

Comment

# Writers will be out in the cold if smart fridges can solve whodunnits

ALLAN MASSIE



Old-style criminals have it tough. John le Carré reckons his con-man father Ronnie would not be able to run up a big bill at a Grand Hotel and then scatter nowadays because, on checking in, he would be required to produce his credit card which would result in him being immediately thrown out.

Still, that's nothing compared with what comes next. According to Mark Stokes, Scotland Yard's head of digital forensics, "smart" fridges, coffee machines, dishwashers and even light bulbs will soon provide alibis or important crime-scene evidence. "The internet of things" came and sensors in household appliances – will all hold evidence of the last moments of murder victims, evidence of false alibis or inconsistencies in witness statements.

We already know that your smartphone enables your movements to be tracked, your whereabouts established; only a foolish murderer carries his iPhone.

But now that domestic appliances are getting into the act, the common run of crimes has become much more hazardous. No wonder today's robbers prefer cybercrime to stick-ups.

Meanwhile, Mr Stokes plans to develop a digital forensics kit which will allow investigators to download data at the scene of the crime. Dixon of Dock Green would be scratching his head in amazement.

But if it's going to be tough for criminals and old-school coppers, what about crime writers? Herend Poirer's "little grey cells" would be redundant when the fridge photographed the culprit. How could Miss Marple's realisation about something the postmistress did in St Mary Mead many years ago compete with an online kettle live-streaming footage of the crime in real time?

Of course many crime

novelists, Val McDermid for instance, have enthusiastically embraced forensic science, and all writers of contemporary crime fiction are aware of the significance of DNA evidence and factor this into their plots.

Authors soon caught up on the subject. You can set him to investigate a cold case, as Ian Rankin has recently done with John Rebus – not a man likely to own a smart fridge.

For some, the solution may be a return to the past. Some are doing this already. Even if your detective is at work today, you can simply revert to apparently gentler times and intuitive investigations.

The historical crime novel can be liberating for the writer and engaging for the reader who is no longer required to wade through pages of police procedure and have a degree of technological knowledge to follow the narrative.

One of the best crime novels of 2016 was *The Ashes of London* by Andrew Taylor. Set in 1866 and beginning with the Great Fire of London, it was a brilliantly imagined and gripping murder-cum-spy story, utterly compelling, with not an online gadget on hand to solve the grisly murders.

The internet of things may prove to be a boon to the boffins of Scotland Yard, but for the crime writer, freedom lies in the past.

Follow Allan Massie on Twitter @allanmas; READ MORE at telegraph.co.uk/opinion



To order prints or signed copies of any Telegraph cartoon, go to telegraph.co.uk/cartoonprints or call 01642 485322 • cartoonist@telegraph.co.uk

# In this age of Trump and Putin, Britain must rebuild its defences

To be able to write our own history, we have to establish a global role for ourselves as a leading military power

TOM TUGENDHAT



The strategic shift we voted for in June's referendum hasn't been implemented yet but already the twin pillars that have underpinned UK strategy for 40 years are shifting. Leaving the European Union was our choice to chart our own future.

Donald Trump has roared back from some of his earlier statements, but his continued praise of Russia's Vladimir Putin and belittling of his own respected intelligence community mean that no one can be sure what his

defence posture will be. Some saw this day coming. Estonia, occupied by Soviet Russia for some 50 years, needed no warning. After regaining independence it began to rebuild its country as a digital nation. Today, its entire state is backed up on three servers abroad. I recently asked a senior Estonian official why. He said it was in preparation for the Russian invasion. They were ready to be a people without a land.

Poland and Lithuania are also readying for a future conflict by training militias in the forests on their eastern border and Latvia has joined its Baltic neighbours in raising defence spending. They have watched the invasion of Ukraine, the conquest of Crimea, the occupation of a fifth of Georgia and the cyber attacks on Estonia. They know defence takes planning.

But for many of us, the strategic shift in the US is yet to be fully appreciated. We were told that Trump would never get the Republican nomination. He did. We were told that he would become more presidential. He hasn't. America's allies don't have the luxury of waiting to find out if he means what he says about Nato. We must take him at face value; anything else is gambling with our national security.

This is an unpicking of the international order that challenges our defence assumptions. With Russia using hard and soft power against the UK and our allies in recent years, it is no academic exercise but a response to a current threat and Britain must again look to the principles of defence. In military doctrine, a basic principle is mutual support, and that means Nato.

Military strategy builds on certainty and mitigates for risk. Today, that means realising the incoming Trump White House doesn't value the alliance and cannot now restore the certainty

deterrence demands. Trump's tweets only encourage our enemies to test our defences, making conflict more likely. Britain needs a new grand strategy to ensure they don't feel tempted.

That strategy will be based around our own capabilities, from conventional to nuclear forces, but we cannot do it alone. We must choose partners to secure European peace and guard our future. If we fail, the post-Second World War era will end and our history will be written by others.

For us, this isn't really a choice. We cannot submit ourselves to an isolationist US president prepared to prioritise his relationship with Putin over his own defence community, let alone ours, nor rely on a European army that only a few Europeans believe is credible. Britain must be the framework nation to shape our future.

This means rethinking our defence posture and reinvigorating Nato. Despite many rounds of defence cuts, the UK is still one of the world's major military powers and our nuclear deterrent alone gives us credibility few can match. Added to a history of cooperation on operations and partnerships across the world, we can provide the hub for a new defence architecture.

In the 1930s, Churchill advocated a similar structure to oppose Nazism. The threat now is not the same, but Putin's vision encompasses nations that the Royal Navy helped make independent. In 1920 the Baltic States were freed from communist Russia by our warships and barely 25 years later Europe was free. We must not let our had cause to thank their own forces serving in our army, navy and air force during the Second World War.

British military patriotism has always been inclusive, not nationalist.



READ MORE at telegraph.co.uk/opinion

From Czechs and Poles in the Royal Air Force during the Battle of Britain to Australians, Canadians, South Africans and New Zealanders in our Army and Navy, many nations have written their own stories of heroism under our colours. Britain provided the framework for others to cooperate and defend the values we all share.

Our links to both Europe and the Commonwealth make Britain the natural cornerstone, not just for a network of European nations but for a global alliance. I served alongside Australians, Canadians, Danes and Estonians in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their ethos meant we made powerful allies.

To get the best from this challenge, we should go further. By deepening the Lancaster House Treaty we could strengthen our military partnership with France, our only military equal in Europe, and build on Churchill's legacy. This commitment to our common defence would demonstrate vividly that, in the coming EU negotiations, Britain is not simply interested in cars or wine, but is a vital security and intelligence partner.

But to achieve the result we need, we must boost defence spending from the lowest percentage in a generation. At a time of such strategic confusion, the case for increasing the defence budget to write a new grand strategy has never been stronger.

Given current threats, the call to take back control is no slogan. If we are to write our own history we must realise that the choice is not vasalage to either Brussels or Washington but our own path, in cooperation with Europe and our allies. We've done it before. We can do it again.

Tom Tugendhat, Conservative MP for Tonbridge and Malling, is a former Army officer

**LIFTON**

A Home Lift which lifts you out of the ordinary

Imagine continuing to live in your family home even when stairs become a challenge. With a LiftonDUO Home Lift, you can; and in style too!

A LiftonDUO Home Lift glides gracefully on its own self-supporting stilt, gently and safely moving you from floor to floor. The small footprint allows it to fit into tight spaces. Installation is quick and simple too. It can usually be completed in as little as a day by one of our own experienced and friendly technicians.

Invest in your future today and enjoy a full life in your home

Call us on 0808 274 0337

# Scrap this chilling threat to Press freedom

If a foreign country had a law like Section 40, Britain would condemn it for shocking censorship

RACHAEL JOLLEY



For years, *Index of Censorship* has monitored state interference in news reporting, from the authoritarian Chile in the 1970s to North Korea today. With a history of scrutinising government pressure on media, we were never going to join Impress, the new state-approved UK press regulator.

There should always be a clear distance between any government and the journalists who report on it. Again and again, *Index* has reported how governments have set up bodies that stop the media covering stories they don't like. In Zimbabwe, the 2002 Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act requires all journalists and media

companies to register. Unlicensed journalists can face criminal charges and a sentence of up to two years in prison.

Last year, the Turkish government forced the closure of news outlets including Zaman and the Cihan News Agency. As our Mapping Media Freedom project has reported, dozens of journalists have been arrested. In Syria we have seen a systematic stifling of reporting.

Meanwhile, in the UK, the Government is considering triggering Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act, which will ratchet up pressure to self-censor. This repressive legislation would pressure newspapers to avoid the controversial and not publish things others would rather not hear.

If such laws were introduced in another country, British politicians would be speaking out against such shocking media censorship. There's no doubt that authoritarian powers will be further spurred to bolster their own cases in imposing media regulation.

As the leading media lawyer Mark Stephens has pointed out, this could mean that if a Somaliian warlord started a British publisher for something stated in an entirely truthful report, the publisher could still be ordered to pay

the warlord's costs when he lost the case for defamation. Section 40 has been on the statute book for three years but was not triggered, because there was no approved regulator of which publishers could be part.

That changed when Impress, a regulator to which so far only tiny local media publishers have signed up, was approved in October.

Having an approved regulator means Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act could now be brought into force, and that we and many other small publishers could face crippling costs in any dispute, threatening investigative journalism or those who challenge the powerful or the wealthy.

Newspapers and magazines need to be able to tackle controversial subjects, and hold the powerful to account, whether they choose to join Impress or not. In every issue, *Index* covers stories of corruption, of threats to writers or journalists and physical violence against people telling the truth. If threats of massive, unreasonable legal costs hang over newspapers and magazines then investigative journalism will be further squeezed.

Local daily newspaper editors are horrified by Section 40 and what it may do to news gathering. Michael



FOLLOW Rachael Jolley on Twitter @rachaeljolley; READ MORE at telegraph.co.uk/opinion

Sassi, editor of the *Nottingham Post*, warned: "Our future could be seriously compromised if either the proposed Section 40 were to become law or we were forced to submit to a government-sponsored regulator. Section 40 could encourage an avalanche of complaints because of the profoundly unfair clause that would force us to pay complainants' costs – win or lose."

As George Orwell said: "In times of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act." At times like this the Government must be even more vigilant about standing up for freedom of expression. If it fails to do so, it will undoubtedly be held up by other nations as an example they can follow.

Culture Secretary Karen Bradley is consulting on whether this chilling law should be activated. She was last month that a number of editors of local newspapers were concerned that the exemplary damages section could put out of them of business and certainly "would impact on their ability to do investigative journalism".

That is an understatement. Section 40 is a direct threat to press freedom in the UK and must be scrapped.

Rachael Jolley is the editor of the *Index on Censorship* magazine