and apply for jobs on social media and other online platforms through their mobile devices. They’re also inclined to taking video interviews and online tests. At this rate, the recruitment process is gradually taking up less time.

These all imply that automation and algorithms aren’t strange to the emerging dominant demographic in the EU’s labour market. Therefore companies can use these automation technologies to elicit data related to recruitment criteria such as productivity, retention potentials, soft skills, cultural fit, etc. AI powers algorithms with capabilities to deduce insights from dense volumes of data such as those relating to speech patterns, facial expressions, and word choices. The outcome can pay off in spades by helping both the recruiters and candidates to save time, so long as the software is programmed correctly.

As people are fast-becoming more conscious of the effects of discrimination in employment across Europe are being put under increasing pressure to oversee the role of robo-recruiters in EU’s job markets. Calls for data privacy laws have intensified over the past few years, bordering human rights protection.

There is a need for pieces of legislation that stipulate the guiding framework for developing and deploying recruitment algorithms. Lawmakers need to put policies in place to ensure the transparency of AI algorithms for recruitment. Such laws should promote the regular testing of these algorithms for biases by independent observers.

The use of robo-recruiters must be made as transparent as possible, and this implies the need for a more inclusive development and implementation processes that incorporate inputs from a wider section of stakeholders.

Talent acquisition is one of the most sensitive aspects of business for automation technologies. This requires companies to tread softly when deploying the technologies, with emphasis on upholding credibility throughout the recruitment process rather than on cutting down human time on various aspects.

Athina Dova

The official magazine of European Democrat Students
Where Did You Sleep Last Night?
Entering a Post-Privacy Era

From Cambridge Analytica harvesting raw data of millions of Facebook users without their consent to the New York Times recent investigative reports on geolocation tracking and face recognition apps, we have been bombarded with privacy leaks beyond our wildest imagination. New revelations point to a definite conclusion – in the world where personal data is collected and used to profile us for both commercial and security purposes, it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep anything private. As data surpassed oil as the most valuable resource, are we missing on an opportunity to claim our ownership or should we give up on the idea of anonymity altogether? Is maintaining privacy inevitably a losing game?

In January 2020, the Times Privacy Project published an investigation into the smartphone tracking industry, showing that a location data company used phone apps with software collecting movements in selected locations. As a result, these apps provided ceaseless precise human tracking. Several news organisations have previously reported on smartphone tracking, but the size of the data set in question makes earlier reports pale in comparison. While the authors ask what these tools might mean in the hands of corporations or governments, the second recently published New York Times story uncovers a start-up licensing a face recognition tool to US law enforcement agencies. Clearview AI is a little-known company deploying technology based on a neural network trained on three billion photos scraped from the internet. Major tech companies mostly refrain from developing face recognition technologies due to their capabilities to radically erode privacy. An early investor in Clearview AI has a different idea, stating that due to the instant increase of information, there is never going to be privacy. The recent cases speak about an era of surveillance. Yet even Orwell would wonder that this time around we have been tricked into monitoring ourselves. What is more surprising, is that these and similar stories cause only a limited and short-lived uproar as we continue being more or less indifferent to personal data collection, which has become a new norm. Our increased dependence on smart devices, social media and online content means that we are constantly asked for our consent with complex conditions, be it with cookies permission or agreeing to the terms of service. Further concerns arise when we are provided with limited options and a lack of transparency when navigating our decision making. This constant “nagging” has given us a mostly oblivious attitude toward keeping our digital steps anonymous. Privacy fatigue leads to a situation where our growing knowledge of pressing privacy concerns is not reflected in our online behaviour. We have become numb.

A study published in the Journal of Communication explored this “privacy paradox” of people disclosing personal information despite their privacy concerns. According to the meta-analysis, this phenomenon can be explained by two main behavioural theories – knowledge deficiency and psychological distance. Due to incomplete evidence about how our information is collected and used, and a lack of knowledge about protective behaviours, our rationality in decision making is severely compromised. Our choices are additionally driven by the factor of immediate gratification and proximal benefits over abstract and psychologically distant privacy values. This take on the psychology of decision making in cyberspace explains why consumers can express deep consideration for the value of privacy and ignore the same standards when being online. The privacy paradox helps us to understand why consumers continue using services that have proven to undermine data security.

Keeping our information safe is, in no small extent, our responsibility. The conventional wisdom says never to publish private information that could be misused or compromising. And we braced these instructions vehemently, erasing embarrassing high school photos from Facebook, but privacy issues got murkier as the discussion moved from what we readily share on the internet to our data being harvested and traded without our knowledge. Tracing of even a simple digital activity shows that understanding the flow of our data has become more complex. Only with a single purchase of a book online customers produce significant data sets about themselves – search data, transaction history, the time spent browsing during the purchase recorded by the online platform and tracking cookies. Personal data is collected and used to profile us. Companies justify this business model with a more significant shopping experience, and many people are happy to share data for free services or personalised experience of existing services. But as
the new investigative reports show, our data is used for far more than targeted advertising. Misuse of geolocation and facial recognition, in particular, can be harmful to our safety, providing for vast possibilities of surveillance by third parties.

Ethical and security questions always arise about possible limitations on the use of technology. Users themselves often feel torn between maintaining privacy rights and reinforcing public safety. Technology provides for better policing, border monitoring, intelligence-gathering and victim identification, to name a few, and citizens are, in theory, often willing to share data for the increased levels of security. On the other hand, the relationship between technology companies and security agencies, which has become closer in response to terrorist threats and attacks, is an uneasy one. Increased surveillance can be used to silence criticism, restrict free assembly or dig into private lives by anyone with access to it. Just as the song popularised by Nirvana, referred in the title of this article, which has over one-hundred-fifty variations, the exact knowledge of where one slept last night can be used in strikingly different ways. Having this information within reach of several clicks brings us no peace.

Anonymity is like fresh air in our lungs, allowing us to try new things and express ideas without the fear of being judged. To some extent, urban living allowed for greater anonymity, which is now being reversed in the ‘online village’. In the process of digitalising our lives, we have become walking data generators. Popular initiatives strode back calling for ownership of our data. The reasoning behind this is that once data is owned on an individual basis, we regain control over our digital lives. We could decide whether to sell our data or monetise our consent. Such actions would lead to disrupting business models of tech giants based on selling our data and at the same time bringing an approximate dividend of several tens of euros per year. But our privacy concerns would not be solved entirely. As a result, while being informed, educated and provided with transparent options is of high importance, the collective wellbeing cannot rely upon individual choices.

If we are going to reassign cultural value to anonymity, regaining our privacy will take a lot more than just independent action, greater digital literacy, cyber hygiene or data encryption apps. If privacy can be categorised as public interest, governments have an active obligation to treat it as a right that people are entitled to and to ensure that technologies do not violate existing human rights standards. But even if well-intended, they are often poorly prepared to address many of the developments, which are primarily in the hands of overseas monopolies. The result is that US tech platforms and their way of doing business end up in court. The US court has reviewed Facebook’s photo-tagging feature based on face recognition technology. The European Court of Justice has taken several steps to address growing privacy and security risks through proceedings, including Google and Facebook, and a lengthy case scrutinising the transfer of personal data outside the EU. On the regulatory side, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) provided for an important debate for data use and transfer, putting in place the most robust data protection rules so far.

This is not the first technological leap forward, but what is different is that the newest technological tools brought by largely privately-owned actors are changing our daily reality with ubiquity, high speed and on a global scale. Neither their positive nor negative implications are fully understood or easily managed. Advanced developments make it more challenging to assess and adequately oversee the development, deployment and use of technology, whether through existing legal and human rights frameworks, new guidelines or regulatory mechanisms. As development processes and methodologies are not necessarily transparent, relevant actors may face additional challenges in gathering and evaluating information that allows for technology oversight. While taking appropriate regulatory and legal steps is not an easy task, the growing numbers of uncovering mishandling of data draw a thick line to doing business as usual. ‘Move fast and break things’ is not a catchphrase fit for this decade. We need a human rights-centred approach to technology and innovations, which places the inherent dignity of an individual at its core.

As our data is collected continuously, mined, and traded, privacy cannot remain a mere abstract idea. We need to understand the depth of privacy risks and impacts and take adequate precautions. We need to create an ecosystem that keeps the focus on people: to ensure that they are empowered and protected rather than put at risk. And we need to ensure that those handling our data are held accountable for their use and protection. The governments and policymakers should eliminate information asymmetries, provide legal and regulatory protection and attract more experts pushing for the technology oversight. While taking appropriate regulatory and legal steps is not an easy task, the growing numbers of uncovering mishandling of data draw a thick line to doing business as usual. ‘Move fast and break things’ is not a catchphrase fit for this decade. We need a human rights-centred approach to technology and innovations, which places the inherent dignity of an individual at its core.

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Mandela’s Negotiation Lesson: How to Overcome Power Imbalanced Discussions and Get to Successful Agreements

How much money does it take to convince a prison guard to build a tennis court yard for an inmate? None at all, if one’s negotiation skills are as advanced as Nelson Mandela’s. In his time in Robben Island prison in Cape Town he negotiated with prison guards and managed to achieve white privileges for prisoners of all races like 1 1/2 teaspoons of sugar a day, blankets and even a tennis yard. In fact, he did all this while he was negotiating with the Apartheid government of South Africa. At one point in life, one is going to be confronted with tough negotiation partners, whether it is a supervisor, a real estate agent or the state government. This article will present a different perspective on the “opponent” and give insights on how to get to a successful outcome without giving in based on the effective techniques of principled negotiation.

Tell me what you really really want

Miguel de Cervantes, famously known for his masterpiece “Don Quijote”, once laid out the most essential negotiation principle: “To be prepared is half the victory.” Fruitful negotiations always start before the actual negotiation. What are the interests at stake for both parties? How high is the potential to agree on a deal? These often-difficult questions can be simplified by creating a “game plan.” Unlike most games, successful negotiation is never about winning or losing; it is not a fight against each other but a joint fight against the problem. The counterparty is not an opponent but one’s negotiation partner. To get there, the best preparation is to put oneself into the counterparty’s shoes. The game plan is best tested in a mock negotiation with colleagues or friends.

While focussing on possible arguments from the other side of the table it is important to be very clear about one’s own position. Unexperienced parties often enter the negotiation process with one option only. A vital instrument that offers more flexible and open discussions, no matter how powerful the counterparty, is a strong “BATNA”, a Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement. In case of the estate agent example the BATNA could be another house for a better price. In case of the government as partner, it could be a strike, which is very frequently used in wage negotiations. Additionally, knowing the opposite side’s BATNA gives a clear picture of how far a negotiator can go and what the pure interests of the other sides are.

The problem is not the only problem

Many times, different opinions, emotions and diverse cultural perceptions force the parties to focus on the people rather than on the agreement. Yet, it is crucial to acknowledge the need to deal with the “people’s problems” and the actual problem both- but separately. Generally, people problems can be broken down into three categories: perception, emotion, and communication.

The first one is about different perceptions of the parties’ beliefs or facts. To exemplify, one could think of a car crash: Both parties involved may agree on the damages that were caused by the accident per se, but not on the circumstances, like whether it was a cloudy or a foggy day or whether it was five or six AM. To get to the actual problem, which could for instance be a very high amount of car insurance money in dispute, one needs to sort out the other side’s differing perceptions. This problem can be easily tackled by initiating the inclusion of a third and, most importantly, objective opinion or evidence, like photographs or video tapes.

The emotion problem accompanies almost every negotiation process. As the fathers of principled negotiation Roger Fisher and William Ury said in their most prominent book about principled negotiation “Getting to Yes”, negotiators are people first, which means that anxieties and petty resentments may lurk below the surface. Especially in longer processes, which often last months or even years, it is hardly impossible to stay calm, friendly and relaxed all the time after investing such huge amounts of time, passion and energy. Again, preparation is a must. Preparing the questions pertaining to understand, and channel the opposite’s and one’s own emotions is highly recommended, even when the process is expected to go smoothly. If emotions are let to fester, or if one hastily gets under a counterpart’s skin, talks could go off the rails. The most effective way of dealing with hurt feelings or anger is to address them directly instead of relying on the aggrieved person by making a concession on the substance of the negotiation or- even worse- explode after tensing up and stirring ones own’s feelings. Psychological techniques, such as testing assumptions by asking simple questions or summarizing the concerns are the tools to go with. Sometimes a break is beneficial as it can be used to give all parties involved an opportunity to vent and cool off.

Lastly, the frequently underestimated problem of communication can be cracked with effective communication itself. Since language barriers might sometimes get in the way of agreeing on more complex issues, being crisp and precise in one’s own ‘s speech as well as listening actively are key factors to negotiation success. The more respectful the interaction the less anxieties and petty resentments may lurk below the surface. Especially in longer processes, which often last months or even years, it is hardly impossible to stay calm, friendly and relaxed all the time after investing such huge amounts of time, passion and energy. Again, preparation is a must. Preparing the questions pertaining to understand, and channel the opposite’s and one’s own emotions is highly recommended, even when the process is expected to go smoothly. If emotions are let to fester, or if one hastily gets under a counterpart’s skin, talks could go off the rails. The most effective way of dealing with hurt feelings or anger is to address them directly instead of relying on the aggrieved person by making a concession on the substance of the negotiation or- even worse- explode after tensing up and stirring ones own’s feelings. Psychological techniques, such as testing assumptions by asking simple questions or summarizing the concerns are the tools to go with. Sometimes a break is beneficial as it can be used to give all parties involved an opportunity to vent and cool off.

Dirty tricks can be cleaned up

In most cases, the real struggle about dealing with powerful people is their overwhelming experience. While one normally does not buy several houses, real estate agents sell them on most days of their lives. The other side of the table knows all the tricky tactics and does not hesitate to use them whenever thinkable. Like with the people’s problems, there are several types of deception techniques. For newcomers, psychological warfare is the most difficult one to deal with. It is designed to make one feel uncomfortable with the aim of influencing one’s subconsciousness in a way that creates the desire to end negotiation as quickly as possible. There are three important steps to avoid walking into the trap. Needless to say, one should first recognize the trick. One perfect trap example could be a stressful situation, they are often created by putting the other negotiation party into an uncomfortable place physically, for example by turning the heater on in the middle of summer or by letting them sit on a very uncomfortable chair. Personal attacks, the good-guy/ bad-guy routine as well as threats are also very commonly used to pressure the weaker party to quit and agree on an unfavourable outcome.

Secondly, whatever tactic is being applied, one should never attack the person using it, but the circumstances themselves. One’s place can simply be changed by asking for a more comfortable chair- not only literally. A threat or a personal attack is most effectively managed by staying principled by referring back to the negotiated interests and a friendly and charming reminder that straightens out the clear intention of not responding to threats or personal attacks.

Even the toughest negotiation partner can be convinced with the right amount of preparation, practice and open-minded charm. The stronger the BATNA the more room there is to freely negotiate, which is why a creative and flexible approach is crucial to achieve a favourable outcome for both parties. No matter how difficult the circumstances or how dirty the tricks if Mandela can negotiate with state officials during his 27 years in prison, there is no challenge one should fear to conquer or -better put in his own words-: “It always seems impossible until it’s done.”

Tell me what you really really want

Dirty tricks can be cleaned up
Feminism Should be About Human Rights

In 2017 the word “feminism” was chosen as the word of the year by Merriam-Webster. Although the movement has gained significant attention across the world, few identify themselves as feminist because of the negative connotations. The word “feminism” has evolved from being associated with femininity to be a word with a powerful force. Yet, modern feminism would be a stronger movement if they used the universal declaration of human rights as its tool of resistance. After all, on the fact that no one gets to be a non-human person, and excluding women is a fundamental violation of the declaration.

Defining feminism is simple: it is a movement fighting for gender equality. Yet, people often define it as a man-hating and anti-shaving movement instead of what it really should be about, equality. When feminism was coined, it was a movement that focused on women’s suffrage that did not include everyone and was seen as a mainly western movement. Today’s feminism, modern feminism, can be defined as a global movement that is accepting diversity and which its goal is equality. As a matter of fact, the feminist fight falls into the biggest and unrenounceable fight for human rights since it is about removing the belief that one gender should be excluded and oppressed. But renaming the movement to “equalism” or “genderism” would – as rightly put by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie – deny the specific and particular problem of gender.

Despite countless conventions and implementations emphasizing the importance of women’s rights and gender equality progress on a global scale has been slow and uneven. Currently the EU has repealed discriminating laws, but laws limiting women keep on existing or are being proposed on a national level. The pathway to accelerate and achieve gender equality is evident. Companies must treat people with respect and offer equal opportunities, while governments must create policies that will provide the same opportunities for all genders. One thing is for sure. Europe could do more in order to become promote gender equality across the continent. A starting point could be to realise that gender equality has not been achieved despite the fact that gender equal laws have been written and implemented. According to the Gender Equality Index, at the current pace Europe has today gender gaps will be closed in 54 years in Western Europe, while in Eastern Europe it will take 107 years. This should not only push the Union to acknowledge the different paces of countries in creating policies to achieve gender equality, but also on proposing specific and targeted awareness raising projects.

Although the feminist movement is growing, the lack of improvements could be linked to the recent growth of the nationalist and populist movements around the world, threatening not only women’s rights but also stability and peace. The fact that there has not been any legislation consistently improving women’s rights in the EU since 2008 only illustrates the slow pace of the EU and the threat nationalism contributed in creating. But a return to nationalism and populism are not the only two emerging trends. Feminist parties are forming and are gaining seats in parliaments. They will offer a fundamental contribute in pushing forward a feminist agenda. The most successful one being Sweden’s Feminist Initiative, which succeeded in gaining a seat in the European Parliament at the latest election.

To sum up feminism is an important movement and should not let itself be defined by the negative connotations it has received. Feminism is still very much needed, and modern feminism has evolved into an including movement, but countries need to realise their lack of improvement in order to progress and for equality to be reached.
Prevent and Monitor or Detain?

Terrorist Suspects in the UK and the Fight Against Radicalisation

The terrorist attack in London on the 29th November 2019 has once again highlighted the issue of rehabilitation when considering those convicted of terror related offences. The fact that this terrorist attacker was fought off by convicted murderers, who were attending the same rehabilitation conference as part of their sentence, demonstrates that terror-related crimes are criminal offences which need to be addressed separately by the British judicial system.

The British Government launched the CONTEST, or as it is more generally known, PREVENT scheme in early 2003. This multi-agency approach was designed to target those who were at risk of radicalisation or presently involved in such activities. Whilst designed to engage with a range of ideologies, including the far-right, it has been criticised by The Muslim Council for Britain as targeting Islam. The scheme allowed partner agencies, such as educational institutions, health care providers and law enforcement agencies to refer individuals who were identified as being at risk of radicalisation towards relevant channels. These ranged from education courses to mental health services through to the criminal courts if necessary. Whilst peddled as a success by the government, regular terrorist attacks and well documented convictions of individuals have led many to question the success of the PREVENT scheme. Psychologist Christopher Dean, who runs the Healthy Identity Intervention scheme, a similar initiative to PREVENT, and the main de-radicalisation programme in the UK, has stated that there is no guarantee such de-radicalisation initiatives work.

The numbers of right-wing referrals to PREVENT are significantly lower and this may help form the arguments made by the Muslim Council of Britain of discrimination.

With the success of PREVENT up for debate eyes logically fall to Britain’s hugely overcrowded prison system. The United Kingdom has a prison population of 83,000 people spread between 117 prisons. This is despite less than 8% of criminal offences resulting in a suspect being charged or put before a court in 2018-2019. Chronic overfunding of the criminal justice system is a legacy of the financial crash and subsequent years of government austerity. In an effort to increase space and reduce cost, it is commonplace for suspects to serve the first half of their criminal sentence inside prison and the second half out “on licence”. This refers to a situation in which convicted criminals live in the community and are supposed to engage and comply with set requirements. If suspected of committing further criminal offences, or not complying with set conditions such as a curfew, those out on licence are immediately re-called to prison. Whilst technically those on licence are not supposed to be violent or sexual offenders, there have been well publicised mistakes and some convicted of terrorist offences have also released into the community without serving all of their sentence.

This system is undoubtedly influenced by the fact that Britain has the highest costs of incarceration in Europe. On average Britain spends £43,070 keeping one person inside prison and the second half out “on licence”. This is despite less than 8% of criminal offences resulting in a suspect being charged or put before a court in 2018-2019. Chronic overfunding of the criminal justice system is a legacy of the financial crash and subsequent years of government austerity. In an effort to increase space and reduce cost, it is commonplace for suspects to serve the first half of their criminal sentence inside prison and the second half out “on licence”. This refers to a situation in which convicted criminals live in the community and are supposed to engage and comply with set requirements. If suspected of committing further criminal offences, or not complying with set conditions such as a curfew, those out on licence are immediately re-called to prison. Whilst technically those on licence are not supposed to be violent or sexual offenders, there have been well publicised mistakes and some convicted of terrorist offences have also released into the community without serving all of their sentence.

As such, this problem looks set to continue. The government flagship model of PREVENT has been largely criticised and with a refusal to commit large numbers to life imprisonment, it is hard to envisage that there will not be further terrorist attacks committed by those on licence, under surveillance or previously known to government agencies. They ever committed terrorist atrocities. The sentence is therefore likely to result in minimal time in prison before release on licence for extremely dangerous individuals who are known to have travelled abroad and engaged directly with terrorist organisations.

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