

Patrick Wintour *Is the world
in another 1938 moment?*³⁴

The Guardian Weekly

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Macron's grand gamble

Could the far right gain power in France?

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Eyewitness *El Salvador*

PHOTOGRAPH:
REUTERS

📷 Heads you lose

A photograph released by the Salvadorian government shows inmates at the Terrorism Confinement Center, a huge jail in Tecoluca opened last year as part of President Nayib Bukele's controversial war on gangs.



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MATT BLEASE



On the cover Could the far-right National Rally gain political power in France and if so, what would it do? Despite Emmanuel Macron's snap election gamble, there is no certainty the RN will win a majority and many experts think the most likely outcome is another hung parliament. But either way, as our Europe correspondent Jon Henley writes, France is in for a rough few years.
Illustration: Guardian Design

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Global report

Headlines from the last seven days

GW

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1 GLOBAL SECURITY

Nuclear weapons spending reaches record high

Global spending on nuclear weapons increased by 13% to a record \$91.4bn during 2023, according to calculations from the pressure group International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (Ican).

This is up \$10.7bn from the previous year, driven largely by sharply increased defence budgets in the US, at a time of wider geopolitical uncertainty caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war.

All nine of the world's nuclear armed nations are spending more, Ican said, with China judged to be the second largest spender with an \$11.9bn budget, well below the \$51.5bn attributed to the US. Russia is the third largest spender, at \$8.3bn, followed by the UK (\$8.1bn) and France (\$6.1bn), although estimates for authoritarian states or the three countries with undeclared nuclear programmes (India, Pakistan and Israel) are complicated by a lack of transparency.

In the five years since Ican began its research, spending on nuclear weapons has soared by 34%, or \$23.2bn. Spending by the US increased by 45% and by 43% in the UK.

A new world war threat *Page 34 →*



2 RUSSIA



US reporter's 'spy' trial to be held behind closed doors

Russia will hold the trial of the detained US reporter Evan Gershkovich, who denies charges of collecting secrets for the CIA, behind closed doors later this month.

Gershkovich, 32, a reporter for the Wall Street Journal, was detained by the Federal Security Service (FSB) in March 2023 on charges of espionage that carry up to 20 years in prison. He is the first US journalist to be detained on spy charges in Russia since the cold war more than three decades ago.

The FSB, the main successor to the Soviet-era KGB, claimed Gershkovich was trying to collect secrets about Uralvagonzavod, a powerful Russian defence enterprise and one of the world's biggest battle tank producers.

Spotlight *Page 15 →*

3 UNITED STATES

Biden has a pop at Trump in comic birthday greeting

Taking a line out of Donald Trump's playbook, Joe Biden offered his rival a tongue-in-cheek birthday greeting on X last Friday, saying: "Happy 78th birthday, Donald. Take it from one old guy to another: Age is just a number."

The president coupled his thoughts with a caustic video sarcastically touting "78 of Trump's historic ... 'accomplishments'" before a Biden re-election campaign spokesperson added: "On behalf of America, our early gift for your 79th: making sure you are never president again."

4 G7

Italian PM closes summit with warning to Israel

Israel is falling into a trap laid by Hamas in its war in Gaza, Giorgia Meloni said at a press conference closing the G7 summit in Bari that affirmed her role as a leading figure in Europe. The Italian prime minister also stated that the EU will not directly contribute to a \$50bn loan to Ukraine agreed by the G7 leaders.

She dismissed a row about the absence of the word abortion, which she fought to excise despite French and US protests, from the final G7 communique. She also insisted she had not sought to alter the commitment to the rights of LGBTQ+ people, saying: "We are not taking any steps backwards, and therefore the expectations of some have been disappointed, because the story did not correspond to the truth."

In some respects her remarks about Israel falling into a trap set by Hamas were the most surprising. She is understood to believe that Israel should be willing to accept the peace plan set out by President Biden that seeks to create a permanent ceasefire on the basis of a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

5 GERMANY

Police seize cocaine worth €2.6bn in biggest ever haul

Prosecutors announced the seizure of cocaine worth €2.6bn (\$2.8bn) from container ships and the arrest of seven people in what they called the biggest ever cocaine find in the country.

Prosecutors in Düsseldorf said on Monday that they confiscated the 35.5 tonnes of cocaine last year after a tipoff from Colombian authorities.

The drugs were hidden among vegetables and fruit, and the seizures had not previously been announced. The German authorities worked with Europol on the operation, which was known as OP Plexus.

6 BRAZIL

Police seek pro-Bolsonaro rioters in Argentina

Police officials have asked Argentina for information about dozens of supporters of former president Jair Bolsonaro seeking refuge in the neighbouring country to avoid legal consequences for rioting in Brasília last January as part of an alleged coup attempt.

Federal police officials believe between 50 and 100 Bolsonaro supporters charged with vandalism and insurrection for their role in the riots have fled to Argentina after rightwinger Javier Milei took office in December.

Brazil has asked Argentinian police to identify their whereabouts in the country before deciding to request extraditions.

7 CANADA



Sleepy bear identified as culprit after car break-ins

After a string of vehicle break-ins in a north Canada town, local residents identified the culprit: a black bear with a taste for upholstery foam.

Awoken by a noise at night, Kayla Seward, who lives in the Ontario township of Larder Lake, found the sleepy black bear locked inside her car. The bear had apparently opened the unlocked vehicle by lifting a door handle with its mouth.

“Apparently, the bears are attracted to foam; that’s why they eat four-wheeler seats and stuff, I was told,” Seward said.

9 ITALY

At least 11 dead in two Mediterranean shipwrecks

At least 11 people died and dozens were missing after two separate shipwrecks close to the Italian coast, rescuers said.

Several bodies were found on Monday in a wooden boat in the central Mediterranean by rescuers from Nadir, a ship operated by the German charity ResQship. The charity said it saved 51 people who were onboard the vessel, believed to have departed from Tunisia.

The shipwreck happened about 65km south of the Italian island of Lampedusa, Italy’s Rai News said.

Separately, 66 people were reported missing on Monday in a shipwreck in the Ionian Sea, about 160km off the coast of Calabria. Twelve people including a pregnant woman were rescued by a merchant ship and taken to Roccella Ionica port. They had been travelling on a boat that had left Turkey, Italian media said.

8 GERMANY

Man with pickaxe shot by police before Euro match

A man who was allegedly wielding a pickaxe and carrying an incendiary device was shot by police near a Euro 2024 fan park in Hamburg last Sunday.

The unnamed suspect was said to have been shot in the leg after he emerged from a kebab shop.

He was surrounded by officers who fired a warning shot but witnesses said the suspect was brought down after he sought to run away among the crowds. Witnesses said he also appeared to be carrying a molotov cocktail.

The suspect was said to be a 39-year-old man from Buchholz in der Nordheide, who is known to have received treatment for mental health problems.

10 GEORGIA



Massive Attack cancel gig in solidarity with protesters

British band Massive Attack pulled out of a concert in Tbilisi, in protest against the government’s “attack on basic human rights”.

In a later statement, the trip-hop band clarified that they feared appearing at the Black Sea Arena would be seen as an endorsement of the political leadership.

Hundreds of thousands of people have massed outside parliament in recent months to protest against a “foreign agents” law. The legislation has been described by Brussels as an obstacle to Georgia’s accession to the European Union.

At least 14 die during hajj pilgrimage amid heatwave

At least 14 Jordanian pilgrims died while on the hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia as temperatures soared in the kingdom.

Jordan's foreign ministry said several people had died during the performance of hajj rituals and others were missing. It said its nationals had died "after suffering sun stroke due to the extreme heatwave" and that it had coordinated with Saudi authorities to bury the dead in Saudi Arabia, or transfer them to Jordan.

Mohammed Al-Abdulaali, a spokesperson for the Saudi health ministry, said more than 2,760 pilgrims suffered from sunstroke and heat stress on Sunday, when the heat reached 47C in Mecca.

Netanyahu dissolves his inner war cabinet

Benjamin Netanyahu dissolved the war cabinet that had been overseeing the conflict in Gaza, apparently moving to solidify his grasp on decision-making over the fighting with Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The prime minister is now expected to hold consultations about the Gaza war with a small group of ministers, including the defence minister, Yoav Gallant, and the strategic affairs minister, Ron Dermer, who had been in the war cabinet. The move is unlikely to have any meaningful impact on the conflict but the political ramifications may be more significant.

Spotlight Page 18 →



Ramaphosa re-elected as president after pact agreed

President Cyril Ramaphosa has been re-elected by lawmakers for a second term, hours after his African National Congress and the Democratic Alliance (DA) agreed to form a coalition, setting aside their rivalry in a historic pact.

Ramaphosa won last Friday's vote against Julius Malema, leader of the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters, winning 283 votes to Malema's 44. Earlier in the day the pro-business DA said it would vote for Ramaphosa as part of an agreement with the former liberation movement to form a unity government.

Vice-president and nine others killed in plane crash

The vice-president, Saulos Chilima, and nine other people were killed in a plane crash on 10 June, the country's president, Lazarus Chakwera, said.

The wreckage of the plane carrying Chilima and the former first lady Shanil Dzimbiri to a funeral of an ex-minister was found in the Chikangawa forest in the north of the country.

Air traffic controllers had told the plane not to attempt a landing in the northern city of Mzuzu due to bad weather. Contact was then lost and the plane disappeared from the radar. Seven passengers and three crew were onboard.

Global report

15 INDIA

**Author to be prosecuted over 2010 Kashmir remarks**

Authorities have granted permission for the prosecution of the Booker prize-winning Indian novelist Arundhati Roy over comments she made about Kashmir at an event in 2010.

The top official in the Delhi administration, VK Saxena, gave the go-ahead for action against Roy, alongside a former academic, under anti-terrorism laws.

The action against Roy and Sheikh Showkat Hussain, a former professor at the Central University of Kashmir, is over allegedly making provocative speeches, the Press Trust of India reported.

While Roy, 62, is one of India's most famous authors, her activism and criticism of prime minister Narendra Modi's government have made her a polarising figure.

Books Page 58 →

17 NORTH KOREA/RUSSIA

Putin visits Pyongyang in bid to strengthen ties

Vladimir Putin praised North Korea for supporting Russia's war in Ukraine, as he travelled to Pyongyang this week to seek continued military support.

In his first visit to North Korea since 2000, Putin was due to meet Kim Jong-un for talks as the two leaders pledge to expand their cooperation in defiance of western sanctions against both countries.

In an article for Korea's Central News Agency, Putin praised North Korea for "firmly supporting" Moscow's war in Ukraine, writing that he plans to lift relations with Pyongyang to a higher level.

It was a rare trip abroad for Putin, who has limited his international travel to friendly countries since he launched the full-scale invasion and became the subject of an international criminal court arrest warrant for the mass deportation of children from Ukraine to Russia.

Just hours before his visit, local media reported that North Korea's military had suffered "multiple casualties" after landmines exploded in the heavily armed border that separates the country from South Korea.

19 NEW ZEALAND

Record number of people quit the country

Citizens are leaving the country in record numbers, with many heading to Australia, new figures show. Stats NZ's provisional data shows there were an estimated 130,600 migrant departures in the year to April - the highest on record for an annual period.

Of those leaving the country on a long-term basis, an estimated 81,200 were New Zealand citizens - a 41% increase on the previous year. The previous record of 72,400 departures was in 2012.

With 24,800 New Zealand citizens arriving, net migration loss of citizens was more than 56,000 - exceeding the record of 44,400 in 2012. Overall, there was annual net migration gain of 98,500 as 154,900 non-New Zealand citizens entered the country.



DEATHS



Françoise Hardy
French singer and actor who wrote some of her country's biggest pop hits. She died on 11 June, aged 80.

Akira Endo
Japanese scientist whose work led to the creation of statins. He died on 5 June, aged 90.

Mark James
US songwriter behind Elvis Presley's biggest hits. He died on 8 June, aged 83.

Fumihiko Maki
Pritzker prize-winning Japanese architect. He died on 6 June, aged 95.

Paul Darveniza
Australian rugby union player and neurologist. He died on 11 June, aged 78.

Jerry West
US Hall of Fame basketball player, coach and executive. He died on 12 June, aged 86.

16 THAILAND

Prosecutors accuse former PM of insulting monarchy

Former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, a powerful backer of the ruling government, has been formally indicted for allegedly insulting the monarchy in 2015, in one of several court cases that have unsteadied Thai politics.

Thaksin, an influential political figure despite being ousted from power 18 years ago, reported to prosecutors just before 9am on Tuesday, a spokesperson for the office of the attorney general said.

Thaksin was granted bail after the attorney general indicted the 74-year-old billionaire. He is seen as the unofficial power behind the Pheu Thai-led government.

18 NEW CALEDONIA

Macron suspends voting reforms after unrest

Controversial voting reforms will be suspended, Emmanuel Macron announced, after a period of unrest in the French Pacific territory. The reforms, which would have altered voting rights, are contested by the Indigenous Kanak people who say they would be marginalised further.

Macron visited New Caledonia in May after weeks of unrest that left nine people dead.

Although approved by both France's National Assembly and Senate, the reforms cannot go ahead until a new legislature is in place after France's snap election at the end of the month.

20 NEW ZEALAND

Failure of PM's plane leaves officials stranded

Air New Zealand swooped in to save prime minister Christopher Luxon's trade mission to Japan, after another one of the country's beleaguered defence force planes was grounded.

The delegation was travelling to Tokyo on Sunday via Papua New Guinea. However, the group - including trade minister Todd McClay, business leaders and journalists - was left stranded after the discovery of blown fuses on the Boeing 757.

Luxon took a commercial flight along with three staff, but 50 others were forced into an unscheduled stay in Port Moresby.



ELECTION 2024

Labour and Tory NHS plans 'tighter than austerity'

Labour and the Conservatives would both leave the NHS with lower spending increases than during the years of Tory austerity, according to an analysis of their manifestos by a health thinktank.

The assessment by the Nuffield Trust of the costed NHS policies of both parties, announced in their manifestos last week, says the level of funding increases would leave them struggling to pay existing staff costs, let alone the bill for massive planned staffing increases in the long-term workforce plan agreed last year.

The Nuffield Trust said "the manifestos imply increases [in annual funding for the NHS] between 2024-25 and 2028-29 of 1.5% each year for the Liberal Democrats, 0.9% for the Conservatives and 1.1% for Labour.

"Both Conservative and Labour proposals would represent a lower level of funding increase than the period of 'austerity' between 2010-11 and 2014-15.

"This would be an unprecedented slowdown in NHS finances and it is inconceivable that it would accompany the dramatic recovery all are promising."

The trust added the planned funding increases "would make the next few years the tightest period of funding in NHS history".

The state of the NHS has been a key talking point in the buildup to the 4 July election. Rishi Sunak last year promised to bring down waiting lists from a record high of 7.2m but there are now 7.5 million people waiting for treatment. Labour has pledged an additional 2m appointments a year.

Spotlight Page 22 →

MIGRATION

Visa deadline puts millions at risk of losing rights

More than 4 million non-EU migrants living in Britain will need to switch to digital eVisas by the end of this year or risk being unable to prove their legal rights.

Data from the Home Office released under the Freedom of Information Act revealed that 4,066,145 people have Biometric Residence Permits that expire on 31 December, despite having legal leave to remain in the UK beyond that date. By the end of this year, they will need to have replaced these physical permits with eVisas.

The Home Office has struggled in early attempts to contact those affected, and campaigners are warning that the next government must address the 31 December deadline or risk a disaster.

HONOURS

Post Office campaigner Alan Bates knighted

The Post Office campaigner Alan Bates was knighted in the king's birthday honours in recognition of his role in exposing the Horizon IT scandal.

The former post office operator and founder of the Justice for Subpostmasters Alliance said he was accepting the honour "on behalf of the group" of branch operators and the "horrendous things that had happened to them".



CRIME

Decision to close hunt for teen's killers to be reviewed

The Met police's decision to shut down the hunt for the racist killers of Stephen Lawrence is to be reviewed, with police admitting "serious mistakes" are still being made in the case, the Guardian has learned.

At least three of the gang believed to have chased and stabbed Stephen, who was 18, in south-east London in April 1993 are still free, with two men convicted of his murder in 2012.

London's police force closed the investigation in 2020, in a move opposed by Stephen's parents. Now the Met has agreed to a review of the closure decision and other aspects of the case.



HEALTH

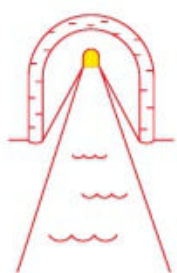
Brexit blamed for crisis of prescription medicine

Almost half of adults in the UK have struggled to get prescribed medicine - and more people blame Brexit than anything else for the situation, research shows.

A survey for the British Generic Manufacturers Association (BGMA) found 49% of people said they had experienced trouble getting a prescription dispensed in the past two years.

One in 12 Britons were unable to find the medication they needed, despite asking a number of pharmacies. When asked why shortages were so common, more cited issues involving the UK leaving the EU (36%) than inflation (33%) or global conflict and instability (26%).

"Shortages are deeply worrying for patients' physical health, alongside the stress of not knowing if an essential medicine will be available," said Mark Samuels, the BGMA chief executive. The Brexit agreement was a factor contributing to the problem, he added.



5.6

The length in kilometres of Standedge Tunnel, the UK's longest subterranean passage for a canal, which was opened in 1811 and stretches below the Pennine hills. Guided canoe trips through the tunnel are being launched to help raise funds by the Canal & River Trust



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Reader's eyewitness

Local colour

'Bright colours on a grey day in Tobermory harbour on the Isle of Mull.'

By Nicola Turner,
Tobermory,
Scotland, UK



SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT



MEDICAL RESEARCH

UTI test to speed up diagnosis wins Longitude prize

An £8m (\$10.2m) prize for a breakthrough in the fight against superbugs has been awarded, after a decade-long search for a winner, to a test that can identify how to treat a urinary tract infection in 45 minutes.

Sysmex Astrego's PA-100 AST system, based on technology from Uppsala University in Sweden, could herald a "sea change" in antibiotic use, the judges said as they announced the winner of the Longitude prize on antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Between 50% and 60% of women will experience at least one urinary tract infection (UTI) in their lifetime, and up to half of the bacteria that cause the infections are resistant to at least one antibiotic. The test can spot bacterial infection within 15 minutes, and identify the antibiotic to treat it within 45 minutes. Previously, the turnaround time for a laboratory could be up to two or three days.

CONSERVATION

Wild horses arrive back on Kazakhstan's steppes

A group of the world's last wild horses have returned to their native Kazakhstan after an absence of about 200 years. Four mares came from Berlin and a stallion and two other mares from Prague.

Przewalski's horses once roamed the vast steppe grasslands of central Asia, where horses are believed to have been first domesticated about 5,500 years ago. Human activity, including hunting the animals for their meat, as well as road building, which fragmented their population, drove the horses close to extinction in the 1960s.

ENVIRONMENT

Ozone-depleting HCFCs reached peak five years early

International efforts to protect the ozone layer have been a "huge global success", scientists said, after revealing that damaging gases in the atmosphere were declining faster than expected.

The Montreal protocol, signed in 1987, aimed to phase out ozone-

depleting hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) found primarily in refrigeration, air conditioning and aerosol sprays. A study published in the journal Nature Climate Change found that atmospheric levels of HCFCs, harmful gases responsible for holes in the ozone layer, peaked in 2021 - five years ahead of projections.

ZOOLOGY

Elephants call each other by their names

Elephants call out to each other using individual names that they invent for their fellow pachyderms. While dolphins and parrots have been observed addressing each other by mimicking the sound of others from their species, elephants are the first non-human animals known to use names that do not involve imitation.

A study published in the journal Nature Ecology & Evolution, used an artificial intelligence algorithm to analyse the "rumbles" of two wild herds of African savanna elephants recorded at Kenya's Samburu national reserve and Amboseli national park between 1986 and 2022.

17m

The number of migratory insects that funnel through the 30-metre-wide Puerto de Bujaruelo pass in the Pyrenees between France and Spain each year, emitting a low, deep hum as they fly south



The big story
French election

FRANCE
By Jon Henley PARIS

Ahead of a snap parliamentary vote, Marine Le Pen's National Rally is polling high across much of the country. Can the party actually win power - and what would it try to do if so?

Fears grow over far right's rise

Centrists on edge over snap poll [Page 13 →](#)

Extremists aim for mainstream [Page 14 →](#)

It is 8pm on Sunday 7 July. Polling stations have just closed after the second round of snap French parliamentary elections - the country's most momentous ballot in living memory - and the first estimations flash up on the nation's TV screens.

President Emmanuel Macron has lost his gamble. The National Rally (RN) of Marine Le Pen has more than trebled its tally of deputies in the *assemblée nationale* to just over 290: an absolute majority. France's next government will be far right.

According to current polling, this may not - by a whisker - be the most likely outcome of the vote taking place less than three weeks before the start



of the Paris Olympics. But it certainly could be. RN has the momentum, and Macron is on the ropes. After scoring a record 31%, more than double the president's list, in EU elections, early polls suggest the party could win up to 265 seats. It would not need much at all to push it over the line.

"Across huge swathes of France, especially outside big cities, in almost every segment of the population - sex, age group, profession - RN is now booking record high scores," said Jérôme Fourquet of pollsters IFOP. "For a great many voters, it's just a party like any other."

Rym Momtaz, Paris-based Europe expert at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, noted that the far-

right party's performance had improved in every election since 2017, and broken records in the most recent two: "This could end up really ugly."

Even a near majority would give RN considerably more influence, forcing the president to seek almost impossible alliances, in a far more hostile and fractured parliament.

Le Pen and Jordan Bardella, the party's telegenic, TikTok-friendly 28-year-old president, have not yet published a manifesto, hoping to hold the door open for as long as possible for potential rightwing electoral alliances in the run-up to the vote.

But a policy statement has been circulated to candidates, and officials have hinted the programme will probably be a cross between its European election manifesto and the platform it campaigned on in the 2022 national elections that gave it 89 seats.

The one-page candidates' leaflet outlines its priorities, led by the cost of living, immigration and security. Apart from a promise to slash power bills and cut VAT on electricity, gas and heating oil, most of the pledges are non-specific.

On immigration, it says an RN-led government will "drastically reduce legal and illegal immigration". On security, it will aim to "put a stop to judicial lenience towards delinquents and criminals".

It also promises to "fight unfair competition" for farmers, boost public health support, "end red tape for families and businesses", "cut the costs of immigration" and "cut benefit and tax fraud". Abroad, it will "defend France's sovereignty and interests".

So far, so vague. The party's 2022 pledges, however, were more specific: expel more migrants, stop family reunification, give French nationals preference in jobs, benefits and social housing, and kick out immigrants unemployed for more than a year.

It promised to privatise French public radio and television (a pledge repeated last week) and install a "presumption of legitimate self-defence" for officers involved in cases of alleged police violence aimed at "restoring authority and boosting morale". It aimed to return the retirement age from 64 to 62 (60 for those who started work at 16 or 17), offer a zero-interest €100,000 (\$107,000) loan to boost home ownership, axe inheritance tax for many and exempt the under-30s from income tax.

'RN is now booking record high scores. For many voters, it's just a party like any other'

◀ Marine Le Pen (centre) and Jordan Bardella (right) may need electoral alliances

CHRISTIAN HARTMANN/REUTERS

▼ Emmanuel Macron's decision to call the snap election has sparked criticism

ALESSANDRO DELLA VALLE/KEYSTONE/AP



Together with RN's planned VAT cuts on energy and other measures such as the renationalisation of France's motorways, economists in 2022 costed the hit to public finances at €120bn a year, for just €18bn in savings.

RN proposed funding this mammoth public spending hike by taxing corporate super-profits and life insurance savings as well as withholding some EU budget contributions, but the Institut Montaigne thinktank put the likely net cost at more than 3.5% of GDP.

Industry associations have said RN's plans are "incompatible with competitiveness and prosperity for our nation" and would further increase France's \$3.2tn debt. The finance minister, Bruno Le Maire, warned of a "Liz Truss scenario" - a reference to the former British prime minister whose plans for large-scale tax cuts and borrowing caused financial panic and led to her resignation after 49 days.

Le Pen acknowledged last week that there would be "constraints" on what the party can do in government without a sympathetic president, while Bardella said "choices will have to be made" and pension reform may have to wait for "a second phase".

RN saw the coming years as "preparation" for its entry to the Élysée Palace in 2027, Le Pen told TF1, recognising that some measures would not yet be possible. Crucially, several of the proposed measures - including most of its "national preference" plans and possibly its under-30s income tax break - are likely to be judged unconstitutional and would require constitutional reform.

That would be problematic in a "cohabitation" with an unwilling president: changing France's constitution requires a three-fifths majority in the lower and upper houses combined, or approval in a referendum that can only be initiated by the head of state.

By convention - and because they do not want to see their government overturned by a no-confidence vote or a motion of censure by parliament - the president appoints a prime minister and cabinet that will have majority support in the lower house.

France has had several "cohabitations" - when the president is in a different camp from parliament and government. "But there has never been one between two politicians so ideologically opposed as Macron and Le Pen," said Mujtaba Rahman of the Eurasia Group consultancy. →



◀ A protest against National Rally and the far right in Paris

TELMO PINTO/
SOPA IMAGES/REX/
SHUTTERSTOCK

“France’s constitution is ambivalent and untested in such a situation. In previous cohabitations, both parties respected the same fundamental principles. Le Pen’s programme, if she tried to impose it, would conflict with Macron almost across the board.”

Macron is centrist, pro-business, pro-European, pro-Ukraine. Le Pen is nationalist, populist, anti-EU, Moscow-friendly. Le Pen’s migration plans would violate European human rights laws, Rahman said, and her national preferences are incompatible with membership of the EU’s single market.

France’s constitution states clearly that the prime minister “directs the action of the government and ensures the execution of laws”, with the government running most of the domestic policy, and foreign and defence policy largely the preserve of the country’s president.

That means key policy areas such as pensions, unemployment benefit, education, taxation, immigration, nationality, public employment, law and order and labour legislation would all fall, in principle, under a far right-dominated parliament and government.

While French presidents enjoy considerable powers compared with many other heads of state, if RN has a stable majority, it would have plenty of scope

‘There’s never been a cohabitation between two politicians so ideologically opposed’

to implement many of its policies: previous “cohabiting” prime ministers have passed measures opposed by presidents, including the 35-hour week and the reprivatisation of state companies.

And even if Macron would, in theory at least, retain control over foreign policy, such as continued French support for Ukraine, he would still need parliament’s backing in order to finance future aid to Kyiv as part of France’s budget.

There is a certain amount the president could do to constrain an RN-led government’s actions. “He has no veto per se,” noted Rahman, but could refuse to sign government decrees and delay them by referring them to an independent constitutional council.

Legal experts believe, however, that the council would probably uphold the government’s right to put into practice many parts of its domestic agenda – and governments can, as Macron’s has, use special constitutional powers such as article 49.3 to push through laws.

The president also, of course, has the right to address the nation on live TV, and could use it to constantly hammer an RN-led government – although, as many analysts point out, his popularity is now so diminished that it is doubtful how much influence that would have.

There is, of course, no certainty the RN will win a majority, or even be able to form a majority in alliance with others. The most likely outcome, opinion polls and most experts assume, is another hung parliament. But either way, France is in for a rough few years. *Observer*

JON HENLEY IS THE GUARDIAN AND OBSERVER’S EUROPE CORRESPONDENT

Greater goal
Mbappé urges rejection of RN

The French footballers Kylian Mbappé and Marcus Thuram have urged voters to reject “extreme views” in the election. Speaking at the Euro 2024 tournament, Thuram urged people to “fight daily” to prevent the National Rally from gaining power. Mbappé (below) agreed: “I don’t want to represent a country that doesn’t correspond to my values, or our values,” he said. “We are a generation that can make a difference. We see the extremes are knocking on the door of power and we have the opportunity to shape our country’s future”



ANALYSIS
FRANCE

‘Russian roulette’ *Macron’s ballot box gamble is the stuff of centrist nightmares*

By Angelique Chrisafis PARIS



The prime minister, Gabriel Attal, stared ahead with his arms folded while another minister covered his face with his hands. As the French president, Emmanuel Macron, gathered top government figures at the Élysée on 9 June to make the shock announcement that he would dissolve parliament and call a snap legislative election after a surge at the polls by Marine Le Pen’s party, the mood, the prime minister said, was “grave”.

One senior centrist figure said they had not slept properly since the announcement of a campaign that is the shortest in modern French history at barely three weeks.

Macron’s opponents on the left have meanwhile deemed it utter folly to call a sudden French parliament election at a time when the far-right National Rally (RN) is at its highest level of support in history. “It’s Russian roulette,” said several politicians.

Le Pen’s renamed National Rally – which as the Front National founded by her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, was for decades regarded as a danger to democracy that promoted racist, antisemitic and anti-Muslim views – topped the European elections with a record 31.4%. This was double the score of Macron’s centrists, who are at their lowest ebb. Le Pen’s support is also increasingly solid – her party came top in over 90% of the communes of France in the European poll.

Amid bafflement on why a

snap election had been called, Macron described himself as an “unshakeable optimist” who was “in it to win”. He said he trusted French voters to now make a distinction between expressing anger at the ballot box in the European elections, and actually risking having an extremist government in France that he said would destroy the cohesion of society and wreck the economy. He said he was convinced a large number of French people did not “recognise themselves in this extremist fever” and would vote to save the centre ground.

Predicting the result is complex, but pollsters agree on the broad trend: the far right could make massive and historic gains, going from 88 seats to more than 200, potentially allowing them to enter government. A united

front of parties on the left could come second. Macron’s centrist group, founded in 2016 as a radical reinvention of the French political landscape that promised to reinvigorate politics and curb the appeal of the far right, could lose a large chunk of its seats and come a distant third. At the end of it all, there might be no absolute parliament majority.

A member of Macron’s entourage said the snap election was admittedly “brutal” for his centrist MPs, but it was “necessary” and “rational”. Macron, after a European election defeat by the far right, and two fraught years with no absolute majority in parliament, could not continue without “listening” to the people, the source said.

Macron argued that he could deliver a new broad centrist

Macron is convinced the French did not ‘recognise themselves in this extremist fever’

▼ Macron has described himself as an ‘unshakeable optimist’

BLONDET ELIOT/ABACA/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

coalition government if more politicians join him from the traditional right and social democratic left. But that form of coalition has proved impossible since 2022, when Macron’s centrists lost their parliamentary majority.

The mood in France is tense. Macron’s confidence ratings have dropped and voters from the centre-left deserted him in the European elections, accusing him of veering right with a law on immigration and pushing through a rise in the pension age. Macron argued that polls showed that a majority of French people approved his decision to call a snap election. But polling by CSA showed that 57% of French people want Macron to resign if his centrists are defeated.

The president insists he will not resign. Even if Le Pen’s RN did manage the steep challenge of reaching an absolute majority in the French parliament and forming a government with their 28-year-old party leader, Jordan Bardella, as prime minister, Macron could remain president for three more years and still be in charge of defence and foreign policy. But he would lose control over the domestic agenda, including economic policy, security, immigration and finances.

Macron gave a broad sense of campaign ideas last week – from calling a national consultation on secularism in France to banning mobile phones for children under 11. He warned that France faced a choice between his own centrists “or the extremes”, which he called the far right and the far left. He said Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s leftwing La France Insoumise party was extreme and warned other parties on the left against an election alliance that included it. But that alliance could score higher in the snap election than Macron’s centrists.

“It’s going to be very difficult for the centrists,” said Stewart Chau, the director of polling at Vèrian Group. He said public opinion viewed Macron’s decision less as an act of courage than “an arsonist playing with fire”.

ANGELIQUE CHRISAFIS IS THE GUARDIAN’S PARIS CORRESPONDENT

31.4%

The percentage of French voters that opted for Marine Le Pen’s National Rally at the European elections

57%

Proportion of people who want Macron to resign if his centrists are defeated in the election, a poll showed





COMMENTARY

Identity crisis

Beware rebranded far right's creep into the mainstream

By Kenan Malik

Far right? Hard right? Radical right? Or just plain right? The success in the recent EU elections of parties such as Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National (RN - the rebadged Front National) and Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) has generated a debate about whether the label "far right" should be retired because, as Spectator editor Fraser Nelson argues, many parties that carry that moniker are "now mainstream in a way that wasn't the case 15 years ago".

Such parties are, for Nelson, better categorised as "new right". It is true that the term "far right" is thrown around too promiscuously and that, in power, far-right politicians often rule not like latter-day Mussolinis but rather as technocrats with a reactionary edge. What is missing from this argument, though, is the recognition that the mainstreaming of the far right should raise questions about the character not just of the far right but of the mainstream, too.

Organisations termed "far right" comprise, as Jon Bloomfield and David Edgar note in a new polemical critique of the "populist right", at least three distinct lineages. First, there are the "unashamed neo-fascist parties", such as Germany's The Homeland (successor to the National Democratic party, NPD) and Golden Dawn in Greece. These may pose a threat on the streets but have little popular support.

Then there are the "fascist successor parties",

organisations that developed out of old fascist parties, including Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy and France's RN, many of which have striven to "detoxify" themselves in search of electoral success. Finally, there are new parties such as the AfD, founded in 2013, and Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom (PVV), created in the Netherlands in 2006 to oppose immigration and Islam, which triumphed in last year's general election.

The burgeoning success of far-right or "new-right" parties does not herald the march of jackboots, or a return to 1930s fascism. The fascist parties of the interwar years emerged at a time of fierce class conflict and of violent confrontation between capital and labour. Today's "new right" has been nurtured by almost the reverse social conditions.

Over the past 40 years, working-class organisations have disintegrated, class conflict has become less overt and large sections of the public have become disengaged from the political process. At the very time that economic and social developments, from the casualisation of work to the imposition of austerity, have made working-class lives so much more precarious, social democratic parties have moved away from their traditional working-class constituencies, leaving many feeling politically voiceless.

Meanwhile, the politics of class has given way to the politics of identity, and class itself has come to be seen not so much a political or economic category as a cultural, even racial, attribute. Politicians and journalists often talk now about the "white working class" but rarely about the "black working class" or the "Muslim working class", even though a far greater proportion of black people and Muslims are working class.

Instead, commentators such as Matthew Goodwin, an academic researcher into rightwing populism who has now turned into an advocate for it, imagine an "informal alliance between white elites, corporations and minorities against the white working class", thereby both excluding minorities from the working class and playing on white victimhood. All this has opened the way for reactionary movements to reshape politics by linking a bigoted form of identity politics, rooted in hostility to migrants and Muslims, to economic and social policies that were once the staple of the left: defence of jobs, support for the welfare state, opposition to austerity. In practice, "new right" politicians advocate measures inimical to working-class interests, from attacks on civil liberties to curbs on trade union rights.

There is, many critics insist, nothing "far right" or "racist" about wanting to restrict immigration or in raising concerns about radical Islamists. That is true. There is, though, something profoundly pernicious about demonising immigrants, castigating Muslims as being incompatible with western societies, obsessing over London becoming a "minority white" city, claiming that immigration has led Britons into "surrendering their territory without a shot being fired", fearing that Europe is "committing suicide". These are far-right themes now advanced by mainstream intellectuals and politicians.

If the label "far right" seems redundant to some these days, that is largely because arguments that once were the staple of the political fringe now nestle at the heart of mainstream debate. *Observer*

KENAN MALIK IS AN OBSERVER COLUMNIST

◀ A defaced RN election poster in Paris

JOEL SAGET/AFP/GETTY

Social democratic parties have moved away from their traditional working-class electorate

UNITED KINGDOM

Why is no one talking about Brexit?

Page 22 →

Spotlight



UKRAINE

Renewed Russian strikes take heavy toll on Kharkiv

By Luke Harding KHARKIV
Artem Mazhulin

The apartment at 24 Liubovi Maloi avenue was an eerie ruin. Its roof and outer walls had disappeared. In one corner, a row of suits hung in a wardrobe. There was a TV, a coffee cup, a maroon jacket on a peg. And a black-and-white photo album with old family snaps taken in communist times.

The flat's inhabitants – Svitlana Vlasenko and her grownup daughter, Polina – were not coming back. The Russian missile that fell on their building on a Friday night killed them and six of their neighbours. Twenty-six people were injured, two of them children.

The street in Ukraine's second city, Kharkiv, was not near any military objects. It was a quiet place of flowerbeds, communal benches and a sandy play area for children. Residents walked their dogs in a resin-scented pine forest, which was also hit in the strike on 31 May by five S-300 rockets.

Since Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Kharkiv has been under constant bombardment. Russian troops tried and failed to occupy the city. They retreated but were close enough to pound it with artillery. In September 2022, Ukrainian forces pushed the Russians back to the state border. On 10 May this year,

▲ A commercial building hit by a Russian attack on 31 May in the Novobavarsky district of Kharkiv

Continued



the Kremlin staged a fresh incursion, seizing the town of Vovchansk and assaulting the hilltop village of Lyptsi.

At the same time, Moscow intensified its aerial attacks on Kharkiv, using drones and surface-to-air missiles. Taking the city remains a Russian objective. For now, Putin appears determined to break the resistance of its 1 million inhabitants by subjecting them to deadly and terrifying strikes. “They want to make Kharkiv a grey zone so we can’t work or live or have fun,” said Liliia Yakovleva, 27, an accountant.

Yakovleva lives across the square from where the attack took place. She said the first missile blew out her neighbour’s windows. The second, a few minutes later, plunged into number 24, a five-storey private block. “The explosion threw bodies on the ground. I saw one was on fire,” she said.

“For two years you think the war is near but it won’t take you. You live your life. Then you understand the war can come for you at any time.”

Rescue workers cleared the yard and removed most of the debris. They left behind a crushed VW Passat car. In the nearby forest, a missile had torn through pine trees and burned undergrowth. “People used to move here, to the west of the city, because it was out of shelling range. Now Kharkiv has no good areas - everywhere is dangerous,” Yakovleva said. “The Russians want us to work for them. But we don’t want to be a part of their country.”

Kharkiv’s regional governor, Oleh Syniehubov, said the number of attacks had recently gone down after the Biden administration allowed Ukraine to use some US-supplied weapons against military targets in Russia. Previously, the Russians had



▲ Ruslan Burdov at the scene of a Russian strike at a lakeside resort in Cherkaska Lozova, Kharkiv

fired on Kharkiv from positions in the Belgorod region, just over the border.

Ukraine’s armed forces have used US HIMARS missiles to destroy at least one Russian S-300/S-400 launcher outside Belgorod. Syniehubov said further action had been taken against enemy logistics but he acknowledged that Kharkiv did not have Patriot air defence systems, which would allow the city to down Russian combat planes carrying guided bombs. “They are still flying,” he said.

Last month Putin declared that he did not intend to capture Kharkiv and merely wished to create a “sanitary zone” to protect Belgorod. “Of course they want to occupy Kharkiv. They will advance until they are stopped,” Syniehubov said.

The reduction in attacks came too late for Ruslan Burdov, the 53-year-old owner of a lakeside resort in the village of Cherkaska Lozova, close to Kharkiv. On 19 May, guests were relaxing on the reed-fringed site. The Russians hit it out of the blue with an Iskander missile.

Six people died. One was a pregnant woman. Burdov said his son Artur, 21, called him about the attack and ran to help the injured. Twenty minutes later a second Iskander missile landed metres away from the first. It was a classic double tap - designed to hurt rescue workers who arrived to give assistance. The second blast ripped off two of Artur’s fingers and tore off

40

The death toll from Russian strikes on Kharkiv between 10 May and 10 June. Another 186 people were wounded

a part of his leg. His fiancée, Sonia, was also hurt.

Burdov said he was bewildered as to why Moscow would target his resort. “I support the Ukrainian army. But we have no soldiers here,” he said. “I’m very sorry people died. I’m sorry about my guests.” Asked what he would do now, he said: “I have no plan. I put my soul into this place. It was 16 years of work.” Before 2014 - and Putin’s annexation of Crimea - many of his visitors had been Russians, he said.

The following weekend, Russia sent another missile into a large and crowded DIY store. About 200 shoppers were inside the Epicentr K hypermarket when the strike - the deadliest in weeks - landed. Sixteen people died and more than 40 were injured.

“There’s no place where they don’t bomb us,” said Herman Shevchenko, a security guard, gazing at the gutted shell of his former workplace. “In 2022 they kept hitting us with Grads [missiles]. We don’t have F-16 planes. If we did, maybe this would stop.”

Just over three hours after the Epicentr strike, Moscow hit a downtown office building. The apparent target was a branch of Nova Poshta,



‘They want to make Kharkiv a grey zone so we can’t work or live or have fun’

▲ Liliia Yakovleva

Photographs by Jędrzej Nowicki

a Ukrainian postal and courier delivery company.

Vladimir Alisultanov, 22, a barista, was in the Sweeter cafe, 100 metres away. “We threw ourselves to the ground. I didn’t see the rocket. There was a red flash,” he said. He was shaken but unhurt. “I saw a girl walk out of a barber’s shop covered in blood,” he said.

Alisultanov, a refugee from the Russian-occupied southern port city of Berdiansk, showed a video he had recorded immediately after the attack. It showed a chaotic scene of dust and rubble. “We were fucking hit here near our work. Phew, it’s good that I’m alive! There, fucking destroyed,” he said.

One of his customers had narrowly avoided being killed. After the impact she ran inside the cafe. Seconds later a piece of concrete smashed into her pavement table, cleaving her chair.

One of the grimmest episodes took place the same week at Factor Druk, Ukraine’s biggest printing house. On 23 May, Russia hit the complex with four S-300 missiles. Seven workers assembling books were killed. Five were so badly burned they could be identified only by DNA tests. More than 50,000 books were destroyed. “The Russians are wiping out our history and culture,” said the plant’s general director, Tetiana Hryniuk.

Statistics from the Kharkiv mayor’s office paint a grim picture. In May alone there were more than 75 incidents of strikes and shelling, almost three times more than in April. It included 37 strikes from airdropped glide bombs, 25 by rockets, 12 from Shahed-type kamikaze drones and three by Lancet-type loitering munitions. The air raid siren went off 193 times and sounded for a cumulative 474 hours and 55 minutes.

According to official data and local media reports, the death toll between 10 May and 10 June was 40 people. Another 186 were wounded. Syniehubov said the direct strike on the private house in Liubovi Maloi avenue was outrageous. “There are only civilians there. We had to identify several victims using DNA tests,” he said.

Despite the attacks, he said he was optimistic about Kharkiv’s future. “We will have victory. You can see for yourself we are still here,” he said.

LUKE HARDING IS A GUARDIAN FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT; ARTEM MAZHULIN IS A UKRAINIAN JOURNALIST BASED IN KYIV

UKRAINE

Key powers fail to sign peace summit communique

By Jennifer Rankin BRUSSELS

Key regional powers including Brazil, India, South Africa and Saudi Arabia failed to sign up to a joint communique issued at the end of a Ukraine peace conference in which more than 80 countries and international organisations endorsed its territorial integrity in the face of Russia’s invasion.

Speaking at the end of the two-day summit in Switzerland, Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, welcomed the “first steps toward peace” but acknowledged that not all attendees had come onboard, saying that Russia was trying to divide the world.

He said the final communique remained “open for accession by everyone who respects the UN charter”.

About 100 countries took part in the conference in the resort of Bürgenstock, but Russia was not invited and China snubbed the event. Amid modest expectations ahead of the event, western diplomats argued that its significance lay partly in its participants. Attendees were mostly from Europe, the US and other western allies, but included countries from Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Zelenskiy said parties had agreed to work in groups on “action plans for peace”, which he said would open the way to a second peace summit.

The final text was signed by more than 80 countries and international organisations.

In a boost for Kyiv, Turkey, which maintains close trading links with Russia and has sought to be a peace-maker, signed the document. It was also signed by Argentina, Iraq, Qatar and Rwanda.

Saudi Arabia, India, South Africa, Thailand, Indonesia, Mexico and the United Arab Emirates, however, took part in the summit, but did not sign the final communique. Brazil attended with “observer status” and did not endorse the text.

Before the gathering, Russia’s president, Vladimir Putin, demanded that Ukrainian troops leave four eastern Ukrainian regions that are partially occupied by his troops. In another diplomatic non-starter for Kyiv, Putin also called on Ukraine to abandon plans to join Nato.

China decided not to send an envoy to the summit, despite Ukraine’s invitation. Asked about Beijing’s position on the war, Zelenskiy said: “China truly has influence and I believe that China could help us.”

He added: “I believe that friends are those who are helping when it is difficult. I would want China to be a friend for Ukraine.”

Signatories to the communique stated that threats or use of nuclear weapons was “inadmissible”, after repeated nuclear sabre-rattling by Putin, as well as attacks on the Zaporizhzhia nuclear energy plant. It called for attacks to cease on Ukrainian civilian ports and on merchant ships, saying food security “must not be weaponised in any way”. And it called for the release of all prisoners of war and the return of unlawfully detained Ukrainian civilians, including children.

In line with the summit’s modest aims, there was no discussion of what a postwar settlement would look like or Ukraine’s hopes of joining Nato. Viola Amherd, the Swiss president, who hosted the event, said the fact that the “great majority” of participants agreed to the final document “shows what diplomacy can achieve”.

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▼ Volodymyr Zelenskiy at the peace summit

URS FLUEELER/
AFP/GETTY





ANALYSIS
ISRAEL

No end in sight Israel's conflict with Hamas and Hezbollah grinds on

By Peter Beaumont JERUSALEM



In 2019, Aviv Kochavi, then the chief of staff of Israel Defense Forces (IDF), delivered a bullish speech. The IDF, he proclaimed, is “all about victory”.

Assessing that the primary threats to Israel's security were from nonstate actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah, Kochavi would the following year usher in a new operational doctrine titled “decisive victory”. It envisaged “swift, offensive operations relying on the use of smaller units supported by massive firepower”.

Nine months into the Gaza conflict that followed Hamas's surprise attack in southern Israel on 7 October, the state is fighting on two fronts simultaneously. But the

promise of a “swift” or “decisive victory” has proved illusory.

And in the midst of US-led international pressure for meaningful ceasefire talks and a hostage-for-prisoners deal, backed by the passage of a UN security council resolution, the dynamics of the ever-lengthening war have imposed their own reality.

The reported existence of letters sent by Yahya Sinwar, the Hamas leader in Gaza, describing civilian Palestinian casualties as “a necessary sacrifice”, suggest that the group sees the progress of the conflict in a fundamentally different light to Israeli officials.

Hamas views its battle in terms of historical liberation movements such as the Algerian struggle for independence from France, which suffered significant civilian setbacks at the hands of French forces. The continuing failure of meaningful ceasefire talks has exposed Israel and Hamas's diametrically opposed views – not just on what the conflict represents today but the longer-term trajectory.

Israel's political and military leadership has for years believed it possible to manage its conflicts, with the Palestinians and with Hezbollah, while ignoring the political vectors driving the violence, not least the Palestinian demand for statehood and self-determination.

But Hamas and Hezbollah have long viewed a more distant horizon. Hamas believes it has

achieved its most significant gains away from the fighting – on the diplomatic front. Israel's conduct of a war with “massive firepower” and the subsequent catastrophic civilian suffering have seen it facing increasing diplomatic isolation and accusations of war crimes, including genocide and the use of starvation as a weapon of war – charges Israel denies – as more countries have recognised Palestinian statehood.

If that explains Hamas's maximalist position in the ceasefire negotiations – that it will only accept the end of the fighting and an Israel withdrawal from Gaza – Israel's position, despite wishful thinking in Washington, is similarly inflexible.

The departure of Benny Gantz and his party from Benjamin Netanyahu's emergency coalition has not only made the prime minister more reliant on far-right parties opposed to a ceasefire, it has failed to trigger a political crisis, instead seeing support for Netanyahu creep up in the polls.

It is not only around the question of the war in Gaza itself, where the conflict is imposing its own dangerous dynamic. In the parallel conflict with Hezbollah, launched in support of Gaza on 8 October, the same Israeli assumptions about managed conflict and the availability of quick and easy victory have been exposed.

Nine months of daily and gradually intensified exchanges have displaced tens of thousands of people on both sides of the Lebanese border. While Hezbollah has insisted it does not seek all-out war but is ready for it if it happens, what remains unclear is how the fighting ends and on what terms.

Like Hamas, Hezbollah views itself as, if not winning, at least not losing. The death of about 400 Hezbollah fighters has not worried the leadership and it remains to be seen if it can be persuaded through negotiations to withdraw from the border.

The war on both fronts – regardless of the horror – appears destined to grind on for now.

Observer

PETER BEAUMONT IS A SENIOR INTERNATIONAL REPORTER FOR THE GUARDIAN AND OBSERVER

◀ Smoke billows from the Israeli border town of Metula after it was targeted by rockets from Lebanon

RABIH DAHER/AFP/GETTY

The failure of ceasefire talks has exposed Israel and Hamas's opposed views on the longer-term trajectory

SUDAN

US warns of the most catastrophic famine for four decades

By Julian Borger WASHINGTON

Sudan is facing a famine that could become worse than any the world has seen since Ethiopia 40 years ago, US officials have warned, as aid deliveries continue to be blocked by the warring armies but arms supplies to both sides continue to flow in.

With much of the world's attention focused on Gaza, the scene of another human-made famine, Sudan is already the worst humanitarian crisis in the world and is slipping towards a disaster of historic proportions, with far less media coverage and global concern. A UN humanitarian appeal for the country has received only 16% of the funds it needs.

"We need the world to wake up to the catastrophe happening before our eyes," Linda Thomas-Greenfield, US ambassador to the UN, told reporters.

She was speaking as El Fasher, the capital of the North Darfur region and a former humanitarian hub, faced its second month under siege by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). A paramilitary group, the RSF has been fighting the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) since April 2023, when a power struggle between two rival generals, the SAF's Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the country's de facto ruler, and the RSF's Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, also known as Hemedti, escalated into a conflict that has split the country. The civil war has killed over 14,000 people and forced 10 million to flee their homes.

The UN security council adopted a UK-drafted resolution last week, demanding an end to the El Fasher siege, but fighting escalated with the SAF claiming to have repelled a major

RSF assault, inflicting "huge losses".

The head of the US Agency for International Development, Samantha Power, voiced concerns over the fate of people sheltering in El Fasher if the town fell to the RSF. That force has largely been recruited from the Janjaweed militias, who carried out massacres while fighting on the Khartoum government's side in the Darfur genocide of 2003 to 2005. "Where the RSF has gone in the Darfur area historically, and in this conflict, mass atrocities have followed," Power said.

Last week, she announced \$315m in new US humanitarian assistance for Sudan, but said hardly any aid was reaching isolated populations. Both sides have been accused of using control over food access as a weapon.

"The RSF has been looting humanitarian warehouses, stealing food, and destroying grain storage facilities," Power said. The SAF had shut down cross-border access from Chad at the Adré crossing, "the main route for assistance to enter the Darfur region", she said.

The SAF has offered another access point from Chad, the Tine crossing, but US officials say it is already obstructed and inadequate and will be impassable with the coming rainy season.

"The clear message here is that it is obstruction, not insufficient stocks of food, that is the driving force behind the historic and deadly levels of starvation in Sudan," Power said. "The most worrying scenario would be that Sudan would become the

deadliest famine since Ethiopia in the early 1980s," she added.

The Ethiopian famine killed a million people between 1983 and 1985, according to UN estimates. Thomas-Greenfield said that in a worst-case scenario, a famine in Sudan could become even more lethal.

"We've seen mortality projections estimating that in excess of 2.5 million people, about 15% of the population in Darfur and Kordofan - the hardest hit regions - could die by the end of September," the ambassador said. "This is the largest humanitarian crisis on the face of the planet. And yet, somehow, it threatens to get worse," she added.

While humanitarian aid has faced constant obstruction, both sides in the war continue to receive weapons, the US officials said: the SAF from Russia and Iran among others, the RSF in particular from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a US ally.

Thomas-Greenfield said Washington had "engaged" with the UAE on the issue. However, a White House account of a "pull aside" meeting between Joe Biden and the UAE's Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan at the G7 summit in Italy did not mention Sudan.

The US faces accusations of hypocrisy from many countries, as Washington calls for an end to weapons supplies to parties involved in the Sudan conflict, while still providing weapons to Israel during its offensive on Gaza.

JULIAN BORGER IS THE GUARDIAN'S WORLD AFFAIRS EDITOR

▼ A queue for rice distributed by the Red Cross near Adré

ZOHRA BENSEMRA/
REUTERS

A cry for help
The scale of deadly crisis

24.8m

The number of people in need of assistance this year

2m

The number of people to have crossed the border since 15 April

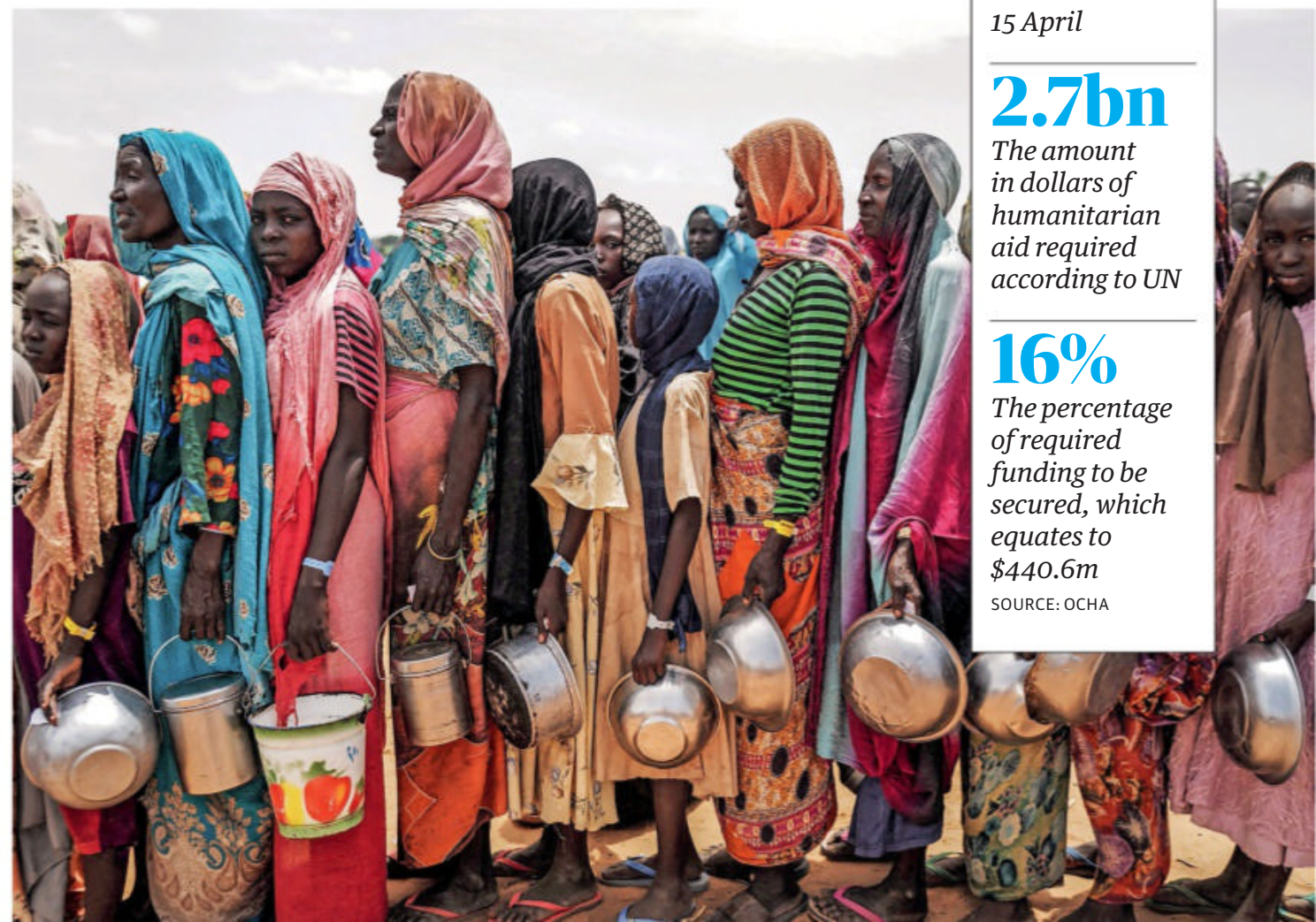
2.7bn

The amount in dollars of humanitarian aid required according to UN

16%

The percentage of required funding to be secured, which equates to \$440.6m

SOURCE: OCHA





Eyewitness *United States*

Post haste

Firefighters work below a smoldering hillside left by a wildfire in Gorman, California, last weekend. Strong winds pushed flames through dry brush in the mountains north of Los Angeles. The blaze, dubbed the Post fire, was only 2% contained last Sunday, with no injuries reported at that time. The cause was still under investigation.

Los Angeles county's first major wildfire of the year swiftly grew to nearly 60 sq km, one day after it forced the evacuation of at least 1,200 people from the Hungry Valley recreation area.

In northern California, a separate wildfire prompted the evacuation of an area near Lake Sonoma. The fire sent up a huge plume of dark smoke 130km north of San Francisco. It had been hoped a wet winter might delay fire risks in California, but the rain helped seed invasive grasses that dry rapidly as temperatures rise.





ANALYSIS
UNITED KINGDOM

The Brexit omertà Why both main parties are scared to mention the B word

It was once the defining issue in British politics – but this time around no one, it seems, is in any way keen to discuss the UK's place in the EU

By Dan Sabbagh



“Get Brexit done” was the promise, repeated to the point of tedium, that took Boris Johnson's

Conservatives to a landslide victory in Britain's 2019 election. But the subject – for so long the defining issue in UK politics – has barely featured in the current campaign.

Keir Starmer, whose Labour party is 20 percentage points ahead on the average of opinion polls, hardly mentions Britain's relationship with the EU.

Anand Menon, the director of the thinktank UK in a Changing Europe, said: “There is an underlying nervousness because Starmer is felt to be vulnerable to attack as a former remainder, anti-Brexit, and Labour needs to hold on to pro-Brexit leave voters.”

Although the Brexit referendum took place in June 2016, resulting in a narrow 52% vote in favour of leaving the EU, there was no clear plan for its implementation. That unleashed a period of political turmoil that ended only when Johnson won the 2019 election.

In the run-up to that vote, Starmer, then the party's Brexit spokesperson, pressed for Labour to support a second referendum,

saying: “We would campaign for remain.” But so emphatic was Johnson's election victory, and so important Labour's need to win back Tory votes among Brexit supporters, the topic has been suppressed.

The silence – “Brexit omertà”, as Menon describes it – goes further. The prime minister, Rishi Sunak, is also reluctant to talk about Brexit. This is partly a response to the fact that a diminishing number of Britons believe leaving the EU was a good idea, amid repeated stories about implementation problems.

Last week, an Italian trucker said he was kept waiting 55 hours by border officials in Kent while 10 of the plants in his lorry full of vegetation were inspected. Full post-Brexit controls on plant and animal imports were not implemented until April, one of dozens of changes that have affected cross-border businesses.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives have little to point to in terms of Brexit successes. Joe Twyman, of polling firm Deltapoll, said: “Last year, when we asked respondents to name any specific benefit of Brexit, only about one in 10 was able to name any specific benefit to the country and only about one in 20 was able to name any specific benefit to them and their family.”

Though Sunak supported Brexit in 2016, he has never been notably enthusiastic. “Sunak did not go into politics to talk about Brexit or immigration and never bought properly into both,” said James Starkie, a member of the main pro-Brexit Leave organisation, and adviser to three Tory cabinet ministers. “Lots of Conservative policies on both issues have not really come off, and with Labour reluctant to stress either issue, it

1 in 10

Ratio of people in the UK able to name any specific benefit of Brexit to the country, according to a survey

1 in 20

In the same 2023 poll, the ratio of people who could name any specific benefit to them and their family

◀ Anti-Brexit demonstrators protest outside parliament in London in 2018

DANIEL LEAL-OLIVAS/
AFP/GETTY

Economic fail
Economists estimate that leaving the EU has hit the UK's gross domestic product, the overall size of its economy, by perhaps between 2% and 3%, but it is not a connection leading politicians are willing to make given that re-entry would almost certainly require another divisive referendum.

feels like both parties have made a pact not to talk about either topic.”

Complicating the picture for the Tories is Nigel Farage, a rightwing populist chasing the party's votes, who does talk about Brexit, but only to criticise the government's record. He said at a campaign launch event that Sunak's party had presided over a “betrayal of the 17.4 million who voted Brexit”, because it failed to lead to a sharp fall in immigration.

British voters, however, are focused on the economy, rebranded as the “cost of living crisis”. The past four and a half years have been dominated by soaring inflation, peaking at 11% in 2022 – levels not seen since the early 1980s – while mortgage costs shot up during the catastrophic 49-day premiership of Liz Truss, Johnson's successor.

Even the UK's third party, and traditionally its most ardently pro-European, the Liberal Democrats, is barely mentioning Brexit. Last week, it launched its policy manifesto emphasising a promise to invest more in the health service – a marked contrast to 2019 when it committed to reverse the result of the Brexit vote. The Lib Dems ultimately performed poorly, winning just 11 parliamentary seats.

Some would like Labour, given it is so far ahead, to be bolder in committing to move closer to the EU.

Tom Baldwin, a former director of communications for the party and anti-Brexit campaigner, pointed to a quieter Labour commitment, made by the party's spokesperson for foreign affairs, David Lammy. He wants to negotiate a “security pact” with the EU, which could be extended to cover “economic security, climate security”, although it is unclear what it would mean in practice.

But perhaps the most significant issue in the Brexit silence is voter fatigue. Johnson's 2019 victory was based partly on exhaustion with an issue that had dominated media coverage for three years, not least because an election held after the Brexit vote, in 2017, had produced a parliament without a majority for a single party. “If you do focus groups and mention Brexit, the biggest reaction you get from voters is a yawn and an eye-roll,” said Menon.

DAN SABBAGH IS THE GUARDIAN'S
DEFENCE AND SECURITY EDITOR

UNITED KINGDOM

Cornish language enjoys a renaissance

By Josh Halliday

The ancient Cornish language has been declared *dehwelans dhyworth an marow* – back from the dead – amid a rise in popularity thanks to Covid-19 and a critically acclaimed psych-pop star.

There has been a significant rise in the number of people learning Cornish since the pandemic lockdown forced classes online, according to the volunteer network An Rosweyth.

“We have people in America, Australia, Mexico, Spain, Turkey,” said Emma Jenkin, its support officer, who added that her last online lesson had “a couple of people in Cornwall – but mostly people are dotted all over the place”. There had been a “huge influx” of people wanting to learn Cornish during the pandemic.

Younger people are taking up lessons as a result of its recent revival in popular culture. The singer-songwriter Gwenno's second album, *Le Kov*, was written and performed entirely in Cornish, and its follow-up, *Tresor*, was nominated for the Mercury prize. The comedian Edward Rowe, better known as Kernow King, has also helped popularise the language.

It is quite the turnaround for a language described as “extinct” by



▲ Singer Gwenno has helped to popularise Cornish

HUGH R HASTINGS/GETTY

Unesco's world atlas of languages little more than a decade ago. The UN's heritage agency now classifies Cornish – *Kernewek* – as “endangered”.

Only 557 people described themselves as fluent Cornish speakers in the most recent UK census, but experts say this is likely to be a significant underestimate because it relates to the number of people who speak it as a first language when, in reality, most Cornish speakers use English in everyday life. Cornwall council estimates that between 2,000 and 5,000 people can speak basic Cornish, and that number is on the rise.

A report by Language magazine last year claimed more than 4,000 people were learning Cornish across the county. According to evidence given to a parliamentary committee, more than 2,000 people were learning it using the app Memrise, while a further 200 were taking formal adult education classes.

Whereas once these classes were the preserve of retirees and amateur enthusiasts, said Jenkin, more than two dozen primary schools – 9,000 pupils – are learning the language as part of the Go Cornish scheme.

That has created its own problem: there are not enough Cornish teachers. Jenkin said: “There's only one school support officer for the whole of Cornwall – and she works part-time – so they [Go Cornish] have a waiting list.”

Denzil Monk, the chief executive of the independent production company Bosena, said artists such as Gwenno and films such as *Bait* and *Enys Men* by the Bafta-winning director Mark Jenkin were part of a renaissance in Cornwall's cultural scene.

“When I was growing up [Cornish] was seen as a historical thing,” Monk said. “But it's become accepted as something that's fun and an important part of our cultural life.”

Monk, who is leading an effort to foster more Cornish-language films, said he had never considered the language extinct – “maybe deeply asleep” – but that its revival in popular culture reflected what was happening on the ground. More people are using bits of basic Cornish – such as *dydh da* for hello, or *meur ras* for thank you – in everyday life, he said. The language with roots stretching back thousands of years is now seen as “interesting, culturally relevant and contemporary, rather than something of the past”.

JOSH HALLIDAY IS THE GUARDIAN'S
NORTH OF ENGLAND EDITOR



NORWAY

Snow patrol

Inside the fight to save arctic foxes

Captive breeding has helped reduce threat from predators and the climate crisis – but can the species survive long-term?

By Alexa Robles-Gil

▲ Arctic foxes play at the breeding station near Oppdal

LISI NIESNER/REUTERS

Deep in the Norwegian mountains, amid a vast expanse of bright snow and howling winds, Toralf Mjøen throws a piece of meat into a fenced enclosure and waits for a pair of dark eyes to appear from the snowy den.

These curious and playful arctic foxes know Mjøen well. He has been the caretaker at this breeding facility for 17 years, going up the mountain daily to feed them at their enclosures near the small village of Oppdal, about 400km north of Oslo.

But Mjøen's familiarity with the species stretches back much further, from his years working at his father's fox farm, where the animals were bred for their fur. Now, years after the fur farms have been shut down, the arctic fox has become a symbol of conservation in Norway. Its long-term fate here, however, is still in doubt.

"Sometimes," Mjøen said, "we can't do anything but try."

Saving an animal from extinction is often seen as a series of dramatic steps, such as banning hunting, to bring a species back from the brink. But for arctic foxes and other recovering but fragile animal populations around the world, Mjøen said: "It's all about small steps."

Every year since 2006, the Norwegian breeding programme has released captive-born foxes into the wild. Measured strictly by the numbers, it's working: the population of arctic foxes has increased more than tenfold and they have spread into Finland and Sweden.

But the research team running the recovery project still feels it is far from the finish line. Over the past five years especially, killings by golden eagles at the breeding station and increased inbreeding in the wild have complicated the rescue operation.

"The problems we're facing today are actually because of the success of the programme," said the project's leader, Craig Jackson, of the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (Nina).

In the first decade, scientists were so focused on bringing the numbers up that they started with a population of about 50 foxes and bred them to more than 550 spread around Scandinavia, with 300 or so in Norway. But now, he said: "It's not just about producing foxes." Instead, the goal is to increase genetic diversity in the population to make the animals more resilient to food shortages and the changing climate.

Tale of tails
Restoring a fragile species

550
Number of foxes bred by the programme – from an initial population of around 50 – in the first decade

9
Of the 11 deaths of foxes at the breeding facility since 2019, this many are attributed to golden eagles



The project now meets all but one of the most important benchmarks of success in a reintroduction programme, according to a study Jackson's team published in 2022. The reintroduced foxes are reproducing faster than they are dying, which is a good sign.

But there is still one big problem: they are still not able to sustain themselves without human intervention, depending on supplementary feeding and lacking genetic resiliency. The only way to create more resiliency is to rebuild the genetic diversity that was lost when the Norwegian population crashed decades ago, said Jackson.

He explains that arctic foxes prey on lemmings, a small rodent with a fluctuating population. Lemmings have been especially hard for foxes to find in recent years because the warming climate has created more opportunities for an invading competitor: red foxes.

Even though red foxes were culled in Norway as an early measure to help arctic foxes recover, they still compete. A scarcity of rodents has made it harder for arctic foxes to become a self-sustaining population.

If there are years with low numbers of lemmings, Jackson said, a more genetically diverse group of adult arctic foxes is more likely to survive because they are healthier and can compete for resources.

Jackson's team is trying to build diversity by introducing genetically distinct foxes in specific areas. But the fox's deeply fragmented habitat makes this more challenging: they need to know exactly which groups of wild foxes lack diversity so they know where to release the captive-bred foxes.



Øystein Flagstad, the captive-breeding project's geneticist, said that requires monitoring of all of the wild and released foxes to assess not just their numbers but also their genomes.

Predation by golden eagles highlights another complication in captive-breeding programmes: as the animals need to be concentrated in enclosures, they become more vulnerable to predators and diseases.

Jackson's team has been forced to get creative in trying to deter the eagles, according to a study published last year. Now, the enclosures are dotted with bamboo sticks and ropes, but it has not been enough.

Since 2019, the captive-breeding facility, which usually has about 16 foxes, has had 11 deaths, nine of which have been confirmed to be caused by golden eagles. Jackson, relying on dozens of live camera feeds, tries to monitor the foxes from his office in Trondheim, north of the breeding station.

In March, Jackson logged on to check the live cameras when he saw an eagle waiting for a male fox. He hurriedly phoned Mjøen, but it was too late. In the video clip, an arctic fox looks tiny and defenceless against the powerful talons of a golden eagle.

▲▲ Researchers give a white arctic fox pup a medical check-up

LISI NIESNER/REUTERS

▲ Craig Jackson (right) sees a blue and a white arctic fox released into the wild

CRAIG JACKSON/REUTERS

◀ The facility is run by the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research

Losing just one fox to an eagle means losing an investment of hundreds of thousands of Norwegian kroner, said Tomas Holmern, of the Norwegian Environment Agency, which has funded the station since 2006 at an annual cost of about 3.1m kroner (\$290,000). The programme aims to improve the fox population's status in Norway from endangered to just vulnerable by 2034, and its funding is guaranteed until 2026.

A conservation biologist, Holmern cited other captive-breeding programmes, such as the black-footed ferret in the American west and the California condor, as examples of successful conservation efforts in improving the genetic diversity of a species.

In these cases and many others, the chief obstacle is what conservation biologists call a "genetic bottleneck", which happens when a population is reduced to a few individuals and loses its genetic diversity.

Building genetic variation back to a healthy level in a species could take thousands of years, said Klaus Koepfli, a geneticist at George Mason University's Smithsonian school of conservation in Virginia, who has worked with black-footed ferrets. "This doesn't stop us from trying," he added.

The black-footed ferret, he said, is still considered a conservation-reliant species because - like arctic foxes in Norway - they need people to keep the numbers up. If scientists stepped back and let nature take its course, the ferrets would probably not survive.

A relatively new tool that could speed up the recovery process is gene editing, which allows scientists to make changes to DNA that could otherwise take hundreds of generations, and is now being considered for some species to bring back genetic diversity and fix harmful mutations.

"Whether you're talking about fishes or birds or mammals or lizards, we can use the same tools for all of those species," Koepfli said.

Even amid all the worries about the threats arctic foxes face, there are signs of hope. And some of those signs are pressed into the snow: fresh tracks from a wild fox, discovered in April. It's a male, and he has been circling the breeding station. Inside the enclosure is a female who lost her mate to an eagle in March.

ALEXA ROBLES-GIL IS WRITES ABOUT WILDLIFE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

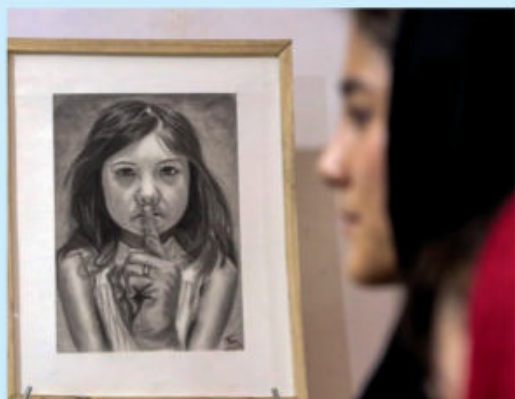
AFGHANISTAN

'It's tragic'

Teen Afghan girls on life without school

Barred from education for more than 1,000 days, girls face forced marriage, violence and isolation with no end in sight

By Annie Kelly, Tom Levitt, Hikmat Noori and Rukhshana reporters



76%

Proportion of women and girls who in a survey classed their mental health as 'bad' or 'very bad' as a result of their isolation



Just over three years ago, Asma's* future contained many possibilities. Aged 15, she was at secondary school. After that lay the prospect of university and then onwards, striding forwards into the rest of her life.

Like many Afghan girls, she understood that education was her route out of the isolation and repression that had constricted the lives of her mother and grandmother under the previous Taliban regime. She was part of a new generation of Afghan women who had the chance to build independent and economically autonomous lives.

In May 2021, a few months before Taliban militants swept to power, Asma was in class when bombs began exploding outside her secondary school. She woke up in hospital to learn that 85 people, mostly other schoolgirls, had been killed. By the time she had started to recover, the

Taliban were in charge and her chances of returning to school were over.

It is now more than 1,000 days since the Taliban declared schools only for boys, and an estimated 1.2 million teenage girls such as Asma were in effect banned from secondary schools in Afghanistan.

What has happened to them since has been catastrophic: forced and early marriage, domestic violence, suicide, drug addiction and an eradication from all aspects of public life, with no end in sight.

"We've now reached 1,000 days, but there is no end date to the horror of what is happening to teenage girls in Afghanistan," said Heather Barr from Human Rights Watch. "What the Taliban have done is not put the dreams of all these girls on hold, they have obliterated them."

Without being able to go to school, Asma has been forced into marriage

◀◀ Schoolgirls after taking part in their high school graduation exam in Kabul in December 2022

WAKIL KOHSAR/AFP/GETTY

◀ Girls show their art during an exhibition organised in protest of the closure of schools in Kabul, September 2022

EPA-EFE

to a man she didn't know, exchanging the four walls of her father's house for those of her new husband's family.

She says she begged her parents not to force her into marriage. "When I told them about my studies and dreams, they laughed and said: 'Since the Taliban has come, girls will never be allowed to study. It's better to get on with your life and get married,'" said Asma. "[After the wedding], my husband's family told me, 'We bought you and paid for you, we didn't get you for free. So you should be at home and working for us.'"

Now 18, Asma is pregnant. "When I discovered my baby is going to be a girl, the world became dark before my eyes because being a girl here in Afghanistan is not worth it," she said. "She will never achieve any of her dreams. I wish I was having a boy."

With diminishing status in society and no protection from the

▼ A girl breaks down when talking about her lack of access to education

AHMAD SAHEL ARMAN/AFP/GETTY



▲ Afghan women protest for their right to education in August 2023

ATEF ARYAN/AFP/GETTY

◀ Girls studying at a secret school in July 2022

DANIEL LEAL/AFP/GETTY

authorities, teenage girls, especially those forced into early marriage, are facing domestic violence inside the home and violence from the authorities outside, say human rights groups.

Benafasha* was 13 years old when the Taliban took power and her family decided that if she couldn't go to school she had to get married. Her sister Qudsia* says Benafasha was sent to live with her fiancé who was instantly violent, brutally beating and abusing the now 16-year-old.

Qudsia said Benafasha, desperate and afraid, went to the Taliban courts to ask to be allowed to separate. Instead, they sent her to prison.

"We had pictures demonstrating how he had beaten my sister, and text messages and voice recordings showing how he would insult and beat her," said Qudsia. "The judge took her

husband's side, saying women are always looking for a small excuse to separate. She was told that as long as she refuses to live with her fiancé, she will remain in prison."

The prospect of a life of isolation and domestic servitude is pushing many teenage girls to deep despair.

A United Nations survey last December found that 76% of women and girls who responded classed their mental health as "bad" or "very bad", reporting insomnia, depression, anxiety, loss of appetite and headaches as a result of their trauma.

Almost one-fifth of girls and women also said they hadn't met another woman outside their immediate family in the three preceding months. Another survey from the Afghan digital platform Bishnaw found that 8% of those who took part knew at least one woman or girl who had attempted to kill themselves since August 2021.

Marzia*, the mother of 15-year-old Arzo*, said her daughter has become withdrawn and depressed since she has been unable to go back to school.

"She talks less and sleeps most of the time," she said. "I know the reason is the school closure, but there's nothing we can do. I always dreamed that my daughter would study and become a doctor so she could stand on her own feet."

Barr said the Taliban have taken away "girls' social networks, their friends, the outside world". "They can't go to school, or to national parks, or beauty salons or the gym or, increasingly, outside the house at all without fear of intimidation. They're taking away everything that makes them human," she said.

She said the international community cannot continue to ignore what is happening to teenage girls in Afghanistan. "It is a threat to the rights of all women and girls around the world because if the Taliban can do this with impunity, then who will be next?"

Last month, a report by the UN special rapporteur for Afghanistan assessed the dire situation facing girls and women there. "Many [girls now denied a secondary education] are driven to psychological distress, including suicidal thoughts and actions. Denial of access to equal education is causing transgenerational disempowerment that will increasingly ingrain the debased socio-economic status of Afghan women and girls and their state-enforced dependence on men," it said.

Fariah*, mother of a 16-year-old in Kabul, said her daughter refuses to give up hope that her life is not always going to be the way it has been for the past three years, but she is close to despair.

"It is a tragedy beyond I can express, not just for her, but for Afghanistan and for the world," she said.

"My daughter is among the smartest of her generation ... I have seen first-hand her strong leadership skills, her ambitions and her determination to achieve them. Sometimes, my daughter tells me that she thinks that, by some miracle, school will be back on. I don't want to crush her optimistic spirit and I tell her, 'yes, that's possible', but deep down, I know it is a lie. I experienced this regime 25 years ago, and they haven't changed. I don't have any hope for our future. Nobody is coming to help us."

* Names have been changed

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SPAIN

◀ Patricia Horrillo (front left) and the group at La Fabulosa bookshop in Madrid

DENIS DOYLE

The women whose words are tackling Wikipedia's male bias

By Ashifa Kassam MADRID

Packed into the back room of a feminist bookshop in Madrid, 17 women hunched over their laptops, chatting and laughing as they passed around snacks. Every now and then a hearty burst of applause punctuated the sound of typing, each time marking a milestone as the group chipped away at what is perhaps one of the world's most pervasive gender gaps.

Just under a fifth of Wikipedia's content, including biographies, is focused on women, while women account for just about 15% of the site's volunteer editors. "The numbers are pretty terrifying," said Patricia Horrillo, who for much of the past decade has spent her spare time working to tackle this gap, cultivating a community of Wikipedia editors dedicated to publishing content focused on women.

The result is Spain's Wikiesfera,

one of a handful of groups - from Whose Knowledge? in the US to Italy's WikiDonne and Switzerland's Les Sans Pages - that have sprung up to address Wikipedia's gender balance.

It is something that has long been recognised by the Wikimedia Foundation, the organisation that hosts Wikipedia. "Wikipedia is powered by humans, so it is vulnerable to human biases," the foundation said. "It is also a reflection of the structural and historical inequalities women experience around the world."

Wikipedia has historically been edited by more men than women, all of whom rely on existing published sources to verify the facts in its articles, the foundation notes. "But in many places around the world, women have been left out of historical narratives and traditional sources of knowledge."

In recent years the foundation has provided support to groups such as Horrillo's Wikiesfera, offering them a helping hand as they seek to right this imbalance. "For the first time, civil society has the power to make women visible," Horrillo said. "History has always been told by those in power - now we have that power."

It was this belief that led more than a dozen women to cram into Madrid's La Fabulosa bookstore to spend a sunny Saturday creating and translating Wikipedia entries about women in art.

"We're writing history today, right here," said Encina Villanueva, who has been attending Wikiesfera's events since 2016. Sometimes she writes up original content for Wikipedia pages on women, other times she nips into existing pages to balance out texts that prioritise women's appearance

or their links to prominent men over their achievements.

Sitting next to her was Celia Hernández-García, a secondary school teacher, who began attending Wikiesfera events in 2017 after reading about the group online. For years she had scrambled to cobble together female-focused content for her students. "At one point I sat down with a textbook and went through all the references of men and women - the difference was mind-blowing."

The seeds of Wikiesfera were planted a decade earlier when Horrillo became fascinated by the question of why people weren't contributing more to sites such as Wikipedia. As she asked around, the answers hinted at barriers that were far greater than technological knowhow. "One woman told me, 'But who am I to write history?'"

The sentiment led Horrillo to launch Wikiesfera. The focus on women emerged in parallel as Horrillo seized on the idea of tackling Wikipedia's gender gap, allowing her to merge her passions of technology and activism.

While the organisation's activities are open to men and women of all ages, those who show up most often are women between the ages of 40 and mid-60s. "These are women who have time, often they don't have children or dependants," said Horrillo. "It's an important point because this is one of the reasons that there are so few women editors - it takes a lot of time."

Horrillo is resolute in her push to add women to one of the world's most visited sites. "What we're doing is super important because there's nothing like Wikipedia," she said.

Last week's marathon session saw a total of 33 articles added to Wikipedia, ranging from a page about a sculpture by Luisa Roldán, Spain's earliest documented female sculptor, to a Spanish-language translation on an artwork by Marie Bracquemond, a notable woman in the impressionist movement.

Each entry was, says Horrillo, a small, tangible step towards tackling the formidable structures that keep most women invisible. "You have to start somewhere. It's a way to fight injustice, but without being overwhelmed," she said. "If you start to ask what can I do to change the world, the answer is a bit complicated. But this is something that is within our grasp."

ASHIFA KASSAM IS THE GUARDIAN'S EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

'History has always been told by those in power - now we have that power'

SINGAPORE

Cats in flats Delight as covert pets finally given legal status

By Rebecca Ratcliffe SINGAPORE

Tommy is, without doubt, the head of his household. If he wants the air conditioning on, he simply glares at the unit on the wall. If he wants an early night, he'll miaow for the TV to be silenced. But, until now, Tommy has been living in violation of a law that bans cats from much of Singapore's housing.

This year, the 34-year-old ban will be overturned, allowing the city's many fugitive cats to breathe a sigh of relief.

Tommy's owner, Adam, who spoke under a pseudonym because he is breaking the regulation, says he can't understand why the ban existed in the first place. "Normally for cats, they're not a problem. Maybe a dog [could be a problem] - they're noisy, and if a dog bites you're in trouble," he said.

The ban, which carries a fine of up to 4,000 Singapore dollars (US\$3,000) and the risk of a pet's eviction, is widely flouted in the city state of 6 million people, otherwise known for its law-abiding culture. While the rule is rarely enforced, owners can face problems if neighbours complain.

The ban applies to high-rise blocks run by the Housing and Development Board (HDB), set up in 1960 to solve a housing crisis that saw many living in overcrowded settlements without proper sanitation. Today, about 80% of the population live in HDB flats.

The cat ban was imposed for HDB flats in 1989, with the agency saying the pets were difficult to contain within apartments and tended to "shed fur, defecate or urinate in public areas and also make caterwauling sounds, which

can inconvenience neighbours". The change in policy may have been influenced by Singapore's citizens. A public consultation found that the vast majority of people - about 90% who answered the survey - believed cats should be allowed as pets in HDB flats.

Under the new law, residents will be allowed to own up to two cats, as well as one dog of an approved breed, provided they complete a free online pet ownership course, and microchip and register their pets. Owners will need to "take reasonable steps" to protect cats from hazards, such as installing mesh or grilles to prevent cats roaming or falling from windows. There will be an amnesty for owners with more than two cats, as long as they apply for licences during the transitional period.

The rules, which come into effect in September, come at a time when pet ownership in Singapore has increased significantly - along with the amount of money spent on animals. It's now possible to take your cat to stay at a luxury hotel, take your puppy to yoga or a sound bath, or buy your guinea pig a bespoke multistorey hut.

According to a Euromonitor International report cited by the Singaporean broadcaster CNA, there were about 94,000 pet cats in Singapore in 2023, up almost 10% from 2019.

Singapore also has a population of stray or community cats that roam many HDB buildings and are cared for by residents who leave out water, food and beds.

Aarthi Sankar, executive director at the Singapore Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, hopes the requirement for people to register cats will, in the long term, prevent people from abandoning unwanted animals - a growing problem for rescue centres.

"We are perpetually at about 70-80% of our shelter's limit," she says. "We try not to take on more cats than that in case we have an emergency rescue."

Sankar worries that owners may misunderstand the new rules and abandon pets above the two-cat limit, not realising there is a transition period in which they can be registered and kept.

Animal welfare campaigners had also wanted the government to impose mandatory sterilisation, adds Sankar. "We've seen many cases of people who hoard animals, particularly pet cats. And most of this begins because of accidental breeding within a litter of cats that they already have."

Adam wonders how the new rules will be enforced, or why there is a need given the ban was already being flouted. "Of course I will go and get the microchip, and get the licence," he says. His cat is already sterilised.

Adam says he had wanted to have a second cat, but that it would be too late to do so now that three-year-old Tommy is an adult. Instead, Tommy will continue as the undisputed - and soon lawful - head of his household.

REBECCA RATCLIFFE IS THE GUARDIAN'S SOUTH-EAST ASIA CORRESPONDENT

▼ A rescue cat at Singapore's first cageless adoption centre for felines

AMRITA CHANDRADAS

94k

The number of pet cats in Singapore, according to a 2023 report, despite 80% of people living in housing in which they are banned



MENTAL HEALTH

Life support

Why looking after No 1 isn't always best

Research has confirmed the health benefits of supporting others. And the deeper the engagement, the better it gets

By David Robson

Like many people, I find that stress transforms me into a nasty combination of Oscar the Grouch and Scrooge McDuck. The more pressure I am under, the more irritable I feel - and the less generous I become. I partly blame our culture. I've read enough wellness advice to know that I need to prioritise my own needs over other people's. And so, when I feel under pressure, I have often made it a habit to practise small indulgences aimed at restoring my mental equilibrium, while insulating myself from all but the most essential social commitments.

Having read the latest psychological research, I can't help but wonder if this attitude only exacerbates my bad mood. A wealth of new studies has shown that being kind to others is often the most effective means of suppressing the physiological and psychological stress response. Whether we are giving our time to a charity, "paying it forward" in a coffee shop, or providing emotional succour to a friend in need, altruism can boost our wellbeing in ways that we simply do not experience from treating ourselves. Other-care, it seems, is often one of the best forms of self-care.

My interest as a science writer

Illustrations by
TRAVIS
CONSTANTINE

'Giving support seemed to create a buzz of pleasure while dampening stress'



was first piqued by a series of papers examining the surprising vitality of volunteers. Over hundreds of studies, scientists have found that engaging in unpaid work for the good of others brings a notable boost to wellbeing. These include a greater sense of meaning and purpose, more self-esteem, higher overall life satisfaction and reduced risk of depression. It even seems to reduce the risk of death. "The effect on mortality really stands out," said Beth Nichol, an associate lecturer

at Northumbria University and lead author of a recent scientific review summarising the evidence.

In large population studies such as these, it is always possible that a third "confounding" factor might explain the apparent link. Volunteers may be in better shape before they start their altruistic endeavours, for example. "Health is a resource that allows us to participate in society," explained Prof Arjen de Wit, a sociologist at VU Amsterdam. Then there's wealth:

richer people, who can afford better medical care and therefore may live longer, may be more likely to volunteer.

Scientists have tried to control for these possibilities, however, and a significant result still remains. A recent meta-analysis, for example, assessed the effects of volunteering for people aged 65 and older, from 26 of the highest-quality studies available. It concluded that the average volunteer has a 57% chance of outliving the average person who does not volunteer.

Before you sign up with a local charity, it is worth noting that many other altruistic activities seem to bring a similar health bonus. Taking care of friends or family members - through emotional support or running errands - is also thought to increase longevity. "The scientific evidence at this point is quite strong," said Tristen Inagaki, an associate professor in psychology at San Diego State University. "Three separate studies have shown that giving more social support to a spouse or someone else that we're close to is related to lower mortality - so more giving predicts greater longevity across five, seven, and 23-year periods."

One possible explanation is that supporting others simply increases physical activity. Inagaki's research, however, suggests the benefits may lie in the brain's emotional processing.

In one experiment, she asked 20 women to undergo a brain scan while holding hands with their partners, who received unpleasant electric shocks. Inagaki saw increased activity in the ventral striatum and septal area - regions involved in reward - and reduced activity in the amygdala, which tends to respond to threat and danger. The act of giving support seemed to be creating a buzz of pleasure while dampening feelings of stress.

Inagaki saw a similar response when participants donated raffle tickets to a friend or family member. The extent of this neural activity seemed to be linked to their habitual behaviour. People who endorsed statements such as "I give others a sense of comfort in times of need" saw bigger changes in these key brain regions.

The regions involved in stress suppression, Inagaki said, can influence the actions of the cardiovascular and immune systems, which would explain why kind and supportive behaviour is associated with better health.

It is enticing to think we might be able to harness these benefits for

ourselves while making the world a better place for others, too. The gold standard of any study is the randomly controlled trial, in which participants are assigned to receive the active treatment or a placebo. There are, however, some inherent difficulties in "prescribing" generous behaviour and measuring the effects - but a few scientists have attempted to overcome these challenges, and their findings are intriguing.

Consider a study led by Ashley Whillans at Harvard Business School, which examined the benefits of gift-giving for people who had previously been diagnosed with hypertension.

Each participant was given three payments of \$40, contained in a sealed bottle, over six weeks. Half were advised to indulge themselves, while the rest were encouraged to treat another person. "It does not matter how you spend the \$40, as long as you spend it on someone else," they were told. The result was a significant drop in blood pressure, over and above their existing treatments for hypertension.

The greatest benefits appear to come when we combine our kind and generous behaviour with meaningful social engagement. Researchers in Canada and the US gave random passersby at a university campus a \$10 Starbucks gift card. Some were told to give the card to another person, without accompanying them to the coffee shop, while others were asked to join the recipient

'I think we intuitively know that kindness is a good thing'

Gillian Sandstrom
University of Sussex

and enjoy a drink together. A third group were encouraged to meet up with someone, but use the card to buy a coffee for themselves, while the fourth group were told to go to the coffee shop alone and enjoy some "me time" with their free drink. That evening, each participant completed questionnaires measuring their emotional wellbeing.

We can guess that most of the people across the experiment were quite chuffed at the free voucher, but the biggest mood boost went to the people who treated their companion to coffee *and* conversation, maximising the opportunity for social connection.

Gillian Sandstrom, a psychology lecturer at the University of Sussex, suspects it's all about the feedback you receive. "I think we intuitively know that kindness is a good thing," said Sandstrom, who was a co-author of the coffee-card study. "But if you're just writing a cheque, you don't get the same feelgood factor as if you can see the difference that you've made."

Inagaki suspects this will be true for many kinds of social support; we need to know that our actions have had the desired impact. "If we feel the care we've given doesn't address the need, or help the person or the cause, or alleviate the problem, there are reasons to hypothesise that giving that kind of care will be less beneficial for health," she said. The effects may also depend on our sense of autonomy. Feeling obliged to cook and clean for an ungrateful family member may feel different from willingly offering support to a friend who makes it clear that our efforts are deeply appreciated.

Like any psychological strategy, we should apply the lessons of this research with caution. If you are struggling to cope, it is still wise to establish clear personal boundaries; there are no benefits to becoming a martyr.

If you have the time and resources, however, you may find prioritising other-care the antidote to your bad moods and lethargy. Despite some initial scepticism, I practise this myself. My irritability, I've realised, is often a sign that I need more contact with others, and so I seek opportunities to overcome those moments of misanthropy. I invariably feel better for having shifted my focus outwards - and perhaps I'll live longer as a result.

Observer

DAVID ROBSON IS A SCIENCE WRITER SPECIALISING IN THE HUMAN BRAIN, BODY AND BEHAVIOUR





UNITED STATES

Will supreme court ethics prove to be a key election issue?

By David Smith WASHINGTON

Look at me, look at me,” said Martha-Ann Alito. “My heritage is German. You come after me, I’m gonna give it back to you.” It was a bizarre outburst from the wife of a justice on America’s highest court. Secretly recorded by a liberal activist, Alito complained about a neighbour’s gay pride flag and expressed a desire to fly a sacred heart of Jesus flag in protest.

This, along with audio clips of Justice Samuel Alito and a stream of ethics violations, has deepened public concerns. The Democratic congressman Jamie Raskin has described a “national clamour over this crisis of legitimacy”. A recent poll for the advocacy organisation Stand Up America suggests the supreme court will play a crucial role in voters’ choices in the 2024 election. Nearly three in four said the selection of justices will be an important consideration for

them in voting for both president and senator in November.

Reed Galen, a co-founder of the Lincoln Project, a conservative pro-democracy group, said: “The idea these guys act as if they are kings ruling from above, to me, should absolutely be an issue. It was always Republicans who said we hate unelected judges legislating from the bench and we hate judicial activism. That’s all this stuff is.”

Public trust is at an all-time low. Alito has rejected demands that he recuse himself from a case considering presidential immunity after flags similar to those carried by January 6 rioters flew over his homes in Virginia and New Jersey. Justice Clarence Thomas has ignored calls to step aside because of the role his wife, Ginni, played in supporting efforts to overturn Donald Trump’s loss to Joe Biden in 2020.

Ethical standards have been under scrutiny after revelations that some justices failed to report luxury trips and property deals. This month Thomas, who has come under criticism for failing to disclose gifts from businessman and Republican donor Harlan Crow, acknowledged that he had accepted “food and lodging” at a Bali hotel and at a California club.

These controversies have been compounded by historic and hugely divisive decisions. The fall of *Roe v Wade*, ending the nationwide right to abortion after half a century, was seen by many Democrats as a game changer in terms of people making a connection between the court and their everyday lives.

There are signs of the debate moving beyond the Washington bubble. This month the editorial board of the Chi-

Some justices have been criticised for failing to declare gifts

CHIP SOMODEVILLA/
GETTY

cago Sun-Times newspaper argued that, since the court’s own ethics code is toothless, Congress should enact legislation that holds supreme court justices to higher ethical standards.

Maggie Jo Buchanan, managing director of the group Demand Justice, said: “It’s important to keep in mind that, even though debate among members of Congress would lead you to believe that court reform is a polarising issue, it really isn’t. For years we have seen broad bipartisan support for basic supreme court reforms.”

Congressional Democrats have introduced bills including one to create an independent ethics office and internal investigations counsel within the supreme court. Broader ideas include expanding the number of seats on the court or limiting justices to 18-year terms rather than lifetime appointments.

But such efforts have been repeatedly thwarted by Republicans, who now hold a 6-3 conservative majority including three Trump appointees. Last week Senate Republicans blocked legislation that would require the court to adopt a binding code of conduct for all justices and establish procedures to investigate complaints of judicial misconduct.

In response, Christina Harvey, executive director of Stand Up America, said its “nearly 2 million members are fired up and ready to continue advocating for supreme court reform – in Congress and at the ballot box”.

But Galen worries that senior Senate Democrats lack the necessary aggression to capitalise on the issue. That principle might apply to Biden himself. The US president, who served in the Senate for 36 years, is reluctant to call out justices by name or call for sweeping court reforms, although he is making its decision on *Roe v Wade* a centrepiece of his campaign.

Others argue that, competing for voter attention with the cost of living, immigration and other issues, the court will fade into background noise. Henry Olsen, at the Ethics and Public Policy Center thinktank, said: “The middle of the country, the independents and the swing voters do not care about the supreme court and I don’t think any effort by Democrats or the media bringing up these things about Alito or Thomas is going to register or motivate those people.”

DAVID SMITH IS THE GUARDIAN’S
WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT

‘The idea these guys act as if they are kings ruling from above, to me, should absolutely be an issue’

CUBA

Russian warships bring cold war frisson to Havana

By Ruairidh Nicoll HAVANA

Where vast American cruise ships once disgorged mojito-thirsty holidaymakers into the crumbling streets of old Havana, now lurks the eerie darkness of the Russian nuclear-powered submarine Kazan.

"It looks like a dead whale," said Adolfo García, as he queued under the scorching sun. The Kazan is off-limits, but García was hoping for a tour of the frigate Admiral Gorshkov, the second of the four Russian naval vessels that had just docked in the Cuban capital.

The warships sent a cold war frisson when they arrived shortly after sunrise on 11 June: a demonstration of Russia's ability to operate in America's backyard just two days before Joe Biden, the US president, signed a 10-year security pact with Ukraine.

"The Russians seem interested in sticking a finger in Joe Biden's eye," said William LeoGrande, a professor at American University, although he called comparisons to the 1962 Cuban missile crisis - when the Soviet Union's attempt to place nuclear weapons in Cuba brought the world to the edge of Armageddon - "ludicrous".

As Cuba's moribund economy fails to recover from the pandemic, beset by ageing infrastructure and the equally aged, if constantly rejuvenated, US embargo, a lack of fuel has resulted in power cuts across the island, leading to unrest.

Summer temperatures are well above 30C, and food spoils easily. Cuban officials have been shuttling back and forth to any country willing to help, nearly all of them - Russia, Venezuela, Iran - anathema to Washington.

Russia has been sending tankers full of oil and tourists, if not enough. Meeting with Vladimir Putin in Moscow in May, the Cuban president, Miguel Díaz-Canel, said: "*We wish you and the Russian Federation success in conducting the special military operation.*"

In 2016, Barack Obama visited Havana "to bury the last remnants of the cold war". Donald Trump swiftly reversed that policy, strengthening the 64-year-old embargo (including banning the cruise ships that once docked where the Kazan has been sitting).

John Kavulich, who for the past 30 years has been running the US-Cuba Trade and Economic Council, said incremental moves forward had been made by the US government: "But now, at least until the 5 November election, it's going to be challenging."

Others feel it has been far too little too late. Antonio Martínez, who is part of Cuba's burgeoning private sector, watched the fleet come in on 11 June. Asked what it meant for Cuba-US relations, he told a joke. "A man who has no hands or feet is using a skateboard to get around and he falls, cursing. A passing woman warns him that God will punish him. The man says: 'Really? What's He going to do? Take away my skateboard?'"

At the cruise terminal, the queue moved forward incrementally. After three hours, we reached the front. A young Cuban officer in naval whites led 20 visitors into the cruise terminal, handing us over to Russians in dress black. There would be no explanations,

Close ties
Although money from Moscow dried up after 1989, it has started to flow again as global tensions mount over the war in Ukraine. When the first Russian tanks rolled towards Kyiv, Havana attempted to remain neutral. Lately, though, the Cuban government has grown more supportive of Moscow.

▼ The Russian nuclear submarine Kazan and tugboat Nikolai Chiker in Havana harbour
YAMIL LAGE/AFP/GETTY

a Cuban officer said. We were led past the submarine and up to the frigate, the two-headed eagle on its stern. A gangway climbed to the helicopter deck where the Cuban visitors started asking sailors for selfies. Some agreed, others refused with a curt "nyet".

It was apparent that this would be a no-frills visit, a one-deck walk from stern to stem with burly black-clad sailors guarding every door.

While we were onboard, the US Southern Command announced that the USS Helena, an attack submarine, had entered Guantánamo Bay. The implication was clear - even if the US Cuban base is at the other end of the island, far further away than US Southern Command's Miami headquarters (which is three minutes' flight away on one of the Gorshkov's new hyper-sonic missiles).

Asked if he was worried, García responded with a question: "Have you ever read [Cuban novelist] Antonio Benítez-Rojo? During the '62 crisis he was completely terrified, until he saw two old women walking past, gay and gesturing. At that moment, he said, he knew that the Caribbean is not an apocalyptic world."

He pointed to where people were still queueing. "Now do you remember, in the queue, that an ice-cream seller came past, calling out 'bocadito de helado'? Well, right then I knew how Benítez-Rojo felt. Nothing's going to happen."

RUARIDH NICOLL IS A WRITER BASED IN CUBA





'We're in 1938 now'

Arms race

British munitions workers in 1938 (above left); in the US factory where shells are manufactured for Ukraine's forces (above right)

POPPERFOTO; CHARLY TRIBALLEAU/
AFP/GETTY



Some analysts believe Kyiv is buying the west time on the precipice of a world war. Does the experience of previous conflicts suggest this time is being used wisely?

BY PATRICK WINTOUR



Putin's war in Ukraine and lessons from history

W

hen big history is self-evidently being written, and leaders face momentous choices, the urge to find inspiration in instructive historical parallels is overwhelming and natural. "The only clue to what man can do is what man has done," the Oxford historian RG Collingwood once wrote. One of the contemporary politicians most influenced by the past is the Estonian prime minister, Kaja Kallas, and not just because of her country's occupation by Russia or her personal family history of exile.

Kallas lugs books on Nato-Russian relations, such as *Not One Inch*, with her on beach holidays. And in her hi-tech office at the top of the old town in Tallinn, she argued this was a 1938 moment – a moment when a wider war was imminent but the west had not yet joined the dots.

She said the same mistake was made in 1938 when tensions in Abyssinia, Japan and Germany were treated as isolated events. The proximate causes of the current conflicts in Ukraine, the Middle East, the South China Sea and even Armenia might be different, but the bigger picture showed an interconnected battlefield in which post-cold war certainties had given way to "great-power competition" in which authoritarian leaders were testing the boundaries of their empires. The lesson – and necessity – was to resist and rearm. "The lesson from 1938 and 1939 is that if aggression pays off somewhere, it serves as an invitation to use it elsewhere," Kallas said.

Her favourite historian, Prof Tim Snyder, adds a twist by reimagining 1938 as a year in which Czechoslovakia, like Ukraine in 2022, had chosen to fight: "So you had in Czechoslovakia, like Ukraine, an imperfect democracy. It's the farthest democracy in eastern Europe. It has various problems, but when threatened by a larger neighbour, it chooses to resist. In that world, where Czechoslovakia resists, there's no second world war."

Snyder said such an outcome had been possible. "They could have held the Germans back. It was largely a bluff on the German side. If the Czechs resisted, and the French and the British and maybe the Americans eventually started to help, there would have been a conflict, but there wouldn't have been a second world war.

"Instead, when Germany invaded Poland in 1939, it was invading Poland with the Czech armaments industry, which was the best in the world. It was invading with Slovak soldiers. It was invading from a geographical position that it only gained because it had destroyed Czechoslovakia."

Snyder added: "If Ukrainians give up, or if we give up on Ukraine, then it's different. It's Russia making war in the future. It's Russia making war with Ukrainian technology, Ukrainian soldiers from a different geographical position. At that point, we're in 1939. We're in 1938 now. In effect, what Ukrainians are letting us do is extend 1938."

As Christopher Hitchens once wrote, much American foolishness abroad, from Korea to Vietnam to Iraq, has been launched on the back of Munich syndrome, the belief that those who appease bullies, as the then British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, sought to do with Adolf Hitler in Munich in 1938, are either dupes or cowards. Such leaders are eventually forced to put their soldiers into battle, often unprepared and ill-equipped – men against machines, as vividly described in *Guilty Men*, written by Michael Foot, Frank Owen and Peter Howard after the Dunkirk fiasco. In France, the insult *Munichois* – synonymous with cowardice – sums it up.

But Snyder made his remarks in Tallinn last month at the Lennart Meri conference, which was largely dedicated to Ukraine and held under the slogan "Let us not despair, but act". It was held against the backdrop of Russia and China hailing a new authoritarian world order in a joint 6,000-word statement that intended to create an axis to undo the settlement of the past two world wars.

Many at the conference wrestled with how much had gone wrong in Ukraine, and why, and whether the west would shed its self-imposed constraints on helping Kyiv. In a sense, everyone wanted an answer to the question posed by the Polish foreign minister, Radosław Sikorski: "Ukraine has bought us time. Will we put it to good use?"

In 1934-35, what Winston Churchill termed the "locust years", and also after the Munich agreement, Britain did not put the time to good use, instead allowing Germany to race ahead in rearmament.

Johann Wadephul, the deputy chair of the German Christian Democratic Union's defence policy committee, fears the answer to Sikorski's question is in the negative. "If the war goes on like it is, it's clear Ukraine will lose. It cannot withstand Russian power with its well-organised support from Iran, China and North Korea and countries like India looking only at its self-interest."

Europe had not reorganised itself for war, he said. Listing the consequences of lost human rights, access to resources and confidence in the west, he said: "If Ukraine loses it will be a catastrophe."

Samir Saran, the head of the Indian thinktank the Observer Research Foundation, who described himself as an atheist in a room full of believers, nevertheless agreed that something bigger than Europe was at stake as he almost mocked the inability of the west's \$40tn economy to organise a battlefield defeat of Russia's \$2tn economy.

► On the brink

Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler, Hermann Goering, the interpreter Paul-Otto Schmidt and Neville Chamberlain at the Munich Conference

DEA PICTURE LIBRARY/DE AGOSTINI/GETTY

'If the west's \$40tn economy cannot defeat a \$2tn nation like Russia, don't think you are deterring China'

He argued: "There is one actor that has reorganised its strategic engagement to fight a war and the other has not. One side is not participating in the battle. You have hosted conferences supporting Ukraine and then do nothing more. But when it comes to action, Russia 2.0 is grinding forward."

"It tells countries like us that if something like this were to happen in the Indo-Pacific, you have no chance against China. If you cannot defeat a \$2tn nation, don't think you are deterring China. China is taking hope from your abysmal and dismal performance against a much smaller adversary."

YET IT IS PARADOXICAL. Nato is bigger and stronger than ever. The transatlantic alliance is functioning far better than the US, France and Britain did in the 1930s - and, after five months of hesitation, some of the extra \$60bn in US arms may finally be starting to reach the frontline.

But from Kyiv's perspective, everything remains too slow and circumscribed, except for the apportionment of blame across Europe. Germany's Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, of the Free Democratic party, takes one side, urging France to hasten weapons deliveries to Ukraine. She said: "We have the problem that, while Poland is doing a lot as a neighbouring country, while Germany is doing a lot, France is doing relatively little."

Others say the culprit remains Berlin, and that, despite recognising what a threat Vladimir Putin represents, it cannot accept the consequences in terms of the nuclear risks of going all in for a Russian defeat. Benjamin Tallis, a senior research fellow at the German Council on Foreign Relations, said: "For all of this talk of political will, what we actually face is political won't. We won't define victory as a goal."

Without naming Germany, the French president, Emmanuel Macron, reinvented over the past year as a scourge of Russian imperialism, said: "Europe clearly faces a moment when it will be necessary not to be cowards."

Ben Wallace, the former UK defence secretary, had less compunction about naming names. "[Olaf] Scholz's behaviour has shown that, as far as the security of Europe goes, he is the wrong man in the wrong job at the wrong time," he said of the German chancellor.

Eliot Cohen, a neocon never-Trumper, finds a wider institutional and moral malaise that needs addressing through a theory of victory and a practical plan to secure that victory - akin to Churchill's call for a ministry of supply that turned the UK into a giant armaments factory.

Cohen said: "It's not about what people say, it's about numbers. Are you willing to lift the restrictions on arms factories to run



'If Russia wins, the threat situation for the states bordering Ukraine would worsen massively'

▼ Direct hit

A Russian tank missile strikes a building in Mariupol, Ukraine

EVGENIY MALOLETKA/AP



them 24 hours a day? Are you willing to give them Atacms [missiles] and hit targets in Russia, and get Germany to give them Taurus missiles?

"My chief concern is that war is so remote from our societies that we have trouble grappling with what success requires."

Sabine Fischer, a political scientist at the German Council on Foreign Relations, says behind these disputes is the pivot around which every judgment turns: whether Europe believes a Ukrainian defeat can be contained. In other words, what are the consequences for Europe, if any, if Ukraine collapses or a Russian-dictated peace leads to its retention of land gained by military conquest?

Would a victorious Putin husband his resources, turn off the war machine and say the recapture of Kievan Rus had been a Moscow objective and Russia's imperial ambitions were now sated?

The Hungarian prime minister, Viktor Orbán, for instance, said: "I do not consider it logical that Russia, which cannot even defeat Ukraine, would all of a sudden come and swallow the western world whole. The chances of this are extremely slim." An attack on an existing Nato state would be "crazy" since the Nato alliance would have to respond.

But Russia's foreign policy concept issued in 2023 focuses on a global confrontation with the US and building the alliances to defeat the west. Given Putin's unrivalled record of broken promises, a Russian peace guarantee might end up as reassuring as Chamberlain's advice to the British people to have a quiet night's sleep after he returned from Munich. The US president, Joe Biden, interviewed in Time magazine at the start of June, appeared to regard the consequences as vast. "If we ever let Ukraine go down, mark my words: you'll see Poland go, and you'll see all those nations along the actual border of Russia, from the Balkans and Belarus, all those, they're going to make their own accommodations."

Others say the Polish response will be less conciliatory. One former Nato commander, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said eastern states would not wait to find out Putin's next move. "If Ukraine fails, I am certain that our Polish allies are not going to sit behind the Vistula [River] and wait for them to keep coming. I think the Romanian allies are not going to sit behind the Prut River and wait for Russia to go into Moldova. So the best way to prevent Nato from being involved directly in a conflict is to help Ukraine defeat Russia in Ukraine."

Fischer believes the consequences of a Russian-dictated peace will not be containable. "Ukraine will experience a new wave of refugees fleeing to the west. The terror regime of the Russian occupation will expand and hundreds of thousands will suffer as a result. The economic, political and security situation will change drastically throughout Ukraine. Partisan warfare could erupt, fuelled by the militarisation of Ukrainian society," she said.

"The threat situation for the states bordering Ukraine would worsen massively. This is true for Moldova, which would again be in the spotlight, as it was in 2022, especially if Moscow were to take over the Ukrainian Black Sea coast. The cohesive

power of the western alliance would be shaken to its core. Russia would continue to weaken Europe from within by building alliances with rightwing, chauvinist populist parties."

Ukrainians, from President Volodymyr Zelenskiy down, have for more than a year tried to frame the consequences of defeat in lurid terms, in an attempt to shake European torpor and galvanise the west.

Olena Halushka, the co-founder of the International Center for Ukrainian Victory, urged Europe to think about the bombardment of Kharkiv. "Imagine a city the size of Munich is likely to be without electricity this winter. The cost in terms of millions of migrants will overwhelm Europe."

Wadephul fears even such framing has not worked. "Europeans think they can have this war without thinking they are themselves at war."

He thinks the guilty men are the leaders who pander to voters who dismiss the Russian threat. That takes the debate back to Germany's, and specifically the Social Democratic party's, ambivalence about a Russian defeat. It is not a coincidence that the election slogan of Scholz's SPD was "a secure peace".

SCHOLZ HIMSELF, FOR INSTANCE, refuses to set Russia's defeat as an objective, and, after Ukraine's failed offensive, peace advocates within his party have had a resurgence. The party believes its vote is being squeezed by two parties, one left and the other right, both saying the war is unwinnable. In a sign of the times, Michael Roth, the SPD chair of the Bundestag foreign affairs committee and a supporter of arming Ukraine, is quitting politics, saying he found it was like stepping into a refrigerator to hold the views he did inside his own party.

Five 20th-century historians, including the Weimar Republic expert Heinrich August Winkler, complained in an open letter that Scholz was not willing to learn the lessons of history or recognise that Russia was bent on the destruction of Ukraine. "The chancellor and the SPD leadership, by drawing red lines, not for Russia but for German politics, weaken Germany's security policy and benefit Russia." The government had to come up with a strategy for victory, they argued.

There is even a suspicion that anti-war politicians with access to intelligence reports are leaking pessimistic accounts of German intelligence assessments, reinforcing the impression that Ukraine's position is hopeless. Ralf Stenger, an SPD member of the Bundestag's intelligence committee, said Ukraine's failed offensive last year showed "we can and must prevent Ukraine from losing, but we cannot ensure that it wins". Anyone who "keeps demanding that weapon A must be delivered more quickly and weapon B in even greater quantities" was chasing illusions, he added. Increasing the dose when the medicine was not working was "not convincing".

Critics say this fatalistic narrative - dovetailing with Russia's main objective, which is to convince the US that further aid is futile - also makes little attempt to identify the lessons of the past two years about the failure to organise a war economy in Europe. Macron coined the phrase "war economy"

▼ Round table

A 2022 Nato meeting just after Russia's invasion of Ukraine

OLIVIER DOULIERY/AFP/GETTY

One lesson of the 1930s is that organising for rearmament entails planning, not just false reassurances

at the Eurosatory military technology conference outside Paris in June 2022, but there is little sign the promise of such a fundamental reorganisation of Europe's armaments industry has taken place, or even that anyone was appointed to bring it about.

Liberal market economies are inherently likely to be slower to adapt to war than their authoritarian counterparts, but one of the lessons of the 1930s, and those locust years, is that organising for rearmament entails planning and not just false reassurances, which were the stock in trade of Chamberlain and his predecessor Stanley Baldwin.

T

HE REALITY WAS THAT BRITAIN, OVERSTRETCHED AND IN DEBT, fell behind, and calls for a ministry of supply to co-ordinate the flow of arms were spurned. Nevertheless, Chamberlain complacently predicted that "the terrifying power Britain was building" by boosting its defences "would have a sobering effect on Hitler".

Something similar happened with ammunition supplies for Ukraine in Europe. In 2023, leaders said they would have 1m shells ready by March 2024, only to admit they could reach only half that number. They promised to reach 2m a year in 2025.

One prominent Ukrainian military adviser said the reality was that the Russian arms industry could now churn out 4.5m shells a year, each costing about only \$1,000 to manufacture. Meanwhile, in Europe and the US, a total of 1.3m shells were

being produced at an average cost of approximately \$4,000. That means Nato is 10 times less efficient, and struggling to locate explosives.

He said: "We need a central plan like in the first or second world war. If governments have an existential demand, a company should not have the ability to make as much profit as they want. It should be regulated. Industrial warfare requires national institutions and a Nato-level industrial warfare committee, which would regulate prices. Right now, we have dozens of really high-level, super-important targets each day. And we have only one missile we can use a week, and this is actually insane."

Some say the picture is improving, but the stark fact, according to Sikorski, is that 40% of the Russian government's budget is devoted to defence. It is Russia, not Europe, that has built a war economy.

The Ukrainian adviser predicts the west may have caught up in two to three years in drones and munitions, but that means the next few years are the most dangerous the region would face.

In the short term, it is the absence of Patriot batteries, a surface-to-air guided missile, and US-supplied F-16s, agreed in August 2023, that leaves Ukraine so exposed. Only six EU member states - Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Spain - operate Patriot systems. Germany has offered a third battery, and the Dutch part of theirs, but Greece and Spain say they have nothing spare. The date for F-16 deliveries depends on the speed at which pilots can be trained.

But Michael Bohnert, an engineer at the Rand Corporation, sees no sign of a public coordinated military plan to raise the firepower needed, let alone new munitions factories. Incredibly, the adviser to the Polish chief of staff, Krzysztof Król, admitted to a conference last month that after two years "we have not yet created proper conditions for a Ukrainian victory with our plans because political leaders had not yet told them the objective". If that objective was conveyed, he added, "the military leaders could easily decide what is required. As it is, we give enough only for Ukraine to survive."

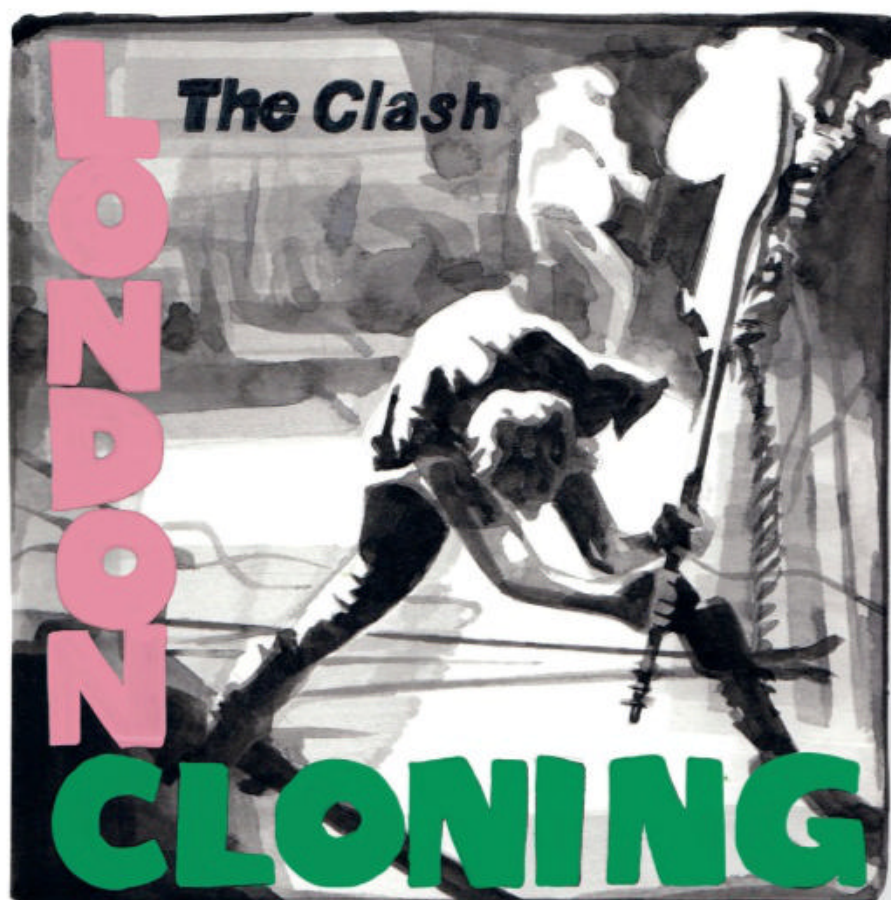
To the extent any European leader has grasped this lacuna, it is Macron, with his emergency meeting on 26 February to look at ammunition shortfalls and speeches on the existential threat to Europe from the alliance between the far right and Putin.

It will take two meetings, one with the G7 leaders in Italy last week and then the 75th anniversary Nato summit in Washington in July, to reveal whether the west wishes not to contain Putin, but to defeat him.

Macron will know many in Europe see the external threat as coming from migration, not Putin, and he knows the popular lure of an easy peace. Flowers, not tomatoes, greeted the French prime minister Édouard Daladier, to his surprise, when he returned from Munich in 1938. Knowing the threat posed by Hitler, and that he and Chamberlain had betrayed Czechoslovakia, the only democratic country in central eastern Europe, he turned to his counsellor and said of the cheering crowds: "Bunch of fools." ●

PATRICK WINTOUR IS THE GUARDIAN'S DIPLOMATIC EDITOR





The vinyl

As album sales boom in the UK, so has the illegal trade in poor-quality fakes. But dogged record detectives are fighting back against the bootleggers

By John Harris

Illustrations by

WILLA GEBBIE and CHRISTOPHE GOWANS

IN JULY 2018, the peace of an upmarket cul-de-sac in rural Hampshire, England, was disturbed by the arrival of two police officers and three people from trading standards banging on the door of a big redbrick house. They had a warrant to carry out an “inspection”, but it was really a raid.

The man they were investigating was 50-year-old Richard Hutter, and their job that day took three hours. As they searched his home, he spent most of the time insisting he had done nothing wrong. His mood was one of shock and deep discomfort. For at least six years, he had quietly sold his wares online and funded an apparently affluent lifestyle to the tune of around £1.2m (\$1.5m); now, the consequences were coming home.

The raid turned up less evidence than the people involved would have liked, but enough to form the kernel of a case. They found one vinyl copy of *Songs for the Deaf* by Queens of the Stone Age, and 13 of *Ænima*, the 1996 album by the California alternative metal band Tool, as well as 18 outer and inner sleeves of the same record. Investigators also found “a big book, like an encyclopedia of vinyl with details of records’ values”, along with a handful of business cards from people involved in buying and selling vinyl records.

The biggest finds were on a mobile phone that was seized: WhatsApp messages mentioning album artwork, and downloads of original recordings. Hutter had also taken detailed pictures of what seemed to be his HQ: an anonymous-looking office, with a solitary desk and computer, and boxes and boxes of vinyl albums.

He had taken a selfie, with records lined up behind him. Other photos showed stacks of albums by artists such as the Beatles, Pink Floyd and Amy Winehouse, which were what collectors would instantly identify as bootlegs: illicit collections of unreleased material, not found in those artists’ official bodies of work. But plenty of others seemed to highlight Hutter’s apparent speciality: counterfeit versions of official albums – from *Blonde* by the eclectic American artist Frank Ocean, to the Eagles’ live album *Hell Freezes Over* – sold to people who he clearly assumed wouldn’t know the difference.

Before he started selling records, Hutter had worked as a solar panel salesman. His latest business was called Vinyl Groove UK. Where it was based was a mystery: when he was asked about what was in the photos, he said the premises they showed were in the Netherlands, where his father lived. This claim, unfortunately, underlined the sense of someone who was not quite a criminal mastermind: on close inspection, the pictures showed British three-pin plug sockets.

Wherever they were shipped to customers from, the records were sold on eBay and the music-focused platform Discogs. Among the array of albums Hutter had been caught trading were blue vinyl copies of Nirvana’s *Nevermind* and a red edition of Guns N’ Roses’ *Appetite for Destruction*, as well as Pearl Jam’s *Vitalogy*, the Clash’s *London Calling*, and two records by AC/DC: one was 1976’s *High Voltage*; the other, poetically enough, the same year’s *Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap*.

The case finally came to court in the spring of last year, in Bournemouth. As everyone involved well knew, Hutter was one small but significant part of a global trade in illegal records. Over the past decade, vinyl has become known as the music format that came back from the dead: now, its renaissance has spawned a criminal industry that seems to be growing bigger by the month.

Following the illegal vinyl trade – and the work of those trying to stop it – can be both fascinating and very strange. The stories it produces mix mundane law enforcement with the names of hugely famous musicians. Four months ago, for example, I learned of a new investigation called Operation Typhoon, which was initially focused on a city in the Midlands. No one involved could say much about it, but parts of the story seemed familiar: the involvement of both the police and local trading standards officers, more records by Frank Ocean, and bone-dry announcements of each new discovery.

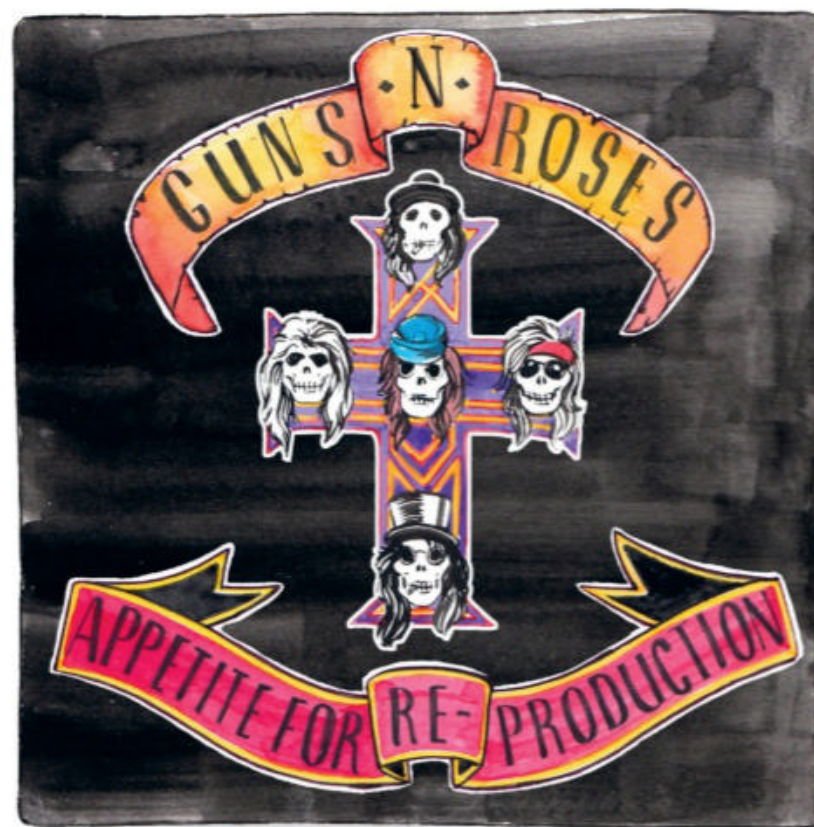
All I knew at first was that 529 records had been seized after a visit to another online business, and put into thick, clear polythene sacks, ready for forensic analysis. But then, early in the morning of 20 February, there was an apparent breakthrough.

The latest raid had been carried out by the City of London police on an industrial unit in west London. What had been discovered included 5,000 albums (along with “inlay sleeves” and “disc centre labels”), by such artists as Kanye West and Drake, as well as old-school rappers De La Soul and Eric B & Rakim. A police statement said the total street value of what had been seized was estimated at £1m. One man had been arrested, and then released under investigation.

Illicit vinyl has been in circulation for as long as records themselves; production last peaked between the mid-1960s



frontier



and late-70s (circa 1964, counterfeit versions of the million-selling American album *Introducing ... the Beatles* were reckoned to have outsold the official edition by three to one). Then, as now, what was produced often followed a predictable pattern: if an album by a successful artist was in short supply, ideally to the point of being considered collectible, then piracy would fill the gap.

The same period saw the advent of so-called bootleg albums. That story is usually reckoned to have begun with a collection of unreleased Bob Dylan recordings unofficially titled *Great White Wonder*, put out in July 1969 by two residents of Los Angeles whose operation was rather archly known as *Trademark of Quality*. For the next 30 years or so, bootleg and counterfeit records – along with cassettes and videotapes – formed an enduring but small part of the record market. But the advent of the CD caused a much bigger problem: the new format proved to be so easy to duplicate and manufacture that counterfeit CDs of huge-selling albums amounted to a massive industry, with the involvement of organised crime. In 2001, two out of every five music recordings sold worldwide were reckoned to be illegal copies.

STREAMING NOW ACCOUNTS for 83% of British music consumption, and has led to seemingly booming times for the UK music industry: last year, it reported its eighth consecutive year of rising revenue from recorded music. Against that backdrop, the new wave of vinyl piracy might look tiny. But old-fashioned records are part of the music industry's unexpected revival: in 2022, 5.5m vinyl albums were sold in the UK alone, and in the first six months of 2023, their sales were up 12% year on year. And there lies the counterfeiters' great opportunity.

As music companies stoke demand for old-fashioned LPs, the world's production capacity lags behind. Until around 10 years ago, the industry was dependent on a finite stock of pressing machines that were more than 30 years old; then, in 2015, new equipment started to ease the pressure. But there is still a big gap between supply and demand. Albums regularly disappear from shops and online platforms, awaiting re-pressing; delays between ordering and getting new records can last up to six months. Worse still, though the vinyl renaissance initially saw record buyers paying about £25 for the average new

Counterfeit versions of US album *Introducing ... the Beatles* were thought to have outsold the official LP by three to one

album, prices are now creeping into the 30s and 40s. Among music obsessives, there is a newly energised market not just for ordinary albums but also bootlegs (of live recordings, radio sessions and studio "out-takes"), and the kind of rarities that can be easily faked.

In the UK, British Phonographic Industry (BPI), the umbrella group that speaks for record labels, employs a small team of people who monitor the illegal sale of music, and do their best to stamp it out. In BPI's view, it is "a serious crime that denies artists the rewards for their creativity, exploits fans, and impacts legitimate retail and the record labels that invest in music". It also points out that the trade in illicit records sometimes blurs into money laundering and drug dealing. Between 2020 and 2022, BPI says it removed 43,000 fake records from online marketplaces, with a crudely estimated value of £860,000: factor in the tens – or even hundreds – of thousands of albums that presumably went unspotted and you get a sense of the mushrooming shadow industry it is trying to tackle.

When I talk to two vinyl specialists from BPI's content protection unit – I'll call them David and Paul – they explain that because they spend some of their time quietly visiting shops and record fairs, they have to remain anonymous. The expertise the job requires is obvious.

They reckon that 50% of the work they do is now focused on vinyl. Some record shops, David tells me, will have up to 5% "counterfeit or bootleg content", which they accept as an unalterable fact of life. "It's like speeding – quite a few people do it, and you can't catch everybody on a given day." When the proportion starts to exceed 20%, "then that's when we start to get really interested".

BPI often starts investigations by doing test purchases online of

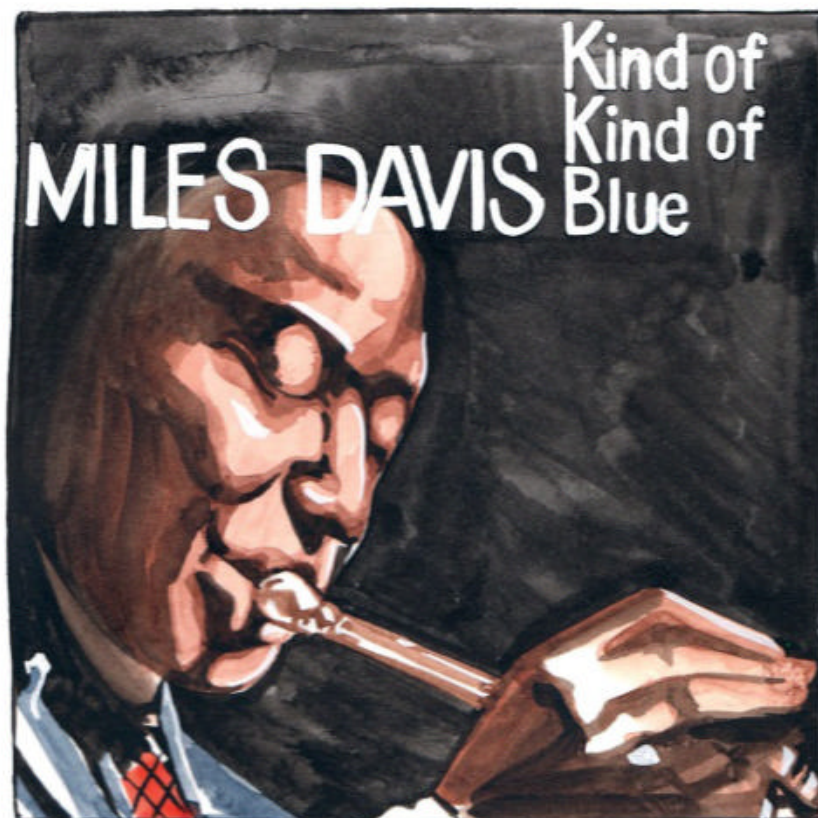
5.5m

The number of vinyl albums sold in the UK in 2022; sales in the first half of 2023 rose 12% year on year



43k

The number of fake records removed from online marketplaces by the BPI between 2020 and 2022



albums that look suspect. Routine giveaways include fuzzy artwork, blurred text and inconsistent matrix numbers etched into albums' run-out grooves. If records turn out to be either bootleg or counterfeit, they will demand that the platforms concerned remove them - before, in some cases, approaching local trading standards officers or the police about taking more drastic action. At the same time, they are constantly piecing together information about where illegal records might be being manufactured, and how they are making it into the UK.

As the Hutter case proved, there is a particularly huge trade in coloured vinyl versions of albums and picture-discs, some of which sell for mind-boggling prices. "Last year, we discovered 12-inch picture-discs that were single-sided," says Paul. "They were originating from Israel. They had a caricature-type picture on the front of the artist. We found about 500 of these. If it was by Dire Straits, it'd be Money for Nothing - one of their biggest hits, just the A-side on a single-sided 12-inch disc. But these were selling for around \$300."

Some hugely popular albums have never made it to vinyl - which creates another opening for pirates. "Beyoncé's 4 never came out in that format," says David. "Frank Ocean's Channel Orange is another classic example: we see a lot of those." The images of Hutter's office show a stack of Channel Orange records, along with copies of Blonde, which was put out on vinyl in extremely limited quantities, before being reissued in 2022.

Most of the vinyl, BPI says, comes from countries in the EU. Do they come across legitimate-looking manufacturers that outwardly restrict themselves to official albums and singles, but press up pirate records when no one is looking? That, I am told, "isn't common, but it certainly happens". The majority of illegal albums, it seems, are done "underground", in "very dirty and haphazard environments". Given that such conditions make for shoddily presented and lousy-sounding records, that often makes the spotting of counterfeits all the easier.

Past prosecutions of illegal vinyl specialists have involved pressing plants in the UK, Italy and the Czech Republic. BPI says it is now putting together a case that involves "intelligence from a Spanish national about an Italian counterfeiter who's pressing in Germany, and banking in Portugal". Records, labels and sleeves are often transported around Europe. The same is even true of "stampers", the metal negatives used when a particular record is pressed.

"About 10 years ago," says Paul, "I raided a pressing plant in this country. We thought there was nobody there. It was quite early in the morning: the police forced entry, and there were two German nationals fast asleep in the control room. They'd brought some stampers over from Germany and were using the premises in the UK to press 12-inch bootlegs, and take them back that morning. So they got nicked, as did the owner."

A FEW WEEKS AFTER I HEAR THAT STORY, BPI's press department sends me a top 10 list of the artists whose bootleg and counterfeit albums have been most frequently removed from online platforms (or "delisted"). The No 1 position, somewhat surprisingly, is held by the veteran goth outfit the Sisters of Mercy, with 695 delistings. Then comes David Bowie, the Rolling Stones, Joy Division and Pink Floyd - followed by the Cure, the Clash, Led Zeppelin, Motörhead and Iron Maiden. Their names are followed by a curt explanation: "You may notice that most of these artists are heritage acts from rock genres. The production of counterfeit vinyl is driven by demand, and this is what is selling."

Richard Hutter, who seems to go by the name Rick, based a lot of his business on artists like these. Biographical material I find about him online says he has a master's degree in economics from Vrije University in Amsterdam, and speaks English, Dutch and German. When I email him, he replies 12 hours later: "How am I going to be portrayed in the story - villain or victim of miscarriage of justice, as they could not take eBay to court?"

The logic of that claim seems questionable, to say the least: eBay takes precautions to stop counterfeit goods being sold and its terms and conditions specify that sellers are responsible for the legality of what they sell. Still, I send a reply to Hutter saying that if that's what he wants to say, it can be included in what I write, and we make arrangements to speak on the phone. But he then backs out. "After having discussed this with my family," he says, "I've decided not to comment."

His case began with a complaint to Dorset county council's trading standards officers, whose department oversees a





huge range of stuff, from fireworks and food labelling to timeshare holidays and the safety of car tyres. The complaint the council received was from someone who had used Vinyl Groove UK to buy the debut album by the 1970s rock band Bad Company, and then tried to contact Hutter about how shoddy their copy turned out to be. It was handed to Tim Evans, the trading standards officer who would take the case all the way to court.

Evans is a genial, matter-of-fact presence and music fan, who works alongside a slightly older colleague called Martin Thursby. When we talk on Zoom, I get the sense from both of them that a long case centred on counterfeit vinyl was a lot more eventful and interesting than their usual beat. “The guy who made the complaint was quite clearly a collector,” Evans tells me. “He knew what he was talking about. And he said, ‘I bought this record. The printing quality is awful. The numbers etched into the disc are all wrong. But it’s being sold as genuine.’ I think he’d paid 30 quid for it. He said, ‘I’ve gone back to the seller and he’s not helped me out. So I’m making a complaint.’”

This whistleblower, Evans says, soon went silent. But he himself then bought two albums from Vinyl Groove UK, both of which turned out to be counterfeit. That, in turn, allowed him to access eBay’s list of people who had previously bought records from Hutter. Three of them agreed to make legal statements.

All the evidence, says Evans, suggested Hutter was selling a lot of records. So the next step was to get a warrant for an “inspection” of his premises. “It sounds like semantics, but we’ve got powers of inspection and entry, not search. So we don’t do that. We *inspect* a property.”

Hutter’s business was registered to an address near Bournemouth airport, but when Evans visited, the unit was vacant, and he was

Counterfeiting is like speeding – quite a few people do it, and you can’t catch everybody on a given day

told the previous tenant had left in 2016. So, the decision was taken to go to Hutter’s house. The morning spent there yielded promising results, so Hutter was taken to Dorset council’s offices for questioning. As had been the case at his family home, he proved to be very dismissive of the suggestion that he’d done anything wrong. “He was quite arrogant,” says Evans. “Very argumentative.”

Hutter claimed he was selling vinyl – bought in “job lots”, and sold wholesale – to customers in the US. But he wasn’t able to provide any information to back this up, including where he had got the records. “No invoices, no nothing – just a rant,” says Evans. “We had information from eBay and PayPal, showing the extent of the criminality and the money he’d been making. So the interview finished and we put the wheels in motion ready to prosecute him.”

THE START OF THE PANDEMIC meant the case’s arrival in court was postponed. After that, more setbacks ensued. “He spent a year delaying things,” says Thursby. “Every time we came to court, he would have a reason why he needed an adjournment: he needed more time to produce evidence that the money wasn’t criminal, or his accountant had information he needed time to produce.”

Eventually, proceedings began – and in contrast to his initial protestations of innocence, Hutter pleaded guilty to seven offences of selling or distributing counterfeit vinyl records under the Trade Marks Act, and six counts of offering for sale vinyl records infringing copyright under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act. He also admitted one count of transferring criminal property under the Proceeds of Crime Act. He was given a four-month prison sentence, suspended for two years, told to hand over £373,000 within three months, fitted with an electronic tag, and ordered to do 250 hours of community work.

Towards the end of my conversation with Evans, one question becomes unavoidable: was he frustrated that the clues he found on Hutter’s phone were not investigated further, following the trail to where the records were being made? “We’re a relatively small sort of service,” he says. “We don’t have the resources of the police. The case had already taken up quite a lot of our time. But there are intelligence databases that we feed into for the police and trading standards. We believe he’s got business interests abroad. We’ve tried to do what we can to inform everyone about him.”

Vinyl Groove UK is still a ghostly presence on Instagram, but as far as Evans and his colleagues understand it, Hutter has metaphorically left the building. “His website was taken down quite quickly; we don’t believe he’s trading in the UK. If he did, he’s on a suspended sentence, so he’d go to jail.”

Operation Typhoon continues: it is clearly aimed at getting beyond just the selling and buying of counterfeit vinyl into who actually manufactures it. It was sparked, according to BPI, when someone who works for a British record label was on holiday in Europe, and went record shopping. They found vinyl versions of albums their company had released with obvious “inconsistencies”; once they got home, the investigation that led from that first episode in the Midlands to the raid on the property in west London began to take shape.

The London raid was a big deal: I soon found out that the 14 police officers involved had come away not just with huge stacks of albums, but the pressing machines that may have been used to make them.

In a picture taken by the police, they were lined up against a white-washed brick wall, seemingly ready to produce yet more fake albums. It seemed to underline a law of capitalism even older than the classic rock beloved by the counterfeiters: the fact that just about every legal business spawns thousands of illicit ones, and that money always follows music, whether the law allows it or not ●

JOHN HARRIS WRITES FOR THE GUARDIAN ON SUBJECTS INCLUDING POLITICS, CULTURE AND MUSIC

JONATHAN FREEDLAND

Starmer is the steady antidote to Tory chaos

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Opinion



POLITICS

*Rising violence against politicians
is an attack on democracy itself*

Simon Tisdall



ILLUSTRATION: GUARDIAN DESIGN

The response of Mette Frederiksen, Denmark's centre-left prime minister, to being physically assaulted in a Copenhagen street was dignified and very human. "I'm not doing great, and I'm not really myself yet," she admitted last week. The attack had left her feeling shocked and intimidated, she said.

Frederiksen suggested her experience was the culmination of some broadly familiar trends: proliferating social media threats, increasingly aggressive political discourse, a divisive Middle East war. "As a human being, it feels like an attack on me. But I have no doubt it was the prime minister that was hit. In this way, it becomes a kind of attack on all of us."

This idea that elected politicians - and the democracies they represent - are everywhere endangered by rising personalised violence is backed by plenty of evidence.

With contentious elections fast approaching in France, the UK and the US, it seems only too probable that there will be more outrages and more victims, some possibly high profile. The root causes of this phenomenon include anger at and distrust of "ruling elites", deliberate polarisation and fearmongering, anti-migrant racism, sectarian bigotry, economic distress and digital provocations by malign state actors. Yet there is no obvious pattern. Political violence, mostly random, is coming from both right and left.

Robert Fico, Slovakia's hard-right prime minister, was shot several times last month and was fortunate to survive. He believes he was attacked because of his views, and blames the influence of political opponents on the left. "It's evident he [Fico's assailant] was only a messenger of evil and political hatred," he said.

In Germany, the boot is on the other foot after a series of attacks by far-right thugs reminiscent of the Nazi era. In May, Matthias Ecke, a Social Democrat MEP, was brutally beaten up in Dresden. On the same evening in the city, a Green party campaigner was also assaulted.

The notorious 2019 murder of Walter Lübcke, a centrist politician, by a neo-Nazi now looks like a turning point. Attacks have doubled in Germany since then. Provisional figures show 234 physical assaults on politicians and political activists last year. "We are experiencing an escalation of anti-democratic violence," said the interior minister, Nancy Faeser.

It would be easy to blame the divisive policies and rhetoric of Germany's surging far-right party, the

Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), and many do. But AfD members suffered more violent criminal attacks in 2023 than any other party, mostly from people with a leftist ideology. The Greens were the second biggest victims.

The decision by France's president, Emmanuel Macron, to challenge the far right in a snap parliamentary election is a big political gamble. But it may prove a personal gamble, too. Macron was attacked with eggs, tomatoes and assorted vegetables in previous campaigns. In 2021, he was slapped in the face.

The potential risks to his and other French politicians' safety in the current climate are obvious, yet difficult to defend against. "Extreme-right violence - motivated by nationalism and authoritarianism - is on the rise in France," warned the University of Oslo extremism expert Anders Ravik Jupskås, writing in *Le Monde*.

Like democratic politicians elsewhere, Macron puts his life on the line when he goes on the stump. It raises basic questions about how long this style of face-to-face politics can realistically continue. It's worth noting that authoritarian leaders such as Russia's Vladimir Putin rarely expose themselves to the public in this way.

Similar concerns are growing in Britain, where memories of the unconnected murders by extremists of Labour MP Jo Cox and Conservative MP David Amess are still fresh. This month, the Jo Cox Foundation joined in condemning two attacks on the hard-right Reform UK party leader, Nigel Farage, one with a milkshake, another with a takeaway cup.

There's a tendency among the more feckless English to view such episodes as harmless knockabout. This attitude dates back to at least the 1970 election, when Labour prime minister Harold Wilson was repeatedly pelted with eggs at public meetings. British politics is less innocent these days. Rosie Duffield, a Labour candidate, revealed that she spent £2,000 (\$2,500) of her own money on bodyguards after receiving death threats. Now she has withdrawn from local hustings.

In this alarming context, Tory minister Michael Gove's fumbling attempts to proscribe extremism amid torrents of public vituperation over Gaza look irrelevant. A more pressing question, for example, is how well protected from non-terrorist-related, rightwing political violence is Keir Starmer, Britain's probable next prime minister?

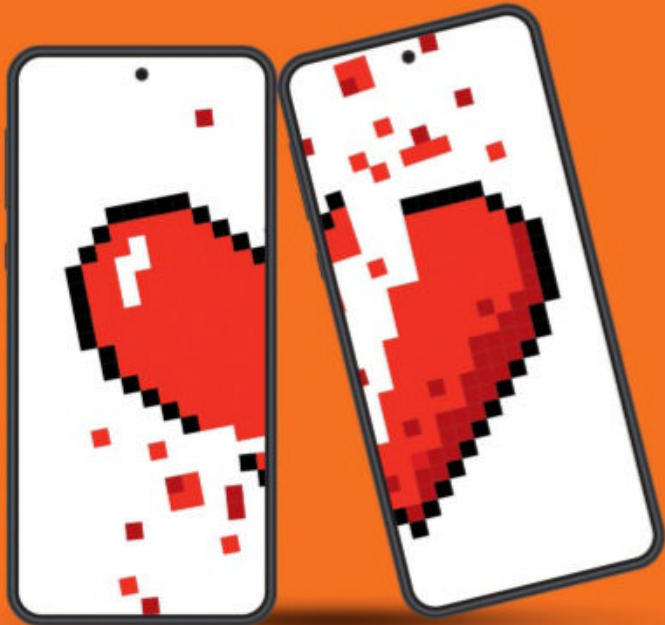
Debate persists over whether political violence predominantly emanates from the far right or left. Of immediate concern is the fact that conventional politics is at risk of sinking under the weight of violence - verbal, virtual, digital and physical. Given America's role as post-1945 democratic paradigm, the prospective resurrection this autumn of Donald Trump could make a bad problem very much worse. Trump's weaponising of state power is uniquely corrosive of trust, tolerance and peaceful change.

Yet in truth, most governments are deeply conflicted. Like its US counterpart, the British state - in suppressing the 1984-85 miners' strike, protests over the Iraq war and Gaza, and environmental activism - has often appeared better at inflicting political violence on ordinary people than protecting them from it ● *Observer*

“
Conventional politics is at risk of sinking under the weight of violence - verbal, virtual, digital and physical

I've swiped away my dating apps – and life feels all the better for it

Anya Ryan



Swipe. Swipe. Swipe. For a while I was swiping so much I was barely thinking. Dating apps had hijacked my fingers, brain and evenings. I'd swipe, mindlessly and without looking, under the table at group dinners or during TV ad breaks. "This is modern dating," I'd tell myself. "It's a job. I have to keep on going. This is the key to my happy ending."

For months, this was my normality. But the lifelong romance I was looking for never materialised. As I sat on my sofa on yet another night ready to swipe until I ran out of steam, I decided I'd had enough. Even if my screen was flooded with likes or messages, my forays into dating app culture had rarely ended with in-person dates. I'd spend hours agonising over a response – I needed to be funny, cool and captivating but not give too much away. But why was I so desperate to impress a stranger trapped behind a screen? I needed to go cold turkey and figure out why I had been sucked in so completely.

I realised that, a lot of the time, I was swiping out of boredom. Instead of enjoying the few moments in the day when I had no responsibilities, I'd reach for my phone. The thrill of going through a pile of likes was unlike anything else. I was addicted to the dopamine rush and the feeling of being wanted – "This person likes me," I'd gush. "This could be the start of our future."

Then my mind would start its journey of invention, because each new connection would bring with it fresh possibility. As I'd stare at the smiling photos

carefully selected by my prospective lover, I'd plan out our life together. I'd envision the ordinary weekday evenings, the things we'd talk about, the holidays and anniversaries. I'd consider their favourite meal, the time they went to bed and how many siblings they might have. I'd draw them a backstory so perfect and full they'd never be able to live up to my creation. And all before we'd even sat down face to face.

But worse than the sense of promise was its fleeting nature. No sooner had I dreamed up a fantasy life with a potential match, I'd be on to daydreaming about the next person. Everything existed in hypothetical passing flashes. There were endless possible connections out there: all I had to do was keep swiping and waiting. Even when messages were exchanged and the idea of a date was floated, more often than not I'd cancel. I'd already be on to dreaming of something and someone new just one, two or 100 clicks away.

To give myself the best chance at romance, I knew I had to look good and that my profile must be regularly updated. On holidays, I itched to get pictures of me looking sun-kissed. At family meals I'd grin, waiting for the camera to click. I'd analyse photos in forensic detail, zooming in on my face just to make sure it was perfect. All of it fuelled an unhealthy obsession with appearance.

But the endless conveyor belt of matches never brought me any joy. Dates I'd romanticised for weeks turned out to be below-average hours that dragged by. I'd bore myself by exchanging with strangers the same job details, facts about my housemates and things I liked to do at the weekend. I'd reel out the same jokes and stories in the same well-practised jargon. But I always left feeling hopeless – even with so many options, I wasn't having any luck. The early fun and excitement of what the apps promised slowly moved into something that felt like a chore. Though I once skipped into dates, I soon felt jaded, realising they would likely go nowhere. I felt like a hamster on a wheel. I was running constantly, and I was exhausted by the relentless churn.

Sometimes I still pick up my phone expecting dating apps to be there, like an old friend. But most of the time I don't miss them. Now they're banished from my screen, I've entered a new phase of encouraging relationships founded in reality. And although they haven't always ended in success, it has been refreshing to lean into conversations in bars, reconnect with people I've not seen for years and be open to possibility.

I've started to care less about my romantic endeavours too. Instead I throw myself into friendships and have more time to work, and my screen time has gone down dramatically. The people I already know have become my priority, and I feel more fulfilled by their company than I've ever been with anyone I'd spoken to on an app. I've realised that life isn't a race to be played out on dating apps – it's about living in the moment.

Deep down I'm a romantic at heart, and I still fantasise about my idyllic future. I'm just not totally consumed with finding ways to make it happen. But who knows? There are thousands of people out there still looking ●

UNITED
KINGDOM

If Starmer is a 'political robot', he's one that has been hardwired to win

Jonathan Freedland

No drama Starmer. No surprises at last week's manifesto launch, no rabbits, no hats. Some in the audience are getting restless. Reporters yawn, or laugh, when the Labour leader says, for the millionth time, that his father was a toolmaker who worked in a factory.

A voter at last Wednesday's Sky News debate told him to his face that he was a "political robot". The complaint is not only about style, but substance too. Opponents on the right lambast the lack of plans and policy detail; on the left they condemn the dearth of radical ambition.

Those complaints all miss the same point. Starmer's

boringness is not a bug: it's a feature. Those puzzled by Labour's giant poll lead - thinking it odd that Starmer is ahead despite being so unexciting - fail to realise that Starmer is ahead *because* he is unexciting. There is method in his lack of madness. To be sure, the caution, the silences on whole areas of policy, may exact a price farther down the road, but for now, it's working.

Take the lament that Labour has offered no shiny new major policy initiative. It seems a failing, until you remember Theresa May - fighting what was the worst campaign in living memory, before Rishi Sunak asked her to hold his beer - threw away a 20-point poll lead in 2017 by proposing a social care policy that instantly became the "dementia tax". If she had said nothing, she would have done much better.

Indeed, Labour's fate under its previous leader is crucial to understanding the current strategy. The party made promises that ticked the boxes Labour's left critics urge Starmer to tick now: bold, radical, exciting. But they did not reassure voters that Labour would manage the economy properly. They did not inspire trust.

Which is why Starmer offers himself as the steady, even stolid, antidote to five years that featured the radicalism of Liz Truss and the excitement of Boris Johnson - and which brought near constant chaos. Last week Starmer told voters that if they were looking for

Illustration Nathalie Lees

someone to run a circus or a pantomime they should look elsewhere. His message is that he may not be box office but a period of calm stability will represent a radical change. For that to work, Labour must present nothing that might put off the many millions of voters who have absolutely had it with the Conservatives.

It's worth recalling just how hard it is for Labour to win a parliamentary majority - only three Labour leaders have ever managed it, in 124 years of trying - and how deeply ingrained is the notion, nurtured over decades by a rightwing press, that Labour is risky, if not dangerous.

Some hint that Starmer himself has done nothing, that the current lead is a mere function of that revulsion at the Conservatives, with Labour as its passive beneficiary. But the Tories have been unpopular before and still won elections - because Labour was deemed unfit.

Even the current increase in Lib Dem support is not down to Ed Davey's paddleboard antics. History suggests the Lib Dems do best when disaffected Tory voters feel safe casting a ballot that will put a Labour prime minister in Downing Street. They refused to do that in 2019 but were happy to do it in 1997 - and seem ready to do it again now.

For the left to slam Starmer for having got Labour to this point is not only a cheek - akin to Dagenham & Redbridge FC faulting Manchester City's playing style - it's also parasitical. So there should be few complaints now from those desperate to see the back of the Tories. As a strategy for winning on 4 July, Starmer's seems hard

to fault. Where the criticism bites is what happens the day after.

✱ **Jonathan Freedland** is a *Guardian* columnist

The pollster James Kanagasooriam warns that Labour might be building an enormous sandcastle, piling on votes from across the spectrum to

make it ever taller - just as Johnson did in 2019. The trouble is, and as the Tories learned to their cost, such a sandcastle can be swept away within a single parliament.

To maintain the coalition currently taking shape beyond 5 July, Labour will have to offer precisely what it has withheld until now: big moves, substantive policy. Starmer says he is seeking a "mandate" for economic growth. The choice of word is telling. If he gets his mandate, he could use it as blanket permission to pursue a range of serious policy shifts about which he stayed mum during the campaign - whether on investment in infrastructure and public services or resetting the relationship with the European Union - all in the name of growing the economy.

Whatever way he does it, it will have to be done. Caution has been a wise means to win power. But, given the scale of the task that will confront the next government - a social fabric that lies in tatters, a weak economy, ailing public services and a country that feels broken - it is no guide for how that power should be used. All the daring, élan and ambition that Labour has repressed in opposition, all the zeal to make things better, stronger and fairer that it has kept in check for so long, all that will have to be unleashed in office. In a reversal of the usual maxim, Labour has campaigned in prose - but it must govern in poetry ●

Heatwaves are on the rise and without urgent action, the death tolls will grow

While parts of Europe have been donning jumpers and complaining about the unseasonable cold, much of the world has been reeling due to excessive temperatures. India has been in the grip of its longest heatwave in recorded history, with thermometers hitting 50C in some places. Greece closed the Acropolis in the afternoon last week as temperatures hit 43C; never has it seen a heatwave so early in the year. Soaring temperatures in the Sahel and western Africa saw mortuaries in Mali reportedly running short of space, while swathes of Asia suffered in May.

Mexico and the south-west of the US have also endured blistering conditions; it was shocking to hear Donald Trump pledge again to "drill, baby, drill" at a rally that saw supporters taken to hospital with heat exhaustion. These bouts of extreme weather are increasing as the climate crisis worsens. Although the El Niño weather pattern contributed to heatwaves over the last 12 months, they are becoming more frequent, extreme and prolonged thanks to global heating. By 2040, almost half the world's inhabitants are likely to experience major heatwaves, 12 times more than the historic average.

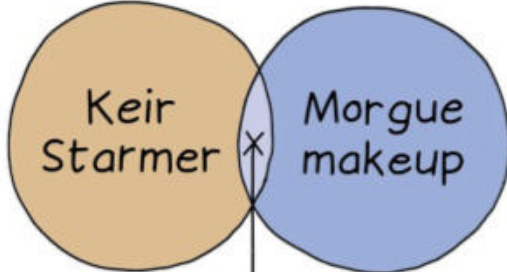
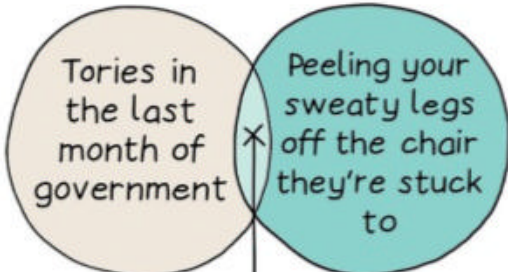
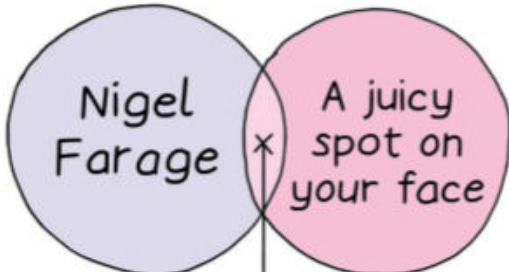
There were more than 60,000 heat-related deaths across Europe in 2022, with 4,500 in the UK alone. In the US, 11,000 died last year. Already hot climates in some countries are becoming unbearable. Experts say deaths are vastly under-reported and many occur well after temperatures fall.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and USAid co-hosted a global heat summit earlier this year to push the issue up the agenda of governments and agencies. Tackling the underlying cause is essential. So is adaptation to cope with the new challenges: everything from redesigning cities to introducing social programmes. Berlin's 2022 "heat aid" scheme for homeless people provided daytime shelter, cool showers and sunscreen.

It means protecting workers. A recent UN report estimated that 70% of the world's 3.4 billion workforce will be exposed to excessive heat at some point. Some countries, such as China and Spain, have maximum temperatures above which outside labour must be suspended or extra mitigations must be put in place - even if enforcement is often woefully inadequate.

The number of workers who have died in the US due to heat exposure has doubled over the past three decades, yet the US has no federal standards - though the Biden administration has asked the Occupational Safety and Health Association to draft them. Industry lobbyists have battled legislative attempts to safeguard workers' health.

Shockingly, in Florida - the US's hottest state - the governor, Ron DeSantis, recently signed a bill that bans municipalities from enacting protections such as proper rest breaks and access to water and shade. That's not just unfair to those now toiling on construction sites and in fields; for some, it may well prove deadly ●

50	Opinion Letters			
WRITE TO US	<p>The drift towards the right needs stopping right now</p> <p>The success of the National Rally party in France and the Tories' flirtation with Reform UK hold similar warnings of the danger of the drift to the far right (Into the void, Big story, 14 June). Marine Le Pen and Nigel Farage are gaining ground among the people most affected by austerity, Covid and the cost of living crisis. In desperation and frustration at the experience of living hand to mouth, blaming immigration and a "rigged" system is an attractive message.</p> <p>This is a warning to Keir Starmer's Labour party, which has no meaningful strategy to alleviate poverty. What Starmer is saying will be enough to win the election, but is it enough to move the momentum away from the far right following it?</p> <p><i>Barry Kushner</i> Liverpool, England, UK</p>	<p>of my friends are activists. It's what we do. In Spain (Andalucía), my friends are of a similar Green/leftwing disposition. What do they do? Well, not much, apart from vote. When I ask why, no one seems to have an answer.</p> <p>Europe does indeed need to wake up. People who care about Europe's drift to the right need to engage beyond their immediate cosy circle. The right (in the shape of Vox) are spreading through Spain like slime, and it's up to individuals to get out there and engage with this menace now. Because <i>mañana</i> will be a day too late.</p> <p><i>Gillian Homer</i> Wallasey, England, UK</p>	<p>the end of the Tories?, Spotlight, 14 June). I proposed that we all stood for a minute's silence in tribute to those who had sacrificed so much on D-day, 50 years earlier.</p> <p>Everyone in the public gallery and the councillors on one side of the chamber stood up immediately. The Conservative councillors, albeit keen to hurry off to a wine-and-cheese reception for the mayor, rose slowly to their feet.</p> <p>They did give me the regrettable impression that they felt such footling commemorative gestures to be something of a time-consuming inconvenience.</p> <p><i>Ben Summerskill</i> London, England, UK</p>	<p>their responsibilities. In this respect, most other countries could, with advantage, follow the example of Australia.</p> <p><i>Dr Juliet Flesch</i> Kew, Victoria, Australia</p>
<p>Letters for publication weekly.letters@theguardian.com</p> <p>Please include a full postal address and a reference to the article. We may edit letters. Submission and publication of all letters is subject to our terms and conditions, see: THEGUARDIAN.COM/LETTERS-TERMS</p> <p>Editorial Editor: Graham Snowdon Guardian Weekly, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU, UK</p> <p>To contact the editor directly: editorial.feedback@theguardian.com</p> <p>Corrections Our policy is to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please write to guardian.readers@theguardian.com or the readers' editor, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU, UK</p>	<p>● Re Timothy Garton Ash's article (Wake up! After this E-day, Europe is again in danger from the far right, Opinion, 14 June), I have just returned from Spain, where I now live, to the UK in order to campaign for the Green party. I am spending my time leafleting, handing out flyers and chatting to people in the street. Most</p>	<p>● Politicians and journalists seem to think that we humble UK voters are excited and obsessed, as they are, with pledges, policies and manifestos (Spotlight, 14 June). At another time, I might be too. However, I am only seeking political normality, integrity and competence.</p> <p><i>Philip Sutton</i> Bradford-on-Avon, England, UK</p> <p>Honouring D-day should not be an inconvenience I vividly recall attending a meeting of Westminster city council in June 1994, as a newly elected councillor (Could this be</p>	<p>Make voting mandatory to promote democracy I am deeply unconvinced by George Monbiot's argument against elections (Elections are a travesty of democracy, Opinion, 14 June).</p> <p>He appears to assume that all citizens have an equal amount of time and energy to participate in people's assemblies. This is simply not the case. Carers, shift workers, people juggling multiple jobs to make ends meet are unlikely to do so.</p> <p>I believe that elections are more democratic if casting a ballot is mandatory, so that people cannot simply abrogate</p>	<p>A much-missed doctor who changed daily lives Dr Michael Mosley has done more to change my everyday life than any other broadcaster (TV doctor Mosley found dead on Greek island, UK report, 14 June). Every morning I do a routine including balancing on one leg and plank. I joined the University of the Third Age (U3A) to learn Latin following his recommendation to learn a language. Most recently, I have discovered the joy of green tea, reducing my caffeine intake.</p> <p><i>Olwen Poulter</i> Leeds, England, UK</p>
<p>CORRECTIONS</p> <p>We referred to Kumi Soejima as a senior lecturer at the National Fisheries University (Net gains, Spotlight, 14 June) whereas she is an associate professor at Setsunan University.</p> <p>A Spotlight article said that Rio Grande do Sul usually produces 90% of Brazil's rice. This should have said 70% (Calamitous floods made more likely by global heating, 14 June).</p>				
A WEEK IN VENN DIAGRAMS Edith Pritchett	 <p>Trying to seem more lifelike</p>	 <p>Clinging on; undignified removal</p>	 <p>Becoming a grotesque focal point</p>	

VISUAL ARTS

Gallery that
put photos in
the frame

Page 54 →

INTERVIEW

Katharine Hamnett

All the rage

*The designer and
activist has been
making waves for
decades. Now she's
back with an urgent
political message*



Culture



INTERVIEW

By Michael Segalov

COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Suki Dhanda

► Under protest

With Margaret
Thatcher at
Downing Street
in 1984

PA/ALAMY

K

ATHARINE HAMNETT

has been plotting. On her battered iPhone, she's scrolling through what she hopes to be the blueprint for, come UK election day, a ballot box-based revolution. It's a PDF with an array of mocked-up billboards, each emblazoned with a policy or slogan. A designer and campaigner renowned for her political punchiness, she has made the text snappy and succinct, all in her trademark capital letters. "In here is everything that's missing from this so-far awful election," she laments. "Both main parties want us to feel like progressive ideas are in the bin. Forgotten. We mustn't let them."

She reels off a selection: "Vote freedom to protest; vote free education; vote save the NHS; vote let aid into Gaza now". There are plenty more. "Vote legalise, nationalise and tax marijuana; vote help refugees; vote ceasefire; vote good, free public regional transport; vote roller-discos." Yes, roller-discos. "I did some research while working with Podemos in Spain. They foster community and solidarity. Isn't that fun?" Another, her overarching mantra: "Our vote is the most powerful tool to get the world we want. I want that one all over."

Hamnett's plan is simple: get these messages plastered across public spaces. "Politicians aren't talking about this stuff, but it's hugely popular," she says. "If I put them out and get people talking, maybe the parties will have to pinch them. It could swing the dial. And if not, it's a reminder to all of us that we deserve to vote for the future we actually want."

One design, DON'T LET THEM STOP YOU VOTING, has already been popping up across London; a statement on new voter ID laws and fears students would be kept off the electoral register. There's a website, too. Her next stop is Glastonbury next weekend: these posters will be erected at Block9, the festival's late-night, anything-goes, politically charged party corner. "I'm not hugely keen on mud and late nights, but for this? I'll do it." She'll have a booth to answer punters' questions. "Because this election, and those in Europe, the United States and beyond this year are the most important of our lives," she is sure. "The whole future of life on Earth will be decided in them. We've got to do something. This is my part. If I wasn't doing it, I'd go



This year's elections are the most important of our lives. The future of life on Earth will be decided in them

► Wham snap

George Michael and Andrew Ridgeley in 1984

TRINITY MIRROR/
MIRRORPIX/ALAMY

▼ War cry

Politics on the catwalk in 2003

SCOTT BARBOUR/GETTY



mad." The phone is returned to her handbag, from which she pulls a cigarette.

We'd planned to meet for coffee at a London community garden café, but the weather is wet and blustery so we find shelter under a canopy. Hamnett is dressed in black, head to toe. Her dog, Arthur, lies beside her. Now 76, Hamnett suggests I sit closer. One of her ears, she explains, is on the blink. I offer to grab us hot drinks. "Or a glass of wine to loosen the lips," she suggests. I oblige. It's immediately apparent, however, that to this end no pinot grigio is required.

"I've been so focused on the election, and what's on offer from Labour and the Conservatives is pathetic," she begins. She's not holding back. "Starmer? He's a shitbag. I want to be expelled from Labour but I haven't been yet. I've got a feeling they just scrubbed my membership out." She voted for Keir Starmer in the 2020 Labour leadership race but feels let down. "He claimed he was going to carry on with the progressive principles that were in place. Watching him reneging on the reasons I voted for him? I was furious. I still am. It's betrayal and shameless."

HAMNETT HAS RARELY SHIED FROM BEING OUTSPOKEN. In 1984, she wore a self-designed, anti-Tory T-shirt (58% DON'T WANT PERSHING, a reference to widespread opposition to US missiles being based in Britain) to meet Margaret Thatcher at Downing Street, grabbing national attention. At London Fashion Week 2003, her models wore "STOP WAR, BLAIR OUT" shirts with the invasion of Iraq looming. This February, she again made headlines. To Instagram, she uploaded a short video: emerging from her front door, wearing a "DISGUSTED TO BE BRITISH" T-shirt, she dumped her CBE in a dustbin. "I'm disgusted to be British for our role in genocide in Gaza," she said to camera. "This is my CBE. It belongs in the dustbin, with Sunak and Starmer."

Hamnett today is one of the British art scene's last true, obdurate radicals. Life didn't start that way. Her father, an RAF man, became a defence attache in MI6, posted to Nato. "And really you don't get more establishment than that," she says. "My parents were the sort of people who wouldn't allow me to do yoga at school. They feared it had communist affiliations." When she was six, the family moved to Paris,

then Bucharest and Stockholm. British boarding schools felt just as oppressive. “Cheltenham Ladies’ College wasn’t a particularly progressive place,” she regrets.

While studying fashion in London, all this changed. “I arrived at Central Saint Martins in the mid-1960s, its golden days. We were all waking up to the injustices and criminality of colonialism, the Vietnam war. Everything happening was completely wrong and we needed to stand up and do something about it. My family all voted Tory. Suddenly I was a socialist. Going home was difficult.”

She entered her industry wide-eyed and optimistic. “Naive, actually,” she self-corrects, “totally fucking oblivious.” She briefly went into business with a friend, then freelanced before setting up her label in 1979. It proved hugely successful. “It was ridiculous. Companies would buy our whole collection. I was my own boss, no backers, entirely self-funded. It meant I was free to say whatever I wanted.” And she did, starting with the T-shirts. “The styles from our collections were all being copied – the highest form of flattery. If that was going to happen, why not, I thought, make large-print shirts that could be spotted from 300 metres away, with ethical and environmental issues that needed attention? I’d be thrilled if they were replicated.”

Soon she turned her focus to her own industry. “It’s easy to be successful if you’re a cunt,” she says. “The challenge is to try to be successful and not be one – to be a decent human being.” The ideas, she says, are borrowed from Buddhism, even if its sacred texts are lighter on profanities. “I wanted to check the environmental and social impact of the clothing and textile industry, thinking it would be fine. I just assumed: it’s fashion – we couldn’t be doing anything that wrong. Around 1989, we did this research.”

A report was commissioned. “And, oh my God, that was a wakeup call: thousands of farmers dying every year from accidental pesticide poisoning. We were destroying the environment and killing workers. The industry was making people sick, keeping them in slavery, devastating ecosystems. Every single material had a huge footprint: leather, PVC, viscose, Teflon – even bamboo is a total green-wash. Dying and tanning processes? A nightmare. I realised quickly I was in the wrong job. Our impact was disgusting.”

Today fashion’s ramifications for people and planet are widely known. Hamnett was a pioneer – the first to blow the whistle. “I had licences all over the world,” she

says. “I decided to say to all these clients and buyers, ‘See what’s happening! We’ve got to fix it!’ I thought they’d all be shocked and agree, that I would persuade them to change.” This proved unsuccessful. “That’s when I realised what business I was really in. A rotten, stinking cesspit, responsible for countless people living in the worst conditions and the destruction of the planet.”

When one of her denim manufacturers refused to offer a profit share to a Senegalese project supporting cotton farmers going organic, she smuggled a Channel 4 News film crew on to his estate to demand his contribution. One leather supplier was secretly using cheap, toxic substances instead of agreed sustainable methods. Hamnett cut all ties. One by one, relationships crumbled.

The label agreed to work on a sustainable collection with an Italian fashion house. “The day before we went out to agents with the pieces, I noticed an issue with the denim. They’d used chlorine bleach. ‘No,’ I said. ‘It’s toxic.’ Their man turned to me and said, ‘Carry on with this ethical and environmental shit, you can take your collection and fuck off.’ That pretty well summed up the industry.”

STILL, HAMNETT PERSEVERED. It felt like her own company was against her at times. The business shrank. “Things just sort of petered out. It’s a shame. I like clothes. I like fashion. I love to make clothes that make people happy. But that’s what happened. I was left with the T-shirts.”

She turned her focus to activism and charity collaborations, her “CHOOSE LOVE” T-shirt design, the most famous, raising millions to support refugees. “It’s a simple, clear message, an antidote to so much hate,” she says. “It’s the best one I ever came up with. It’s the lens through which we should all look at the world, the antithesis to everything that’s happening in politics.” Does it sting that so much of her other creative output is often left out or forgotten? She shrugs. “I’d much rather be doing this than be stuck in some old fashion house trying to keep itself alive with a 76-year-old boss competing against companies producing beautiful things from Uyghur slave labour in Chinese prison camps.”

For decades, Hamnett’s family was based in east London. Married but now separated, she has two adult sons and a grandchild. Post-Brexit, the clan sold up and headed to Mallorca. “Honestly,” she says, “I just thought fuck this.” Right now, though, she’s back in London, renting. The future feels uncertain. “Spain is lovely,” she says. “I have gorgeous friends. But this is an emergency. I can’t just sit around. I’ve come back and feel like I can actually achieve something here. Be part of something. Whereas in Spain I’m a nobody. I have a voice I can use for something positive.”

And Hamnett has so much to say. Her views might have been forced out of the political mainstream, but her optimism is unrelenting. “Hello,” she exclaims, “what choice do we have?” She pretends to slap me round the face, as if to wake me. “We can’t feel sorry for ourselves. Channel it into creative energy. Stay angry as hell and do something. Our votes are an incredibly powerful tool. I believe in people. And I think I’m right, even if we all need to just wake up a bit. We can truly get our green and pleasant land in this country, a different Jerusalem if we take this chance.” Another cigarette. “I really do hope this works. I do believe humans are 99% good. There’s just a few rogues who go out there and seize power. Let’s stop them.” ● *Observer*

MICHAEL SEGALOV IS A JOURNALIST, FILMMAKER AND AUTHOR



▲ **Bloc capitals**
Making a pro-EU statement in London in 2019

DAVID M BENETT/GETTY



Choose love is a simple, clear message. It’s an antidote to so much hate, the best one I ever came up with

Alive and Kicken

The gallery that's pivotal to how we see photography

Co-founded before the medium was taken seriously as art, this Berlin venue is turning 50 by celebrating its collection – and photography itself

By Eliza Apperly

When Annette Kicken's late husband, Rudolf, founded a photo gallery in Aachen, West Germany, in 1974, appreciation of photography as an art form was rare. Major German photographic museums were years away from opening. In the UK, the National Portrait Gallery had only just appointed its first curator of photography. In the US, the Metropolitan Museum of Art would not establish a department of photographs until 1992.

"It was a very, very small scene," says Kicken, who joined the gallery in 1999. "There were few institutional exhibitions. There was no market."

Kicken Gallery, which moved from Aachen to Cologne in 1979, and to Berlin in 1999, set out to preserve photography. Quick to participate in fairs such as Art Basel and proactive in its cooperation with museums, the gallery helped to build recognition for the photography of surrealism, Czech modernism and the Bauhaus, as well as American new colour photography and artistic documentary movements in both East and West Germany.

The current 50 Years | 50 Photographs at Kicken Berlin reflects on the gallery's legacy, and the gradual acceptance of photography as a means of artistic expression. The exhibition is curated by Wilhelm Schürmann, a photographer and co-founder of the gallery.

You feel Schürmann's photographic eye throughout the exhibition. Industrial development and women's independence are recurring subjects. In an exhibition about how photography is shown, and how it has been seen, here are subjects confronting with a stare, shielding eyes from view, and inviting us to look closer.

"Our hope is that other galleries take on the photographic position more and more," Kicken says. "Maybe then the need for specialist galleries like ours recedes, but then our mission will be accomplished."

ELIZA APPERLY IS A WRITER AND PRODUCER BASED IN BERLIN

50 Years | 50 Photographs is at Kicken Gallery, Berlin, to 20 December



▼ Jaromír Funke

Z Cyklu Cas Trvá,
from Time Lasts, 1937

Kicken Gallery promoted several protagonists of Czech avant-garde photography, including Jaroslav Rössler and Jaromír Funke. Sourcing impulses from cubism, new objectivity, abstraction and surrealism, Funke was pioneering in his experimentation.



▲ Ed van der Elsken

Amsterdam,
Nieuwmarkt, 1956

This picture by the Dutch photographer Ed van der Elsken of twin sisters in Amsterdam is one of several in the exhibition that capture pairs of women, whether workers, friends, siblings or a mother and daughter.

► Lisette Model

Bois de Boulogne, 1938

When Kicken first opened, it fostered relationships with pioneers of the genre. Austrian-American Lisette Model turned to photography in the mid-1930s and built a portfolio of candid street shots. From 1951, she taught at the New School in New York, where her students included Diane Arbus.



► Sibylle Bergemann Alexanderplatz, Berlin, 1967

Today, Kicken is housed in a surviving Wilhelminian building on the Kaiserdamm boulevard in Berlin. In the unusually intact historic venue, 50 Years | 50 Photographs also traces the destruction, reconstruction and division of the city, including this striking shot by Sibylle Bergemann, born in Berlin in 1941 and a leading documenter of everyday life in East Germany.



▲ **Wilhelm Schürmann** Ireland (Dublin), 1973

As a photographer, collector and co-founder of Kicken, Schürmann offered an “inside and outside” view on the gallery’s history, says Annette Kicken. “It’s very personal, very selective, very special.” Schürmann’s own work is represented in two photographs, including this portrait from Dublin.

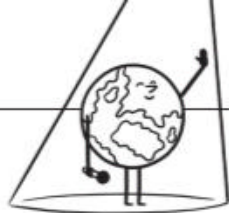


Here are subjects confronting with a stare, shielding eyes, inviting us to look closer



▲ **Helga Paris** Selbstportraits, 1981-1989

50 Years | 50 Photographs opens with three works from Helga Paris’s 80s self-portraiture series. A fitting start for an exhibition reflecting on the passage of time, Paris’s shifting outfits, hairstyles and expressions evoke the final years of the German Democratic Republic – the subject of much of her work.



VISUAL ARTS

Gavin Jantjes: To Be Free!*Whitechapel Gallery, London*

★★★★☆

Gavin Jantjes is not a name on many people's lips, although he should be. Born in Cape Town in 1948, the year the apartheid regime first devastated South Africa, he is one of the country's most significant artists. But a lifetime's exile, moving between Germany, Norway and England, and shifting between several different roles, have perhaps obscured his singular qualities as an artist. The Whitechapel's huge survey aims to change that.

Some paintings are like riddles or pictograms. It is not always easy to unpick Jantjes's allegory. But very often the internal force of the image holds its own irreducible poetry.

Jantjes is extraordinarily various, his idiom shifting all the time. There are paintings that develop into three dimensions, sculptures that punctuate paintings, and considerable shifts from post-pop art to late-flowering expressionism. After a long pause, he established a new studio in Oxfordshire. His latest works are vast and serene. They fill the upper floor of the Whitechapel, the best of them emitting an uplifting light. And for him, they must carry the thing he most desires, and has stood for, and written about all through his life - the spirit of freedom. *Laura Cumming Observer*
To 1 September

► **Out of the blue**

Untitled, 1989

GAVIN JANTES/DACS

► **Centre stage**

Normani returns with her debut solo album

MARCUS COOPER

MUSIC

Normani*Dopamine, Columbia*

★★★★☆

For six long years Normani was the most overlooked member of Fifth Harmony, a so-so girl band fused together in 2012 on the forgotten US variant of The X Factor. When they split in 2018, she quickly became the pop connoisseurs' choice for assumed solo breakout success.

In summer 2019 she unleashed *Motivation*, a Max Martin-assisted, 00s pop-infused banger. From the outside, things looked rosy. Then Normani disappeared until she resurfaced in February with news of her long-awaited debut album.

With Normani there were extra issues in play. After 19 years in remission, in 2020 her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. A year later her father was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Music, unsurprisingly, took a back seat.

Now, on *Dopamine*, the bright pop of *Motivation* has been replaced by an expertly curated deep dive into her passion for R&B.

There's a sense of the 28-year-old figuring out an artistic identity throughout the 13 tracks. *Dopamine* strives hard for perfection, but it can feel strangely anonymous at times. When Normani fully lets loose, as on the gyrating *Grip*, and the house-inflected *Take My Time*, there's a real sense of that superstar everyone hoped to see back in 2018 finally taking centre stage. *Michael Cragg*



FILM

Inside Out 2*Dir: Kelsey Mann*

★★★★☆

The first *Inside Out* took us into the Mission Control operations centre within the mind of a kid, and showed us the emotions amusingly piloting her every decision - Joy, Fear, Rage, Disgust and Sadness. Now the sequel-upgrade brings us to the teen years. There are some laughs, but it sees the transition in terms of a moral crisis, of abandoning and then reclaiming childhood innocence. It's a little bit convoluted and repetitive and, in its sanitised way, this film can't quite bring itself to mention love - the most important new emotion of all.

Riley (voiced by Kensington Tallman) is now 13. She is due to start high school, and along with her two best friends is heading off to a prestigious ice-hockey camp. But when Riley discovers these two girls have kept a secret from her, she figures she has to outgrow them and start hanging out with the camp's supercool older stars - led by Valentina "Val" Ortiz (Lilimar) - which in turn upsets her old friends.

Meanwhile the five emotions, led by the boosterish Joy (Amy Poehler), are alarmed to find the tiniest touch on the controls triggers tearful tantrums in the once level-headed Riley. What's more, to their horror, a whole new bunch of teen emotions have barged in, including Anxiety (Maya Hawke) and - hilariously - a shruggingly dismissive Ennui (Adèle Exarchopoulos), which wrestle the old guard for control of Riley's soul.

Inside Out 2's view of growing up has nothing in it as powerful or real as the *When She Loved Me* song from *Toy Story 2* - but there are a lot of entertaining moments, not least when Joy has a crisis of authority: "Maybe this is what happens when you grow up ... you feel less joy." Not at all, of course: it's just a different kind of joy. *Peter Bradshaw*

*In UK, US and Australian cinemas***Podcast of the week** *Where Everybody Knows Your Name* with Ted Danson and Woody Harrelson (sometimes)

The *Cheers* stars rekindle their friendship while chatting to interviewees - and it is as smile-inducing as you'd expect. Will Arnett is first up, but the hosts are questioned about their comedy chops as much as their guest. *Alexi Duggins*



FICTION

A wild ride

Tragedy and farce collide in the Irish author's beautiful, lovable and fun tale of lovers on the run in 19th-century Montana

By Sandra Newman

▲ **Foal play**
Tom and Polly head off with a palomino horse

CLARK AND COMPANY/
ISTOCK/GETTY

The hero of Kevin Barry's new novel, *The Heart in Winter*, is a dope-fiend Irishman haphazardly subsisting in the mining town of Butte, Montana, in the 1890s. Tom Rourke has a poor excuse for a job as assistant to a poor excuse for a photographer, and earns drink money by writing letters for illiterate men luring brides from the east. His spare time is spent haunting brothels, racking up debt through his opium habit, and writing songs along the lines of: Ain't got a dime / But the sun's gonna shine / Coz we's all bound for heaven / On the Cal-i-for-nee line. In his own mind, he is "set apart from the hoarse and laughing crowd. He was at a distance of artistic remove from it was what he felt."

As the book begins, Tom has two fateful meetings, both involving love at first sight. The first is with a palomino horse, "a nervous animal, of golden aura", which he stumbles upon while coming down from opium at 4am. He's no horseman, and yet the animal calls to him as if from some foredoomed future: "The horse stilled herself utterly and fixed the lashes of the long stare on his and he was bound."

The second encounter is with Polly Gillespie, a newly arrived mail-order bride who walks into his photography studio with her God-obsessed stick of a husband, Long Anthony Harrington. As her picture is taken, the tip of her nose twitches, her eyes meet Tom's, and "his heart turned". From Polly's point of view: "That boy was looking at her so hard it was like he just discover eyes ... and suddenly everything was chilly and there was a real weight to it." Before long, Tom and Polly have taken the palomino and are lighting out for San Francisco with a saddlepack full of stolen money. "And there she was with Tom Rourke hand in hand in terrible love in the dead of night and the forest

deep looking up to the sky and all at once yessir absolutely they could see fires on the moon."

Barry's books are known for their stylistic brilliance, and *The Heart in Winter* is no exception. Terse and acrobatic, the novel effortlessly walks the line between goofy and gothic. Almost every sentence is quotable. It's woven from plain-spoken lyricism ("the last winter days went by like weary brokedown soldiers at the end of a war") and jokes that are at once subtle and silly ("Tom Rourke salted the eggs unambiguously").

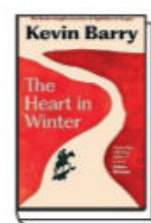
Barry also has a genius for inventing comic characters. There's the photographer Loneyan Crane, obsessed with a rival who poses women looking coyly over their shoulders, which he darkly insists refers to anal sex. "It's a nod and a wink! It's buggery and cavortion! It's the beasts of the fields!" There's Ding Dong, the bellhop turned wilderness hermit, who has abandoned civilisation because he had "turned silly on account of not sleeping at all and was just not fit for the company of humankind no more". Then there's the Reverend, whom Tom and Polly find in the backwoods "sleeping ravenously in a covered wagon". On first laying eyes on them, he clutches at his head and cries out "Hoodlums of Love!" then confesses his sins to them, marries them, and makes them guzzle Tres Sombreros tequila to kill the intestinal creatures that he believes lure people away from God.

Even the horse is a memorable character, stuck on Tom and sulky with it. But, best of all, are Tom and Polly, burdened with a great love and no resources. Seeing himself in a mirror, Tom thinks: "The sea-blue eyes were too moist and pastoral-looking. He was fucking harmless was what it was." Their rocky pasts have taught them nothing except that the future is probably no gift either. They are hapless and in no way special, and you totally get why they adore each other.

Barry has written us a love story that never seems false or cheap, and an adventure where the violence is never gloating or desensitised. It's a wedding of Cormac McCarthy with Flann O'Brien; a western but also the most Irish of novels; a tragedy written as farce. You might object that the plot isn't perfect: Barry has one too many villains driven by odd sexual kinks, and the climax rushes by too precipitously. Still, I doubt these flaws will matter much to any reader's admiration of this book. It's made to attract superlatives, while inspiring joy with every incident, every concept, every sentence.

Barry does more with a single word like "mopesome" than some writers do in 300 pages. One should never say a book is the best of its year, since no one can read all the books of any year. I doubt, though, that anyone will publish a novel this year that is at once so beautiful, so lovable and so much fun.

SANDRA NEWMAN IS AN AMERICAN AUTHOR AND CRITIC



BOOK OF THE WEEK
The Heart in Winter
By Kevin Barry

HISTORY

A disaster foretold

The story behind 1986's Challenger space shuttle explosion is a gripping catalogue of underfunding and stifling bureaucracy

By Killian Fox

▼ Doomed craft

Challenger lifts off from Kennedy Space Center, Florida



In 1986, two catastrophic events occurred on either side of the cold war divide that shocked the world. On 28 January, 73 seconds after takeoff, the US space shuttle Challenger broke apart in mid-air, killing all seven astronauts on board and traumatising millions of viewers watching live on TV. Three months later, on 26 April, a meltdown at Chornobyl sent a radioactive cloud across the USSR and Europe. Two workers died immediately and the estimated death toll over time ranges from hundreds to tens of thousands. It's widely believed to have contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In his 2019 book *Midnight in Chernobyl*, the British writer Adam Higginbotham reconstructed the latter event in forensic detail, building up to the meltdown and tracking its aftermath with the skill of a great thriller writer. It's one of the most queasily compelling books I've ever read, and the scenes in which ill-equipped workers venture into the stricken reactor in the hope of containing the fallout are permanently seared into my memory.

Now Higginbotham is tackling the former event, and despite the awful spectacle of the Challenger disaster and the media frenzy around it at the time - heightened by the presence on board of the charismatic schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe - it would seem the more difficult of the two incidents to turn into a nonfiction page-turner tense enough to make your palms sweat.

For one thing, the Challenger's demise - though it punctured Nasa's reputation for competency under pressure, and rattled the US's conception of itself as a spacefaring nation - did not have the empire-toppling force of Chornobyl, which also hobbled the cause of nuclear energy. For another, though the key event at Chornobyl unfolded very quickly, the danger persisted long after the meltdown and rippled outwards to affect millions of people.

The Challenger disaster, by contrast, was over

within seconds, and besides the impact on the astronauts and their families, the main damage in the aftermath was to the reputations of those who pushed for the launch despite being aware of fatal flaws in the technology.

Then there's the sheer volume of technical detail. *Midnight in Chernobyl* had its share of heavy-duty analysis of how reactors work, and catastrophically fail, but this pales in comparison with the shuttle programme, which has so many moving parts, each complex in its own way, that a writer as thorough as Higginbotham has to work doubly hard to make it all comprehensible.

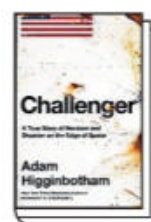
It helps that he's extremely good at explaining

the intricacies of the world's first reusable manned spacecraft - the most complicated machine in history, he calls it, with its alarmingly rickety rocket boosters and its infernal jigsaw of heat-insulating tiles, which covered the surface of the shuttle to prevent it from burning up on re-entry. He's illuminating, too, on the labyrinthine workings of Nasa, which by the 1980s was underfunded, stiflingly bureau-

cratic and yet wildly overambitious in its mission to make space flight as routine as air travel.

The experience of reading *Challenger* is a bit like blasting off from Cape Canaveral. The first stretch can be heavy going, requiring the full thrust of Higginbotham's prose to propel us through the technical and institutional nitty-gritty while also familiarising us with a wide cast of characters - from the astronauts and the top brass at Nasa over three decades to lowly engineers working for contractors around the country. But then, after a couple of hundred pages, the weight of exposition drops away and we cruise with ominous ease towards the events of 28 January 1986.

That we know exactly what's in store makes the journey no less nerve-racking, largely because Higginbotham is so adept at bringing characters to life, often within the space of a



Challenger
By Adam Higginbotham

INTERVIEWS

Burning bright

Arundhati Roy talks forcefully about India's 'mad pathology', the self-absorbed west and globalisation

By Sukhdev Sandhu

By 2001, when this collection of 12 interviews with US writer and broadcaster David Barsamian begins, Arundhati Roy was already under fire.

Leftwing critics, among them Aijaz Ahmad, had attacked her Booker prize-winning *The God of Small Things* (1997) for its anti-communism.

In Kerala, where it was set, she was charged with "corrupting public morality". *The End of Imagination* (1998), an essay collection in which she railed against India's turn to nuclear nationalism and the growing number of mega-dam projects harming the country's environment and rural population, led to charges that she was anti-progress, anti-patriotic, unladylike.

Did this make her watch her tongue?

The very thought. Her fires keep burning all the way through *The Architecture of Modern Empire*, whether she's talking in Delhi or Las Vegas. Sometimes she laughs, sometimes she rages, sometimes both. Were a non-Indian to itemise the country as she does they would be damned as an orientalist. Anti-blackness, huge

rates of illiteracy and malnutrition, the murder of millions of young girls, the ubiquity of rape, feudalism, ever greater numbers of deaths in custody, "genocide" against Muslims, air pollution, river poisoning: it's a dark index.

Roy is stringent and unforgiving about the "mad pathology" of this India where "peace is a daily battle for food and shelter and dignity". She worries about globalisation. In the



The Architecture of Modern Empire
By Arundhati Roy

paragraph. One Nasa honcho is described as “secretive, inscrutable and machiavellian ... the Thomas Cromwell of the Johnson Space Center”. As we spend more time with the Challenger crew members, their individual quirks and passions emerge. Ron McNair, one of Nasa’s first Black astronauts and a talented jazz musician, is determined to broadcast himself playing saxophone live from space. Middle-school teacher McAuliffe, who charms everyone with her gee-whiz enthusiasm, fearlessly swings a supersonic jet into a barrel roll when she’s handed the controls during a training flight.

As the astronauts become more vivid on the page, we watch helplessly as repeated attempts to deal with the shuttle’s key weakness – the rubber seals preventing the release of hot gas within the rocket boosters – fail to resolve the problem. It wasn’t just a technical impasse; outside pressures on the shuttle programme meant that higher-ups at Nasa and its contractors were prepared to ignore the warnings in order to stay on schedule. Higginbotham’s account of an emergency meeting on 27 January about the disabling effect of low temperatures on the seals demonstrates this in shocking detail.

As in the case of Chernobyl, blame also resides with the politicians who heaped pressure on the programme even as they hacked away at its budgets. The media, which hounded the astronauts before the launch and their grieving families afterwards, also comes in for criticism. But this is primarily a story of corporate and institutional malfeasance, and echoes of the 1986 disaster – the corner-cutting, the suppression of safety concerns and persecution of whistleblowers – can be felt in the crisis currently besetting the plane manufacturer Boeing.

Higginbotham’s latest may lack the feverish radioactive pulse and vast dramatic scope of *Midnight in Chernobyl*, but once it gets over the initial hurdles it’s still one hell of a ride. *Observer*

KILLIAN FOX WRITES ABOUT THE ARTS, FOOD, TRAVEL AND SCIENCE FOR THE OBSERVER

west, she believes, “every person that’s walking down the street is a walking barcode”. The real problem? “India is becoming very much like the United States, so self-absorbed.”

More than half the interviews were conducted before 2009. Could she have predicted that as early as 2012 Narendra Modi would, in the form of a hologram, address a rally, or that social networks might be exploited by fundamentalists?

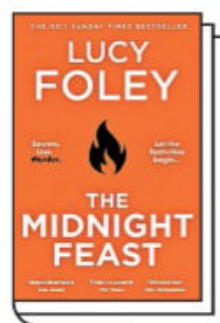
Not all of Roy’s invective has lost its power. In 2002, she points out that 11 September 1922 was the date Britain marked out a mandate on Palestine: “Eighty years on, the Palestinians are still under siege. How can one come to the United States and not mention Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian territory? The US government is funding it ... politically and morally. It’s a crime.”

SUKHDEV SANDHU IS A WRITER AND ACADEMIC

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

The best recent crime and thrillers

By Laura Wilson



The Midnight Feast

By Lucy Foley

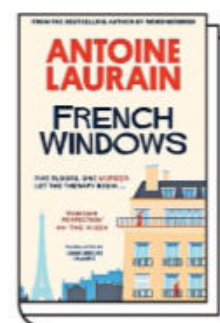
Bestselling author Foley’s latest novel is set on the picturesque Dorset coast, where Francesca Meadows has turned the grand house she inherited into a sumptuously Instagrammable eco retreat called The Manor. None of this pleases the locals, some of whom have scores to settle with Francesca. While she prepares for a lavish summer solstice celebration, complete with the eponymous feast, they are busy conducting a campaign of disruption. There’s a house fire, and a body is discovered at the bottom of a cliff, and we shift back and forth in time from before the celebration to after and, finally, during it as the story unfolds through the multiple narrators. Most of them, from entitled and hypocritical Francesca to mysterious Bella, have something to hide. Foley deftly keeps all the plates – old resentments, terrible secrets, new age woo-woo, and a side order of folk horror – spinning for a tense, atmospheric read.

The Burial Plot

By Elizabeth Macneal

Macneal’s third novel is a wonderfully atmospheric thriller set in the early Victorian period, when London’s “magnificent seven” cemeteries were

being built to cope with the capital’s burgeoning population. Runaway Bonnie is in thrall to conniving Crawford. When one of their criminal schemes goes wrong, she needs a place to hide and, at his urging, goes into domestic service at a gothic revival house in a leafy London suburb. The owner is obsessed with creating a mausoleum for his wife, who died in mysterious circumstances, while their daughter writes love letters to herself – and Bonnie realises Crawford has plans for all of them. With an appealingly flawed protagonist and plenty of period detail, this is an immersive and creepy read.

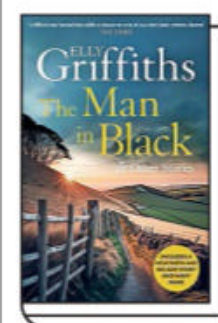


French Windows

By Antoine Laurain, translated by Louise Rogers Lalaurie

There are echoes of Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* in French bestselling author Laurain’s latest novel, which begins when a photographer, Nathalia Guitry, loses her ability to work after inadvertently capturing a murder on camera, and sinks into inertia. Her psychoanalyst, Dr Faber, suggests she relight her creative fire by writing stories about the people she can see through the windows of the building opposite her home, working from the bottom floor to the top. Each of these vivid accounts,

which include an actor turned You Tuber and a songwriter who is forced to choose between his family and his cat, is a satisfying tale about a person who makes a life-changing decision. Dr Faber suspects the stories are not entirely made up – and then, as Nathalia reaches the top floor, things start to get very dark indeed. Intriguing, comic and poignant by turns, this is a delight.



The Man in Black & Other Stories

By Elly Griffiths

Taking in everything from disappearing women and prehistoric families, to faith, mythology and the eerie arrival of a stranger on a winter’s night, in settings that include London’s theatreland, the rapidly eroding Norfolk coast and a Nile cruise, this short-story collection includes both original and previously published cosy crime, psychological suspense and ghost stories. There are also tales featuring Griffiths’s best-loved characters, including forensic archaeologist Dr Ruth Galloway, DCI Harry Nelson and Cathbad the druid. While newcomers to Griffiths’s work are probably best off beginning with one of the novels, this compilation will be a perfect holiday treat for fans.

LAURA WILSON IS A CRIME WRITER

MODERN LIFE
Tim Dowling



Who are our family's fussiest eaters? It must be the pets

The cat hates the new cat food. It's not medically specific or dietetically optimal - in fact, its purchase was an expensive mistake - but there's a lot of it left, and I'm determined to get rid of it by putting it all through the cat. The cat is not cooperating.

The dog, meanwhile, will eat any kind of food as long as it is expressly made for cats and served in the cat's bowl. If it's made for dogs and served in a dog bowl, it might as well be sand.

For a while I tried putting the dog's food in the cat's bowl, but over time the cat developed a taste for it. From that point any of the new cat food I put out ended up in the dog, and any dog food left around was eaten by the cat.

"And that's how we ended up where we are," I say. "Just one man trying to do the right thing."

"Tragic," my wife says.

At 6.30am the cat wakes me in the customary manner: by pressing a paw against my nostrils to block

off my airway. This is tremendously effective - I'm basically afraid to go back to sleep afterwards.

I get up and go down to the kitchen, with the cat trying to trip me up on the stairs and the dog following cautiously behind. I put some cat food into the cat's bowl, while the cat looks on in horror.

"Only 11 packets left," I say.

"Not long now."

"Miaow," says the cat.

"That is not my problem," I say.

The cat stares at the food while the dog stares at the cat. After a few minutes, the cat wanders across the room and out the flap. The dog steps toward the cat's bowl, then stops.

"What?" I say. The dog sits.

"So now because the cat doesn't want it, you don't want it either?"

The dog looks at the ground.

"Anyway," I say, "there's still food in your bowl from last night." The dog looks at me, tail wagging limply.

"Who are you talking to?" my wife says, coming into the room.

"No one but myself, clearly," I say.

"Have you fed the animals?" she says.

"There is no short answer to that question," I say. The cat comes back in and walks up to me.

"Miaow," it says, using my left leg as a scratching post.

"Oh my God," I say. "Are you gonna pretend we didn't just have this conversation?"

I make myself a coffee and go out to my office shed, where the tortoise is sunning himself. I sit next to him.

"Morning," I say. After a long

pause the tortoise turns in my direction, and gives me a hard stare.

"Fine," I say, standing up. I lean over the raised bed and pick him a few leaves from the top of a radish. The tortoise likes radish leaves more than anything else: more than lettuce, more than raspberries, more than bare human toes.

"What about cat food?" I say. "Do you like cat food?"

This is a rhetorical question. I have often seen him eat it, upending the bowl to spray the contents across the floor, and then helping himself.

"I could leave some out," I say.

"It's actually sort of a gourmet brand, although the philistines round here don't seem to think so."

The tortoise makes his way to the far end of the step, blending by degrees into the dense foliage of the flowerbed, until he disappears.

"OK, nice talking to you," I say.

When I go inside later both the dog's and the cat's bowls are empty, but there is no way to tell who has eaten what. It's possible I am starving one animal while overfeeding another. My wife walks in.

"Why are you always in here when I come in here?" she says.

"I don't know," I say. "Luck?"

"I'm making a shopping list," she says. "Do you know if we need anything?" I peer into a cupboard.

"Tinned tomatoes," I say.

"Chickpeas."

"Uh-huh," she says.

"Potatoes," I say. "Pet food."

"Dog or cat?" she says.

"Does it matter?" I say.

The dog eats any food as long as it's for cats and in the cat's bowl

STEPHEN COLLINS



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ASK OTTOLENGHI



Grain reaction: is there a culinary reason to use kosher salt?

If a recipe specifies kosher salt, is somebody having a laugh, or is there a gastronomic reason to use it?

Pablo, Lancaster, England, UK

Kosher salt is not actually “kosher” (as in, it’s not religiously treated). Historically, the name stems from the Jewish practice of removing surface blood when dry brining meat (such as with brisket), and that process is known as *kashering*.

Because of this kind of salt’s larger grain size, it dissolves more slowly and evenly, which in turn ensures a more even brining. It also doesn’t contain any additives or preservatives, so has a very clean, er, salty taste.

In practical terms, then, the coarseness and consistency of kosher salt grains also mean they are easier to handle and hold in your fingertips.

This gives the cook a greater level of control, because they can salt

ingredients much more evenly, unlike when you use fine sea salt, for instance, which has an annoying tendency to pour everywhere or clump up.

As a general rule, I use fine sea salt in the likes of sauces and pickling liquids, because it’s easy to measure by the teaspoon and because it dissolves much more quickly than other salts.

I use a coarser salt such as kosher to season meat, fish and vegetables before cooking; and I use a flaky sea salt with larger, uneven crystals to finish off dishes.

But beware! One teaspoon of fine sea salt is *not* the same as one teaspoon of diamond crystal kosher salt, and is, in fact, twice as salty.

At the end of the day, however, it doesn’t really matter what kind of salt you use at home, so long as you are aware of what it is and how it behaves.

YOTAM OTTOLENGHI IS CHEF-PATRON OF THE OTTOLENGHI DELIS AND THE NOPI AND ROVI RESTAURANTS

THE WEEKLY RECIPE

By Thomasina Miers

№272

Smoked mackerel caesar salad with fried croutons



Prep 15 min

Cook 10 min

Serves 4

A great salad is a mouth-watering combination of fresh ingredients, a glossy dressing and all the crisp crunch you could want. This riff on a classic uses flaky smoked mackerel for extra umami, and croutons fried in a pan for ease.

Ingredients

2 thick slices sourdough, cut into 3cm cubes
3-4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
½ tsp smoked paprika
2 tbsp capers, drained and dried on kitchen paper
2 large cos lettuces
270g smoked mackerel fillets
70g grana padano or parmesan, finely grated

For the dressing

2 egg yolks
Juice of ½ lemon
2 tsp red-wine vinegar
1 tsp dijon mustard
6 anchovy fillets, drained and chopped
2 small garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
Salt and black pepper
100ml olive oil
100ml vegetable oil

Method

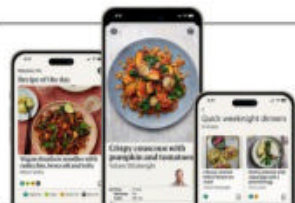
To make the dressing, put the egg yolks, lemon juice, vinegar, mustard, anchovies and garlic in the bowl of a small food processor, add a pinch of salt and blitz to a paste. With the motor running, gradually add the oils, beginning with a very slow, thin trickle and slowly moving up to a thin stream once the ingredients have emulsified. Blend to a smooth sauce, adding one or two tablespoons of water towards the end, until the dressing is the consistency of pouring cream. Adjust the salt or lemon juice to taste.

To make the croutons, put a frying pan on a medium heat. After a few minutes, add two tablespoons of the oil and the cubes of bread, season with a few pinches of salt and saute, stirring, for four to five minutes, until golden and crisp all over; add more oil if needed. Sprinkle with the paprika, fry for half a minute longer, then transfer to a plate. Add the remaining oil to the pan, turn up the heat and fry the capers for a minute or two, until they start to pop and turn crisp.

Cut the lettuces in half lengthways and break up the leaves, then wash and dry them. Mix the leaves, croutons and mackerel in a large bowl, flaking the fish into generous chunks (fry the skin in the frying pan until crisp and use this to garnish the salad, if you like). Toss the lot in the dressing and cheese, then arrange on plates and top with the crisp capers and freshly ground black pepper. When it’s tasting irresistibly good, serve.



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Notes and Queries
The long-running series that invites readers to send in questions and answers on anything and everything

QUIZ

Thomas Eaton

- 1 Which archipelago was the first Unesco world heritage site?
- 2 Which Oxford philosopher devised the trolley problem?
- 3 What was raised from the Solent in 1982?
- 4 Which company had 13 employees when Facebook bought it for \$1bn?
- 5 What is the largest living reptile?
- 6 The TV show Kaun Banega Crorepati features in which film?
- 7 What branch of the US armed forces was

- created in 2019?
- 8 Which singer said: “It costs a lot of money to look this cheap”?
- What links:**
- 9 Jeffrey Archer (FF8282); Imran Khan (804); Nelson Mandela (46664)?
- 10 Gibraltar; Hamilton; Jamestown; Stanley?
- 11 Chioma Nnadi; Edward Enninful; Alexandra Shulman; Liz Tilberis?
- 12 Orpheus and Eurydice; Lot’s wife; Bob Dylan film?
- 13 England (10); Germany (1); Italy (20); Scotland (54); Spain (36)?
- 14 Born Genoa; died Valladolid; buried Seville?
- 15 Cliff Booth; Cameron; Sonny Hooper; Colt Seavers?

PUZZLES

Chris Maslanka

- 1 **Wordpool**
Find the correct definition: *BELOID*
a) low type
b) meteoritic metal
c) arrow-shaped
d) type of rotifer
- 2 **E pluribus unum**
Rearrange *OLD STATUE* to make a word.

- 3 **Same Difference**
Identify these two words differing only in the letters shown:
R**** (fast)
S**** (tasty)
V**** (dull)
- 4 **In the Garden**
Name a flower containing the vowels A, E, I, O and U each once and once only.

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CHESS

Leonard Barden

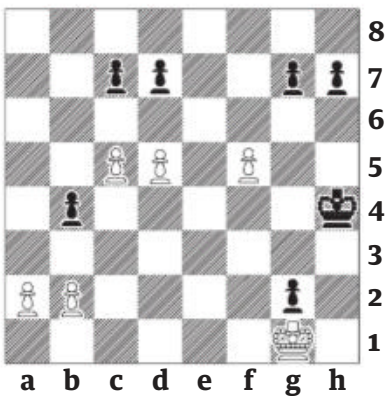
Norway Chess, this month’s \$161,000 event in Stavanger, was Magnus Carlsen’s 10th victory in his last 11 starts, and also a significant success for Hikaru Nakamura. The 36-year-old streamer regained a 2800 rating, and passed Fabiano Caruana to take over as No 2 in the Fide world rankings.

Carlsen assessed it as “a good performance, not a sparkling performance by any means, but I feel I was quite professional in the way that I handled the last seven games or so. My

mindset went from trying to play fun chess, which wasn’t fun at all, to more of a slow, grinding style.”

The Norway Chess tournament began in 2013, and for the first six years Carlsen won the event only once. By contrast, in the six years

3924 White to move and win. A tricky pawn endgame, with a forced victory route.



CINEMA CONNECT

Killian Fox

Name the films and the screenwriter who connects them.



Answers Quiz 1 Galapagos Islands (1978). 2 Philippa Foot. 3 Mary Rose warship. 4 Instagram. 5 Saltwater crocodile. 6 Slumdog Millionaire. 7 Space Force. 8 Dolly Parton. 9 Prisoner numbers. 10 City status in UK overseas territories. 11 UK Vogue editors. 12 Don’t look back: punished in Greek myth; turned to salt in Bible. 13 1967 documentary title. 14 Wins by 2024 football champions: Manchester City; Bayer Leverkusen; Inter Milan; Celtic; Real Madrid. 15 Fictional stunt performers: Once Upon a Time in Hollywood; The Stunt Man; Hooper; The Fall Guy. **Maslanka** 1 c). 2 EPU OUTLASTED. 3 RAPID, SAPID, VAPID. 4 PELARGONIUM (Any others?). **Cinema Connect** Marathon Man, All the President’s Men and The Princess Bride were all written for the screen by William Goldman.

since Armageddon was introduced, he has scored five victories, missing out only to Nakamura in 2023.

Meanwhile, Ding Liren’s travails continue. China’s world champion said at the start of Stavanger that his ambition there was “not to finish last”. He did win two mini-matches, including a convincing defeat of Nakamura, but still finished sixth of six.

Ju Wenjun won the Women’s Norway Chess title and \$65,000 by defeating her old rival Lei Tingjie in the decisive final round.

3924 1 f6! gxf6 2 Kxg2 Kg4 3 a4! bxa3 ep 4 bxa3 Kf4 5 a4 Ke4 6 d6! cxd6 7 c6! dxc6 8 a5 and White queens.

COUNTRY DIARY

BADENOCH
Cairngorms, Scotland, UK

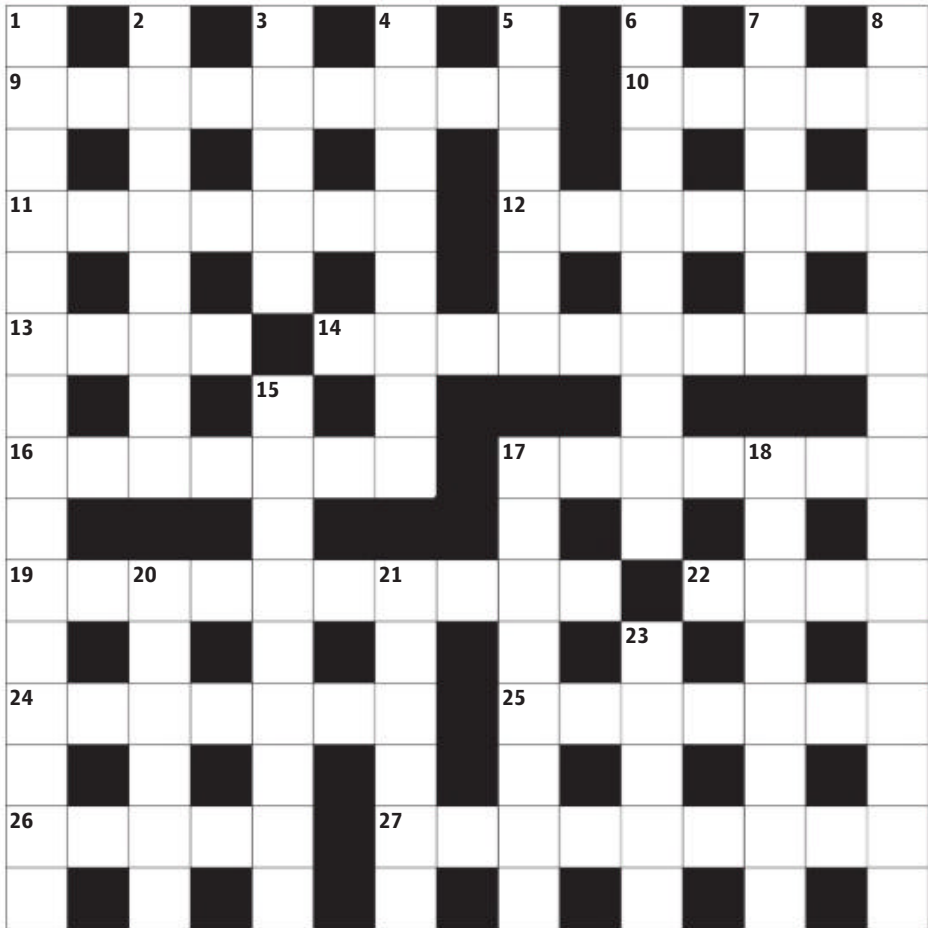
We know we won’t see them, but we are here for the beavers. After extinction in the UK 400 years ago, and reintroduction in Argyll and other sites from 2009, they were brought to the Cairngorms national park last December. They are settling well, but nocturnal and elusive. It is after 9pm when we drop down a steep bank to a waterway all but hidden in the undergrowth. Giant larches rise above a tangle of rowans, birches, aspens, bird cherries and willows. The spaces below are filled with shrubs, rushes and long grasses, everything growing into and out of one another in wild abandon.

In the soundless and secretive flow of the stream, we hear a splash. Too hefty for a duck, more like a flop and afterwash. Then nothing. We note the signs of beaver: the felled trunks, the orange discs of bare wood where they have cut through, and the strips of pale yellow where the bark is gnawed away. Up close, we can see their bite marks in the stumps. Sharp and strong as chisels, their teeth have iron in them.

We creep out on to a vast fallen larch, its lower branches steeped in the stream. Under it, the beavers have stashed a pile of wood; it is different from their lodge round the corner, which is a masterpiece of mud-caked sticks. We keep imagining we have seen something. A disturbance here, a ripple there. But it’s only the patterns of flow around dangling leaves, or the circling from an insect’s touch. We crouch, mesmerised by the falling dark. And somehow, in the trance, our eyes are opened. For there, perfectly still below the water’s surface, is a rough texture. At one end, the gleam of an eye, at the other, the unmistakable paddle of a beaver’s tail. *Merryn Glover*



ILLUSTRATION: CLIFFORD HARPER



* All solutions published next week

The Weekly cryptic

No 29,406



By Paul

Across

- 9 Subject described by improper noun, an option to consume? (2,3,4)
10 As aging rocker, grossly hirsute originally, I'm tearing my hair out! (5)
11 Brace having held one log that's loose, shelter built in the woods (7)
12 Wrong content in parcels, send a batch back (7)
13 With that, odd number is even for the present time (4)
14 First of fruit dark, like a kiwi, say? (10)
16 See 15 Down
17 A bluebottle stuck in prune drink (7)
19 Someone choosing anagram of 'Chile' in flier? (10)
22 Floor was whiffy when rear wiped (4)
24 Song and dance don't stop? (5-2)
25 On the podium if not after flipping, gymnastic star gets medal, finally (7)
26 Scrap approach (3-2)
27 Westernmost city in Florida Panhandle, no place as far out (9)

Down

- 1 Corrupt in double time, seemingly? (6,2,3,4)
2 Grating fifth of cheese, sharp object (8)
3 Butcher, a geezer (5)
4 Ground slippery, suddenly sprang back (8)
5 Sweet cuddle when knelt before Spooner? (6)
6 Standard enclosures second (9)
7 Reportedly more than one cheese in piece of cake? (6)
8 Rock nihilists' spat, a nadir for group in film (4,2,6,3)
15/16 Purpose of megaphone, dammit! (3,6,3,4)
17 Anomalous, a bug fed endless fruit (8)
18 See 23

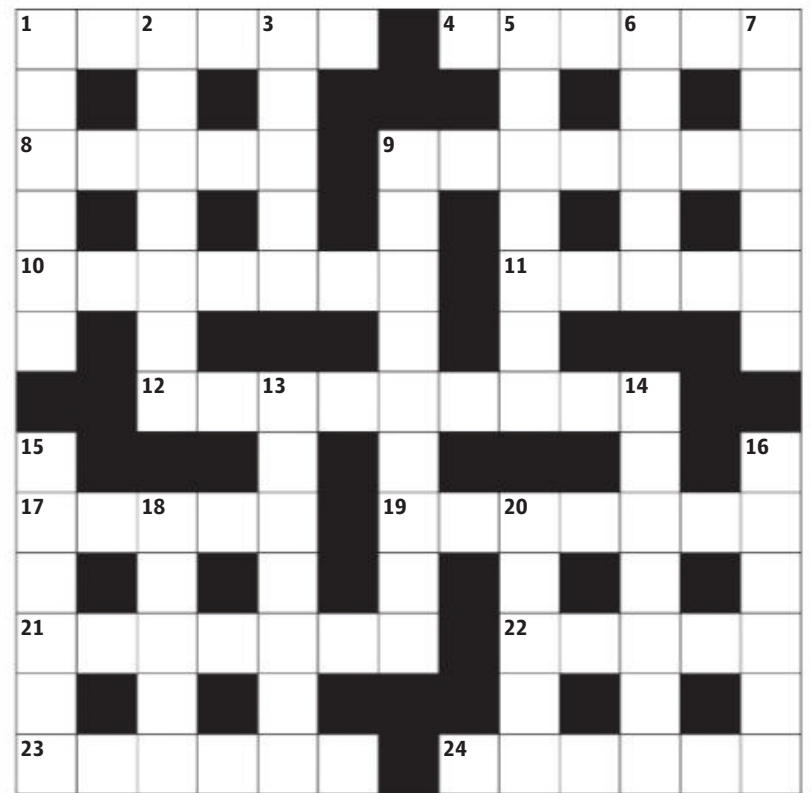
- 20 Discontented alligator prodding cat in some box? (6)
21 Models, just over three turned up (3-3)
23/18 Fitter lad crushed by big old player? (5,8)

Solution No 29,400

C	N	D	M	S	N	S	B
U	S	E	B	Y	D	A	T
R	B	I	S	C	V	R	R
B	R	U	I	N	S	A	L
L	G	I	U	N			
L	E	A	D	O	F	F	D
I		F		E	N	U	A
G	I	A	N	T	R	E	D
H	G	H	E		E		T
T	O	R	M	E	N	T	A
A		R	G	T	E		
C	A	R	T	I	L	A	G
U	I	N	C	I	I	A	O
B	L	A	C	K	E	S	S
A	N	Y	D	M	G	L	E

Quick crossword

No 16,879



Across

- 1 Golf club - Hollywood actor Adam (6)
4 German subs (1-5)
8 Sacred choral music (5)
9 Breed of terrier (7)
10 Compunction (7)
11 Mother-of-pearl (5)
12 'Jaws' director (9)
17 Shout joyfully (5)
19 Act of retaliation (7)
21 Thick, sweet paste (7)
22 Impoverished (5)
23 Showing effects of heat or exercise (6)
24 Vessel for e.g. wine (6)

Down

- 1 Affectedly modest (6)
2 Narrow strip of land (7)
3 '___ the Dragon', Bruce Lee film (5)
5 Girl who does good turns for others (7)

- 6 Montezuma, e.g. (5)
7 Israeli money (6)
9 Feel suspicious (5,1,3)
13 Prosthesis, sometimes (7)
14 Plant root used in traditional medicine (7)
15 Birds - Jonathan and Taylor? (6)
16 Nairobi native (6)
18 Asian feline (5)
20 Strong plastic (5)

Solution No 16,873

L	E	W	D	P	S	Y	C	H	O	U	T
E	I			H	O	V					
M	E	N	U	C	U	T	P	R	I	C	E
O	D	E	F	A	D	E					
N	I	P	A	N	D	T	U	C	K		
A	I	T	I	A	D	O					
D	E	P	O	R	T	A	B	S	O	R	B
E	E	Y	I	A	M	S					
		C	L	E	M	E	N	T	I	N	E
L	F	E	P	A	C	S					
A	U	R	E	V	O	I	R	B	I	A	S
O	E	E	S								
S	T	E	A	L	T	H	Y	N	E	R	D

Sudoku

Easy

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.

Last week's solution

4	9	5	3	7	6	2	8	1
7	8	2	9	5	1	3	6	4
6	1	3	4	2	8	7	9	5
8	7	1	6	3	2	4	5	9
3	4	9	7	1	5	6	2	8
5	2	6	8	9	4	1	3	7
9	3	8	2	4	7	5	1	6
1	6	4	5	8	3	9	7	2
2	5	7	1	6	9	8	4	3

					9			8
		5		4		7		
	7					5	6	
					8			2
	4					9	8	1
9			4			6	7	
	3	4		5	7			9
		2		1	6			
5			8	9		2		

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The GuardianWeekly

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