

AP PHOTO



A train that heralds China's global ambition

By Philip Stephens

Among this year's under-reported events was the opening of a new rail freight route. A locomotive, pulling wagons loaded with Chinese manufactures, set out in early January from Yiwu in Zhejiang province. Some 18 days and seven countries later it arrived at a goods depot almost 7,500 miles away on the eastern edge of London. The jury is out on the economics of this latest reincarnation of the ancient silk routes. That is beside the point. The journey above all else was a statement of China's geopolitical intent.

In truth, it took several trains to complete the trip. The freight containers had to be switched at various points to take account of different track gauges, and then again for the last stretch through the Channel tunnel. It is not clear how frequently the trains will run, although the operator says it is offering a service much faster than by sea and

much cheaper than by air. Once a month seems to be the first target. Similar routes opened a while ago to continental cities such as Hamburg and Madrid. London, though, is a prize.

The trains, following the old silk road through central Asia, Russia, Belarus and Poland into western Europe are unlikely to have a decisive effect on present patterns of trade. The important thing is the psychological impact - a network of rail links reduces the distance between Asia and Europe. And there lies the grand design of China's Xi Jinping. The president wants to obliterate boundaries between the two continents and draw the rich nations of Europe close to China.

There is a shorthand among foreign policy types that designates the 20th as the Atlantic century. The 21st, the received wisdom continues, will belong to the Pacific. The last century saw wealth and power concentrated among the littoral states of the north Atlantic as Europe

and the US reached across the ocean. But prosperity and power have travelled eastward and southwards. The phrase Pacific century seems to capture China's rise.

Only in part. True, the People's Liberation Army is building military bases on reclaimed islands in the South China sea to expand its maritime reach into the Western Pacific; and, yes, China could well clash with the US in these waters. But such tensions misread Beijing's organising ambition. It is looking westwards rather than eastward.

Mr Xi's big play is wrapped up in his "One Belt, One Road" idea - the recreation of the sea and land routes of an earlier age of globalisation. When it looks ahead, China imagines an era in which the great land mass of Eurasia becomes the vital fulcrum of global power. And guess who will be the pivotal Eurasian player?

Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former national security adviser

to president Jimmy Carter who until his death this year was Washington's sharpest strategic thinker, long ago grasped the significance of what he called the "axial supercontinent". "A power that dominated Eurasia", he wrote as far back as 1997, "would exercise decisive influence over two of the world's three most economically productive regions, western Europe and East Asia [...] What happens with the distribution of power on the Eurasian landmass will be of decisive importance to America's global primacy and historical legacy".

It is easy to see why he was concerned. Eurasia - and the historic division into two continents has more to do with tradition and culture than any physical boundary - accounts for more than a third of the world's landmass and for about 70 percent of the global population. It is home to much of the world's energy and other natural resources.

For some the One Belt, One

Road project speaks to a jumble of different objectives - some economic, some strategic. Thus a Chinese railway through Myanmar provides a route to the sea that bypasses the pinch point of the Strait of Malacca. A new port in Pakistan provides direct access to the Indian Ocean and the Gulf. Vast infrastructure projects in central Asia and Africa are designed to mop up China's excess industrial capacity and to secure sources of raw material. Beijing wants new investment channels to expand its presence in Europe.

When it looks ahead, China imagines an era in which the great land mass of Eurasia becomes the vital fulcrum of global power

Some of these enterprises are more successful than others - as witnessed by James Kyng's reporting in the FT last week of Beijing's stumbling attempts to export high-speed train technology. It seems it is better at running trains than building new railways in other nations. Nor can Beijing expect to have it all its own way. At some point Moscow will tire of its place as very much the junior partner in the Sino-Russian axis. And India will not be easily pushed aside as China cuts a swath through Eurasia.

But the whole amounts to more than the sum of the parts. One Belt, One Road is China's route to Eurasian primacy. And the gods are looking favourably on the Chinese leader. The belligerent isolationism that counts for foreign policy in President Donald Trump's White House offers Beijing a free hand.

Brzezinski's worry was that without a strategy to promote its own interests through balancing alliances, the US would cede Eurasia to others and, eventually, would be left a great power stranded in its own hemisphere. Such geopolitical calculation does not loom large in Mr Trump's White House. Beijing can scarcely believe its luck. As the US retreats, China makes its presence felt. Quite suddenly, the Eurasian century has a certain ring to it.

The rare talents of autistic employees

By Emma Jacobs

THREE young men are in a small office in the City of London, listening to a coach talk about dealing with stress. These are not burnt-out lawyers or bankers, but wannabe tech contractors. Their autism and coding skills have brought them to the London offices of Auticon, a German consultancy that specialises in placing people on the autism spectrum in work, in entry-level or highly skilled jobs in a range of technology specialisms.

Tom Cowley, a 29-year-old who stands at 6ft 5in, with bushy curly hair and a beard, is one of the trio. After studying for a degree in games design, he has found himself in the catch-22 position of wanting to work at a games company but not landing opportunities because he lacks experience. Mr Cowley says he currently feels like a “tool without a purpose”.

He hopes that with Auticon's help - support from a coach, a contract and an understanding employer - his self-esteem will improve. In the long term it may enable him to move out of his parents' home in west London.

Auticon is one of a few consultancies - others include the Belgian Passwerk and Specialisterne, founded in Denmark but now with operations across Europe and the US - that place autistic people in IT companies.

Mr Cowley's difficulties are far from unusual. Autistic people can experience problems finding and staying in work, often due to misunderstandings related to their condition, or a lack of support. The complex neurodevelopment disorder can cause social, communication and behavioural difficulties.

Autism affects people in different ways: some might not be able to speak but others will be highly articulate, for example. Mr Cowley thinks he can occasionally come across as “a bit rude”.

But autistic people also sometimes have extraordinary talents, according to Auticon. Many are able to recognise patterns or mistakes in large amounts of data, are good at logical thinking, innovative problem-solving and offering fresh perspectives. They are often precise, good at concentration and perseverance - as well as autodidacticism.

In the UK, according to one 2010 survey, 26 per cent of graduates with autism were unemployed six months after completing their course - a proportion almost three times higher than non-disabled graduates. Phil Evans, an autism advocate and speaker who is looking for work, says interviewers have

AP PHOTO



found him “robotic” - meaning they overlook his skills and degree.

The condition affects a high portion of the population. In the US, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in 68 children are autistic, increasing to one in 42 for boys. Some suggest the figure may be higher. One 2011 study by Autism Speaks, a US advocacy group, which looked at the entire population of school-age children in South Korea, found the figure to be one in 38 children.

“ We try to turn it round and say that autism is an advantage.

KURT SCHÖFFER
AUTICON

Dirk Müller-Remus, Auticon's founder, is a software developer whose son Ricardo was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome - a form of autism -

at the age of 14 in 2007.

“His difficulties in social interaction and communication [...] became more and more obvious,” he says.

A year later Mr Müller-Remus and his wife attended a talk at which 25 people with autism, most of whom were highly educated, spoke about their struggles to find work. All were unemployed. Mr Müller-Remus was shocked, and he resolved to start a company to focus on the strengths of technically skilled people with autism.

Martin Neumann has been working as a consultant for Auticon in Germany for the past four years. He used to own a civil engineering planning company with a friend. He took care of the technical expertise while his co-founder was the public face of the business, in charge of communicating with customers and networking. This worked well until his partner became ill and Mr Neumann had to take on his responsibilities.

“I couldn't do it. The stress wore me down,” says Mr Neumann. It led to burnout, and in turn a visit to the doctor, who diagnosed Mr Neumann

as being on the spectrum. The 55-year-old had felt for his entire life that “either I was the outsider or others were”.

Soon after, Mr Neumann came across Auticon. His programming skills mean he is in high demand.

It helps that a coach briefs new colleagues on his needs. “Neuro-typicals”, a neologism used in the autistic community as a label for people not on the spectrum, need to “check how your day was”, says Mr Neumann. “I don't need to. I find it stressful. It's like a third or fourth language. I don't quite understand it.”

Emma Jones, partnerships and employment training co-ordinator at the National Autistic Society, says some employers make assumptions based on partial knowledge of the condition.

Some autistic staff may want to work alone in a cubicle, while others may find solitary work lonely, for example. She recalls one autistic woman who was moved from the job she loved to the finance department after an autism diagnosis, because it was assumed that she would be

good at figures. “She hated maths,” says Ms Jones.

Viola Sommer, head of operations at Auticon, says hiring staff with autism can boost a business. Some of their autistic consultants' brutal honesty has ruffled feathers. But, if such honesty means pointing out that a project is likely to fail when other staff may be reluctant to voice doubts, it can ultimately be good for business.

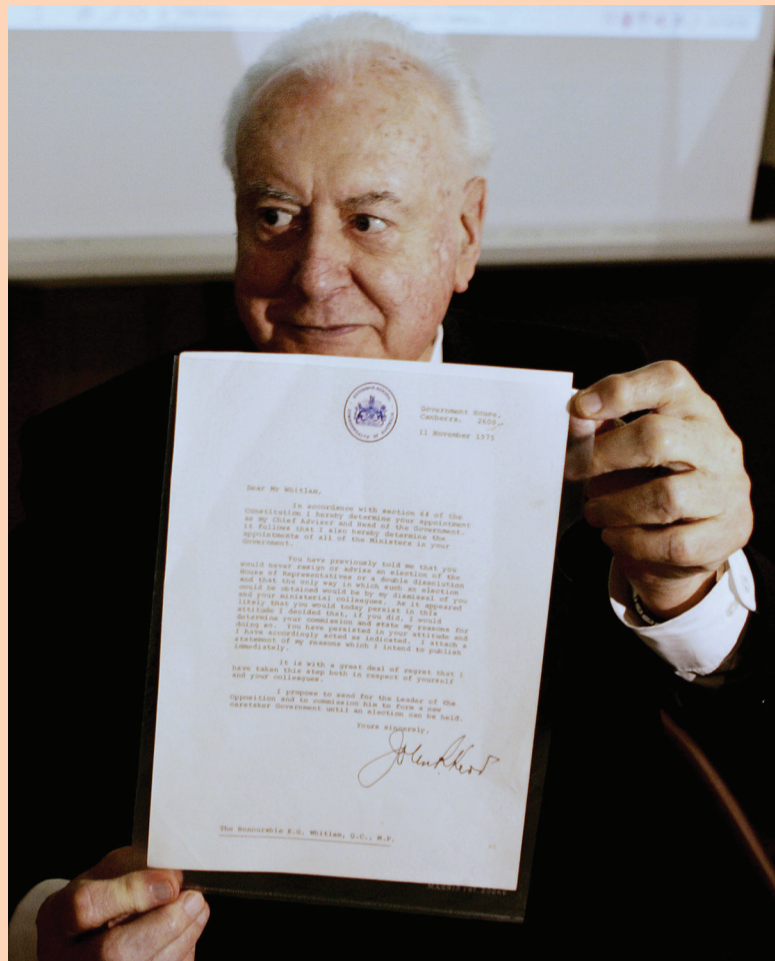
“Managers often don't want to hear the truth,” she says.

“We try to turn it round and say that autism is an advantage,” says Kurt Schöffner, Auticon's chief executive.

Meanwhile, Miles Findlay, a smartly dressed 22-year-old, has found the coaching briefing from Auticon helpful. Before the training sessions in the City of London, the computer science student was worried about entering the workplace. He has experienced something of an epiphany, realising he has unique assets and skills. “I have skills and don't need to worry about the condition,” he says.



AP PHOTO



Former Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam holds up the original copy of his dismissal letter he received from then Governor General Sir John Kerr on the 11th of November 1975

Professor Jenny Hocking poses for a portrait in Kensington

Historian asks Australian court to reveal Queen's letters

Rod McGuirk

A historian is going to court this month in an attempt to force Australian authorities to release secret letters that would reveal what Queen Elizabeth II knew of her representative's shocking scheme to dismiss Australia's government more than 40 years ago.

The National Archives of Australia has categorized the correspondence between the British monarch, who is also Australia's constitutional head of state, and her Australian representative, Governor-General Sir John Kerr, as "personal" and might therefore never be made public.

The letters would disclose what, if anything, the queen knew of Kerr's plan to dismiss Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's government in 1975 to resolve a month-old deadlock in Parliament.

It remains the only time in Australia's history that a democratically elected federal government has been dismissed on the British monarch's authority. Kerr's surprise intervention placed unprecedented strain on Australia's democracy and bolstered calls for the nation to split from its former colonial master by becoming a republic. Suspicions of a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency conspiracy persist.

Jenny Hocking, a Monash University historian and Whitlam

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biographer, will argue in the Federal Court in Sydney on July 31 — the only hearing day of the case — that the letters should be released regardless of the queen's wishes because Australians have a right to know their own history.

"To me, it's a point of national humiliation that we have to be even considering asking the queen whether we can look at these key records in our own history," Hocking told The Associated Press.

She started the case in October last year, is represented by lawyers free of charge and has raised more than USD28,000 through crowd funding in case she loses and is ordered to pay the Archives' legal costs. The legal argument has been presented so far in written submissions.

While Hocking is taking on the Archives alone, she has a powerful ally in Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who agrees that the communication between two such key figures in Australia's constitution should not be secret.

The Archives, Buckingham Pa-

lace and the governor-general's official residence, Government House, have all declined AP's requests for comment.

The court is being asked to remove the letters from their "private" and "personal" classification, so that they could become public 30 years after they were written like other government documents held in the Archives.

Under an agreement struck between Buckingham Palace and Government House months before Kerr resigned in 1978, the letters covering three tumultuous years of Australian politics will remain secret until 2027. The private secretaries of both the sovereign and the governor-general in 2027 would have the option of vetoing their release indefinitely.

The British royal family is renowned for being protective of their privacy and keeping conversations confidential.

The family went to considerable lengths to conceal letters written by the queen's son and heir, Prince Charles, in a comparable case in Britain that was fought throu-

gh the courts for five years.

Britain's Supreme Court ruled in 2015 that 27 memos written by Charles to British government ministers could be made public despite objections that their publication might damage public perceptions of the future king's political neutrality.

Years of dogged research by journalists and historians have pieced together answers to many of the questions surrounding how and why Whitlam's government was dismissed and who was behind it.

Kerr, who died in 1991, rejected in his memoirs media speculation that the CIA ordered Whitlam's dismissal over fears that his government would close the top secret U.S. intelligence facility that still exists at Pine Gap in the Australian Outback. In the 1985 Hollywood spy drama "The Falcon and the Snowman," a CIA plot to oust Whitlam motivated a disillusioned civilian defense contractor played by Sean Penn to sell U.S. security secrets to the Soviet Union.

Australia's governor-general, who is chosen by the prime minister and appointed by the monarch, is a largely ceremonial role. Turnbull, as a journalist in 1975, described Kerr as an "unelected ribbon cutter."

Few realized before 1975 that the role carried unwritten constitutional powers to sack a prime minister in a crisis. Lawyers still

argue about whether the so-called reserve powers even exist.

The constitutional crisis came in 1975 when the opposition tried to force Whitlam to call general elections by blocking in the Senate routine legislation that allowed the government to pay public servant salaries and deliver services.

It would cause a constitutional crisis if the queen's personal opinions became known.

PHILIP BENWELL
LEADING ADVOCATE FOR THE
BRITISH MONARCH

Kerr fired Whitlam during a brief meeting at Government House, called an election and appointed opposition leader Malcolm Fraser as prime minister. Weeks later, Fraser's coalition won a resounding election victory. But his eight-year tenure was always tainted by how it began. Whitlam branded Fraser "Kerr's cur" and the insult stuck.

Kerr's critics argue that he should have warned Whitlam of what he was planning and given the prime minister an option of remaining the government's leader if he agreed to an election.

Former High Court Chief Justice Anthony Mason, who secretly assured Kerr he had the power to sack Whitlam, only revealed in media interviews in 2012 that he had also advised the governor-general that Whitlam should be warned.

Kerr explained that he chose an ambush because Whitlam might have fired him first if the governor-general had shown his hand.

Turnbull, who believes an Australian president rather than a British monarch should be Australia's head of state, argues that Kerr should not have been worrying about saving his own job when deciding how to act as governor-general.

Weeks after becoming prime minister in 2015, Turnbull said he would ask the Palace and the current Governor-General Peter Cosgrove to release the letters. But Turnbull has remained tight-lipped on progress since then.

Philip Benwell, a leading advocate for the British monarch remaining Australia's head of state, argues that the letters should remain private. The political system would become untenable if the queen's opinions were known to be at odds with her government, he said.

"It would cause a constitutional crisis if the queen's personal opinions became known," Benwell said. AP

JAPAN

More photographs captured of likely melted Fukushima fuel



Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) spokesman Takahiro Kimoto speaks during a press conference while showing video image taken by an underwater robot into Fukushima nuclear plant to search for melted fuel

Stephen Stappczynski

A trove of new images captured in the past few days show what is likely to be melted nuclear fuel from inside one of Japan's wrecked Fukushima reactors, a potential milestone in the cleanup of one of the worst atomic disasters in history.

Tokyo Electric Power, Japan's biggest utility, released images on Saturday of mounds of black rock and sand-like substances at the bottom of the No. 3 reactor containment vessel at Fukushima, which is likely to contain melted fuel, according to Takahiro Kimoto, an official at the company. A survey on Fri-

day found black icicles hanging from the above pressure vessel, which was "highly likely" to contain melted fuel. Kimoto noted it would take time to confirm whether this debris contains melted fuel.

"The pictures that we have gained will assist us in devising a plan for removing the melted fuel," Kimoto told reporters Saturday night in Tokyo. "Taking pictures of how debris scattered inside of the reactor was a big accomplishment."

If confirmed, these pictures would be the first discovery of the fuel that melted during the triple reactor accident at Fukushima six years ago. For Tokyo Electric, which bears most of the cleanup costs, the discovery would help the utility design a way to remove the highly-radioactive material.

The pictures were taken by a Toshiba-designed robot the company sent to explore the inside of the reactor for the first time from July 19. The robot, 30 centimeters long that can swim in the flooded unit, was tasked with surveying the damage inside and also finding the location of corium, which is a mixture of the atomic fuel rods and other

structural materials that forms after a meltdown.

"It is important to know the exact locations and the physical, chemical, radiological forms of the corium to develop the necessary engineering defueling plans for the safe removal of the radioactive materials," said Lake Barrett, a former official at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission who was involved with the cleanup at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in the U.S. "The recent investigation results are significant early signs of progress on the long road ahead."

Because of the high radioactivity levels inside the reactor, only specially designed robots can probe the unit. And the unprecedented nature of the Fukushima disaster means that Tepco, as the utility is known, is pinning its efforts on technology not yet invented to get the melted fuel out of the reactors.

The company aims to decide on the procedure to remove the melted fuel from each unit as soon as this summer. And it will confirm the procedure for the first reactor during the fiscal year ending March 2019, with fuel removal slated to be-

gin in 2021.

Decommissioning the reactors will cost 8 trillion yen (USD72 billion), according to an estimate in December from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. Removing the fuel is one of the most important steps in a cleanup that may take as long as 40 years.

Similar to the latest findings in the No. 3 reactor, Tepco took photographs in January of what appeared to be black residue covering a grate under the Fukushima Dai-Ichi No. 2 reactor, which was speculated to have been melted fuel. However, a follow-up survey by another Toshiba-designed robot in February failed to confirm the location of any melted fuel in the reactor after it got stuck in debris.

A robot designed by Hitachi-GE Nuclear Energy Ltd. also failed to find any melted fuel during its probe of the No. 1 reactor in March.

The significance of the recent finding "might be evidence that the robots used by Tepco can now deal with the higher radiation levels, at least for periods of time that allow them to search parts of the reactor that are more likely to contain fuel debris," M.V. Ramana, professor at the Liu Institute for Global Issues at the University of British Columbia, said by email.

"If some of these fragments can be brought out of the reactor and studied, it would allow nuclear engineers and scientists to better model what happened during the accident." **Bloomberg**

ASK THE VET

by Dr Ruan Du Toit Bester

ADMINISTERING CAT EYE DROPS

Many eye infections, diseases or injuries will require treatment by the administration of cat eye drops. Some cats will resist this treatment, especially if the eye is in significant pain. There are some techniques which make this process much easier to complete, and with a little bit of patience you should find your cat's eye infection healing.

Gentle restraint

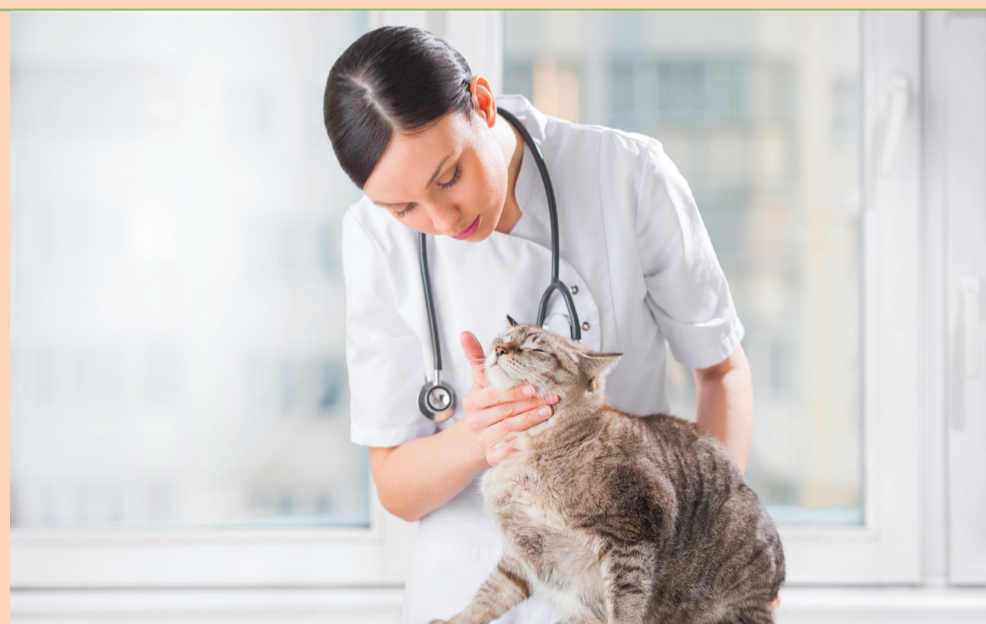
It may be necessary for you to retrain you cat for the successful administration of cat eye drops. This must be done gently, and in a loving way, to avoid injury to the cat or to yourself. If it will be necessary to give eye drops on a continued basis, it will also help to speak in a loving way while the cat is being held, alleviating as much fear as possible. If you have a helper, it might be most effective to have that person hold the cat, facing you, by the front legs and chest. If another set of hands is not available, you could wrap the cat in a blanket, or set the cat on a slippery surface like a tabletop of dryer, while trying to keep your body as close as possible. This prevents the cat from running away and hiding.

Preparing the Medication

Make sure to have all the materials you'll need readily available, as you'll want this to be as quick a process as possible, and your cat will appreciate that as well. Have the medication, and read the instructions so you know ahead of time how much of the cat eye drops you'll need to administer. Have any eyewash solution or wipes required, and have a favorite cat toy or treat for when the episode is successfully complete.

Technique for safely administering cat eye drops

When you are ready, with cat in place, grasp under and around the cat's chin with your free hand. Hold the head tightly, but not forcefully, and gently face the cat's head at an upward angle, so the cat is looking toward the ceiling. Try to hold the affected eye slightly open with the index finger that's grasping the chin. Bring the cat eye drops over the top, or around the side of the head. The point is to keep the cat from seeing this coming, and to prevent any wild reactions. Rest the hand with the eye drops on top of the cat's head and keep the tip of the bottle at least one



inch from the cat's eye, to prevent injury. Squeeze the required dose into the eye, making sure not to touch the eye with the dropper, and hold the cat's head in place long enough for the medication to disperse over the eye.

Talk and Offer Praise

Once you are finished, before letting your cat run free, it will be of great benefit to talk and offer praise. Pet your cat and express words of thanks or appreciation. Offer a treat, or some catnip, as an exchange for the coop-

eration. If your cat realises that treats come after this experience, it may lessen the stress when the next medication time comes around.

Hope this helps
Till next week
Dr Ruan Bester

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