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# Passport blog recommendation

**The Ozempic War**




At first glance, Donald Trump’s latest press release, dated 21 July 2026, appeared to be a dull piece of economic news: the President imposed punitive tariffs of 100 per cent, and later 200 per cent, on imported generic (copycat, off-patent) medicines. The business pages reported the figures, the stock markets wavered, and the world moved on. Yet if we look beyond the headlines, the backdrop to the 21st century’s biggest and most lucrative healthcare deal comes into view: the Ozempic war.
Read more >>

22 July 2026

**Half an hour left of your life**



John Ratcliffe, Director of the CIA, recently shared a shocking statistic at the Pennsylvania Defence and Innovation Summit: the average survival time of invading Russian soldiers arriving in Ukraine on the front line is just 20–30 minutes.
Read more >>

19 July 2026

|**How thick is your book?**



It’s quite common for a film or book to be years or even decades ahead of its time. When we read or watched the series and saw that the human mind could simply be backed up, expanded or tweaked with plug-ins, we were sceptical. Yet today, all this is quietly becoming a reality. With one uncomfortable ‘snag’: whilst we believe ourselves to be complex, unpredictable beings with free will, reality is kicking down the door of our dreamy world: our entire consciousness can be compressed onto a 5-gig USB stick.
Read more >>

11 July 2026|

**Orwell was wrong; bureaucracy has triumphed**



In 2018, I wrote a blog post entitled “Points System in China” about a plan proposed by the Chinese authorities that was more like an episode of Black Mirror. Over the past eight years, however, instead of the points-based system, a much harsher blacklist system based on digital bureaucracy has emerged.
Read more >>

5 July 2026

**Russia’s hybrid warfare against the European GNSS system**



How would you react if, all of a sudden, your car’s sat-nav stopped working? What if the mobile network went down and, just like that, the power cut out? These are, in fact, the main objectives of one of the tools of Russian hybrid warfare: GPS jamming. If you happen to think this is just an empty threat, I’m afraid I must disabuse you of that notion; the Russians are already testing this capability almost every month. Read more >>

27 June 2026

**Ebola outbreak in the Congo**



The Hungarian (and, generally speaking, European) press tends to turn a blind eye to epidemics in distant parts of Africa – such as the current **Ebola outbreak in the Congo** – rarely reach the threshold of the Hungarian (and, more generally, European) press, as long as they do not pose a direct threat to the continent. According to an analysis by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), this risk to Europe is currently very low. Ebola is not airborne (unlike Covid-19 or influenza); it can only be transmitted through direct contact with a patient’s bodily fluids, so the likelihood of it being introduced internationally is minimal. Read more >>

28 May 2026

## When a solar power station turns the desert into an oasis



In China, on the Tibetan Plateau – a desert-like, rocky and barren region – one of the world's largest solar power stations, the Talatan Solar Park, has been built on the edge of the Gobi Desert. The huge solar panels needed cleaning, but the runoff water and the sheltered conditions provided by the desert proved favourable for plants; they slowly began to overgrow the panels. What's the solution in such a situation? Why, the 'organic lawnmower', of course: sheep. Read more >>

13 May 2026

## Boeing 737 MAX / MCAS



The history of the Boeing 737 MAX/MCAS represents one of the most serious aviation crises of recent decades, highlighting fatal shortcomings in corporate culture and safety regulation. Read more >>

5 May 2026

## The shadow of Chernobyl: Forty years after the disaster



Four decades have passed since 26 April 1986, when Reactor No. 4 at the Chernobyl nuclear power station exploded, causing the worst civil nuclear accident in history. Although the physical ruins have long been covered by a gigantic steel sarcophagus, the invisible legacy of the disaster lives on today. Radioactive isotopes, such as caesium-137, undergo a slow half-life, but, having become part of the natural cycle, they remain present in Europe's ecosystems. Read more >>

26 April 2026

## The trivial disaster of the Mars Climate Orbiter (MCO) programme



In September 1999, after a journey to Mars lasting nearly 10 months, the Mars Climate Orbiter broke apart and burned up in the Martian atmosphere. This happened on a day when NASA engineers and onlookers were preparing to celebrate, holding their breath whilst sipping champagne. Reality on Earth, however, dealt a harsh blow; the rush and cost-cutting had not paid off, and, above all, the simple fact that one part of the design team had used the metric system whilst the other had used imperial units for their work, and they had forgotten to coordinate this with one another. Read more >>

24 April 2026

## Therac-25: The error message nobody understood



The engineers test the equipment methodically, in their own way. They type in the instructions precisely and in the correct order, using ‘two fingers’, and everything works as expected. Then reality sets in: operators who break out of their routine, make mistakes and correct them in a flash. If the software does not respond well to this, problems can arise. If, during development, there was excessive faith in the software’s safety and other protective measures were not built in, this can certainly lead to tragedies. This is exactly what happened in the case of the Therac-25. Read more >>

19 April 2026

## When the King Became the Second-in-Command



You board a scheduled KLM Cityhopper flight from Budapest to Amsterdam, and you’ll have no idea that in the cockpit, in the right-hand seat – that is, as co-pilot – the King of the Netherlands is flying the plane. Yet it could happen. Read more >>

17 April 2026

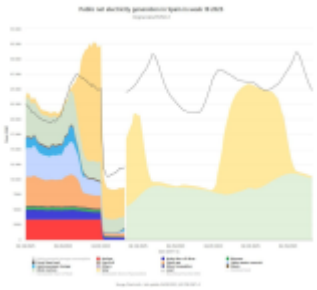
## Chongqing, the world’s largest city



We went to visit the world’s largest city, Chongqing. Here is my report on this trip. Read more >>

6 May 2025

## Blackout in Spain



Yesterday’s power cut in Spain has highlighted the problems facing the European electricity grid, which will become increasingly serious unless meaningful action is taken, and will affect more and more regions and countries. Let’s start with a brief, albeit rather superficial, explanation of how the electricity grid works. Read more >>

29 April 2025

## The Dunning–Kruger effect




The Dunning–Kruger effect is a psychological phenomenon whereby people with little knowledge or skill in a particular area tend to overestimate their own abilities. Conversely, those who actually possess a high level of knowledge or experience often underestimate their own abilities. Read more >>

30 March 2025

## The ekranoplan: back on top of the waves



The Caspian Sea Monster, the Soviets’ massive and genuinely flying ekranoplan, held the Western world in fear, because no one knew what the monster was capable of. What exactly is an ekranoplan? It is an aircraft that does not fly high, but instead races just a few metres above the surface of the open sea, utilising the physical principle the boundary-layer effect, which albatrosses and seagulls have known and utilised for millennia. The ‘monster’, and later its American counterpart, the MD-160, were indeed operational; however, at the time, controlling these mechanical behemoths just a few metres above the water’s surface posed a serious – practically insurmountable – technological challenge. These problems have, of course, largely been overcome by now, so it was to be expected that someone would dust off the plans and reconsider the feasibility of ekranoplans. Read more >>

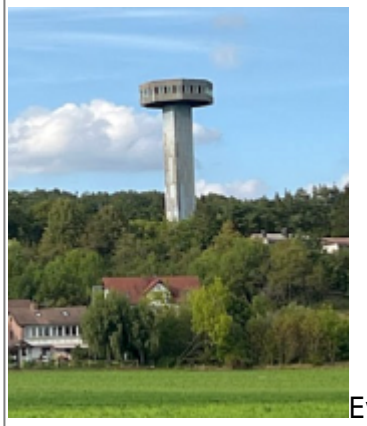
13 February 2025

## The Legacy of the Silk Road

One of US President Donald Trump’s first decisions was to grant a pardon on 21 January 2025 to Ross William Ulbricht, the developer of the Silk Road platform. Ross was serving two life sentences plus 40 years in Tucson, a sentence handed down in 2015, meaning he ultimately served 10 years for developing Silk Road. Read more >>

24 January 2025

## Bayernturm, the observation tower that has lost its function

Even during its construction, the observation tower caused concern on the eastern side, as it was initially believed that a missile launch pad was being built. The building, complete with an adjoining restaurant and hotel, immediately attracted huge interest; ‘business was booming’, with visitors arriving from all over the world to catch a glimpse of the border installations and the ‘death strip’. Read more >>

21 January 2025

## Basilique Notre-Dame de la Paix, the world’s largest Catholic church

The foundation stone was laid by Pope John Paul II on 10 August 1985, suggesting that the Church was not at all bothered by a project that was devouring almost all the resources of this impoverished country. This mad project was completed in September 1989, and His Holiness the Pope consecrated it on 10 September 1990. Incidentally, the church bears a striking resemblance to its Vatican model, with 24 pillars supporting the massive dome above the single-nave structure. Some of the columns even contain lifts, which, of course, have not been in operation since the building was handed over. Read more >>

13 January 2025

## Film quotes reloaded

Let’s take it easy; leaving behind the Christmas rush and the pressure to clean the windows, we retreat to the cinema or in front of the telly, and dig out our old favourite films that we haven’t seen in ages. The stories whose every twist and turn we know by heart (and perhaps even by heart), and where we’re already reciting the well-known quotes to our appreciative audience before the characters even say them. Read more >>

12 December 2024

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