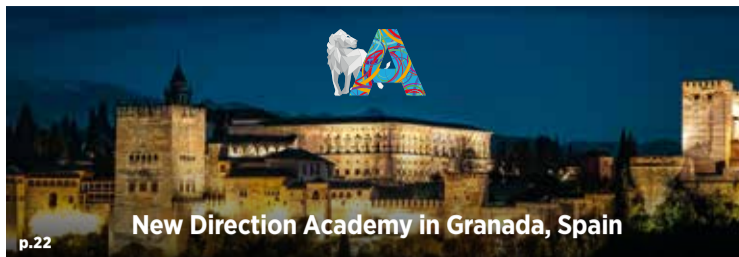


Dr Roberts Zile MEP

## WISFUL THINKING VERSUS REALITY

p.13



p.22

New Direction Academy in Granada, Spain

Janet Daley

## WHY YOUNG PEOPLE, LIKE THE YOUNGER ME, KEEP FALLING FOR TROTSKY

p.15



OLD-SCHOOL JOURNALISM - REPORTING YOU CAN TRUST



Issue #5 | April 2019

# THE CONSERVATIVE

A fortnightly Newspaper by the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE) | theconservative.online



Chancellery of the Prime Minister of Poland

## NATO TURNS 70

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation celebrated its 70th Anniversary this month. For seven decades, NATO has stood at the forefront of European defence and guaranteed a lasting peace that many didn't think would survive in the years that preceded Second World War. Yet despite its success, now more than ever, we need reminding of the importance of the trans-Atlantic relationship. With a resurgent Russia, growing threat of terrorism and populist attempts to either divide, scrap or replace the Alliance, support for NATO is more important than ever before.

The NATO Alliance has stood for the longest time as a beacon of freedom and

security for many countries on the peripheries of Europe. With the support of the Americans and Canadians, NATO offers a sense of safety for those living within its borders. And even as that frontier has expanded Eastwards, the value of NATO membership has not been lost.

The Alliance has undergone huge geographic shifts. In the beginning NATO was focused on Western Europe and bridging the divide between Atlantic partners, bringing together 12 member states. Today it's an Alliance that spans the entire continent, with the collective might of 29 countries. From the USA to Poland, Canada to Croatia.

Over the last 70 years, NATO has also undergone several huge shifts in

policy, to reflect the changing dynamics of its members. From welcoming former rivals, who have become some the alliances closest allies, to the post-cold war pivot that has seen a refocusing of efforts on counter terrorism and jihadism.

### An Old Threat

However, since the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO has shifted its focus from the War on Terror back to countering the threat from Russia. The 29 Member States have become resolute in their commitment to efficiently deter Moscow, and to further strengthen the Alliance's eastern flank.

The annexation of Crimea demonstrated the need for NATO to adapt its strategy when dealing with the Russia, as for too long they had been complaisant.

Not only must the Alliance remain vigilant, it must also upgrade its arsenal to maintain a sufficient defensive posture. NATO ought to invest more in heavy equipment and armaments that will minimize the threat posed by Russia's latest generations of combat aircraft and anti-submarine weapons, as well as finding smart ways to work around their current salami tactics. The NATO allies need to try their utmost to show Russia that its nuclear blackmail is useless and that they will not bow down to bullies. **CONTINUED ON p.12**

### Brexit

## EU27 PREPARING FOR A "NO DEAL"

European countries are preparing for a "no deal" on Brexit. The Conservative has looked at the preparations taking place in different countries. **p.5**

### Grzegorz Kuczyński

## NATO MUST CONTINUE TO BE FLEXIBLE TO SURVIVE

As NATO turns 70, a new report from Poland addresses what the future holds for the Alliance and how best to tackle the main threat posed to Central Europe by Russia. **p.8**

### Profile

## VALDEMAR TOMASEVSKI

From Vilnius to the Nation **p.10**

### Anna Fotyga MEP

## NATO AT 70

"Together we continue to overcome the most serious security challenges in a generation: Russia's aggression in and around Europe, terrorism and instability in our southern neighbourhood, as well as very real threats from cyber-attacks and missile proliferation." **p.13**

### Jan Zahradil

## CAMPAIGN DIARY Part IV.

Freedom of religion and belief, Blue Green Summit, Road to Europe **p.18**

### Conservative Books

## W.M. Thackeray's VANITY FAIR

by James Delingpole

Vanity Fair is indeed a magnificent novel and a great, rollicking read, surprisingly modern in its tone and style, and refreshingly free of the earnest moralising we have to endure in contemporaries like Dickens. **p.21**

## ON DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE by Tomasz G. Grosse

EU institutions are increasingly restricting democratic practices in its Member States. This is due to two main reasons: first, the EU aims to improve the efficiency of the management of public policies, and second, it seeks to develop the so-called integration "through law", as well as through observing the rule of law principle. The goal of the following article is to analyse certain European problems with democracy using the example of two basic mechanisms of European integration: the first concerns the integration "through law" and European constitutionalism. Here, I will focus in particular on the example of the Court of Justice of

the European Union (CJEU) as well as its policy of extending the scope of EU law, seeking to enhance the competences of EU supranational institutions and the protection of the rule of law principle within the community. The second mechanism is related to the majority voting procedure in the EU, which appears to be more and more frequently used within its structures. Both instruments are considered problematic in light of democratic standards. According to some scholars, such mechanisms may therefore result in the rebellion of Member States along with their societies against EU institutions and thus might deepen further disintegration processes in Europe.



CONTINUED ON p.16



SPECIAL FEATURE NATO 70 TURNS







Dutch establishment parties and press in breach of Godwin's law  
**THE LEFT IS LEFT WITHOUT A REAL ARGUMENT**



At the victory celebration of Forum for Democracy (FvD) – the recently established party that won the largest number of votes in the Dutch regional elections on 20 March – party leader Thierry Baudet addressed his party in a 20-minute speech that was broadcast live to over one million households by the Dutch national broadcasting company.

At the core of the heartfelt speech were the shared values on the European debate, the abolition of the referendum and the need to control immigration. The speech was considered quite moving by those who were present, even if it made use of some references not common in today's political climate, such as Hegel's owl of Minerva. Baudet emphasised that the Netherlands was part of "a civilisation that has created the world's most beautiful architecture, music and paintings. Our country is part of a family... (but like the other countries that belong to this boreal world, we are being destroyed by those who ought to protect us. We are being undermined... by the established political class."

There was much that could have been discussed in the post-election analysis of the FvD victory and indeed the speech. It might have been taken as an invitation to debate the fate of Europe, to discuss Dutch immigration policy, or to revisit the climate change argument or one of the other topics of the campaign. But the Dutch establishment parties and the press avoided all of these discussions, instead focusing on only one word in the speech, namely "boreal". The entire Dutch post-election debate has turned to semantic exegesis.

Based on the use of the word "boreal", numerous journalists claimed the FvD to be fascist. The reasoning is something along the lines that the word "boreal" "must be" a "fascist" "dog whistle" because it has been used by some far-right groups in France. The implication drawn from this is that the use of that word must "reveal" Baudet's "actual intentions". To date the post-election debate has ignored the fact that the FvD's programme is

not even remotely based on fascist ideas, and indeed many of the established policies that the FvD criticised in the campaign on objective criteria are closer to Mussolini's "corporatist" philosophy. For example, the extension of direct democracy and referendums that Baudet tirelessly argued for during the campaign are precisely what have been suppressed under totalitarian regimes.

During the debate that ensued Baudet explained the use of the word "boreal" as a geographical expression. That was it. There was, in his view, nothing more to it than that.

The word "boreal" is borrowed from the Latin word Borealis, which simply means "northern". It is used in numerous contexts such as the Greek god of the northern wind ("Boreas"), the natural phenomenon of the northern lights ("Aurora Borealis") and about a third of the Canadian landmass (the "Forest Borealis"). The word has been used by Baudelaire, Victor Hugo and many more who felt it was a beautiful word to describe the countries of the European peninsula.

The boreal debate continued to escalate over the course of the week following the speech. An article published by NRC Handelsblad, generally accepted as the country's newspaper of record, contained a quote by a member of Nicolas Dupont-Aignan's Debout La France (DLF), critical of the use of the word "boreal". But the day after the article was published DLF released an official press statement pointing out that they "formally contest the NRC article, which was filled with lies and imaginary quotes against Thierry Baudet, in all respects".

To outsiders it looks like the establishment parties have turned the entire post-election debate in to a straw man argument to demonise the winner. And it looks like much of the press has been playing along. The Dutch people, however, do not seem impressed by this exercise as in the polls since the election the FvD has gained another six seats. If there were parliamentary elections today, the polls indicate that the FvD would be the largest party also on the national level. ■

Poland  
**Remembering Smolensk**



On 10 April, Poland fell silent to mark nine years since the Smolensk plane crash, which caused the deaths of several of the most important political figures in the country, including the sitting President, Lech Kaczyński.

The disaster took place as senior figures of the government, military and civil society were heading to Russia to mark the 70th anniversary of the Katyn Massacre. The event was supposed to be to remember the 22,000 Polish soldiers and officers, murdered in the Katyn forest by the

security services of Communist Russia. The commemorations of the air crash in Warsaw were sombre, with former Polish Prime Minister and chairman of the Law and Justice Party Jarosław Kaczyński laying a wreath on his twin brothers grave. ■



European Parliament  
**Controversial new EU copyright rules approved**

At the end of March the European Parliament approved changes to EU copyright rules, after a political deal was closed on the issue in February. The so-called "Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market" aims to stimulate innovation, creativity, investment and production of new content, also in the digital environment, but critics fear it will also restrict material that is not protected by copyright, as well as protected issues such as irony and user-generated memes reducing the freedom of the internet.

The new rules faced a lot of opposition, with tens of thousands of people taking to the streets of German cities ahead of it. Finland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Poland issued a joint statement arguing that the end result on copyright is a step back and fails to strike a balance between protecting right holders and the interests of individual citizens. These governments could not support the final package because the legislation risked having a negative impact on the competitiveness of

the European Digital Single Market. Especially controversial are Articles 11 and 13. Article 11 wants news aggregators, like Google News, to pay media companies a so-called "link tax" when sharing their content. Article 13 wants platforms to police the content uploaded to posts ahead of their publication. For this, automated software would be necessary to detect and filter out violations of intellectual property.

Last year Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the World Wide Web, warned that the legislation inverts the current model by placing liability on the platforms directly for ensuring the legality of content. The end result would fall heavily on ordinary users of internet platforms; not only those who upload music or videos, but also those who contribute photos, text or computer code to open collaboration platforms such as Wikipedia and GitHub.

The legislation follows other EU initiatives to regulate the internet. Last year there was the cumbersome General Data



Protection Regulation, imposing all kinds of requirements on storing and using data, while the European Commission's anti-trust regulators have hit Google with more than €8 billion in fines.

The law still needs to be implemented into national law within two years, but the big question now is how YouTube and Google will manage to address the technological challenge of catching violations before they are made public. The Electronic Frontier Foundation has worried that the consumers will be left in the cold when their work is censored thanks to a malfunctioning copyright bot.

Reacting to the vote in the European Parliament, the spokesman of the European Commission declared that the EU was "taking back control" of the internet. ■

Spitzenkandidat  
**THE MAASTRICHT DEBATE 2019**



The Maastricht Debate 2019 will take place on April 29 evening with the lead candidates of the European political parties for the role of European Commission President. The 90-minute event will be broadcast live across the European Union.

It's been five years since the last Maastricht Debate, where current European Commission President Juncker defended his vision for Europe and outlined what he would do if elected.

This year, the Maastricht Debate 2019 is being jointly organized by three

partners from Maastricht: Working on Europe – Maastricht University, the City of Maastricht and the Province of Limburg – as well as the European Youth Forum and the European Journalism Centre.

Similarly to the 2014 edition, the debate will focus on the concerns of students and young people across Europe, many of whom will be voting for the first time.

On this occasion, the organizers have invited POLITICO, the leading European publication for EU influencers, to ensure an extensive reach to the widest possible audience. ■

A blow for the Franco-German tax initiative  
**EU digital services tax fail – for now**



The attempt to introduce a digital tax at the EU level has failed. The EU plan to impose a tax on the revenue of online advertisement and trading user data, originally a Franco-German idea, was rejected by Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Ireland.

The so-called EU "digital services tax" would have meant a 3 percent tax on the revenue of large multinationals selling online advertising or providing online sales platforms. It has been harshly criticised by digital companies. Member states like France, Italy, Spain and the UK have nevertheless decided to introduce similar measure at the national level. The French government has claimed this could raise 500 million euro per year.

Trade policy think tank ECIPE has pointed out that "a key assumption... was that digital companies [should] pay their fair share of tax", however noting that "the European Commission's "hypothetical" estimates for effective corporate tax rates (ECTRs) do not reflect the high effective corporate tax rates of most corporations that operate in the EU and outside EU Member States, including the world's largest digital enterprises".

The think tank has highlighted how French car manufacturer Renault's effective corporate tax rate in France is lower than American digital giant Google. It thinks the EU Commission's assumptions were wide of the mark, as its estimates have made clear that "real world financial data show that the average corporate tax rates of many digital companies actually exceed the European Commission's "hypothetical" estimates by about 20 to 50 percentage points."

The Coalition for a Digital Economy, an NGO, has furthermore noted that digital taxes drive tech investment to

other countries, harming smaller companies and start-ups in the process.

Plans are now to focus on more fiscal coordination at the OECD and G20 level. Eugen Teodorovici, the Romanian Minister responsible for the issue within the Romanian Council Presidency, has said that if there is no progress by the end of 2020, the EU will reconsider the idea. German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz has said he's "optimistic" that the G20 initiative, which occurs in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), would deliver results by then. No strategy has been announced so far, but the goal is to work out plans how to tax tech companies providing digital services globally.

The episode follows several failed EU attempts for taxation at the EU level. For years now, attempts to have common EU rules on how to define the tax base have stalled, which was foreseen in the EU's so-called Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB) - proposal, which was relaunched in June 2018 but still faces a lot of opposition. In January, the EU Commission also proposed to end national vetoes over tax matters in the EU, thereby touching upon the heart of national democracy. Ireland has however swiftly rejected the idea. At the relevant ECOFIN meeting on 12 February, France and Spain were among those strongly in support, the countries open for discussion were Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece and Portugal. Strongly against, apart from Ireland, were Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Slovakia and Sweden. ■



Grzegorz Kuczyński

# NATO MUST CONTINUE TO BE FLEXIBLE TO SURVIVE

As NATO turns 70, a new report from Poland addresses what the future holds for the Alliance and how best to tackle the main threat posed to Central Europe by Russia.

For 70 years of its existence, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has demonstrated its flexibility and ability to adapt to rapidly changing international conditions. Its particular importance was shown back in the 1990s when the Alliance continued to exist, even despite the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Instead, NATO allies specified a set of new objectives and managed to expand, attracting new members. The Alliance served as a tool for stabilizing the volatile Central and Eastern Europe region, as exemplified by accepting new member states, a tendency that seems particularly visible in the Balkans. It is a paradox that, despite earlier rumours about the end of the Alliance, the aggressive policy of Putin's Russia brought NATO into further existence, making the Alliance

return to the Cold War-like reasoning, both in politics and military issues.

To efficiently deter Moscow, it is vital to convince the Russians that NATO is committed to defending each of its members in a highly efficient way, a step that explains the need to further strengthen the Alliance's eastern flank.

Also, NATO ought to invest in heavy equipment and armaments that will minimize all threats posed by Russia's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy, salient elements of which are latest generations of combat aircraft and anti-submarine weapons. Besides, NATO allies need to try their utmost to show Russia that its nuclear blackmail proves completely useless. They should equally increase both the frequency and scale of military drills held in the regions bordering

Russia, taking into account the NATO Response Forces while boosting combat readiness of all NATO allied units. NATO allies should also concentrate on simplifying and shortening decisive and command mechanisms. Naturally, it is still valid to protect the Alliance against hybrid and informational warfare methods. This ought to take place while expanding a specific NATO+ program that would tighten military cooperation with non-NATO members, such as Finland and Sweden, that are at risk of Russia's intervention. Furthermore, the Alliance should commit itself in supporting the defense capabilities of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova; as long as they are not ruled by pro-Moscow regimes, the direct military threat for NATO seems relatively weak. The post-Soviet area, along with the Balkans, should now be where the



Alliance will expand its presence. Five years after Moscow's annexation of Crimea it is essential to introduce substantial changes to NATO doctrinal papers, officially admitting that Russia is a threat posed to the Alliance and its immediate rival. ■ You can read the full report at: <https://warsawinstitute.org/nato-russia-relations-return-enemy/>

Latin America

# Voters in search of solutions turn to center-right leaders



The dramatic economic and social situation in Venezuela has resulted in the country dominating international media coverage and spurred EU Lawmakers into passing multiple resolutions on the dire situation in the country. This has hidden the fact that the Venezuelan tragedy is changing political fortunes elsewhere in Latin America from the left to conservative politicians. With an estimated five million people leaving the country to escape the misery and violence generated by the socialist regime, large numbers of regular voters across the continent hear first-hand the effect of Nicolás Maduro policies.

Perhaps the best example is in Argentina. Where the systematic corruption and rising inflation contributed to the electoral defeat of Cristina Kirchner and opened the door to businessman Mauricio Macri's new reformist government.

In Colombia, Iván Duque was elected president last year by defeating Gustavo Petro, a radical left-wing candidate who was once a militant member of M-19, a terrorist group, giving the right renewed mandate. And Conservatives also hold power

in Chile and Perú, where Sebastián Piñera and Martín Vizcarra have embraced a moderate agenda that may not advance center-right positions as much as expected, but still represents an alternative to leftist forces that openly oppose conservative ideas for society, institutions and economics. Even in the former bastions of the region's socialist left we are seeing some significant changes. In Bolivia, Evo Morales has been forced to give up on some of his most radical proposals. In Ecuador, Lenin Moreno has broken up his alliance with Rafael Correa, his predecessor, and has launched an open investigation into the corruption of the former Socialist leader. But perhaps the most striking case of all is that of Brazil. For years, the left held the institutions of government, thanks to the leadership of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff. Today, both former presidents are under investigation and the government is in the hands of Jair Bolsonaro, a military man who openly defends a conservative agenda. His triumph truly marks a turning point for Brazil and cements the idea that leftist forces are in retreat. ■

1<sup>st</sup> JUNE 2019 | MADRID | SPAIN  
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White House

# Donald Trump meets NATO Secretary General

President Donald Trump met with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on the 2nd of April at the White House. The meeting covered a wide range of topics from terrorism to the situation in the Middle East and finally the contributions made by member states to the Alliance.

Mr Trump said during a press conference after the meeting: "Over the past two years, the Secretary General and I have developed a very strong working relationship... We're both committed to ensuring that NATO can address the full range of threats facing the Alliance today. And there are many threats."

The President went on to talk about the importance of NATO in tackling major threats around the world, including terrorism and the crisis in Syria. He also took the chance to congratulate the Secretary General on the 70th Birthday of the Alliance.

Secretary General Stoltenberg said, "NATO is a strong alliance, but to



remain a strong alliance, we have to be a fair alliance. And therefore, Allies have to invest more in defence. You have a very clear message on that, and your message is having a clear impact. Because Allies are now starting to invest more. After years of decline, we've seen all Allies are investing more in defence."

This echo's calls by the President for European member states to start paying more. Currently only six NATO member states meet the 2% defence threshold; the United States, Greece, the United Kingdom, Estonia, Romania and Poland. ■

Election in Australia

# Liberals strengthen the economy

The Australian government is back in the black with conservative Prime Minister Morrison delivering the first budget surplus in more than a decade. This year will see a surplus of \$7.1 billion. A \$55.5 billion turnaround from the deficit the Liberals inherited six years ago from the previous Labor government. It will also see a total of \$45 billion of surpluses over the next four years. The surplus will continue to build toward one per cent of GDP within a decade. Through disciplined budget management and adhering to fiscal conservative values Australia is again well-positioned to respond to the challenges of the future.

A strong economy means will allow the Australian government to lower taxes, guarantee essential services, invest in infrastructure and keep Australians safe and secure. The budget surplus will also mean that the Australian government can start to pay down some



of the debts it has accumulated over the past decade. This proves that debts can be managed through good fiscal policy and conservative management of the economy. A spokesperson from the governing Liberal Party of Australia said "Reducing debt will ensure that the next generation does not pick up the tab for the last. In delivering a surplus budget, the Government's economic plan is giving Australians more opportunities, and creating a stronger economy." ■

Algeria

# President resigns after 20 years

Algeria's President Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced his resignation as the country's President on the 2nd of April, after nearly twenty years in charge of the country. He resigned after weeks of protests across the country, over his intention to seek another mandate as Head of State. The 82 year old was first elected President in 1999, and has ruled the country with an iron grip ever since. However in recent years bad health had prevented him from governing. In 2014 he had a major stroke and was sent abroad for treatment.

Despite having removed the President, protestors have sworn to continue until the entire government has been removed. There were still reports of large scale celebrations in the capital after the announcement was made that President Abdelaziz would step down. This is seen as a step towards turning Algeria towards the path of democracy.

Algeria had been largely immune to the Arab Spring protests that took place across the region in early 2012. The last Presidential election took place in 2014, with a few incidents of violence taking



place in some areas and a widespread opposition boycott, Abdelaziz won with more than 80% of the vote.

Alongside the demand for Abdelaziz to step down were a number of other demands, including the formation of a national unity government and the drafting of a new constitution. They have called for more democracy and less corruption in the country and its institutions. ■

Defending Media Freedom

# Jeremy Hunt and Amal Clooney agree joint legal plan

UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and his Special Envoy on Media Freedom Amal Clooney will establish a panel of legal experts to counter draconian laws that hinder journalists from going about their work.

The High Level Panel of Legal Experts will examine legal and policy initiatives that states can adopt to improve media freedom including by:

- Offering advice to governments who want to strengthen legal mechanisms to improve media freedom;
- Supporting the repeal of outdated and draconian laws;
- Encouraging and supporting governments to help ensure existing laws and international obligations are enforced;
- Promoting best practice and model legislation to protect a vibrant free press.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:



"Violence against journalists has reached alarming levels globally and we cannot turn a blind eye. The media has a crucial role to play in holding the powerful to account. There is no escaping the fact that draconian and outdated laws around the world are being used to restrict the ability of the media to report the truth."

International human rights lawyer Amal Clooney said: "I welcome the UK Government's focus on this issue at a time when journalists are being killed and imprisoned at record levels all over the world and I look forward to working on new legal initiatives that can help to ensure a more effective international response." ■

New Direction report

# EU and Russia: CURRENT PROBLEMS AND FUTURE SCENARIO. CZECH PERSPECTIVE

When at the end of February 2014 Russian troops took control of the Crimean peninsula, the whole western world was left in shock. It wasn't the first time that Russia had used its military offensively against another sovereign state - in 2008 the Kremlin ordered the invasion of the Republic of Georgia in the Caucasus.

2014 was the first time that Russia had taken hostile action against a country that shares a direct land border with the European Union. Surprise at this was not the right reaction. Tensions have been high between the EU and Russia for a long time. And the current tensions between the EU and Russia did not appear from nowhere. The roots lie deeper in the past.

In the nineties, Europe was in upheaval. Germany was undergoing a process of reunification. Central and Eastern European countries were preparing themselves to face a life after communism. And the EU was preparing to welcome them into the European project as free and independent democracies. European politicians were so occupied with these new realities that Russia disappeared from the agenda. They took for granted the idea that a Russia without Communism and

without the Soviet Union would automatically become a liberal democracy. They were so focused on themselves that they failed to notice Russia slip back into her old autocratic ways. By New Years Eve 1999, President Putin had taken control. Western politicians who never felt the need to engage with Russia or try to understand it, suddenly woke up, facing a new power in the east whose position was less than friendly.

Make no mistake: Russia is not an economic giant. It has yet to recover from its post-soviet slump. The GDP of the world's largest nation is not even comparable to that of Italy or other European states. And yet even with limited resources, Russia is able to project itself on the world stage as a superpower. It achieves this in two ways. Firstly by maintaining a strong military and secondly by unifying it's people behind the myth of an external enemy out to get them.

Europe has not yet figured out how to respond to this. With the awakening of an ambitious neighbour in the east, the west faces a question of how to deal with an evolving threat from a resurgent Russia.

As western democracies we believe in soft power and leading by example,



whilst Russia resorts to a more conventional kind of diplomacy: using threats of force, divide and rule tactics, and economic pressure and extortion. Whilst we believe that NATO is a defence alliance to keep us safe, Russia perceives it as an imminent threat. Whilst we see an opportunity to open up to our friendly neighbours, Russia sees us moving in on their territory.

We will never move on in our relationship without understanding Russia in a realist framework. Until we realize that any concessions or gestures of good will from our side are seen by Kremlin as signs of weakness, we will not have any success in dealing with Russia. Until we learn to understand Russia's modern history, its interests and motivations, we will never be able to face Russia as an equal counterpart. ■

Jan Zahradil MEP



## VETERAN MEP RUNNING AGAIN

# Dr Roberts Zīle

Latvian heavyweight politician and economist Dr Roberts Zīle is running for his fourth term in the European Parliament for Latvian party the National Alliance. In the European Parliament, Zīle has focused on the economic governance of the EU and solving the adjoining issues of banking crisis national economic downturns and energy issues – especially ensuring the energy independence of the Baltic countries from Russia.

In 1990 Zīle was entrusted with the executive of the Latvian Citizens' Congress after devoting more than a decade to economics. It was at this point that his political career took off, first becoming deputy in Riga City and then as an assistant to a Member of the Latvian Parliament. Zīle himself was elected to the next parliament in 1995 – for the "For Fatherland and Freedom" list – where he served as a member of the European Affairs and the Budget and Finance Committees. Soon Zīle advanced to become the Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee.

In 1998, after a few years in this role, Zīle was appointed Minister of Special Affairs for cooperation with international financial institutions in two successive governments, and between 2002 and 2004 he served as Minister of Transport in a third government. Zīle also developed an extensive economic reform programme, known as "Zīle's programme", designed to prevent a looming real estate crisis and to create a socially equitable tax system in Latvia oriented towards productive investments.

With this track record of political experience, Dr Zīle was elected Chair of For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK and nominated as the party's candidate for Prime Minister in 2006. Later, when the new association of political parties National Alliance "All for Latvia!" – "For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK" was created, he was elected Co-chair. Once the organisation was set up he resigned in order to focus fully on his mission as Member of the European Parliament and to open the way for a leader of the National

Alliance who was based in Latvia.

He was elected Vice President of Europe of the Nation's political group in 2004, and when For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK joined the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) in 2009, he became a member of the Executive Group.

Dr Roberts Zīle was born in Riga in 1958. In 1981 he finished his Baccalaureate degree in Economics at the University of Latvia and the Latvian Institute of Agriculture and Agricultural Economics. He worked in the United States, Canada and Australia before gaining a Doctoral degree in Economics from the Latvia University of Agriculture. After a couple of years working as an editor Zīle moved on to become a research fellow, and was appointed Head of Unit at the Latvian State Institute of Agrarian Economics. Zīle has also engaged himself in different civic causes, including founding the Economists Association to stimulate the growth of Latvia's economy and spread knowledge of economic issues to the public. ■



## FROM VILNIUS TO THE NATION

# Valdemar Tomaševski

Valdemar Tomaševski was born in 1965 in Vilnius. As the son of teacher-intellectuals, Tomaševski performed well in school, living up to his parents' passion for education. In 1983 he was selected to be a student of Vilnius Engineering Institute of Construction (Vilnius Gediminas Technical University) and graduated as a mechanical engineer in 1990. During these years of industrious studies, Tomaševski also performed military service as a draftee in Murmansk Province in Russia from 1984 to 1986.

In 1994 Tomaševski was one of the creators of the party Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania (EAPL), and became its first Vice President. The party that was later to become the most successful foreign party for Polish people was established to ensure the minority rights of Poles in Lithuania – defending the rights of Polish education, land and language.

Tomaševski has been a Member of the European Parliament since 2009, where he has been trusted with several significant commissions: Vice Chair of the delegation of relations with Belarus, member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, and member of the Committee on

Agriculture and Rural Development. He is also a Board Member of the European Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE). He is indeed a success story in Lithuanian politics. Besides being a passionate politician, Tomaševski is also a beloved husband and father, married for 30 years to his wife Violeta, the mother of his two children.

In 2009, thanks to the support of his voters, he ran for the office of president of Lithuania and came fourth out of seven candidates, with 5 per cent of the votes nationwide. In the city of Vilnius he finished second. His election campaign is recognised as successful as he was the youngest runner for the position at this time. In 2014 he ran for the presidential office again and won 8.23 per cent of the votes nationwide, winning in the Vilnius region.

In 2016 Tomaševski accepted the role of party leader for the EAPL, who on his initiative changed its name to Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Christian Families Alliance (EAPL-CFA). The party's future looks bright, due for a large part to the well-known courageous work that Tomaševski has carried out as Chair and in his political duty overall.

Tomaševski has announced his

candidacy for the presidential office in Lithuania. The election will be held in May. The core of the party's political message is "When Christian values are the foundation, the outcome is to strengthen honest reliable politics and the policy of supporting the traditional family". EAPL-CFA has governed Vilnius district, demonstrating the party's track record in effective local governing on a small budget. In the last decade, that local government has made significant investments in roads, sewage and water infrastructure, which will be a central issue to the campaign – securing Lithuania's future economic welfare. Furthermore, it has constructed several schools and kindergartens, 50 playgrounds, 6 social care facilities, 2 hospitals and 16 sports fields. All of these investments have been made without incurring any debts, proving that EAPL-CFA has managed the budget effectively.

So what motivates this long-term dedication to serving his country? Maybe the answer is to be found in Valdemar Tomaševski's motto "God – Honesty – Fatherland". As a devoted catholic who strives tirelessly towards improving conditions for his people, his motto truly sums up the core of this great politician's strong sense of political duty. ■



# SPECIAL FEATURE NATO 70 TURNS

## THREATS BY RUSSIA AND TERRORISM GROWING

Contrary to popular belief prevailing since the end of the Cold War, the end of the military standoff between NATO and Soviet Union did not mark a new era of peace and safety. Under the rule of Vladimir Putin, Russia is trying to once again assert itself as a world power and regain lost influence and prestige by pursuing an increasingly aggressive and revanchist policy. This coincides with the fact that while doing so, the Kremlin is seeking to distract Russian citizens from the country's growing internal problems. Turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa, civil war in Syria, and conflicts in Yemen and Libya, has brought an unprecedented wave of migrants and refugees towards Europe. Almost all of our neighbourhood is touched by open or frozen conflict, unrest and civil war, whilst exposed to the threat of terrorism.

Both Europe and NATO face unprecedented threats on many different fronts. These range from conventional warfare through the expansion of terrorist groups, radicalisation of our own citizens to information warfare and propaganda fuelled mainly by the Russia regime.

Despite predictions by numerous experts that future warfare will predominantly belong to special forces and not tanks and artillery, the situation in Eastern Ukraine (and to some degree in Syria) clearly shows that this is not the case, at least not yet.

The threat posed by Russia is much bigger than it has been since the end of the Cold War. Simply look at recent history. Because we did nothing in 2008, the Kremlin now believes it can get away with whatever it wants. They have played taken advantage of Western

complacency and struck whilst we are divided about the future of European defence.

Moscow's vision of divide et impera rule was much broader than just diplomacy. What has followed since 2009 – including the annexation of Crimea, aggression against Ukraine and intervention in Syria on the side of Assad regime – clearly shows that the Kremlin is determined to pursue its goal of working on different fronts and using a variety of tools.

Today, not only Ukraine, but also Moldova and Georgia are under threat. The second key challenge for the security of NATO countries is terrorist groups such as Daesh or Al Qaeda. NATO should be ready to militarily counter and fight terrorist groups which use partisan tactics and often melt into civilian populations or use human shields on their own soil.

This requires a completely different way of thinking about warfare, especially in cities and densely populated areas.

Another side of this coin is the need to dismantle terrorist cells operating in our own countries. Another directly linked threat is the spread of radicalisation amongst young people. Europe's population is suffering from terrorist attacks led by radicals and militants whom have been either trained abroad or have been recruited by terrorist organisations in Europe and America. These individuals often have European citizenship and are therefore much more difficult to track. We also have to remember that experienced radical Islamist fighters may – and almost certainly do – infiltrate the waves of refugees coming to Europe.

Last but not least, we have recently witnessed the revival of a threat which

has already been very creatively used by the Soviet Union before – information warfare targeting both NATO and the EU. The strategic communications employed by Russia are not only undermining security on Europe's Eastern border, it is also targeting our partners like Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. The "weaponisation of information" by the Kremlin is a well-thought through and well-funded strategy and should be regarded as a threat equal to more traditional ones. NATO is aware of the problem and its Stratcom Centre of Excellence in Latvia does a great job at exposing Russian lies and manipulation.

As NATO turns 70, it is vital that we continue to strengthen its position and the best means of defending the West against Russia and the growing other threats that continue to emerge on all fronts. ■









# ON DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE

Democracy constitutes the core of Europe's political culture. At the same time, it is endangered by the ongoing processes of European integration. As for the European Union, it has no proper legitimacy while such phenomenon is referred to as a democratic deficit.



Tomasz Grzegorz Grosse, PhD

CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT PAGE

## Democracy still important for voters

Modern Europe's problems with democracy seem to be a major challenge for future integration processes. Some research has referred to the "democratic deficit" in the EU or insufficient political legitimacy for the European project. The most well-known typology specifies two types of legitimacy: the first is the so-called "input legitimacy", which is typically based on a mandate granted via general scrutiny. According to the aforementioned research, such legitimacy appears weak in the European context. The second type of legitimacy, hereby referred to as "output legitimacy", regards essentially the direct results of all policy-making processes. That is why it is justly specified as "utilitarian legitimacy". In times of economic prosperity, when the European Union was not tormented by any serious crises, the issue of insufficient "input legitimacy" was usually downplayed; instead, the community was rather praised for its usefulness in relation to the Member States, being alleged to provide better solutions to social and political problems. Therefore, utilitarian legitimacy was expected to constitute the very core of both the EU's political authorization and its subsequent progress. Yet this sometimes occurred at the expense of reducing the influence of electoral politicization while progress in integration acted to the detriment of "input legitimacy" of the political process. Nonetheless, electoral mechanisms constitute the very core of democracy while utilitarian legitimacy has only a complementary character.

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The essential problem of the EU results from the choice between the greater effectiveness of its governance and fidelity to the aforementioned democratic principles.

During subsequent crises it turned out that all claims concerning the EU's higher utility had been severely dented whereas utilitarian legitimacy ceased to justify the EU's power over European societies. According to polls conducted by Eurobarometer, such was the feeling of at least a large part of EU citizens. Therefore, it can be assumed that the EU's structure is properly legitimated during "good times", but not during periods of trouble. Before such problematic situations started to emerge, progress in integration processes enjoyed some social consent, even though the project did not fully meet all democratic criteria. In the literature on this subject matter, such phenomenon is generally referred to as the period of "permissive consensus". Citizens allowed political elites to make decisions on the EU's essential affairs as long as there were no major problems; it was only later that they began to monitor the issue of integration – either to criticize it or to question its further development. Such was the manifestation of electoral politics, which had until recently been either dormant or simply ignored by the elites during some integration processes. This new political period has been referred to as "constraining dissensus", which was equivalent to reducing integration processes by dissatisfied Europeans. Interestingly, some scholars have been wondering why certain societies eventually decided to accept integration processes, bearing in mind that they kept evolving without any proper democratic mandates for quite a long time. Additionally, experts claim that the growing importance of electoral politics in the EU, thus the ever-increasing role of voters in political processes at the

European level, may exacerbate hitherto crises and prevent integration from fully developing. Moreover, the European Union lacks the adequate democratic legitimacy to conduct such radical reforms that would make it possible to deal with the aforementioned impasses as well as to ensure more effective governance, understood in terms of greater utilitarianism of the European project.

## Integration mechanisms: not really democratic

It is vital to indicate two basic integration mechanisms. The first is referred to as integration "through law" or "European constitutionalism". This consists of granting European law supremacy over national law, as well as envisaging the systematic strengthening of the competences of the European Commission (EC) and the Court of Justice of the European Union in ensuring proper implementation of EU law in all Member States. In light of the discussed concept, European treaties aspire to become EU constitutional law whereas the CJEU is eager to be perceived as the constitutional court for the entire community. Under the notion of integration "through law", as mentioned above, both treaties and European law tend to encompass more and more public affairs. In addition, these two institutions actively seek to extend their current scope of competences as well the impact of EU law, even beyond the literal understanding of treaty provisions, which in fact influences some spheres controlled exclusively by the Member States.

As for the second mechanism responsible for deepening integration, this concerns the ever-growing number of cases submitted to intergovernmental institutions (mainly in the EU Council) that are subsequently handled through the majority voting procedure. This institution plays a leading role in legislative procedure ("community method"), even despite the fact that it is the European Commission that has a near monopoly on legislative initiatives while the European Parliament is also involved in the legislative procedure. In addition to improving governance, majority voting speeds up the law-giving process as well as facilitating the adoption of more effective solutions and not only those that could satisfy all interested parties. Nonetheless, such procedure shifts power in the EU to the community's largest states, which only intensifies during times of crises, and what I personally refer to as the systemic tendency towards the "asymmetric confederation".

Thus, scholars claim that these two main integration development mechanisms should not be perceived as purely democratic tools. According to Fritz W. Scharpf, integration "through law", along with expanding the competences of both the EC and the CJEU, seem highly problematic from the perspective of democratic principles. The former lacks appropriate electoral input legitimacy while the latter does not have at its disposal adequate political supervision from the elected "majoritarian" institutions. Being part of the trias politica model, the judicial system shall indeed enjoy some autonomy; nonetheless, it cannot be completely free of influence exerted by the electoral politics in any of the world's democratic countries. Such claim may be evidenced by the fact that

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The European Union lacks the adequate democratic legitimacy to conduct such radical reforms that would make it possible to deal with the aforementioned impasses as well as to ensure more effective governance.

in many democratic systems voters, parliaments or representatives of the executive branch have the right to appoint judges, or to influence the choice of the state's highest judicial bodies, with particular regard to members of constitutional courts. Moreover, the EC tends to extend the scope of impact exerted by European law also on the domains being within exclusive competences of Member States and those that have been nominally excluded from the jurisdiction of the CJEU. The Commission interferes in these areas on the pretext of protecting liberties on the common market as well as taking advantage of referring Member States to the CJEU. Such was the case of the limited use of military offenses by EU countries, even regardless of the fact that both security and defence matters were excluded from the rules related to common market (pursuant to Article 346 of the TFEU). As for the Court, it tends to agree with the Commission in such cases. Needless to say that, under the CJEU rulings, also in some matters in which the European Union has no competences, Member States shall exercise their respective powers in accordance with European law. Such attitude violates the democratic principle, according to which only sovereign political communities, backed by their democratically-elected representatives, are entitled to pass competences to international institutions.

In addition, more and more cases of majority voting have emerged, the procedure of which raises some concern about its compliance with democratic principles. The EU is closer to a confederal rather than federal solution, thus constituting first and foremost a union of equal states while its democratic mandate derives primarily from scrutiny carried out in subsequent Member States. Many scholars urge that the EU should be referred to as a "demoi-cracy", and not as a "democracy"; it forms a union of democratic national communities (demoi) that has failed to develop into a uniform European community (demos). So, voting processes in such systems shall be primarily based on consensus, understood in terms of unanimous decisions made by their members. Thus, it is not democratic to let one national community – or a group of them – to outvote any other ones. Under EU principles, all democratic communities shall be equal with no apparent dominant structure. Thus, providing only one of them with a greater number of votes and – more importantly – outvoting some other communities in the Council of the European Union – does not comply with democratic legitimacy. If the European Union had the intention to apply majority voting in its institutions, such occurrences would have to take place only in cases where a losing minority could be

entitled to take advantage of the opt-out right, which would allow them to exclude themselves from a given regulation without a need to implement it on their territory. For instance, such was the case of the Central European countries that voted against legislation on the compulsory relocation of asylum seekers in the EU in 2015 when having been outvoted by other Member States, they refused to enter the directive into force in their respective national systems. Although such behaviour constituted an example of violating EU law as well as the principles of "European constitutionalism", they acted according to democratic rules.

This brings me to the main conclusion of this part of the paper. The essential problem of the EU results basically from the choice between the greater effectiveness of its governance and fidelity to the aforementioned democratic principles. Nonetheless, today's political reality makes it impossible to meet both of these criteria while any undertakings aiming to enhance action effectiveness are immediately associated with disregarding democratic legitimacy. The fact of obeying such strict democratic norms translates usually into a detention in action efficiency as well as difficulties occurring at the decision-making level in the EU institutions. This is dramatic for the European project, constituting a situation with no simple solution, which has additionally worsened during subsequent crises.

## Rule of law as a mechanism for the integration progress

One of the most important instruments of the integration "through law" is the practical implementation of the rule of law principle. Its main task is to defend the authority of European law and its supremacy over national law. In addition, it constitutes a source of power for the EU institutions, with particular regard to the European Commission and the Court of Justice of the European Union, as both of them account for the interpretation of rule of law and its observance in EU Member States. Thus, such principles mainly seek to promote a specific vision of integration, based on the expansion of European law as well as the competences of the EU institutions. Thus, the above-mentioned rules reconcile the supranational interests of both the European Commission and the Court of Justice of the European Union. However, in Europe, the rule of law tends to be exercised in a rather flexible, discretionary and often arbitrary manner. Such approach gives the impression that some national interests, especially those of the largest and most influential Member States, are far more privileged than those of others, as evidenced by the



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The EU is closer to a confederal rather than federal solution, thus constituting first and foremost a union of equal states while its democratic mandate derives primarily from scrutiny carried out in subsequent Member States.

expansion of the existing Nord Stream pipeline; the undertaking of which actually breaches EU law – or at least is far from the rule of law principle.

Europe's rule of law is safeguarded by the CJEU, referred to as the most independent judicial institution in the world. Nonetheless, its independence does not translate directly into having an apolitical nature. According to scholars, the Court does not operate in a political vacuum, being in fact a political actor, involved in implementing a particular vision of a progress in integration. Moreover, it fosters the expansion of both European law as well as the power of the community's institutions while its judges seem to closely follow public debate; they "read morning papers", with special regard to Western European titles, according to some experts. There emerge some examples of judicial decisions aimed at establishing long-term public support both for the Union as well as the work of the Court. Such type of policy, which is currently being created by the members of the CJEU, has been ever described in the subject-matter literature as so-called "diffuse legitimacy". The aforementioned strategy consists of defending rights of EU citizens, ranging from consumer protection to some regulations regarding mobility and employment in the internal market.

In the 1990s, the Court safeguarded the right to move freely within the territory of the EU, while another incentive was open access to the welfare systems of the most affluent European countries. The same applied to the possibility to work in the internal market; freedom of movement of employees was widely encouraged, mostly by eliminating barriers imposed by countries that could offer higher wages but which were also characterised by more extensive regulations and a strong level of unionisation. So, in both cases, namely access to social welfare and freedom of employment in the common market, the Court's judicial decisions backed liberal solutions that were beneficial to the inhabitants of less affluent Central European states, not to forget greater financial solidarity granted by the countries of Western and Southern Europe.

Nonetheless, at the time of the global financial crisis, such case law was subject to gradual changes. The Court ceased to invoke the rights of EU citizens to free movement, all to work – no longer perceived in terms of superior values – simultaneously stipulating that job opportunities offered by other EU Member

States, or the possibility to profit from their social security systems, shall have a solely conditional character. The judicial institution referred to the need to protect public finances of the EU's most affluent countries as well as to reduce the free flow of workers on EU territory, a solution that could have been implemented through the necessity to comply with protective regulations on local markets.

While observing such changes within the jurisprudence of the Court, numerous pundits question the actual reason for such state of affairs. According to some opinions, the Court essentially took into account the change in attitude of voters in Western and Southern countries who, facing the global economic recession became much more critical of both liberal principles in the internal markets as well as of the ongoing globalisation processes. Yet other experts claim that the Court bore in mind the fact that the EU's most influential Member States, including France, Germany and Italy, opposed such liberal rules. In light of both interpretations, it is recognized that political factors have altered the jurisprudence of the Court while its protectionist interpretations of EU law seemed beneficial for the societies of the so-called "old Europe", while at the expense of the newly-admitted Member States of the European community.

The issue of the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice in the context of the Eurozone crisis, especially in terms of some unconventional interventions of the European Central Bank (ECB), has come under scrutiny in the relevant literature. Interestingly, some scholars perceived such interventions as evidence of breaching or bypassing EU law. For example, the ECB broke the principle of independence of the national fiscal policy and the sole responsibility of the Member States for their own debt (pursuant to Article 125.1 of the TFEU). The institution is also believed to have violated both the ban on the mutualisation

of debt as well as that on making the ECB the lender of last resort (under Article 123.1 of the TFEU). In many cases, the ECB has ceased to be a politically-independent institution, which can be observed in situations where it forced borrowing states to accept all conditions imposed by the creditor states. Both the ECB and the EC disrespected the treaty rule related to some public policies, which should be left to the exclusive competence of the Member States (pursuant to Article 5 of the TEU). This was a consequence of imposing fiscal austerity on some Member States that affected these public policies.

As for the Court, it authorized the activities carried out by both the EC and the ECB that were referred to by many lawyers as disregarding Europe's constitutional law, including treaties. Similarly, the judicial institution limited the ability of citizens to assert their basic rights if they were disregarded by international assistance programs. Thus, it altered its previous policy of "diffuse legitimacy" that opted for safeguarding the rights of EU citizens while such a step has been taken in the name of a higher historical necessity. There is little doubt that the Court acted accordingly with European integration, preventing the EU's monetary union from any dissolution processes. Nevertheless, many lawyers refer to these actions as arbitrary and as characterized by their loose approach towards the treaties in force; some of whom resorted even to accusing the EU institutions of changing hitherto constitutional order. Of course, it is considered by some that the Court had sought to authorize such unconventional policy conducted by the ECB, though it was deprived of its legitimacy based on the rule of law observance. In the time of the recession, integration "through law" was used to centralize power at the European level, which appeared particularly visible in the case of technocratic institutions, including

the EC, the ECB as well as the CJEU. They all became subject to the politicization, i.e. they served the interests of the EU's wealthiest states that granted assistance loans to some members of the monetary union. In such a way, formally independent institutions became a tool for the most influential and well-off European countries, thus sanctioning the hierarchy of power in the EU (and more specifically – the monetary union) between creditor countries and borrowing countries. Also all actions performed by the CJEU, including the rather arbitrary implementation of the principle of the rule of law, have been completely subordinated to such hierarchy, which I have previously defined as asymmetrical power relations between stronger and weaker Member States.

## Growing rebellion of national communities

Such steps as promoting the principle of the rule of law within the EU structures, escalating the power of both the EC and the CJEU in relation to subsequent countries, as well as outvoting all countries representing interests other than those of the EU's largest Member States, may eventually lead to some instances, in which the EU's political order could be openly questioned. This might be executed on the basis of, or even to defend, democratic principles. Individual national communities or their governments may challenge the authority of the Commission as well as the judgments of the CJEU, or even fail to implement any regulations that have been adopted contrary to their positions. Scharpf urges that undermining the EU's legal order may concern the rejection of liberal principles applied in the internal market by voters being increasingly critical of liberalization and globalization processes. The same may also apply to liberal values being questioned in other domains. Such a trend

seems more and more visible in the case of migration policy, as evidenced by the example of tensions amid the alleged violation of the rule of law principle by both Poland and Hungary, within the framework of which the right of the European institutions to interfere in states' internal reforms has been reportedly undermined in both countries. Nonetheless, the European legal system was perhaps most seriously questioned during the United Kingdom's European Union membership referendum in 2016, as a result of which the country voted to leave the community. Most Britons sought to, among others, regain their sovereignty in enacting law-giving processes and thus, also to become independent of the judicial decisions issued by the CJEU.

It is worth noting that all tendencies mentioned above, which ultimately lead to the rejection of two basic integration instruments, stem directly from the increase in electoral politics within Member States, thus undermining liberal norms and defending democracy. Therefore, they result from the deficit of "input" democratic legitimacy of Europe's political processes, and are fuelled by some instances of European inconsistency or even hypocrisy within the scope of the rule of law.

## Conclusion

Recent crises have seemingly woken up the EU's dormant election politics. Voters have decided to defend their own national democracy against the authoritarian and liberal tendencies that accompanied the progress of European integration. The literature refers to such direction of integration development as "authoritarian liberalism", which is being increasingly contested by some societies. We cannot be sure whether such sentiment(s) will continue to grow as well as how they might possibly influence further processes of European integration. Nonetheless, everything seems to indicate that the European Union should alter its hitherto approach and adapt to the principles of democratic legitimacy, which could be achieved even at the price of less operational efficiency and weaker decision-making processes. Undertaking all steps aiming to improve the management, yet at the expense of democratic standards, constitutes a shortcut that seems profitable for integration processes only in a short-time perspective. ■



# Jan Zahradil CAMPAIGN DIARY Part IV.

## Freedom of religion and belief, Blue Green Summit, Road to Europe



### EVENTS

#### Faith and Freedom Summit



ACRE's lead candidate Jan Zahradil delivered a key note speech at the Faith and Freedom Summit that took place on 2nd April in Brussels. The Summit brought together leaders from religion, politics, government, academia, activism and the not-for-profit sector from Europe and beyond, in order to propose and develop initiatives that would put Freedom of Religion and Belief in Europe back in the spotlight.

The Summit aimed to drive an open discussion on the topic and the need to reinforce the existing mechanisms protecting freedom of religion and belief in the European Union.

#### Blue Green Summit and why conservatives are the best conservationists



The ACRE Blue Green Summit 2019 took place on 3rd April in the Brussels Solvay Library, and presented a great opportunity to counter the view that environmental policies are exclusively on the left's agenda.

Jan Zahradil opened the Summit saying: "Here in Brussels, the response to environmental issues is often to turn to regulation. The Green movement seems to have completely lost its way intellectually. The EU, its Member States, and markets must all work together if we are to develop effective solutions for sustainability."

A water technology engineer by profession, Jan Zahradil also warned that the issue of climate change, which absolutely dominates the public discourse on environmental issues, overshadows any other environmental problems we have such as water scarcity and draughts.

#### Jan Zahradil's Road to Europe



On 4th April ACRE lead candidate for the Commission Presidency Jan Zahradil spoke in the Spitzenkandidaten Series debate Road to Europe organised by the Financial Times and European economic think tank Bruegel. The topics covered issues such as sustainable growth, Eurozone and European economy, trade and Competition and industrial policy.

Jan Zahradil campaigned for the EU budget to be restructured and focused on infrastructure, innovation and research and also stressed that the EU needs to become the world leader in trade.

"European institutions need to become servants of the member states rather than their master," concluded Mr Zahradil.



Should environmental groups continue to reject pragmatic solutions, remain deeply suspicious of market forces, and obsess over utopian ideals, they will almost certainly lose the battle of ideas on how to avoid, mitigate and minimize adverse environmental impacts.

### TWEETS

11:43 AM - 3 Apr 2019 Thursday morning with @ftbrussels and @Bruegel\_org. Happy to share my @ACREurope #spitzenkandidat idea of flexible + decentralised #EU and of scaled-back @EU\_Commission that doesn't play "quasi-government" role. #RetuneTheEU

6:04 AM - 2 Apr 2019 Retweet @BrianMaguireEU Filming #OverACoffee - Great to chat with @ZahradilJan this morning. We spoke about #EP2019, Salvini, Orban, Vox, Russia, China, 5G, Eurozone, Climate and #Brexit @ecrgroup #Spitzenkandidaten @EURACTIV

10:12 AM - 31 Mar 2019 This is interesting. Key #EU players, including @EU\_Commission, apparently do not follow strict #US strategy on #China. Why? For United States, China means geopolitical rivalry first, economy + trade second. For Europe, it is exactly the other way around.

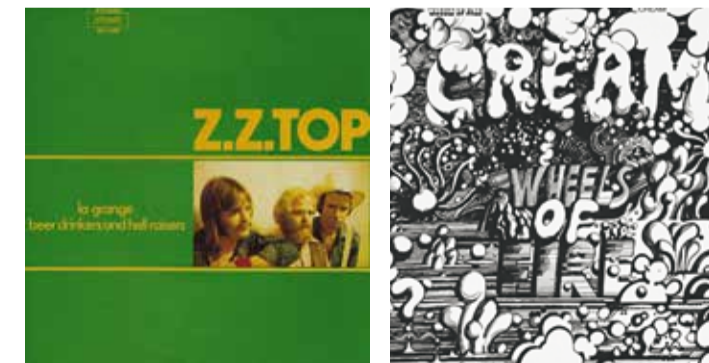
11:52 AM - 26 Mar 2019 As @ecrgroup #Spitzenkandidat, I would kindly ask Mr. @vilimsky not to speak on behalf of us. We are well established, structured, growing. We are leading eurorealist + reformist force of next #EP. No need of any "fusion" with other groups.



### IN THE NEWS



### MUSIC WHAT I AM LISTENING TO RIGHT NOW



ZZ Top Beer Drinkers & Hell Raisers

Cream Politician

### ZAHRABEER

Very special beer from the Beer Mania in Brussels. Highly recommended for the upcoming EP election campaign.



## BUILDING A GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN TEAM? Ignore the "geniuses" in their little Ivory Towers. Just do the simple things but do them well...

In the last edition, we spent considerable time pondering the role of the Campaign Team remit for the production, and distribution, of campaign literature. This time out we will scrutinise some of the other core functions which any, half decent, Campaign Team should have.

So, let's start with the vexed issue of voting intention identification. I say "vexed" because in some countries canvassing, or surveying, and asking people who they are most likely to support in an election is as traditional and normal as holding the election itself. It is just what you do. In other countries, however, the practice is utterly alien. This may be for many a different reason not least perhaps, in some nations, because of comparatively recent political and governmental circumstances. Either way, times move on and times change. Attitudes and expectations alter. New generations of voters emerge. The fact is that any candidate worth their salt needs to know where their electoral support resides - and why. If they don't actually ask the direct question, they will never know. That then in turn, self-evidently, makes getting out the vote (GOTV) somewhat problematic!

Let's be pragmatic, though. Electoral laws and traditions are different in every country. For example, some countries do not have a freely available electoral register for campaigners to utilise. Elsewhere, disobligingly for GOTV aficionados, campaigning on the eve of poll or polling day itself is deemed unlawful. Then there's the mind boggling, and stifling, red tape vis-à-vis the relatively newly introduced GDPR regulations. Just occasionally, one might be forgiven for feeling that precious little within our professed "democratic" electoral systems actually encourages active democratic participation and engagement. That consideration, though, is perhaps for another day. Currently, for better or worse, we are where we are.

So, take time to review the state of play in your own country. Ideally, you will want to have access to an electoral register (paper and/or digital copies), to have highlighted street maps, to have telephone numbers for each elector and to be able to campaign right up to close of poll. Whichever of these things you can, or cannot do, do not lose sight of the overall objective.

As a reminder, the "objective" is to speak regularly with the electorate and engage with them. Without voter participation after all, in most circumstances, politicians are unable to get elected.

At the start of any campaign, the Campaign Team should appoint a volunteer member to be responsible for canvassing/surveying. That person needs to ascertain as a priority, based on the electoral system in use, how many votes their candidate will require to be elected. It is easy enough, based upon previous results and estimated percentage turnout, to create a mathematical formula which will calculate how many voters are needed to pledge their support for your candidate. And you can only hit that target if you actually speak to the voters and ask for their support. Once you have reached your target, assuming your calculation is correct, your canvassing is reliable, and your GOTV efforts are professional - your candidate wins. "Simple".

And actually, it genuinely is - simple. What could be simpler than having a list of voters, going and talking to them, trying to reach a target level of support,

encouraging that target audience to vote - and then wait for the result. Undeniably it is hard work and takes time and lots of people to help. Whoever said winning an election was easy? You have to deserve it. And, traditionally, talking to your voters is usually considered a good first step!

This is an exceedingly demanding role for the lead person on the Campaign Team and they will need a great deal of assistance. What, though, sometimes makes it harder is when "clever" people try to complicate what should be a simple process. It is normally would-be "geniuses" who come up with impractical "modern" techniques such as trying to ascertain how "intensely" a voter feels about supporting a particular party. These "geniuses" start to require their volunteers to ask voters about their likelihood to support each and every party that will appear on the ballot paper. Volunteer canvassers are provided with a robotic and unreadable canvass sheet script which is meant to yield a 1-10 response from the elector. Most canvassers hate it. The voter certainly gets bored and irritated and it takes so much volunteer time that you only get to meet relatively few residents. This sort of nonsense idea pops up from time to time and is created by "arm-chair warriors" who obviously need to "get out more". My advice? Ditch any such superficially cunning, but ultimately useless, ideas and just do what



you actually need to do. Survey people, ask their voting intention this time and who they supported last time - and then move on swiftly to the next property. Time is short in a campaign. You have to reach your target not waste time glean small handfuls of information that nobody will ever use.

The other method that "experienced" campaigners swear by is to not go out canvassing at all. This method is normally deployed because a small minority of candidates arrogantly feel that voters should come to them, rather than the other way around. They also believe that they already know what people think and so there is no need to ask them. Finally, you also regularly hear the refrain, "well we have never done it that way before". Well, maybe not but have they ever won before? And, even if they have, which part of the representative democratic engagement process do they not understand?

Communication should always be the primary watchword for politicians, candidates and activists. Communication all year round - not just at election time.

One area that the Campaign Team should potentially pay extremely close attention to is postal voting. Postal voting is abundant in some countries, other states have strictly limited absent voting, whilst in many it is not legal at all. If you are contesting an election with postal voting, your Campaign Team need to be all over it like a rash. There

is little point canvassing somebody, or delivering them a piece of persuasive literature, if they have already voted early by sending in a postal vote! In such elections, Campaign Teams must wise-up to the fact that there are, effectively, two separate GOTV campaigns to run. One with the standard polling day in mind, but the other with early postal voters as the target audience.

One designated member of the Campaign Team should have the responsibility for ensuring that canvassed supporters if required, and if eligible, should be offered a postal vote. They should also ensure that registered postal voters are contacted early in the campaign, before their ballot paper arrives. Such voters need to see the candidate's messaging and their canvassers - ideally, prior to them completing and returning their postal ballot.

And then, of course, there is the whole topic of getting out the vote (GOTV). Once you have exceeded your mathematical target of pledged supporters, you then need to encourage them to actually go and vote. And there are so many reasons people (where abstention is allowed) say they will support a candidate and then, subsequently, fail to do so. There are any number of reasons such as, they are away from home on election day and needed a postal vote (if available). Each time you find one of these, your Campaign Team Postal Vote supreme will have "failed"! But there are other reasons for people not turning out. Perhaps your arguments have not been persuasive enough; it's raining or it is too cold; they are too elderly to go out without a family member to assist; they are watching the football or, most likely, they just plain forgot. All these reasons and more mean that, within the rules of whatever your own country's election law states, your GOTV plan has to be prepared well in advance and most be exceptionally thorough. If you end up losing by one vote - and it has happened many times - you will forever kick yourself. The person in charge of GOTV on the Campaign Team occasionally feels that their endeavours do not need to be ramped up until late in the election. This is completely untrue. Strong GOTV and GOTPV (Get out the Postal Vote) operations can make all the difference between success and failure.

The grassroots Campaign Team roles we have examined here, and in previous editions, are unquestionably the most essential of all the key tasks that necessitate colossal focus. There are other roles such as someone on the Team who will find highly visible poster sites from supportive and willing land owners. Indeed, whether it is a site along a large stretch of farmland or the upstairs window of somebody's apartment - it all adds positively to the campaign's visibility. Inevitably, the Campaign Team will also need a volunteer to head up the organisation and deployment of regular street stalls around the constituency. Equally, an individual who can liaise with local business alongside another colleague whose sole purpose in life should be to fund raise. Something, or someone, has to raise the funds required to meet your campaign expenses. Unless, of course, your party has belatedly and surprisingly found the famed "magic money tree"! Setting up, organising and maintaining an efficient volunteer Campaign Team takes time, patience and hard work in spades. But remember Theodore Roosevelt's words - "Nothing worth having comes easy."



Having been the Capital of Poland for over 500 years, over 500 years ago, Krakow historically is truly the center of attention culturally, academically and economically. Krakow dates back to the 7th century and is the second largest city in Poland making it truly the top pick for history and culture lovers.

When to go?

Winters in Poland are very cold to say the least. If you are into snow and have one or two big coats then I wouldn't suggest against it because in the Winter Krakow takes its charm and charisma to a whole new level, just be ready for some winds that bite. As the outdoor travel ideas might not be on the top of the 'Winter Picks' list, some would suggest staying inside and drinking Hot Chocolate but really it's the outdoor Winter experience that makes Krakow so exciting in Winter. Getting involved in the ice-skating in the various ice rinks across the city is one way to take advantage of Winter. Another is the Christmas markets - found all throughout the city but especially prominent is the Old Town Market Square, where you can find artisan businesses with their little wooden stalls selling everything from handmade clay bird callers, and replica armourers, to smoked meat, and mulled wine.



which takes place in March - typically somewhere from the 10th onwards, not just strictly around Easter. This is a fantastic opportunity to spend time amongst the locals who come out in full force to take part in the activities and market. Pisanki, or painted Easter eggs, are one of the hallmarks of the fair. If this is too early and cold for you, another great time to be in Krakow is April. Temperatures are on the rise and outdoor trips through the gothic and medieval arch itecture are much more viable. One incredible thing to take advantage of in Spring in Krakow is the Mistieria Paschalia Festival, classical music concerts are held in the various venues around Krakow during Holy Week.

The summers are equally a fantastic time to visit. If you are fortunate enough to visit Krakow during the summer months, there are a variety of outdoor options that you can enjoy. I know that a popular local choice is spending time on the banks of the Wisla river, sun bathing, walking, riding or rollerblading. Along the river are fixed barges housing bars and restaurants, which are a great option for a lunch-time stop. A stone's throw away from Wawel castle and not too far from Grunwaldzki bridge is Krakow's hottest summer spot, Plaza, an artificial beach, bar, restaurant and swimming pool on the banks of the river. This is a great spot to relax and enjoy the sun. If you're happy to go further afield then take a taxi to Kryspinow. Here there is another artificial lake which attracts the younger crowd - a popular spot for a barbeque and a beer. The Lake is also home to a wakeboarding club so you can try your hand at this extreme sport should you want.



What to do?



**1 Wawel Castle**  
Wawel Castle was constructed during the 14th century. It's really impressive to look at on top of its hill and it was home to Polish Monarchs for centuries. You can pay for a tour of almost all of the rooms, which contain an exquisite collection of art and decors. Admission is free on Mondays from April to October.



**2 The Underground Museum**  
One of the more interesting spots in Krakow is actually directly underneath the feet of the unsuspecting main Market Square tourists. This museum is dedicated to Krakow's medieval past through well-preserved foundations, artifacts and city history. Cleverly, the museum makes use of 3D technology and simulations to fuse an interactive experience with a classic one. It gives you an incredible overview of how the city came to be what it is today.



**3 The Royal Road**  
The Royal Road stretches from St. Florian's Gate to Florianka, across the Rynek Glówny, and all the way through Grodzka to the Wawel Castle (thus a good combo with number one on our list). This was once the route taken by medieval kings as they made their way through the city center and it is a way to relive the historical past of Krakow.



**4 Auschwitz**  
A much more sobering pick now. Auschwitz-Birkenau is the infamous German Nazi concentration and extermination center during World War II. Not for the faint of heart but certainly eye opening and moving. Over 1.1 million people died here, and you do not need to be told that to feel it. As a visitor, you can tour the grounds, including the barracks and the gas chambers.



**5 Schindler's Factory**  
If you've ever seen the fantastic 1993 Spielberg classic, 'Schindler's List' then you'll know exactly what this place it. Located in the actual factory itself, this fantastic museum is an incredibly thorough journey across the history of Poland through World War II.



**6 Salt Mines**  
The Wieliczka Salt Mines were used all through Krakow's history, dating back to the Middle Ages, to produce table salt, one of the city's largest industries. It has been a museum since 2007. It's pretty incredible to see the statues, chandeliers, cathedrals and chapels carved from salt by the old miners. A four-hour guided tour is available for a price with transportation to and from Krakow.

Where to stay?



Those with a taste for luxury will find nowhere better than Bonerowski Palace. The name gives it all away with this beautiful palace located literally right in the city's centre, pricey and yet completely perfect.



In the mid range is WM Hotel System in Pradnik Bialy, roughly 5km from the city centre. Beautifully designed and subtly modern, this hotel is a perfect choice if you're not looking to splash out.



On the other side of the spectrum is the Intro Hostel, whose cozy atmosphere and cute balconys serve as a nice retreat. Perfectly located to be tucked away and yet close to the action, this is the perfect pick if you're looking to save money.



William Makepeace Thackeray's **VANITY FAIR** Antidote to an age of cant

“Very good indeed, beats Dickens out of the world,”

wrote Jane Carlyle to her philosopher husband Thomas, as William Makepeace Thackeray's serial novel *Vanity Fair* was beginning to catch fire in the Victorian public's imagination. Until then - it was serialised in Punch magazine in 1847/8 - Thackeray was just a modestly successful jobbing journalist, critic and author, "writing for life" to feed his wife and three daughters. By the book's close he was an overnight sensation, hailed by Charlotte Brontë as "an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognised", hugely sought after by society, and was subsequently an influence on Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

*Vanity Fair* is indeed a magnificent novel and a great, rollicking read, surprisingly modern in its tone and style, and refreshingly free of the earnest moralising we have to endure in contemporaries like Dickens. Perhaps its most daring experiment is its almost complete absence of likeable characters. Hence its subtitle: A Novel Without A Hero.

It does have a heroine of sorts, though, in the form of the amoral adventuress Becky Sharp. Becky is cynical, manipulative, shallow, acquisitive, deceitful and treacherous. By the end - spoiler alert - she has even added murder to her list of crimes against the social order. Sometimes you root for her, sometimes you don't, but you're never in any doubt where she is coming from. Born the daughter of an impoverished artist and French dancer, Becky has the chameleon social skills, accomplishments and aspirations of a proper English lady. But not, unfortunately, the financial security to keep herself in the style she would prefer. Her only real option, therefore, is to ensnare a succession of richer men.

Money is the driving force not just for Becky but for most characters in *Vanity Fair*. (Just as you might expect of a book which takes its title from the licentious centre of commerce in John Bunyan's allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress*.) Thackeray, who himself gambled away his inheritance, writes with feeling and insight on the subject: how to make it; how to spend it; how to lose it. One of the chapters is famously titled: "How to live well on nothing a year".

Though the book is set in Regency England (and Europe) and written for a Victorian audience, the pecuniary preoccupations of its cast of characters will never date. Then, as now, everyone wants to get a foot on the ladder, to improve their finances, status and

lifestyle. And if they can't achieve it by fair means, well foul ones it might just have to be...

Thackeray - via a chirpy, confiding authorial voice which frequently calls the reader aside to comment amusedly on proceedings - passes little moral judgment. Virtue is rarely rewarded; wicked deeds often go unpunished. When John Sedley loses all his money, he is not suddenly redeemed by penury: it simply turns him into an irritating loser engaged in endless fruitless money-making schemes which drive his poor wife and daughter deeper into misery. Thackeray's cynicism - especially in an era more religious than our own - is breathtaking, and may explain why contemporary audiences found the book so exciting. Here, in the raw, is an almost Godless universe where the smiling author refuses to countenance anything so trite as a happy ending.

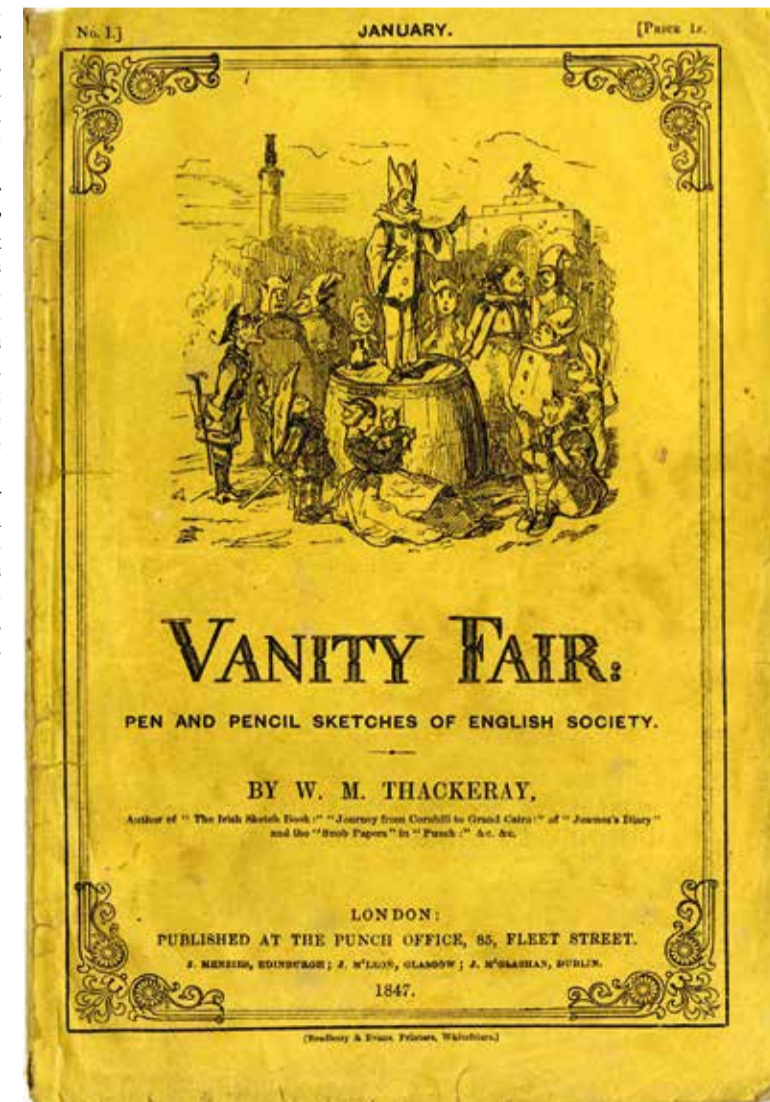
All this makes *Vanity Fair* a particularly refreshing antidote to our own age of cant and virtue-signalling. Were he writing today, Thackeray would no doubt be hailed by feminists for having such an empowered, feisty, psychologically plausible woman as his main protagonist. Except he then goes and

blows his politically correct credentials completely with his portrait of the book's other main female character - the dreary, sexless, worthy, feeble-minded, maddeningly drippy Amelia Sedley - surely one of the most uninspiring women in literature. Thackeray doesn't want you to like or admire him; he just wants to tell you what he knows.

The book is not without its flaws. When you buy it, make sure you get an edition with a key to all the *dramatis personae*, otherwise you're likely to find yourself lost for at least the first half. Yes, it could have been more tightly edited and the sprawling plot - as is the way in serial novels - does read at times like it was written on the hoof with a view to titillating with sudden shocks and cliffhangers. But that's also what gives it its exuberance and vitality: that sense you get of a writer at the height of his powers, bursting with so much prolific talent he can't help squandering it now and then. There are longueurs, yes. But also passages of such vivid colour - the scene at Vauxhall gardens; the ball before Waterloo; Becky's brief apotheosis as a society queen - that they will stick in your memory forever. ■

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*Vanity Fair* is indeed a magnificent novel and a great, rollicking read, surprisingly modern in its tone and style, and refreshingly free of the earnest moralising we have to endure in contemporaries like Dickens.



**James Delingpole**  
is a conservative columnist and novelist who has written for publications including the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and *The Spectator*. He is also the executive editor of Breitbart London. His latest book is *Watermelons*.  
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Spain's favourite pastime

**BULLFIGHTING AND HUNTING**



Bullfighting is an ancient tradition in Spain, which goes back in one form or another to the Roman amphitheatres. In its modern iteration, bullfighting is generally dated to 1726 when Francisco Romero began fighting on foot with a cape and sword. Over the years, the tradition has slowly changed and become a cornerstone of Spanish culture. For example, to prevent bull or fighter from being unfairly cornered bullrings were introduced. The modern school of bullfighting, the now common technique of the matador drawing the bull close with his cape, was introduced and popularised in the mid-20th century by the famed Juan Belmonte.

In 2013, after decades of criticism of the practice of animal rights groups, and the introduction of bans in certain regions, a Spanish congressional commission made the decision to protect bullfighting by declaring bullfighting part of Spain's Cultural Heritage. This did not prevent continued lobbying by the animal rights groups from trying to outlaw the pastime calling bullfighting a "desperate [...] industry to secure the future of this dying industry [...that is] outdated and has no place in a modern society". More recently, the Constitutional Court overturned Cataluña's ban on this particular pastime.

Despite the fact that the bullfighting fans have won both in the legislature and the courts against a coalition of international animal protection organisations including the Humane Society International, World Society for the Protection of Animals, CAS International, League Against Cruel Sports, and Peta, continue to make it hard to practice. In a long overdue response to these left-wing animal welfare groups tens of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets of Madrid at the beginning of March, to defend this is deeply rooted tradition. The demonstration turned political as it was attended by political leaders from different parties. It also has called in to question the claims that bullfighting is a dying industry.

The more than 1,500 corridas that take place each year are an integral part of the Spanish economy. Experts estimate that corridas add value to 100 different industries, with tourism perhaps being the business that benefits the most from this tradition. Although attendance at bullfighting events declined during the economic crisis, popular festivities involving bulls kept growing in spite of the economic crisis and is now close to

20,000 encierros per year. Since the economic crisis ended bullfighting has recovered and has grown 12 percent following the end of the recession. In terms of tax revenues, no other cultural industry generates as much VAT as bullfighting events.

Furthermore, the ranches, dehesas, that specialize in breeding fighting bulls preserve 250,000 hectares of pasture lands and preserve genetic strains of the fighting bull which are the living genetic heritage of ancestral bovine species that lived in the Spanish Peninsula and the Mediterranean some 10,000 years ago. These often are considered the jewel of Spain's livestock.

The politically left-leaning animal rights groups have also started attacking hunting. Hunting of course goes back to the beginning of humanity itself and is a pastime that is enjoyed by a large part of the population. The number of hunting licenses has kept climbing in recent years and is now close to 715,000. There are more than 32,000 estates that hold hunting activities and these estates preserve almost 45 million hectares.

According to Deloitte, a consulting firm, hunting activities in Spain create a very significant economic value. Annually, coursing traditions generate 6.5 billion euros of economic activity, a figure akin to that of the powerful wine sector. Such numbers are large enough to support close to 185,000 jobs, a workforce not much smaller than the automotive industry.

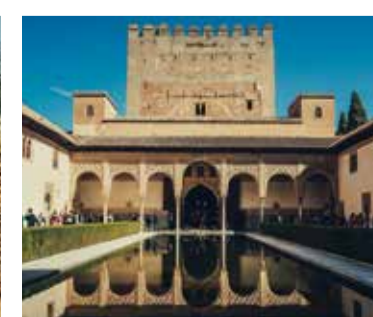
Deloitte estimates that owners and managers of hunting grounds allocate 285 million euros per year to ensure proper conservation of their fields. Investment in reforestation and environmental preservation is as high as 233 million euros annually. Also, more than 54 million is budgeted every year to prevent wildfire, maintain swamps, and prevent poaching.

According to official data from the Ministry of Agriculture, the annual number of animals that are slaughtered for food around the country is as high as 4,300 million. In comparison, hunting ends the life of around 20 million animals. And, while food farms maintain an industrial-like approach to breeding, hunting allows for the preservation of wildlife in a sustainable and ecological way that carries no cost to the taxpayer.

One of the reason for the success of Vox is that the party has had the courage to contradict the animal rights lobby and openly support hunting and bullfighting aficionados. ■



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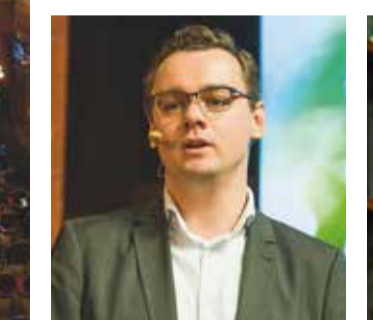
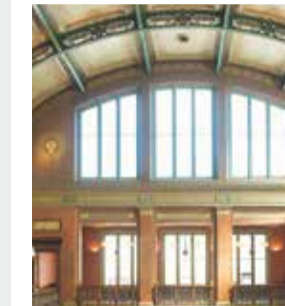


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