



Felix

The Student Newspaper of Imperial College London



EDITORIAL

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Felix Office
Beit Quad, Prince Consort
Road
London, SW7 2BB

Tel: 020 79548072
Email: felix@ic.ac.uk

felixonline.co.uk
@feliximperial

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Front Cover // Taja Strle

5 vs. 30 Minutes: PR is Key

PR and marketing are important. Billions upon billions are invested into it every year, by every company from Apple to your local chippy. Whether it's in the graphic design of the logo, the name of the company, the way it responds to criticism, the press relations it forms with various publications, sponsorships, or anything else, it's indisputably essential to the operation and success of any organisation.

There are good reasons for this. You need people to think well of you to succeed. In the corporate world, there's an obvious incentive: money. The same applies to charities. In politics, the currency is votes instead, but it amounts to the same thing – you need people to give you some of what they have, some of the appropriate currency.

In some cases that currency is the nebulous concept of 'goodwill'. In other words, you need a particular community to support you in something. This is often especially the case with campaigns – on the national scale, one can point to an organisation like Extinction Rebellion, or more locally we could point to a little organisation called 'the student union'.

The union needs student goodwill to be functional. There's a financial aspect, as always – if students like union events, they'll buy tickets, and the union can turn a profit. However, that money is directly re-invested back into students and their activities, so the real currency here certainly isn't GBP. To understand the need for 'goodwill', you have to think about what the union's goal is.

It is, predominantly, to represent students and cater to their needs. That can be food or drinks, it

can be supporting clubs and societies, or it can be campaigning or advocating for student rights and welfare.

In the latter cases, student goodwill allows the union to take a firmer stance, to put more pressure on the College, and to organise larger-scale demonstrations of student opinion – from the simple petition to the drastic strike.

It's clear that to achieve its goal, the union needs students to believe in it and be on its side. Naturally, it has to earn that, and whether you believe in the union or not is a separate discussion. What I want to discuss, though, is how this necessitates a strong PR presence.

There is a marketing directorate within the union – with which Felix, for the sake of clarity, works somewhat closely regarding the Union pages and adverts. That's there for obvious reasons; the union needs marketing materials for its events and campaigns, and needs experts to help realise and broadcast the student voice. However, PR comes in at every level and every decision

made – not just within that directorate.

An interesting anecdote was mentioned offhand at Union Council on Tuesday – the Community and Welfare Board had decided to propose the introduction of a Working Class Officer. I can sense some of you flinching a little bit at the name now, because discussing class is still a little bit taboo at times – especially for many Imperial students, who come from wealthier backgrounds and risk being considered snobs.

This uncomfortable feeling was raised by a few people at the meeting, who wondered if a better name was possible. After all, many people who would not consider themselves traditionally working class would also need to be represented by this officer (hell, I was one of them, broke as can be.)

A few options were discussed. Indeed, the majority of the discussion was about the name, and very little about the substance of that particular proposition. This is because everyone, it seemed, clearly agreed that it was a good idea.

It was said that the

CWB, on initially discussing the idea, had spent five minutes agreeing on the idea, and 30 minutes on the name. The same sort of ratios were seen in the Union Council meeting. The proposition was voted through 32 to 1, with overwhelming support, alongside other Liberation and Community reforms – bravo to the DPW for that victory.

However, it did get me thinking. PR is essential for generating goodwill, and goodwill is essential for achieving goals, and so one has to consider PR in every decision their organisation makes. Fine. I just sometimes wonder if many of us, as the students whose goodwill is being sought, are a bit too picky. We're perhaps a little too demanding of what we will give our goodwill to.

We are not nearly so discerning with our money – nor, in the broader world, our democratic right to vote. So many voting-eligible Imperial students will not have voted in the recent general election. So many of us keep giving our money to Amazon.

And yet here we have a situation where an organisation whose sole point of existence is to provide for us is spending six times as long worrying about whether we'll tear them apart for a slightly awkward name, than worrying about whether to introduce it. They don't need to do the latter because it is clearly an excellent idea – but in that case, why should they have to do the former?

Would we really be so reactionary as to criticise an uncontroversially beneficial idea for the sake of a little bit of awkward – not even bad – PR sentiment?

I think we would. And maybe that's a problem. Once again, I offer no solutions. Just food for thought.



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Union Council Rejects College's Revised Rent Model

The College and Union's negotiations resulted in a revised deal based on the same "break-even" financial model; Union Council rejected the proposal on the same basis as in December. Rent strikes have been proposed

NEWS

Henry Alman

Editor-in-Chief

This article forms part of a series on the rent negotiations; see 'Union Council Votes 36:1 to Reject Increase in Halls Rent Price' and 'College Plans to Increase Halls Rent Again; Union to Negotiate Prices' on the Felix website.

The Union Council voted on 21st January to once again reject a revised five-year rent price plan constructed by the College between early December and mid-January.

The revised deal works on the same "break-even" financial model as the one originally proposed late in 2019, which was debated and eventually rejected via vote by the Union Council in early December.

The original version of the increase would have seen prices increase by 12.2% on average across all halls rooms next year, despite the opening

"The inflation offset of 2.5% per year is significantly above the 2019 rate of inflation (1.8%)"

of the 710-bed Kemp Porter halls in Autumn 2020, with a subsequent increase of 2.5% per year to account for inflation.

Criticisms levied at this "break-even" model – in which revenue is theoretically set to match costs (such as paying off the debt for building the new hall) – were numerous. Particularly controversial was the inflation offset, estimated by the College at 2.5% per year, being significantly above the rate of inflation for 2019 (1.8%), and not accounting for the fact that many costs – such as the debt owed on the building – will not actually increase with inflation.

Additionally, the value of Pembridge hall – whose debt has now been paid off and is retiring as a hall, to become a leased-out property – is not considered, and costs which were previously not factored in (such as the cost of central staff working on halls) are now included.

The deeper concern is that student welfare will be adversely affected – either by 'pricing out' less wealthy prospective students, or creating a large 'class divide' between students in Acton and South Kensington.

Since this rejection by the Union Council in December, the Union President and Deputy President (Welfare) have re-entered negotiations with the College's Campus Services. Two further meetings were held before the Christmas break – at the latter of which, it was agreed that certain information would be passed on to the Union. A significant portion of that information, the

Union President says, never arrived.

A revised deal was then proposed, in which the rise in rent would be 'smoothed' – instead of 12.2% followed by 2.5% every year, it would be a flat 5.5% increase every year. This would result in lower rents than the previous model for the years 2020-2023, but higher rents for 2023-25, and still used the same financial model the Council had criticised.

To address this, the most recent offer was that the lowest point of the curves for each of the two proposed models would be taken – in other words, a 5.5% increase for the years 2020-2023, and a 2.5% increase for the

"The offer was presented to Union Council on Tuesday and rejected in a vote of 29 to 3, with two abstaining"

years 2023-2025.

Depending on the split between South Kensington and Acton halls, this revised model could still see halls in South Kensington be priced at over £300 per week by 2024. This offer was presented to Union Council on Tuesday, and rejected in a vote of 29 to 3, with a further two members abstaining.

Feedback in conversation at Council was almost unanimous – the fundamental model,



Pembridge Hall, retired this year // Neville Miles, Imperial College London Asset Library

which was the cause for the initial rejection, had not been re-assessed, and requested information had not been provided. Although the reduction could be viewed as a token 'win', the Council had mandated itself in December to oppose the financial model proposed by College, and so only a rejection was considered appropriate.

A College spokesperson said:

"We don't believe we should make either a surplus or a loss on student accommodation. Running our halls at cost means we will be able to renew our first-year undergraduate accommodation at the appropriate time, so future generations of students can have access to similar facilities and support services.

"It is also important that we ensure rent for our first-year undergraduate halls is lower than accommodation of a similar standard in the open market and other comparable London universities, and we carried out a benchmarking exercise to make sure of this.

"The proposed rents are in line with the New London Plan as approved by the NUS which says 35% of new student accommodation should cost no more than 55% of the maximum maintenance loan provided by Student Finance England. There are also cheaper beds available in a variety of locations to reduce the disparities in rent between different halls."

After the vote, conversation at Council turned to discussion of 'next steps'. While many were in support of further action – whether to raise petitions or act via some other campaign – the conversation took a cold turn when the mention of rent strikes naturally arose.

Rent strikes at universities have previously proven to be effective. In 2016, students at Goldsmiths, Roehampton, and UCL engaged in a rent strike costing around £1 million in revenue. This resulted in a rent freeze, as well as an increase in the accommodation bursary. However, they also come with risks. The College can legally

evict students for not paying rent – though this is relatively unlikely, due to reputational risk for the College and prior strikes at other universities have not resulted in evictions. It also places a large burden on predominantly first-year students, going through exams for the first time, to represent the views of students determined via a referendum available to students from all years. The latter concern was the one most expressed at Council.

Representatives felt they needed more time to process and consider the ramifications of such an action. The student reps will meet again in two weeks to discuss what the Union should do next, pending the outcome of further conversations between the College and the Union President and Deputy President (Welfare) – who will meet with the Provost on Monday.

NEWS

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

An Interview With: 'Ribbon Guy', Zhengli Lim

Felix met up with Zhengli Lim, affectionately known as 'Ribbon Guy', to talk about his inspiration

Felix: Recently, IC Exposed has been blowing up with people talking about you – affectionately termed 'Ribbon Guy'.

ZL: Yeah, that was quite unexpected!

Felix: So this has come out of nowhere, you thought you were just doing your thing and nobody noticed?

ZL: Yeah, I've been doing this for weeks now and it's been chill – nobody said anything about it. All of a sudden, in the last couple of days it's gone from 0 to 100 real quick.

Felix: The power of viral posting I guess! How does it feel being at the centre of attention, a BNOC?

ZL: It doesn't feel too different; I mean maybe when I go out I get a couple more selfie requests from time to time. Aside from that, I just enjoy doing my own thing. I'm sure it'll die down soon – it's just hype, memes come and go.

Felix: So you started doing this just a few weeks ago – have you begun rhythmic gymnastics recently, or is this something you've been doing for some time?

ZL: I only got my first set of ribbons maybe two months ago – in November. I didn't even know it had a name until afterwards. I'm not professionally trained in rhythmic gymnastics or dance, I'm literally just making things up as I go! I'm a DJ and I like listening to good

music, a lot more than the average person. I just feel like moving – I gotta keep moving. Whenever I go out to clubs, whether I'm working as a DJ or not, I like to dance to my own music. The ribbons were a recent addition because I just thought it would be funny.

Felix: So you got into this sort of randomly – why the Queen's Lawn, just for practicality?

ZL: Yeah, I do need the space – I do high tosses into the air. Besides that, I like the outdoors, wide spaces. I always go at around lunchtime when the day is warmest, and when the sun just reflects off of the windows and makes the grass warm. And where else would I do it?

Felix: This is something you've kicked off on your own – would you be interested in setting up a society, or growing and doing with other people?

ZL: People are very welcome to join me on the lawn, maybe we can get something going. But I want it to be gradual, rather than making a society. At the end of the day, what I'm doing is about being your individual self, and not having to follow a certain set of patterns or rules. That's why I've been hesitant to join dance societies and such – it could be good fun, but I don't feel like I could follow a choreographed pattern very well, I just want to do what I feel like.

Felix: Is that desire to express individuality via either your music



Zhengli rocking his favourite colour // Zhengli Lim

or dancing something that results from your experiences at Imperial and on your course, or is it from earlier than that?

ZL: The feeling became stronger when I was doing my undergrad. I help out with the MechEng department, aiding students and such, and would say I've been put into a leadership position in multiple cases. That's helped me become more confident, and to care less. Be a bit less stressed, take things as they come.

Felix: Do you think

more people at Imperial should push themselves to get out there, follow this mentality of individuality and less stress you've outlined?

ZL: I don't know, because each person has their own specific problems and issues. There isn't a 'one size fits all'. But if everyone just cared a little less about the standards that other people have set for them, and to just go about setting their own standards, they would be much happier.

Felix: It would be good to hear about

'the man behind Ribbon Guy'. What's your story?

ZL: I'm Malaysian, and studied there for primary school. Then I went to Singapore for a bit for my IB, and came to Imperial after for my Mechanical Engineering degree, before moving onto the PhD here. I can't leave this place for some reason!

Felix: Stockholm Syndrome?

ZL: I guess you can call it that! On the side I usually DJ. You can usually see me playing

at ACC, some external events for the medics, and sometimes Ministry of Sound.

Felix: So what got you into music? That seems to have put you onto the track of rhythmic gymnastics.

ZL: That already set in during my early teens. I really liked listening to music, for some reason. Back when I was a teenager, my family were like 'it's just a teen phase, you're being antisocial with your headphones in' and so on. Well guess what, now it's my job! But for example my

NEWS

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Mum is very supportive. I just really like music so much, and I feel like I need to dance to it, to get it through my system, and just kept doing it for some reason. Last summer, before I picked up the ribbons, I tried doing it with a staff. A big strong thing – I hit myself with it a number of times!

Felix: You should

try nunchuks. What didn't work out with the staff?

ZL: Oh no, I'd end up killing myself! And with the staff, it's because you can't bring it into clubs, you'd end up hurting someone. Ribbons are less likely to do that. I've used them in the Winter Carnival, a medics event in Embankment, a show

this past Wednesday at Embargo Republica, and I'll use them in ACC too! It just really makes things more fun.

Felix: Where can people catch up with what shows you're doing?

ZL: I do have a Facebook page, 'Zhengli Lim', as a DJ – though I don't

maintain it that often. If you want to follow it, follow it! I do also have a public Spotify playlist which has some of my own favourite songs on, which I listen to when I'm doing my ribbon dance. It's called 'Fluid Mechanics and Chill'.

Felix: Please make a song called 'Panopto', and we'll make it

the Imperial anthem! Are there any other comments you have about this experience, both discovering it and then it blowing up on social media?

ZL: I really don't care – whether there are five people or five hundred people watching, it doesn't really change what

I'm doing. If it makes them happy, yeah, go for it – but I'm just doing my thing, listening to my own music, and dancing. And I'll still be dancing when this is all over.

Union to Implement 'Cashless' Trial

The Union's commercial venues – including the bars and the Union shops – will be trialling a card- and Yoyo-only payment scheme in February

NEWS

Henry Alman

Editor-in-Chief

The Union has announced plans to trial 'cashless' payment at its venues during the month of February, with the potential for the plan to roll out permanently.

Since August 2017, 13% of Beit Bars' income was from cash, while 79% was via debit or credit

card.

The idea was proposed to the Union's Leadership Team by the Head of Commercial Services, Julia Mattingley, at the end of last term. She cited an improvement in efficiency, reducing risk from either theft or robbery, or from mishandling of cash.

However, term ended before the matter could be fully discussed with other members of the Leadership Team, and due to the need for marketing materials to inform students of the change Commercial

Services made an "executive decision was made to trial in February", according to the Deputy President (Finance and Services).

The change is also intended to be a cost-saving exercise, removing the necessity of processing cash – however, the fine details of this are still to be discussed and explained. Transactions by card incur a fee for the vendor, and so the cost-savings would need to outweigh this added expense.

An additional concern

is the effect on students without bank accounts – typically those arriving in the UK for the first time at the beginning of the year.

The Head of Commercial Services did not respond to request for comment.

Typically, the Union bars specifically take a lot less cash during term-time than during the summer break and at the beginning of term time. However, there is a high variance – within a given week, there will be days where only £10 of payments are with

cash, while on others the figure can reach closer to £600.

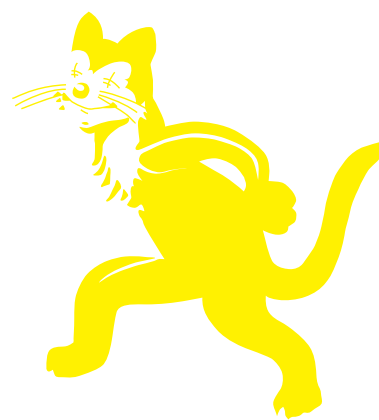
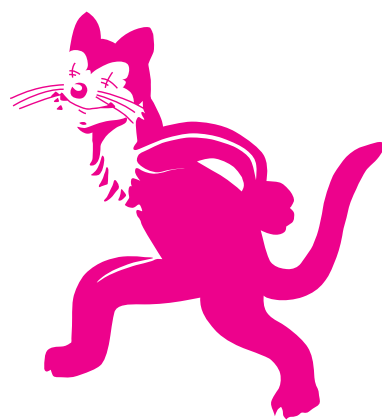
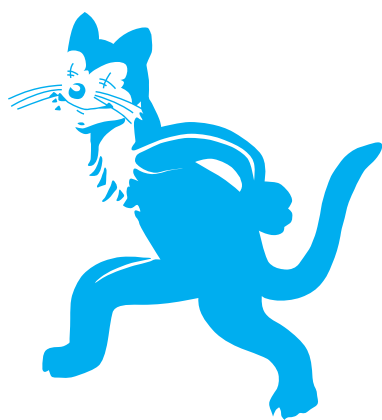
The DPFS commented that it would be "useful to know if the cash we take is because its an option, or because it's the only option." She further clarified that student feedback would be considered: "knowing how students feel about going cashless, and the impact it had on their experience with the Union, can significantly shape where we go moving forward."

The cashless move

extends behind the scenes as well, with the Finance directorate dispensing with all petty cash – meaning they cannot reimburse small amounts. This is reportedly in order to stop the Union incurring high transaction processing fees, as charges are calculated per-transaction.

The DPFS has encouraged students to get in contact at dpfs@imperial.ac.uk in the run-up to the trial.

Felix is recruiting!



NEWS

news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Fourth Union Council of 2019-20: Rundown

NEWS

Henry Alman

Editor-in-Chief

Liberation and Community Reform

The first paper up for discussion was submitted by the Deputy President (Welfare), Shervin Sabeghi, regarding his ongoing work to review and reform the structure of the Liberation and Community officers' roles within the Union.

Specifically, the paper proposes the introduction of Liberation and Community Student Networks, with multiple officers representing the interests of each group. This would, in theory, enable more support to be given to students, as currently the structure of the Liberation and

Community support falls squarely on the shoulders of individual officers. Concerns were raised about filling all of the positions in Spring elections, which was rebutted with how many students tend to run for unfilled roles in Autumn elections.

"The paper proposed the introduction of Liberation and Community Student Networks ... and passed with a vote of 32 to 1"

Working Class Officer

As part of the same paper, it was noted that a statistically significant attainment gap exists between students of different socioeconomic classes, as well as these students facing specific problems unique to them. Given the intention of the College to increase the number of students from 'disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds', one of the subcommittees of Council (the Community and Welfare Board, or CWB) felt it appropriate to establish a new Liberation and Community Officer: a Working Class Officer.

A few queries were raised regarding the name, and a few other suggestions, such as 'Access Officer', were discussed.

The Council passed the paper with a vote of 32 to 1, with one member

abstaining.

Rent

The Union Council voted 29 to 3, with two abstentions, to reject the College's financial model for halls rent again.

See the News section for a breakdown.

Update to Standing Orders: ERB Voting Membership Excludes Dep Reps

The Council Chair updates the Union's Standing Orders every year; this was discussed further in the first Council Rundown in October 2019. Where disputes were raised, adjustments were made.

One such adjustment caused controversy in the January 21st meeting – specifically, the voting membership of the Edu-

cation and Representation Board (ERB) had been reduced to just nine, by removing voting power from departmental representatives.

The reasoning behind this was a further change this year: that subcommittees of Council have the ability to vote on and pass policies, so long as the remit of the policy falls only under their own. Therefore, although boards such as the CWB and ERB have almost never needed to vote in the past, they will need to regularly now. Many departmental reps – particularly postgraduate reps – do not attend most meetings of these Boards, meaning that they would struggle to reach quorum, the minimum proportion of voters needed for a vote to be valid.

Several Council members strongly opposed this change,

citing the fact that the ERB itself had discussed the issue and agreed they preferred to keep departmental reps' votes earlier this year. Alternate solutions were offered, such as adopting the Council's rule that missing two meetings excludes you from voting.

The vote was indecisive, 10 members voting to accept the change, 17 rejecting it, and 7 abstaining; the vote will run again at the next meeting.

Reports

Most of the reports – from the constituent unions and sabbatical officers – were relaying the content of their papers, which are available on the Union website.

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COMMENT

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United States vs Iran

Comment writer **Aida Manzano Kharman** argues that it is important to understand the context of the news that we read

COMMENT

Aida Manzano Kharman
Comment Writer

It is likely that many of the readers have heard of escalating tensions between the US and Iran, especially after the assassination of Qassem Soleimani. While many were taken by surprise after this move from the US, it is crucial to understand that in fact this event, as rogue as it was, is a result of a steady deterioration between the US and Iran's relations.

After 2015 there was a sense of hope and optimism that the decades of tension between Iran and the US were perhaps on the wane, following the nuclear deal between Obama and Rouhani. This deal essentially outlined that in exchange for Iran limiting their nuclear activities and allowing international inspectors into their nuclear facilities, the US would lift its economic sanctions that crippled Iran's economy.

This deal was successful and aided the mending of the two countries' estranged diplomatic relations. However, following Donald Trump's entry into the White House, diplomatic relations were soon to suffer. Trump had stated as part of his campaign that he wanted to abandon the nuclear deal, otherwise formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), one that had been negotiated by the United States, the United



Oh no, someone's set the Iranian and US flags alight // [publicdomainpictures.net](https://www.publicdomainpictures.net)

Kingdom, Russia, France, China and Germany and Iran. This move was highly discouraged by key international players such as France and China, that advised against the move, given that the evidence was clear that Iran had in fact been adhering to the deal. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Mike Pompeo verified this, with the only claims against this coming from Benjamin Netanyahu. He argued that Iran had broken the deal given that they had not disclosed their research into nuclear weapons, and based on alleged evidence that Israel had obtained, Iran had been carrying out research into nuclear weapons and had not disclosed it.

The IAEA responded that there is no evidence that Iran tried to develop nuclear weapons after 2009 and other EU countries spoke out saying that they were not naïve about Iran's nuclear intentions, but that regardless, the terms of the JCPOA had

not been broken by Iran. Interestingly enough, there is a very clear irony in Israel's sudden aversion of nuclear warheads in the Middle East, when they themselves are widely known to possess nuclear warheads, and they have very purposely remained ambiguous when it comes to their international statements about the issue, never officially denying or admitting to having the weapons, yet calling out Iran when not disclosing information about their research on nuclear weapons, despite them being guilty of the exact same accusation. It is estimated that they have anywhere between 80 and 400 warheads, and they also declined to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, despite the UN's urges to join it.

After all the accusations and Netanyahu's theatrical speech and newfound rejection of nuclear weapons, Trump abandoned the nuclear deal in May 2018 and

reinstated the economic sanctions against Iran. He also threatened to do the same to countries and companies that continue to buy goods from Iran. This move meant that Iran was forced into a diplomatic issue with the US, as neither does Trump wish to abide by the nuclear deal that the US initially organised, neither does he acknowledge the international sources that back that Iran had in fact been complying with the deal, and also forces every other country that has economic ties with Iran to actively choose between maintaining these relations with Iran and thus becoming target of the US' sanctions, or cutting off ties with an economic partner.

Iran then issued a statement calling Trump "unacceptable" and decided to bypass the US and continue negotiations of the deal with the remaining signatories: France, Germany, UK, Russia and China. The US announces the rolling

out of their sanctions soon after and Iran as a result states that they will no longer keep the enriched uranium and produced heavy water limited, and that the signatories of the deal have 60 days to fulfil their part of the JCPOA. Iran then issues another warning statement 10 days before surpassing the limit, saying that this can be reversed if the European signatories step in to stop the US sanctions and abide by their part of the deal. This never happens and more events in the Gulf ensue where Iran and the US clash. Amongst these are the US sanctions to Iran's foreign minister Javad Zarif, the shooting down of a US drone by Iran, the US' deployment of F-22 stealth fighters, and the US' attempts to keep the Grace 1, an Iranian tanker, under detention in Gibraltar, despite Gibraltar's supreme court ruling that the vessel is free to sail, also offering several millions to the captain of the vessel if he agreed to steer it into a country where it could be seized. These are just a few of the events that occurred as an aftermath, but the most recent and notable ones were the US' assassination of Qassem Soleimani, and Iran's firing of missiles against the Ukrainian passenger airplane, that had been mistaken by a US cruise air missile according to the Iranian government.

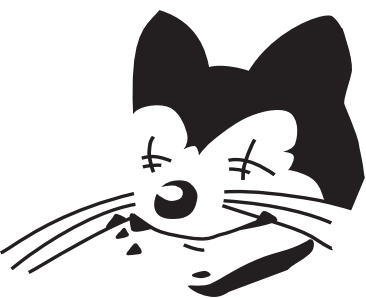
There seems to be a clear trend towards the scaling of aggression and the deterioration of negotiation talks between the US and Iran since Trump

became president, with many moves on the US' side showing an unnecessary provocative attitude towards Iran despite Iran's initial willingness to renegotiate the nuclear deal and continue to abide by it. Trump created a problem between Iran and the US when there was none to start with, to show a "strong" response and the timing of this is very coincidental with his impeachment scandal and the end of his term looming with the 2020 elections, which unsurprisingly enough, is a similar situation in which his only international supporter was, Netanyahu, with serious corruption charges, and at the time, an upcoming election. It is especially worrying how the US government believes it is entitled enough to kill a government general, and then proceed to justify this assassination, and it is also not only worrying but tragic how the lives of civilians were the cost to pay for the Iranian government's mistake.

Ultimately, as readers, it is crucial that we understand the context of the political news that are reported in the media, and avoid falling victim to propaganda and manipulation, as it is sadly becoming a trend to see media outlets suddenly vilify collectives to suit the agenda of certain political parties, and then conveniently omit the so necessary context that provides a better understanding of the causes and the consequences of the reported events.

COMMENT

comment.felix@imperial.ac.uk



Why it Hurts to Know History?

Comment writer **Amal Ahmed** thinks that a deterministic view of past events leaves us trapped in a present not of our own creation

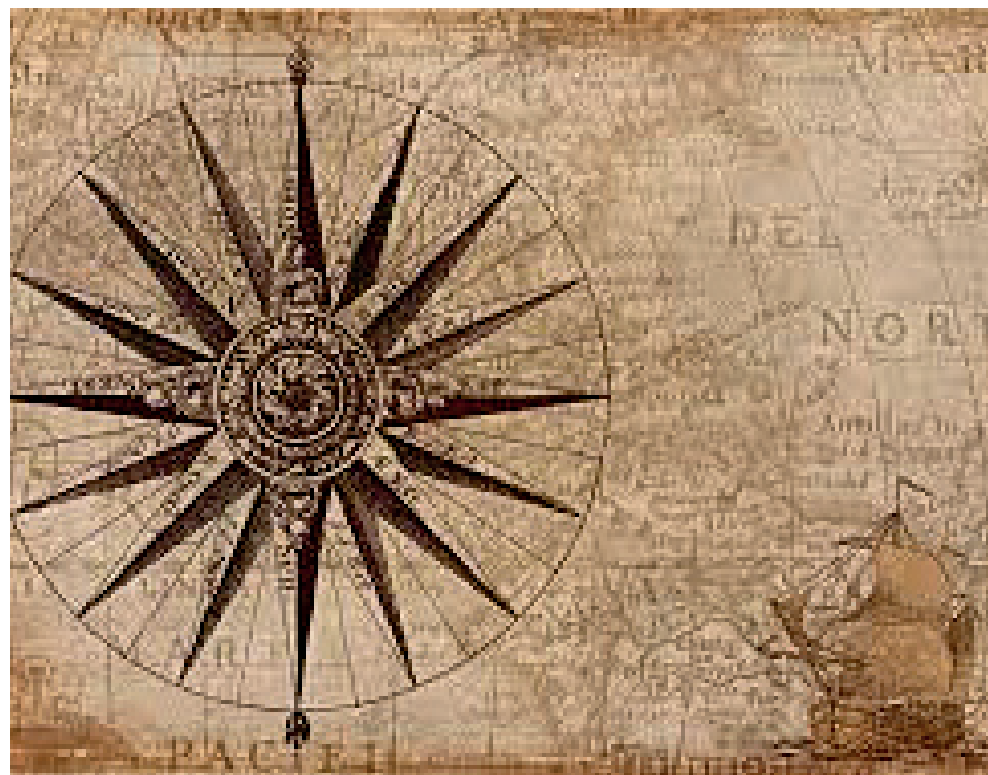
COMMENT

Amal Ahmed

Comment Writer

History is not a field that possesses obvious social value. Historians claim that the study of history allows people to develop a sensitivity to cognitive biases and logical fallacies, imparting perspective, encouraging prudence and impelling social advancement. However, the strength of these claims is undermined by the fact that history often fails to provide any useful lessons at all.

When history is approached from a deterministic perspective, where human independence of action is denied, history reinforces moral ambiguity. It often does not “relate the right thing to do in one case or another” but exemplifies how “even doing the right thing rarely works out.” To blur the boundary between right and wrong - good and bad - is to aggravate ethical quandaries and obscure moral judgements. This may subvert decent or decisive action and threaten social justice and national security. Certainly, conflicting views about whether “we ought to bomb these guys or side with those guys we were bombing before,” would undermine effective governance and public safety. Such a complication of already complex political, military interventions may be inimical to democracy, as well as domestic and foreign policy. This affli-



History is a map with no directions // Wikimedia

ation of history with moral ambivalence negates the historian’s assertion that it helps to know history.

This sentiment is reinforced by the notion of history’s variability. Some historians believe that “history...teaches [us] that it is hard...for anyone to control, including the people who think they’re making it.” The deterministic interpretation that the present is beyond human jurisdiction incites a sense of powerlessness. The implicit futility of individual effort promotes a culture of inaction and complacency. While “studying history doesn’t argue for “nothing-ism,” this interpretation inadvertently does. The belief that “the best will in the world” and “the best candidates for our support” can’t alter or better the course of history. Examples of this are the attempts to manage violent

unrest. The Mahdi’s revolt in Sudan against the British was bolstered by efforts to erode it; Middle Eastern terrorism was amplified by attempts to eliminate it. The idea that human endeavours to divert the trajectory of pressing social and political problems were self-defeating, furthers the argument that nothing can be learned from history except that human actions are often pointless.

These premises conjure history’s potential to excuse recklessness and ineptitude. When a deterministic attitude is applied to the reading of modern events, it allows clear cut mistakes to be characterised as inevitable. For example, when considering the United State’s many adventures in the Middle East, the characterisation of their invasions can be described as inevitabilities,

essentially “uncontrollable,” rather than heinous immoral acts that should be condemned. Such an attitude impairs the recognition and rectification of individual and official errors. Thereby, the claim that we are “made by history” compels a passive spectatorship of the past, present and future, which stagnates personal and social innovation. This is inconsistent with Gopnik’s claims of history’s social utility.

The above advances the fact that the utility of history is limited. A deterministic view of the past leads to moral “historical blindness.” The suggestion that “horrible groups doing horrible things,” emerge as a result of the “certain things we... do” and “[don’t] do” - that action and inaction alike inevitably result in chaos. Thereby, history is framed as a series of

unruly inevitabilities. This muddies the motivations of independent political actors. It divorces intent from outcome - Lyndon B. Johnson’s orchestration of the Vietnam war from the “moral and strategic” atrocities that followed it. This renders “catastrophes,” “unintended consequences,” and rationalises the juxtaposition of L.B.J with Obama. This, in lieu of a “lack of historical sense,” would cloud humanity’s view of the world to invite misinformed civic choices and misplaced public representation. This portrayal of history and historical knowledge contradicts his appraisal of its social functions.

Accordingly, the argument against the reiteration of historical mistakes is antithetical to his conception of history. He maintains that history is “singular” and “uncontrollable,” but is incredulous that humanity operates in ignorance of past experience. Some historians claim that “no matter how many interventions are badly made, the experts who intervene make more: the sixteenth-century doctors who bled and cupped their patients and watched them die just bled and cupped others more.” This does not demonstrate that “nothing works out as planned,” but indicates an incapacity for effective planning. That individuals and organisations re-commit the same errors, with the benefit of hindsight, speaks to an intrinsic human failing rather than the forces of historical fate. This description of

history is incompatible with his appraisal of human behaviour. This diminishes the purported instructive value of historical knowledge, and hence, its value to humankind.

This is furthered by the assumption of historical illiteracy. Historians posit that the cultivation of a “historical sense” is the solution to “presentism,” or the assumption that the events of the modern day are in some way special. However, the deterministic attitude to history forces the assertion that “history is past, and singular, and the same year never comes round twice.” If historical knowledge is, thus, “uniquely” different, how can modern day mishaps be “familiarily difficult?” Painting past events as atypical, one-time occurrences vindicates the centennial tendency to “exaggerat[e]...present problems out of all proportion to those which previously existed.” Indeed, this delineation of history’s “singularity,” and uniqueness disputes its potential to act as a frame of reference for current issues and, hence, alleviate “presentism.” This self-contradiction vitiates the validity of the claim, about history’s practical advantages to society.

A deterministic view of history has the potential to entrap humanity in a passive, pacifist cycle of unresolvable social, political and moral disputes. So, does it help to know history? Probably. But not with the assumption of determinism.

COMMENT

comment.felix@imperial.ac.uk



Students Should Use Mitigating Circumstances

Editor-in-Chief Henry Alman makes the case for why every student who might have been affected by an issue should use mitigating circumstances – and not feel like they're 'cheating'

COMMENT

Henry Alman

Editor-in-Chief

Exams suck. That's the bulk of my argument. There is an obvious aspect to their awfulness, which is the experiential one – people hate taking exams. They are stressful, panic-inducing nightmares during which the flip of a coin can decide your future.

Did the lecturer ask about your best or worst topic? Who knows! Or perhaps your neighbour decided to have a party last night and you lost out on sleep. Well, enjoy also losing out on your 1st degree.

It's an uncontroversial statement to make, so I'll leave that there. However, there is a slightly more sinister aspect to the discussion that does bear elucidation: a somewhat exploitative one.

The failure of exams to accurately and fairly assess the abilities of students is well-documented. Better than well-documented, it's common knowledge – even common sense. The conditions do not even vaguely reflect real-life conditions; they often test skills other than the intended ones such as rote memory or short-term focus; and the arbitrariness of the conditions on the day do not lend themselves to fairness and accuracy of performance assessment. There are a litany



Suffering the exam slog unites students throughout the years... // Public Domain

of studies backing this up, conducted over decades.

This is precisely why performance reviews in the real world do not consist of examinations. Because examinations suck.

So why are they still so frequently used as the primary form of assessment for virtually everything we do outside any actual job in an actual career?

The simple answer is that they're practical. It's far easier to herd hundreds of students into one room for a few hours, where they can

be overseen by just a few examiners. Then, as gruelling as marking exams is – trust me, staff members and postgrads, I sympathise with you – they are faster to mark than a more customised or project-based assessment, which often requires supervision.

What this actually translates to is that they're cheaper to administer effectively than other types of assessment. And what that translates to is that your future is not being decided based on factors governing you and your performance, but rather

they can accomplish – although I'm sure many PhD students would still like to have more of all four of those things.

There is so much to be said about that. However, it's a topic for another article. What I want to discuss here is why this means you should absolutely use mitigating circumstances (MC), even for minor things.

A lot of students are reluctant to use the MC system; some feel it's

“The institution you are paying skimps out for the sake of their own convenience and wallets - if you don't use MC, you're letting them screw you and pocket the change”

a version of 'cheating' or 'making excuses', some are embarrassed to discuss their problems, and others have their own reasons. I want to make it clear to you: it is none of those things. It is the bedrock on which examinations are made even vaguely reasonable or fair as a method of

assessment.

The point of MC is to account for at least some of the inherent unfairness of exams – as outlined above, you could be ill, tired, have suffered a bereavement, any number of things. MC is not an 'extra', a tool for only the severely afflicted or the special snowflakes to use; it's an integral part of the exam system, specifically there to account for the how disastrously poor exams are at determining your real-world ability.

Without them, the exam system is even more meaningless than otherwise – a measure of the wrong skills, and a measure of whose neighbours were dick-heads the night before.

So use them. You're being exploited if you don't. You are paying up to £30,000 a year to learn and then to be certified based on that learning. The institution you are paying to do so skimps out on that last part, for the sake of their own convenience and wallets. If you don't use mitigating circumstances, consider them an integral and necessary part of this system, you're letting them screw you and pocket the change – and screwing yourself over as well by cheating yourself out of the marks you've worked for.

POLITICS

politics.felix@imperial.ac.uk

No, the U.S. is not “greatest threat to world peace”

In response to an article two issues ago titled “Is the U.S. a Threat to World Peace?” **Gabriel Lipkowitz** argues against the claims made by the other writer. (The article this one responds to is printed on the next page).

POLITICS

Gabriel E. Lipkowitz
Politics Writer

I read with great interest the recent opinion article of January 10th by Felix politics writer Seyed Nasrollahi, in which Nasrollahi outlines a few reasons why he believes “the United States poses the greatest threat to world peace at the present moment.” In support of this rather aggressive claim, Nasrollahi cites the large amount of money the U.S. spends on defense; Trump’s recent action to order the assassination of the Iranian General Qasem Soleimani; and historic examples of U.S. military action in the Middle East, which he calls “imperialism.”

I share Nasrollahi’s sentiment that the actions

of the current U.S. president are often reckless. (As an important disclosure, I am talking about my president here. I was born in, grew up, and went to college in the U.S. before finding myself in this other Western democracy embroiled in a political mess.) Certainly, President Trump’s past actions in the foreign policy sphere have been quite forward, from his

“I share Nasrollahi’s sentiments that the actions of the current U.S. president are often reckless...”

instigation of a trade war with China, brinkmanship with North Korea, and decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, among others.

Nonetheless, I find Nasrollahi quite unconvincing when he concludes from this action, and other American military actions in the recent past, that the U.S. is “the greatest threat to world peace” today. First and foremost, I would point out that Trump’s strategy of brinkmanship need not be as much a threat to peace as Nasrollahi – and many others in the media – make it seem. Unsurprisingly, worries about World War III trending on the internet turned out to be completely bogus and overreactive, and I would offer a reason why Trump’s action did not come close to precipitating any such conflict. Simply put, Iran’s military and economic capacities are no match for Ameri-

ca’s, and to think that that country could legitimately hope to win a direct war against the United States is far-fetched, at best. Instead, the U.S. military’s targeted attack on this Iranian general can be seen as a successful deterrent action, of a su-

“...nonetheless, I find Nasrollahi quite unconvincing in his conclusion”

perpower against a minor one, rather than an action that necessarily produces conflict, or even comes close to it.

To go further, one could even point to historic

examples where just the opposite of Trump’s actions – namely, appeasement – have facilitated conflict. Most recently, many around the world have actually criticized the U.S. and other Western powers for not intervening aggressively enough in Syria to prevent the civil war there, arguing that if they had maintained the “red line” that former President Barack Obama declared, lives would not have been saved in that region. To go a bit farther back in history, I need not remind U.K. citizens of the results of the appeasement of Adolf Hitler in the lead-up to the Second World War. Here, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s weak stance against Hitler, many historians point out, facilitated Hitler’s takeover of Czechoslovakia. I do not bring up these examples to necessarily support Trump’s actions today, but merely to point out that they are not as much a threat to peace as Nasrollahi leads readers to believe.

After his description of Trump’s actions, Nasrollahi proceeds to describe in detail the great amount the U.S. spends on defense, without actually explaining why a large U.S. military force in itself creates a threat to peace. Setting aside for a moment the important and acknowledged deterrent capacity played by NATO, which the U.S. contributes significantly to but Nasrollahi does not mention once, the examples he draws from the politics of the Middle East to try to show how the U.S. military is such a threat are dubious at best. He first uses the Iraq

War as an example, but I need not remind him or Felix’s readers that the actions of the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein towards Iraq’s neighbor Kuwait, which in many ways prompted the U.S. invasion, were themselves extremely aggressive and conflict-inducing, with Hussein actually invading that country to seize its oil fields. Yes, the suspicions that Hussein was harboring or developing weapons of mass destruction turned out to be incorrect, but this should not mask the fact that in this case, the U.S. was in many respects not the first aggressor in the Iraq War.

Nasrollahi attempts to

“Instead, the U.S. military’s targeted attack on Soleimani can be seen as a successful deterrent action”

describe how the Syrian Civil War is somehow another example of the American “imperialism” – in one paragraph! – but I fail to see this connection at all. As I mentioned above, many have criticized the U.S. for not getting more involved to prevent the horrific bloodshed in this country. Whether the U.S. gets involved to prevent Middle East atrocities or does not, it is either way imperialistic and a threat to world peace, according to Nasrollahi!



“The U.S. was in many respects not the first aggressor in the Iraq War” // Flickr

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felix@imperial.ac.uk

Importantly, Nasrollahi neglects how U.S. military involvement in other areas of the world, outside the Middle East, can also serve as a significant deterrent force, to actual aggressor states. Most would agree that Russia, having recently completely destabilized Ukraine, and North Korea, launching not infrequent missile strikes towards its Southern neighbor, create far greater instabilities in the world than the U.S. And if not for the deterrent capabilities of the U.S. military, one wonders whether these dictatorships would not take even more drastic steps towards destabilizing their respective regions. These countries, led by radical dictatorships, can on the whim of their leaders catalyze, overtly or covertly, conflict.

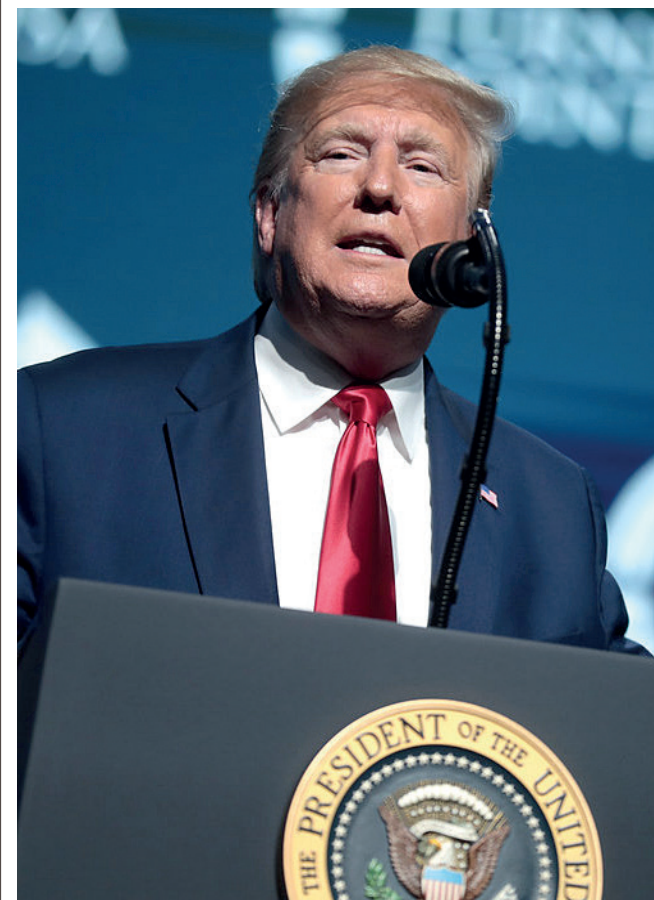
On this note, I would also appreciate a bit of elaboration by the author about how the U.S. democracy is totally “broken,” as Nasrollahi claims. If the American democracy were indeed as “broken” as it is in Russia, Iran, or North Korea, I would agree with Nasrollahi that its military

“I would appreciate elaboration by the author about how the U.S. democracy is totally “broken””

would pose a grave threat to world peace. But this is decidedly not the case, for numerous reasons. First, Trump’s recent impeachment – even if it does not result in his removal from office – shows that the mechanisms of executive checks are alive and well in the U.S. Second, I will soon be mailing in an absentee ballot to participate in the legitimate elections that occur in the U.S., nonexistent in those aforementioned dictatorships. And finally, while at the end of his piece Nasrollahi cites (quite bizarrely and without elaboration) “George Orwell’s ‘1984’ [sic] dystopia,” suggesting that America is a “state that sees its right to run programs of mass surveillance on its own people [and] controls the truth,” I fail to see how the American media

that criticizes Trump so ferociously today is “controlled” by the state.

In conclusion, while Nasrollahi rightly interprets Trump’s decision to assassinate General Soleimani as quite reckless, his further conclusion that America poses a greater threat to world peace than the likes of Russia and North Korea is far-fetched indeed. I would respectfully encourage him to think more carefully about Middle Eastern politics, and American actions there and elsewhere in the world, before making such an accusation.



Donald Trump’s impeachment shows that the mechanisms of executive checks are alive and well // Flickr

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POLITICS

politics.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Is the U.S. a Threat to World Peace?

Two issues ago, **Seyed Nasrollahi** argued that the US is a threat to global stability due to its enormous military and confidence in its exceptionalism. (A reponse to this article written this week is printed on the previous page.)

POLITICS

Seyed Nasrollahi
Politics Writer

Making the world one filled with peace and harmony is probably the shared desire of most people. Every year, we celebrate the New Year in the hope of taking another step towards a more peaceful world. However, seeing #WWIII trending all over social media only two days after the New Year is far from this aspiration.

Last Friday, 3rd January 2020, Donald Trump ordered the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani, a top Iranian military leader who had been helping the

“Last Friday, Donald Trump ordered the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani, a top Iranian general”

Syrian and Iraqi military forces in fighting ISIS and Al-Qaida terrorists in the region. He was known to be a highly influential figure in defeating the ISIS insurgency in Iraq and Syria. Many believe that the assassination of General Soleimani by Trump’s administration has been a clear violation

of international law and counts as an act of war against Iran. This is an asinine decision which will only spur further violence in the world.

There are multiple dimensions to this event which makes one have second thoughts about whether the U.S is helping to establish peace in the world, or is itself the biggest threat to world peace and liberal democracy. The events of the last few weeks suggest that it is the latter.

In defence of the U.S. actions, U.S secretary of state Mike Pompeo stated that the assassination of General Soleimani was an act of defence. The U.S suspected that Soleimani was plotting attacks against U.S diplomats and soldiers, despite the lack of any evidence to back such claims. Does this mean anyone can go around killing people and justify it as an act of defence against unforeseen future attacks? Wouldn’t the world be chaos if everyone justified crime that way?

Additionally, the majority of U.S. congress members were kept in the dark regarding Trump’s decision to assassinate General Soleimani. This is a clear violation of democracy for a decision which could have global and long-term consequences, not just for the Americans, but the whole human population. Democratic processes are there to put a check on executive power. When they are not allowed to act, tyranny is the result. Thirdly, as part of the NATO coalition in Iraq, the British leaders were also not informed about the attack, an act which

has dragged the British government into a matter they did not consent to. Lastly, the attack was a violation of Iraq’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and international law. It’s like inviting your friend to your house and he stabs your roommate because

“I believe that the United States poses the greatest threat to world peace at the present moment”

he didn’t like him.

I believe that the United States is not the saviour of the world. Instead it poses the greatest threat to

world peace in the present and will continue to do so for many years to come. There are three main reasons for this (a) United States by far has the most powerful military in the world, (b) United States wants to have total control over the affairs of the world, and (c) the crippled democratic system in the United States allows men like Donald Trump to rule the country. History has taught us that too much power brings forth corruption and death. When tied with adventurism and a failed democratic system which puts people like Trump in charge this system has the potential to be way more dangerous to humanity than anything else.

U.S Military Power

The U.S has by far the most military expenditure compared to any other country, more than 600

billion US dollars every year. It is more than the military expenditure of China, Russia, the UK,

“The US spends more on its military than China, Russia, the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and India combined”

France, Germany, Italy, Japan and India combined. The U.S has more than 6000 nuclear warheads along with Russia, only to be followed by France, China and the UK with less than 300

each. The United States has 11 aircraft carriers in service, more than what the rest of the world has altogether, and has 72 operating nuclear-powered submarines, more than what Russia, France, the UK and China have combined. The U.S also has about 800 military bases in 40 countries. The UK comes second on this list having military bases in 13 countries only. The U.S military also accounts for 60 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emission per year. That is more than the total carbon dioxide produced by most countries. If the Pentagon was a nation, it would be the 55th largest carbon dioxide emitter in the world.

U.S imperialism in the Middle East

Let’s skip all the adventurism by the U.S military in Asia, Africa



Trump withdraws from the Iran Nuclear deal // Wikipedia

POLITICS

felix@imperial.ac.uk

and America. There is abundant literature concerning the U.S military footprint on global politics. I will only go over the U.S footprints in the Middle East in the last two decades.

Afghanistan

Since the United State's invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the U.S has spent 975 billion US dollars on the war in Afghanistan. During the eighteen years of their presence, the U.S military forces have dropped more than 30,000 bombs on Afghanistan's soil. This has caused the death of hundreds of Afghan civilians every year. In fact, U.S air strikes have killed more civilians in Afghanistan than terrorist forces. Despite all that, Afghanistan is still struggling with the presence of terrorists. It is hard to tell if the U.S invasion has done the country any

good at all.

Iraq

The U.S formed a coalition, including the UK, to invade Iraq in 2003 in an attempt to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime as he was suspected of having weapons of mass destruction. Of course, no such weapons were ever found, and the claims were found to be bogus. Almost all countries in the coalition including the UK came to the consensus that the Iraq war was a terrible mistake. Not only did it incur billions of dollars in cost, it ruined a country, spread hatred and violence in the world, and caused the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. General Stanley McChrystal, the commander of Joint Special Forces who fought Al-Qaida in Iraq, acknowledged that U.S military's presence in Iraq was the motivation

for the Al-Qaida insurgents to migrate to Iraq in the first place.

Syria

There is plenty of evidence on how the U.S had been planning to overthrow Bashar Asad's regime. Leaked cables from U.S administration show how they had been planning to cause chaos in Syria since 2006, five years before the war erupted. You can google 'Influencing the sarg in the end of 2006' and read one of such cables in Wikileaks for yourself. The book 'The Wikileaks Files' provides plenty of evidence on how the United States government has had an agenda of pursuing imperialism in the world in the name of national security. The civil war in Syria eventually led to millions of refugees and a total civilian death toll of more than one hundred thousand.

When power, imperialism and failed democracy meet

When power, imperialism and failed democracy meet, it will create a state very much like George Orwell's '1984' dystopia. A state that sees its right to run programs of mass surveillance on its own people. A state that

controls the media, and so controls the truth. A state that feeds people of that it considers a threat to their national security apparatus. It doesn't matter who the enemy is, but there is always an enemy. Orwell understood human nature quite well, "power is not a means, it is an end". If we fail to realise that such a state could actually

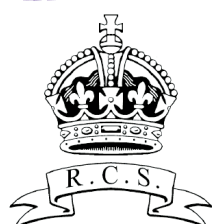
exist, and would happily screw others over to reach its ends, then I very much fear that Orwell's prophecy would not be far from truth: "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face – for ever."



The M1 Abrams, a symbol of US imperialism // US Marines

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POLITICS

politics.felix@imperial.ac.uk

The criminal history of Socialism in Spain

Politics writer **Diego Martin Duro's** shares his perspective on the current leading party in Spain.

Disclaimer from the politics editors: This article outlines the opinion of solely the writer and does not represent the viewpoints of ourselves or the paper.

POLITICS

Diego Martin Duro
Politics Writer

Last month a Seville court handed down judgment on the largest corruption scandal in the history of Spanish democracy known as ERE. Two former presidents, one ex-minister, and 16 other top officials of the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) have been convicted of prevarication and embezzlement. In 2000 they developed an illegal system for diverting public funds meant for the unemployed and companies in difficulty of the region of Andalusia. José Antonio Griñan, the former Socialist president, received 6 years in

"With this event, the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) became the most corrupt party in Europe"

jail and a 15-year ban on holding political activity. It is estimated that over the course of the scandal over EUR 679 million were stolen from the Spanish people and spent on prostitutes and cocaine amongst other things.

With this event, the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) became the most corrupt party in Europe

and writes another chapter in his criminal history, which dates from its establishment to our days and will be recapped in this article.

The criminal history of the PSOE begins in the year 1909, when the party first gained a seat in the Spanish parliament. That year its founder, Pablo Iglesias, threatened the conservative Spanish former president and leader of the opposition Antonio Maura, saying: "We have considered that before Maura rises to power, we should commit an attack". Two weeks later he was the victim of a terrorist attack.

In the year 1934, during a parliament session and due to several disagreements, a fight between the MPs broke out and the socialist MP Indalecio Prieto pulled a gun on another conservative MP. Later in the same year, the socialist leader Largo Caballero led an attempted uprising against the democratically elected liberal government, arming miners and other workers. This act of irresponsibility led to over 2000 deaths, which fall on the shoulders of the PSOE.

During the electoral campaign of 1936, the last before the civil war, Largo Caballero said: "If the right wins, we will have to declare civil war" and "If socialism loses in the polls, we will go to the violence, because we prefer anarchy and chaos to fascism". In the end, the 'Popular Front, the electoral alliance lead by the PSOE, won the elections. Nevertheless, it has recently been claimed that this was a result of electoral fraud. It has been asserted that the electoral

records were manipulated giving over 70.000 votes to the 'Popular Front. This outcome led to a fraudulent absolute majority of the socialist forces and gave rise to persecution of political dissenters and the Catholic Church by militia

"This act of irresponsibility led to over 2000 deaths, which fall on the shoulders of the PSOE."

forces. The aim of this group was creating chaos by burning convents and monasteries, the murder of monks and priests and exercising violence against dissidents among

the crowd. The murder of the conservative leader of the opposition Jose Calvo Sotelo, by the is considered the 'casus belli' for the military uprising that lead to the civil war. On the 1st July 1936 an MP of the PSOE said to Jose Calvo Sotelo: "The violence might be legitimated. In your case, everything is legitimated, including an attack ending with your life". On the 13th of the same month at 3.00 am 1936 Calvo Sotelo, who had previously received death threats, was illegally arrested by Luis Cuenca, a socialist militant and bodyguard of the above mentioned socialist MP Indalecio Prieto. He was forced into a van and then shot and killed. Five days later Franco's military uprising took place, leading to the Spanish Civil War, where 120,000 people lost their lives. Therefore, it is a

fact that the socialist was a key ingredient for the war to occur place.

During this war, the

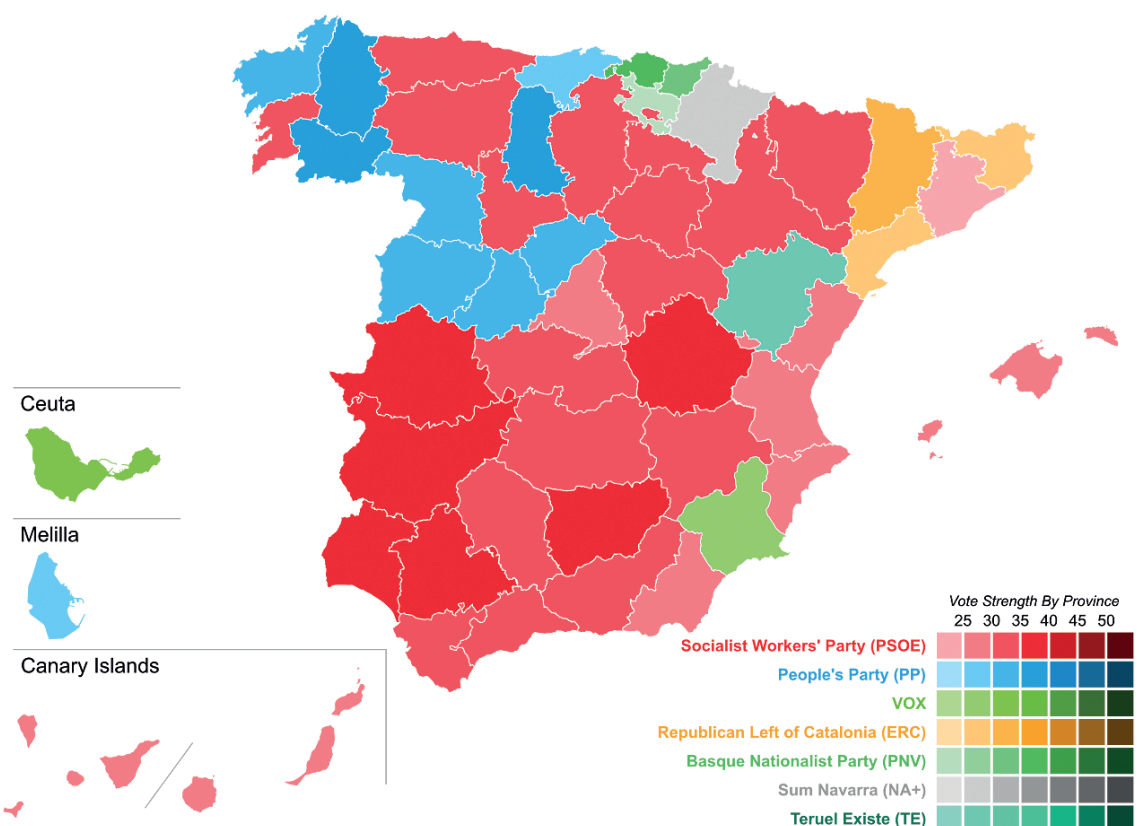
"During this war, the former socialist minister of finance Juan Negrin carried out the theft of the 700 tons of gold"

former socialist minister of finance Juan Negrin carried out the theft of the 700 tons of gold reserved for the Bank of Spain and transfer them to Stalin's USSR.

The PSOE was forced into hiding during the

dictatorship until 1977 when the party was legalized, one of their first actions was requesting an amnesty for prisoners belonging to terrorist group ETA, a Basque separatist organisation.

With no doubt, the most embarrassing event in the history of the PSOE, which occurred between the years 1983 to 1987 during the government of the socialist Felipe Gonzalez, was the dirty war against the ETA and the establishment of the GAL (Antiterrorist Liberation Groups). This was a death squad aimed to kill the leaders of the ETA, but also resulted in the deaths of 10 innocent people. It was later proven at trial that the GAL was led and financed by the Spanish Interior Ministry and the former socialist president Felipe Gonzalez. In any developed country, as you can imagine, this would



POLITICS

felix@imperial.ac.uk

have lead to the declaring of such a party illegal, however, not in Spain.

Nevertheless, this not the last link that the PSOE had with terrorism. For example, during the 2004 election campaign they used the al-Qaeda Madrid train bombings, where 193 people died and over 2.000 where injured, that occurred three days before the election as an electoral argument against the incumbent conservative government.

In 2011, the PSOE pressured the Constitutional Court to legalize the political arm of the terrorist group ETA lead by Arnaldo Otegi, who had been sentenced to

prison for being part of the terrorist group and taking part in several terrorist attacks such as the kidnapping of entrepreneur Luis Abaitúa. This political arm of ETA was previously banned by the Supreme Court but finally legalized in the Constitutional Court with 6 votes in favour and 5 against.

In 2016 Pedro Sanchez, whose doctoral thesis has been accused to be plagiarized, won a motion of censorship against a functional government of Mariano Rajoy with the support of the Catalan coup perpetrators and with those who have blood on their hands, the political arm of ETA. The main

arguments for this censorship, that led to 3 years of unstable government, was the corruption case of the party of Mariano Rajoy known as 'Gürtel', which supposed a loss to public finances of €120M. This amount, although high, is less than a tenth of what the PSOE was responsible for losing

All in all, we can say that the history of the PSOE is the history of a criminal party, from its establishment to the present day counting among its crimes death threats, murders, coups, electoral fraud, alliances with terrorists and being the most corrupt party in Europe.



The logo of the PSOE // Wikipedia

Spain's New Government: A Progressive Coalition

Politics writer **Julio Perez** gives insight on the outcome of the Spanish elections.

POLITICS

Julio Perez
Politics Writer

These past weeks mark a turning point for Spanish politics. After two general elections, a majority was finally agreed in the parliament to form a government. The self-named progressive government is a coalition of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, or PSOE, (social democrats) and Unidas Podemos (left-wing), who have agreed on a program based on social justice, democratic rights, and a sustainable economy.

This government is the result of the past November elections, which saw the rise of the far right and a victory for PSOE that still did not give them a majority. This led, in less than 24 hours, to an agreement between Pedro Sanchez (PSOE)

and Pablo Iglesias (Unidas Podemos); even though April elections attempts to form a coalition had been fruitless. The partners still did not sum up the required number of seats and had to unite with other smaller parties to gain a majority. These agreements made the PM investment ceremony that followed one of the most polemic in modern

“These agreements made the PM investment ceremony that followed one of the most polemic in modern Spanish democracy”

Spanish democracy, with right-winged parties rejecting the legitimacy of the democratically elected government.

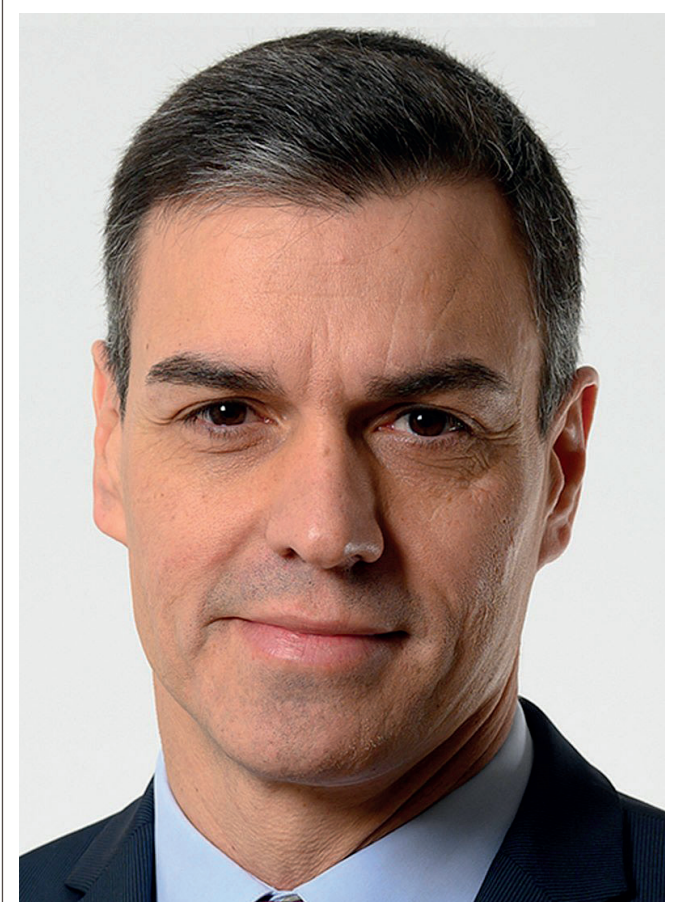
Broadly speaking, the government's program is of a classic social democratic character. The coalition is conscious of the climate crisis with one of their main goals being to achieve zero carbon emissions by 2050 and the implementation of the UN's 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Culturally, their aim is to challenge the conservative paradigm by making policies that will secure rights conquered by popular movements in the recent years, such as the feminist or LGBT+ collectives. In this sense they have created the ministry of equality and plan on reinforcing the gender violence law. On the economic side, their fundamental axis is the restoration of public services and spending, which had been cut to minimums in the previous

legislatures, and defending workers' rights and their material conditions. They have already started working on this by increasing the minimum salary, reinforcing trade unions, and regulating the housing market in certain areas. Geographically, the government's greatest challenge is to deal with the depopulation of rural areas, which they plan on solving with the restoration of public transport and economic incentives that will encourage migration to the countryside.

This is the first coalition government in the history of Spanish democracy, the first one with members of Unidas Podemos, a party born out of popular movements, and the first elected left government in Spain in nearly a decade. Although the coalition may not bring radical change to the country, it serves as a historical reference for a period where the far right rises and the market “frees” itself more than ever from

the hands of politics. As deputy MP Pablo Iglesias said, “politics is the art of riding contradictions” and even though this gov-

ernment will encounter many, it will still try to pose an alternative for the post-democratic spectre that is haunting Europe.



Pedro Sanchez, leader of the PSOE // Wikipedia

POLITICS

felix@imperial.ac.uk

Italian Regional Elections: A Test For Populism

POLITICS

Luca Rameli
Politics Writer

The political climate currently pervading Italy is that of uncertainty. As laid out in my previous article, the rise of populism in Italy, and across Europe, has been a major phenomenon of the last decade. Now, populism, with its new, bold, and controversial presence on the political stage, could either further deepen its roots in Italian politics or instead be outright rejected. All of this could depend on the result of the elections taking place on Sunday 26th in two Italian regions: Emilia-Romagna and Calabria.

The former is one of the richest regions in Italy, with a thriving economy and a highly developed healthcare system (in Italy this is a prerogative of regional government and not of the central state), while the latter is the poorest and plagued by corruption. However, though there are deep socio-economic differences between them, they share some political similarities: they are both governed by the centre-left Democratic Party (PD). Since the 2016 constitutional referendum, the PD has been continually losing political ground, to the advantage of the Northern League and the Five Star Movement (M5S). While the M5S, which has both left and right leaning members, seems to be increasingly divided between these two currents (some even suggest a schism is near), the League, which is right-wing, has



Stefano Bonaccini, PD candidate for Governor of Emilia-Romagna // Wikimedia

managed to increase its numbers by attracting more moderate electors. The leader of the League, Matteo Salvini, has indeed been able to put great pressure on the current coalition government between PD and M5S through a continuous presence in

“Political polarisation is nothing new in Italy, but its conjugation with populism has marked its adoption of a new, worrisome shape”

the squares of the whole country.

The League’s efforts and events have seen a consistent increase

in recent times in Emilia-Romagna itself, where the result of the elections is the most uncertain, while in Calabria a win for the centre-right coalition to which the League belongs is almost sure. In the richer Emilia-Romagna, the most recent polls show a narrow centre-left lead held by PD and its allies, followed closely by the centre-right coalition and finally trailing much behind is the M5S, who has decided to run alone, separate from any government allies. It is this choice of M5S, along with a consistent number of undecided voters, that could swing the balance in favour of one or the other of the contenders.

The fall of the affluent Emilia-Romagna region to the centre-right would be interpreted as a great blow for the Democratic Party, since this is a region that has always been left-leaning – indeed, the Italian Communist Party was founded there

and retained power in the area from the end of the Second World War to the 90s, even as other centre-left areas of the country started to embrace more moderate, social-democratic politics after the Cold War. However, the destiny of the region is still unwritten, especially with the birth of a new anti-populist movement in November 2019, that of the “Sardine” (literally the “Sardines”; yes, the fish). Such a bizarre name symbolises their opposition to the loud, brash political slogans of populism, and depicts themselves as the silent majority, as the sardines are fish and hence silent, and supposedly the party represents numbers of people large enough and with big enough presence that they could be imagined as tightly packed in each constituency, as sardines are in a can. Aside from the question of names, which Italian political organisations overall seem to have poor taste in, this

movement was founded only a few months ago by four friends in their 30s and has since spread to every corner of the country. Their refusal to constitute a political party and their criticism not only towards right-wing populism but also towards some characters on the left, have helped them to consolidate and expand their base.

“Such a bizarre name symbolises their opposition to the loud, brash political slogans of populism, and depicts themselves as the silent majority”



Lucia Borgonzoni, League (right) candidate for Governor of Emilia-Romagna // Wikimedia

Unfortunately for Mr Salvini, the core of this movement happens precisely to be Bologna, the regional capital of Emilia-Romagna, and it can be safely said that it has played a prominent role in thwarting the initial lead held by the League.

A war of words and digits has hit the region, with each side competing to have the highest number of participants to each manifestation. In all of this, political polarisation is nothing new in Italy, but its conjugation with populism has marked its adoption of a new, worrisome shape. Mr Salvini’s tolerant, often sympathetic remarks towards far-right groups and their stiff stance on the question of immigration on one side have mostly contributed to this happening, but the continuous portrayal of the threat of an authoritarian drift, sometimes excessively, on the other, has also played a part. The racially motivated online threats directed from far-right members towards Senator Liliana Segre, an Italian Jew and Auschwitz survivor, shows just how dim the situation is and how deep the dignity of men can sink. According to Italian law, demonstrations and polls or any form of political advertisement cannot be conducted anymore on the day preceding the elections, in order to let people meditate on their choices undisturbed. I do hope this will be useful, but what I can see right now is just the calm before the storm, a storm with unprecedented strength, much like the violent chaos depicted in paintings by Turner.

ARTS

arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

The One Where They Robbed a Bank

ARTS



Where? The One Where they Robbed a Bank
When? 21st Jan - 1st Nov
How Much? £11.50, £20.70

Eamon Akil Farhat
Arts Editor

The premise of “A Comedy about a Bank Robbery” is quite simple; a couple of criminals break out of prison to try and rob Prince Ludwig of Hungary’s diamond, which is being kept in a Minneapolis bank. Why would the diamond be there? I can’t say I’m quite sure. Not much of this play makes sense anyway. This play is more about the comedy than the bank robbery and thus cheap laughs are definitely

favoured over a rock solid plot.

The first act, and especially the opening scene, is a bit of a shock. For audience members not entirely sure what to expect, the humour seems a bit cringe at first. Quickly, it is made clear that neither the writers nor the actors have taken themselves too seriously and that the humour is not always high brow. Lots of puns and slapstick humour are used with a Friends-esque amount of situational irony. However, this does not mean that it can’t be appreciated. Sometimes these jokes are ruined by being drawn out a little bit too much, and just when you think it’s over, the performers keep going! The first half definitely had many more of these unfunny, drawn out sequences but as the audience gets used to them, the second half flies

by!

Ashley Tucker’s portrayal of the classic 1960s mother with a bit of a fiery side is brilliant. Every scene that she was in, I could not take my eyes off of her performance. Her comedic timing, hilarious mannerisms and overall attitude guarantee the biggest laughs from the audience. If that is not enough, she also sings the most, and the most beautifully, during the few musical moments. These choreographed musical pieces usually take place whenever there is some major action: a car chase for example. With the impeccable choreography and the fun swinging beats, the show successfully builds up excitement. These musical moments also add to the hilarity of the whole play. I wish there were more of these unique gems, which are reason enough



The star of the show, Ashley Tucker (right), brings an angry seagull to life // Robert Day

in themselves to come and see the play.

Another high point is one of the final scenes, where the stage is flipped right on its side with the floor becoming the back of the stage. Hilariously, this mind boggling, gravity defying setup is definitely not essential for the performance and is almost put there as a curve ball to the actors to

see how they cope with the new situation. With actors harnessed up, they comically make their way across the stage and perform gravity defying tasks. I have to say it took me a few minutes to even understand how it was all working and which way was up.

Overall, the performance feels a bit like an old Friends rerun and is

tired in parts but hilarious in others. There is also an improvised feel to the show, not that it is, and the audience finds the jokes funnier and funnier as they get to know the characters and actors. If you want a bit of laugh and to see a stage flipped on its side this is definitely one to see!

Welcome to West Egg, Old Sport

ARTS



Where? Immersive London
When? Until 31st May
How Much? From £30

Ozbil Dumenci
Arts Editor

In addition to being one of the great American classics, The Great Gatsby is also a novel that I feel strongly attached to, having analysed it to death for my English Literature GCSE. Instead of forming an adverse reaction to Gatsby, I was surprisingly taken aback by its depth, and its exploration of universal themes through

the lens of the American Dream.

With this in mind, you can imagine my excitement when I heard about this immersive production. I hoped it would allow me to be immersed in the world of Gatsby, help me relate to the circumstances and the challenges of 1920s America, and fall deeper in love with the book I’ve held onto dearly for years.

This immersive production is wildly fun. From the moment you enter the venue, you are greeted by enthusiastic staff with American accents, dressed fully in 1920s attire. The décor surrounding the entire room is hidden behind curtains. However, there is a bar, which is fully

glammed up in true Gatsby fashion, serving themed cocktails. As the play starts, the curtains fall to reveal Gatsby’s fancy pad, complete with monograms reading JG (Jay Gatsby), fountains, and a grand piano.

“This immersive production of Gatsby entertains, but comes short of capturing the depth of the classic novel”

From the get-go, the cast does a commendable job involving the audience, chatting everyone up and teaching a fun Charleston routine, which they ask the audience to engage in various times during the play. The cast is charming and they bring these iconic characters to life with an authentic flair. However, the transitions between scenes feel tacky at times, with the cast simply asking the audience to move themselves from one side of the room to the other with not much reason or explanation.

The main problem with the production is the fact that a significant effort has been put into making sure the immersive experience is fun, that the depth of the novel has been reduced to

a mere shadow of itself, and instead replaced with quippy one liners. Gone are the subtexts and intricacies that made the original manuscripts so great. Instead we burst into our dance routine to amp up on the ‘immersiveness’ of the production. Rather curiously, however, by the second act, the play kind of gives up on its idea of making Gatsby immersive, letting the audience sit all around the room and simply watch everything unravel.

One thing that confused the hell out of me was seeing the cast members escort random theatre-goers into a side room for large chunks of time, at some of the most important points of the play, no less. I was never

lucky enough to be chosen to experience whatever was in the side room, but I can’t help but wonder what might be going on down there that would make up for missing out on the actual plot.

If you’re looking for a chill night at the theatre, I would say this isn’t the right play for you, as it is often hectic, tiring, and at all times, way too crowded to be fully enjoyable. On leaving, you do feel immersed in the world of Jay Gatsby, perhaps more than you would through a regular play. However, I am just not sure if this makes up for the lack of depth and substance which play a considerable part in making the novel the work of art it truly is.

ARTS

arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Onegin

ARTS



Where? Royal Opera House

When? 18th Jan - 21st Feb

How Much? From £5

Vaidhiswaran Ramesh

Arts Writer

Russian literature is often unsuitable for shorter format reproductions. How could one begin to fathom distilling the multiple facets of, say, Tolstoy's *War and Peace* into a single movie? Equally daunting is the task of bringing to life the complicated characters of Alexander Pushkin's celebrated 19th century novel verse, Eugene Onegin, through a ballet. But this is what John Cranko has achieved (quite masterfully) in his ballet Onegin, created for the Stuttgart Ballet in 1965, and staged by the Royal Opera House since 2001.

The ballet is as much about the eponymous Onegin as it is about Tatiana and her internal struggle to decide between duty and love. The story follows Tatiana, a young

girl enthralled by romantic novels, as she falls in love with Onegin, a friend of her sister Olga's fiancé, Lensky. Her affections are spurned by Onegin, who instead chooses to flirt with Olga and in doing so enrages Lensky to a duel ultimately leading to Lensky's death. Years later, Tatiana and Onegin cross paths again. Upon seeing Tatiana, now married to Prince Gremin, Onegin realises his mistake and declares his love for her, only this time to face disappointment with Tatiana sending him away.

Natalia Osipova, as Tatiana, shines in the production and is equally convincing as an adolescent girl in Act I as she is portraying a Russian princess in Act III. Her portrayal of a charming young girl exploring her affections for Onegin is one to look out for. Reece Clarke, playing Onegin in his debut performance, brings much grace and elegance to the role, wonderfully transitioning between emoting stoic indifference and regret. Other notable performances include Francesca Hayward as Olga and

Mathew Ball as Lensky, who are both remarkable in their roles. Hayward in particular owns the stage in those few scenes that she occupies.

The music, arranged by Kurt-Heinz Stolze (from works of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky) and conducted by Valery Ovsyanikov for the production, adds a breath of life to the characters and their emotional conundrums. The choreography by Cranko is stellar, with the mirror pas de deux being a truly remarkable standout to this day. The staging, lighting and costumes need praise as well, bringing to life the beautiful settings of idyllic country life and grand quarters of Russian palaces with much ease.

In summary this is a production that no ballet enthusiast should miss. Pushkin's story, with a rare central female lead, deserves revisiting in today's day and age. The production delivers in every department and when the sum of the parts emerges by the end of Act III, one is left speechless, much like Tatiana!



Natalia Osipova as Tatiana // *Tristram Kenton*



Mikey Anthony-Howe (Kevin) and Tina Chiang (Li Na) // *Nicole Latchana*

Fix

Or, rather, unfixable

ARTS



Where? Pleasance Theatre

When? 14th Jan – 1st Feb

How Much? £16 for students

Disha Bandyopadhyay

Arts Writer

Julie Tsang's *Fix* is a provocative tale about a washing machine repairman, Kevin, and his battle with his inner conscience as he is forced to address the crimes of his past by interacting with a mysterious woman, Li Na, in her crumbling house in the woods. A cosy set-up in the Pleasance Theatre, *Fix* is an hour-long morale piece delving into the psyche of the guilty.

The intimate seating and stage arrangement with a broken washing machine as the central prop gave the show an almost immersive experience. Starting off as an amicable chat between a repairman and the client

and building to an acknowledgment of a dark past, the show oscillates from boring to mediocre as the conversation meanders its way through arguments about the nearest phone booth to a pet dragon residing in the top floor.

Fix is a ravishing literary piece speckled with symbolism, metaphors and East Asian cultural allusions. Unfortunately, this did not translate into an interesting performance and it is a pity that the performance does little justice to the potential of the script. The pace of the story takes too long to build up, with little flow into the charged climax. It is only in the last fifteen minutes that the point of the play gets explained, and by then it is already too contrived and disjointed.

Controlling this narrative, Tina Chiang (Li Na) comes off more as strange and eccentric than an eerie, omniscience figure. Feeble attempts were made at raising the tension, the height of it when she steals Kevin's

tools and seems to spike his tea. But even then, the tension wasn't sustained for any longer than a few moments and neither of these actions seemed to extend the storyline whatsoever. Mikey Anthony-Howe (Kevin) is a more convincing repairman and helped the duo carry the story.

The eminent element of the play is a thought-provoking twist that begs for scrutiny of missed signs and symbols throughout the performance. From a broken washing machine symbolic of an irreparable past which can now no longer wash away blood, to Kevin, who becomes a handyman and still can't fix his past, Tsang lays out crumbs throughout the story hinting at the climax. With the final revelation (spoiler alert!) of Kevin being a perpetrator of a fatal assault, the previously mundane details transformed into clues of his past and make for a great discussion in the tube on your way back home.

Fix is an alluring story, best just read.

ARTS

arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

English National Ballet's 70th Anniversary Gala

ARTS



Where? London Coliseum
When? 17th - 18th Jan
How Much? From £14 students

Aya Hayakawa
Arts Writer

The English National Ballet's 70th Anniversary Gala took you through the history of the company in the special two-and-a-half-hour long event. It was a great celebration of dancers, artists, choreographers, musicians, and everyone else who has been involved in the company's history - the "English National Ballet Family". The performance was filled with passion, joy, and pride and

there was a true sense of community both on stage and in the audience.

What made this performance so unique was the direction, and the structure of the performance was extremely well thought-out. Each small section started with a screening of a short film or a video, followed by a performance on a related theme. Making use of archive footage and pictures of the company from the past, it helped the audience to understand the background and history behind a show or a repertoire, which does not usually happen in a ballet performance. A particularly heartfelt example of this was the segment about the English National Ballet School. The film explained the importance the company places on education and inspiring the younger generations and the per-

formance that followed was given by the current students of the school. This structure gave a consistent flow and essence to the performance and helped link various pieces that may have been completely unrelated in a meaningful order.

It was regrettable that the lengths of the performances varied significantly. Some pieces seemed too brief while others ran for a disproportionately long time. It seemed that the limited time could have been better allocated to make the performance more engaging, as some pieces often became repetitive. The dancing was also not completely polished, especially in group performances. Some of them were noticeably out of sync which did not present the choreography and the dancers themselves to their full



Francesca Velicu and Joseph Caley with the future stars of the English National Ballet performing *La Sylphide* // Bill Cooper

potential.

Nonetheless, showcasing some of the most symbolic pieces and greatest hits, the English National Ballet's 70th Anniversary Gala gave the audience a unique and rare opportunity to

watch a variety of work throughout their history. The performance represented the historic story of the English National Ballet in an innovative manner. Whether or not you are a ballet fan, this event exposes the

audience to a wide range of the company's work along with the history and allows the audience to experience and celebrate what English National Ballet stands for.

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BOOKS

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The Starless Sea by Erin Morgenstern

BOOKS

Eleni Konida

Books Writer

I know a good book when I read it because it has managed to leave me inspired, or thoughtful, or feeling any kind of strong emotion towards it – and that’s... fine. I will give it a three to four-star rating, maybe recommend it to a friend that would find it interesting and call it a day. I know a great book when I read it when it has managed to leave me utterly, deeply and completely disoriented. I finished reading *The Starless Sea* less than one week before my first exam and for a whole day I forgot to be stressed about it. Morgenstern’s writing, accompanied with the vivid and very twilight zone-y scenery she created with it, feels like a fever dream you know is absurd in its essence as you experience it, but also is alarmingly vivid.

The *Starless Sea* follows Zachary, a 25-year-old grad student. He loves to read books he borrows from the university library (which are unrealistically non-scientific), where one day he finds an old, battered book with no information about the author on the cover, titled “Sweet Sorrows”, which doesn’t seem to be registered in the library. He decides to borrow it anyway – but he is shocked to find out that, amongst the many, seemingly unrelated short stories, there is one describing a day of his childhood in great detail. It’s a story of the boy he used to be, standing in front of a mysterious door which he ultimately decided not to open – a door, the story says, that would lead him to a place called the starless sea. Unable

to ignore this, he sets out to find more information about this book, and the mysterious underground library some of the stories describe, getting himself involved in something a lot bigger and older than himself in ways he cannot yet imagine.

The *Starless Sea* is Erin Morgenstern’s second work – her first one, *The Night Circus*, was very well received. I have bought but not yet read *The Night Circus* to compare but judging by how much I enjoyed *The Starless Sea*, I think that the hype around it was well-earned. It checks a lot of the boxes that make a good book – and if not good, then at least worth reading. First of all, the story in itself and the way it was told, struck me from the very beginning as incredibly unique. Each chapter of the main story unravelling in the present is interrupted by what, in the beginning, seems to be fragments of little alle-

“What seems irrelevant at first becomes important part of the plot as the story unfolds”

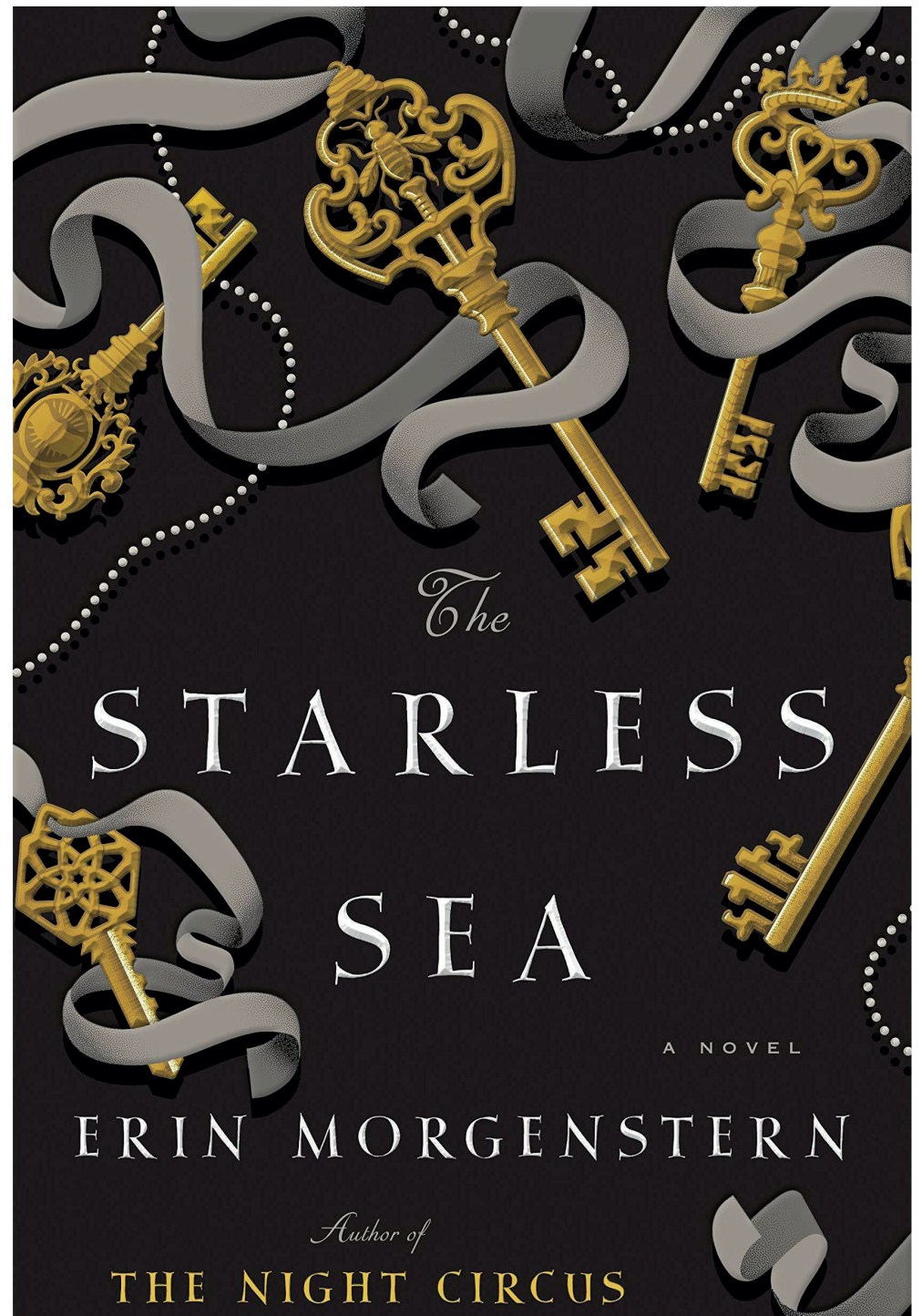
goric pieces of fairytales – about people and the lives they have lived, time and fate and their tragic tale of love, and a mysterious owl king. These seem very irrelevant at first, but as the story unfolds, they become a very important part of the plot – become more than words on a page, or an insert that is there just to set an aesthetically pleasing scene.

For a book as lengthy

as this one is, the people who are introduced within its pages are surprisingly few. The total number of people adds up to no more than 10. All of them were very multi-dimensional and interesting – as everything in this book was; every part they played in the story was very carefully planned – none of them written as a plot filler or an easy way to earn diversity brownie points. What is more, Morgenstern managed to achieve the impossible – creating the mysterious love interest, a troubled guy with a dark past-type character while also making him interesting, in a way that doesn’t feel too try-hard, edgy or overdone. I was more than impressed.

The *Starless Sea*, as most (if not all) pieces of storytelling art created amount to today, can be broken down in to tropes. However, to say that it boils down to the typical otherwise not special protagonist-saves-the-day cliché plot would be beyond unfair. It is in no way a story about, or of Zachary – it is a story (one of the many) about the starless sea, which, as all stories do, has a beginning, a middle and an end – a story the reader is made aware that they’re experiencing only a part of.

This brings me to my next point. Now, I am often very critical of open endings. It always felt a bit lazy to me to write hundreds upon hundreds of pages just to end the book on a very bleak and vague “and they might’ve survived, but nothing knows what happened to them after that, the end.” tone. However, the exact fact that throughout it the reader is made to understand that they’re reading about a piece of a story that is connected



The *Starless Sea* by Erin Morgenstern // Goodreads

with countless others that have already been written, and ones that have not yet come to exist, makes it feel wrong to say that *The Starless Sea* had “an open ending”. All the little details that are left unexplained don’t seem to matter entirely that much – they’re part of things that have always been or that haven’t yet begun to unfold.

In conclusion, there is no way to coherently talk about all the points and the elaborate plots that intertwine and make up

the experience that is *The Starless Sea*. Reading this book felt like a puzzle, whose fragments individually mean very little and could only be understood for what they were when their neighboring fragments had also been put together. The story does not have a “big reveal” that makes everything make sense all at once, but throughout it there are points when it just clicks, odd-shaped pieces of story perfectly sorted into place, absolutely nothing left to chance. Amazing

in its conception, its characters and its writing, I would recommend *The Starless Sea* to anyone.

“Reading this book felt like a puzzle”

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MUSIC

music.felix@imperial.ac.uk

The rise, and further rise, of Billie Eilish

MUSIC

Emily Freeman

Music Editor

Back in June 2019 I thought Billie Eilish had peaked – how does one top headlining Glastonbury to 40,000 people at the age of 17? The answer is simple apparently: write the new 007 theme tune at the age of 18, therefore being the youngest person ever to do so.

This of course begs the question of where she could possibly go next, but I'm more intrigued about how she got here from her first single

released just over 4 years ago. There's no doubt music is in Eilish's blood: her parents are both musicians, and her brother Finneas is also musical. In fact, her first single 'Ocean eye's', was originally written by Finneas for his band. As legend has it, after being asked to write a song for her dance class, Eilish recorded her version of the song with Finneas and put it on SoundCloud. From there, it blew up. The single itself has Eilish's iconic soft vocals mixed with relaxed beat and synths to give a dreamy electro-pop sound. It's a great song, but does it scream James Bond? Definitely not, but Eilish's development from

that initial single has been immense.

Subsequently to the success of 'Ocean eye's', Eilish was signed to Interscope Records and was being interviewed by Vanity Fair at 15 years old; at 16 years old she was named an Apple Music UpNext artist after the release of her first EP *don't smile at me*. In March 2019, the now 17-year old Eilish releases her first album, *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?* and the budding star becomes a supernova. She instantly broke the record for the female artist with the most songs in the top 100, after all songs (bar one) off the album hit the charts, subsequently

becoming the first artist born in the 21st century to have a US number one album. She even knocks off Lil Nas X's 'Old Town Road' after its 19-week stint in the top spot with her single 'Bad Guy'. This album has a harder edge to it than her previous EP, with Eilish's still whispery vocals a stark contrast to the heavy beat and themes accompanying them; with this change comes a shift in appearance, with Eilish exhibiting a darker edge to her closet which soon became legendary.

To put this all into context, third year undergraduates had just got those shiny offers from Imperial when Eilish

released her first EP: Eilish now has a US/UK number one album, six top-40 songs including a number one single and is nominated for six Grammys. No comment.

To pinpoint where it all went so right for her though is difficult. She has obviously grown up in an environment that may well have been preparing her for all of this and being signed

certainly helps. However, with streaming services nowadays it is easy to blur the lines between genres, and Eilish's unique blend of electro-pop, industrial rock and hip-hop, as well as her intriguing style, attracts a wide and varied audience. In brief, things have clearly worked well for her, and (irritatingly) perhaps that's just down to pure talent.



Billie Eilish is on fire // Wikimedia

Felix Recommends...

MUSIC

STROODLES



Artist: Cousin Kula. **Label:** Chiverin. **Top Track:** Stacked. **For Fans Of:** Tame Impala, Beach House, Alvvays. *20 minutes*

Miles Gulliford

Music Editor

STROODLES blends elements of funk, dream-pop, soul and psychedelia to deliver a set of well-written tracks with an ABSOLUTELY GORGEOUS sonic pallet. Sweet, juicy and lilting the EP is a delight on the ear, bursting with joy and colour for its entire 20 minutes.

Cousin Kula formed in Bristol's jazz scene, the 6 piece now live together, and it shows. The group forge velvet-

een tunes whose airy grooves could play for hours, as they likely have been. Each listen to their second EP *STROODLES* imbues me with more confidence that every track has been slavishly worked out in advance, with a plethora of ideas propelling each tune through to completion, despite the languid tempos here, there is scarcely a dull moment.

Deciphering the sounds on *SROODLES* can be a challenge, albeit a welcome one. 'Stacked' plays back like Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory (1971) on half speed. Arriving over oozing, chorus-laden guitars and shimmering reversed melodies, drums and bass lay down a perfectly tight groove. Synth and guitar add sparkle throughout, alongside a tight baritone sax riff to drive

the track to its conclusion. The centrepiece of 'Stacked' however (and the EP as a whole), remains Cousin Kula's breathy, multi-tracked vocals. Their distant, effeminate sound evokes Beach House, thick harmonies and more discernible lyrics, however, take them a cut above their predecessors.

Track Review

Track: Treehouse People.**Artist:** Zeñel.*4 minutes*

Treehouse People' is the latest single from the South London group Zeñel. With impeccable production and rhythmic intrigue, the tune is so engrossing it made me miss my tube stop.

Some might recall Zeñel from a 'Felix Recommends...' 2 weeks ago. Their mind-bend-

ing debut single 'Bubble Leaves' illustrates their intent to challenge the London scene's genre boundaries (boundaries which are nebulous at best already). Cherry picking elements of jazz, fusion and electronic, the young trio concocted a dizzying 6-minute odyssey. 'Treehouse People' situates itself differently on the musical spectrum.

It's opening bars bustle with the sound of children on a playground accompanied by a minimal synth. The track then plunges into silence, only for a percussive, 8-bit sample to burst through with a melody so persistent is feels percussive. Wobbling bass and synth (Noah Stoneman) and kilting drums (Zoe Pascal) follow the addictive lick up a build into the first of a series of cruising, half-time choruses.

The harmonic pallet

of 'Treehouse People' shows a strong dance influence. It's simple, well-built melodies and progressions leave plenty of space for the talented trio to decorate, the result is a tune that is not just catchy, but infinitely listenable and impossibly fun.

The standout lead instruments, first a blown-out flute, then a semi-psychedelic vocal sample, deliver licks so squarely on beat, and

just staccato enough to hold down the pulse. This allows the drums to explore, garnishing jazzy rhythmic patterns, including a time-bending loop of quaver triplets that accelerate across beat at the one-minute mark (keep an ear out).

Any fans of electronic, or those looking to hear something new and exciting would serve themselves well giving this track a listen.



Not to be confused with strudel // Cousin Kula Bandcamp

MUSIC

music.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Candy: Provides a Different kind of Rush

MUSIC

Ambika Bharadwaj

Music Writer

Similar to: Young the Giant, Glass Animals, HAIM

In November 2014, Garrett Børns (stage name: BØRNS) released his debut EP, *Candy*. The four-track EP is a dizzyingly sweet synthpop concoction that captures Garrett's iconic sound. There are big choruses and playful verses, which make the whole album feel like a massive celebration. Garrett said that most of his music was inspired by the '60s & '70s Playboys, and so it's harder to tell if the bubbly love song, 'Electric Love', is about love or drugs.

Some critics have compared BØRNS to a "happier Lorde" or "Owl

City's music for cool kids" but the album effortlessly blends elements of electro-pop, synth, psychedelic pop, and alt rock into a highly danceable blend of catchy hooks and eclectic, inviting orchestrations; making BØRNS the it thing when it comes to indie pop.

The light pop 'Electric Love' is the first song on the EP, and it takes the prize when it comes to production value, also BØRNS's vocals & songwriting make the song a complete masterpiece. It feels like a heartfelt declaration until the song bursts into a colourful chorus. It doesn't quite feel like a love song, but the song is dreamy and hook laden. Although Garrett has been very honest in his music, as there are no hidden themes, 'Electric Love' feels highly ambiguous. Nevertheless, you would definitely sing along, and even Taylor Swift deemed

it an instant classic!

'10,000 Emerald Pools', one of the singles from *Candy*, has an exemplary bass intro, which coupled with BØRNS' harmonies and high falsetto wail set the tone for the album, coloured with the same retro vibes that characterise his musical style.

'Past Lives' is the third single on the EP. The song begins with an a cappella portion of wonderful harmonies before a slight lull springboards into pounding drums and bass. The transition feels like someone flipped a switch somewhere, as if the listener were hearing two separate tracks rather than one single song. "Lost love is sweeter when it's finally found" is one of the many verses that make Garrett an excellent poet and songwriter.

'Seeing Stars' is like the Naked and Famous, Passion Pit, and MGMT

have been put into an ice coffee and blended together, in H&M. It feels like jubilant bliss on a summer's day, something that would put a smile on our face, no matter what.

The whole album feels like it's thickly coated with honey, and Garrett's songwriting skills are golden. The Michigan singer looks and sounds like he stepped out of Velvet Goldmine and high-fived Lana Del Rey. Anyone paying close attention to BØRNS' blend of synth pop will only expect good things. On *Candy*, BØRNS delivered by all measures a collection of masterfully mixed synth-fueled pop gems.

Vocals and clean songwriting would be the key drivers here, with Garrett Børns' voice setting a smooth tone throughout. He's stellar on 'Past Lives' and even better on 'Electric Love', a track where his voice oozes an



Album cover // Interscope Records

effortless cool.

Garrett's eccentric lilting tenor voice complements his psychedelic pop style perfectly. The retro track, with clever drum samples and complex bass and guitar riffs, make the EP a pleasant musical experience, but the melodies could never overpower BØRNS' stunning vocals, which are the star of the album. His voice possess-

es an immense range and a smooth, strong falsetto that never sounds out of control; he has a sound that could easily become iconic. The lyrics themselves, already vivid and expressive, seem all the more sincere and emotional when carried by his voice. True to its name, *Candy* is a satisfying listen.

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FILM

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1917 (2020)

FILM

1917



Dir: Sam Mendes. **Script:** Sam Mendes, Krysty Wilson-Cairns. **Starring:** George MacKay, Dean-Charles Chapman. 119 minutes

Dominic Ede

Film Editor

Whilst sitting in the cinema watching *1917*, having sat through what felt like five minutes of film, I heard my watch bleep signalling it was 21:00; but how could this be, the film started at 20:30? This swift passage of time is all too apparent in this war time drama from Sam Mendes.

The idea behind *1917* seems as alluring as any, a film made to appear as one take, set over the course of the 8-hour journey of two Lance Corporals as they make their way through occupied territory. As soon as I'd heard about this one take format of the film, I was immediately drawn to the cinematographer who would be responsible for this movie magic, quietly hoping Emmanuel Lubezki (of *Birdman*) would be there, however in finding Roger Deakins, I was definitely not disappointed.

In some ways the centrepiece of the film, this one-shot format doesn't disappoint. From winding steady shots to shaky claustrophobic moments, *1917* seriously delivers an experience unlike many others in cinema history. Comparing this to *Birdman* is in some ways unfair, they're very different films held together only by their format, yet they're bound to draw comparisons, and

so I will. In the same way that *Birdman's* mirror scenes left me scratching my head as to how they did it, *1917* delivers in the same spectacular fashion too, where the camera glides seamlessly over water seen to be totally isolated, over terrain that looks untraversable, and all while keeping our protagonists perfectly in shot. Roger Deakins is really at the top of his game here. The tracking shot not only serves as an extremely impressive feat, but it also completely sucks you in. Time passes in this film like no other, where the stringing together of shots blurs any concept of time you have. This results in a really encapsulating feeling that you feel you can't miss; I was really wracking my brains as to how people were able to leave to go to the toilet during this film.

The one-shot aspect isn't even where the bril-

"1917 seriously delivers an experience unlike many others in cinema history"

liance of the cinematography ends, it's hard to describe until you actually see it, but the shots are almost hyper-realistic. From my primitive knowledge of cinematography, I think what I was seeing is deep focus perfectly employed throughout a large majority of the film. This choice is masterful from Mendes as we're not restricted to focus solely on the characters, as all



A visceral image of Schofield running perpendicular to the rest of the front line // eOne

the tiny, horrific details throughout the journey, seen unapologetically as the real hardships of war, are shown to us. It puts you there in a way that a normal lens just wouldn't. We also have to mention some of the gorgeous shots in the dusk and night-time scenes, where the colours really melt into each other. The blues at dawn are just phenomenal.

With a film that follows its protagonists for such a long duration, there needs to be a great performance to carry the weight of the story; this comes in the form of George MacKay (Schofield). While this is not a showcase in extreme acting prowess, he does act as an excellent vessel through which the story is conveyed. He plays the character honestly and plainly, letting the gravity of the situation and scenes around him fold in and encapsulate the seriousness and difficulty he finds himself in. Neither intrusive nor underplayed, he does an excellent job throughout the film.

Now all that I've said so far indicates that I

thought this a brilliant film with nothing at fault, but even with all this brilliance there is still something missing. Due to the fast paced nature of the film, I was unable to fully invest myself in the story; where everything was happening so quickly, there wasn't quite enough time to fully flesh out the characters and something is left slightly hollow. The brilliance of the cinematography in contrast with the slight lack in character development makes the whole thing seem as almost an exercise in film, rather than a film. However, when reflecting on the story and taking in the context of the events, I'm left battling with two thoughts: one in which the film is accidentally hollow, and one where it is purposefully hollow. If it is the latter, this film is perfectly showcasing the hardships of war, where the fast pace and horrific events combined with lack of character is a perfect description. We see how impersonal and brutal the events are, as we're dragged through

scene after scene of the difficulties faced. An out-

"The brilliance of the cinematography in contrast with the slight lack of character development makes the whole thing seem like an exercise of a film, rather than a film"

standing shot comes, for me, in one where Schofield is running through a battlefield, perpendicular to the rest of the company; there's something extremely visceral in seeing an unarmed man running against the line, and truly

encapsulates the journey he's faced.

Having seen the film, one of the things that is plain to see, is that this was just so brutal. I think this too is where the significance in the name of the film lies, *1917*. The end of the film comes, and it almost feels like the war should be over, but it's not. There's still over a year of fighting to come and with it can only come more of what we've just seen. This snippet of the war and how significant it felt for one person is felt so strongly in these final moments that it really does leave you to reflect on how much was given by those in the war. Although it has its flaws, this film is truly a landmark in cinema and an excellent, visceral portrayal of just a slice of the hardships faced in WW1.

FILM

film.felix@imperial.ac.uk

The Umbrellas of Cherbourg (1964)

The Umbrellas of Cherbourg, and why it is the one musical I think everyone must watch

FILM LES PARAPLUIES DE CHERBOURG

Director: Jacques Demy.
Script: Jacques Demy.
Starring: Catherine Deneuve, Nino Castelnuovo, Anne Vernon, Marc Michel.
Language: French. 91 minutes

Charlotte Arrand
Film Editor

Going into this film I expected a full-blown *Singing in the Rain*-esque musical, but this was a musical like no other. With no heavily choreographed dancing and no distinct songs, it sets itself apart from, and above, all musicals I've ever seen before. In *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, every word of dialogue is sang in tender sing-song and accompanied by gentle tunes. I believe without first hearing this

for yourself, the thought of this for an entire feature length film might be quite irritating, but I found this to flow so softly and fall on the ears so pleasantly that you would be surprised at how well it works. Frankly, I think this style is just as effective (if not more so) than occasional outbursts of song.

The Umbrellas of Cherbourg follows an ill-fated romance between teenage Geneviève (Catherine Deneuve), who helps her disapproving mother run the town's umbrella shop, and Guy (Nino Castelnuovo), a local mechanic, and the events succeeding Guy's draft to serve in the Algerian War. This could be following the skeleton of a plot for any bog-standard romance, but for some reason it's different. The story feels very real and is very simple. We get to see the harsh reality of being in love, un-sugar-coated, despite the dreamlike singing and bubble-gum

sets. This contrast is what makes some scenes so affective, and is particularly apparent in the touching final scene in which you can't tell if you're happy or heartbroken for the characters.

With a mouth-watering colour palette, beautiful

"The Umbrella's of Cherbourg is a technicolour musical masterpiece"

costume design and an even more beautiful cast, this film is an aesthetes dream, and I can do nothing but praise the production team. I watched a restored version of this film in which the vivid colours were brought back to life and packed the punch that director Jacques Demy intended.



Geneviève and her mother in one of many stunning sets // 20th Century Fox

This made it even easier to appreciate the details put into the film's design, from the matching colours of Geneviève's outfits and the background, to the dreamy wallpapers. It is clear to see that this colourful style has inspired directors such as Wes Anderson, and other musicals, such as *La La Land* (but being the prototype, it is far superior). It cannot be stressed enough

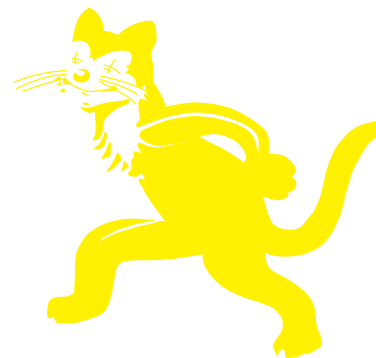
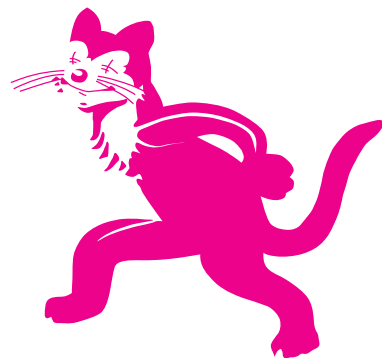
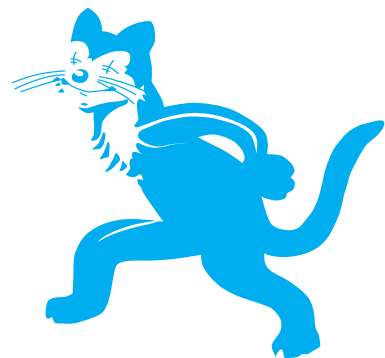
how gorgeous this film is. The creative direction is simply exquisite.

Whilst in plot this film is not ground breaking, in execution it is perfect. Although the plot itself is romantic and heart wrenching, it provides nothing new and the film owes its greatness to its vibrant colours, which clash with the melancholy story, and moving score. *The Umbrellas of Cher-*

bourg is a technicolour, musical masterpiece that everyone must watch in their lifetime, particularly on the big screen.

I watched this as part of the BFI's musical season and would highly recommend catching one of its features before the season reaches its end at the end of this month.

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TELEVISION

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Binge of the Week: *Dracula*

Another rendition of Bram Stoker's classic gothic horror novel Dracula, shedding light to Count Dracula's vulnerability with an unexpected twist ending

TELEVISION



Creator: Mark Gatiss, Steven Moffat **Starring:** Claus Bang, Dolly Wells, John Heffernan

Jia Qi Tan
TV Editor

Netflix's 2020 series retells the classic vampire fantasy story *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, following Count Dracula's (played by Claes Bang) journey from Transylvania to England and his attempt to spread the undead curse, whilst battling with the descendants of Van Helsing. The show is written by Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat, both previously writers of BBC's *Sherlock*. Needless to say, they both have considerable experience adapting classic stories into the format of three 90 minutes long episodes. Each episode gives a piece of the story while maintaining a complete, standalone arc surrounding *Dracula*.

This interpretation retains many of the classic elements of the original version, including *Dracula*'s encounter with English solicitor Jonathan Harker, boarding of the *Demeter* ship, arrival in England and final battle with Van Helsing. One main difference is transforming the character of Professor Abraham Van Helsing to Sister Agatha Van Helsing and Dr. Zoe Van Helsing (both played by Dolly Wells). Another difference includes bringing *Dracula* to modern England for his

final confrontations in the third episode. The plot is split reasonably into three parts, the first of which introduces the infamous Count *Dracula* and Van Helsing, the second details his journey while building the rising action, while the last bringing about the climax - the final battle and *Dracula*'s epiphany.

Logically one would expect the suspense to build up as we inch closer to the season finale, however, I find the actual episodes play out to be almost the exact opposite. I find the first episode the most well-written and executed, slowly declining with the introduction of more side characters. While the writers clarified that the adaptation would be both "faithful and faithless" as with their other works, I find that there is less room for creative development with *Dracula*. Unlike with *Sherlock* where more raw material is available to begin with, *Dracula* features a short, complete storyline where not much can be altered. This is typical of Moffat's writing style - wonderfully pretentious but a bit of an overkill at times.

The ending is a twist I have not expected and

"The overall mood could have been more consistent; the characters could have been more fleshed-out"



Dracula // Wikimedia

is in stark contrast to the original. It feels like a standoff between a metaphorical and a physical ending. The original work focuses on the aspect of vampire-slaying, while the adaptation features a mental battle, where we delve into *Dracula*'s past and motivations. This also takes place in contemporary England, with classic characters like Lucy Westenra (played by Lydia West), John Seward (played by Matthew Beard), and Quincey Morris (played by Phil Dunster) adapted to the 21st century. All in all, I think the writers tried to incorporate more elements than necessary - leaving the final product underwhelming, messy, and too much of a detour. The shift to modern England could have been a nice touch, but 1) the characters are poorly adapted - for instance Lucy has turned into an unlikeable, self-absorbed

party girl, and 2) the execution not only lacks the gothic aura of the late eighteenth century but also fails to set the tone for a horror setting. The overall mood could have been more consistent; the characters could have been more fleshed-out. It leaves something to be desired.

The highlight of the show for me is the character of Sister Agatha Van Helsing - Wells does an amazing job bringing life to this witty, sharp-tongued nun. This is a successful change of character, where she was naturally woven into the plot. A nun in a convent lends itself nicely to a vampire story in the late nineteenth century. The character is also well-written - every line she delivers is precise and/or hilarious. The titular character *Dracula*, as portrayed by Claes Bang, comes across ordinary and a little dull. It's difficult to play

the single most famous vampire in the history of vampires, and this iteration suffers from the lack of a distinct personality which can also be attributed to the writing. It feels as if *Dracula* is just another blood-thirsty vampire running around searching for brides, nothing special. While the moment of redemption sheds light on his vulnerability, it does not exactly align with the *Dracula* from the first two episodes. This may be controversial but I find this version of Count *Dracula* lackluster and inconsistent.

The cinematography is especially crucial for the genre of horror. It takes the right shots and framing techniques to create spine-chilling moments that exemplify the genre. The first two episodes successfully tap into our psyche with its eerie lighting, unexpected transitions, unique angles. It's interesting that the

production team kept flies as a motif that is fitting and provides a strong visual. However, the cinematography for the third episode resembles that of a typical drama rather than horror - the lighting, depth of field, exposure could have been improved.

There were both ups and downs in this adaptation. Many details were done right, for example, teasing of "traditions/myths" about vampires was quirky. Sadly the series started off strong but finished weakly. For potential future seasons, I'm more interested to see them playing with perhaps *Dracula*'s origin story. All in all, it's still delightfully diabolic, and I would recommend it if you're in the mood for some vampire fantasy drama.

TELEVISION

tv.felix@imperial.ac.uk

His Dark Materials: Paradise Regained (Finally)

A new attempt at televising Philip Pullman's epic trilogy finally seems to get it right

TELEVISION

Season 1



Written by: Jack Thorne.
Starring: Dafne Keen, Ruth Wilson, James McAvoy

Waleed El-Geresy
TV Writer

His Dark Materials (HDM) is a new series broadcast by both the BBC and HBO. It is a fresh take on Philip Pullman's original eponymous trilogy. Following the disappointing reception of the original television adaptation of *The Northern Lights* (the first book in the trilogy) as the feature film *The Golden Compass*, we unfortunately had to wait until the television and film rights expired before being able to experience any more of the story on screen. Now that the wait is finally over, and the first season of *His Dark Materials* has been released, it does not disappoint.

The first season has a much darker tone and a more modern and realistic feel than *The Golden Compass* which is much truer to the nature of the books. *The Golden Compass* tended to tone down the content to make things relatively child friendly, losing the essence of the original trilogy in the process.

Pullman's belief is that fiction whose readership includes children (there is no such thing as "children's fiction", since any children's book will also be read by adults, says he), should be able to deal with any issues that children might realistically expe-

rience in their everyday lives. This includes traditionally taboo themes such as divorce and sexual maturity, which of course are things that children may come across in some form in their daily lives, but may not fully comprehend. In keeping with his philosophy, his trilogy includes ideas about things such as puberty, religious indoctrination and oppression. Definitely not what you might immediately associate with children's literature. These, notably, are also the things which *The Golden Compass* seemed to filter out, which made it flop despite its stellar cast, which included Nicole Kidman and Daniel Craig.

It is unclear whether the decision was made to embolden the storytelling because of a return to Pullman's original ideals, or whether it is simply reflective of the fact that those who were children at the time of *The Golden Compass*'s release, or who read the original trilogy at the time, are now adults. Perhaps by not limiting the run time to the length of a feature film, the team had more time to experiment with developing and adding depth to the story. In any case, it was a step in the right direction.

The season is well put together in terms of storytelling, pace, and its overall tone. The headquarters of the Magisterium (a vaguely disguised representation of the Catholic Church) are in a clean cut, minimalist building, in stark contrast to the magical spires of the Oxford colleges that the protagonist, Lyra, calls home. Despite the fact that technological advancements such as modern touch screen smartphones and tablet

computers were not used at the time that Pullman wrote the original trilogy, different forms of such technology make frequent appearances throughout the first season, further emphasising that this is a show of our times. These modern touches by the creative team are a testament to their awareness of the modern audience.

An interesting distinction from the books was the inclusion of parts of *The Subtle Knife* (the second book in the trilogy), interleaved throughout scenes from *The Northern Lights*. Writer Jack Thorne (*Skins*, *Shameless*, *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*) has mentioned that the production team had the benefit of hindsight, with all 3 parts of the trilogy to work with from the get-go, meaning that they could throw away the need for chronological storytelling and introduce elements of the second book much earlier. This enables them to foreshadow future events in a different way to the novels, drawing interesting parallels between plotlines, and I think it works very well.

Of course, the first season isn't perfect by any means. I felt the pacing for the first few episodes was rather slow, presumably to set the scene and avoid bombarding the audience with details that could be revealed over time, as required. However, this does change as the story progresses.

It might be my prejudice, already being familiar with the HDM universe, but I felt that the audience were sometimes patronised a bit too much. Certain expositions about plot points or the quirks of Lyra's world, done



His Dark Materials, now available on BBC iPlayer // HBO/BBC

mostly through character dialogue, seemed unnecessary and could have been better executed through simply showing us, rather than telling.

One thing that was done well was the diversity in casting, with black actors and actresses in roles across the board. This notably includes Ariyon Bakare who gives an outstanding performance as Lord Boreal, and Clarke Peters as the master of Jordan College. This could of course be taken further through the inclusion of people from a more diverse variety of ethnic backgrounds. The world is not just black and white - it is grey too, something perfectly exemplified by one of the most interesting characters in the *His Dark Materials* trilogy: Mrs Coulter, whose morality is very grey indeed.

Ruth Wilson's performance as Marisa Coulter is, in a word, brilliant. It is as true to the books as you could wish for. Her scenes with Lyra (Daphne Keen) exquisitely exhibit the inner conflict of a woman doing the wrong things for perhaps not-so-wrong reasons. Jack Thorne's goal of avoiding making her one-dimensional

really does come across.

James McAvoy was drafted in as Lord Asriel as an emergency replacement late on in the process. His performance is accurate though perhaps slightly theatrical, in the literal sense: in certain scenes I felt as though I was watching a play rather than a TV show. Despite his at times over-the-top performance, he effectively portrays Lord Asriel as a dynamic and preoccupied man, prone to fits of aggression, but with a strong purpose.

Finally, I would like to mention the central character: Lyra herself, played by Daphne Keen. It is immediately obvious that Lyra's character in the TV show is not the same as the one in the books, but that is not to say that it is an entirely bad thing. Pullman has gone so far as to describe the literary Lyra as a "greedy little savage", on account of her mischievousness and propensity for telling lies, but the Lyra in the show is a very different girl. Although still mendacious, she appears to be much more innocent. She perhaps comes across as a little too docile. In the show's defence, this

can be reconciled with the overarching theme of the original trilogy (again, one that Pullman may have only become aware of while writing the stories in retrospect), of the transition from innocence to wisdom.

Overall, this series is definitely worth a watch! It should be exciting for those who, as of yet, have no experience of the world of daemons and panserbjørne, and also offers seasoned readers a fresh enough take on the original... materials... to keep them interested.

Now... stop standing at the brink of hell, pondering your voyage, and go and find *His Dark Materials* on iPlayer!

GAMES

games.felix@imperial.ac.uk

A Beautiful Logo For a Beautiful Game // press.pokemon.com

Pokémon Mystery Dungeon Remake Demo!!!

A nice summary of what you can expect from the demo of everyone's favourite Mystery Dungeon game. Blue and Red Rescue Team have been fused into one complete package and oh my, does it look glorious!

GAMES

Freddie Ugo

Games Editor

Earlier this month we were treated to a healthy portion of Pokémon news in a 35-minute presentation by the Pokémon company, taking place far from their typical Pokémon Direct in May. Right off the bat we were treated to a nostalgia rich trailer for the newest remake in the franchise... Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Rescue Team DX.

This is a remake of the original Blue and Red Rescue Team games, for the DS and GBA respectively. From the trailer alone it looks to be a faithful recreation of the originals, with a beautiful hand-drawn art style and a 3D environment

which only elevates that of their predecessor. The best part? It is slated for a March 6th, 2020 release, with a demo available right now; and yes, of course I have played it.

Straight away you are greeted by an old friend, the personality quiz. Anyone who played these games as a child surely has fond memories of this. The idea of the quiz is to figure out which Pokémon is best suited to your personality, whether kind and quirky, or as the game brutally labelled me: "annoying and alienating". Jeez Game Freak no need to be mean. The quiz is not always the most accurate in choosing your favourite Pokémon, but luckily there is the welcome addition of letting you say 'no' and instead choosing your own starter. I chose Psyduck (my fave), chose

Bulbasaur as my partner and off I went.

When the game threw me into the world, I immediately noticed how gorgeous the game



// press.pokemon.com

looked. The originals had a wonderful, sprite-based art style, but the hand-drawn aesthetic of this remake combined with the amazing sound track really brings that extra drop of charm to a game already full to the brim with it. As far as I can tell, the dialogue is almost identical – this is a

good thing when the story is one of the best in any Pokémon game ever.

This is all well and good, but what is a Mystery Dungeon game without good dungeons? Luckily, the combat, exploration and team building are the same as it was all those years ago: refined and joyous. The gameplay is simple and repetitive but hopelessly addictive – it is a Pokémon game after all. However, it is so wonderfully refined, with the stunning background making the dungeons even more enjoyable to explore and the UI showing all the information you need without taking up much of the screen (both in handheld and docked mode). You travel through multiple floors of a dungeon, fighting Pokémon as you go, in a turn-based grid system. The demo gives

short tutorials, which remind you of the basics without being insultingly

“The hand-drawn aesthetic combined with the amazing sound brings that extra drop of charm to a game already full of it”

simple, as well as roughly an hour of gameplay between the dungeon and the town. The town was really something else. Bustling with atmosphere and things to do, such as

visiting the Kecleon shop, or depositing items in the Persian bank so you don't lose them when you faint. Seeing this area I loved as a child reimagined is such a gift.

As it is only the beginning, I naturally found the demo fairly easy; if you are worried about difficulty, don't be. The game gets much, much harder with 100 floor dungeons near the end game truly testing your skills as a gamer.

The demo is quite short at roughly an hour long, but that's okay. If you have played the game before, it is an amazing nostalgia kick and if you haven't, it begins an enticing story that is sure to draw you in and convince you to buy the game to find out more. Definitely check it out if you haven't already!

GAMES

games.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Pokémon DLC? That's right! Fans are finally getting exactly what they want!

In the same Direct as Mystery Dungeon was announced, Game Freak unveiled a large expansion pack for Pokémon Sword and Shield that they have been working on. Let's go over what is included.

GAMES

Freddie Ugo

Games Editor

The main thing to come out of the Pokémon Direct was a big announcement that Game Freak are working on brand new DLC for Sword and Shield. This DLC is coming out in two waves: The Isle of Armour (June) and The Crown Tundra (November). This is big. According to Game Freak, this expansion pack (selling for £26.99 for BOTH expansions) is meant to replace the usual incremental entry in the franchise, e.g. Crystal, Platinum, Ultra Sun/Moon. Personally, I am a huge fan of this change. I always feel the need to buy every Pokémon game, so the fact that the additional content can now just be added to the game rather than having to buy a whole extra version for some slight story changes and extra end game content is wonderful news. So, what is actually coming with this?

There will be slight differences in either version, depending on whether you get this pack for Sword or Shield (e.g. different Pokémon). But on the whole, whichever game you have does not matter much.

The Isle of Armour

Currently, we know more about the Isle of Armour. It takes place on an Island to the east of Galar, rich with beautiful nature. The Isle of Armour focuses on the theme of

growth. There is a dojo on this island, where you begin an apprenticeship led by the trainer who runs the dojo 'Mustard'. Mustard is an ex-champion of the region, now mentoring Leon, the current champion of the Galar region (until you kick his ass at the end of the game of course). Whilst training in the dojo you either train with Klara, a poison type user, if you have Sword – or with Avery, a psychic type user, if you have Shield. They are also releasing a brand-new legendary Pokémon called 'Kubfu' – a fighting type Pokémon that is entrusted to you by Mustard to train until it evolves into 'Urshifu' – a Pokémon with two distinct forms. Urshifu is

“We are being given over 200 Pokémon that have been left out of the game this time round”

a powerful Pokémon that is also getting a Gigantamax version for both forms: single strike (fighting-dark) and rapid strike (fighting-water). As well as this additional story content, we are being given over 200 more Pokémon that have been left out of the game this time round. You do not even need to buy the expansion pass to add them to your team – as long as



Concept Art for the Crown Tundra. It Looks Absolutely Stunning// press.pokemon.com

you get Pokémon Home when it comes out later this year, you'll be able to trade these monsters from your old games to the new ones.

The starters are all getting Gigantamax forms as well! My personal favourite is Rillaboom's, which transforms it from looking like a toned-down Donkey Kong into a full-on heavy metal drummer. As well as this there are new fashion items, new looks for the Rotom bike, an exp. Charm, apricorns that can be turned into pokéballs and more tutor moves!

The Crown Tundra

The Crown Tundra is themed around the idea of exploration, taking place in a frozen wildland to the North of Galar. Like the Isle of Armour, you'll be able to find Pokémon that were not present in the game at launch. Fitting in with the theme, there is plenty to discover, from mysterious temples to a giant tree growing in a place where it doesn't

belong.

A 'certain person' appoints you as the leader of their exploration team in the Crown Tundra. Calyrex is the legendary Pokémon of this expansion. This psychic and grass type is characterised by its graceful, regal movements.

The Crown Tundra has a new form of co-op play which allows you to journey with friends into Pokémon dens deep underground, beneath the frozen tundra. Deep inside the dens you will be able to find all kinds of legendary Pokémon, including some brand-new ones waiting to be found. Similar to the Isle of Armour, there will be new clothing items to purchase too!

Once you have completed the entire game, the Isle of Armour and the Crown Tundra, there should be plenty more battle challenges waiting for you.

Controversy

Personally, I am super excited for this! With 2

new areas meant to be bigger than the original wild area, and a bunch of new legendaries, what's not to like? Well for most people, the price. The majority of concern that I am seeing online seems to come from the idea that Game Freak could have just included this all in the base game – especially the returning Pokémon. I see where people are coming from with this; increasing the development cycle for this game in order to fit this all in could have worked.

However, Sword and Shield are already massive, and in order to take the extra time for development it would have meant delaying the game past the holidays. This would have resulted in: a) no big title for Nintendo during the holidays, b) worse sales of the Switch Lite which released a couple of months prior and c) a likely upset fan base who have been waiting for a mainline Pokémon title on the switch since its release 3 years ago! I

am of the opinion that this is a good thing. It means that we got Sword and Shield during the usual November Pokémon release, and now we can look forward to more content throughout the

“The Crown Tundra has a new form of co-op play which allows you to journey with friends”

year without having to buy another incremental game. There's nothing I dislike more than buying a new Pokémon game and playing through the same story again for hours just to experience a small amount of post-game content. I'm looking at you Ultra Sun and Ultra Moon.

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icu.investmentsociety@imperial.ac.uk

Macro-Economics VS Micro-Economics

INVESTMENT

Marios Papadopoulos

ICIS
Investment Student Writer

Microeconomics and macroeconomics constitute the two main subgroups of the social science known as economics. Both disciplines are said to have risen from “The Wealth of Nations” by Adam Smith, whose work as a political philosopher has influenced much of the world’s economic policy choices since the late 1700s.

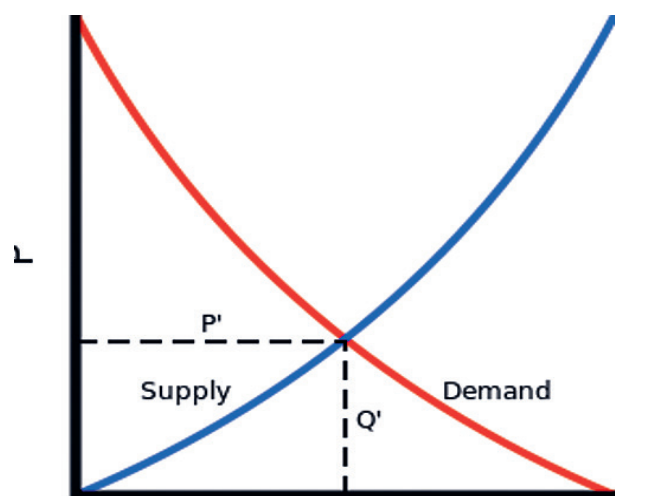
Microeconomics

Microeconomics studies how the behaviour of economic factors, such as individuals, households and firms, affect the operation of the market. The market is defined as any structure which enables the sale and purchase of a product.

It is often thought of as a physical market, but that is not necessary if the sellers and buyers choose to communicate remotely in order to complete the transaction. When referring to the functioning of the market, economists are mainly interested in the prices, supply, and demand for goods. This field focuses on the operation of individual market places and how they interact with each other, while disregarding their relationship with the economy as a whole. The important question is, how do microeconomists develop their theories to predict the market’s response to changes in the production process?

Method and Main Microeconomic Theories

Microeconomics



The underlying force behind all markets, the law of supply and demand//Wdflake via Wikipedia

attempts to model human behaviour using mathematics. As is often the case in physical sciences and engineering, certain assumptions must be made. The main ones include that individuals have full knowledge about the goods available and make rational purchasing decisions, the number of buyers and sellers are infinite and that goods are homogenous, i.e. they closely resemble their competition. These models can lead to the formulation of theories about various types of economic events within a given market. These hypotheses must then be tested in practice, through empirical research, which involves the collection and analysis of economic data from real-world markets.

Microeconomics has given rise to several theories which seek to explain how the market operates. The most prominent ones are listed below:

Production Theory: It seeks to explain how a business decides how much it will produce of the commodity that it intends to sell. A firm must select the appropriate combination of productive factors, which include land, raw materials, and human labour, among others, for this purpose.

Laws of Supply and Demand: According to the Law of Demand, provided all other factors do not change, a higher price for a commodity will reduce the demand for it. The Law of Supply states that the supplied quantity of a product will increase if the price is increased.

As seen in the graph above, the downward sloping curve of the Law of Demand intersects the upward curve of the Law of Supply at a single point. That point is referred to as the equilibrium price, which allows the supplier to sell their product at a price considered acceptable by buyers.

Macroeconomics

The publication of John Maynard Keynes’s *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* in 1936 highlighted the difference between the two fields of economic study. It sought to explain the effects of the Great Depression and in doing so, it demonstrated that microeconomic concepts could not simply be extended in order to explain the entire economy.

Macroeconomics analyses the behaviour of factors, such as the growth rate, unemployment and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which influence the economy’s performance. GDP refers to the

collective monetary value of all products and services produced in a country in the span of a year. Achieving development, which will hopefully result into increased living standards is considered the main goal of this discipline. Macroeconomic research is divided into two types: long-term economic growth and the business cycle.

Economic Growth

Economic development is linked to an increase in the total production in a country’s economy. It is therefore essential to investigate which factors may lead to a slowdown or an acceleration of growth.

Before the 20th century, macroeconomic analysis regarding growth revolved around qualitative arguments, such as those found in Adam Smith’s *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, which formed the basis of capitalism. Since the start of the last century, macroeconomists have developed formal mathematical models. Growth frequently appears as a function of available capital, labour force and technical progress.

The term “business cycle” refers to the fluctuations in economic activity which may occur over a given time period. Each cycle comprises of six stages: At first, expansion is associated with a rise in income, employment and production in an economy. At some point, growth peaks, which is then followed by a period of recession. During that period, income, employment and demand levels decline. Continued contraction leads to the depression stage, which entails more business closures as well as reduced investment into the economy. The trough stage signals the end of

the depression, which then paves the way for the recovery stage. Due to low prices, according to the Law of Demand, consumers will begin to spend more, which will lead to increased employment and production levels. Exit from the recovery stage marks the end of the business cycle.

Methods of Macroeconomics

As previously mentioned, finding the policies which will help achieve economic growth is one of the primary goal of macroeconomic studies. This implies a certain subset of goals, with some of the most important ones being:

Sustainability: The growth rate achieved permits increased living standards without adverse environmental effects

Full employment: All individuals who are willing and able to work have managed to secure employment, which does not necessarily mean zero unemployment. Several economists argue that a certain rate of unemployment will always exist.

Price stability: Prices remain stable for extended amounts of time. Low-to-moderate inflation is considered ideal for promoting growth. Inflation measures how quickly does the price of goods in an economy rise over a given period of time. Large rates of inflation are undesirable because individuals will be able to purchase fewer products with the amount of money available to them, leading to a decrease in demand.

External balance: The monetary value of goods imported in an economy is roughly equal to the value of exports in the long-term.

Macroeconomists have developed mathematical models to describe relationships between

numerous factors, such as inflation, unemployment, consumption, and investment, among others. These models rely on assumptions similar to the ones mentioned about microeconomic models, but also on statistics about unemployment and GDP.

Comparison

As deduced from the definitions of the two fields, scale is the main difference between them. Microeconomics focuses on how economic events influence the decision-making of individuals and firms, while macroeconomics studies their effect on the economy as a whole. For example, a shift in the government’s tax policy would be of interests to economists of both fields. A microeconomist will observe the policy’s impact on producers’ decision making, namely if they will increase or decrease production levels. In contrast, a macroeconomist will concentrate on how this new measure may affect the living standards of the general population, i.e. if they will benefit from this move or stand to lose.

Conclusion

As already shown, both microeconomics and macroeconomics are essential to understanding how the economy reacts to changes in society. One could argue that macroeconomics is much more prevalent as it shapes government policy, which affects everyone in the end.

However, they would be wrong given the continued interaction between the fields. For instance, an increase in house prices would not only have an impact on households and firms, but also on the greater economy, considering the large size of the housing market in several countries.

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icu.investmentsociety@imperial.ac.uk

Everyone as an Investor: Why you should be one

INVESTMENT

Maciej Psiuch

ICIS

Investment Student Writer

Though this be madness, yet there is method in't.

- Hamlet, act 2 scene 2

Emperor's New Clothes

The semantics behind the word investor has come to be as one of a full-time profession, and adjective that could be shared by common people that an investor is a fat cat with with bells floating out of his Bentley whilst he jumps out for a meeting with the City of London Corporation. What it should mean is a person of certain characters and

"...an investor is a fat cat with with bells floating out of his Bentley whilst he jumps out for a meeting with the City of London Corporation..."

qualities, and those those who can sacrifice now to gain later. Acts on logic, and not emotions. Makes a plan, and sticks to it. Strategy can be applied to any scary source, but when applied to money we are thinking about putting close on one back. True to the original definition, and that is of the latin word investierie, to clothe oneself. So, if you are wearing clothes right now you are in a very good place to start being an investor. Otherwise, go and put some clothes on and come back to this article. And try to convince you of why you should be an (active) investor from this moment onwards.

Investing vs. Gambling

Word "investing" is being thrown around however, especially in case when things have nothing to do with investing but everything with chance. Speculation, is not investing. What shows it amazingly is a scene from South Park E3S13 (great episode), where Stan puts his \$100 cheque into his bank to "grow" without any plan or investigation into process:

"We can put that check in a money-market mutual fund, then we'll reinvest the earnings into foreign-currency accounts with compounding interest aaaaaaand it's gone!" Poof, it's gone. Sadly to many people investing appears to



The stock price of the NVIDIA Corp. has made meteoric gains in the later half of the decade //Google Finance

be exactly that, putting money through financial mechanism with an opportunity of (probable) reward. The truth, unless you're a High Frequency Trader... you'll end up like Stan. What investing actually is, is owning a piece of business. And Stan didn't try to look into healthy businesses that might be undervalued and will grow within the next five to ten years. He just wanted "money to grow", well money doesn't grow on trees and neither it does in a bank account. If Stan instead invested his money into a business he might know of enough to make a decision to support he would end up differently. Like video games. Virtual reality has been coming to our homes for ages, with game studios like NVIDIA working on it. If Stan bought 11

stocks at \$7.98 and paid \$10 in fees spending his \$100 (not a great strategy to spend everything on a single stock, but Stan is just a child), aaaaaaand forgot about it till Oculus rift hits the shelves and rises to popularity in 2018. He would have \$3036 worth in stock. That's the difference between investing and speculating.

How to start

It has never been simpler than now, you just Google "how to buy stocks" and here you have it. Back in the day you would need to call in to a broker, which would then not only try to sell stocks to you Wolf-of-Wall street style but also take a commission for everything you'll try to do on top of basic costs. But going beyond the practical aspect, as little as £20 will suffice to start and gain

the experience. Yes there are simulators, but it's crazy how differently we behave when real money is at stake. If you can play the stock market like a video game, with no emotions just by looking at numbers you're a natural-born investor whos is better than Warren Buffet.

However 99.9% of us will have to sadly learn for ourselves. It's a bit like gardening, it'll take few years to see result of your decisions. So the earlier you start the better.

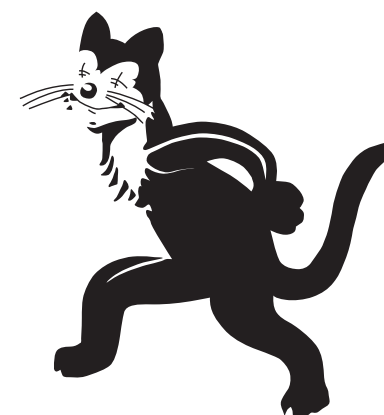
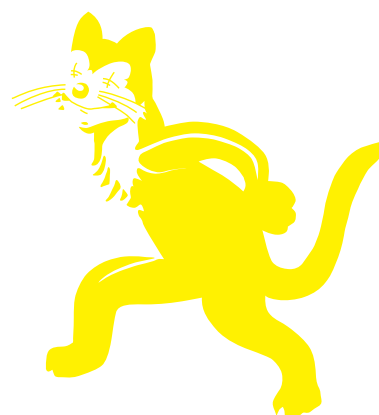
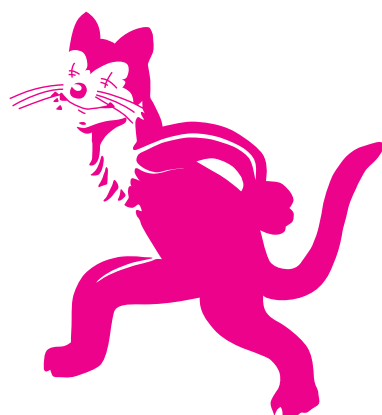
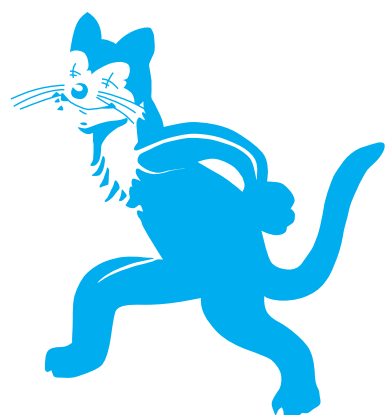
Once you decide to invest, you'll have to think about what kind of investor you want to be: passive or aggressive. By doing a lot of research (start with: Investopedia, Intelligent Investor by Benjamin Graham and of course joining appropriate College societies) and think on how committed

you can be.

How do we benefit?

Well, most importantly money invested is distributed well. It's not hanging out within the financial mechanisms but is being targeted for appropriate businesses individuals consider worth supporting which then can perform well through the use of these funds.

Giving back to its investors but also increasing quality of service to everyone else. But the biggest change, one would say is the societal one. Act of investment, as described in future instalments, is part of ones character. Sacrificing now, to gain later by thinking of the future. A personal quality that's best acquired through investing.



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icu.investmentsociety@imperial.ac.uk

The Future Looks Bright for Japanese Equities

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Edward Leane

ICIS

Investment Member

In the latter part of 2019, Japan finished hosting the Rugby World Cup. I'm sure those who watched any of it would agree that it was a verifiable success, and for nearly two months the country was at the centre of the sporting world. After the success of this rugby competition, Japan now looks towards the Olympics this year for another chance to shine. These kinds of competitions can become cultural phenomena; those in London during 2012 will remember the euphoria in the UK but also the

"I think it is a particularly vibrant and exciting time for Japan both culturally but also economically"

way in which it captured the imaginations of many around the world.

I have no doubt that the 2020 Tokyo Olympics will be just as successful and will introduce many around the world to the wonderful hospitality and culture of Japan. For these reasons, and for many others, I think it is a particularly vibrant and exciting time for Japan both culturally but also economically. Ever since the tech boom and bust of the late 80s and early 90s, the country has

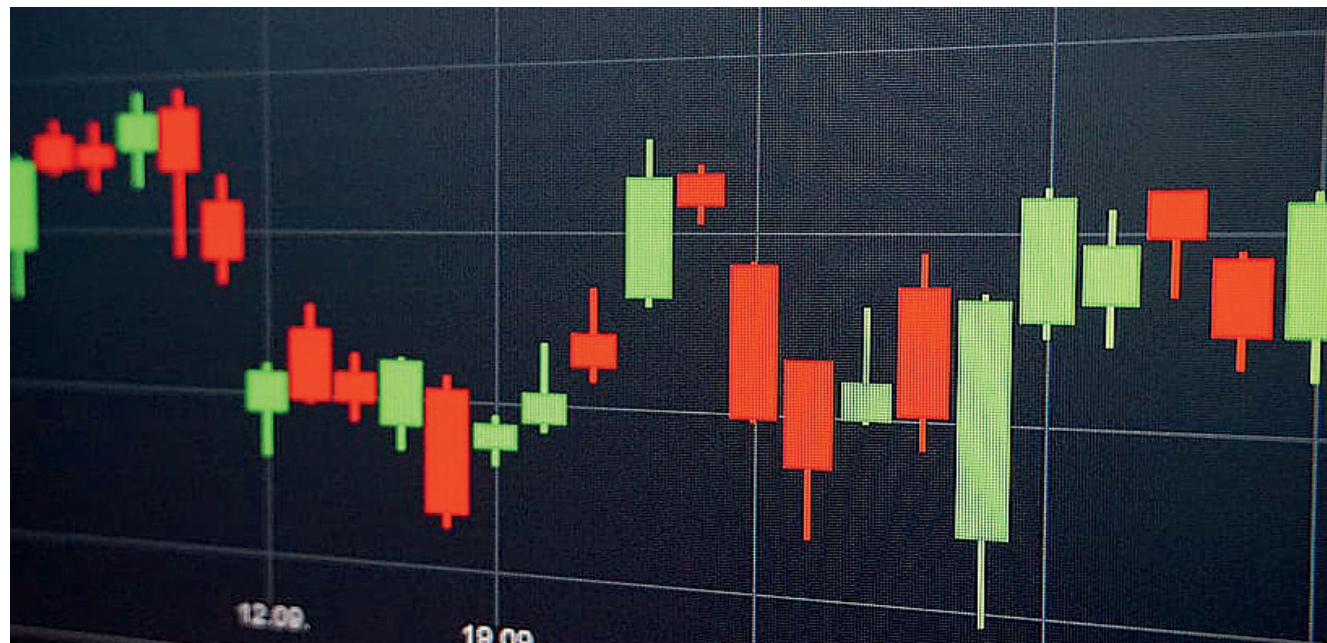
faced a protracted period of economic stagnation, with the Nikkei index still yet to reach and surpass its meteoric highs of the early 90s. Moreover, demographic changes and an ageing population are of big concern for policy makers in the country.

For a long time, forecasts and predictions for the economic health of the country had been bleak. However, some changes are starting to manifest themselves now which are beginning to transform the Japanese economy and, coupled with the successes of the Rugby and Olympic competitions, it seems that positive times are ahead for the country.

To the Olympics and beyond

During the Olympics, an expected 8.4 million people will visit Tokyo with many more watching on from around the world. The Japanese government have made it very clear that they want to use this unparalleled exposure to advertise the culture, opportunities for investment, and technological advances that Japan has to offer, or "monozukuri" – excellence in manufacturing.

Some important debates will take place in Japan next year, most notably the holding of a long anticipated referendum on the role of Japan's military and, increasingly, those leading the country are discussing what role Japan will play in the international community in the future. On the surface, demographic change and an ageing population seem to be the biggest challenges that the country faces. And whilst this is true to an extent, there are some other key things which will challenge the resilience of Japan's economy as well as force a reassessment of the role the country



The ubiquitous candlestick charts of the financial markets were created by Japanese rice merchants // pxfuel

plays in the international order. Underpinning this is a need to cement the economic growth the country has seen in the past few years and ensure its future prosperity by inculcating greater changes to the social and economic attitudes of its people and businesses.

Abenomics

Prime Minister Abe's economic policy, which is commonly referred to as "Abenomics", has a three-pronged approach. In order to stimulate an economy that was deflationary for many years, Shinzō Abe has focused on increasing the nation's

"Increasing participation in the workforce of women and foreign workers over the last few years has had a positive impact..."

money supply, fiscal stimulus, and structural reform to make Japan's economy more competitive on a global stage. When Abe became Prime Minister for the second time in 2012 he declared that he would "implement bold monetary policy, flexible fiscal policy and a growth strategy that encourages private investment, and with these three pillars, achieve results."

To a large extent these policies have been successful, providing a steady rate of inflation, pushing down unemployment to a 22-year low of 2.4%, and helping make Japanese businesses more competitive. However, in the long-term this economic stimulus will be challenged as demographic change in Japan becomes more acute. The working population in Japan is predicted to fall from 76 million in 2018 to 54 million in 2050, whilst the proportion of those aged over 65 is set to increase from 28% in 2018 to 38% in 2050.

Ageing Japan

The advantage of these sorts of demographic changes is that they have forced the Japanese government and policy makers to confront some

of the underlying issues that have held back the country's economy for a long time despite the advances made under Abe. Increasing participation in the workforce of women and foreign workers over the last few years has had a positive impact and this looks set to increase further and further in the future.

Whilst the increase in foreign workers and a greater proportion of women working will have cultural ramifications in Japan, it should help support the ageing workforce. According to Graham Smith, a market commentator at Fidelity, this opening of the doors to foreign blue-collar workers could be a "game changer" for the Japanese economy.

The Japanese Market

Diving deeper, the make-up of Japan's stock market is also changing. Typically viewed as very expensive, value investors have been put off the Japanese equities market due to comparably high P/E ratios and dividend yields, but this is changing.

These sorts of metrics are now much more in-line with the US stock market, which makes it

"The Japanese market's dividend yield currently stands at about 2.5% compared to the S&P 500's 2% and share buybacks are up 90% from 2018..."

a more attractive place for those once turned-off value investors. Since the crash of the late 1980s, the Nikkei 225 index is still about 1/3 lower than its peak three decades ago and if Abe's reforms can continue to strengthen economic growth in Japan, these sorts of value investments become increasingly attractive.

One of the problems with cheap stocks is that there often needs to be a catalyst that pushes their price up to their intrinsic market value. But with structural

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icu.investmentsociety@imperial.ac.uk

The Future Looks Bright for Japanese Equities

changes to the corporate governance of Japanese companies taking place at the moment I think there will be impetus for changes in this market. Having typically hoarded cash and been resilient to addressing shareholder concerns, many Japanese companies are now much more aware of how returns to shareholders are important. This evolution in corporate governance attitudes is already leading to greater returns to shareholders.

The Japanese market's dividend yield currently stands at about 2.5% compared to the S&P

500's 2% and share buybacks are up 90% from 2018. Return on equity has more than doubled to 10% since Abe took office. The manifestation of these corporate governance changes will be a driver for the Japanese stock market and makes it particularly attractive, especially at current valuations (P/E of approximately 15x across market in line with markets like US).

Money Where Their Mouth Is

Some institutional investors are beginning to put their money where their mouth is. Fidelity In-

ternational became overweight Japanese Equities in November of last year as they anticipate a rebound in corporate earnings and relatively cheap valuations compared to other international equity markets. Patrik Schowitz, Global Multi-Asset Strategist at JPMorgan Asset Management, recently spoke to Bloomberg about the underperformance of Japanese Equities over the last few years compared to the US and why now would be an opportune time to invest in this market as many other regions' stocks begin to look comparatively ex-

pensive.

Equally, Goldman Sachs expects 8% EPS growth in 2020 followed by 6% in 2021. Overall, the cool-down in trade tensions between China and the US, recently signing a deal to pause their trade war, is another welcome boost to both world markets and markets in East Asia.

On a macro-level, a lot will change in Japan over the next decade. Demographic transformation, cultural evolution as the country becomes more open to immigration, and a reassessment of the role that the country plays in

the international order are all extremely interesting.

Despite some of these challenges, I think that these changes from an investment perspective will precipitate strong returns for those who are overweight Japanese equities. Crucially, an evolution in the corporate governance strategies of Japanese company management teams will arguably have the biggest impact on the stock market and Abe's economic reforms will support this growth.

As the country opens up to the world for the Rugby and the Olympics, so too should investors who are

looking to navigate the rather ominous future for global equity markets.

"...evolution in the corporate governance strategies ... will arguably have the biggest impact ..."

Elements of *Art of War*: The Sino-American Trade War

INVESTMENT

Kevin Wang

ICIS

Investment Member

Can a trade war be fought in the same methods as a physical war? To find the answer to this question, one has to go back in time to an era of turbulence in the 5th century BC. The author of this magnum opus, Sun Tsu, was the chief of staff who was confronted a problem: how to defeat an enemy, often in a disadvantageous situation?

Centuries later, though much has not changed in principle, it is needless to state that the façade of physical warfare has changed with the evolution of weaponry. Similarly, trade wars and currency wars did not change much either in the last centuries. All tactics of a field war may be used in both contexts: elements of surprise, force of attack, plan and strategy.

"The only option for the dragon country is to face that of the eagle in the eye."

In this article the author will investigate exactly that in the perspective of the trade war between United States and China.

Death Ground

United States is without doubt the party with larger size and consequently bigger caliber. So how can China hold off repeated attacks in form of sanctions and political pressures? Sun Tsu gave us the answer: 'Should you be outnumbered; the best route is retreat. It is better to fight with absolute numerical advantage.' In simple words, divide and conquer. Is it possible for a country as big as China to evade the pursuit

its adversary? Is the option of a retreat open? Unfortunately, the trade war provides no room for retreat. Sun Tsu called it the 'death ground'. The only option for the dragon country is to face that of the eagle in the eye.

Does this mean that the trade war has to be conducted in form of trench massacre? Not necessarily. Though no space is available for retreat, China can attack where defense is light on the American side while holding off American assaults on the other side of the battlefield, essentially fighting a van-guard action on one side while having the old guard marching onto the Pratzen height (from the Battle of Austerlitz). Indeed, maneuvering is in the heart of the Art of War, since a war of attrition between the two parties will without doubt lead to the demise of the weaker side. As we shall see, the Chinese are well aware of this point. To prevent a rout, China has to hold, at the very least, in theatres of sanction and technolo-

gy, where the Americans have the lead. Chinese export was hit hard in the latter half of 2019. The situation became critical in November, but it held. A similar situation developed in the technology theatre, where interventions of the Department of Commerce of the United States effectively crippled ZTE by means of sanction. It also put up policies against 5G technology by Huawei due to security reasons.

Gathering Ammunition

The Chinese government also understands that 'wars are not won on evacuations'. The theater of attack was the foreign exchange market, in which the Chinese were in full control. In the first place, mainland market is sealed off to Foreigners by the implementation of exchange control. This creates a layer of insulation between domestic markets and international markets. Sun Tzu noted that 'all you can do is to establish a position ensuring non-defeat - to win or not depends on

your enemy making a mistake'. With much foresight, the Chinese government then embarked on a journey to collect as much Renminbi as possible in overseas markets. It further regulated the offshore Renminbi market in Hong Kong, mainly by strictly monitoring its size. One must understand that, in order to short a sovereign currency, the speculator must be able to gather enough of the currency to influence the market, much like an attacking army must get hold of enough ammunition before any meaningful action. These tactics effectively eliminate the possibility of a large-scale speculative sell-off. In this scenario, the Chinese leadership wisely took away the ammunition needed to be used by the other side. All of these will ensure a non-defeat result on the Chinese side.

What did the Americans do in retaliation? They labeled China as a currency manipulator, but was this justified? The power to control interest

rate and currency outflow is deeply enshrined in a state's sovereignty, no less than that of its border. It was the choice of the Americans that they shall not manipulate their currency exchanges, but they have no right to force such choice onto the Chinese who do not wish to conduct business in this manner. Hence this 'currency manipulator' label only exerts its influence on people also believing in free market. Such course of action would take no effect on the Chinese should they think sound economic policy involves government intervention in extraordinary times. Trade war is undoubtedly such an extraordinary situation.

Will the Chinese turn out victorious in the trade war according to Sun Tzu's strategies? It is far too early at this stage to predict the outcome of the trade war, but one should see treaties signed in the near future.

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The Omen of the Next Recession

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Sam L'Huilier

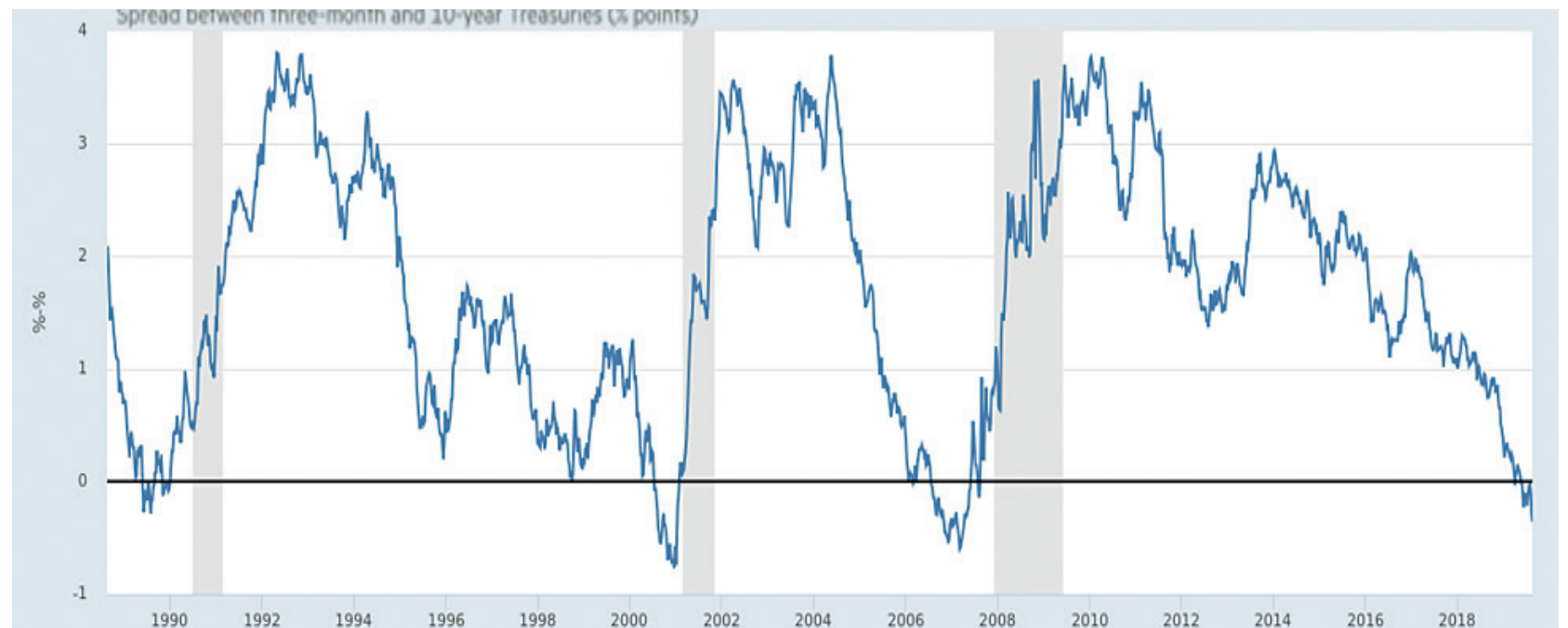
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What do you get when GDP, income, employment, manufacturing and retail sales experience a decline over six months? A recession—where growth is negative over two consecutive quarters. We all remember the flabbergasted investors, underwhelmed executives and even the distraught homeowners losing their livelihoods as a result of the so-called Great Recession of 2008. Yet, what if there had been an indicator that had correctly predicted it

“... what if there had been an indicator that had correctly predicted it about a year in advance”

about a year in advance. In fact, this powerful economic omen is called the yield curve and it actually inverted without fail prior to every recession since the 1950s, except once: August of 2019, as seen in Figure 1. The graph commonly known as the yield curve is actually the US Treasury yield curve which simply put, gives the yield of a bond plotted over varying maturities where yield is the fixed interest of that bond divided by its price. A bond is a loan to the government or



Negative spreads between the 3 and 10-year bonds are signalled by the graph dipping below the zero line . Conventional wisdom argues that this is a sign of investors having a pessimistic outlook for the short term //Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System

a large corporation which is conventionally thought of as one of the safest investments: the government, if short on cash, can simply increase taxation. Maturity is the length of time it will take for repayment to occur or the bond to ‘mature’. In a sense therefore, leaving your money locked away for longer i.e. higher maturity is a greater risk to you as an investor because there is a far greater uncertainty over a 10-year period as opposed to a two-year period say. Hence, investors traditionally expect higher rates on longer term bonds to compensate for the increased risk meaning the yield on higher maturity bonds tends to be greater which you will see below for the healthy years of 2011 and 2018.

On the other hand, when investors fear a gloomy outlook, they tend to position themselves with longer term safe assets such as government bonds rather than say the stock market reflecting a short-term pessimism. When the demand for such bonds is high enough, the yield on long term bonds will decrease below that

of short-term bonds which is what is known as an inversion seen Figure 2 for the years 2000 and 2007 where the gradient decreases below zero. Additionally, on Figure 1, displaying the difference between yields on 10-year versus three-month bonds you will see that it goes negative prior to each recession signifying that at those points, returns on 10-year bonds are lower than those of 3-month bonds.

However, few economists believe this sort of speculation itself guarantees a slowdown but

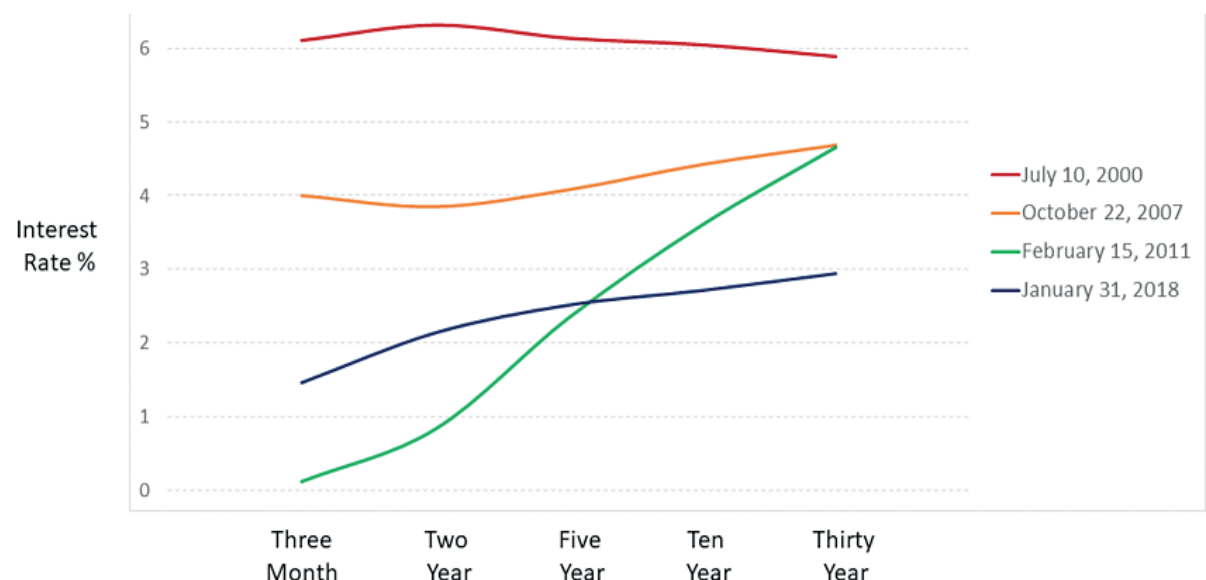
rather that a slowdown is caused by a culmination of central banks raising rates in the short term to keep the economy from overheating and investors fearing slower growth so moving to longer term positions.

The Federal Reserve of the United States as with any central bank is responsible for managing currency, monetary supply and importantly, interest rates which affect the cost of borrowing money. Generally, the FED can be extremely slow to react and alter rates especially to the yield curve

whether that’s caused by layers of bureaucracy or simply a skepticism of the indicator. However, the Federal Reserve unusually abandoned its policy to continue raising rates this year and instead cut them from 2.4% to 1.55% in line with what the yield curve was suggesting. Interestingly, the move weakened the omen-ness of the yield curve because it’s no longer an independent analysis of economic outlook but rather a piece of data the FED uses to influence policy.

Fortunately, the yield curve has since reversed

itself, but by no means does that sound the all clear; a simple explanation could be that the inversion was caused by a false alarm in the investment community with fears such as US-China relations and Brexit mounting. However, a more cautious perspective could be that we are yet on the road to the next recession. In fact, the last three economic recessions all completed a full reversal before collapsing a year or so later so the bullet may still be on the way.



Bond yields plotted against different maturities at 4 points in the past 20 years // Federal Reserve Economic Data

SCIENCE

science.felix@imperial.ac.uk

It's Alive! Make Way for The Frobots As Robotics Comes to Life

Scared of robots taking over their creators and destroying the world? With frog cells used to make the first living robots, your nightmare may be one step closer to reality

SCIENCE

Julia Dabrowska

Science Editor

Stem cells have exponentially risen in popularity for a variety of uses, predominantly in the field of regenerative medicine. Harnessed to treat diseases including macular degeneration, spinal cord injury, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and skin damage, amongst others, the incredible potential of these cells comes from their ability to self-renew and differentiate into specific cell types. While most types of adult cells, once damaged, cannot regenerate, or can do so only in fixed states and conditions, stem cells can give rise to many other

cell types and can promote the repair responses of diseased or injured tissue.

However, it now seems that stem cells have broader applications than traditional regenerative medicine. Last week, researchers at the University of Vermont and the Allen Discovery Center of Tufts University revealed their use of stem cells, taken from African clawed frogs, to create the first living robots. The paper, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, names these xenobots after the species they are made from (*Xenopus laevis*). While robots are usually made from metal or plastic for strength, resistance, and durability, these materials also carry drawbacks, including harmful ecological and

“(...) the ultimate plan is to scale them up as the first step in designing bespoke living organisms”

health-related side effects. Lacking these same drawbacks, living robots also possess multiple other benefits: in addition to self-renewal, and healing their own wounds, they also disintegrate upon completion of their programmed task. Much like any other natural organism, these xenobots

will die and decay at the end of their lifespan.

In the future, applications of these robots may include drug delivery, clearance of arterial plaques, location and digestion of toxic or radioactive materials, and even removal of microscopic-sized pollution from oceans.

“These are entirely new lifeforms. They have never before existed on Earth,” said Michael Levin, the director of the Allen Discovery Center at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, to the Guardian. “They are living, programmable organisms.”

The robots are largely designed by an algorithm, highlighting the prevalence and utility of computational techniques in biology. A computer program generates random 3D configurations of 500 to 1000 passive skin cells, and active, contracting heart cells, which are then tested virtually for properties such as their ability to move and propel forwards in a certain direction, aggregate around foreign objects, displace objects, or a combination of these.

The heart cells in this cell mixture act like miniature engines, driving the robots along for up to ten days before death, while the skin cells provide the formation of an organised structure. The most promising candidates are then shortlisted, and used to make more similar designs, with the process repeating for 100 generations, until only a selected few remain. These tiny robots, of <1mm, are then

finally constructed in the lab, using skin and heart cells from the embryos of the African clawed frogs.

Scientists’ ability to create novel lifeforms is currently limited to genetically modifying existing organisms, or performing tissue engineering in vitro. Although synthetic organoids and 3D bioengineered scaffolds are the most promising

“[the xenobots] are able to survive for days or weeks without any additional nutrients”

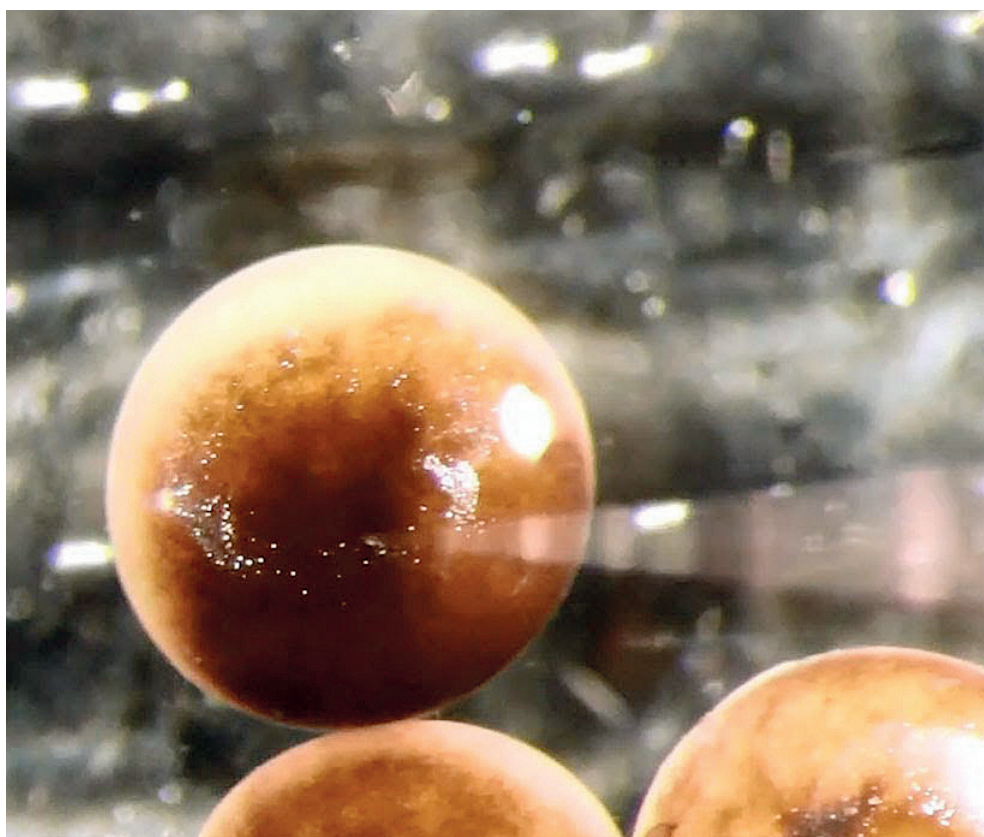
endeavours, it is difficult to predict the behavioural impacts of these arbitrary constructions. Therefore, the creation of these robots opens up new avenues: while the robots are currently very small, the ultimate plan is to scale them up and use them as the first step in designing bespoke living organisms. Moreover, at present, to keep the frog cells alive, the robots need to be placed in dishes of water, they are then able to survive in these conditions for days or weeks without additional nutrients. By building these xenobots out of mammalian cells instead, it would be possible for them to survive on dry land, and they could be built using blood vessels, nervous systems and sensory cells

(to form basic eyes), increasing their complexity and hence applicability.

As do all experiments relating to stem cells, this research raises ethical concerns relating to their use, but also the fact that future variants of the xenobots may have nervous systems, and thus be selected for cognitive capability. Questions about at which point moral consideration should be given to these beings also arise – should they be classified as living creatures, or machines? However, despite the initial thought one may have (or may have had following the subheading...), it is unlikely that these xenobots will pose a threat to humankind any time soon, as although they demonstrate novel functions, they are little more than simply an aggregates of cells, with no capabilities of reproduction or evolution.

In addition to the previously mentioned applications, the work also intends to utilise the xenobots in helping scientists understand human life. “The aim is to understand the software of life,” Levin told the Guardian. “If you think about birth defects, cancer, age-related diseases, all of these things could be solved if we knew how to make biological structures, to have ultimate control over growth and form.”

And, who knows? Maybe, despite the horror stories of world domination, rather than destroy, robots will save humankind after all.



Embryonic frog stem cells used to make the xenobots // NY Post

FOOD

food.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Where We Bout to Eat at? Patty & Bun is every student's

FOOD

Zahra Abiola
Food Editor

Patty & Bun, famous for their fun variety and creative collaborations, has made a name for itself in the London burger scene but still won't relent. They want to reach us students as well. And I must hand it to them, they've doing a great job of reeling me in. As a foodie, the problem with South Kensington is it attracts pricey restaurants that hope to take full advantage of the tourist clientele without any regard for the students that are lost in the sea of school children holding hands to cross the street. With a branch on Pembridge Road, a stone throw

from one of Imperial's Halls of Residence and a 20-minute walk from the South Kensington campus, they've got the location on lock.

Their burgers come wrapped up in their branded paper with a sticker to seal the whole thing up and remind you of what's to come. Perfect to pick up to take with you on the commute to campus. But, like Pandora's box, be careful

"Their use of pickling sends some of their burgers from good to drool worthy just by smell"

of where you open them up. From all the cheese, sauces and filling they get stuffed with, these burgers can look like an explosion! Rather fitting with the strong, hard-hitting flavours they employ to get their signature taste. It's a messy endeavour but at the end of it all you've conquered their beast and can use their packaging to put it all away like it never happened.

Their use of pickling really sends some of their burgers from good to drool worthy just by the smell when you peel off the sticker. We've sampled just about everything to really have a good insight into what this brand has to offer... for research purposes of course. The classic Ari Gold's pickled onions are bright and tangy with their smoky mayo rounding out the whole thing. If I was



You don't lose creaminess with this vegan milkshake// Tim Heightman

to recommend anything to someone who hasn't been before, it would be this.

Their "Smoky Robinson" really lives up to its name. This burger isn't just thicc, it's thiqué. We're talking stacks of crispy bacon on top of a thick cut of meat here. This is juxtaposed by the sweetness of the caramelised onions almost perfectly and the smoky sauce brings it all together for the perfect cheat meal.

"Hot Chic" was probably the biggest mess as the creamy coleslaw got just about everywhere during this trip. This one if the most different from all the other meat burgers. This is definitely the lightest of all the options, but you aren't getting away easy. It's still indulgent due to the fried buttermilk batter with the thick cream and a slight kick of tanginess from the pickled cucumber.

The brioche buns are perfect at preserving the burger from sogginess even after being left in my bag – wasn't my best call. They ask how you want your meat cooked, a tell that the meat is of good quality, but they have

missed the mark on our preference on multiple occasions out. If we inform them, they change it and correct but sometimes that more hassle than its worth to wait again.

This is all well and good but its no secret that London is breeding ground to inventive burger places. So why is this the one I've decreed friend to

"The brioche buns are perfect for preserving the burger from sogginess even after left being in my bag"

students? Well at the end of 2019, they introduced a new student deal. Now a meal of any burger, their rosemary fries and a drink sets you back £10. That's about the price of some of their burgers alone. This means you can alternate between all the burgers to

find the one that truly suits you for your perfect Patty & Bun meal.

Many student deals have the pesky clause stating they can only be used from Monday to Thursdays, famously the days when most students are busy being glued to a library cubicle, watching their coursework deadline inch closer and closer. But Patty & Bun understands. They don't want you to put your grades in jeopardy to get your fix. That why there is no time frame associated with their deal. As long as it's open, you can cop your meal at the student price.

The only thing is that the burger can't be the monthly special. This brand keeps things interesting by having a new burger added to its menu every now and again. Sometimes its collaborations with brands, charities or even other restaurants. Sometimes it's a burger that finds a permanent place on the menu if it gets enough buzz. Either way, it's a way of keep spark in the burger-student relationship once you've tried every burger. Full details of the deal can be found



A messy endeavour but worth it, the vegan patty doesn't compare// Zahra Abiola

FOOD

food.felix@imperial.ac.uk

dream, and this isn't even their final form

on Student Beans.

This month, they've gone Veganuary themed for the special. But this time they are not only coming with a new burger but also with fully developed vegan menu which is part of the student deal. Veganuary becomes a lot easier when all their burgers now also come in a meat-free form. But how does it compare to the originals? Because we tirelessly work for you guys to make sure you have the tea, we tried two of their burgers, sampling both of their new vegan patties. They come with the same packaging with a

"Any burger including their new vegan ones, a drink and their rosemary fries is £10 for students with Student Beans!"



The imitation chicken is the best new addition from the vegan menu// *Time Heightman*

green sticker to set themselves apart but don't get it twisted. Inside there is still the same The 'Hot Chic' Chicken Burger becomes vegan by the swap to the This Isn't Fried Chicken Patty. On first taste, there isn't a difference. The

texture of the burger was perfect, the outer coating a perfect substitute for the buttermilk. The faux chicken stood its ground, coming apart naturally and staying moist. If I wasn't the one ordering, I wouldn't have known it

wasn't real chicken.

The "Ari Gold" vegan burger doesn't come close to the Patty & Bun classic that it attempts to imitate. The plant-based patty, which is the same

"If 'Hot Chic' is Mystique then the vegan chicken nuggets are Loki"

one that all the other Vegan version come with expect the 'Hot Chic' and The Whoopi Goldburger, left me lacking when the memory of the juicier, thicker meat version was still fresh in my mind. All the other parts of it were still and bright and tasty as ever but the vegan cheese let me down. It didn't melt

properly and ended up tasting slimy.

If "Hot Chic" is Mystique then the vegan chicken nuggets are Loki because these were also indiscernible from their animal counterpart. It comes with vegan mayo and if you haven't been able to tell already Patty & Bun never does just mayo. The vegan variety was given a new lease of life with the addition of their blend of spices. We also sampled the vegan Biscoff milkshake and it was a creamy and sweet. Another great imitation.

To the vegans of Imperial, I'm sure you are tired of the exploitation of veganism for progressive, woke points by companies that hop on the trend every January without nuanced, structural changes to make their menus accessible to a meat-less diet. Or whatever my vegan friend said when I used milk in my tea. Well, I can tell you

that Patty & Bun is not one of these companies. You don't have to rush to try some good vegan food before the month is over because this is becoming the vegan versions are staying on the menu full time.

Their branches are rather small so during peak times, it can be difficult to get yourself a space. The staff all seem to have a chill vibe around them which fits the brand perfectly. The sounds of Lo-fi and RnB wafting through the restaurant and the low lighting gives the ambiance an intimate feel.

Patty & Bun still has more up its sleeve from reopenings to giveaways and to new location specific deals. They have their monthly deals lined up for some great things this year so be sure to be on the lookout.



Packed really pretty but a ticking time bomb of flavour// *Tim Heightman*



BETTER INGREDIENTS.
BETTER PIZZA.

STUDENT

ALERT



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CONSTITUENT UNION

felix@imperial.ac.uk



Is the Union Listening?

RCSU

Aishwarya Chidambaram

RCSU Sponsorship Officer

In these rapidly-changing times of Imperial College Union, big strides are being made, such as the negotiations with College of halls rent and the introduction of the support networks for Liberation and Community Officers to expand their impact. New changes are being brought about by the Officer Trustees to try out new things and see how they can have their impact, but as I, and many of the senior volunteers, have seen, some of these developments go awry.

We all witnessed the rainy Tuesday in October that saw all efforts made towards creating a welcoming freshers fair literally wash away. Although the weather was partly to blame here, it did not come without ample warning giving the Union time to

react, plan and reach out to CSPs. Although the Union admitted defeat in this case, and did aim to make it up to the CSPs, was the attempt at the Welcome Back Fair enough to make up for the catastrophic effect of their prior actions?

At Union Council this week, I was pleasantly surprised at Tom's (DPCS) recent acknowledgement of the fact that student-led initiatives have been more successful than if they were done by the Union. Although speaking here regarding the matter of ACC and Arts nights at the union, Tom has also mentioned this in the context of student involvement regarding updating Union systems. This would be a major step forward in ensuring that students are at the heart of the Union's decisions that effect student volunteers. An example of which I have personally witnessed regarding sponsorship contracts.

Many of you are likely

aware that concerns have been raised over the way that sponsorship contracts are signed by the DPFS. The current system involves the DPFS checking through the multiple pages of

"The sponsorship process is laborious for CSPs, and often sponsors grow impatient"

every single contract, that's 307 contracts so far but hopefully 308 if my latest contract gets read! Despite many of the clauses of contracts not varying between clubs or sponsors, the DPFS still has to check these to ensure no errors have been made since

the contracts are legally binding documents. And even after the contracts have been signed, there's another week to get the invoice for your sponsor as the Finance team has to approve it once again.

As you can see this isn't the most efficient path for a document to be processed as it essentially has to go through the union twice. It also seems like a mismanagement of the DPFS's valuable time, taking away from their other, arguably more important responsibilities, such as returning food to the Union! Moreover, having gone through this 13 times myself, I can say from experience that the sponsorship process is incredibly laborious and time consuming for CSPs and often sponsors grow impatient. (Just imagine what DoCSoc go through, doing this over 50 times!)

With growing concerns raised by multiple CSPs, particularly DepSocs, Hilliam (CGCU Treasurer) and I took it upon

ourselves to do something about it. After sitting down for less than 5 minutes, we already had a pretty decent idea of how to implement a "Sponsorship Contract builder" on eActivities.

Our proposition would allow CSPs to input their variables, such as sponsor name, fee and services provided and then receive a finished, signed, contract. From here the contract can be signed by the CSP and sponsor then uploaded to have an invoice generated, like how POs work. This system would also allow for management group checks, reducing the number of contracts reaching the DPFS that have errors. All in all we created this to save ourselves and also the DPFS a lot of time!

Whilst we were extremely grateful that the Officer Trustees have been incredibly on board with our idea, we are struggling to see the vision of implementation of the idea.

Hilliam and I were soon told the matter was being taken care of and haven't been consulted since. This is only just one case, but as it is student volunteers like ourselves who we are thinking about the most, it makes us lose confidence when the Union decides to handle actions by itself and we have to entrust that these ideas aren't poorly executed. As student volunteers we have recently been promised many things. This includes experienced student volunteers delivering sessions at officer academy and a system that would allow students to directly contribute to improvements of the Union's systems.

Although these ideas sound like a step forward in improving the Union's relationship with its student volunteers, after recent miscommunications and false promises, we are yet to see if they will be successful or if the Union will continue to dangle the carrot in front of us.



RSMU

Chris Carter

RSMU President

In just under a month, 150 Royal Miners will be heading down to Cornwall to continue

Bottle Match Approaches!

a much-loved RSMU tradition, older than Imperial College itself. This is, of course, the Bottle Match, which brings the fierce rivalry between the Royal School of Mines and the University of Exeter's Camborne School of Mines to a weekend

of sporting events and revelry.

The 118th annual Bottle Match will take place between the 21st and 23rd February and is sure to be a highlight of the year for many of our members. Bottle Match is the world's second longest running rugby varsity but has expanded in scope since its humble beginnings in 1902.

This year, eight teams compete in seven sports; Tennis, Squash, Hockey (Men's and Women's), Netball, Lacrosse, Football and Rugby. Each match is intense, with players giving it their all

and spectators cheering and chanting on the side lines. It really is worth the hype; but be sure to bring lots of warm clothes (like our RSM Bobble Hats and Scarves) to keep warm.

Each team will compete for an individual prize (either an actual trophy, or just bragging rights), with the rugby team competing for the titular Bottle, a 3-foot-tall tin beer bottle that was 'liberated' from a delivery lorry by a group of students in 1926. Since then, it has undergone various transformations, first being emblazoned with the emblems of the RSM and the CSM,

then being damaged and welded repeatedly (it could do with a fix-up now, so if any of our friends over at the CGCU know how to weld, your help would be appreciated!)

Finally, as is tradition, every year we design a new Bottle Match t-shirt. If you have any creative designs or ideas, send them over to me at rsmpres@ic.ac.uk or Annie Mao, the RSMU Vice President (Clubs and Societies) at rsm-vpcs@ic.ac.uk; you might even get a discount on your ticket! Tickets include return travel from the RSM to Cornwall, 2

nights' accommodation, entry into the celebration at the FXU, a seat at Players Dinner (players only) and travel to Sailors, for the after-party.

So, if you're on the fence about coming – I really would recommend it! Bottle Match is always a great experience for players and spectators alike and is a great way to get involved with the RSMU.

Bottle Match 2020 tickets will be available for players and spectators to purchase from 12pm-2pm on Friday 24th February in RSM G35, for £65



The Bottle Match rages fierce // RSMU

Union Page

Emerging Leaders

Essential skills
for 21st century leadership

Sign up for free skills workshops

Are you interested in developing yourself beyond your degree? Sign up for one of our Emerging Leaders workshops. Through online learning and workshops, you can develop your leadership skills and gain official recognition of your achievements. Our upcoming workshops include:

Resolving Conflict

Tuesday 28 January, 17:30-19:30, MR4 - Beit Building

Developing Emotional Intelligence

Wednesday 29 January, 13:30-15:30, MR3 - Beit Building

Creating Social Change

Tuesday 4 February, 17:30-19:30, MR4 - Beit Building

Register for a workshop at imperialcollegeunion.org/el-workshops



Early Bird Summer Ball tickets on sale now

Early Bird tickets are now on sale for Summer Ball 2020: Enchanted Forest! Join us on Saturday 20 June for the biggest event of the year, as we transform the South Kensington campus into an enchanted funfair. This year the Summer Ball is being completely built and shaped by students.

Your ticket will include all of the usual festivities including rides, fireworks, and live entertainment, but this year you will also receive a main meal and dessert, AND a Prosecco reception upon arrival!

Our star headliner will be announced soon so stayed tuned. Ball Only tickets are £50.00, Ball + After party tickets are £57.50 (Limited Early Bird tickets available!)

Get your Early Bird tickets at imperialcollegeunion.org/summerball.



Battle of the Bands

Witness the best of Imperial College bands as they compete for audience votes in the pursuit of being crowned champion. The winner will receive £500, plus a spot on the Summer Ball line up!

Check out the dates for each event below and sign up now to compete at imperialcollegeunion.org/battle-bands.

Event Dates:

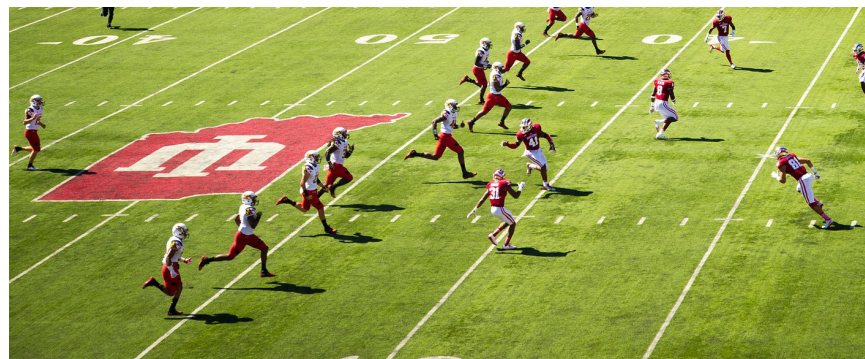
Heat 1 – Thursday 6 February, 19:30-23:00, Reynolds

Heat 2 – Friday 7 February, 19:30-23:00, Reynolds

Heat 3 - Thursday 20 February, 19:30-23:00, Reynolds

Heat 4 – Friday 21 February, 19:30-23:00, Reynolds

Final – Thursday 12 March, 19:30-23:00, Metric



Superbowl Sunday

Are you ready for the biggest event in the American sporting calendar? Who will win the championship - the Kansas City Chiefs or San Francisco 49ers?

Once again the Imperial Immortals will be hosting a massive party at the Union. With multiple big screens, extra seating, drinks deals and food served until late.

This is the perfect place to come watch the big game with your friends.

Buy your tickets at imperialcollegeunion.org/super-bowl.

FiveSixEight.
THE UNION BAR metric

Beit Me I'm Famous

24 January 2020

Beit Bars

imperial
college
union

24 January, Friday

Beit Me I'm Famous
Metric | 20:00 - 02:00

Karaoke
h-bar | 19:30-23:00

28 January, Tuesday

Super Quiz
FiveSixEight | 20:00-22:00

Games Night
h-bar | 19:30-23:00

29 January, Wednesday

ACC Wednesday
Beit Bars | 19:00 - 02:00

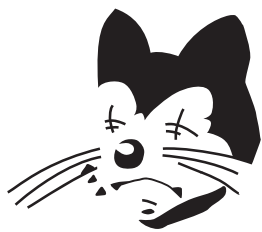
30 January, Thursday

Pub Quiz
h-bar | 19:30 - 21:30

31 January, Friday

Thank Goodness It's Friday
Metric | 21:00 - 02:00

[f](#) beitbars [f](#) hbarpub [f](#) reynoldsbarcx



Hangman



I will give you a 1% equity in my new fake eyelash company in exchange for 3 million pounds // Super Fresh Meme

Imperial startup flounders in search for new investment

HANGMAN

Negafelix
Editor-in-Chief

Imperial alumni Ponathan Jeters and Wan Dalkwer returned to Imperial this week to talk about their entrepreneurial success, launch their new project and to ask the students for money to help them avoid bankruptcy.

The talk was held in the Huxley, familiar ground to the two former Computer science

students. “All through our degrees the message that we were told was that the way to make money was to make an app. But we all know the feeling of wanting an app that lets you hire a dog groomer and filter for hand size, the amount of variety can be intimidating. That is why today we are launching Appdr, the app that helps you find apps and are inviting all of you to please invest quickly.”

The audience’s response was positive with many leaping to their feet and cheering at the aplomb of the graduates in front of them. Others, however, looked less pleased and three groups of students

ran out of the room shouting into mobile phones. Investigations later found that all three groups have launched legal proceedings against Jeters and Dalker and each other for ‘stealing our idea’.

The Imperial has a proud history of startups with notable companies such as Geegle and Nile all claiming their origins in the airless computer labs of Huxley. Vice Provost Zisabelle Hang (Racketeering) was also at the talk and encouraged students to follow the example set by the Appdr founders. “All companies founded at Imperial have to give us a 50% stake. We will get our pound of flesh.” she chuckled cheekily.

While the conditions might not appeal to all

“Imperial has a proud history of startups with notable companies such as Geegle and Nile all claiming their origins in ... Huxley”

there has not stopped students dreaming about starting their own

companies and being their own bosses. The Entrepreneurial society is one of the most active at Imperial, running workshops including ‘Lying to venture capitalists - why you should get on this gravy train’ and ‘The finer points of bankruptcy law - You don’t have to flee to Thailand’

In fact the startup scene has been so vibrant that it has begun to generate its own ecosystem. Hoodiedr the app that helps you design startup hoodies and Funkdr the app that helps you create an authentic startup atmosphere by sending you boxes of curated, handpicked, artisan sweat aerosols each month via a subscription service have

been two winners.

The faculty heads have been relaxed about the surge in amount of students dropping out to go to live in their Mum’s basement.

“When they come back as mature students, we can charge them again. In a lot of ways this is pro cake pro eating it situation.” said a representative of the Mechanical Engineering department.

The one course not suffering from student drop outs has been DesEng but this hasn’t worried them.

“We don’t have any skills to start a company” one said. “But I am convinced that the moment I leave there will be loads of job offers. Tons. I am sure.”

HANGMAN

negafelix@imperial.ac.uk

Modern slavery in the heart of tranquil West London suburb!!

HANGMAN

Negafelix
Editor-in-Chief

Police raided a house in Fulham, West London late last night as part of an ongoing operation against modern slavery gangs. They freed several migrant workers who had been kept in subhuman conditions and forced to work for nothing under threat of being reported to UK Border Force.

Local residents expressed surprise at waking

up inside a police cordon. "It looked like a completely ordinary house. We did hear shouting and banging but we thought they were just IC students like us," said Cark Momer.

Slavery is a major problem in London with hundreds of nail bars and massage parlours running as money laundering operations using a smuggled workforce to limit the chance of being discovered.

Police have declared that the house had potentially been used to keep migrant workers trapped for up to 20 years. Detectives have wondered how

so long went by without the alarm being raised. Feb Senton, local resident "Well they did hang a banner out of the window but it just had Chinese characters on it. Obviously I can't read Chinese but they matched the ones on the 'Live, Laugh, Love' tattoo I got around here last month*. I just figured they were all really chill people"

Police confirm that they are following up leads and will inform the media of any further advances in the case and ask the public to be extra vigilant of any hints of suspicious activity.



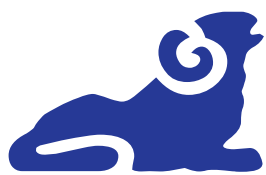
Fulham. Full of crooks and scoundrels// Geograph

Editor's note:

The banner hung from

the window has been found to have said 'Please help me. I am here against

my will'. Senton has not responded to requests for comment.



ARIES

This week, after month of negotiation, your girlfriend finally gives you access to the non-core parts of her body.



TAURUS

This week you buy WeightWatchers products in bulk.
-
You've missed the point.



GEMINI

This week your mayonaise 'hobby' moves into the realm of a problem.



CANCER

This week you find out that testicles have tastebuds and can detect both sweet and umami. Do with that what you will.



LEO

This week the pigeons in SAF are really taking the piss.
-
One of them followed you into the lecture hall and started taking notes.



VIRGO

This week you go on a lad's holiday to China. 12 hours in and you're stamping on Ollie's fingers as he tries to climb into the already over laden fishing boat.



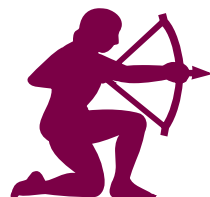
LIBRA

This week you realise that it wasn't a dream.
-
You did fail your exam. You did pee your pants. Obama was there.



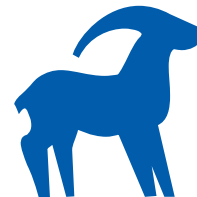
SCORPIO

This week the banging on the walls of your halls room has been going on a long time.
-
That is a lot of shelves to be putting up!



SAGITTARIUS

This week you think the horoscopes are about you.
-
They're not.



CAPRICORN

This week you get kicked out of your flat by your flatmates. Well, technically your boyfriend's flat and they weren't technically your flatmates and you weren't technically paying rent. But you thought you had an understanding!



AQUARIUS

This week your mind is telling you no.

But your personal tutor is telling you that it's probably best for everyone if you reconsider your place at university.

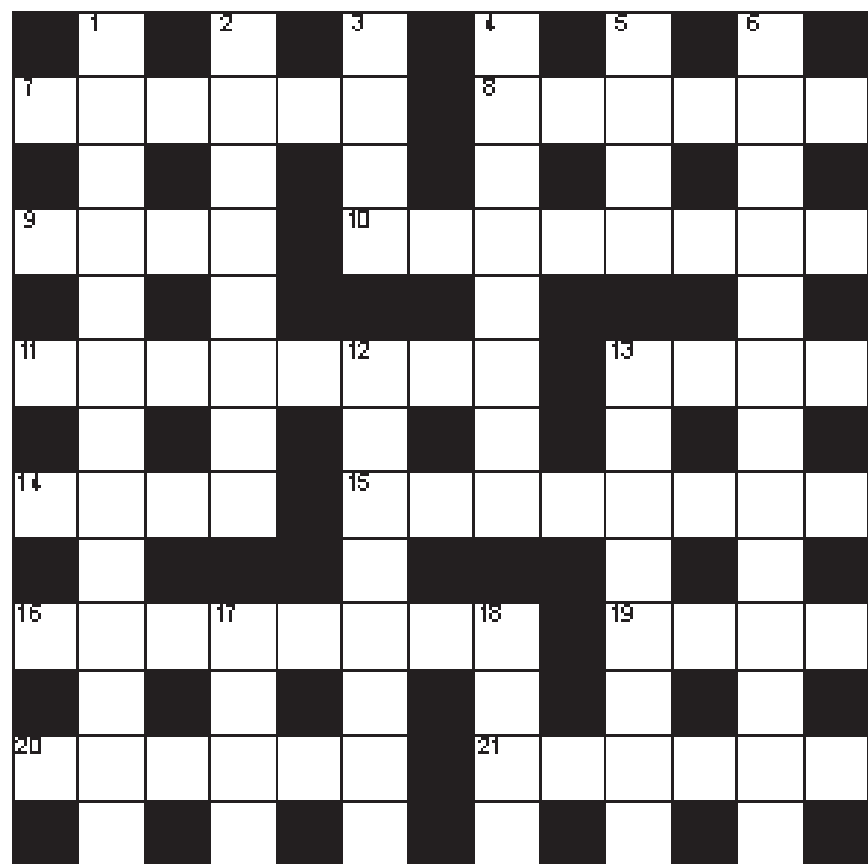


PISCES

This week you use a hair dryer for the first time as laugh.
-
You now have 5 different types of brush for cleaning your toenails and aren't sure where it went wrong

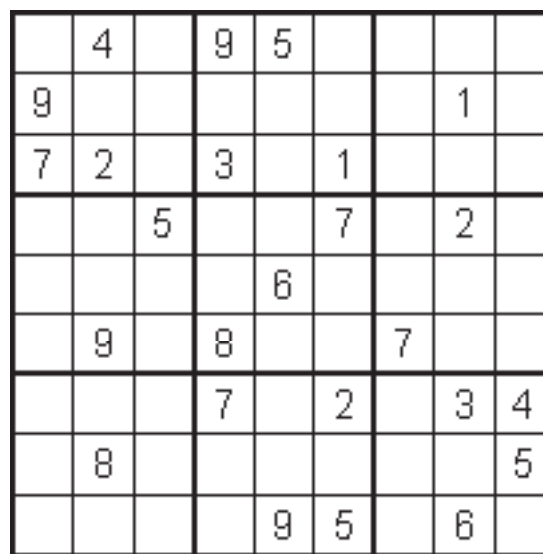
PUZZLES

fsudoku@imperial.ac.uk



SUDOKU

Fill all the boxes with a number between 1 and 9. A number can only appear once in a row/column, and only once in each sub-box.



FUCWIT

1	O1G	26
1	Lochy Monsters	26
1	RIP Pat	26
2	F***URhys	25
3	StandWithHK_Fight4Freedom	24
4	DQ	23

Points available

Crossword	5
Sudoku	4
Trivia	3
Cryptogram	2
Shikaku	2
Minesweeper	2
Gogen	2

Total **20**

Send your solutions to fsudoku@imperial.ac.uk before Wednesday noon to take part in the leaderboard!

If you'd like to contribute or get involved, drop us an email at fsudoku@imperial.ac.uk!

Across

- 7. Tooth layer (6)
- 8. Anointed someone before death (6)
- 9. Obscene language or content (4)
- 10. Having doubts (4,4)
- 11. Feeling blissful happiness (8)
- 13. Amazon product line (4)
- 14. Got a high 1st (4)
- 15. Between tenor and bass (8)
- 16. Infamous Roman emperor (8)
- 19. "Bring Sally Up" musician (4)
- 20. Scowl (6)
- 21. Popular programming language (6)

Down

- 1. What Trump turns out not to be (13)
- 2. Mimicked (8)
- 3. First name of American actor Baldwin (4)
- 4. Mode of transport found in 18-Down (8)
- 5. Peasant tied to his lord's estate (4)
- 6. Archaic Google (9,4)
- 12. The most romantic month of the year (8)
- 13. "I reckon it's about 3 or 4 of them" (8)
- 17. US State with an important caucus coming up (4)
- 18. Popular winter destination (4)

Trivia

QuizSoc's head writer has provided the following six literature-themed questions...

- 1. Suzanne Collins wrote which Young Adult literary trilogy?
- 2. Acton, Currer and Ellis Bell were the principle pen names of which literary siblings?
- 3. What is the name of Hamlet's mother in Shakespeare's play?
- 4. Which trilogy by Philip Pullman has a title taken from Milton's Paradise Lost?
- 5. Philip Marlowe is the detective in the major novels of which author?
- 6. What is the title of the Tennyson poem that begins "Half a league, half a league/ Half a league onward/ All in the valley of death/ Rode the Six Hundred"?

CRYPTOGRAM

The letters of the alphabet have been scrambled and numbered 0 to 25! A movie quote has been hidden for you to decode. A grid has been provided to help you out!

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25

_____ , _____ : _____ ?
 18 13 14 15 2 23 13 22 22 13 19 9 3 18 13 14 25 9 2 16 8 13 5 2 12 14 2 9 22 20 13 5 24 13 20 8 2 2 16 16 14 0 3 18

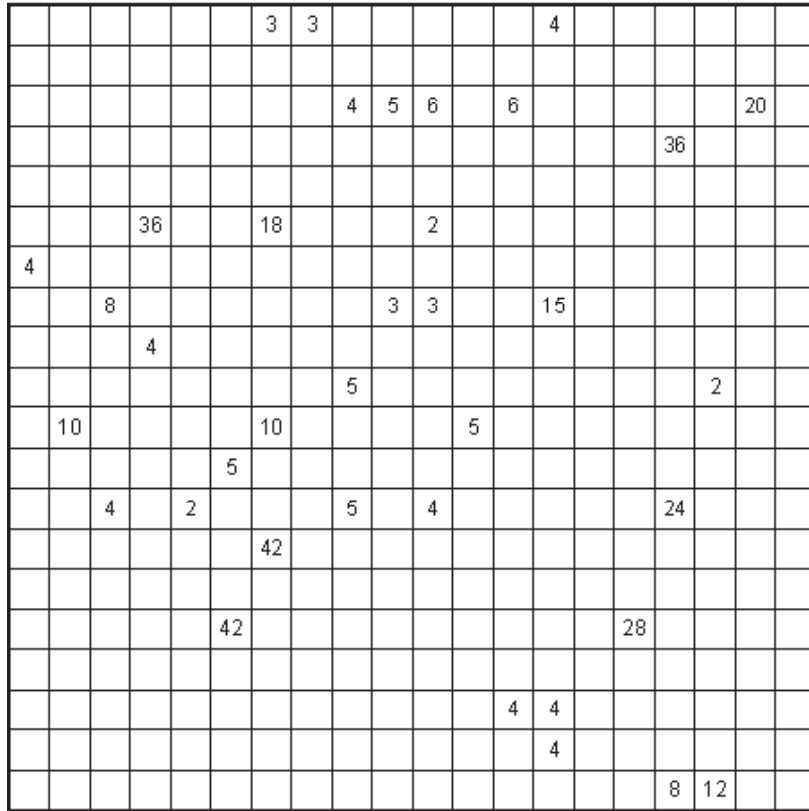
_____ , _____ ?
 21 2 16 16 24 13 18 13 14 6 14 5 3

PUZZLES

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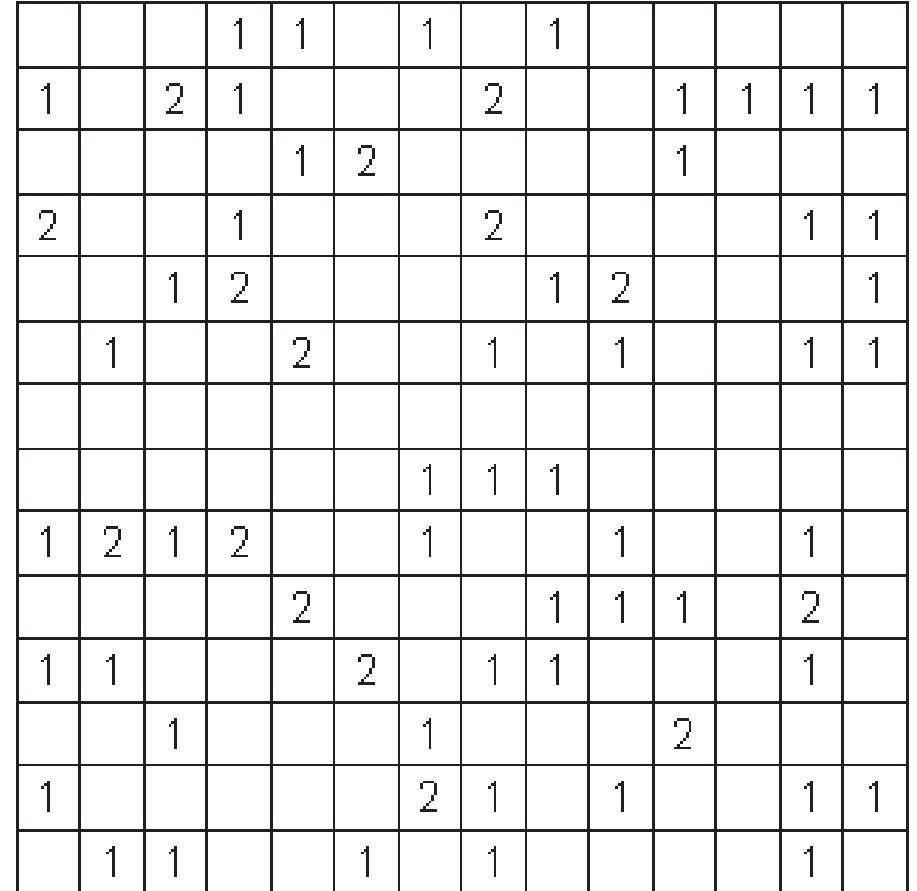
SHIKAKU

Divide up the square into smaller rectangles such that each rectangle has one number exactly, and that number is the area of the rectangle.

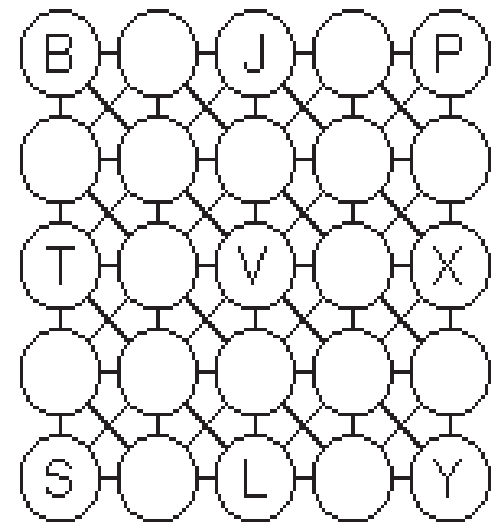
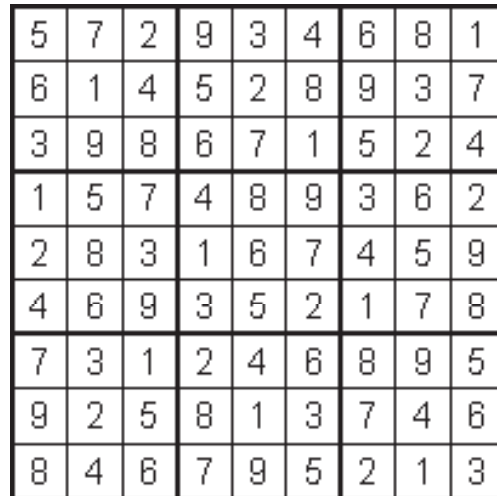


MINESWEEPER

The number in a cell represents the number of mines adjacent to that square (up/down, left/right, diagonal). Find and mark all of the mines to clear the board.



Last week's solutions



Cryptogram

"If you don't know where you want to go, then it doesn't matter which path you take."
-- The Cheshire Cat

Hello puzzlers!

Two weeks into term means 2 pages of puzzles (please don't expect 3 pages in the next issue, it isn't happening), and we're just that bit closer to doom.

Shout out to craswords.com (as always) for helping us produce Sudoku, Shikaku and Minesweeper, and to Quiz Society for their long awaited trivia. They will be going back to a fortnightly schedule, so keep an eye out!

Gogen, too, makes a return - I've made it a bit tricky, so have fun. Try creating some of your own and submitting!

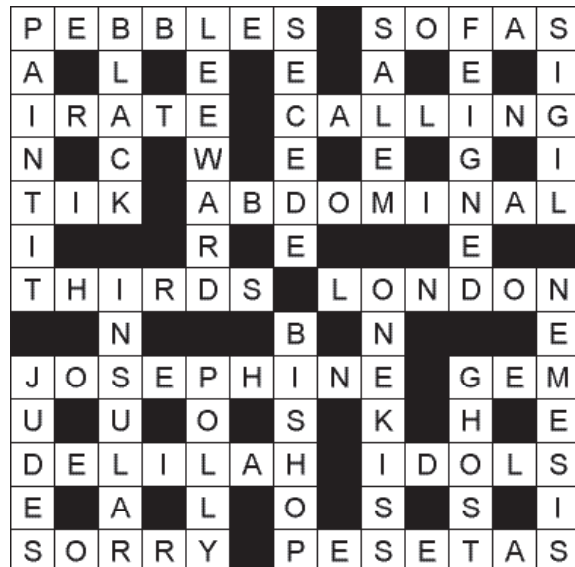
Gogen

Fill in the grid with letters A-Y such that the words below can be made by connecting letters next to, above, or diagonal to each other.

Clues:

- BOTCH
- CLANK
- FOB
- INKY
- JIVE
- KNAVE
- MINX

- MOVING
- NAG
- PEND
- SQUANDER
- TOUCAN
- WANE



FEELIX

FRIDAY DEC. 9th.

