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As Europe emerges from the shadows of recent crises, the spotlight turns to its upcoming newly elected leadership. Amidst evolving challenges such as emerging threats, an ageing population, workforce and drug shortages, and the relentless pace of technological advancement, the continent stands at a crossroads.

Set for November 19-20 in Brussels, POLITICO Health Care Summit's ninth edition takes place at a critical juncture as a new EU leadership takes office, seeking to unravel the complexities of Europe's multi-faceted health care crisis. In this context, the summit probes a pivotal question: what does the future hold for Europe's Health Union under a new EU leadership? This two-day event will dissect key topics ranging from the new direction of the EU Health Union, access and competitiveness in health care, preparedness and prevention strategies for the post-COVID era, and the cutting-edge intersection of innovation and digital health.

PRESENTING PARTNERS



NETWORKING PARTNER





Prisoner

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

would try to forget where he was, held with hundreds of prisoners and dissidents in the Iranian capital, in its notorious Evin jail.

"When I was completely exhausted, I would just lie down and kind of pant, and I would put a wet towel on my face, close my eyes and just escape mentally," Floderus said in an interview revealing harrowing new details of his over two-year imprisonment.

"I would spend an hour just being somewhere else. It was the best time of day."

Iran has employed the strategy of hostage diplomacy since the 1979 Islamic revolution, when it held more than 50 hostages from the American Embassy in Tehran for more than 400 days while demanding the Shah of Iran's return from the United States. When Floderus emerged from solitary confinement, his fellow prisoners revealed to him why he had been detained.

"When I told the other prisoners there about what happened to me, they immediately told me: 'Oh, but you're a hostage. Have you never heard about this guy called Hamid Nouri in Sweden?'"

Floderus, a Swedish national, was arrested and charged with espionage during a trip to see friends in Tehran. He suddenly found his fate intertwined with that of Nouri, an Iranian judiciary official.

The Iranian was detained in Sweden while on vacation and sentenced to life in prison for the mass execution of Iranian political prisoners in the 1980s.

Floderus was facing a possible death sentence, according to Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson.

"If it wasn't me, it would have been

another Swedish citizen put in my place," Floderus said.

'BETWEEN HOPE AND DESPAIR'

Floderus drew succor from his anthology of Sufi poetry – once prison guards returned it to him months into his detention.

"It's all about finding meaning or even joy in one's suffering," he said.

For the first stretch of his imprisonment, Floderus was convinced there had been some sort of mix-up and he would be back on the next plane to Brussels. Soon he found out that his previous travel to Iran as an EU official for projects related to Afghan refugees were classified as spying by his interrogators.

"It all [supposedly] showed that my real intention – the EU's real intention and my intention – was to topple the establishment," he said.

His hope of being released faded. "Days and days and days started passing without any news, without any human contact," he said. "I saw myself as spending sort of an indefinite period of time [there], five, 10, 15, 20 years, who knows? Hope just went out like a candle."

Allowed only three twenty-minute stints outside each week, Floderus organized his life in his cell. When out of solitary confinement (Floderus spent a total of eight months alone), he became the undisputed boss of his cell. Fluent in Farsi, he set co-living rules to keep the cramped space clean, taught English and fashioned chess sets and playing cards out of cardboard. He filled his time by making decks of cards, playing poker sometimes ("That's super illegal, according to Islamic law," he added.) On Iranian State TV, Floderus watched the film "Papillon" about a wrongfully convicted man who escapes his imprisonment.

For two weeks he shared his cell with the Belgian aid worker Olivier Vandecasteele until they were split up into separate cells for reasons un-

known to Floderus. "I think I spent months, half a year maybe more, between hope and despair, sort of as a pendulum," he said. "I just tried to break out of that really destructive and horrible pattern and tried to reach a place of just acceptance, some people call it radical acceptance, acceptance of the here and now."

After 10 months, prison officials allowed him to make a three-minute call to his partner of four years – now fiancé – Johnathan von Fürstenmühl, 31. Despite their inability to speak regularly or for more than a handful of minutes, a similar realization was also dawning on von Fürstenmühl back in Brussels, who was reading about other cases of Swedish nationals held hostage abroad.

Iranian officials who arrested Floderus knew he had a boyfriend because they had looked through his phone, Floderus said. Still, the Swede – whose hundreds of cellmates included dissidents, killers and members of Islamist terror group, ISIS – kept his sexuality secret.

FREEDOM PARTY

The only point of regular contact with the outside world Floderus had was with a consul from the Swedish embassy. Once, that person passed on a copy of Leo Tolstoy's "War and Peace" via Floderus' interrogator.

He read it three times.

"It was thanks to Tolstoy that I can look at what's going on, what's happening to me, in a different light. I don't have to look at it as just bad. I can think of it as a challenge to be overcome and as an opportunity to grow," he said.

In Brussels, with no contact from his partner for months, von Fürstenmühl chafed against a request from the Swedish government not to go public about Floderus' detention. Silent diplomacy had its limits, he told Swedish ministers and Johan's family in Sweden on more than half a dozen trips to Stockholm.

"I think I spent months, half a year maybe more, between hope and despair, sort of as a pendulum. I just tried to break out of that really destructive and horrible pattern and tried to reach a place of just acceptance."

JOHAN FLODERUS

TOM SAMUELSSON
VIA AFP/GETTY
IMAGES

It pained von Fürstenmühl to tell friends who inquired about Johan's mysterious disappearance that he was merely back home in Sweden dealing with a "family emergency."

Then – after more than 500 days of imprisonment – the New York Times broke the story about his imprisonment in September 2023.

"It gave me a lot of strength," said Floderus, describing seeing his face appear on Iranian state TV in his cell.

The public campaign led by von Fürstenmühl exploded into life, with posters going up around Brussels and international coverage, including by POLITICO.

Then one day in mid-June, von Fürstenmühl's phone rang. The call was from a Swedish government official who told him to get on the next flight to Stockholm to meet Floderus.

The experience has changed Floderus, who is now a more spiritual person, by his own account.

He was released in exchange for Nouri in a prisoner swap brokered by the Swedish government in June. Dual Iranian-Swedish citizen Saeed Azizi, who Sweden described as having been arrested on "equally false grounds," was also released under the deal.

Since his return to Brussels, Floderus has held a joyous "freedom party" for friends from around the world, cut alcohol from his diet and limited the amount of news and social media he consumes. He will return to work at the European Commission's department for development in January, after six months of medical leave, in which he has received mental health counseling.

"My head was not connected to my body," von Fürstenmühl said, recalling the anxious wait at a Swedish airport, with Floderus' parents and two older sisters.

Then Floderus was on one knee on the airport tarmac proposing to him.

"I'm the happiest man alive," Floderus says, voice cracking.

G7'S UKRAINE LOAN IS AT RISK

What began as a multilateral statement of support has morphed into a fragmented and precarious arrangement, plagued by internal political and legal wrangling.

BY ARMIN STEINBACH

IN JUNE 2024, THE G7 PLEDGED A \$50 billion loan to Ukraine – a promise they hoped would signal Western unity and display strength. But just a few months later, this commitment risks falling apart.

What began as a multilateral statement of support for the beleaguered nation has now morphed into a fragmented and precarious arrangement, plagued by internal political and legal wrangling. And the loan itself – initially designed to be risk-free for G7 lenders – is facing a very real risk of failure unless urgent action is taken.

The original plan, born at the G7 summit in Puglia, Italy, hinged on mutual concessions from both of its major partners. The EU would work to make the loan “Trump-proof,” bypassing Congress, while the U.S. reluctantly agreed to respect the bloc’s concerns regarding international law by foregoing the outright confiscation of Russian assets. Instead, the loan would be repaid with windfall profits from frozen Russian Central Bank funds – a clever but fragile solution.

Now, however, the cracks in this arrangement are becoming glaringly obvious.

The biggest problem is the EU’s six-month sanctions renewal cycle – a technical but critical sticking point. Unanimity among EU members is required to renew sanctions, meaning that each vote brings with it the possibility of a break in sanctions and, consequently, a break in the revenue stream supposed to fund Ukraine’s repayment.

This uncertainty has sparked concerns within the White House’s Office of Management and Budget, which fears the unreliable flow of windfall earnings could create budgetary risks that Congress would never approve.

Of course, it’s hard to ignore the irony here. On one hand, the U.S. asks the EU to sidestep international law and seize Russian assets. On the other, it balks at the idea of taking any domestic legal risks, drawing a line at the EU’s own sanction renewal process. This double standard is emblematic of the broader struggles within the G7 as well: European indecisiveness brushing up against America’s legal rigidity, with Ukraine caught in the middle.

However, the solution to this deadlock could be simple – if the political will existed. The EU could shift from its six-month renewal process to a more robust system, tying sanctions to Russia’s compliance with international law. This would make lifting sanctions conditional on Moscow’s payment



of war damages, rather than calling for a vote every six months to keep them in place, and a revised mechanism would require a unanimous vote to end them.

Such a move would also align with rulings from the Court of Justice of the European Union, which has never demanded a rigid six-month review cycle, as long

as the character of sanctions are “temporary precautionary measures.” Yet, political inertia and legal formalities continue to block this path forward. And Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has already made it clear he would veto a change to extend the renewal time frame.

Meanwhile, time is running out.

And while the U.S. contribution to the G7 loan remains in limbo, the EU’s still scrambling to finalize its own portion of the loan.

Pushing forward unilaterally, the European Commission has proposed a \$40 billion bilateral loan to Ukraine – made possible through the exceptional budgetary headroom that allows the EU to borrow funds. But while this mysterious and opaque tool has proven useful in past crises, it’s now coming under scrutiny. There’s currently no clear public accounting of exactly how much headroom remains, and the borrowing for Ukraine must be completed by the end of the year.

Moreover, the terms of the EU’s loan are rather troubling. Unlike the U.S., Canada and Japan – which are going to offer Ukraine non-recourse loans that absolve Kyiv of repayment if windfall profits from Russian assets dry up – the EU’s loan is a recourse loan.

This means that if the Russian profits fall short, Ukraine will be liable for the \$40 billion – an unbearable burden for an economy already crippled by war.

Worse, this could trigger debt sustainability concerns with the International Monetary Fund, potentially cutting off Ukraine’s access to vital capital.

Interestingly, this disparity between approaches is reversed when it comes to the magnitude of the loan itself. While the U.S. is being cautious about protecting its national budget from risk, the EU – despite its more stringent repayment terms – seems ready to step up and shoulder a larger portion of the G7 pledge. If the U.S. fails to come through with its share, the bloc stands prepared to cover \$40 billion of the \$50 billion total, while the remaining \$10 billion would be supplied by other G7 partners.

But this seemingly deep-pocketed generosity ultimately masks a growing fragmentation in the West’s support for Ukraine, with each G7 nation retreating into its own legal and political concerns. The G7’s loan was supposed to be a symbol of Western unity. But that unity – at least on the financial front – is fraying. And what remains instead is a piecemeal approach to supporting Ukraine, where the original vision of a cohesive, risk-free loan has been lost in a political quagmire and legal intricacies.

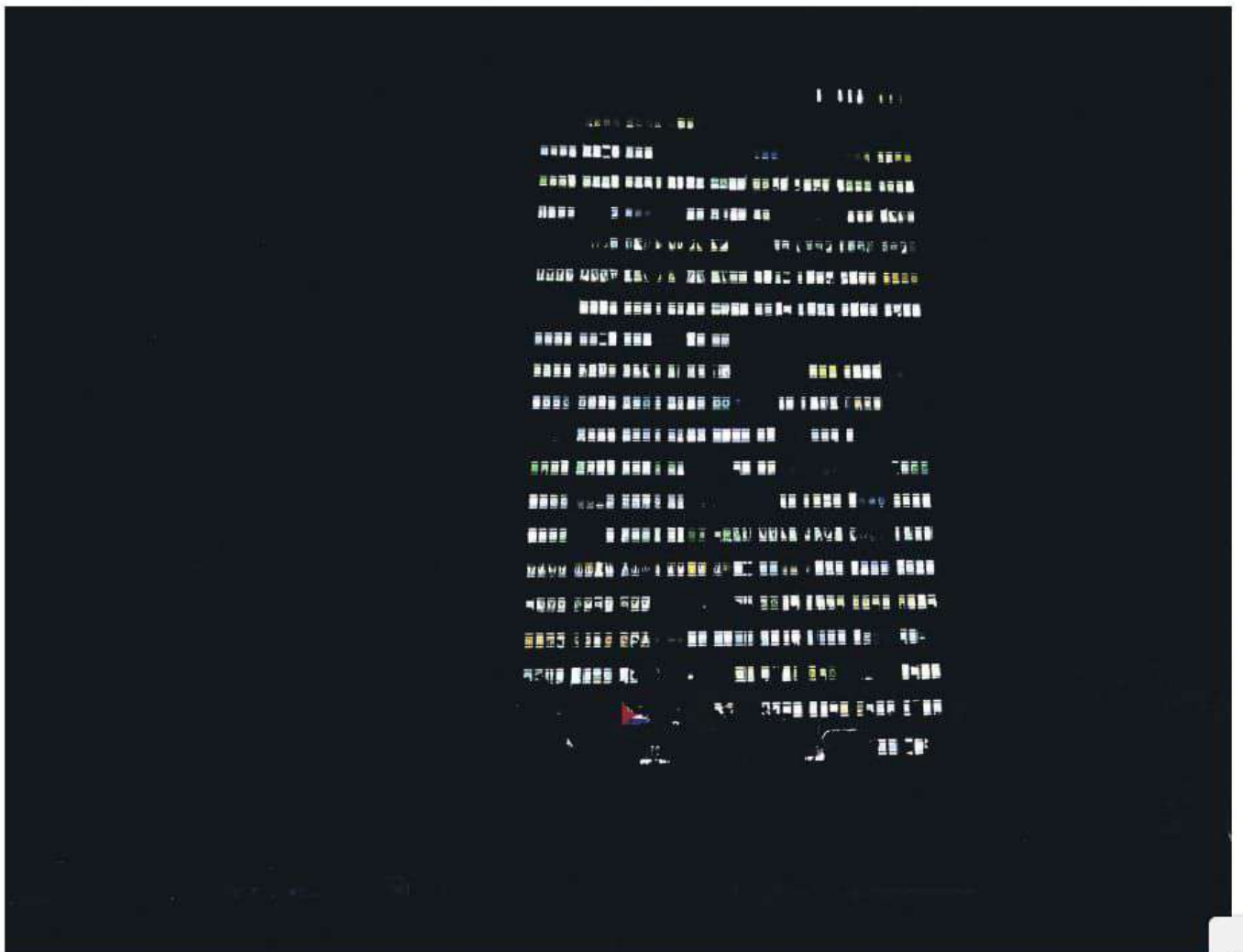
If the G7 doesn’t act quickly to resolve these issues, this crucial financial support could turn into a failure – just when Ukraine needs backing most.

Armin Steinbach is a professor of law and economics at HEC Paris and a non-resident fellow at Bruegel.

ANGELA WEISS/
AFP VIA
GETTY IMAGES



VIEWPOINT





POLITICO

Student Name: Gaurav thakur

Branch: BCA

Semester: 3

Subject Name: Desktop publishing lab

UID:23BCA10243

Section/Group: 4A

Date of Performance:24-10-24

Subject Code:23Cap-204

1. Aim/Overview of the project:

The aim of this project is to create a visually compelling digital presentation on a political topic using Photoshop. The project will consist of five pages, each focusing on different aspects such as political theory, influential leaders, historical events, and current political issues, using graphics, images, and text to engage and inform the audience.

2. Task to be done:

The main tasks involved in this project include:

- Selecting a political topic and key subtopics for each page.
- Researching and gathering relevant images and information.
- Designing five cohesive pages in Photoshop that effectively communicate the chosen political themes.
- Incorporating visual elements to enhance understanding and engagement.
- Compiling the project into a digital format suitable for presentation.

3. Steps followed in making the project:

Page 1: Introduction to the Political Topic

1. **New Document Creation:** Open Photoshop and create a new document (A4 size, 300 DPI).
2. **Background Design:** Use the **Gradient Tool** to create an engaging background.
3. **Text Layer:** Use the **Text Tool (T)** to add the title and a brief introduction. Choose a bold font for the title and a legible font for the text.
4. **Image Insertion:** Import a relevant image using **File > Place Embedded** and position it strategically.
5. **Adjustment Layers:** Use **Curves** and **Hue/Saturation** adjustment layers to enhance the image's colors.

Page 2: Politico health summit

1. **Layout Design:** Create a grid layout using **Guides** for alignment.
2. **Image Collage:** Gather multiple historical images and use the **Lasso Tool** to create cutouts.
3. **Layer Styles:** Apply **Drop Shadows** and **Stroke** effects to images for emphasis.

4. **Text Boxes:** Use the **Text Tool** for captions, summarizing key historical events related to the topic.

Page 3: Influential Leaders

1. **Image Selection:** Choose high-resolution images of political leaders.
2. **Masking:** Use the **Quick Selection Tool** and **Layer Mask** to isolate each leader.
3. **Visual Hierarchy:** Arrange images in a way that highlights the most influential leaders at the top.
4. **Text Annotations:** Add names and brief descriptions using the **Text Tool**, utilizing different font weights for emphasis.

Page 4: Current Political Issues

1. **Data Visualization:** Create infographics using the **Shape Tool** and **Pen Tool** to represent current issues (like statistics).
2. **Color Scheme:** Maintain a consistent color scheme that reflects the topic.
3. **Background Elements:** Use **Patterns** or **Textures** for subtle background designs to keep it visually interesting.
4. **Text Blocks:** Summarize key issues using bullet points with the **Text Tool**.

Page 5: Conclusion and Call to Action

1. **Final Layout:** Revisit the layout to ensure consistency with previous pages.
2. **Image Selection:** Use a strong, impactful image for the background.
3. **Text Layer:** Write a compelling conclusion and call to action using the **Text Tool**.
4. **Final Touches:** Apply **Adjustment Layers** for overall color correction and consistency.

4. Result/Output/Writing Summary:

The project culminated in a five-page digital presentation that effectively communicates key aspects of the chosen political topic. Each page integrates striking visuals and informative text, creating a cohesive narrative. The final output is saved as a PDF for easy sharing and presentation.

Learning outcomes (What I have learnt):

1. Advanced Photoshop techniques for graphic design and photo editing.
2. The importance of visual storytelling in communicating complex political themes.
3. How to create engaging layouts that guide the viewer's attention.
4. Research skills to gather relevant and credible information on political topics.
5. The ability to critically analyze and summarize political issues effectively.