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How NATO keeps the world safe

Jake Sullivan

OPINION

Americans understand the value of alliances. They know that these relationships make us stronger and help us build a world that is free, independent, prosperous and secure. But they also want to make sure that our allies are pulling their weight and paying their fair share of the costs of a common defense.

When President Biden took office in 2021, our alliances around the world were atrophied and underutilized. Now, three and a half years later, our allies are committing more to our common defense than at any point since the end of the Cold War, making both them and America more secure. There is still more progress to be made, but we are well on our way to building strength that advances U.S. interests and enables us to work together to shape the future of the international order.

U.S. allies are pulling their weight and paying their fair share of the costs of a common defense.

Let's start with the numbers. As NATO meets this week in Washington, we are closer than ever to fulfilling the pledge that alliance members made 10 years ago, after Russia's illegitimate annexation of

Crimea, to spend 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense. Twenty-three NATO members, out of 32, are expected to meet or exceed that target in 2024, compared with just nine in 2020, and five in 2016. This year alone America's NATO partners — Canada and 30 European nations — will spend an estimated \$506.7 billion on defense. That is an increase of \$181 billion from 2020, compared with an increase of \$70 billion from 2016 to 2020, during the previous administration.

These numbers will continue to improve. In 2023, defense expenditures of NATO nations in Europe and Canada grew by 8 percent. This year, they are set to grow by 18 percent. These are not just numbers on a page or a fancy accounting trick: In the next five years, our NATO allies will add over 650 fifth-generation F-35 aircraft, over 1,000 air defense systems, nearly 50 warships and submarines, 1,200 battle tanks, 11,300 combat vehicles and nearly 2,000 artillery systems to modernize their arsenals, making us all more secure. So indeed, Europe is doing more.

There are a number of reasons for this important shift. The president knew that we could persuade our allies and partners to do more — and spend more — if we strengthened and deepened ties

The New York Times publishes opinion from a wide range of perspectives in hopes of promoting constructive debate about consequential questions.



A research geologist positioning an acoustic instrument off Dhigulaabadhoo, Maldives, where scientists have found that while rising seas destroy land, they can also extend it.

Islands that failed to vanish

DHIGULAABADHOO, MALDIVES

The expected first victims of rising seas are showing some amazing resilience

BY RAYMOND ZHONG

On a wisp of land in the Indian Ocean, two hops by plane and one bumpy speedboat ride from the nearest continent, the sublime blue waves lapping at the bone-white sand are just about all that breaks the stillness of a hot, windless afternoon.

The very existence of low-slung tropical islands seems improbable, a glitch. A nearly seamless meeting of land and sea, peeking up like an illusion above the violent oceanic expanse, they are among the most marginal environments humans have ever called home.

When the world began paying attention to global warming decades ago, these islands, which form atop coral reefs in clusters called atolls, were identified as some of the first places climate change might ravage in their entirety. As the ice caps melted and the seas crept higher, these accidents of geologic history were bound to be corrected and the islands returned to watery oblivion.



Sources: Mohamed Aslam and Paul S. Kench; Anthropocene; Nature Communications

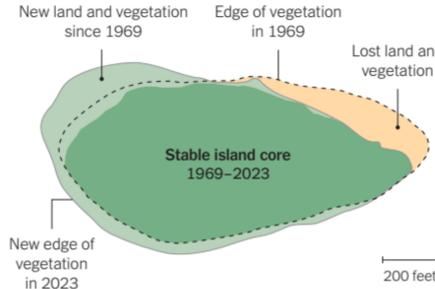
The small island of Kandahalagalaa in Huvadhu Atoll, Maldives, which shows how overall shape can change over the years while a core of land and vegetation remains stable. Kandahalagalaa's shape gradually shifted from a potato in 1969 to a teardrop in 2023.

Then, not very long ago, researchers began sifting through aerial images and found something startling. They looked at a couple dozen islands first, then several hundred, and by now close to 1,000. They found that over the past few decades, the islands' edges had wobbled this way and that, eroding here, building there. By and large, though, their area hadn't shrunk. In some cases, it was the opposite: They grew. The seas rose, and the islands expanded with them.

Scientists have come to understand some but not all of the reasons for this.

Which is why a team of them recently converged in the Maldives, on an island they'd spend weeks outfitting with instruments and sensors and cameras.

They were there to learn more about how the steady collision of blue waves and white sand does surprising and seemingly magical things to coastlines, both destroying land and extending it. Really, though, they were trying to answer a bigger question: If atoll nations aren't facing certain and imminent erasure, then what are they facing? For having a future is not the same thing as



JONATHAN CORUM/THE NEW YORK TIMES, SATELLITE IMAGES BY CNES AND AIRBUS VIA GOOGLE EARTH

having a secure future.

If, for instance, some of their islands become difficult to live on but others do not, then atoll governments will have to make hard choices about which places to save and which to sacrifice. In the places they save, they will have to plan for the long term about supplying fresh water, about creating jobs, about providing infrastructure. They will have to invent the best future they can with the limited resources they have.

In short, atolls might not be such outlandish islands, page 4

A firebrand both adored and hated in France

PARIS

Even some leftist allies of Jean-Luc Mélenchon aren't eager to see him lead

BY ADAM NOSSITER

Emphatic, pugnacious and demanding: The style met the moment in the speech by the far-left leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon to a fired-up crowd of thousands celebrating victory in Sunday's French legislative elections.

Standing before supporters in the working-class 20th Arrondissement of Paris, Mr. Mélenchon addressed himself to President Emmanuel Macron, and not politely. "The president should either resign or name one of us prime minister," he declared.

Other leftist leaders have said that there should be "discussions" about the future of the country. Not this one. The crowd on Sunday roared.

Mr. Mélenchon's tone and hard-line stance have given him a devoted, youthful following — the only leftist leader with one — and made him both adored and hated, marginalized and central in French politics. More French have a negative opinion of him, 73 percent, than do of Marine Le Pen, the leader of the far-right National Rally. But he also attracts large crowds who hang on his every word, as they did on Sunday.

Now he is necessarily at the center of the discussion of what might lie ahead for France: his brand of leftism or the milder form represented by his critics within the winning leftist coalition, the New Popular Front. His party, France Unbowed, won the most seats in Parliament, 75, in the coalition.

He has said the person chosen to lead the government should be himself. Unlike the other leaders on the left, he has come close to the presidency, nearly making it to the runoff two years ago. He told France 5 television on June 22 that "very obviously" he was ready to be prime minister. "I intend to govern this country," he said.

It is a prospect that even members of Mr. Mélenchon's own coalition, wary of what is viewed as his intermittent extremism, have vowed will never happen. "If he really wants to help the New Popular Front, he should put himself off to the side," said François Hollande, the mild-mannered former president, a Socialist and now newly elected deputy, two weeks ago. "He should just shut up."

He is not going to, and that is both a source of his support and his major problem with the others in the leftist coalition that almost immediately threatens to fracture, despite its victory.

FRANCE, PAGE 4

TURMOIL THREATENS FRENCH ECONOMY
The recent election results point to a stalemate in a country bedeviled by debt and slow growth. PAGE 9

Holocaust museum's 'crown jewels' of Jewish people



A painting using an eggshell background by the artist Jacques Gotko shows one of the camps where he was kept. Gotko died of typhus in Auschwitz-Birkenau, in Poland.

JERUSALEM

As the aging generation of survivors dies out, Israel works to preserve artifacts

BY ISABEL KERSHNER

The pictures are haunting: black-and-white prints of a snow-covered barracks and paintings bordered by wire fences and skeletal trees, grim depictions of a World War II camp in France where Jews were interned before being transported to concentration camps.

The artist, Jacques Gotko, created one picture using a background of crushed eggshells glued to a wooden board; for others he used a piece of old tire as a printing block. Those were just some of the few materials available to him at the camp where he was held before being transported to Drancy, another camp in France, then Auschwitz-Birkenau, in Poland, in 1943.

Fragile and rarely displayed, these works are part of a massive repository of Holocaust-related artifacts — among them millions of pages of testimony, artworks and personal belongings and more than half a million photographs — collected over the years by Yad Vashem, Israel's official Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem.

Most of the artifacts had been scattered around Yad Vashem's vast campus, but they will now be housed in a new center that will allow easier access for researchers and provide the most advanced technological conditions to safeguard them for future generations. The center was recently completed and was inaugurated on Monday.

The task of preserving the artifacts has become all the more urgent as the Holocaust has become an ever more distant episode, with the number of survivors steadily decreasing, at a time when antisemitism and extremism are resurgent around the world, Yad Vashem officials say. MUSEUM, PAGE 2

PLAY 14
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It's all the buzz.
Can you get to Genius level? Play Spelling Bee to see how many words you can make with 7 letters. Play now at nytimes.com/buzz.



PAGE TWO



Inside the museum of Yad Vashem. Curators said the imperfections of many objects can often best convey the stories of the Jewish communities decimated in the Holocaust.

‘Crown jewels’ of Jewish people

MUSEUM, FROM PAGE 1

“These are the crown jewels of the Jewish people,” Dani Dayan, the chairman of Yad Vashem, said of the collections. “There is no Judaism without historical remembrance.”

The new David and Fela Shapell Family Collections Center is opposite the Hall of Remembrance, which was established more than six decades ago at the core of the campus, and where an eternal flame burns above a stone crypt containing the ashes of Holocaust victims from extermination camps in Europe.

It is mostly subterranean, reaching five stories underground, blending in with the landscape and housing the artifacts in a protected space.

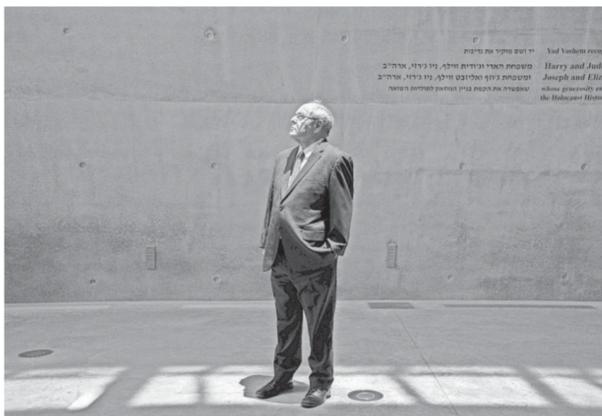
More than 150 staff members will be working at the site, gathering more names of victims and artifacts, and conserving and cataloging the objects. A video installation along the wall of the entrance hall runs in a 44-minute loop showing thousands of fragments of documents and objects kept in the center’s vaults.

“We are not looking for a Mona Lisa,” said Medy Shvide, the director of the Yad Vashem archives, museums and collections. “We look for things that tell the story of the people of the time — who was this family and what happened to them.” Those remnants, or clues, could be as seemingly unremarkable as a hairbrush or a glove.

State-of-the-art labs are upgrading the process of digitizing and treating documents and other paper artifacts; textiles, such as decorative ritual garments; and oil paintings.

Many objects are not restored to their former state, intentionally. Yad Vashem’s curators say the imperfections, or damage such as charring from a fire, can often best convey the stories of the Jewish communities decimated in the Holocaust, of Jewish life before World War II or of survivors.

The art collection is housed in a vault with an oxygen-reduced atmosphere for fire prevention. Most of the works created during the Holocaust were on paper and are in boxes. Many are not by famous artists. “It is our duty to commemorate them,” said Eliad Moreh-Rosenberg, Yad Vashem’s art collections director; otherwise, “they will be forgotten.”



Dani Dayan, the chairman of Yad Vashem. For Mr. Dayan, preserving the Yad Vashem collections is crucial to building a solid foundation of evidence, data and knowledge.

Some of the works in the art vault will go on display as part of a rotating exhibit in Yad Vashem’s gallery.

Since the Hamas-led assault on southern Israel on Oct. 7, Israelis have been wrestling with a new tragedy and questions of remembrance and commemoration. About 1,200 people were killed that day, most of them civilians, according to the Israeli authorities, making it the deadliest single day for Jews since the Holocaust.

“We look for things that tell the story of the people of the time — who was this family and what happened to them.”

Yad Vashem’s mission is to emphasize the uniqueness of the Holocaust as a singular historical event and educate the world about it. Mr. Dayan, the chairman, takes issue with direct comparisons between the terrorism of Oct. 7 and the Nazi genocide and says a distinction must be made.

“Oct. 7 was not the Shoah,” he said, referring to the Holocaust by its Hebrew name, adding that modern Israel has a

strong army that can exact a toll from its enemies.

Still, he said, for many people the associations were inescapable: Mothers muffling their infants — trying to keep them quiet while hiding in their safe rooms as gunmen hunted them down and set their homes ablaze — recalled Jews hiding from the Nazis in barns, basements or attics in Europe.

In the years before the assault of Oct. 7, antisemitic incidents had been on the rise. The shooting in October 2018 at a synagogue in Pittsburgh in which 11 worshippers were killed was the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history. In Europe, synagogues in Germany and France were scenes of attacks, sometimes fueled by anger over strife between Israel and the Palestinians.

After the Oct. 7 assault, Israel’s devastating offensive in Gaza unleashed mass protests in foreign capitals and on college campuses, at times with antisemitic overtones.

Israel has found itself accused of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza — where more than 38,000 people have been killed in the war, according to Gaza health officials, who do not distinguish between civilian and combatant deaths.

Israel denies committing genocide.

For Mr. Dayan, preserving the Yad Vashem collections is crucial to building a solid, authoritative foundation of evidence, data and knowledge to counter Holocaust deniers and distorters as the aging generation of Holocaust survivors dies out.

That means commemorating artists whose creations came to stand as their last wills and testaments — like Jacques Gotko, who died of typhus in Auschwitz-Birkenau, he said.

Using the scrap of tire, Gotko created a series of linocut-style prints of the barracks where Jews were kept at the Nazi transit camp at Compiègne, in France. The signed works are numbered and labeled Front Stalag 122, as the camp was designated, and dated 1942.

Born Jakow Gotkowski in Odesa, in what is now Ukraine, Gotko moved to Paris in 1905 as a child with his family. He studied at the École des Beaux-Arts, and his paintings were exhibited in prestigious Parisian art salons.

He continued painting after he was taken with other Jews to the transit camp in 1941. In the camp, a still life that is being stored in the new facility was among his creations.

In a twist on the traditions of the old masters, instead of sumptuous displays of exotic fruit and vivid flowers, the still life he painted featured a crust of bread, a spoon, a tin cup and a matchbox. His backdrop was a wire fence and trees, some bare and skeletal, some with leaves, in the world beyond the camp.

Mr. Dayan has a quotation etched on the wall of his office written by Gela Seksztajn, a Polish artist who died in the Warsaw Ghetto. Knowing that she was doomed, she wrote: “My works I bequeath to the Jewish museum to be built after the war.”

Many of her works were hidden in a secret archive in the ghetto and survived the war. Most are now kept in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. A few are in the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and one is in Yad Vashem.

“We are approaching a watershed moment in Holocaust remembrance,” Mr. Dayan said. “We are entering the post-survivor era where we are going to be the messengers.”

Smuggling of cigarettes stalls Gaza aid convoys

JERUSALEM

Organized looters attack trucks full of relief supplies, hindering food deliveries

BY AARON BOXERMAN AND NATAN ODENHEIMER

A new problem is bedeviling humanitarian aid convoys attempting to deliver relief to hungry Gazans: attacks by organized crowds seeking not the flour and medicine that trucks are carrying, but cigarettes smuggled inside the shipments.

In tightly blockaded Gaza, cigarettes have become increasingly scarce, now generally selling for \$25 to \$30 apiece. U.N. and Israeli officials say the coordinated attacks by groups seeking to sell smuggled cigarettes for profit pose a formidable obstacle to bringing desperately needed aid to southern Gaza.

The Israeli authorities closely scan everything that goes in and out of Gaza through Israeli-administered checkpoints. But the cigarettes have managed to slip through for weeks inside aid trucks, mostly through Kerem Shalom crossing into southern Gaza.

To evade Israeli inspections, smugglers — mostly in Egypt — have been hiding them in sacks of United Nations-donated flour, diapers and even a watermelon, according to aid agencies and an Israeli military official who shared photos with The New York Times.

Aid trucks that set off from the crossing into Gaza were then attacked by crowds of Palestinians, some of them armed, seeking the cigarettes hidden inside, according to U.N. and Israeli officials.

Andrea De Domenico, who runs the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Jerusalem, confirmed that aid officials had “seen cartons of U.N.-branded assistance with cigarettes inside.” He said the contraband cigarettes had created “a new dynamic” of organized attacks on aid convoys.

Israel’s near-total control of the goods that enter Gaza amid the war has warped the enclave’s economy. The price of flour has plunged in parts of Gaza because Israel, under intense international pressure to ease hunger, has allowed aid agencies to pump in large amounts of it. Other commodities, which have entered less frequently, remain rarer and more expensive.

Mr. De Domenico showed The New York Times footage he had taken during a recent drive along the road leading into Gaza from Kerem Shalom: Full flour bags can be seen lying along the side of the road, seemingly of little interest to the looters.

“Their main purpose here was to search for the cigarettes,” said Manhal Shaibar, who runs a Palestinian trucking company at Kerem Shalom that ferries U.N. aid.

Officials said that most of the trucks

bearing cigarettes appeared to come from Egypt, which rerouted trucks arriving from Egyptian territory through Kerem Shalom after Israel captured the Rafah border crossing in early May. Mr. Shaibar attributed the smuggling operation to Bedouin families with a footprint in both Gaza and the Egyptian Sinai.

The looting is a product of the anarchy that has gripped much of Gaza as Israel’s war against Hamas enters its 10th month. Israeli forces have targeted Hamas’s governing apparatus and police without installing any new administration in their place, creating widespread lawlessness.

Even as deprivation in southern Gaza has deepened amid a new wave of Israeli military evacuation orders, the contents of over 1,000 aid trucks have been stuck for weeks at the Gaza side of the Kerem Shalom crossing, according to the Israeli authorities. Fearing attack, aid agencies have hesitated to send trucks to collect and distribute the goods.

Israel says it has made efforts to ensure U.N. agencies can collect the goods, including by paving new roads, and points out that private merchants have been able to bear the difficult conditions to pick up their wares. Aid officials say Israel could do much more, including allowing them to expand their use of other roads and crossings.

Convoys ferrying U.N. aid are often an easier target than private businessmen, who are willing to pay hundreds or thousands of dollars in protection money to guards or to the organized gangs themselves.

U.N. and Israeli officials said the smugglers outside Gaza were closely coordinated with organized groups inside the territory that have blocked aid trucks with light arms, clubs and improvised roadblocks. After successfully halting convoys, the looters often appeared to know precisely where to find the cigarettes hidden inside, Mr. De Domenico said.

“These attacks have been very targeted,” he said. “They go exactly into the pallet” where the cigarettes are.

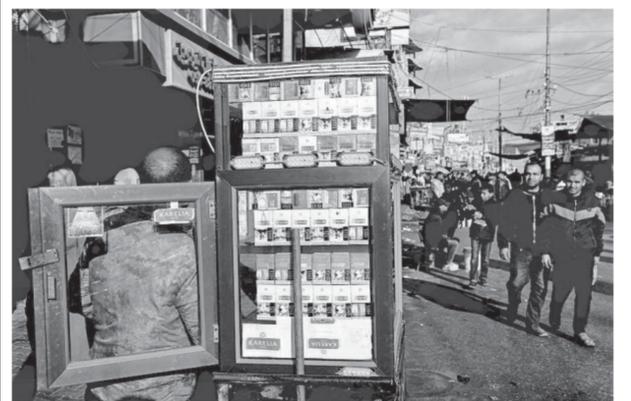
Col. Elad Goren, a senior official in COGAT, the Israeli agency that oversees Palestinian civilian affairs, said the smuggling appeared to originate in Egypt; other people familiar with the trade shared his assessment.

“Most of the packages we’ve been able to get our hands on,” Colonel Goren said. “But we believe that things need to be done on the Egyptian side in order to stop the smuggling.”

The Egyptian government’s press office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

One cigarette seller in Gaza City said prices could range up to \$40 per cigarette for more sought-after brands. Desperate smokers were willing to pay the high prices, despite being impoverished after several months of war, he said.

The seller, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared retribution, said Hamas forces were still present in the area but not as police to apply the law, just as “mafias.”



Cigarettes on sale in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip. In the tightly blockaded area, cigarettes have become increasingly scarce and now sell for \$25 to \$30 apiece.

Archaeologists find a marble statue in an ancient Roman sewer

BY AMELIA NIERENBERG

Archaeologists in Bulgaria made an unexpected discovery in an ancient Roman sewer last week: A well-preserved marble statue, taller than a man.

“We found it by accident,” said Lyudmil Vagalinski, the scientific director of the excavation. “It was amazing. A whole statue appeared in front of us.”

The discovery could illuminate how people in the area, modern-day Bulgaria, fought to preserve their religion as Christianity swept across the ancient world. The sewer may have been a hiding place used by pagans trying to protect the imposing statue from Christian zealots, who sometimes destroyed the heads of pagan deities.

If so, the pagans seem to have succeeded: Researchers have not yet unearthed the entire statue, but the face and head show no signs of destruction. “It’s a miracle that it survived,” Dr. Vagalinski said.

He and his colleagues were working on a routine archaeological dig near the village of Rupite, close to Bulgaria’s southwestern border with Greece, in the blistering summer heat last week when

they spotted marble in the soil.

They tried to keep their excitement in check, Dr. Vagalinski said, as a marble foot emerged. Then, they saw careful carvings on the toenails. Legs sprouted upward. A torso followed. Finally, a head.

“It was just waiting for us,” he said. Almost as if the statue had found them, not the other way around.

This would not be the first ancient statue to emerge from an unsavory trench: Construction workers in Rome also found a marble figure in a sewer system last year.

The Bulgarian statue — which Dr. Vagalinski thinks may depict the god Hermes — may have been buried in the late fourth century. He thinks it was placed in the sewer a few years after 380 A.D., the year Emperor Theodosius I declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.

The pagans in the ancient city where the statue was found, then called Heraclea Sintica, may have wanted to protect their treasures from Christian defacement. “They tried to secretly preserve their memory of these deities,” Dr. Vagalinski said.



Unearthing a well-preserved statue found by accident in southwest Bulgaria. Scientists believe pagans were trying to hide the statue from Christian zealots around 380 A.D.

He also thinks that the statue may have been buried some time after 388 A.D., when a major earthquake hit the area and devastated the city. It appears

to have destroyed infrastructure to such an extent that the sewers were no longer functional, he said.

But even though the sewer had been

decommissioned following the quake, Dr. Vagalinski added, it remained sturdy, and became something of a burial ground for pagan history.

“Although we might not think a sewer is the right place, at least it would be unharmed,” said the Rev. Professor Martin Henig, an expert on Roman art at Oxford University who was not associated with the dig. “Nobody was going to touch the sewer,” he added.

The statue is missing part of its right arm, which almost looks as if it was amputated, Dr. Vagalinski said. The left hand may be damaged, too. But otherwise, the statue seems mostly intact.

“It is rare and exciting to find an almost perfectly intact statue, and especially one of such apparently high quality,” Elizabeth Marlowe, the director of the museum studies program at Colgate University, who was not involved in the dig, wrote in an email.

The statue’s geographic location may also offer insights to researchers. Many such well-preserved statues were looted, Dr. Marlowe wrote, and “surface seemingly out of thin air in dealers’ shops in Switzerland or New York.”

This can mean that the finds — al-

though remarkable — are often stripped of clues about their origins. (Smugglers work hard to erase those details to obstruct cultural officials who may try to get artifacts back to the place they were found.)

“If this surfaced on the art market, we would never in a million years have guessed that it came from a small town in the Bulgarian hinterland,” Dr. Marlowe wrote. “We would have guessed that it came from a wealthy city or private estate in Italy.”

Such an impressive marble statue — which she said was a rare find in southwest Bulgaria — could be useful to understanding Heraclea Sintica. Dr. Marlowe said the city was not a well-known Roman site. “This has the potential to greatly enrich our understanding of the local culture of this region,” she wrote.

For now, Dr. Vagalinski and his team are focused on carefully extracting the statue. Once it is fully excavated, which he hopes will happen this week, he and other researchers will work to date and analyze the piece.

Boryana Dzhambozova contributed reporting.

World

A policy nerd hopes to save Haiti

Country's new premier is viewed as an outsider untainted by dirty politics

BY FRANCES ROBLES

As the new prime minister of Haiti, a country with no president or Parliament, where gangs have destroyed dozens of police stations and killed thousands of people, Garry Conille has arguably one of the toughest jobs of any leader in the Western Hemisphere.

He has attended funerals for slain police officers and met with their widows. He fired the police chief — blaming him for failing to fight the gangs — and named a new one. And he ushered in police officers from Kenya tasked with helping alleviate the violence. He spent last week knocking on doors in Washington with an urgent message: “This is no time for Haiti fatigue.”

Mr. Conille, 58, a former longtime U.N. official who had lived outside Haiti for more than a decade, took over the helms of Haiti's government five weeks ago amid one of the country's worst crises in decades.

The position had become vacant after armed groups joined forces to attack prisons, hospitals and entire neighborhoods in an uprising so severe that the former prime minister, who was on an overseas trip, could not return to his own country.

Mr. Conille was chosen by a presidential transitional council that is helping to oversee the country.

A gynecologist by training, Mr. Conille now must restore order to Haiti



Clockwise from above: Garry Conille, center, Haiti's new prime minister, meeting with Kenyan police officers; a family that was displaced by gang war violence; and an armored vehicle patrolling near the National Palace in Port-au-Prince last month.



CLARENS SIFFROY/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES



RICARDO ARDUENGO/REUTERS

in the hopes of organizing fair elections for president and Parliament. He is viewed as something of an outsider unstained by Haiti's notoriously dirty politics and chronic corruption who was appointed with the blessing of the Biden administration and the international community.

Haitians are left wondering: After years of political turmoil, graft and a murder plot that left the last president dead at the hands of Colombian mercenaries, can this mild-mannered technocrat turn things around for a country

with millions of people living in abject poverty and where more than 500,000 people were forced to flee their homes?

It has already been rough going: Within days of taking office, he briefly wound up in the hospital for an unknown condition.

“First, what I need is a functioning justice system, and to be honest, that I don't quite have right now,” Mr. Conille said in an interview with The New York Times. “I have 40 police stations that have been destroyed. We need to get ready to fix them.”

His list of priorities is long: regaining territory from gang leaders' grips, reopening schools and hospitals, rebuilding roads. He envisions a Haitian government that can provide basic services, like education and medical care, to its 11 million people, particularly the millions who are experiencing hunger.

For that to happen, Mr. Conille said the international community needed to provide more money, noting that Haiti received far more international aid in prior years, when the situation was not as dire.

“I think the crisis that we're facing now is certainly more complex than what we faced after the earthquake,” he said. “And after the earthquake, we had certainly a much larger pool of partners engaged and engaging in a more significant way.”

A magnitude-7.0 earthquake struck Haiti in 2010, leaving a death toll that its government estimated to be as high as 316,000. Billions of dollars in aid poured in from around the world, but the country struggled to recover.

After the quake, Mr. Conille worked for former U.S. President Bill Clinton, who was the U.N.'s special envoy to Haiti. He had previously served as prime minister under President Michel Martelly, but lasted just four months

when the two clashed over claims of corruption in post-quake contracts.

Mr. Conille met last week with U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, members of Congress, international lenders and members of the Haitian diaspora to make the case that aid is needed more than ever.

Wolf Pamphile, the founder of the Haiti Policy House, a Washington research institute, said he was struck by the prime minister's inviting and “calming” vibe. At a cocktail hour meeting in Washington, Mr. Conille wore a guayabera and spoke Creole and English — but not the French usually favored by the Haitian educated elites, Mr. Pamphile said.

He said Mr. Conille was enjoying a

honeymoon period, but it's unclear how long it will last.

“You know when you first start a job and everyone likes you?” Mr. Pamphile said. “He's off to a good start. He's delivering something people have been asking for, which is communication.”

Experts debate when exactly things got so bad in Haiti. The billions in earthquake aid never accomplished the enormous redevelopment needed. No elections have been held in eight years, which has left Parliament and most other elected positions empty.

President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in his home three years ago this week, and the next three years were marked by a wave of gang violence that saw huge increases in kidnappings, killings and the takeover of much of Port-au-Prince, the capital.

In late February, several gangs joined forces in a quest to overthrow the government. They succeeded in forcing the resignation of the prime minister at the time, Ariel Henry. Mr. Henry had flown to Kenya to formalize an agreement for the East African nation to deploy police

“First, what I need is a functioning justice system, and to be honest, that I don't quite have right now.”

officers to curb gang violence. Gang leaders took advantage of his absence to attack police stations, prisons and medical centers.

Nearly 600,000 Haitians were forced to flee their homes in recent years. The United Nations recorded 3,252 homicides between January and May, up from 2,453 during the previous five-month reporting period.

Asked why he would leave his previous job, as a regional director for UNICEF, to take on such a challenging endeavor, Mr. Conille borrowed from an expression he said he picked up in Africa: “If not me, then who? And if not now, then when?”

Mr. Conille scored points shortly after he took office by showing empathy by publicly meeting with widows of slain police officers, said Garry Pierre-Pierre, founder of The Haitian Times, an online newspaper based in New York that covers Haiti and the diaspora. “Haitian leaders never do that,” he said.

Mr. Pierre-Pierre called Mr. Conille's prior term as prime minister a decade ago under Mr. Martelly a “debacle,” because he was not one to play politics.

“He was politically naïve,” Mr. Pierre-Pierre said. “He didn't play the petty games that politicians writ large and especially those in Haiti play, and he was not ready for that.”

Mr. Conille's profile as a policy nerd, one detached from Haitian politics, was exactly what people were hoping for, experts said. Haitians have grown weary of the country's political class, who have often been mired in accusations of misconduct and who have ties to the very gangs now wreaking havoc.

The United Nations accused Mr. Martelly of financing and arming gangs. The United States imposed sanctions on former Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe, accusing him of misappropriating \$60 million in Venezuelan government aid for private gain. Mr. Henry, who served after the president's killing, was dogged by accusations that he had ties to a prime suspect in the case.

All three politicians denied the accusations.

NATO's new boss: Affable, pragmatic and ready for Trump

BERLIN

BY STEVEN ERLANGER, LARA JAKES AND CLAIRE MOSES

Mark Rutte rode off into the sunset on his bicycle last week, making a carefully choreographed exit from Dutch politics, which he has dominated as prime minister for nearly 14 years. His next job will be even more challenging: He will be the new head of a NATO that is facing threats as severe as Russian aggression and the rise of right-wing nationalism across Europe.

Mr. Rutte, known as a flexible pragmatist, will take his experience at conciliation to the 32-nation military alliance when he takes over as secretary general from Jens Stoltenberg on Oct. 1.

As it celebrates its 75th anniversary with a summit meeting in Washington this week, NATO, which was founded to deter the former Soviet Union from further expansion in Europe, has found renewed purpose in its support for Ukraine against Russia's invasion. Beyond that challenge, NATO faces a Russian government's forging of stronger ties with China and Iran.

Leading member states like France and Germany are dealing with the empowerment of far-right parties with clear sympathies for Moscow. Hungary and Turkey are authoritarian democracies. And there are new demands.

Then there is the possibility that Donald J. Trump, a vocal skeptic about NATO, will return to the White House as the leading presence in what remains an American-dominated alliance.

But Mr. Rutte, 57, has managed four difficult and different ruling coalitions in the Netherlands with aplomb, putting the need for agreement before personal ideology. He is a known quantity for other leaders, and has been praised both by President Biden, who pushed him to take the job, and by Mr. Trump, who once said after an Oval Office meeting, “I like this guy!”

Unlike Mr. Stoltenberg, a Norwegian, Mr. Rutte comes from a country fully integrated in both NATO and the European Union. “That is really substantively important now, because we really need both organizations to work more closely together,” said Camille Grand, a former assistant NATO secretary general now at the European Council on Foreign Relations. That synergy will be necessary to enable Europe to do more for its own defense as Washington turns toward Asia, he said.

“He is a nice and easy guy, but also extremely tough, who does not suffer fools gladly,” said Robert de Groot, a former Dutch ambassador to the European Union who has worked closely with Mr. Rutte since 2011. “He's extremely kind and loyal, but he will drive you like he drives himself.”

Mr. Stoltenberg said he hesitated to give Mr. Rutte any advice, “but what is obvious is that the main task for NATO is to ensure that we are united.”

Mr. Rutte, the son of a car dealer, has a penchant for finding common ground, rather than pushing his own point of view.

He is a private person of regular habits who lives alone, does not cook, drives an old Saab and goes to the same sum-



Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands leaving his office last week after nearly 14 years in the role. He will become the new secretary general of NATO in October.

mer house every year. Those habits limit what he considers to be distracting choices that divert him from his real love — politics and his job.

He is particularly fascinated by U.S. politics and regularly sees Robert A. Caro, the author of a seminal biography of Robert Moses, the urban planner who helped create modern New York City.

In an interview, Mr. Caro described his friendship with Mr. Rutte and a childhood friend, Koen Petersen, now a Dutch senator. In 2015, the two men sought out Mr. Caro, who reluctantly agreed to have lunch with them at Patsy's, a traditional Italian restaurant in

Midtown Manhattan, to quiz him about Mr. Moses.

Nearly every summer since, they have visited New York without security, rented a car and gone to one of Mr. Moses's landmarks, while reading the appropriate chapter in the biography, Mr. Caro said.

“These are some of the nicest days of my life, just the three of us,” Mr. Caro said. “I'm a lot older, but I felt like we were kids exploring New York.”

He described Mr. Rutte as a voracious reader who asks penetrating questions. “There is so much tension in Europe,” he said. “But if I ever met a person who

could pour oil on troubled waters, Mark is that person.”

Well-known for riding his modest bicycle to work in his suit and sometimes eating an apple while riding, Mr. Rutte's image is meticulously curated, said Wilma Borgman, a Dutch journalist who has covered him for decades and recently co-wrote a book, “The Rutte Mystery.” He keeps his private life to himself.

“He doesn't let anyone get close,” Ms. Borgman said. “Of all the people we interviewed, nobody ever went to his home. By Dutch standards, that's exceptional.”

Mr. Rutte declined an interview request, given the proximity to the NATO summit meeting.

After 14 years, he is leaving the Netherlands as a new government that includes Geert Wilders's nationalist far-right Party for Freedom takes over.

There is criticism of Mr. Rutte's own record on numerous issues, including a lack of new housing, consumers' declining purchasing power and insufficient attention to the quality of education.

Mr. Rutte has also been accused of having been too slow to come to grips with the Covid-19 pandemic, too complacent about the earthquakes that resulted from the draining of a big natural gas field and too insensitive to an old scandal about child care benefits, when thousands of people were falsely accused of fraud.

With the challenge from Mr. Wilders, Mr. Rutte toughened his party's stance on migration. At one point he urged what he called adherence to Dutch values, telling migrants: “Behave normally or go away.”

Mr. Rutte has acknowledged his mistakes publicly and tried to learn from them, winning him broad leeway with the public and the nickname of “Teflon Mark,” said Matthijs Rooduijn, a political scientist at the University of Amsterdam. “The fact that he apologizes makes him a human being people can relate to,” Mr. Rooduijn said.

However, he added, “you can be of Teflon for a while, but at some point, after more than a decade, things do begin to stick to you.”

Mr. Rutte knew that “this was the moment to call it quits,” said Rem Korteweg, a senior fellow at the Clingendael Institute, a research institution in The Hague.

At NATO, a major part of Mr. Rutte's task will be to increase military spending, as Mr. Trump always demands, while making European security less dependent on America — to try to “Trump-proof” the alliance's support for Ukraine while also pacifying the man who could be president and who has remained noncommittal about keeping the United States in NATO.

Mr. Korteweg, the Dutch analyst, said Mr. Rutte is known for not making issues too complicated. “He'll be good at keeping everyone together, and if Trump wins in November that will help,” he said.

Mr. De Groot, the former ambassador, said: “If he can't bridge a new U.S. administration with Europe, I don't think anyone can.”

Steven Erlanger reported from Berlin, Lara Jakes from Washington and Claire Moses from Amsterdam.

WORLD



Clockwise from above left: a swimming class in Malé, the capital of the Maldives; a shoreline that was reinforced with concrete, fencing and rubble to slow erosion on the island of Himandhoo, Maldives; and scientists examining a sediment core from Dhigulaabadhoo.

The vanishing islands that failed to vanish

ISLANDS, FROM PAGE 1

ers in this world after all. Look hard enough, and they start to look a lot like everywhere else.

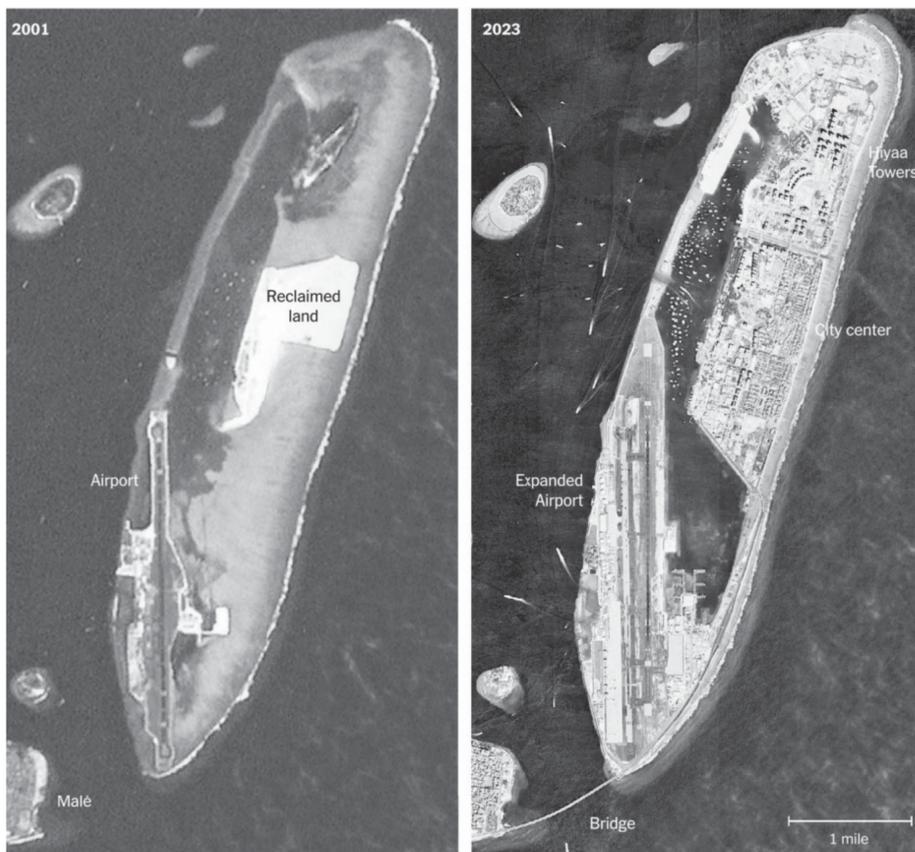
Swaying palms, unspoiled beaches and abundant sunshine are the main draws for most visitors to atolls. Not for scientists. No, to understand what really beguiles them about these islands, you need to take a dive into the surrounding sea. Or you need to gaze down from a plane. Or, for the very best view of all, you should find a way to peer back into the past.

There, you would see the island volcanoes that once stood in the atolls' place. Fast-forward a bit, enough to let the tectonic plates shift, and you would see the volcanoes start to cool and subside. As they sank, corals would colonize their flanks, growing higher and higher. In time, the volcanoes would be no more and all you'd see was the ringlike reefs, each one encircling a lagoon. Where the reefs poked up high enough, wind and waves would toss up sand and rubble, forming slender islets.

"Such formations surely rank high amongst the wonderful objects of this world," Charles Darwin wrote in 1836 after visiting an Indian Ocean atoll during his voyage on the *Beagle*.

It was Darwin who first theorized that atolls were burial sites for dead volcanoes, that these modest, almost shy, formations had astonishing pasts. Only later did scientists discover a key piece of their more recent history: Swings in sea level, they realized, had drowned and exposed the islands several times through the ages. Which didn't bode particularly well for them today, now that global warming was causing the oceans' rise to speed up.

To understand what had happened to the atolls since this acceleration began, two researchers, Arthur Webb and Paul



Sources: Mohamed Aslam and Paul S. Kench; Anthropocene; Nature Communications

JONATHAN CORUM/THE NEW YORK TIMES; SATELLITE IMAGES BY CNES AND AIRBUS VIA GOOGLE EARTH

When the Maldives' capital, Malé, became crowded, the nearby island of Hulhumale was reclaimed from the ocean. The island's recently constructed towers are a rarity in the Maldives and its population has expanded to 65,000 residents.

Kench, decided to look down at them from above. The scientists collected aerial photos of 27 Pacific islands from the middle of the 20th century. Then, they compared them to recent satellite images. "I'm not sure we really knew what we would find," Kench recalled.

Their findings caused an uproar.

The seas had risen an inch or so each decade, yet the waves had kept piling sediment on the islands' shores, enough to mean that most of them hadn't changed much in size. Their position on the reef might have shifted. Their shape might be different. It wasn't as simple as oceans rise, islands wash away.

Dr. Webb and Dr. Kench's study, which came out in 2010, inspired other scientists to hunt for more old photos and conduct further analysis.

And yet, to really grasp the forces at work, and to anticipate what they might do to the islands next, scientists also need to study atolls up close. On a blob of land just a few miles north of the Equator, Dr. Kench walked past a section of beach that the currents had eaten away.

"People obsess on that end of the island," he said. Then he pointed up ahead. "This side has got bigger."

The day before, another island in the same atoll was abuzz with activity. One group of scientists and graduate students measured currents using makeshift buoys. Another group fiddled with a tower-mounted sensor that mapped the waves running up the beach. A third team dove down to the seafloor, where they installed instruments.

The researchers were hoping all this data from the island, Dhigulaabadhoo, would help them see the future. Only with hard numbers can you start projecting island change going forward, said Dr. Kench, who teaches at the National University of Singapore. "That's the holy grail."

Among scientists who study islands and coasts, the most common advice for dealing with sea level rise can sound a lot like doing nothing. Coexistence, to use Dr. Kench's word, means accepting that the mighty ocean will do what it will and learning to live with it. It means planning smartly around the water rather than trying to keep it away with engineering projects, which carry their own environmental side effects.

And yet, to the man who actually decides how the Maldives deals with sea level rise, welcoming the water would be just as unacceptable as doing nothing. "If there's coastal erosion, then we have to do something about it," the country's environment minister, Thoriq Ibrahim, said. "We can't just leave it, thinking that nature will expand the island."

The issue is whether people can wait. Whether their needs for modern services, for better lives, will lead them to demand sea walls and breakwaters and land reclamation, the very things that could diminish the islands' natural resilience. Or whether they will leave.

If the atolls' near future is written in their recent past, then we can retell it: Some islands will shrink, others will grow. Many will be stable. But which of these places people will actually want to call home is the harder question, a question that every country confronts in one form or another, a question as eternal as the tides.

Maahil Mohamed contributed reporting from the Maldives.

A far-left firebrand both adored and hated

FRANCE, FROM PAGE 1

"The problem they will have, when the president looks for a new government — the others don't want Mélenchon," said Gérard Grunberg, a political scientist and research director emeritus at the National Center for Scientific Research. "He makes a real union of the left impossible. He's very provocative. The left is totally disunited."

For now, France is without a government, and it is not clear how it will get one. No party or alliance won a majority in the elections. Despite that, Mr. Mélenchon said on Sunday, "We're not going to cancel a page or a comma of our program."

That program is a redistributionist, egalitarian, hostile-to-capitalism economic vision that was inspired in large part by Mr. Mélenchon's 2022 presidential platform.

On Sunday, he spoke of the coalition's economic plans as if he owned them: raising the monthly after-tax minimum wage to 1,600 euros, from 1,398 euros (or about \$1,700 from about \$1,500) — "We'll decree it," Mr. Mélenchon said; freezing prices on food, energy and fuel; \$162 billion in taxes on the rich. Other elements include payments to households for costs associated with their children's education. The right, and Mr. Macron, have criticized it as adding an unbearable fiscal burden to an already deeply indebted country.

Mr. Mélenchon didn't even have to bring up another signature element in the left's platform: "Retirement at 60!" the youthful crowd began chanting spontaneously.

It is hard to imagine Mr. Macron's appointing Mr. Mélenchon prime minister.



Jean-Luc Mélenchon, center, after the second round of French legislative elections on Sunday. His tone and hard-line stance have given him a devoted, youthful following.

They are not fans of each other. Mr. Macron has compared the left's political movement to the far-right National Rally. Mr. Mélenchon is happy to return the compliment.

"Under his baton, France has become a global example of police violence and government abuse of power, in a regime that is supposed to be democratic," Mr. Mélenchon wrote of the president in his 2023 book, "We Can Do Better! Toward a Citizens' Revolution," which was not translated.

"Emmanuel Macron is dawdling, deliberately dragging his feet," Mr. Mélenchon said Tuesday after arriving at the National Assembly. "He's holding things

up to hang on to power as long as he can."

Mr. Mélenchon fights with the media, attacking individual reporters, professes hate for the United States and love for leftist Latin American dictators whose prolixity he shares. He has offered praise for authoritarian regimes in China, Cuba and Venezuela. "The Yankees represent everything I detest," he told *Le Monde* in 2011. "A pretentious and arrogant empire, made up of ignoramuses, of pitiful leaders."

A former Trotskyist, longtime senator from the Paris exurbs and onetime government minister under the pragmatic Socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin,



Mr. Mélenchon left the Socialists in 2008 to found his own party, moving further and further left.

He has refused to condemn Hamas as a terrorist organization, has fought publicly with the leaders of Jewish organizations in France and is regularly accused of antisemitism, which he denies. He sometimes traffics in insinuations that are stereotypes, once saying, for instance, that a Jewish former economy minister, Pierre Moscovici, didn't "think French" but thought "international finance."

"There is at least an ambiguity there that favors antisemitism," Mr. Grunberg said.

Patrick Weil, another political scientist, agreed: "There's a limit to Mélenchon. He's considered by a big part of the population as dangerous and antisemitic."

When Mr. Mélenchon said on Sunday that a top priority would be to "recognize as quickly as possible the state of Palestine," the crowd erupted in roars of "Free Palestine." As at other Mélenchon rallies, kaffiyehs and Palestinian flags were much in evidence.

One of his longtime heroes is Maximilien Robespierre, the most bloodstained of the 18th-century French revolutionaries, and during the campaign he showed his own authoritarian side, purging five

members of his France Unbowed party who had often disagreed with him. "Our democracy deserves better than you," François Ruffin, an independent-minded deputy and party member who was not one of those purged, posted on social media.

Yet he has a formula — populist economics to appeal to hard-up youths, fierce hostility toward Israel to appeal to working-class French Muslims in the suburbs, anti-American and anti-Europe rhetoric and a pro-immigrant stance — that proved to be a winner in this election. Many in the crowd on Sunday cheering him on were of Arab and African origin. "The French people are not a religion, not a skin color," Mr. Mélenchon said.

He is the rare French politician who speaks approvingly of immigration, employing the term "creolization" to describe his country, as he did Sunday. "That is very positive," Mr. Weil said. "He integrates into citizenship young people of North African and African origin. He says France has become a melting pot. It's super important."

There were echoes of his hero Robespierre, who presided over the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, in his rhetoric Sunday night.

"The government of the New Popular Front will have no other authority than what the people give it," he said — a line that could have been written 230 years ago by Robespierre, a man who proclaimed that "the people" were the only source of government authority.

"It's not the politics of the past that will continue," Mr. Mélenchon said, "it's the people who have surged up from all the working-class neighborhoods."

'It was like fire from the sky and under your feet'

In Saudi Arabia, dire heat and profit seekers amplify dangers on the annual hajj

BY RANA F. SWEIS, EMAD MEKAY AND LYNSEY CHUTEL

Huda Omari sat outside a broker's office in Jordan for two days, waiting for her visa to make the annual hajj, or pilgrimage, to Saudi Arabia.

In Egypt, Magda Moussa's three sons pooled their resources to scrape together nearly \$9,000 to realize a dream of accompanying their mother to the hajj. When she got the go-ahead for the trip, she said, relatives and neighbors in her village ululated in celebration.

The dayslong pilgrimage is a profound spiritual journey and an arduous trek under the best of circumstances. But this year, amid record heat, at least 1,300 pilgrims did not survive the hajj, and Saudi authorities said that more than 80 percent of the dead were pilgrims who lacked permits.

Ms. Omari and Ms. Moussa were among a large number of unregistered pilgrims relying on illicit or fraudulent tour operators to skirt the official permit process. Both said they were aware that the once-in-a-lifetime trip would be physically and financially demanding, but neither foresaw the terrible heat or mistreatment they would endure.

"We were humiliated and punished for being there illegally," Ms. Omari, 51, told The New York Times after returning home.

With nearly two million people participating each year, it is not unusual for pilgrims to die from heat stress, illness or chronic disease during the hajj. And it is unclear whether this year's toll was higher than usual because Saudi Arabia does not regularly report the numbers. Last year, 774 pilgrims died from Indonesia alone, and in 1985 more than 1,700 people died around the holy sites, most of them from heat stress, a study at the time found.

But this year's deaths drew attention to the disturbing underbelly of an industry that profits from pilgrims who often spend years saving to complete one of Islam's most important rites.

To control the influx of visitors and avoid tragedies like the 2015 stampede, the Saudi government has sought to register pilgrims. Those who are registered must buy a government-sanctioned



Pilgrims arriving in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, last month before the annual pilgrimage. Above right, a man affected by the heat in Mina.



When Ms. Omari arrived, she said, she was assigned a room in a building where the air-conditioning barely worked.

"The halls felt like they were on fire," she said.

So she shelled out more money for a decent hotel, where she shared a room with women from her hometown.

Ms. Moussa was luckier: Her sons paid hundreds of dollars for her to have a bed in a hotel room with three other women, while the sons spent more than \$200 to sleep on a mattress on the floor in another building, in a room crowded with eight men.

Saudi officials removed at least 300,000 unregistered pilgrims from Mecca even before the hajj began, sending many of those without proper documentation to the port city of Jeddah, more than 40 miles (65 kilometers) away, according to Saudi state media. Others were deported.

As the hajj drew closer, police raids intensified, witnesses said.

"We are pilgrims. We are Muslims," said Ms. Omari. "We are not here to cause problems."

Ms. Omari, who arrived nearly a month before the hajj began in mid-June, remained holed up in the room she shared with four other women, leaving only to perform religious rites.

"We know we only go once in our lifetime, and this was it," she said.

On the eve of the Day of Arafat — the day when pilgrims gather near Mount Arafat as one of the hajj rituals — no car or bus would pick her up because she did

not have the right permit, Ms. Omari said. So she walked 12 miles to reach the plain of Arafat under a scorching sun with choking humidity. Temperatures surpassed 120 degrees Fahrenheit (49 Celsius) during the hajj period.

"It was like fire from the sky and under your feet," she said.

Ms. Moussa said she had tried to board a bus, but a Saudi police officer demanded hajj permits from her and the women she was with. The officer threatened to end their pilgrimage, so close to its zenith, if they could not produce permits.

"After all those years wishing for this day, now they want to prevent us?" she said.

Ms. Moussa, stung by the treatment, said she quietly exited the bus through the back door. She bundled her belongings and balanced them on her head, and then began walking. Stopping only to pray or ask for directions, she walked through the night.

"I had plastic slippers on," she said. "By the time I arrived, they had gotten so worn-out, they felt as if I was wearing nothing on my feet."

As she walked, she said, pilgrims in air-conditioned buses gawked at her as she limped along the path. Someone took a video of her that went viral in Egypt.

The two women's families reached the plain of Arafat, but the walk back exposed the tragedy of the situation.

"Younger people than me were lying dead," Ms. Moussa said. "It was heart-breaking."

travel package that has become too expensive for many.

Those who enter on other types of visitors' visas have difficulty accessing the safety measures put in place by the authorities. So pilgrims' financial means determined the conditions and treatment they experienced, including their protection from — or exposure to — the Gulf's increasingly dangerous and extreme heat.

Registered pilgrims stay in hotels in the holy city of Mecca or in Mina, a city of white tents that can house up to three million and which offers showers, kitchens and air-conditioning. They are also transported between holy sites, sparing them from the hot sun.

The unregistered in Mecca found themselves stuffed in bare apartments in a southern district that has become popular with the travel brokers who cater to them, according to some of those who went. During the months surrounding the rite, these brokers rent out entire buildings and pack them with pilgrims.

Still, many are undeterred. And as pilgrims return to their home countries, a

clearer picture is emerging of the conditions they endured.

Working with the Saudi authorities, Jordan has limited the number of people allowed to participate in the hajj annually. And the Jordanian authorities said last week they had arrested 54 people and shuttered three travel agencies after 99 Jordanians died during the hajj.

Ms. Omari lives in Irbid, Jordan's second-largest city, where she said she sells spices to make extra money. She scraped together 140 Jordanian dinar, nearly \$200, for a visa that allows Muslims to visit Saudi holy sites but excludes them from the hajj.

In all, Ms. Omari paid 2,000 dinars (more than \$2,800) for a package that included travel, insurance and accommodations. Though it was "no small amount," she said, it was still just half of the cost of the official hajj package.

Egypt, where rising inflation and a weakened currency have put the pilgrimage out of reach for many, may have had one of the highest number of fatalities this year, but the authorities there have not confirmed the toll. Egyptian officials have recently closed 16 tour operators, and they have arrested and charged two travel brokers.

Ms. Moussa's three sons had long dreamed of taking her to the hajj, and this was the year that dream would be realized. It would cost them 120,000 Egyptian pounds (nearly \$2,500) for her trip alone, and they would accompany her at 100,000 Egyptian pounds each.

Still, the cost was substantially less than the official package.

When Ms. Moussa, a widowed grandmother who used to work as a telecoms technician, received her visa, her family and neighbors in the village of Bahadah, near the capital Cairo, celebrated her good fortune.

The hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam, dating back centuries to when pilgrims first walked in the footsteps of the prophets. All Muslims who are physically and financially able are obliged to perform it at least once. Today, there are tiered visitors' packages for the registered and a widening gap between those who can afford these packages and the unregistered who cannot.

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Advertisement

Nishan Forum: Fostering cultural exchanges and addressing modern challenges with Confucian wisdom

Themed "Traditional Cultures and Modern Civilizations," the 10th Nishan Forum on World Civilizations convened from July 10 to 11, bringing together foreign dignitaries, representatives from international organizations, ambassadors to China, and global experts and scholars in Qufu, east China's Shandong Province.

This coastal province, known for its rich history and vibrant culture, is one of the birthplaces of Chinese civilization and the home of Confucius. The renowned philosopher, who lived from 551 to 479 BC, emphasized morality, social harmony

and education. His teachings, recorded in the "Analects," laid the foundation for Confucianism and continue to inspire people worldwide.

Confucianism's broad scope and its extensive connections within human civilization were reflected in this year's forum discussions. For instance, scholars explored how Confucius's ancient wisdom, alongside contemporaneous Western philosophers, can help address modern challenges.

During the forum on traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), scholars delved into the humanistic con-

cepts and social views embedded in TCM culture. They thoroughly explored contemporary issues related to the inheritance and development of TCM and its role in the progress of human civilization.

Also, discussion on the connection between traditional Chinese culture and the Olympic spirit highlighted shared values like moral excellence, respect and harmony. Confucianism promotes virtues like righteousness, integrity and respect for others to create a harmonious society. Similarly, the Olympic spirit values excellence, respect and friendship, encouraging athletes to

strive for their best while fostering international friendship.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach noted that the forum deepens understanding between different cultures through respectful dialogue, much like the Olympic spirit of excellence, respect, unity and peace.

The vitality of civilization lies in communication and exchange. Recognizing and maintaining the diversity of human civilization is essential for achieving coexistence among civilizations and fostering new partnerships and win-win cooperation. Confucianism, with its long-standing influence on human civilization, continues to maintain strong connections with contemporary global culture.

Another key aspect of Confucianism is the responsibility individuals bear for national development, unity and the continuity of civilization, highlighting its broad scope. In a world full of uncertainties, Confucian discussions on order can contribute to maintaining global peace and development.

This year's forum discussions, beyond exploring the broad scope of Confucian thought and its deep cultural connections, highlighted promoting intercultural exchanges, fostering a harmonious world, and building a community with a shared future for humanity.

Established 14 years ago in response to a United Nations initiative, the Nishan Forum has become a vital platform for fostering international dialogue and cultural understanding. It continually broadens the scope of

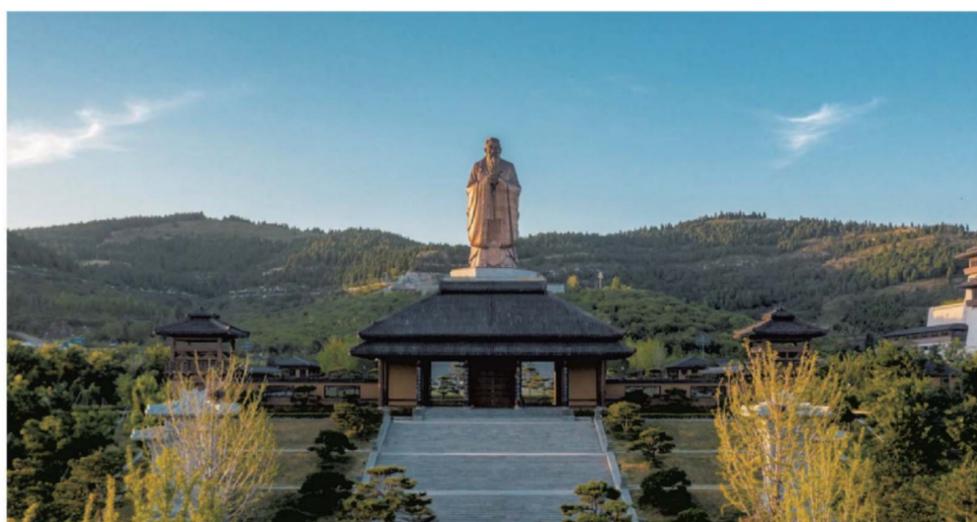
cultural exchanges, prioritizing dialogue and the preservation of cultural diversity.

This year, the forum featured keynote speeches, sub-forums and parallel forums. Topics include the inheritance and innovation of cultures during modernization and the intersection of artificial intelligence and human civilization. It aimed to integrate diverse cultural perspectives and develop solutions to common global challenges.

Jeffrey D. Sachs, a professor of economics at Columbia University and president of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, described the Nishan Forum as "a great initiative" that unites people from around the world to learn about Confucius and traditional Chinese culture, fostering harmony in today's world. Edil Baisalov, deputy chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Kyrgyzstan, noted that the forum "addresses the urgent needs of all mankind."

The forum wasn't just about discussions and theories. It was vibrant with cultural exchange activities like dialogues on Confucianism in Japan, South Korea, Thailand and other countries. Additionally, the forum offered hands-on cultural experiences like stone carving and calligraphy. These activities allowed guests to experience the charm of traditional Chinese culture firsthand.

The 10th Nishan Forum facilitated insightful discussions and exchanges, enhancing global understanding and cooperation. This year's gathering continued the forum's mission of fostering a more connected world through cultural and civilizational exchange.



A view of the Nishan Sacredland in Qufu City, the birthplace of Confucius, east China's Shandong Province.

Credit of Nishan Sacredland

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WORLD



A Biden event this week in Harrisburg, Pa. President Biden said that campaigning in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin had reaffirmed his belief that voters were standing by him.

His future in his own hands

NEWS ANALYSIS

Biden's defiance shows continuing his candidacy is going to be his decision

BY SHANE GOLDMACHER

President Biden's increasingly emphatic declarations that he will not exit the U.S. presidential race are delivering an unmistakable message to potentially wayward Democrats: Any criticisms going forward damage the party's chances against Donald J. Trump.

For days, Mr. Biden has said he will remain his party's nominee after his poor debate, short of an intervention from "the Lord Almighty."

It began on Monday with an open letter to congressional Democrats saying he was definitely running. It continued with a defiant call into one of his favorite cable news shows decrying the "elites" trying to shove him out. It included a midday appearance on a private video call with some of his campaign's top financiers, as well as a call into a virtual meeting with a bulwark of his past support: the Congressional Black Caucus.

"I am not going anywhere," Mr. Biden told the donors.

The moves amounted to a show of defiance that the Biden operation hoped would earn him some deference, as uneasy Democratic lawmakers trickled back to Capitol Hill after a holiday break. At the same time, the Biden team was trying to reframe the pressure campaign to get him to step aside as one hatched by the elite party establishment, rather than a genuine reflection of grass-roots voter fears about the 81-year-old commander in chief's age and acuity.

"I love this fighting Joe Biden," said Representative Robert Garcia of California, a Democrat and an outspoken Biden supporter. "When he takes a punch, he's going to come back and punch harder."

As lawmakers returned to Washington, Mr. Biden received some key words of support from Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York ("He is in this race; the matter is closed"), among others.

But there were also concerns among influential lawmakers, including Senator Patty Murray of Washington, who is in the Democratic leadership ("We need to see a much more forceful and energetic candidate").

In both private and public remarks, Mr. Biden made clear he holds all the cards when determining his political future. He has won every state in the Democratic primaries and 14 million votes, netting him practically every delegate headed to Chicago next month for the party's convention.

"I'm more than the presumptive," Mr. Biden said to Mika Brzezinski, one of the co-hosts of "Morning Joe," during his MSNBC phone interview. "I'm going to be the Democratic nominee."

Mr. Biden is trying to turn attention back on Mr. Trump, saying on the call with the campaign's top financiers: "We're done talking about the debate. It's time to put Trump in the bull's-eye."

Even some of the president's allies, however, were asking why the public-relations blitz was coming more than 10 days after the debate, rather than its immediate aftermath. Mr. Biden waited eight days after the debate to sit for his first unscripted interview, with ABC News on Friday, and did not call congressional leaders until days after the debate.

David Doak, a longtime Democratic



strategist, said the effort to impose party discipline was understandable for Mr. Biden, even if it risks "dividing the party at the worst time." By insisting so unequivocally he is not stepping aside, Mr. Biden is making it harder for Democrats to call for him to do so, lest they weaken him for the fall.

"Strategically, it is what I would be advising him to do if he wanted to hold on to the nomination at all costs," Mr. Doak said. "It is the 'at all costs' which is the question at hand."

On MSNBC, Mr. Biden goaded those who want a different nominee to try running against him. "Go ahead, announce for president," Mr. Biden dared them. "Challenge me at the convention."

"I don't care what the millionaires think."

In 2020, Mr. Biden spoke of serving as a "bridge" to the next generation of Democratic talent. Now he sees himself as the party's best chance to defeat Mr. Trump again, regardless of widespread concerns about his age.

"I wouldn't be running if I didn't absolutely believe that I am the best candidate to beat Donald Trump in 2024," Mr. Biden said.

Despite his standing as the head of the party and the most powerful elected official in the nation, Mr. Biden tried on Monday to take on the mantle of an outsider fending off the establishment of

his own party. "I'm getting so frustrated by the elites," Mr. Biden said on the MSNBC show that has long been a favorite of the Democratic political establishment.

"I'm not talking about you guys," he said of the "Morning Joe" co-hosts, "but by the elites in the party who, they know so much more." He uttered those last words with a singsong tone of disdain.

He added that campaigning in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin had reaffirmed his belief that voters were standing by him. "I don't care what the millionaires think," Mr. Biden said.

Less than three hours later, Mr. Biden was participating in a Zoom call with members of his national finance committee — the top donors, millionaires and financiers who bundle contributions from others — to thank them for their support.

Mr. Biden's attempt to reframe the race as a battle against the elites — in an echo of how Mr. Trump has often bashed his own party's leadership — did not sit well in some quarters of the party.

"This desire to wedge the 'Dem elite' against 'regular folk' is bad," Hilary Rosen, a veteran Democratic strategist, wrote on X. "The elite are actually late to concerns about Biden. A majority of voters have been concerned about this for the last two years."

A New York Times/Siena College poll last week showed that 74 percent of voters said Mr. Biden was too old to be effective, including 59 percent of Democrats.

Above, Mr. Biden and Jill Biden, the first lady. "We're done talking about the debate," he said during an MSNBC phone interview. Senator Jon Tester of Montana, left, said Mr. Biden needed to prove to voters that he could serve another term.

A day after some influential House Democrats had met virtually in a private call and aired their concerns about standing behind Mr. Biden, the president's operation began lining up and receiving more statements of support, including from some key Black lawmakers.

"I am 100 percent with the president," Representative Joyce Beatty of Ohio, a former head of the Congressional Black Caucus, said on MSNBC. The current chairman, Representative Steven Horsford of Nevada, issued a statement on Monday standing by Mr. Biden, too: "President Joe Biden is the nominee and has been selected by millions of voters across this country."

Representative Grace Meng of New York, a former leader of the Democratic National Committee, also issued a supportive statement. Some of those who had criticized Mr. Biden in private were largely silent publicly, including Representative Jerrold Nadler of New York, who declined to answer questions about the president at an appearance in Manhattan.

Still, Mr. Biden continued to suffer some fresh Democratic doubt on Monday.

Senator Jon Tester of Montana, who is up for re-election this fall in a state Mr. Trump is expected to carry in a landslide, said the president "has got to prove to the American people — including me — that he's up to the job for another four years."

And Representative Greg Landsman of Ohio said "time is running out" for Mr. Biden, who he said needed to be able to make his case "again and again and again."

The central concern among many Biden allies has been the president's ability — or inability — to handle unscripted appearances.

On Monday, a White House spokesman, John Kirby, announced that Mr. Biden would participate in what he called a "big boy press conference" on Thursday after a NATO summit meeting.

Patrick McGeehan and Nicholas Nehamas contributed reporting.

Black women dismiss calls to abandon Biden

MACON, GA.

Party's most loyal voters buoyed his 2020 run and find waverers frustrating

BY MAYA KING AND JAZMINE ULLOA

As Democratic leaders and voters called on President Biden to step aside after his faltering debate performance, Black women remained his firewall of support.

During conversations at a national music festival last weekend in New Orleans, at a small organizer gathering in rural Georgia immediately after the debate last month and in recurring chats over text chains and phone calls, Black female Democrats have affirmed and reaffirmed their willingness to vote and organize their communities to back Mr. Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, whose place on the presidential ticket they vigorously lobbied for in 2020.

Many acknowledged that the president's debate performance was flawed. Others shared concerns that his weakened state and meandering answers on the debate stage would make it more difficult for them to energize Black voters, who have already expressed a lack of enthusiasm for the Democratic ticket.

But they have joined a broad swath of Black lawmakers in publicly dismissing the idea — circulating among others in the party — that Mr. Biden should step aside.

"All the airwaves attention that Democrats are putting on this and not putting on efforts to convince and motivate voters is just completely distracting," said Stefanie Brown James, a co-founder of the Collective PAC, an organization that supports Black candidates at all levels of government. "I just don't think it's helpful right now."

Black women have long been the Democratic Party's most reliable voting bloc. More than 91 percent of Black women who voted in 2020 supported Mr. Biden, and polls have consistently shown they are still his most stalwart constituency, one that has yet to crack, even as those same surveys suggest a broader slippage of support among Black voters.

Interviews with nearly two dozen Black Democratic women, including many of the grass-roots organizers credited as instrumental to Mr. Biden's victory four years ago, indicate that a vast majority of this loyal voting group is not prepared to abandon him or Ms. Harris.

Their continued backing is driven in part by pragmatism. If he were to drop out, many argued, the Democratic Party would be thrown into disarray and their chances of defeating former President Donald J. Trump would be gravely imperiled. And they see Mr. Trump as a threat to democracy and to the racial progress made over the last several decades.

Mr. Trump's comment during the debate about immigrants taking "Black jobs" has circulated widely online and given some Black leaders an opening to remind voters of his racist and reductive comments. And the latest New York Times/Siena College poll shows Mr. Trump winning roughly 15 percent Black support — a decrease from past surveys, even though he has widened his overall lead over Mr. Biden in battleground states.

But Ms. Harris is also a significant factor in their support, they said, sharing concerns that attempts to undermine Mr. Biden could also undercut her as part of the ticket and do damage to her future prospects. Mr. Biden's stepping aside and Democrats' selecting a candidate other than the vice president would all but assure a monumental loss of Black support, many suggested.

Representative Sydney Kamlager-Dove of California likened the Democratic Party to a sports team during a panel discussion with the Congressional Black Caucus PAC on Saturday at the Essence Festival of Culture in New Orleans. The party's victories do not solely depend on the coach, she said, but "its star players."

Mr. Biden has repeatedly insisted that he would not be pushed out of the race and in a letter to congressional Democrats on Monday, reiterated his commitment to running again. But in recent days, Ms. Harris, who has not wavered in her backing of Mr. Biden, has gar-

nered more attention as an alternative presidential candidate.

Some donors beginning to shy away from the president have shown fresh interest in Ms. Harris. Representative James E. Clyburn of South Carolina told the MSNBC host Andrea Mitchell last week that he would support Ms. Harris if Mr. Biden were to step aside, adding that Democrats "should do everything we can do to bolster her, whether she's in second place or at the top of the ticket."

At the Essence Festival, where she participated in a moderated conversation, Ms. Harris drew a large, animated crowd of mostly Black women. Many said in interviews that while they supported Mr. Biden, they were excited by the prospect of seeing Ms. Harris atop the ticket — either this year or in 2028.

One attendee, Joyce Dallas-Maryland, said she believed Ms. Harris would make an "excellent replacement" for Mr. Biden but felt it would be too disruptive for the party to change course now.

"I am on Biden's team, and those who are in line with him," said Ms. Dallas-Maryland, who traveled to the festival from Mobile, Ala. "They stand for democracy, and that's what I stand for — democracy — as well."

This week, Ms. Harris will host a number of campaign events, including two on Tuesday in Nevada, a crucial swing state.

She will also have an opportunity to speak directly to Black women at national gatherings for two Black sororities: Alpha Kappa Alpha, of which she is a member, on Wednesday, and Zeta Phi Beta, at the end of July.

On the airwaves, Black women have been among the most prominent defenders of the Democratic ticket. In a CNN interview with Victor Blackwell on Saturday, former Senator Carol Moseley Braun called Democrats' criticisms of Mr. Biden "very discouraging," while conceding that his debate performance had been poor. She said "the chatter should stop."

"Abandoning Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, for me personally, it feels like it's abandoning my own freedoms."

Representative Frederica Wilson of Florida released a statement Sunday underscoring her support for the Biden-Harris ticket and condemned the Democrats who called for Mr. Biden to step aside, saying that anyone who does so "needs to get their priorities straight."

The Black women supporting Mr. Biden point to his record. He has appointed more Black women to federal courts than any other president, and his policies lowering the cost of insulin have disproportionately benefited Black diabetics. And though his student loan debt forgiveness plan was hampered by legal and legislative roadblocks, his administration most recently canceled student loan payments for more than 160,000 borrowers — a boon for Black women, who disproportionately owe student loans.

"Abandoning Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, for me personally, it feels like it's abandoning my own freedoms," said Jotaka Eaddy, a veteran Democratic strategist who convenes regular meetings with Black female organizers and elected officials. "I am not willing to do that."

Still, many of the same organizers who delivered for Mr. Biden four years ago are staring down a much steeper challenge in re-electing him. In polls, focus groups and interviews, Black voters have shown less interest in supporting Democrats this November, expressing significant frustrations with Mr. Biden. Some, pointing to higher prices as a result of inflation and the party's failure to pass voting rights or criminal justice legislation, have said they will vote for Mr. Trump or withhold their votes altogether.

Still, some Black Democratic women said the immediate calls and plans for a new standard-bearer suggested a lack of loyalty to the president whose re-election they had committed to supporting.

"In the aftermath of the debate, everything has been about his performance and how he looked and how he sounded and all of that," said Leah D. Daughtry, a veteran Democratic strategist. "We have not yet gotten to the accomplishments of this administration and what the last three and a half years have looked like."



Many Black women acknowledge that the president did poorly in his debate, but along with Black lawmakers, they are generally united in rejecting calls for him to step down.

Metal thieves are stripping America's cities

All over the country, streetlights, statues and gravesites have been hit

BY MICHAEL CORKERY

The Sixth Street Bridge in Los Angeles is wired to glow with colorful lights celebrating the city's spirit. But the bridge, known as the "Ribbon of Light," goes dark at night now. So do stretches of the busy 405 freeway and dozens of street blocks across the city.

In St. Paul, Minn., a man was recently hit by a car and killed while crossing a street near his home where streetlights had gone out.

And in Las Vegas and surrounding communities, more than 970,000 feet of electrical wiring, the equivalent of 184 miles, have gone missing from streetlights over the past two years.

The lights are going out across American cities as a result of a brazen and opportunistic type of crime. Thieves have been stripping copper wire out of thousands of streetlights and selling it to scrap metal recyclers for cash. The wiring typically fetches only a few hundred dollars, but blacked-out lights pose safety hazards to drivers and pedestrians and are costing cities millions of dollars to repair.

Metal theft has been an urban plague for decades, often rising alongside commodity prices. But the combination of the economic ills and social malaise lingering since the pandemic and soaring demand for metals, especially for copper, has brought this street crime to new levels.

Some theft involves elements of essential city infrastructure and even public artwork that once seemed immovable. Across Los Angeles County, more than 290 fire hydrants have gone missing since January.

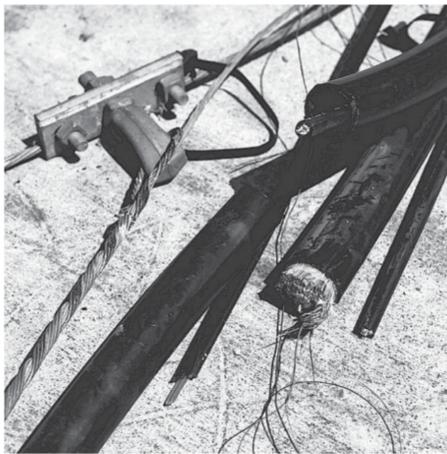
And in Denver, two men were arrested in the past winter for removing bronze artwork from a Martin Luther King Jr. monument, causing roughly \$85,000 in damage. The police said the two men were paid \$394 for the metal, which was recovered from a local scrap company.

Other theft hits personally. At the Lincoln Memorial Park Cemetery in Carson, Calif., in Los Angeles County, someone stole nameplates off the mausoleum and a commemorative plaque dedicated by the boxer Joe Louis, according to Aisha Woods, who volunteers to maintain the cemetery. Thieves even stole the metal pipe that is used to water the lawn.

The Lincoln cemetery was founded by African Americans in the early part of the 20th century when they were not welcome at many other cemeteries, said Ms. Woods, whose mother is buried there. The thefts have unnerved many people who go to visit gravesites, said Ms. Woods. "It's like opening a new wound," she said. "It's disrespectful to sacred grounds."

Los Angeles City Councilman Kevin de León, who represents the downtown area, recently pushed to create a task force to combat metal theft. In Mr. de León's district alone, there were 6,900 cases of copper wire theft in the last fiscal year, up from just 600 cases five years ago. He said that some of the theft involved sophisticated criminal enterprises that recruit people struggling with addiction to do the stealing in exchange for drugs.

"There are huge parts of the city that have been left in the dark," said Mr. de León.



"It's like opening a new wound. It's disrespectful to sacred grounds."

AISHA WOODS, a cemetery volunteer, on the theft of gravesite nameplates.



Clockwise from top: the Sixth Street Bridge in Los Angeles, where the lights have gone dark since thieves stripped their wiring; workers replacing a fire hydrant in Los Angeles that was stolen; a scrap metal yard in downtown Los Angeles; Aisha Woods, a volunteer at a cemetery where mausoleum nameplates have been stolen; and vandalized power lines.

Mr. de León said he has begun preemptively removing public statues and putting them in storage, including one that was a gift from the Mexican state of Veracruz. He made the decision after someone had tried to saw into the ankles of a statue at a park in the Lincoln

Heights neighborhood. The Los Angeles Bureau of Street Lighting was unable to provide the total number of outages caused by wire theft among the 225,000 streetlights it operates citywide. In a statement, a representative for the bureau said wire theft began increasing

just before the pandemic, "with the most dramatic increases happening in recent years."

The thefts have come amid a feverish demand for copper and other metals. Copper, in particular, is at the heart of the evolving economy — a key compo-

nent of battery-powered cars, modern electrical grids and the giant new data centers powering artificial intelligence and other technology.

"The world can't get enough copper," said Karthik Valluru, global leader of Boston Consulting Group's materials

and process industries sector. "It is the most important metal when it comes to the energy transition."

There will be an estimated global shortage of as much as 10 million tons of copper over the next two years, Mr. Valluru said. But developing new copper mines can take a decade or more, making scrap copper more valuable.

During the early part of the pandemic, many recycling facilities shut down, disrupting the supply of scrap metal. Around the same time, demand for metals increased, as the Biden administration began funneling billions into the construction of huge infrastructure projects.

It became a boom time for metal thieves.

In interviews, elected officials and police officers across the country said that they did not recall another time when public property like bridges, telecommunication cables and fire hydrants had been struck by thieves at such a large scale.

"It seemed like a weird little issue when it first came up," Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz said of the wire theft in St. Paul and other communities across the state. "But it is costly and destructive."

St. Paul's streetlights have been popular with wire thieves. For safety reasons, many of the lamp poles are hollow so they can break off easily when hit by a car. That allows thieves to easily cut into them or pry open a small panel at the base to extract the wire.

Melvin Carter, the mayor of St. Paul, said he had noticed how many of the streetlights were out when he did his nightly jog around the Minnesota capitol.

"The moment we fix them, people come back and snatch them up again," Mr. Carter said.

In late April, six people were charged in connection with an effort to steal thousands of pounds of copper wire across St. Paul. One member of this wire "cutting crew" had collected \$12,169 from recyclers between November 2023 and January, according to a police report.

Many of the metal thefts involve some level of expertise. Some people hitting fire hydrants in communities south of Los Angeles appear to have used a tool that allowed them to shut off water before removing the hydrant, said Kate Nutting, general manager of the south-west region of the Golden State Water Company, which operates the hydrants.

Ms. Nutting said it was possible that the thieves stole the necessary tool from a utility maintenance truck. The hydrants, which weigh about 100 pounds each and are made largely of iron, cost \$4,000 each to replace. In some neighborhoods, as many as 10 hydrants have been taken at a time, Ms. Nutting said.

Last month, Governor Walz signed a new law that will require people selling copper scrap metal in Minnesota to obtain a license from the state and to attest that the material was obtained legally.

Some Los Angeles officials have urged the city to focus on prosecuting the scrap companies purchasing the stolen material, not the people stealing the wiring who are more likely to be living in poverty and desperate for money.

Still the problems persist. Late last month, thieves struck the Lincoln cemetery again. Someone stole additional metal nameplates on the mausoleum and broke off the doors to the chamber, where remains are interred.

"They used to say there was honor among thieves," said Mr. de León. "But when you are stealing markers from graves, that is a new low."

Students weaponize social media against teachers

MALVERN, PA.

BY NATASHA SINGER

In February, Patrice Motz, a veteran Spanish teacher at Great Valley Middle School in Malvern, Pa., was warned by another teacher that trouble was brewing.

Some eighth graders at her public school had set up fake TikTok accounts impersonating teachers. Ms. Motz, who had never used TikTok, created an account.

She found a fake profile for @patrice.motz, which had posted a real photo of her at the beach with her husband and their young children. "Do you like to touch kids?" a text in Spanish over the family vacation photo asked. "Answer: Si."

In the days that followed, some 20 educators — about one quarter of the school's faculty — discovered they were victims of fake teacher accounts rife with pedophilia innuendo, racist memes, homophobia and made-up sexual hookups among teachers. Hundreds of students soon viewed, followed or commented on the fraudulent accounts.

In the aftermath, the school district briefly suspended several students, teachers said.

The principal during one lunch period chastised the eighth-grade class for its behavior.

The biggest fallout has been for teachers like Ms. Motz, who said she felt "kicked in the stomach" that students would so casually savage teachers' families. The online harassment has left some teachers worried that social media platforms are helping to stunt the growth of empathy in students. Some

teachers now hesitate to call out pupils who act up in class. Others said it had been challenging to keep teaching.

"It was so deflating," said Ms. Motz, who has taught at the school, in a wealthy Philadelphia suburb, for 14 years. "I can't believe I still get up and do this every day."

The Great Valley incident is the first known group TikTok attack of its kind by middle schoolers on their teachers in the United States. It's a significant escalation in the way middle and high school students impersonate, troll and harass educators on social media. Before this year, students largely impersonated one teacher or principal at a time.

The middle schoolers' attack also reflects broader concerns in schools about how students' use, and abuse, of popular online tools is intruding on the classroom. Some states and districts have recently restricted or banned student cellphone use in schools, in part to limit peer harassment and cyberbullying on Instagram, Snap, TikTok and other apps.

Social media has helped normalize anonymous aggressive posts and memes, leading some children to weaponize them against adults.

"We didn't have to deal with teacher-targeting at this scale before," said Becky Pringle, president of the National Education Association, the largest U.S. teachers' union. "It's not only demoralizing. It could push educators to question, 'Why would I continue in this profession if students are doing this?'"

In a statement, the Great Valley School District said it had taken steps to address "22 fictitious TikTok accounts" impersonating teachers at the middle school. It described the incident as "a gross misuse of social media that profoundly impacted our staff."



Patrice Motz and Shawn Whitelock are among the victims of attacks from a group of students on social media. Both are veteran faculty members at a school in Pennsylvania.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY HANNAH YOON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Last month, two female students at the school publicly posted an "apology" video on a TikTok account using the name of a seventh-grade teacher as a handle.

The two, who did not disclose their names, described the impostor videos as a joke and said teachers had blown the situation out of proportion.

"We never meant for it to get this far, obviously," one of the students said in the video. "I never wanted to get suspended."

"Move on. Learn to joke," the other student said about a teacher. "I am 13 years old," she added, using an expletive for emphasis, "and you're like 40 going on 50."

In an email to The New York Times,

one of the students said that the fake teacher accounts had been intended as obvious jokes but that some students had taken the impersonations too far.

A TikTok spokeswoman said the platform's guidelines prohibit misleading behavior, including accounts that pose as real people without disclosing that they are parodies or fan accounts. TikTok said a U.S.-based security team had validated ID information — such as driver's licenses — in impersonation cases and then deleted the data.

Great Valley Middle School, known locally as a close-knit community, serves about 1,100 students in a modern brick complex surrounded by a sea of bright green sports fields.

The impostor TikToks disrupted the

school's equilibrium, according to interviews with seven Great Valley teachers, four of whom requested anonymity for privacy reasons. Some teachers already used Instagram or Facebook but not TikTok.

The morning after Ms. Motz, the Spanish teacher, discovered her impersonator, the disparaging TikToks were already an open secret among students.

"There was this undercurrent conversation throughout the hallway," said Shawn Whitelock, a longtime social studies teacher. "I noticed a group of students holding a cellphone up in front of a teacher and saying, 'TikTok!'"

Fake teacher accounts also followed and hit on other fake teachers.

"It very much became a distraction," Bettina Scibilia, an eighth-grade English teacher who has worked at the school for 19 years, said of the TikToks.

Students also attacked Mr. Whitelock, who was the faculty adviser for the school's student council for years.

A fake @shawn.whitelock account posted a photo of Mr. Whitelock standing in a church during his wedding, with his wife mostly cropped out. The caption named a member of the school's student council, implying the teacher had wed him instead. "I'm gonna touch you," the impostor later commented.

"I spent 27 years building a reputation as a teacher who is dedicated to the profession of teaching," Mr. Whitelock said in an interview. "An impersonator assassinated my character — and slandered me and my family in the process."

Mrs. Scibilia said a student had already posted a graphic death threat against her on TikTok earlier in the school year, which she had reported to the police. The teacher impersonations increased her concern.

"Many of my students spend hours and hours and hours on TikTok, and I think it's just desensitized them to the fact that we're real people," she said. "They didn't feel what a violation this was to create these accounts and impersonate us and mock our children and mock what we love."

A few days after learning of the videos, Edward Souders, the principal of Great Valley Middle School, emailed the parents of eighth graders, describing the impostor accounts as portraying "our teachers in a disrespectful manner." The school also held an assembly on responsible technology use.

But the school district said it had limited options to respond. Courts generally protect students' rights to off-campus free speech, including parodying or disparaging educators online — unless the students' posts threaten others or disrupt school.

The district said it couldn't comment on any disciplinary actions, to protect student privacy.

In the Great Valley students' "apology" on TikTok last month, the two girls said they planned to post new videos. This time, they said, they would make the posts private, so teachers couldn't find them.

"We're back, and we'll be posting again," one said. "And we are going to private all the videos at the beginning of next school year," she added, "cause then they can't do anything."

On Friday, after a Times reporter asked the school district to notify parents about this article, the students deleted the "apology" video and removed the teacher's handle from their account. They also added a disclaimer: "Guys, we're not acting as our teachers anymore that's in the past!!"

Business

Tough road to Britain's clean energy goals

HULL, ENGLAND

Analysts warn that projects Labour seeks will be costly and will present other risks

BY STANLEY REED

There may be no better place to see evidence of Britain's shift to cleaner energy than a sleek industrial complex on the Humber estuary outside Hull, a faded port city.

On a July morning, workers in a brightly lit building were preparing molds for fiberglass wind turbine blades longer than football fields. Outside on the docks, squat six-wheeled vehicles gingerly maneuvered a blade weighing 50 metric tons for loading onto a ship that would take it to Scotland for installation.

The factory, which is operated by Siemens Gamesa, a unit of the German company Siemens Energy, began producing the blades in 2016. It has since expanded to accommodate larger models.

The factory is a case study for how the new British government under Prime Minister Keir Starmer, whose Labour Party won a decisive election victory last week, hopes to use investment in clean energy to bolster stagnant economic growth.

Andy Sykes, the manager of the factory, said that 500 million pounds, or about \$630 million, had already been invested in the plant, which employs 1,300 people in an area that has struggled economically for decades. Another round of expansion is in the works.

The plant serves as an anchor for green efforts in the region, one of Britain's major industrial areas, which is dominated by oil refineries and other polluters.

Mr. Sykes, though, said the British government would need to attract the funding for port expansion and other efforts to keep the offshore wind industry growing. "There needs to be a commitment and a guarantee that there's a return on investment," he said.

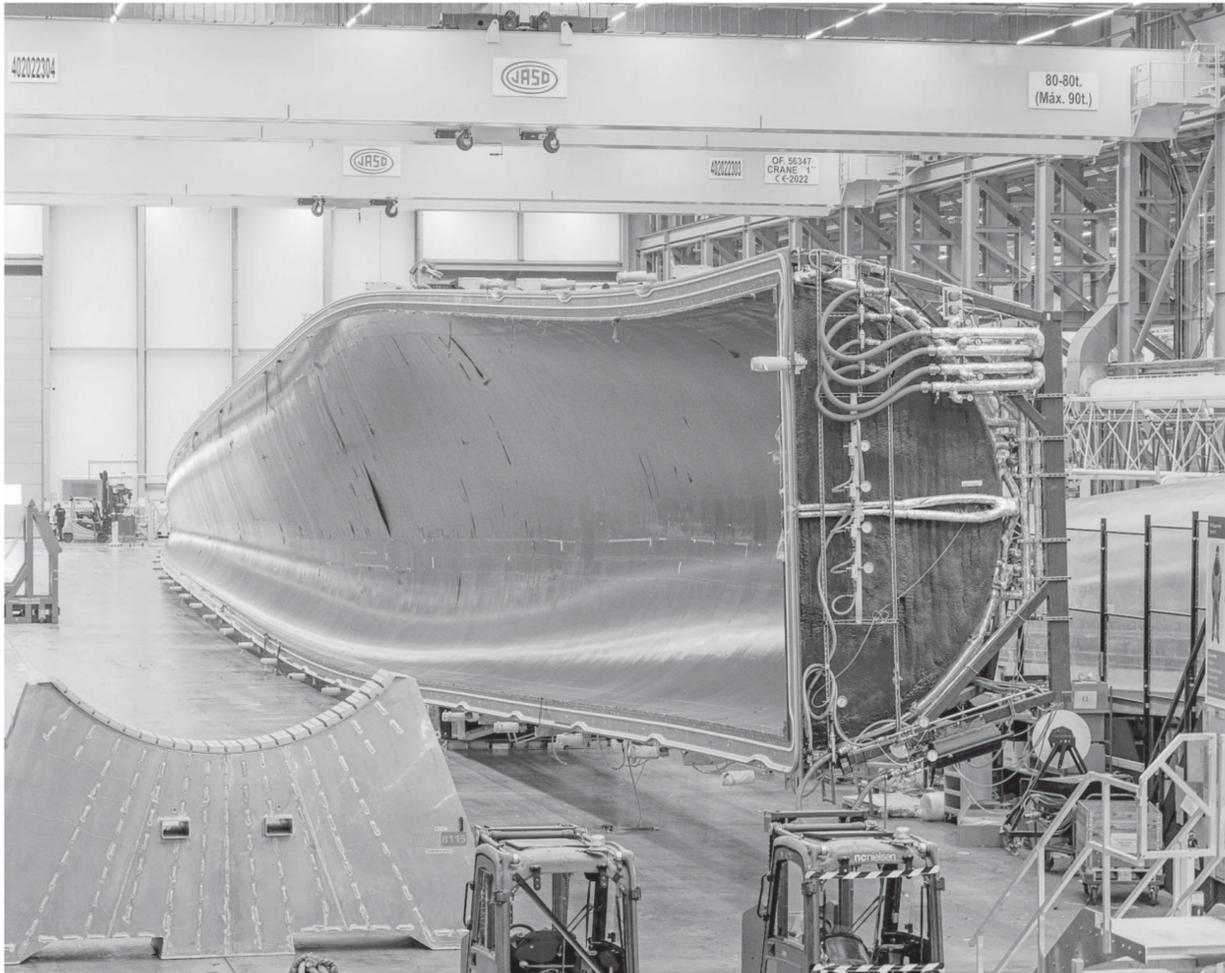
The government is also facing concerns about the costs of the transition and its potential to hurt job growth in a region that depends on the energy industry for employment opportunities.

Executives in the clean energy industry like most of what they have heard from the Labour Party. Mr. Starmer, who took office last Friday, made the rapid expansion of low-carbon energy — including wind and nuclear — a key plank of his campaign to tackle climate change and bring in what could be tens of billions of pounds in investment.

Among his pledges: quadrupling Britain's offshore wind capacity, which is already second globally only to China's, as part of an ambitious effort to eliminate emissions from electric power generation by 2030.

Mr. Starmer also wants to streamline Britain's agonizingly slow development planning process, sweeping away restrictions that prevent the building of land-based wind farms, for instance. Wind is already the largest source of power generation in Britain, accounting for about 30 percent of supplies over the last year, slightly more than natural gas.

And Mr. Starmer wants the government to have a bigger role in renewable energy. The vision pleases both clean



Above, a mold for making a wind turbine blade at the Siemens Gamesa factory, which has been making blades since 2016, in Hull, England. Right, employees working on a wind turbine part. The plant employs 1,300 people in an area that has struggled for decades.

energy operators and environmentalists, who have chafed at what they perceive as a loss of momentum on climate goals under the former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

"Achieving that by 2030 or even getting close to that would be just an enormous step forward, far, far ahead of our major economy peers," said Chris Stark, a former chief executive of the Climate Change Committee, a government body that monitors Britain's plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Starmer is also taking a tough approach to old-line energy producers. He has said he would tighten an existing tax squeeze on oil and gas companies operating in the North Sea and stop issuing exploration licenses in the area, which, while in decline, is still a major source of both energy and jobs.

"The U.K. has, and I think continues to be, at the leading edge of the energy transition," said Roger Martella, the chief sustainability officer at GE Renova, a maker of wind turbines and other energy-related machinery.

Labour has presented these proposals as an almost risk-free bonanza that will not only help stave off climate change, but will also create some

650,000 jobs. The party says that more blades spinning in the safety of home waters would insulate Britain from the impact of international events, like the sharp rise in prices for electricity and natural gas that occurred after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. "Families and businesses will have lower bills for good," the party said in an election document.

Analysts warn, though, that Labour's proposals are unlikely to be cheap, and they come with other risks. For one thing, Labour is proposing a large effort to build green energy infrastructure in an economy that is more focused on sectors like finance.

"The U.K. doesn't have almost any of the supply chain for developing wind or solar or, indeed, nuclear or anything else," said Dieter Helm, a professor of economic policy at the University of Oxford.

Such shortcomings have already been seen in the soaring costs plaguing Hinkley Point, the first nuclear power station that Britain has tried to build in decades.

A rush to build renewable energy sources could push up costs, which might then be passed on to consumers.



"If cost is no object, that's great," said David Reiner, who teaches energy policy at the Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge, adding that Labour's goals might be achievable with an increase in electric bills.

The environment for building renewable energy projects has become much tougher since the coronavirus pandemic.

According to industry estimates, the costs of developing an offshore wind farm — large ones run to billions of dollars — have risen 40 percent in recent years because of higher material and labor costs and interest rates.

An auction last year for government support produced no bids for offshore wind projects, and the industry said that

the government's electric power pricing targets were unrealistically low. Industry executives said the results of a new auction, expected to be announced in September, would be seen as a bellwether for the future British market.

Finally, there are risks that moving fast to curtail oil and gas production could cost more jobs around the North Sea, especially in Scotland and northeast England, than the ones green energy would create.

James Reid, an analyst at the consulting firm Wood Mackenzie, forecast that production could fall 50 percent by the end of the decade if Labour's fiscal proposals cause "people to turn the investment taps off."

Highlighting the stakes: Around 200,000 North Sea energy jobs are linked to oil and gas, but just 34,000 are linked to renewables, estimated Paul de Leeuw, the director of the Energy Transition Institute at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, Britain's oil center. "It is scary and a real call to action," he said.

Mr. de Leeuw said that renewable energy could compensate for a lot of jobs expected to be lost in the oil industry, but the pace of building new projects needed to be much faster — "not an easy thing to do."

"The U.K. doesn't have almost any of the supply chain for developing wind or solar or, indeed, nuclear or anything else."

Oil workers are alarmed at the threat to their own jobs and skeptical about finding alternatives in renewable energy or elsewhere. Unite, one of the largest unions in Britain and usually a key supporter of the Labour Party, has even organized small protests in Aberdeen against Mr. Starmer's planned curbs on the oil industry.

"The lads don't see any other option, apart from the oil and gas industry," said Kyle Griffiths, a union official who cleans and paints oil tanks on an offshore platform.

To help stimulate investment, Mr. Starmer has promised to set up a government company called Great British Energy, with headquarters in Scotland, to fund new renewable initiatives like mounting turbines on floating platforms. The £8.3 billion that Mr. Starmer intends to put into the new company over five years is relatively small, but its impact could be multiplied through partnerships and loans.

"We've got lots of projects we could partner with them on," said Alistair Phillips-Davies, the chief executive of SSE, a utility based in Scotland that is one of Britain's largest green energy developers.

Britain may be a leader in offshore wind generating capacity, but it has fallen short in securing jobs that make the equipment, analysts said. Aside from the Hull factory, there is only one other comparable offshore wind site in Britain — a blade factory and test center operated by Vestas, the Danish turbine maker, on the Isle of Wight.

"Unrivaled wind installation programs in the U.K. have mainly benefited producers in neighboring European countries, notably Germany and Denmark," Simone Gasperin and Joshua Emden wrote in a study that was recently published by the Institute for Public Policy Research.

When it turns out your bank wasn't really a bank

Unsuspecting depositors find \$300 million is frozen in an unprecedented case

BY ROB COPELAND

For close to a century, putting your savings into a federally insured U.S. bank has been a sure thing: If the institution fails, up to \$250,000 of your money will be protected.

What if it isn't anymore? The promise of bank insurance — a treat of consumer protection since the Great Depression — is now being tested by a crisis swirling around online-only lenders with hundreds of millions of dollars of deposits among them. Customer accounts have been frozen, preventing people from cashing out their life savings. Most depositors have little clue where their money has gone and whether they will get any of it back.

The turmoil was set off this spring with the bankruptcy of Synapse Technology, the kind of company you've probably never heard of unless you suffered through all the fine print of your account statements. It operated banking software for fast-growing online lenders with names like Juno, Yieldstreet and Yotta.

Backed by some of Silicon Valley's biggest venture capitalists, the start-ups offer accounts that charge lower fees and pay far higher interest rates than traditional brick-and-mortar banks. Their slick websites advertise insurance from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the U.S. agency that pledges to pay back lost funds.

Unlike stodgy brick-and-mortar institutions, this group's pitch is that banking can be downright fun. "Play Games. Win Big," says Yotta, which features a lottery-like system that boosts returns for some lucky customers.

This model is increasingly popular — especially among 20- and 30-somethings — and legal.

The rub is that although these start-ups may look and feel like banks, they are not. They simply collect customer money and pass it through financial technology intermediaries like Synapse to old-school banks that may have only one physical branch and minimal online presence. The banks, including Evolve Bank & Trust of West Memphis, Ark., according to filings, are the ones that actually manage the depositors' money.

If one link breaks in this sequence, it can become intensely complicated for people to gain access to their funds.

When it filed for bankruptcy in the spring, Synapse said it had only \$2 million in cash on hand and owed multiples of that.

Shortly afterward, account holders at Juno, Yotta and elsewhere, with nearly \$300 million in cumulative deposits and no direct relationship with Synapse, could no longer gain access to their money.

The only one of the aforementioned crew that is actually a chartered bank, and thus covered by F.D.I.C. insurance, is Evolve. And because Evolve itself did not fail, the customers of the online lenders were not eligible for automatic federal banking insurance.

"It's really unprecedented," said Jason Mikula, a former Goldman Sachs product manager who now writes a fi-



ancial newsletter. "There is no direct, legal authority for the F.D.I.C. or any other agency to intervene."

The companies involved point the finger at one another. Yotta, which repeatedly advertised its products as "F.D.I.C. insured," has told customers it was powerless to help because it held none of the money itself. The founder of Synapse, Sankaet Pathak, blamed Evolve, writing in a Medium post that it was "unnecessary and punitive" for the bank to freeze the funds. Neither Mr. Pathak nor representatives for Juno and Yieldstreet responded to requests for comment.

Yotta's founder, Adam Moelis, son of the prominent investment banker Ken Moelis, said that he took responsibility for trying to resolve the situation but not

for causing it: "The responsibility of the banks and Synapse was to store and move money and conduct proper oversight."

He added: "This is basic stuff. While we feel horrible for the impact this has had on our customers, that these parties are unable to account for and reconcile tens of millions of dollars is not our fault."

Even to the experts, what happens next is unclear. While some of the frozen \$300 million in bank accounts has been released to customers, according to filings in Synapse's bankruptcy case, the court-appointed trustee has told the court that there is a "shortfall" of as much as a \$95 million in the funds that Synapse handled for lenders.

Thomas Holmes, a spokesman for Evolve, said that as it awaited guidance from the court, the bank was holding onto \$46 million of the funds because it had discovered "numerous significant discrepancies" in Synapse's paperwork.

The bankruptcy court judge has said that he suspects that tens of millions of dollars will never be found, but is powerless to compel regulators to get involved. "This is a very, very unusual situation," Judge Martin R. Barash said at a hearing last week.

Left twisting in this Möbius strip of blame are customers, whom these lending start-ups call "end users." To have a shot at recouping their money, they first have to figure out who has it.

Many were told at one point that they had debit cards and accounts at Evolve but have now learned it was another unnamed bank who had their money. Mr. Holmes of Evolve said the bank "transferred all end user funds" to other banks at the request of Synapse, but declined to identify them. "It's complicated," he wrote in an email Friday, declining to elaborate further.

In interviews, customers were shocked to learn that they were not entitled to immediate federal insurance.

"It all sounded like a normal bank to me," said Erick Baum, 45, an information-technology professional in Sacramento, who transferred roughly \$30,000 of his savings from JPMorgan Chase to Yotta after hearing about it on a popular financial advice channel on YouTube.

Mark Hingle, a paramedic in Gretna, La., was irritated that regulators would not get involved, even though they were so quick last year to help out distressed lenders catering to well-heeled clients

like Silicon Valley Bank and First Republic. In those instances, depositors gained access to their accounts within days after regulators organized auctions of the fallen banks and deployed federal insurance funds.

"I didn't play with this money," said Mr. Hingle, 33, who has \$60,000 stuck and said he could not pay for back surgery without access to his savings. "I thought this was a bank that was F.D.I.C. insured."

Representatives of the F.D.I.C. and Federal Reserve, the main banking regulator, declined to comment. An F.D.I.C. spokesman pointed to a letter the regulator sent to the bankruptcy trustee saying that it found the collapse of Synapse "deeply troubling" and that it had responded to over 1,000 complaints from those unable to access their funds.

On Tuesday the Fed chair, Jerome H. Powell, told a Senate committee that the central bank was "strongly encouraging" Evolve to make money available to depositors, but said he had no power over Synapse or the online lenders.

At the bankruptcy hearing for Synapse last week, one depositor, who said she was on the verge of selling her home to pay her bills, noted that she had filed dozens of requests for help with the F.D.I.C. The agency's only response, she said, was a copy of answers to "Frequently Asked Questions."

Another depositor said: "The F.D.I.C. has diverted the responsibility to the consumer." A third earlier told the court he was contemplating self-harm.

Judge Barash said he had no answers. He suggested that depositors might hire lawyers of their own to sue those involved.

Political turmoil threatens French economy

PARIS

Election results suggest prolonged stagnation in a country plagued by debt

BY LIZ ALDERMAN

One thing was clear after France's surprise election results on Sunday: Any new government formed by President Emmanuel Macron will face months of political paralysis. What's less certain is whether that gridlock will tip France's heavily indebted economy further into distress.

The turmoil has focused attention back on France's ballooning debt of three trillion euros (\$3.24 trillion) and a deficit that has grown to more than 5 percent of economic output. It immediately prompted a warning on Monday from S&P Global Ratings over France's sovereign debt rating.

"Uncertainty hangs over France's future government architecture," said the ratings agency, which had already downgraded France's debt rating on May 31, rattling the government, whose economic credibility has been one of its main political assets. Should the polarization of France's new Parliament weaken the government's ability to mend its finances, France's debt could be downgraded again, the agency added.

France is facing uncharted territory after left-wing parties surged unexpectedly in nationwide legislative elections, eclipsing the nationalist, anti-immigration National Rally party to secure the most seats in the lower house of Parliament. The result left no party — including Mr. Macron's centrist coalition — with a majority and has splintered the lower house of Parliament into three bitterly antagonistic blocs.

With the political outlook more muddled than before, investors are scrambling to make sense of the possible outcomes: The uncertainty makes unclear exactly how France will be governed and risks piling economic havoc atop the political contention.

The French economy was already in a rough patch. Unemployment, which fell last year to a 15-year low of 7 percent, has ticked back up as manufacturers have curbed production and exports have slowed. Consumers, weary of persistent inflation, have cut spending, a key driver of growth.

Mr. Macron's government recently warned that growth would be weaker than expected this year as it looked to cut spending by more than €20 billion. The European Union reprimanded France late last month for breaching fiscal rules that restrict spending and borrowing. France's debt has climbed to more than 110 percent of economic out-



French consumers, who are tired of unrelenting inflation, have already cut spending, which has hindered growth. Political gridlock could lead to exacerbation of the problem.

put, and the country has a deep budget deficit after the government spent heavily to shield consumers and businesses from pandemic lockdowns and high energy prices.

Mr. Macron's opponents on the right and the left seized on the debt to assail him during their campaigns. But the major parties are in no mood to reach consensus, and investors are worried that the new Parliament will fail to pass a budget in the autumn that will include major spending cuts and avoid the risk of further downgrades to France's sovereign debt.

"Once the dust has settled, the deadlock of a hung Parliament will prove more damaging than first implied," Alex Everett, investment manager at Abrdn, a London-based investment company, wrote in a note to clients. "France's budget problems have not disappeared. Macron's attempt to force unity has instead fueled yet more discord."

Investors had already driven up the

government's borrowing costs. The difference between the interest rate that investors are charging on French debt and that of Germany has increased, a sign that investors are worried about France's ability to manage its finances. The danger is that France's debt grows even larger, which could lead to a faster rise in interest payments.

Complicating the picture is the left-wing alliance, the New Popular Front, which on Sunday won the most seats in the lower house of Parliament. The party, a bloc that includes Communist, Green and Socialist lawmakers, is pushing a heavy "tax the rich and spread the wealth" agenda inspired by the far-left France Unbowed party. It has said it is ready to flout European Union fiscal rules to carry out its platform.

Indeed, unless the government raises taxes on businesses and the rich, the leftist bloc is likely to reject a national budget that honors France's pledge to Brussels and debt ratings agencies to

cut the deficit next year to 4.4 percent of gross domestic product, from 5.1 percent, Mujtaba Rahman, the managing Europe director for the Eurasia Group, wrote in an analysis. The group will also seek more spending on education and health care and possibly push to increase France's minimum wage, he said.

But the leftists, while emboldened, will lack overall control, so their agenda has little prospect of approval. That has eased fears among some investors about the economic cost of the New Popular Front's spending program. The estimated cost would be as high as €187 billion annually, a total that would be supported by up to €150 billion in increased taxes for businesses and wealthy individuals and the scrapping of a variety of corporate tax breaks.

"A hung Parliament is likely the best solution for European equities," said Claudia Panseri, chief investment officer for France at UBS Global Wealth Management.

On Monday, Mr. Macron's finance minister, Bruno Le Maire, warned in a post on X that the leftist bloc's economic program could tip France into a financial crisis and economic decline. "It would destroy the results of the policy that we have pursued for seven years and which has given France work, attractiveness and factories," he said.

Holger Schmieding, chief economist at Berenberg Bank, said Mr. Macron's centrist coalition will probably have to accept the reversal of some of its signature initiatives.

Among those could be his move to increase France's retirement age to 64 from 62.

In the long term, Mr. Schmieding added, such reversals and disfavor among global investors are likely to reduce growth and raise inflation in France. "Coupled with the potential credit rating downgrades, this would raise financing costs and exacerbate France's fiscal woes," he said.

Report slams drug pricing practices

BY REED ABELSON AND REBECCA ROBBINS

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission's scathing report on pharmacy benefit managers this week signals a significant ramping up of its scrutiny of benefit managers under the agency's chief, Lina Khan.

It also is a remarkable turnabout for an agency that has long taken a hands-off approach to policing these companies. The 71-page report took a new tack, saying "these powerful middlemen may be profiting by inflating drug costs and squeezing Main Street pharmacies."

The F.T.C. has so far stopped short of bringing a lawsuit or other enforcement action against a benefit manager. But the industry fears that the report could lead to a formal investigation into its practices or to a lawsuit accusing benefit managers of anticompetitive conduct. The agency's findings could also fuel efforts in Congress and in the states to impose limits on the industry.

The three largest benefit managers — CVS Health's Caremark, Cigna's Express Scripts and UnitedHealth Group's Optum Rx — collectively process roughly 80 percent of prescriptions in the United States. Hired by employers and government health insurance programs like Medicare, benefit managers are responsible for negotiating prices with drugmakers, paying pharmacies and helping decide which drugs are available and at what cost to patients.

Benefit managers are supposed to save everyone money. But in recent years, the industry has grown more consolidated and has taken more control over how patients get their medicines, in a shift that critics say contributes to driving up drug costs.

In a statement on Tuesday, Ms. Khan said the agency's inquiry had shown "how dominant pharmacy benefit managers can hike the cost of drugs — including overcharging patients for cancer drugs." She went on to say that the agency found evidence of "how P.B.M.s can squeeze independent pharmacies that many Americans — especially those in rural communities — depend on for essential care."

The industry strongly disputed the F.T.C.'s findings. "These biased conclusions will do nothing to address the rising prices of prescription medications

A U.S. agency says pharmacy benefit managers are raising the price of drugs, even for cancer.

driven by the pharmaceutical industry," said Justine Sessions, a spokeswoman for Express Scripts.

The benefit managers defended their business practices, saying they save money for employers, governments and patients. They say that their scale gives them crucial leverage to take on the pharmaceutical companies. And they say they are being frugal with their clients' money when reimbursing outside pharmacies at low rates for buying and dispensing medications.

An investigation by The New York Times published last month found that the benefit managers often act in their own interests, at the expense of patients, employers and taxpayers.

The F.T.C.'s report cited The Times's findings, detailing an array of ways that benefit managers appeared to be inflating the cost of prescription drugs. The agency's study characterized the benefit managers in blistering language, saying that they "wield enormous power and influence" and that their practices "can have dire consequences for Americans."

For example, the report pointed to an important line of business — the companies' affiliated pharmacies, including warehouse-based operations that send prescriptions through the mail to patients. The agency examined two generic cancer drugs and found that benefit managers often paid their own pharmacies much more than it would cost to buy those drugs from a wholesaler. The practice translated into nearly \$1.6 billion in revenue over less than three years for the biggest three conglomerates, according to the report.

The agency also zeroed in on the benefit managers' role in deals intended to block competition in favor of a single product. These are arrangements in which a drugmaker pays a large discount, handled by the benefit manager and passed back to the employer, in exchange for restrictions that push the drug company's product to patients, while discouraging similar and potentially cheaper products. The report suggested that this practice may be illegal, because it thwarts competition.

The commission voted 4-1 to issue Tuesday's report. The two Republican commissioners issued statements expressing concern with elements of the report, saying it relied too much on weak evidence.

David Whitrap, a CVS Caremark spokesman, said that policies that would limit the P.B.M.s' ability to negotiate "would instead reward the pharmaceutical industry, leaving American businesses and patients at the mercy of the prices drugmakers set."

The F.T.C. has historically given these intermediaries the benefit of the doubt, because it viewed their mission of lowering drug prices as good for consumers.

Law firm scrutinizes applicants' protest activity

Sullivan & Cromwell aims to weed out those involved in acts of antisemitism

BY EMILY FLITTER

For as long as students at colleges across the United States have protested the war in Gaza, they've drawn the fury of some of the financial world's mightiest figures — investors, lawyers and bankers — who have flexed their financial power over universities, toppling school leaders in the process.

It didn't stop the students. The protests intensified this year until campuses emptied out for the summer.

Now, a prominent Wall Street law firm is taking a more direct approach with protesters. Sullivan & Cromwell, a 145-year-old firm that has counted Goldman Sachs and Amazon among its clients, says that for job applicants, participation in a protest — on campus or off — could be a disqualifying factor.

The firm is scrutinizing students' behavior with the help of a background check company, looking at their involvement with pro-Palestinian student groups, scouring social media and reviewing news reports and footage from protests. It is looking for explicit instances of antisemitism, as well as statements and slogans it has deemed to be "triggering" to Jews, said Joseph C. Shenker, a leader of Sullivan & Cromwell.

Candidates could face scrutiny, even if they weren't using problematic language but were involved in a protest where others did. The protesters should be responsible for the behavior of those around them, Mr. Shenker said, or else they were embracing a "mob mentality." Sullivan & Cromwell wouldn't say whether it had already dropped candidates because of the policy.

"People are taking their outrage about what's going on in Gaza and turning it into racist antisemitism," Mr. Shenker said.

Private employers in the United States can hire whom they want, with only a few restrictions meant to prevent discrimination. Some have fired workers over their actions or statements since Hamas's Oct. 7 attack on Israel.

Sullivan & Cromwell's policy stands out because of the way it holds applicants accountable for the actions of others and considers commonly used pro-



Left, a protest at Columbia University in April. Right, Joseph C. Shenker, a leader at Sullivan & Cromwell, said job applicants' participation in a protest could disqualify them.

test slogans to be out of bounds. No other law firm on Wall Street has publicly discussed a similar policy toward protesters, but leaders at four of Sullivan & Cromwell's elite rivals privately said they were considering similar rules.

To Sullivan & Cromwell's critics, the policy is an effort to silence criticism of Israel on campus and to paint all protesters as equivalent to those who have been heckling and threatening Jewish students.

"When we went through big law recruitment, we knew your social media better be clean. You better not have on there anything that you can't defend. You have to be a respectable person to be able to get a job at any of these places," said Rawda Fawaz, a lawyer for the Council on American-Islamic Relations. "That has always been the practice. Why do you have to have a special policy on this?"

Ms. Fawaz, who worked as an associate at a large law firm after graduating from Columbia Law School in 2022, said many Muslims and Arabs working for big firms already felt pressure to avoid discussing their views on Israel and its actions.

"Your political activism is part of your identity," she said. "In a way, it's good, because law students will know who they can work for and still maintain their identity."

Sullivan & Cromwell is not asking ap-

plicants for privately expressed views, seeking to exclude everyone who has criticized Israel or condemning the general act of protesting, Mr. Shenker said. He and others who support this approach argue that it is an extension of existing workplace prohibitions on hate speech.

"What's happening here is really just the implementation of basic work force decency standards," said Neil Barr, the chairman of Davis Polk, a global firm employing more than 1,000 lawyers. Davis Polk rescinded job offers over students' involvement with groups that had released statements blaming Israel for the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas.

Sullivan & Cromwell's screening will take place after students apply for jobs or arrange for interviews through top law schools. The firm has engaged a background check company, HireRight, to scour social media and recordings of public appearances for statements or actions about the conflict. Applicants will also be asked to list student groups they have joined.

Participation at a protest or involvement in a group that Sullivan & Cromwell finds objectionable will prompt questioning. Applicants will have to explain their role, including what they did to stop other protesters from making offensive or harassing statements.

The policy shows how businesses are trying to influence the behavior of peo-

ple they cannot hope to directly control for several more years, said Roderick A. Ferguson, a Yale professor of American studies who has researched universities' responses to student movements. Disqualifying people based on what someone else nearby may have been doing seems to characterize all protesters as having a single mind-set, he said.

"How do we make the leap that it's all the students?" Mr. Ferguson said. Such thinking, he said, "can mimic racist thinking, sexist thinking, homophobic thinking, that one instance becomes a character of all."

"People are taking their outrage about what's going on in Gaza and turning it into racist antisemitism."

On the list of unacceptable slogans and statements, Mr. Shenker said, is one that has been seen or heard at virtually all pro-Palestinian rallies: "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."

The chant's intent has been fiercely disputed. Many Palestinians see it as a call for the end of Israeli oppression in Gaza and the West Bank and as a plea for equal rights for Arab citizens of Israel. Many Israelis see it as a threat to wipe their country off the map.

Mr. Shenker isn't Israeli, but he has strong ties to the country. His great-



AVA PELLOR FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

EVIAN CHAMPIONSHIP

The toll of being a teen pro

Constant attention, scrutiny and pressure come with the territory

BY PAUL SULLIVAN

Asterisk Talley was faced with a tricky question after she made the cut at the U.S. Women's Open, the second women's major of the year. Would she have time to finish the homework that her teachers back home had assigned?

"I have a bunch of homework and it's all due today," said Talley, 15, part of a growing number of young golfers playing at the highest level of the game.

The admission spurred a raft of suggestions for excuses for why it wouldn't get done, not least of all that she was teeing off late on Saturday, just a few shots off the lead.

When asked after the second round if she was feeling any pressure, Talley responded: "Not really. I feel like I'm kind of used to it."

Women's golf has been becoming younger for decades, and Talley is nowhere near the youngest player to tee it up in a major like the Women's Open. Lexi Thompson, who is retiring this year at 29, was just 12 in 2007 when she qualified for her first one. (The youngest ever was Lucy Li, then 11.)

At this week's Amundi Evian Championship, Yana Wilson, a 17-year-old standout amateur from Nevada, is the youngest player in the field, but this is old hat for her.

In 2023, Wilson won the amateur trophy at the Mizuho Americas Open. She shared the stage that week with Rose Zhang, then 20, who after winning the Augusta National Women's Amateur that spring turned professional and promptly won her first event.

"We could not have scripted it any better," said Cheryl Gilbert, the chief marketing officer for Mizuho Americas.

Inviting young amateurs to play in professional events is not limited to women's golf. Miles Russell, 15, received a sponsor invite to the Rocket Mortgage Classic after making the cut in a Korn Ferry Tour event and finishing in the top 25, which got him into the next Korn Ferry event.

"It's the same reason they invite Tony Romo to play," Grant Boone, a golf commentator, said, referring to the former Dallas Cowboys quarterback. "The



JOHN JONES/USA TODAY SPORTS, VIA REUTERS

journey, it hasn't always been an easy one," she said in a post on Instagram. "Since I was 12 years old, my life as a golfer has been a whirlwind of constant attention, scrutiny and pressure. The cameras are always on, capturing every swing and every moment on and off the golf course.

"Social media never sleeps, with comments and criticisms flooding in from around the world. It can be exhausting to maintain a smile on the outside while grappling with struggles on the inside."

But Boone was cautious not to draw broad conclusions from a few high-profile players.

"There are enough examples to say there is something exacting about the life lived out in public," he said. "It's hard enough to grow up without someone watching. It's tougher when someone is dissecting all your moves."

There are exceptions. Lydia Ko, who turned professional in 2014 at age 17, has won 20 times and is a point away from entering the L.P.G.A. Hall of Fame. From the start, she said she didn't want to play past 30.

Andrea Lee, who will be in the Evian this week, played her first U.S. Women's Open at age 15 like Talley did. "I even played a practice round with Michelle Wie that week," she recalled. "It was crazy. She won the entire thing. I was a kid and so shy that I don't remember talking to her."

What it did do was cement Lee's desire to become a professional golfer, though she took a more traditional route by playing at Stanford University.

"I had a good amateur career and college career, but jumping into the professional scene, I put a lot of pressure on myself," Lee said in an interview in June. "I really struggled. I missed a lot of cuts. I had to take a step back. I had to remind myself that I am a great golfer. I had to focus on what I had to do."

The past decade has taught her a lot about golf and herself.

"As a 15-year-old kid, you don't really know anything about being a professional or what that scene looks like," she said. "You're just having fun out there. Now as a 25-year-old professional, the goal is to win all the time. That's what you want at the end of the day. To get there it's about being comfortable to achieve the results I want to achieve. It's a slow grind."

She worries that some of the youngest players on tour are missing out on a key component that will aid them as they play at the highest level: fun.

"I hope they don't see it as a job from the very beginning," Lee said. "I hope these young girls really enjoy their youth. I encourage all the junior girls to go to college and be on a team. I encourage them to take their time. Enjoy the process of getting on tour. The L.P.G.A. isn't going anywhere."

It's a sentiment echoed by Juli Inkster, who won 45 times, including seven majors, and is a member of the L.P.G.A. Hall of Fame. On a recent edition of the Big Pickle podcast, she talked about playing a variety of sports growing up and naturally gravitating to golf. She didn't have an extended team of coaches, psychologists and trainers; she played golf and figured things out. But after competing in tournaments, she would go out with her fellow players and they would have dinner together.

Boone thinks that the financial rewards of playing on the L.P.G.A. push players to turn pro younger, making them feel more isolated.

"A 19-, 20-, 21-year-old kid and you're on the L.P.G.A., and you have a sports psychologist, a physical therapist, a full-time caddie, and maybe your parents have quit their jobs and are following on tour, and you think, 'I'm the C.E.O. of this corporation and if I don't deliver every

week these people aren't going to eat,'" Boone said. "That's a lot of pressure for an adult, let alone a kid."

But the youth movement at major championships is here to stay. "This was the first U.S. Women's Open where not a single competitor was in her 40s," Boone

said. "The oldest was 39."

As for Talley, no word yet on that homework. But she did accomplish a goal: She tied for the low amateur with Megan Schofill, 22. That was good enough for 44th place, besting some of the game's best players.

Teeing up

Above, the 15-year-old golfer Asterisk Talley at the U.S. Women's Open.



SARAH STER/GETTY IMAGES



EZRA SHAW/GETTY IMAGES

Under pressure
Andrea Lee, top, played her first U.S. Women's Open at 15. "I had a good amateur career and college career, but jumping into the professional scene, I put a lot of pressure on myself," Lee said. Lexi Thompson, bottom, is retiring this year at 29, citing constant pressure on her mental health. She was just 12 when she qualified for her first major.

sponsors want people to pay attention to them. But a lot of exempt players or partially exempt players hate the thought of that precious spot going to a novelty."

The career trajectories of young girls who turn professional before they're even out of school is often debated, as it is with any preternaturally gifted athlete. The basketball great LeBron James was the No. 1 draft pick while still age 18.

Yet this year there is added attention on Thompson. This comes a year after Michelle Wie West, another childhood phenom who played in professional men's and women's events as a girl, retired at 32. Neither achieved the professional victories — Thompson had 11, with one major; West with five, with also one major — that their early promise would have predicted.

Thompson cited the constant pressure on her mental health as a reason for retiring.

"Although this has been an amazing



ANNA NORDQVIST



BROOKE HENDERSON



LYDIA KO

Coming home, with great expectations

PARIS

Céline Boutier returns to defend her Evian title and play in the Olympics

BY CHRISTOPHER CLAREY

Céline Boutier, the most successful French women's golfer ever, has spent much of her adult life outside of her home country.

At 18, she left France to study psychology and play golf at Duke University, winning the N.C.A.A. team title and becoming the world's top-ranked amateur.

After college, she moved to Dallas to live near her swing coach Cameron McCormick, who had helped Jordan Spieth scale the heights and win majors. Since 2018, she has been a full-time member of the L.P.G.A. Tour, reaching No. 3 in the rankings last year.

But Boutier, now 30, made the most of one of her rare moments in France: winning her first major last year at the Amundi Evian Championship by a commanding six strokes and getting doused with Champagne on the 18th green by friends and fellow players.

"I think it was the most powerful moment of my career so far," she said in a telephone interview from Dallas. "Just because it was something that I had wanted to win for so long, and it was a tournament that I really watched when I was young. I was always drawn to it, and so it honestly felt a bit surreal to be the one at the center of this award ceremony that I had watched so often with the trophies and the national anthem."

She was the first French golfer to win the title on the picturesque course at the Evian Resort Golf Club. Boutier became the third Frenchwoman to win a major after Catherine Lacoste at the 1967 U.S. Women's Open and Patricia Meunier-Lebouc at the 2003 Kraft Nabisco Championship. Lacoste, the daughter of tennis star and entrepreneur René Lacoste, is the only amateur to have won the U.S. Women's Open.

Boutier will defend her title this week,



FABRICE COFFRINI/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

while also preparing for a much bigger French occasion: the Summer Olympics, where the women's golf event will be staged in the Paris suburbs from Aug. 7 to 10 at Le Golf National, a course Boutier knows well.

"I have played it many times," she said. "We had the French championships there every summer, and I was based in a training center there for a year during my last year of high school. So, we trained there nearly every day."

Boutier, an unimposing 5-foot-5 on a tour full of big hitters, wins with precision, not power, and she considers herself an overachiever.

She and her younger brother, Kevin, were introduced to golf at the same time by their father, Christopher, a late convert to golf who took them to the Paris Country Club, a course in the Paris suburb of Rueil-Malmaison. She was 6 and Kevin was 3, but she said her brother showed the most natural talent.

"In our early childhood, everyone could see that it came to him easily, but because of that, he did not need to work," she said. "I was a bit the opposite. Everything I achieved had to come from hard work because it did not come as naturally. But of course, there are different talents in life. In terms of pure golf-

ing talent, I don't think I had that much, but there are other talents like determination, drive and perseverance. Those are the things that help you compensate if, say, your hand-eye coordination is not at an extraordinary level."

Boutier's determination is clear in the results: Despite ranking 86th in driving distance, at 256 yards, with her precision, she has recorded top-10 finishes in all five women's majors and won six L.P.G.A. Tour titles, four of them in 2023, the season that took her to another level.

At home, she became the first golfer to win the French champion of champions award, given by L'Équipe, the national

sports daily, to the country's top female athlete.

"It was honestly a complete surprise," she said. "I am in a bit in my golf bubble, and I would not have thought that a golfer would get more votes than all the great athletes in other sports."

But the highlight of her year was overcoming her past struggles at the Evian, which she first played in 2014.

"I think it's a very intimidating course the first time you play it because it's very narrow," she said. "The greens are extreme. I think it's really a course that the more you play it, the better, and you start to understand with experience where you can be and really shouldn't be. You get more comfortable even looking at it because the first times you play it is very intimidating visually."

"I also would say it's not easy to handle because you are playing at home and there's more expectation from people and a bit of extra pressure that you put on yourself and that others unconsciously put on you, too."

So, what changed in 2023?

"It was honestly the first time when I played there that I truly didn't worry about the result," she said. "I just focused on the game itself and nothing else. And it worked."

She will try to take the same approach this year as she takes on the challenges of Evian and the Olympics.

"Those really will be the biggest targets of my season," she said.

Boutier took part in her first Olympics at the Tokyo Games in 2021, but that was not the full Olympic experience with the pandemic restrictions in place.

"It was a strange Olympics," she said. "I hope and think this one in Paris will be much more typical, and it will be fun to be able to go watch other sports and have interactions with other athletes."

These are the first Summer Olympics in Paris in 100 years, and golf made it back into the Games only in 2016. Her timing seems just right.

"It's really an extremely rare opportunity, and I am fully aware of that, so I won't be taking it lightly," she said. "I feel fortunate that it is coming at this stage of my career. To be able to win a medal at home would be the ultimate dream for me."

Day of glory

Céline Boutier celebrating with a French flag after winning the Evian Championship last July. "I think it was the most powerful moment of my career so far," she said of winning the tournament, her first major, in her home country.

Looking back and ahead

Angela Stanford won the Evian Championship in 2018, her only major title

BY MICHAEL ARKUSH

In 2018, Angela Stanford's prospects looked bleak after she failed to birdie the 72nd hole of the Evian Championship in France.

The leader, Amy Olson, however, later double-bogeyed the same hole, giving Stanford her first and only major title.

Stanford had hoped to play in 100 straight majors, but the streak ended at 98. She failed to qualify and wasn't given an exemption into this year's United States Women's Open.

With this year's Evian Championship beginning on Thursday, Stanford, 46, reflected on her 2018 triumph and future in the game.

The following conversation has been edited and condensed.

What is your favorite memory from the 2018 event?

Finishing Friday afternoon. I'd played really well that day. Coming up at 18, the sun was setting and you could see the lake. That was kind of a cool moment. To have a chance to play for a major on the weekend was pretty special.

More than winning the tournament?

That's kind of a given, and the winning part was weird. I did make the eagle on 15, but I doubled 16 and barely missed a birdie on 18. It would have been different if I would have made the winning putt. There was a lot of waiting at the end.

Did you think it was over when you missed the putt on 18?

Yeah, I thought that was it.

It doesn't take anything away from the victory that Olson doubled the last hole?

No. I had a conversation with one of my former instructors. He's like, a lot of people don't realize that anything can happen in golf and you have to put yourself in the position to be in second place so if something happens to the person leading the golf tournament, you put yourself right there. That made me feel like I did everything I could to get there.

When you were five down going into the final round, what were you thinking?

I thought if I can make some putts and maybe get to a point where I was within two on the back nine, then I'll have a chance. If you're within a few on the back nine of a Sunday, anything can happen.

Had you begun to doubt whether you'd ever win a major?

Yeah. I'd gotten to the point where if I



MEG GULPHANT/GETTY IMAGES

Up next

Angela Stanford is an assistant captain this year in the Solheim Cup.

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ROLEX

Opinion

In Iran, Gen Z is still waiting for the revolution

For many young Iranians, their country can't be free as long as an octogenarian cleric and his allies rule.

Holly Dagues

A young Iranian woman wore baggy jeans, a backpack slung over one shoulder and a black mask, presumably to protect her identity. Allowing her auburn hair to flow freely in contravention of the Islamic Republic's mandatory hijab rules, she proceeded to spray-paint in Persian on a wall in the holy city of Mashhad, "Khamenei you're next."

Her stark warning for Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei came in May just one day after the death of President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash. And while undeniably dangerous, the act of defiance, recorded on video in Mr. Raisi's hometown and widely circulated on social media, isn't out of the ordinary these days in Iran, where a generation of youth is deeply disillusioned with the status quo and wants the geriatric clerical establishment ruling Iran gone.

Young Iranians' discontent played a critical role in the recent elections to replace Mr. Raisi, when a majority of the nation rejected the nezam — the system — and boycotted the polls. According to Iran's official count, just 40 percent of registered voters participated in the first round of voting on June 28, the lowest turnout in the Islamic Republic's 45-year history. That number went up in last week's runoff to about 50 percent, though some suspect real turnout may be even lower. Elections in Iran are neither free nor fair, and videos from across the country showed empty polling stations. In the end, the so-called reformist Masoud Pezeshkian won over the hard-liner Saeed Jalili.

For millions of Iranians, there was no acceptable choice: Both candidates were approved by the Guardian Council, a 12-member vetting body, six of whom are handpicked by Mr. Khamenei. But the breadth of the boycott appears to have put the regime on the back foot. The supreme leader took longer than usual to deliver his customary message congratulating the people of Iran for voting. The fact that so many groups — dissidents, activists, bereaved families of slain protesters among them — joined in this act of civil disobedience signaled to the regime and to the world that they don't want an Islamic republic.

The bleak turnout wasn't unexpected. Soon after the election was announced, the hashtags #NoWay!IVote and #ElectionCircus began circulating on X along with calls to sit out the vote. According to a survey conducted by the Group for Analyzing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran (GAMAAN) in June, of those Iranians who said they planned not to vote or were undecided, nearly 70 percent cited their "opposition to the overall system of the Islamic Republic" as their reason. Before the second round of voting on July 5, another hashtag, #TraacherousMinority, popped up criticizing those who planned to cast their ballot for Mr. Pezeshkian, who opposes the violence that has become synonymous with mandatory hijab enforcement and advocates closer ties to the West. Some equated the act of getting your index finger dipped in ink after voting with sticking a finger in protesters' blood.

Many of those who said they planned



SHEIDA SOLEIMANI

to boycott the vote on social media belonged to Nasleh Zed, or Gen Z, a phrase that has only recently entered the Persian lexicon though about 60 percent of Iran's nearly 90 million people are under 30. They are largely the first in Iran to grow up with illegal satellite dishes and censored internet reached through VPNs, giving them a window onto the free world. As they came of age with the same needs and wants as youth everywhere, Gen Z Iranians watched successive presidents vow to improve their lives as things only got worse, triggering a wave of mass protests and brutal crackdowns.

The violent state backlash reached its nadir during Aban Khoonin, or Bloody November, in 2019, when security forces reportedly killed 1,500 protesters, including children, under the darkness of a total internet shutdown. The fact that this state-sponsored violence transpired on the watch of President Hassan Rouhani, a moderate politician who had promised change through an improved economy and better relations with the West through a nuclear deal, confirmed for many that it didn't matter who was in power in Iran under the current system; authoritarianism reigned supreme. Three years later, thousands of young Iranians braved

bullets and batons on the front lines of the 2022 Women, Life, Freedom uprising, a monthslong anti-establishment protest that posed the greatest internal threat to the clerical establishment in its decades of rule.

As this tech-savvy generation circumvents blocks to scroll through their social media feeds, they plainly see how aghazadehs, or children of the elites, are living their best lives on Instagram, driving the latest-model Maseratis, eating steak wrapped in gold leaf and doused in caviar, and continuing to benefit from nepotism, systemic corruption and the black market economy. This, while the average Iranian — living in a resource-rich country that funnels the people's money to proxies like Hamas and Hezbollah — is struggling to pay the bills with high inflation. Thirty percent of Iranians now live under the poverty line.

"Young Iranians see no bright future for themselves, as the situation keeps getting worse and worse," said Roya Piraei, a 26-year-old woman who now lives in Britain, having left Iran after her mother was shot and killed by security forces during the 2022 uprising. The current system, Ms. Piraei told me, "cannot meet the needs of the people." Many members of Gen Z blame their

parents and grandparents for ushering in an Islamic republic after the revolution that overthrew the shah in 1979 and continuing to accept the current situation, hoping for incremental reform. They don't see the difference, as some of the older generation do, between "principalist" politicians, known as hard-liners in the West, and "reformists" like Mr. Pezeshkian. Various memes of pink nooses festooned in flowers and morality police wearing pink bows made the point that the reformist camp offers a version of the clerical establishment that is friendlier on the surface only. To them, these men are all "footmen" of Mr. Khamenei, the ultimate decision maker on domestic and foreign policies.

To the Iranians who voted for Mr. Pezeshkian, the incoming president offers hope of some reprieve from the hard-line government of Mr. Raisi and the country's dire economic situation. During his campaign, Mr. Pezeshkian, who in contrast to his predecessor weaves English phrases into conversation, vowed to "stand against" the morality police and online censorship rules, and called for "constructive relations" with the West by returning Iran to the nuclear negotiating table.

Mr. Pezeshkian, a 69-year-old cardiac surgeon and member of parliament has

surrounded himself with advisers from the Rouhani era, including former Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who helped secure the Iran nuclear deal, and former Information and Communications Technology Minister Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi. The latter, who played a key role in the November 2019 internet shutdown, tried to sound hip on X by using English slang to call on Nasleh Zed to support Mr. Pezeshkian after the election. A user replied, "Vaghan eww" ("Really eww").

Even if the president-elect is able to deliver on his agenda — which would happen only with the blessing of the supreme leader — he is unlikely to satisfy those Iranians who already see the Islamic Republic as irredeemable. This is especially true of Nasleh Zed, who will not easily forget the faces of those killed and brutalized by the state over the years.

To them, as long as an octogenarian cleric and his allies continue to rule over their country, Iran can't be free.

HOLLY DAGUES is an Iranian American who spent her formative years in Iran. She is a nonresident senior fellow in the Atlantic Council's Middle East program and the curator of *The Iranist* Substack.

It's an old story: Great authors are not always great people

Great writing is about the complexity of being human, not the black-and-white moralizing of the internet mob.



Pamela Paul

Is a single transgression enough to torpedo a writer's reputation — Virginia Woolf wearing blackface, for example? Or does the full-throated denunciation require a lifetime of racism, antisemitism, homophobia, sexism, Nazism or collaboration, along the lines of Jack London, Henry Miller, Thomas Mann or Jean Rhys?

All are writers who are still read. But these are different times, and so the question arises anew with regard to recently named transgressors, Neil

Gaiman and Alice Munro, both celebrated, even beloved figures.

Let's go over what we know. With Alice Munro, the facts are straightforward and damning. According to an essay by Munro's daughter Andrea Skinner in *The Toronto Star*, Munro stayed married to the man who pleaded guilty to sexually abusing her daughter.

With Neil Gaiman, the issue is knottier. The author was recently accused of sex abuse and rape, allegations he has emphatically denied. We don't know what happened, but recent history shows that for some audiences, accusations alone are too often sufficient evidence. It doesn't bode well.

The question of whether you can separate the art and the artist is old and vexing, with no clear answer, though the current cultural consensus holds strongly against. As Jean Luc Godard (allegedly to be antisemitic) once said, "How can I hate John Wayne upholding Goldwater and yet love him

tenderly when abruptly he takes Natalie Wood into his arms in the last reel of *'The Searchers'?*"

Even some who argue that, say, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot or Louis-Ferdinand Celine can still be appreciated despite reprehensible views or acts may also insist that artists whose work is closely tied to their personal lives, like Woody Allen or David Foster Wallace, for example, should be held to account.

In these latter-day cases, the verdict, spiked with envy and resentment, seems preordained. Will there be a double standard between Neil Gaiman, who is a prominent and commercially successful online figure, and Alice Munro, who led a humble, quiet existence in Canada and whose stature among the literati has achieved Joan Didion-level worship?

Most people in the literary world know that writers are flawed humans just like everyone else, only a little more so. Even so, most of us do not



CHAD HIPOLITO/THE CANADIAN PRESS, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

According to an essay by Alice Munro's daughter Andrea Skinner, Munro, who died in May, stayed married to the man who pleaded guilty to sexually abusing her daughter.

really know these people; we know them mostly through their writing.

Great writing is about human complexity, not the black-and-white moralizing of the internet mob. In the eyes of the wise reader, whatever our judg-

ments of the authors, their writing only becomes yet more interesting, more telling, more potent.

This is an excerpt from *The Point*, the *Times* Opinion blog.

The New York Times

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To save life on Earth, bring back taxonomy

Robert Langellier

In 2009, the botanist Naomi Fraga was hunting a flower without a name near Carson City, Nev. Ms. Fraga saw that the plant was going extinct in real time as its desert valley habitat was bulldozed to make way for Walgreens and housing developments. But in order to seek legal protections for it, she had to give it a name.

The diminutive yellow flower became the Carson Valley monkeyflower or, officially, *Erythranthe carsonensis*, allowing conservationists to petition the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to safeguard it under the Endangered Species Act. If their petition is approved, the flower will go from unknown to critically important in less than a generation, at least as far as Western science is concerned.

Taxonomy, the science of naming and classifying organisms, is the foundation for conserving disappearing plants and animals. Yet the field — often viewed as an archaic, dusty tradition that harks back to intrepid 19th-century botanists describing the plants of newly colonized lands — is dying.

Several decades after the taxonomic frenzy of 1830 to 1920, when Western scientists went deep into far-flung regions of the world, molecular genetics revolutionized our ability to classify species, and began vacuuming up funding while the analog field of taxonomy was left to languish.

With genetic sequences, we can now identify the fundamental building blocks of life, but we need to be able to interpret genetic data in a way that humans can understand and use. That's taxonomy's job. And if we want to save what's left of the vast diversity of life on Earth, we'll have to reinvest in this science. How we delineate between species determines what we choose to save.

The dire state of taxonomy in the United States might be best illustrated by the Flora of North America, the definitive 30-volume attempt to name and describe every plant species here and in Canada. The project began in the 1980s, but it still hasn't been completed because its contributors have struggled to secure consistent funding. By the time the last volume is completed in 2026, it will have to be revised immediately.

For instance, its first volume, on ferns, released in 1993, is utterly out of date as new species have been discovered and nonnative species have moved in. Imagine trying to understand a 2024 Camry with a manual from 1993. That's what botanists and conservationists trying to maintain biodiversity are working with.

The Flora of North America has been the victim of a broad shift in our scientific priorities as a nation. The National Science Foundation is the main funder

of American botany. But since the 1980s and 1990s, its funding has increasingly gone to hypothesis-driven, laboratory-based research. When the Flora's contributors ask university botanists to work on the project, it often must be done pro bono.

Much of the work of taxonomy is done in herbariums, collections of dried plant specimens that serve as a library and are typically housed at universities and botanical gardens. In fact, many of the species left to discover are probably already hiding in herbariums as unnamed specimens. But even the herbariums are now losing funding; Duke University recently pulled support for its collection, one of the country's biggest, saying it was too costly to maintain.

I see this and other evidence of taxonomy's slow death as a tragedy. I'm in a graduate program for botany at the University of Vermont, and the act of naming a plant has always felt like a sort of interspecies intimacy. Though my university's herbarium is still well funded, it feels as if the basic work of plant identification is being left behind as grant money and students flow to flashier fields in biology. Fewer and fewer plant biology students know how to identify the plants in their own woods.

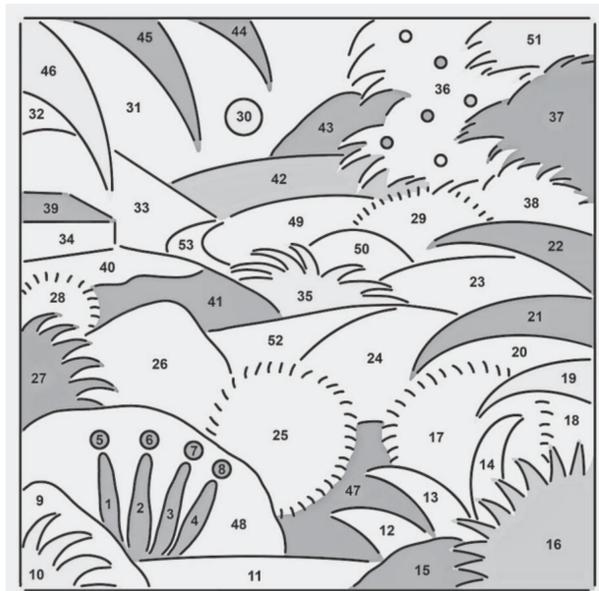
The consequences of allowing taxonomy to falter are significant. Every year, botanists around the world discover around 2,000 new plants, a number that has held fairly steady since 1995, suggesting that there are still tens of thousands of plants to introduce to science. Three-fourths of the new species are already threatened with extinction. If we don't have taxonomists to describe these species, we stand little chance of saving them — or their habitat.

And governments and conservation groups are more likely to act when exciting species are discovered. In the mid-1990s, for example, after the botanist John Clark and colleagues discovered a number of rare species in western Ecuador, the government created an ecological reserve half the size of Great Smoky Mountains National Park. In 1992 botanists discovered and named eight plants just outside Birmingham, Ala. The area is now protected by the Nature Conservancy.

Taxonomy also could save lives and influence what we eat. There are an estimated 8.7 million species of plants and animals. We've described just 1.2 million of them. Which among those still to be named have undiscovered curative or other properties that might change the course of medicine or nutrition?

With the threats of climate change, nuclear war and artificial intelligence bearing down, the act of simply itemizing our plants can seem trivial. But when I asked Art Gilman, a botanist, a taxonomist and the author of "The New Flora of Vermont," why it matters, he paused in the careful way of a scientist. He gave no answer about curing cancer or revolutionizing food systems. "We lose the opportunity to know our world," he said, finally.

ROBERT LANGELLIER is a writer and field botanist in Vermont.



JOSÉ QUINTANA

Democrats must speak the plain truth to the president

The Editorial Board

For voters who held out hope that President Biden's failure to communicate during last month's debate was an aberration, the intervening days have offered little comfort.

Donald Trump's candidacy for a second term poses a grave threat to American democracy. Mr. Biden, instead of campaigning vigorously to disprove doubts and demonstrate that he can beat Mr. Trump, has maintained a scripted and controlled schedule of public appearances. He has largely avoided taking questions from voters or journalists — the kinds of interactions that reveal his limitations and caused him so much trouble on the debate stage. And when he has cast aside his teleprompter, most notably during a 22-minute interview with ABC's George Stephanopoulos on Friday, he has continued to appear as a man in decline.

The president, elected in 2020 as an antidote to Mr. Trump's malfeasance and mendacity, is now trying to defy reality. For more than a year, voters have made it unquestionably clear in surveys and interviews that they harbor significant doubts about Mr. Biden's physical and mental fitness for office. Mr. Biden has disregarded the concerns of those voters — his fellow citizens — and put the country at significant risk by continuing to insist that he is the best Democrat to defeat Mr. Trump.

Since his feeble debate performance, multiple polls have shown that both Mr. Biden's approval rating and his chance of beating Mr. Trump have markedly dropped from their already shaky levels. In response, he has adopted a favorite theme of the floundering politician, insisting that the polls are wrong in showing that his presidency is historically unpopular. Even if the polls were off by historic amounts, they would still show overwhelming skepticism about his fitness. The latest Times/Siena poll showed that 74 percent of voters think that Mr. Biden is too old to serve, an increase of five percentage points since the debate and not a figure that can be attributed to some kind of error or bias.

He has denied that age is diminishing his abilities, not even bringing up the subject in a lengthy letter to congressional Democrats issued on Monday. In that letter, he insisted that he is the candidate best equipped to defeat Mr. Trump in November — thereby dismissing the potential candidacy of Vice President Kamala Harris or any other younger, more vigorous Democrat, and in effect asking the American people to trust him instead of their own lying eyes.

It's not enough to blame the press, the donors, the pundits or the other elite groups for trying to push him out, as he did in the letter. In fact, to use his own words, "the voters — and the voters alone — decide the nominee of the Democratic Party." But Democratic leaders shouldn't rely solely on the judgment of the few voters who turned out in this year's coronation primaries. They should listen instead to the much larger group of voters who have been telling every pollster in America their concerns for a long time. Mr. Biden has to pay attention to the will of the broader electorate that will determine the outcome in November.

At times, Mr. Biden has seemed to hover on the verge of self-awareness, as when he reportedly told Democratic governors last week that he needs to sleep more, work less and avoid public events after 8 p.m. But he has resisted the obvious conclusion that a man who needs to clock out at 8 should not attempt to perform simultaneously two of the world's most difficult and all-con-

suming jobs — serving as president and running for president.

From the grass roots to the highest levels of the party, Democrats who want to defeat Mr. Trump in November should speak plainly to Mr. Biden. They need to tell him that his defiance threatens to hand victory to Mr. Trump. They need to tell him that he is embarrassing himself and endangering his legacy. He needs to hear, plain and clear, that he is no longer an effective spokesman for his own priorities.

The party needs a candidate who can stand up to Mr. Trump. It needs a nominee who can present Americans with a

compelling alternative to Mr. Trump's bleak vision for America.

House minority leader, Hakeem Jeffries; and even the former House speaker Nancy Pelosi — the time has arrived to speak forcefully to the president and the public about the need for a new candidate, before time runs out for their own candidates to make their case to the party's convention delegates.

For those at the helm of the Democratic Party — including the Senate majority leader, Chuck Schumer; the

Mr. Biden and his defenders say that voters should focus on his accomplishments during his three and a half years as president. It is an impressive record. But the classic Wall Street warning applies to politicians, too: Past performance is no guarantee of future results. The question confronting voters is not whether Mr. Biden has been an effective president, but whether he can beat Mr. Trump in November and govern effectively thereafter.

Mr. Biden also argued in his Monday letter that the focus on his own abilities was distracting Democrats from the work of defeating Mr. Trump. But it is precisely because of the importance of defeating Mr. Trump that Americans are preoccupied with Mr. Biden's decline.

Mr. Trump was the worst president in modern American history. He is a felon convicted of breaking the law as part of his campaign to win the 2016 election. Four years later, after his multiple attempts to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election failed, he incited an attack on Congress aimed to keep himself in power. During the current campaign, he has promised an even more unrestrained version of himself if re-elected, even refusing to disavow violence on his behalf.

If elected, he has promised to turn the federal bureaucracy and even the Justice Department into weapons of his will to hurt his perceived political enemies. (With the aid of the three justices he appointed, the Supreme Court just made it possible for him to break the law in doing so with no fear of criminal prosecution.) And he has made clear that he will surround himself with people who support his plans. He will work to further restrict the reproductive rights of women. He will roll back environmental rules, allowing companies to pollute the water and the air. His belligerent, erratic, go-it-alone approach to foreign policy will undermine the nation's interests and its security, encouraging Vladimir Putin and other authoritarians around the globe.

By departing the race, Mr. Biden can focus public attention on Mr. Trump's capacity to perform the job of president. Mr. Trump, of course, should also withdraw from this race, not least because of his own cognitive deficiencies and incessant lying. He, too, is not the man he was four years ago. He also makes fewer public appearances and refuses to answer questions about his health. His habitual mendacity now frequently wanders into nonsensical incoherence. He would be the oldest person ever to be inaugurated as president — older than Mr. Biden was in 2021.

Mr. Trump is manifestly unfit to serve as president, and there is reason to believe a majority of the American people still can be rallied against his candidacy. But Democrats will struggle to press that case with voters so long as their own standard-bearer is a man who also appears unfit to serve as president for the next four years, albeit for very different reasons.

The 2024 presidential election is not a contest between two men, or even between two political parties. It is a battle for who we are as a nation.

President Biden clearly understands the stakes. But he seems to have lost track of his own role in this national drama. As the situation has become more dire, he has come to regard himself as indispensable. He does not seem to understand that he is now the problem — and that the best hope for Democrats to retain the White House is for him to step aside.

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DAMON WINTER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

debate, most elected Democrats have resisted taking a public stand, instead waiting quietly and hopefully for Mr. Biden to arrive at the necessary conclusion. Mr. Beyer's office issued a statement after his comments were reported insisting that he still supports Mr. Biden. Others have voiced concerns with-

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The longer the Democratic Party delays in getting Biden to step down, the harder it will be to replace him.

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How NATO keeps the world safe

SULLIVAN, FROM PAGE 1

instead of bullying them or threatening to leave the alliance. Europe, as well, was adjusting to the new security realities following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The good news is not confined to NATO. In the Indo-Pacific, our closest partners are also increasing their military spending. Japan committed to doubling its national security-related spending, including a 65 percent increase in military spending, by 2027. In 2022, South Korea announced a five-year plan to spend more than \$260 billion on its defense, which would mean annual increases of 6.8 percent on average. And Australia recently announced that it would spend a record \$37 billion on defense next year, with further increases planned over the next few years.

Our allies are also spending more on weapons platforms and munitions that are made in America. Combined with our own investments of supplemental funds for Ukraine appropriated by Congress, this funding is being used to revitalize production lines across the country and is putting Americans to work. We are manufacturing weapons that make the United States and the world more secure, while strengthening our economy.

The strength of the allied response to Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated why NATO, a

75-year-old alliance, is still critical today. When the United States became aware of Vladimir Putin's plan to invade, President Biden consulted with our allies and built a coalition to support Ukraine. Some were skeptical that Russia would follow through, but when it did, they stood with the Ukrainian people. America's ironclad support for NATO reassured our allies that we would have their back if Russia attacked them. This allowed them to give Ukraine crucial air defenses and munitions that they may have withheld for their own defense had they believed that the alliance was hollow and it was every nation for itself.

This is the first time since World War II that our European partners have carried more of the burden than the United States in a major conflict. America has contributed many billions of dollars in military and economic assistance to help Ukraine defend itself; Europe has spent more. According to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, which tracks overall international support to Ukraine, the United States gave Ukraine \$80 billion (74 billion euros) between January 2022 and the end of April 2024. Europe gave \$110 billion (102 billion euros), including long-range missiles, the high mobility artillery rocket system, armored fighting vehicles, air defense systems and munitions.



DANIEL TEBINA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The United States is leading a coalition of more than 50 nations around the world, a Euro-Atlantic community, which continues to provide Ukraine all manner of support, from weapons to humanitarian and economic assistance. It's an unprecedented effort.

The Biden administration has sought to improve cooperation among our democratic allies globally to harness our collective strength, and the results

have been significant. Our Indo-Pacific allies have come to Ukraine's aid, while our European allies are taking a more active role in the Indo-Pacific region. Britain is helping Australia build nuclear-powered submarines. European and Indo-Pacific allies are cooperating closely with the United States to protect sensitive technologies critical to national security from being used by China against us. Partners and allies around the globe are speaking out in support of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and freedom of navigation and rule of law in the South China Sea.

More remains to be done. Our allies need to spend more. We must continue our urgent work of strengthening our defense industry and investing in innovation. We must continue to deepen our alliances and strengthen deterrence. We must keep working to integrate Ukraine into the Euro-Atlantic community to help support a long-term foundation for peace and stability in Europe.

We expect to make significant progress on all of these tasks this week at the NATO summit. Ultimately, the way to make America more secure and to persuade our allies to do more is to commit to our alliances and to work together to counter shared threats and to build a better world.

JAKE SULLIVAN is the national security adviser of the United States.

STYLE

Modeling
a path
forwardCindy Crawford invented the playbook
for professionally beautiful people

BY JESSICA IREDALE

When Cindy Crawford walked into a lounge in the Santa Monica Proper Hotel on a morning in early June, her vibe was immediately obvious: comfortable, professional, direct. No artifice. No entourage. Just her longtime publicist, Annett Wolf, who made a brief introduction and disappeared, leaving Ms. Crawford at the head of a table set with a display of products from her Meaningful Beauty line of skin and hair care, a \$400 million brand she introduced 20 years ago.

"Where do you want to start?" Ms. Crawford asked. "What feels the most organic?"

It's tempting to describe Ms. Crawford, 58, as casual, but that's not quite it. Dressed in a Celine corduroy jean jacket, a camisole, Nili Lotan bootleg jeans and a Foundrae charm necklace symbolizing resilience, her beauty was radiant without being the least bit overwhelming. A resident of Malibu, where she lives with her husband of 27 years, the nightlife and tequila maestro Rande Gerber, she exuded California unfussiness. She is a familiar face, literally, having been photographed and filmed thousands of times over the course of her 35-plus-year career as one of the world's most successful models.

What felt most organic was to start with the business of Cindy. More than the mole above her lip, more than her brown eyes and va-va-voom hair and her healthy physique, Ms. Crawford's interest in transcending modeling to become a brand — decades before personal branding was a career path — is what has distinguished her from her peers.

"I always say, 'I modeled.' Ms. Crawford said. "It's not, 'I am a model.' It's a verb to me. It's not an identity."

An entrepreneurial role model among aspiring supermodels, Ms. Crawford invented the modern playbook followed by the current generation of professionally beautiful people, including Gigi and Bella Hadid; Hailey Bieber; Ms. Crawford's own daughter, Kaia Gerber; and most of the Kardashian-Jenner family. It includes brand partnerships, brand ownership, products, campaigns and deals across various forms of media.

"There wasn't someone that I was, like, 'I want her career,'" Ms. Crawford said. "A lot of it was just, like, 'Why not?' or 'Let's try this.'"

"Cindy, Inc. Not just your basic \$7-million-a-year supermodel." That was the cover line of a 1994 Vanity Fair profile that tried to put a finger on Ms. Crawford's golden touch as a model who could command markets, demographics and products, whether Vogue or Kay Jewelers. At the time, Ms. Crawford was 28, married to Richard Gere (they filed for divorce the following year) and a perfect specimen of youth and beauty.

Two of the profile's themes were Ms. Crawford's happiness and the question of whether she would find the "engine" to power her ambitions. Much was made



AMY HARRITY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



PAUL MASSEY/SHUTTERSTOCK

Above, Cindy Crawford in June. Left, Linda Evangelista, Ms. Crawford, Naomi Campbell and Christy Turlington in 1991. Right, Ms. Crawford, on MTV's "House of Style" in the early '90s.

stake of her career, a 50-50 partnership with Guthy-Renker, the direct-to-consumer subscription marketing firm known for brands such as Proactiv, JLo Beauty and Tony Robbins Personal Power.

The Guthy-Renker way, traditionally an infomercial model, is not sexy. "You could say that infomercials were below Cindy," said Greg Renker, who founded the company with Bill Guthy. "She knew it. She reminded us of it."

If Ms. Crawford was going to do an infomercial skin-care line, it was going to be her way. She wanted to develop the products with Dr. Jean-Louis Sebagh as a distillation of the antioxidant treatment he provides in his Paris practice, but made more accessible.

The bet on Ms. Crawford did not pay off at first. "It was difficult to present Cindy warmly, even though she was in fact a warm and terrific person," Mr. Renker said. "At that time in supermodeldom, they were all kind of intimidating and untouchable. We almost quit."

They recalibrated, emphasizing the connection to Dr. Sebagh and filming the infomercials with Ms. Crawford speaking to a peer, rather than directly to the customer. The brand flourished, and it no longer relies solely on television infomercials or Ms. Crawford. Customers buy the products through the brand's website, social media and from wholesale outlets such as Amazon, and the line has additional spokeswomen, including Ellen Pompeo and Porsha Williams.

"I didn't even want my name on the brand," Ms. Crawford said. "I hoped that it would have a life bigger than just me."



MTV NETWORKS, VIA EVERETT COLLECTION

Ms. Crawford has never clung to the rarefied world of fashion. In a career unmarked by scandal, one of her most controversial moves was doing Playboy in 1988, tastefully shot by the high-fashion photographer Herb Ritts. Preternaturally savvy at age 22, Ms. Crawford has said she thought the Playboy shoot would increase her audience — heterosexual men, as opposed to the primarily female fans of luxury fashion. The wide lens through which she viewed the opportunity has applied to many of her business decisions.

"My most important collaborations were with Pepsi and Revlon, not Hermès," Ms. Crawford said. "They were with brands that are for everybody."

Raised in a working-class family in DeKalb, Ill., Ms. Crawford has never lost touch with her roots, even at the height of the 1990s glamourama, when she was starring in George Michael's "Freedom! '90" video and part of Gianni Versace's inner circle.

Early in her career, her mother visited her in New York and borrowed one of Ms. Crawford's dresses, a simple style by Donna Karan. "She's, like, 'Oh my

god, I love this dress. I'm going to buy one just like it.'" Ms. Crawford said. But it was about \$800, she remembered, more than what her mother would spend on clothes in a year. Ms. Crawford gave her the dress.

"My mom recognized quality when she had it," Ms. Crawford said. "It was an 'aha' moment that was about access and knowledge."

In the late 1980s, before the words "super" and "model" were merged to form a new noun to identify the band of models that included Ms. Crawford, Christy Turlington, Naomi Campbell, Linda Evangelista and a handful of others, Ms. Crawford was known as the small-town Midwestern girl who was co-valedictorian of her high school class and attended Northwestern University on scholarship before dropping out to pursue modeling.

She was willing to break the fourth wall and be heard and not just seen — anathema to the modeling world. As the inaugural host of MTV's "House of Style," the beloved behind-the-scenes fashion news program that aired in 1989, Ms. Crawford had zero broadcast experience, but she made it look easier than it was.

Last year Ms. Crawford, Ms. Turlington, Ms. Evangelista and Ms. Campbell were all on camera together for the first time in years for the Apple TV+ series "The Super Models." It was a four-episode trip through the ups, the downs, the underestimation, the aging. Ms. Campbell and Ms. Crawford were the instigators behind getting the foursome together for the series, which was in the works for eight years.

"There is so much obsession with the '90s," Ms. Crawford said. "We're, like, someone is going to do this documentary. Let's own our own narrative." All four women received executive producer credits. None had final cut.

Ms. Crawford was mostly happy with the finished product. Her first present-day on-screen moment captures her on a plane, jockeying for a photo that will fetch the highest bid at a charity auction. "I think we all came off as exactly who we are," she said.

The cover shoot by Rafael Pavarotti featuring Ms. Crawford, Ms. Turlington, Ms. Campbell and Ms. Evangelista that ran in the September issue of American Vogue received a fair amount of backlash for gratuitous retouching.

"Do I think it's my best Vogue cover ever? No," Ms. Crawford said. "We don't have say on how much they retouch us with Vogue. We don't even have final approval of the picture. I hated my eyebrows — they way overdid them. But no one is asking me."

After making a living on her physique for this long, she is used to the world's dissecting her looks.

"I was not interested in changing my face," she said.

There is upkeep. She has done Botox, but less as she gets older because she wants her forehead to match the rest of her face. Radio frequency, micro-needling, infrared sauna, cold plunge, a red light mask. She does dry brushing and lymphatic drainage on herself every morning, followed by gua sha, a gentle scraping of the skin, with a Meaningful Beauty oil.

"I'll do those kinds of things," she said. "But in the end, I truly haven't seen anything that's made such a huge difference that I like on anyone."

"I'm 58," she said. "Part of me would want to not be doing magazines or photo shoots. If you want to scroll through your comments, you will find really mean things. But they're not meaner than you've thought about yourself." "But at the same time, am I being complicit in this message to women that we need to hang it up at a certain age?"

Hair oil gets
a slick rebootSome South Asian women were ashamed
of hair oiling traditions. No longer.

BY ALISHA HARIDASANI GUPTA

Hair oiling days for the comedian and actress Lilly Singh were always a family affair.

The entire Singh clan — including her cousins, aunts and uncles down the street — would gather in the living room, all waiting to have their scalps rigorously massaged by her mother or grandmother.

"Yes, it was good for hair," she said in a recent interview. "But it was also just — for lack of a better word — a vibe." The good vibes remained until Ms. Singh started high school, where the shiny, oiled look was seen as decidedly uncool by her peers, a perception that she and her cousins internalized. "I don't think I ever did a slicked-back braid in high school, ever — I'd rather jump off a building," she deadpanned.

It's a familiar childhood story for many women of color, who remember washing their hair before the start of a new week to avoid taunts at school or stares in public.

"My parents are Pakistani, and I've been hair oiling since I had hair," said Kirin Bhatti, a makeup artist who grew up in Los Angeles. "I hated it as a kid, because when you're a kid, you want to be like everyone else, and no one else was hair oiling. I just wanted, at the time, to have an Herbal Essences moment."

Like Ms. Singh, she abandoned the ritual when she went off to college.



SARA NAOMI LEWIKOWICZ FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

But lately, in sharp contrast with the hair hygiene practices of the late 1990s and early 2000s — when dry shampoo was whipped out at even the slightest sign of grease — oiled hair has become a distinct part of the "It" girl look.

On TikTok, where the hashtag #hairoil has garnered almost two billion views, young women post videos of themselves heading to the gym or running errands wearing the kind of greasy ponytails that Ms. Singh avoided. One influencer, Nicole Mehta, wore an oiled bun to a New York Fashion Week show.

Another, Diipa Büller-Khosla, slicked her hair back to walk the red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival. In one TikTok video, the influencer and model Valeria Lipovetsky showed her followers how to achieve her "wet hair" look using oils and masks.

"You want the hair looking dirty and greasy and weird," she joked in the video.

And in February, Beyoncé told Essence magazine that the hair oil in her new hair care line, Cécred, had been inspired by the oiling practices of her mother, Tina Knowles.

"People are always asking me, like, 'Hey, I saw this on TikTok — which oil do you think is good for my hair?'" said Xavier Velasquez, a hair stylist whose clients include Maria Sharapova and Olivia Wilde. "They kind of want an easy way out of having to style their hair in the humidity or after getting out of a pool or at the beach."

The trend is part of a broader shift that some industry experts are calling the "skinification" of hair — a renewed focus on nourishing one's scalp and hair through multistep routines rather than merely styling it.

Sephora has seen "a significant shift in consumer preference" toward products that address scalp concerns and hair thinning and a "growing interest" in



CINDY ORD/GETTY IMAGES FOR AAVRANI

The makeup artist Kirin Bhatti, left, now enjoys using hair oil. Right, the comedian Lilly Singh showed off her long hair at a 2023 event.

hair oils, Jennifer Lucchese, the company's vice president of hair care merchandising, wrote in an email.

With skin care, "people started to move away from just color and cosmetics to 'wait, what if my base line skin was great?'" said Roosh Roy, the founder and chief executive of Aavrani, an ayurvedic skin care brand that added a hair care line in collaboration with Ms. Singh. "I think that shift is happening with hair care."

Mentions of oiling the scalp and hair can be found in thousand-year-old ayurvedic texts from the Indian subcontinent, where the term "champi" and its derivatives translates to "massage" and is the origin of the word shampoo.

Ms. Büller-Khosla, who is also the founder of the skin and hair care brand Inde Wild, based her hair oil on a recipe that her mother had brewed at home for decades. It included castor oil, sesame oil, hibiscus flowers and native Indian

herbs. (For the record, her mother, who, at 65, features prominently in Inde Wild's branding, has a full head of lush hair that reaches to her ankles.)

Other cultures have long had their own versions of hair oil, too. In Latina communities, scalp care often features ingredients such as maracujá (passion fruit) or acai oil. For Black women, moisturizing the scalp with oil is a common part of wash days, said Taylor Anise, who has used social media to document her journey back to wearing her natural hair.

Some people have mixed emotions about the new appreciation for an old, cherished ritual. Last year a white TikTok influencer lauded a rosemary-mint hair oil sold by Mielles Organics, a brand long admired among Black people, and it sold out in stores across the country. Some Black women were shocked as the product was more than just a trend to them.

Similar feelings are bubbling up for some South Asian women lately. The recent boom in hair oil is an example of the "exoticization of our culture," said Priya Satiani, a talent manager in Los Angeles who also remembers hair oiling as a central part of her childhood. "It's a fine line — on the one hand, it's amazing to be appreciated, but it's also terrible to be appropriated."

Many South Asians are now revisiting the cultural practice. Ms. Satiani said that she started oiling her 9-month-old niece's hair as a way to pass on the tradition.

Ms. Singh said: "This thing that I used to feel really insecure about and that I used to be made fun of is trendy — does that hurt me a little bit? Yeah, I won't lie."

"Now when I have oil in my hair, people will approach me and be like, 'Your hair looks so good right now,'" she added. "And I'm like, 'Where were you when I was in high school?'"

Sports

A tennis podcast that heralds Black players

Black Spin Global found an audience with cheeky coverage and fan staples

BY STACY Y. CHINA

Eugene Allen was an 8-year-old Black boy growing up in southwest London when he first started to nurse hopes of one day playing professional tennis. It was 1997, and there were no Black men ranked in the top 100 on the ATP Tour. Venus Williams had just made her U.S. Open debut that year, and she and Chanda Rubin were the only Black women ranked in the top 50 in the world; Serena Williams was at No. 99.

About 10 years later, Allen put down his rackets to focus on his education. The costs of the game — coaching sessions, travel to tournaments, equipment — were piling up. His family could no longer afford to help him prepare for the pro circuit.

“I kind of fell out of love with it,” he said. “There was almost a resentment.”

Now, Allen is the center of an online community focusing exclusively on Black tennis players worldwide, at a time when there are more pros and juniors on tour than ever before. As of July 1, there were five Black men ranked in the top 50: Ben Shelton (No. 14), Felix Auger-Aliassime (No. 17), Frances Tiafoe (No. 29), Gael Monfils (No. 33) and Arthur Fils (No. 34). On the WTA Tour, there were four women: Coco Gauff (No. 2), Jasmine Paolini (No. 7), Madison Keys (No. 13) and Sloane Stephens (No. 50).

Since 2019, Allen has run Black Spin Global, a digital media brand that encompasses a podcast, blog and social media accounts where he and Lucy Tezangi delve deep into the tennis universe. “It’s not just, ‘Oh, they won,’” she said. “It’s match updates, breaking news, coach updates, player updates and so on.”

Allen, 35, was lured back to the sport in the mid-2010s, when both Williams sisters were routinely ranked in the top 20 and James Blake, Monfils and Jo-Wilfried Tsonga were fan favorites breaking through on the men’s tour.

Since leaving high-level competition, Allen had majored in journalism and taken jobs at The Daily Mail Online and The Telegraph, while writing freelance soccer articles. He founded Pitching It Black, a website dedicated to covering Black soccer players in Europe, in 2016.

And he thought, what if he did something similar for tennis?

Black Spin Global started as a social media brand, with Allen regularly posting to Twitter (now known as X) and Instagram accounts. Those early posts got the attention of Tezangi, a 27-year-old digital marketer who grew up a fervent tennis fan in Newham, in East London. She reshared so much of his content that



Lucy Tezangi and Eugene Allen hosting the Black Spin Global podcast. As a youngster, Allen had hoped to become a pro tennis player, and Tezangi grew up a fervent tennis fan. Below left, Frances Tiafoe, ranked 29th in the world. He’s been a guest on the show and said, “I love what they’re doing.” Below right, Serena (left) and Venus Williams.



ISABEL INFANTES/REUTERS

Allen eventually asked if she would host a podcast with him.

She said no. Convinced that her online passion would carry over into the studio, Allen kept pressing.

“In all honesty, Eugene just didn’t want to accept no as an answer,” Tezangi said. “And that motivated me to give it a

try. I saw the vision from early, the potential it had.”

It took them some time to find their rhythm. They started in February 2020 with an episode previewing the BNP Paribas Open, held in Indian Wells, Calif. And then the pandemic hit.

Though that tournament and a host of others were canceled, Black Spin Global



DAVE CAULKIN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

kept posting and broadcasting, keeping fans up to date on how players were dealing with the lockdowns and when the tours hoped to resume. As play restarted without fans in attendance, Black Spin Global offered a conversational way into the game, with Allen leaning into more straight news and analysis and Tezangi sharing unbridled

fan-centered opinions about the ins and outs of the game.

In a March episode, Tezangi gleefully advocated the departure of Toni Nadal (Rafael Nadal’s uncle and former coach) from Auger-Aliassime’s camp. (Some fans speculated about his devotion to the player. In tennis, the unofficial ethos on team life is simple: Either you’re all

in, or you stay out.) Pointing out that Auger-Aliassime had a quite good clay court season without him, Tezangi was effusive about his exit.

Allen at first tried to gently reel her in with questions about the rest of the player’s coaching orbit. But then he co-signed her enthusiasm.

They have found a committed audience, averaging about 200 to 300 podcast listeners per episode. Tezangi refers to their followers as family and makes a point of engaging them online, taking snap polls and asking for their opinions.

“I love what they’re doing,” said Tiafoe, who has been a guest on the show. “They’re super-relaxed, personable guys. They made me feel at home when I was speaking to them.”

Christopher Eubanks (No. 62) has also been on the podcast, as well as coaches and family members of rising talents, including Michael Parks, the father of No. 121-ranked Alycia Parks, 23.

In that respect, Black Spin Global has provided a needed forum for listeners and those working inside the sport.

“Tennis is traditionally a predominantly white sport, and you don’t see a lot of people who look like us competing, and I think there are even fewer journalists covering the sport at the tournaments,” said Jarmere Jenkins, a coach and retired tennis professional who has worked with Serena Williams, Gauff and Ons Jabeur. He has appeared multiple times on the podcast.

“I wish they had been around when Serena and Venus burst onto the scene,” Jenkins said, noting the often hostile response to their rise. “I can’t help but think what it would have been like to have an advocate like Black Spin Global in their corner.”

Tumaini Carayol, who covers tennis for The Guardian, has also been a repeat guest on the show.

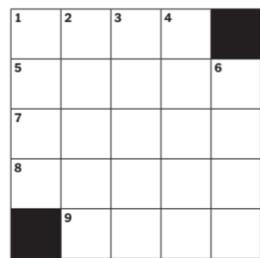
“It has been particularly impressive to see the connections they have made with the players and their teams in a short space of time,” Carayol said. He added, “It is clear that many players and other people within the sport really value having a platform that shines a light on the journeys of Black players.”

Tiafoe added: “Everyone wants to feel love and stuff, and they do a great job with that.”

Allen and Tezangi have gotten more opportunities to cover matches live from the sport’s most hallowed venues. Britain’s Lawn Tennis Association credentialed Black Spin Global to cover three lower-level tournaments on site and the two are reporting from Wimbledon for the second consecutive year. They plan to cover the U.S. Open when the tournament begins in August.

Jenkins sees a bright future. “I think it’s brilliant that we have this platform for us, by us,” he said, “and that little Black boys and girls have a social media presence they can go to and keep up with their favorite players.”

The Mini Crossword



7/11/2024 BY WYNA LIU EDITED BY SAM EZERSKY

- ACROSS**
- Part of a cherry you shouldn’t eat
 - “Detour” sign feature
 - Depart
 - Nail polish brand that sounds like two letters of the alphabet
 - Part of a pomegranate you should eat
- DOWN**
- Shopper’s excuse to “save money”
 - Head lock?
 - Wipe, as a memory card
 - Common date night activity
 - Fast-growing plant

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

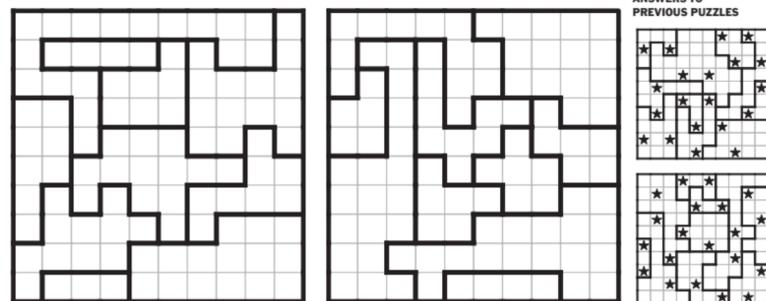


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Two Not Touch



Put two stars in each row, column and region of the grid. No two stars may touch, not even diagonally. Copyright © 2024 www.krazydad.com

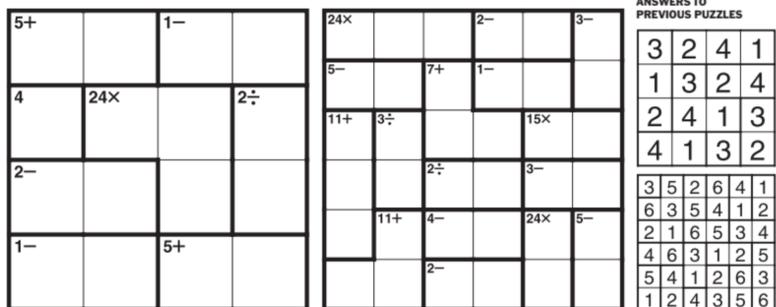
Cryptogram

“IQWUWOHG” QK NPI VHOJ WOHD PGI XGO IDIK KII QU
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PUZZLE BY BEN BASS

YESTERDAY’S ANSWER East Coast

KenKen



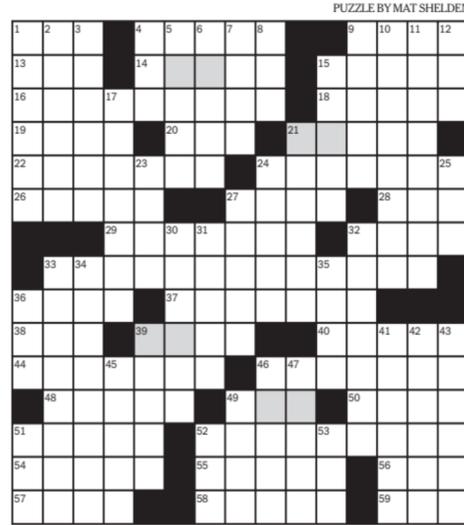
Fill the grid with digits so as not to repeat a digit in any row or column, and so that the digits within each heavily outlined box will produce the target number shown, by using addition, subtraction, multiplication or division, as indicated in the box. A 4x4 grid will use the digits 1-4. A 6x6 grid will use 1-6.

For more games: www.nytimes.com/games

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Crossword Edited by Joel Fagliano

- ACROSS**
- They’re made in the kitchen and not at the gym, it’s said
 - “Dukes”
 - Prepare for a shot
 - Determined
 - Totally in the dark?
 - Disapproving sound
 - 2011 Margaret Thatcher biopic
 - Petrol purchase
 - Go on and on, maybe
 - Brown, e.g.
 - Katniss’s partner in “The Hunger Games”
 - Professions
 - Defensive boxing strategy
 - Within bounds
 - Norton’s “Fight Club” co-star
 - Place for a peel
 - Player one?
 - Equal
 - Minor setback ... or a hint to entering 16-, 24-, 44- and 52-Across
 - Bad thing to be caught on
 - Hair stylist, at times
 - Apr. addressee
 - Tests for college seniors, for short
 - Q: “Why don’t scientists trust ___?” A: “Because they make up everything!”
 - Saint Petersburg, once
 - “Yeah, don’t do that”
 - What bass guitars have that double basses do not
 - Ice cream container
 - It has its limits
 - Disney toon originally called Dippy Dawg
 - Musicians of the Middle Ages
 - Samsung competitor
 - Rolls-_____
 - Italian possessive
 - Western tribe
 - Tennis announcer’s cry



PUZZLE BY MAT SHELLEN 7/11/24

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE



- DOWN**
- Kind of projection
 - Parent’s demand
 - Court figure, for short
 - Trade from which John Jacob Astor made his fortune
 - How latkes are cooked
 - Some Balkan natives
 - Not messy
 - Total mess
 - Worked steadily at
 - Living off the land?
 - Got rid of
 - Scratch (out)
 - It can help you get a grip
 - *sheepishly raises hand*
 - Like bonsai trees
 - Off-kilter
 - Sunak of British politics
 - Meaning of the prefix “oto-”
 - Pockets for falafel
 - Some fall babies
 - When rights may be restricted
 - Staple of classical Greek architecture
 - How many people walk along the beach
 - Certain calligraphy mark
 - Interpretation
 - Farthestmost point
 - April Fools’ Day declaration
 - Intense aversions
 - Standard for evaluation
 - Opens up to a doctor, in a way
 - Some mortgage loans, in brief
 - Channel guides?
 - Counting devices of old
 - Bring (out)
 - Hyena’s prey
 - Prefix with athlete
 - Groundhog’s home

Online subscriptions: Today’s puzzle and more than 9,000 past puzzles, nytimes.com/crosswords

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Culture

‘Beautiful simplicity’ sets the tone

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
AIX-EN-PROVENCE, FRANCE

An operatic double bill highlights the vibrancy of a composer's vision

BY ZACHARY WOOLFE

A young woman is offered as a sacrifice to save her people before being rescued by divine intervention. Then a war is fought. Years pass, and, now living some 2,000 miles away, the same woman receives an agonizing order to perform a sacrifice herself, another bloody gift to the gods.

That is a summary of two operas, both by Christoph Willibald Gluck: “Iphigénie en Aulide” and “Iphigénie en Tauride.” They were written five years apart and were never intended to be performed together. Each is a full-length score of about two hours, and while they share a protagonist, the vocal range for the character isn't quite the same in both.

But their plots — the story of Greek myth's Iphigenia, first in Aulis as a would-be victim, then in Tauris as a would-be murderer — flow together with uncanny ease. And this month, the Aix-en-Provence Festival in France opened a production that pairs the works in a marathon double bill, directed by Dmitri Tcherniakov as a brooding reflection on the numbness of endless conflict.

Tcherniakov sets the two operas in a stage-filling, prisonlike skeleton of a house, with “Aulide” as the last gasp of a frivolous prewar elite. His “Tauride” depicts the somber aftermath of years of brutal battles, and the physical and emotional toll — the paranoia, the twisted fantasies — on those who remain.

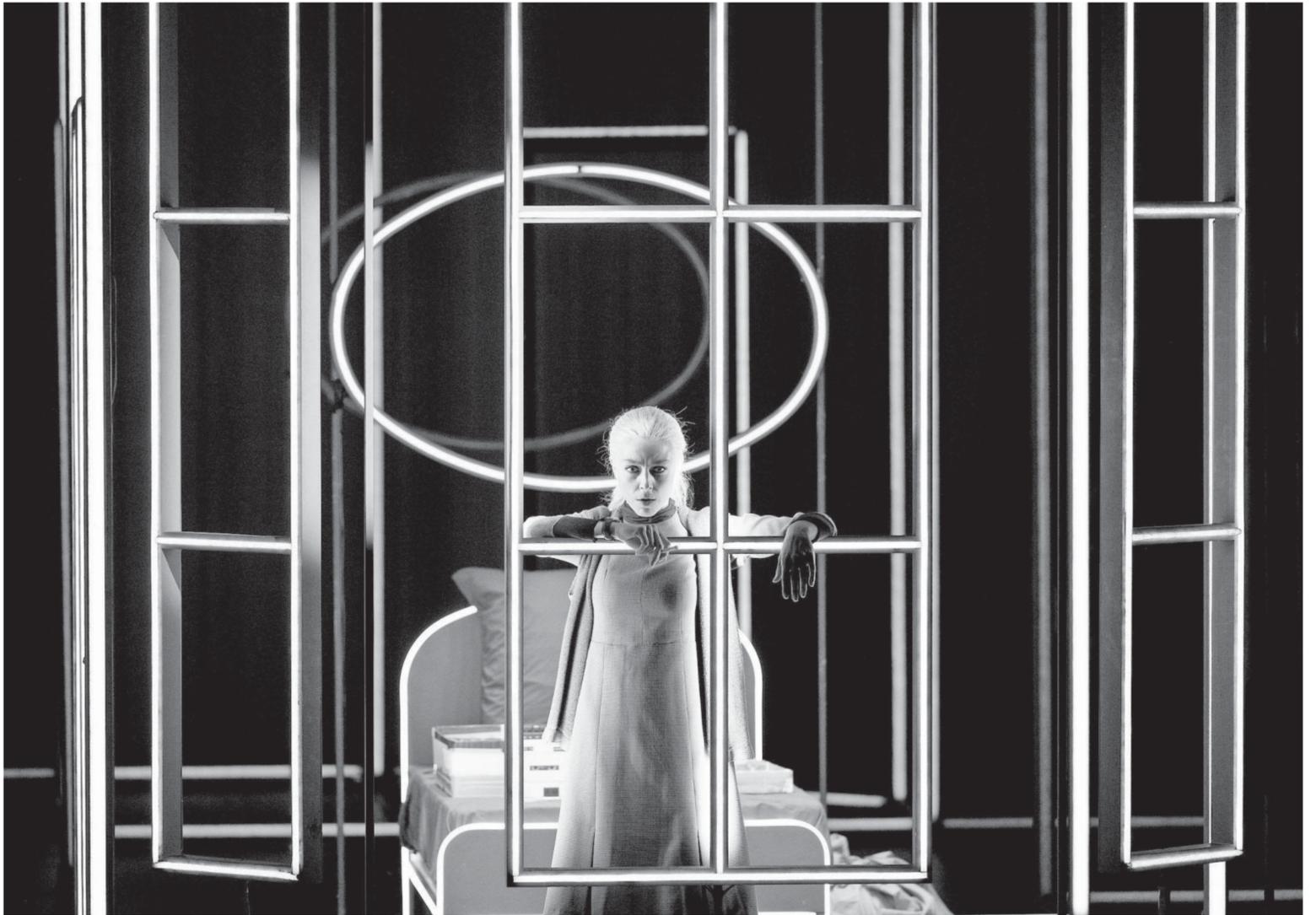
Today, Gluck suffers a little from a reputation for formality, even stodginess. But with the period instrument ensemble Le Concert d'Astrée conducted gracefully yet energetically by Emmanuelle Haïm, the Aix double bill was a reminder of the vibrancy of his vision.

This rare juxtaposition offers an immersion in Gluck's revolutionary innovations, what became known as his reform of opera, paving the way for Wagner and modernity. By the middle of the 18th century, bloated extravagance was the mainstream of Italian opera, dominated by singers burling mindless coloratura in an endless parade of arias that barely held together as narrative.

Gluck wrote in 1769 that these abuses had “turned the most sumptuous and beautiful of all spectacles into the most ridiculous and tedious.” To counter this, his aim was “to restrict music to its true function of helping poetry to be expressive and to represent the situations of the plot,” to seek “a beautiful simplicity.”

While this paring-down was forward thinking, it was also backward looking: a revival of the focus on the words in the first Italian operas of the early 1600s and the austere French tragédies lyriques later that century.

Gluck nods to those origins. But he goes further in eight works written in the 1760s and '70s, when he was already decades into his career, and had written nearly 30 more conventional operas. These reform pieces helped introduce to the art form a new symphonic intensity and a pace that moves at something closer to spoken drama.



The soprano Corinne Winters, who plays Iphigenia in both parts of Dmitri Tcherniakov's double bill of Gluck's “Iphigénie” operas at the Aix-en-Provence Festival.

MONIKA RITTESHAUS/IPHIGÉNIE EN AULIDE

(It can be hard to imagine today, but his operas were sometimes criticized for being too short.) Working with creative librettos, his music broke free of strictly regimented forms, instead responding flexibly to the rhythms of the story. He says as much as he needs to, and no more.

So, in “Iphigénie en Aulide” (1774), a father's despair at the gods' demand that he kill his daughter isn't the occasion for a grand aria that stops the action, but rather a brief, tender outpouring that barely breaks it.

“Iphigénie en Tauride” (1779) replaces the traditional stand-alone overture with a prelude that, in just two and a half minutes, depicts a calm sea erupting in storm, then melts, with no break for applause, into Iphigenia's passionate prayer for the tempest to end.

This deference to the needs of the drama, the steady ratcheting up of tension through long scenes of continuous music that prefigure Wagner's epic spans, is the key feature of Gluck's reform. Few figures were more important in creating opera as we know it.

Gluck was born in 1714 in a small village in what's now northern Ba-

varia, Germany, into a family of foresters and gamekeepers. He was no musical prodigy, but he developed his budding talent, and came of age amid the vogue for Italian operas driven by virtuoso singers, featuring librettos produced without any collaboration with the composers who set them. Though Gluck diligently produced many works in this vein, from the beginning he had little taste for coloratura fireworks; from a reform perspective, he didn't have too many bad habits to break.

He was as much a vessel as an originator of the great change. “There were many people working on naturalizing the prevailing styles, and sort of domesticating them,” Stephen Wadsworth, who directed “Iphigénie en Tauride” at the Metropolitan Opera in 2007, said in an interview. Other opera composers, writers and impresarios around the same time were seeking greater simplicity, less complicated melodies, the merging of arias into the surrounding recitatives (sung dialogues), a more realistic acting style and less subservience to singers.

Gluck's “Orfeo ed Euridice” (1762)

was the culmination of these efforts, ushering in his trademark style. His librettist, Ranieri de Calzabigi, pressed him toward an organic union of words and music; the title role was sung by the castrato Gaetano Guadagni, who had worked with the English actor David Garrick, a pioneer of onstage naturalism.

These pieces helped introduce to the art form a new symphonic intensity and a pace something closer to spoken drama.

“Alceste” premiered in 1767, and when the score was published two years later, Gluck's preface set out his artistic credo, calling for an end to steady marches of da capo arias in favor of an unfurling drama, with fluidity through arias, recitatives and dance sequences, and a chorus that took a more vital part in the action. Supple and clear declamation dominated the scores: “Always as simple and natural as possible,” Gluck wrote.

“Iphigénie en Aulide,” his first opera

written for Paris, was rehearsed for six months. (Simplicity is enormously complicated to achieve.) Controversy broke out over Gluck's experiment, enough that Leopold Mozart warned his 22-year-old son, the already well-known Wolfgang Amadeus, against alienating any of the cultural elite by talking sides.

But Mozart made his choice clear: His masterly “Idomeneo” (1781) would quote Gluck in tribute. He was among the first composers to absorb Gluckian lessons, and he was followed by giants like Cherubini, Beethoven, Spontini, Berlioz, Meyerbeer and Wagner.

“Iphigénie en Aulide” was enough of a success to inspire “Iphigénie en Tauride,” a kind of sequel and also a maturation. There are more aria-like passages in the second opera, but their placement is more unexpected, and more responsive to the drama. At Aix, Haïm's muscular conducting brought their styles closer together, playing down the nostalgic courtliness in “Aulide” that can make it a less fiery, elemental drama than “Tauride.”

In Tcherniakov's concept, Iphigenia is from the start a passive figure, al-

most sleepwalking through a perfunctory marriage proposal from Achilles, then the terrifying prospect that her father, Agamemnon, will sacrifice her to ensure favorable winds to sail the Greeks to war in Troy.

Some 20 years later, she is serving as a kind of nurse or matron, perhaps in a prisoners' camp, haunted by the ghosts of the dead she left behind, merely existing as history presses on around and past her. Her voice stern and hauntingly blank, the soprano Corinne Winters achieved a remarkable stunned stillness through a bill that takes her from the light soprano territory of “Aulide” to the deeper mezzo-soprano range of “Tauride.”

The bitterly melancholy production reflected Gluck's sobriety and the molten feelings churning underneath. He didn't directly train students who carried his mantle; even his own adoption of his reforms was inconsistent. But his ideas ended up charting the course of the art form's future: his preferences about arias and choruses, yes, but far more important, his larger notion that opera must be, first and foremost, drama.

A would-be astronaut's final frontier

MOVIE REVIEW

Emma Roberts portrays a bartender who dreams of finally launching her life

BY ALISSA WILKINSON

Some of Hollywood's most durable genre conventions have to do with outsiders and underdogs, often two categories rolled into one, who show up the self-important elites. The cowboy who rolls into town and brings justice in a not-quite-law-abiding way. The lovable con artist who makes a fool of the uppity society folks. The washed-up cop or spy called in for one last covert mission. The stereotypical sorority girl who turns out to be a secret legal genius.

That last one is, of course, the “Legally Blonde” heroine Elle Woods, a fashion major who decides on a whim to go to Harvard Law School and discovers her unconventional qualifications give her insight that her more buttoned-up classmates lack. Rex Simpson, the protagonist of “Space Cadet,” bears more than a passing resemblance to Elle, and not just because the actress Emma Roberts could play, at a squint, Reese Witherspoon's niece. (Her actual aunt, Julia Roberts, played another scrappy underdog in “Erin Brockovich.”)

Roberts's most famous work might be in Ryan Murphy's TV shows “American Horror Story” and “Scream Queens,” in which her knack for playing a certain kind of queen bee — gorgeous, cruel, one crisis away from combustion — makes her a magnetic presence. She's great at a caricature, elevating those characters to satire without diluting their sugary poison. That flair for exaggeration would seem to make Rex Simpson the right role for her.

“Space Cadet,” a comedy written and directed by Liz W. Garcia, is cast closely along the lines of “Legally Blonde,” with some beats lifted so clearly from that movie I started to wonder if they weren't meant as jabs. Rex is a neon-wearing bartender in Florida who wrestles alligators and loves to party on the beach, but there's more than meets the eye: She was a bit of a science genius in high school and dreamed of being an astronaut. When her mother died, she turned down a full ride to Georgia Tech. By the time she attends her 10-year high school reunion with her best friend, Nadine (Poppy Liu), she's down in the dumps over her failure to, uh, launch.

A chance encounter with a former classmate who runs a private space-flight company sparks something in Rex. It's time to chase her dreams. So she pops open the NASA website and decides to apply to be an astronaut. One problem, of course, is that she has absolutely no qualifications for the job.



Emma Roberts in “Space Cadet,” written and directed by Liz W. Garcia.

ERIC LIEBOWITZ/PRIME VIDEO

But is that a real barrier to Rex, the woman who invented patent-worthy tanning mirrors?

The movie continues in this direction, sending her to NASA in a crop top to become an astronaut candidate (or AsCan, a moniker that provides more than a few jokes). Here is where the “Legally Blonde” comparisons come in. There is, for instance, a scene in a classroom where Rex doesn't know the answer to a stern professor's question,

then one later where she does, demonstrating her growth. There's a whole sequence in which people look askance at Rex upon her arrival at NASA because of her peppy, kooky outfit that signals unseriousness.

Her cohort seems oddly familiar, too. It includes a pretty and high-strung mean girl (Desi Lydic), who is determined to take Rex down because she's convinced she's not qualified to be there. Rex makes a friend (Kuhoo

Verma) who needs a few confidence lessons, and she gives them. There's an over-serious overachiever who just came back from six years of isolated Arctic research (Josephine Huang), a gay M.I.T. graduate who proclaims himself a “smoothie artist” (Troy Iwata), an unsmiling former special forces operative (Yasha Jackson) and a patriotic former military captain (Andrew Call).

Most of all, there are the two brilliant people overseeing the AsCan training program, Pam Proctor (Gabrielle Union) and Logan O'Leary (Tom Hopper), whose British accent is explained away in the screenplay by handing him dual citizenship. Logan is the love interest, of course, though I had trouble staying interested in him. His main draw, as Rex eventually informs us, is his accent and his glasses.

Like Logan, most of the characters feel more like familiar types than actual people — not uncommon in a fast-paced, lighthearted comedy. But that means there's nothing surprising enough in the movie to prompt laughter. The jokes feel tired. The actors are mostly doing their best, but the screenplay too often leaves them mimicking comedy rather than performing it.

All of that extends to Rex herself. If the freshness of a “Legally Blonde” movie comes from how aspects of the character's weaknesses (many hours logged in a beauty salon, for instance) turn out to be strengths, the problem

with Rex is we don't know her weaknesses. She's a bartender — everyone calls her a bartender to foreground how not-qualified she is — but aside from her competence in high-pressure situations, that work experience has had little effect on her. We are told Rex likes to party, but that's limited to some wholesome nights out with friends. She's a smart girl, a generous friend, a kind daughter, and if she's not exactly qualified to be at NASA, she seems able to easily overcome all the challenges there.

In other words, Rex gets short shrift as a character, a shame for an actress of Roberts's particular talents. When the moment calls for her to give a rousing speech of encouragement, it's full of vague platitudes that any kindergarten teacher could spit out, rather than hilarious Rexisms. (Her only catchphrase seems to be “dude.”) By the end, we know wrestling alligators gave her the skills to dislodge some space debris, but it feels like an afterthought.

The film ends with truisms about making the big leap and never giving up, which feels mildly incongruent with the plot itself. That doesn't mean “Space Cadet” is unwatchable, but it's the sort of movie that makes you want to go back and revisit the better versions. Comedy depends upon sharply rendered quirks and absurdly specific bits that keep you chuckling. Without that, “Space Cadet” is less a comedy than a dream of one.

CULTURE

Steward of secrets

ART REVIEW

An exhibition celebrates a chronicler of the Latino and queer scene in L.A.

BY ZOË HOPKINS

We can imagine it's sometime around 2 or 3 in the morning. Music is blaring — cumbia or punk rock — yet shards of well-lubricated conversation and laughter manage to steal into the sweaty, smoky air. The moment is buzzing with romantic and sexual chemistry, and intimate scenes are unfolding in the room's corners.

Somewhere in the crowd, Reynaldo Rivera is clicking the shutter of his camera, chatting with friends, and lovingly documenting all this energy and animation.

Over the 1980s and '90s, Rivera, a young and self-taught photographer, compiled a vibrant and vivid chronicle of the people, places and moods that shaped the Latino and queer underground scene in Los Angeles. The world that Rivera's photographs capture is a clandestine one, and Rivera a steward of secrets that we are carefully, partially let in on.

Now, 50 of these images are gathered at MoMA PS1 in New York for "Fistful of Love/También la belleza," billed as the first solo museum exhibition for an artist who — until his inclusion in the 2020 Hammer "Made in L.A." biennial and the publication of a monograph of his work that same year — has worked beyond the scrutiny of the art world. Rivera's images are as intoxicating as the world they picture. Yet a certain skepticism at my own access to it crept into the frame as I was reminded that this work was made under the radar.

Born in Mexicali, Mexico, in 1964, Rivera grew up working as a migrant farmer and a soup canner alongside his father. The two shuttled between cities on both sides of the border, including Stockton and Pasadena in California and San Diego de la Union in the Guanajuato province of Mexico. Against this backdrop of instability, he discovered photography as a teenager while flipping through old photo books and magazines at a bookshop in Stockton.

In these early days, he was taken by the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson, Lisette Model and Brassai, whose noirish influence is plainly legible in several works on view at PS1. At 16, he bought his first camera and began photographing those around him: his sisters, friends and members of the cleaning staff at the hotel where his father worked.

In the 1980s, Rivera landed in Echo Park, then a predominantly Latino Los Angeles neighborhood where he was a photographer for LA Weekly. Working there meant access to concerts and fashion shoots, which he would photograph both for the publication and for his own pleasure. Though Rivera continues to live and work in Los Angeles, the images at PS1 cast a focused and retrospective gaze at a small slice of personal history between 1981 and 1997.

He has crafted an indispensable archive of a moment that many did not deem worthy of being remembered, with a clear sensitivity to its beauty. Rivera dotes on the same set of local characters — among them his sisters Connie and Martine; his partner, Christopher Arellano (also known as



VIA REYNALDO RIVERA AND REENA SPAULINGS FINE ART NY/LA



REYNALDO RIVERA

Bianco); and performer friends who are often identified by their stage names, like "Mrs. Alex" and "Paquita" — deepening the emotional flavor of his images.

Glass vitrines in each gallery display well-chosen selections from Rivera's

amassed ephemera, immersing us in the ideas, tastes and histories from which the photographs emerge, bringing together items like Sonic Youth concert posters and fliers advertising Chicano studies courses. Among the most striking are photographs and



VIA REYNALDO RIVERA AND REENA SPAULINGS FINE ART NY/LA

Left, Reynaldo Rivera's "Martine (Herminia) and Reynaldo Rivera" (1981). Top, "Paquita and Reynaldo Rivera, Le Bar" (1997/2021), with the photographer in the lower right corner of the mirror's reflection. Above, "Bianco, Echo Park" (1992/2023).

paraphernalia from "Chance: Three Days in the Desert," a wild, wayward convening of artists and thinkers organized by Jean Baudrillard (the French post-structuralist philosopher) and Chris Kraus (the American author and art critic), who hired Rivera to photograph the event — situating him in a milieu of late-90s transnational counter-culturalism.

The camera meanders through

queer nightlife, onstage and off, from the campy glamour of drag and music venues like Le Bar and Silverlake Lounge to the feverish social rhythm of house parties. Much of this scene, once an enclave of safety and self-fashioning, has since been washed away by a confluence of AIDS and gentrification.

Among these images, we encounter a few staged portraits of clubgoers and performers, including the rock musi-

cian Siouxsie Sioux and the performance artist Vaginal Davis. But the best of Rivera's nightlife images are offhand candids like "Paquita and Reynaldo Rivera, Le Bar" (1997/2021). Here, in the busy, balmy grit of a backstage dressing room, as a drag queen named Paquita applies makeup in the mirror, we glimpse Rivera's reflection in the corner, face buried behind his camera. He was no interloping fly on the wall, but a trusted part of this surreptitious social sphere.

These private and personal tones deepen in tender domestic scenes from Rivera's own life — his "blue" series, which is focused on intimacy and sexuality, including "Bianco, Echo Park" and "Bianco, Reynaldo, Echo Park" (both 1992/2023). In the first of these images, Rivera's partner (now his spouse) is lying in bed, back to the camera, and in the second, the two join in a tangle of limbs and lust. There is an unflinching eros here that hums in a visual minor key, with soft light and melancholic shadows. Queer touch and sensuality assume a quiet tone that prompts the viewer into an almost reverent way of looking — an urgent antidote to the pathologizing of queer desire.

The wall text attached to these and other more explicit images, such as "Steven and Reynaldo, Downtown Los Angeles" (1990/2023), indicates that they were not originally meant for public viewing. The artist and the organizers of the show — Lauren Mackler, a guest curator, and Kari Rittenbach, PS1 assistant curator — collectively decided to unveil this private realm. In an interview, Rittenbach elaborated that "this body of work is part of a conversation" — one that Rivera "wasn't wanting to make public at a certain point. But now, our discourse is changing. It was important for us to show that it's always been part of everyday life."

One must respect these intentions. But as a viewer, it was hard to escape the feeling of being in the gray area between authorization and encroachment.

"Bus Stop, Sonora" (1991/2020), among the most challenging and convincing images in the show, marks a thematic departure. We find an eerie bus station waiting room that is empty except for a television screen and two shadowy figures in the background. Rivera has stepped into a zone of mystifying disquietude: We have departed Los Angeles for Mexico and substituted the elated bustle of the club for an alienated aesthetic that evokes Eugène Atget or Lee Friedlander. In its haunting near desertion, this image presents a narrative of unnoticed life that made me hungry for more like it: Its tensions and discomforts offer a thrilling ambiguity with which to wrestle.

The kaleidoscopic whirl of Rivera's pictorial universe springs to life in "Fistful of Love" (2024), a scrappy 102-minute film shot with an old-school hand-held camcorder. Jumbled snippets of the photographer's life and friends let us crash the party with its ebullient bachata performances, drag shows, birthday parties and frank conversations about gender and sexuality. Rivera's voice occasionally wafts in as he teases friends, goading the viewer to wander further into all of this stylishness and seediness, this fun and fraught landscape.

Yet I found myself still cautiously at its edge, unable to shake the feeling that this is all too preciously intimate for our eyes. Maybe we just had to be there.

Generations of PTSD

FICTION

Long Island Compromise
By Taffy Brodesser-Akner. *Random House*. 464 pp. \$30.

BY SLOANE CROSLLEY

What does it mean to come by one's life honestly? This is the question at the heart of Taffy Brodesser-Akner's generation-spanning sophomore novel, "Long Island Compromise," which tells the story of a wealthy, dysfunctional suburban New York Jewish family.

Given the unavoidable success of her debut, "Fleishman Is in Trouble," I will spare curious readers the suspense and answer a more cynical question: Is this book as good? It's better. Sprawling yet nimble, this is her Big American Reform Jewish Novel. In an assimilatory turn, it's less reminiscent of Roth (Philip or Henry) than of Franzen (Jonathan), whom Brodesser-Akner profiled in her role as a staff writer for The New York Times Magazine.

A fictionalized account of a true story, "Long Island Compromise" begins in 1980, when the prominent businessman Carl Fletcher is ambushed in his driveway, taken to unknown parts and tortured by unknown parties. Bubble burst, the house is suddenly teeming with F.B.I. agents as Carl's frantic wife, Ruth, finds herself taking her younger son, Bernard, on an elaborate ransom drop, a day that will

scar both him and his older brother, Nathan, for life.

Not to mention Carl himself, who, upon his release, is advised by his mother to compartmentalize his trauma ("Listen to me, boychick. This happened to your body. This did not happen to you. *Don't let it in*"). No dice. Carl spends the next several hundred pages on an ineffective cocktail of antidepressants, alternating between jags of hysteria and vegetation, a glass ornament of a father to Nathan, Bernard and Jenny, who has the questionable luck of being born just after the family tragedy. Ruth, who was so sure she'd escaped the paranoia hurricane of her scrappy childhood, finds herself back in its eye. "It started right now, the real division of her life," Brodesser-Akner writes: "before the kidnapping and after it."

The novel is loosely divided into three sections, told from the third-person perspectives of the three children, now in their late 30s and early 40s, laying out the cornucopia of ways in which they are screwed up by latent generational trauma, their father's repression and the affluence that insulates them. "They spent their money like third-generation American children do: quickly, and without thinking too hard about it."

Bernard, or Beamer, has become a handsome, BDSM-loving, shiksamarrying, drug-addled screenwriter who cannot think of a single plot without a kidnapping at its core and is constantly pretending to take phone

calls, sometimes for the sake of avoidance, sometimes for the illusion of importance. (Each character has a conversational tag; I'm partial to the way Ruth mumbles some iteration of "Leonard Bernstein over here" or "Julius Rosenberg over here" whenever she's displeased with her sedulous spawn.) Then there's Nathan, a neurotic and servile land-use lawyer who has put all his eggs in a friend's S.E.C.-violating basket and is married to a moral Orthodox woman who just wants to redo the kitchen. Finally, Jenny is a drifting intellectual snob who eschews attachment to friends, men, money or careers until the day she becomes aware of the concept of union organizing.

The Fletchers' source of wealth is a factory started by Carl's father, Zelig, who narrowly escaped Nazi Poland. Threaded throughout the novel is the phrase "there's a dybbuk in the works," a family saying regarding a malevolent spirit from Jewish folklore that applies equally to malfunctioning machinery, "an infestation of ants in a sugar bowl or Cossacks murdering your siblings in front of you." Well, the dybbuk is about to hit the fan in this way-below-code factory that produces polystyrene molds for insulation.

As it is with cholesterol, there are good and bad kinds of cleverness, and though Brodesser-Akner tends to traffic in the former (prepare to be delighted by the triple entendre of the novel's title), things can get awfully symbolic for these self-stymied sib-



Taffy Brodesser-Akner.

lings who grew up in a town called Middle Rock.

But look what you get for the price of a few corny jokes! A satchel of 20th-century American Jewry deep cuts ("Easter eggs," as they might be called in more genteel endeavors): Hadassah bowling leagues, Viennese dessert tables, Israel bonds, the song "Y.M.C.A.," "Jewish-holiday crisp" weather.

"Long Island Compromise" is a heavily populated satire with more cul-de-sacs than the whole of Nassau County; but all those narrative asides about jealous neighbors and forays into Zelig's harrowing tale of survival

propel the novel. This is because when Brodesser-Akner dives, she does so without making a splash, seamlessly entering the mind of Jenny, who fetishizes freedom when she already has it; or Bernard, who sincerely wonders: "Did either of them notice that while Charlie typed, Beamer stood behind him, saying 'Yes, right. Exactly!' but did not also contribute any new ideas?"

Brodesser-Akner is empathetic to her characters' pathological inability to know themselves, but she is also merciless when it comes to the idea that acknowledging confusion is not enough. Zelig came over on a boat and it wasn't the Mayflower, so are they still victims when their privilege is undeniable? Unable to answer this question in the mirror, they seek validation from co-workers, lovers and partners. Oh, how they long to be good. Or if not good, better. Or if not better, bearable.

They hail from a generation for whom the Holocaust was both last week and a colloquial cudge ("Hitler would have loved your help, Jennifer," Carl's mother says to her granddaughter), a generation whose grandparents came from nothing unless you count mortal danger as something. Brodesser-Akner does not defend the myriad manners in which these three fumble the inheritance of suffering, as much as she seeks to define their crisis. She strives to dig a hole through the clichés and, for the most part (this reader could have done with less rhino-

plasty and I.B.S.), she comes out the other side with a dynamic story about an American family.

Fresh off adapting "Fleishman" for television, Brodesser-Akner incorporates screenwriting tropes into her prose ("CUT TO: Within a few minutes, he was back in his car"), sometimes in ways that feel less than intentional. After Carl is kidnapped, setting the town aflutter, a woman in an "avocado-colored kitchen" uses "her matching avocado-colored long-corded landline phone" to call a neighbor with a "mustard-colored" version of the same setup. Cue the split-screen. "The Royal Tenenbaums" in a yarmulke, or so a studio pitch might go: You've got the younger brother flirting with self-harm, the brilliant but icy sister and the eldest, a father to fearful twin boys whose joint bar mitzvah provides the culminating festivity of the novel.

The author also makes a few fairly transparent efforts to break up streams of dialogue toward the end. In the words of countless American children of the 20th century, Jewish or otherwise, her epidermis is showing. But the point of that joke is: Yeah, of course it is. All those well-timed twists, neat callbacks and tidy scenes are a mitzvah for this satisfying, touching novel. The talented Taffy Brodesser-Akner over here.

Sloane Crosley is the author of seven books, including the novel, "Cult Classic," and the memoir, "Grief Is for People."

LIVING

A slow simmer into cookbook success

Biography on Judith Jones shines light on how she revolutionized publishing

BY MELISSA CLARK

Judith Jones edited many literary luminaries — Langston Hughes, Sylvia Plath and John Updike — during her 54 years as editor at the publishing house Alfred A. Knopf. Yet she's far more famous for discovering an obscure cook named Julia Child. And in the process, starting a cookbook revolution.

Sara B. Franklin's new biography "The Editor: How Publishing Legend Judith Jones Shaped Culture in America," chronicles Ms. Jones's journey from eager, poetry-loving Bennington graduate to one of the most influential cookbook editors in American publishing.

Great editors bring out the best in their authors, nurturing the truest versions of their craft and selves on the page. As Ms. Franklin demonstrates in her deeply researched book, Ms. Jones, who died in 2017 at age 93, fell well into this category. She had an ear for distinct voices — she saved "The Diary of Anne Frank" from a slush pile — and a knack for shaping their stories into best sellers.

But what Ms. Jones did for cookbooks went beyond this. By holding their prose to the same standards she set for her literary writers, treating recipes as cultural touchstones and viewing authors as experts with specific and important perspectives, she helped define contemporary cookbook editing. And by publishing a diverse roster of authors, including Madhur Jaffrey, Irene Kuo and Edna Lewis, she shined a light on cuisines and cooks routinely ignored in an age dominated by white home economists and male French chefs.

"Judith wasn't just interested in recipes," said Ms. Jaffrey, who published her first of many books, "An Invitation to Indian Cooking," with Ms. Jones in 1973. "She was interested in the people behind them and their culture. This was radical for the time."

When Ms. Jones began her career in publishing in the 1950s, cookbooks and food writing in general weren't taken seriously, often lumped in with technical manuals and textbooks. Their editing focused on the recipe instructions, without thought to point of view, cultural context or the beauty of language.

The most popular cookbooks of the day set out to save housewives from "kitchen drudgery" by pointing them to shortcuts and prepared foods. Ms. Franklin illustrates how the purpose of the best-selling cookbook of 1950, "Betty Crocker's Picture Cook Book," which was jointly published by McGraw-Hill and the corporate food giant General Mills, was not to get women to cook well — it was "to get them to shop."

In this landscape, Ms. Jones began building her cookbook list at Knopf, creating a serious and thoughtful place for food writing to blossom. In 1959, only two years after starting her job at Knopf, she convinced her reluctant bosses that American cooks were ready for the kind of exacting, sophisticated and sometimes labor-intensive cuisine that was at the heart of Julia Child's "Mastering the Art of French Cooking," co-written with Louisette Bertholle and Simone Beck.

Ms. Jones was herself an accomplished and adventurous cook, having learned her way around the kitchen in Paris after college, experimenting with entrecôte and goose cassoulet along with her husband, and future cookbook collaborator, Richard Evan Jones. It was her love for and deep knowledge of French cuisine that enabled her to recognize the brilliance of Ms. Child's work.

After that initial success, Ms. Jones trusted her own appetite and curiosity to guide her to new authors and cuisines beyond the European paradigm of the time. When Ms. Jones met Ms. Lewis in 1972, she was looking for an author to write about the overlooked richness of American cuisine. Ms. Jones was immediately taken with Ms. Lewis's memories of the simple, seasonal meals her family cooked and ate in Freetown, Va., the farming community founded by formerly enslaved people, where she had grown up. The resulting cookbook published in 1976, "The Taste of Country Cooking," has become a classic, showing Americans the bounty of Southern cuisine and influencing generations of chefs, including Alice Waters.

Francis Lam, the editor of Clarkson Potter (and a former New York Times Magazine columnist), said that "The Taste of Country Cooking" was groundbreaking in part because it opened the doors to a more personal, layered style of cookbook writing.

In Ms. Lewis's descriptions of her life around food, he said: "She weaves together personal and complex scenes of her community. She presented Black rural life as beautiful, full of culture and refinement."

The Egyptian-born Claudia Roden, who had written "The Book of Middle Eastern Food" in Britain, was another big get; Ms. Jones bought the American rights to that book and continued to publish her work throughout Ms. Roden's long career.

Ms. Jones's interest in Chinese cuisine led her to Ms. Kuo, whose influential 1977 cookbook, "The Key to Chinese Cooking," was one of the first and most thorough volumes in the United States to explore China's regional food culture.



Judith Jones, the famed cookbook editor, homed in on both the recipes and the people who developed them. It was her love for and deep knowledge of French cuisine that enabled her to recognize Julia Child's brilliance, setting the stage for the modern cookbook.

She had an ear for distinct voices — she saved "The Diary of Anne Frank" from a slush pile — and a knack for shaping their stories into best sellers.



DAVID MALOSH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES. FOOD STYLIST: SIMON ANDREWS.

Ms. Jones's editorial style was hands-on: She frequently tested recipes, worked side by side with her authors, asked questions and added detail to provide context, which was especially helpful for readers new to a particular cuisine. Her insistence that the recipes were clearly written and would work perfectly when followed was another aspect that set her apart.

Her authors became an extended family as well as unofficial cooking teachers, and she absorbed their lessons. From Ms. Jaffrey, she learned about toasting spices to bring out their flavor, a technique she used throughout her cooking. With Ms. Lewis, she learned about foraging for wild mushrooms and herbs. Whenever they met, the two would share their passion for fresh, seasonal produce and growing their own vegetables (Ms. Jones kept a big garden at her summer home in Vermont.) These were rare pursuits in the 1970s, long before farm-to-table cuisine became a culinary cliché.

Through her editing, the books Ms. Jones published marshaled the pleasure of food as a way to broaden people's minds, allowing them to explore the world in a more complex way. And maybe even change it for the better. Cookbooks have come a long way since "Betty Crocker."

"Food was our rebellion," Ms. Jones told Ms. Franklin. "It gave us courage to see things, make things happen."



DAVID MALOSH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES. FOOD STYLIST: SIMON ANDREWS.

STIR-FRIED CHICKEN WITH MUSHROOMS AND SNOW PEAS

ADAPTED FROM IRENE KUO
TIME: 30 MINUTES, PLUS AT LEAST 30 MINUTES' CHILLING
YIELD: 3 TO 4 SERVINGS

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut crosswise (against the grain) into ¼-inch-thick slices, 1½ to 2 inches long
- 1 tablespoon Shaoxing wine or dry sherry
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1 large egg white
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch, plus another 2 teaspoons, if you like
- 5 tablespoons neutral oil (peanut, safflower, grapeseed)
- 2 ounces snow peas, trimmed and cut in half crosswise (about ¾ cup sliced)
- 8 ounces mushrooms (any kind you like), sliced
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce, more to taste
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil

1. Put the chicken slices into a bowl, and stir in Shaoxing wine and ½ teaspoon salt. In another bowl, beat the egg white until the gel is broken and it thins out slightly (it should not be frothy) and add to the chicken mixture. Sprinkle in 1 tablespoon cornstarch and mix well. Add 1 tablespoon neutral oil and stir until smooth.
2. Refrigerate chicken for at least 30 minutes and up to 2 hours so the coating

has time to adhere to the meat.

3. Bring a medium saucepan of water to a boil, then add 1 tablespoon neutral oil. Add the snow peas to a sieve or strainer that fits in the pot. Lower into boiling water for 10 seconds. Pull out the sieve (leaving water in the pot) and rinse snow peas with cold water. (Alternatively, you can put the snow peas directly in the water, stir once with a slotted spoon, then scoop them up and drain in a colander, rinsing well with cold water to stop the cooking.)

4. Lower heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Add in the chicken, stir to separate, and keep stirring gently until the coating turns white, about 1 minute. Drain chicken. (If you'd like a thicker, glossier sauce, whisk 2 teaspoons cornstarch with 1½ teaspoons warm water until the cornstarch has dissolved. Reserve.)

5. Heat a wok or large, heavy skillet over high heat. Once hot, add remaining 3 tablespoons neutral oil, swirl and heat for 30 seconds. Add mushrooms and ginger to hot oil, and stir and flip rapidly for about 30 seconds, or until the color of the mushrooms begins to brighten. Add the snow peas and remaining ½ teaspoon salt, and briskly stir mixture for 1 minute.

6. Add the chicken, soy sauce and reserved cornstarch slurry if using, and stir until the mixture is coated. Add the sesame oil, flip the mixture a few times and cook until the chicken is just cooked through, about 1 to 2 minutes. Serve immediately.

BAKED SUMMER TOMATOES

ADAPTED FROM EDNA LEWIS
TIME: ABOUT 1 HOUR
YIELD: 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small bits, plus more for pan
- 3½ to 4 cups (about 2 pounds) mix of cherry tomatoes and regular tomatoes (cherry tomatoes halved; larger tomatoes cut into 1½-inch pieces)
- 2 slices stale sourdough bread, cut into 12 pieces
- ½ teaspoon fine sea salt
- ½ teaspoon to 3½ tablespoons granulated sugar (see Tip)
- Freshly ground pepper

1. Heat oven to 375 degrees. Generously butter a 1-quart casserole dish (or 8-by-8-inch baking dish).
2. In a saucepan, combine tomatoes and

2 tablespoons water. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat and cook gently, stirring often, until most of the liquid evaporates, 5 to 15 minutes depending on how juicy they are. They should soften but still more or less hold their shape.

3. Line the sides of the prepared pan with 8 pieces of bread. Pour the stewed tomatoes and any liquid into the pan. Top the tomatoes with half of the butter and season with the salt, sugar and pepper. Place the 4 remaining pieces of bread on top, dotting each piece of bread with the last of the butter.

4. Bake until the tomatoes are bubbling, about 35 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Tip: Edna Lewis's original recipe calls for 3½ tablespoons sugar, but you can add less if you like. More sugar makes it taste like a sweet tomato jam. Less sugar is lighter and brighter.



DAVID MALOSH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES. FOOD STYLIST: SIMON ANDREWS.

SHRIMP PULLAO

ADAPTED FROM MADHUR JAFFREY
TIME: 50 MINUTES
YIELD: 6 SERVINGS

- 3 tablespoons finely chopped cilantro, plus more for garnish
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice, more to taste
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- 1½ teaspoons fine sea salt, more to taste
- ½ to 1 fresh hot green chile, such as serrano or bird's-eye, thinly sliced
- 4 tablespoons neutral oil (such as grapeseed or safflower)
- 1 pound large shrimp, peeled
- 1 medium yellow onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 2 cups long-grain rice (preferably basmati)
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter

1. In a small bowl, combine 1 tablespoon warm water, cilantro, lemon juice, turmeric, garam masala, ½ teaspoon salt and the green chile.

2. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium-low. Pour the contents of the small bowl into the skillet and cook, stirring, for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the shrimp and cook with the spices over medium heat until the shrimp turn pink and are almost cooked through, 2 to 4 minutes.

3. With a slotted spoon, transfer the shrimp to a bowl, leaving the sauce behind. Pour 1 cup water into the skillet and scrape up anything stuck on the pan. Turn off heat and reserve.

4. In a heavy-bottomed, 3-to-4-quart Dutch oven or pot, heat remaining 2 tablespoons oil over medium. Add onion and cook until the edges begin to turn golden brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the rice, 2 cups water, 1 teaspoon salt, and the liquid from the skillet. Stir and bring to a boil, then cover and reduce heat to very low. Cook for 25 minutes.

5. Remove the lid and use a fork to stir in the shrimp. Cover and cook until the shrimp and rice are tender, about another 10 minutes. Stir in butter until melted and the rice is coated. Taste and add more salt or lemon juice if needed. Top with more chopped cilantro and serve.