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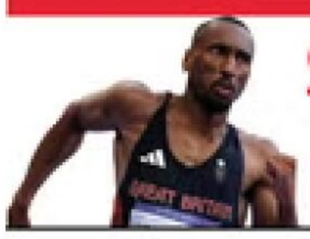
MARY DEJEVSKY: WE'VE NEVER SEEN A RUNNING MATE LIKE TIM WALZ BEFORE



Silver lining Matthew Hudson-Smith is denied Olympic gold in nailbiting men's 400m final

The full force of the law

Three men are sent to prison for more than seven years in total over riots in Southport – the first of many to be jailed as Keir Starmer vows swift justice over far-right violence

TARA COBHAM

Three thugs handed heavy sentences for involvement in violence are just "the tip of the iceberg", prosecutors said yesterday as the crackdown on rioters continues. The trio were jailed for a total of more than seven years as Sir Keir Starmer pledged that perpetrators of disorder "will face the full force of the law". Police were last night braced for more than 100 protests nationwide; more than 1,300 specialist public order officers were on standby in London alone. The number of offenders charged has passed 140, the Crown Prosecution Service said, with the figure expected to rise significantly in the coming days.

News

Editorials

Thugs will learn the hard way that violence on our streets achieves nothing

It is no coincidence that the Home Office in recent days has been using social media to highlight the sentencing parameters for certain types of crimes: rioting, up to 10 years; violent disorder, up to five years; inciting racial hatred, up to seven years; criminal damage, up to 10 years.

Now, as the first cases are being processed by the courts, these stark warnings have been supplemented with videos of offenders linking their actions with the judicial consequences. The prime minister, a professional prosecutor by trade, has eagerly joined in the campaign, posting a clip from Sky News reporting custodial sentences of 20 months, 30 months and three years for offences relating to the riots.

It all lends some considerable substance to the oft-repeated promise that "the full force of the law" will be brought to bear on those engaged in the current unrest. The fact that there has also been the arrest of a man in Birmingham wielding a sword in response to far-right threats is also evidence that Britain does indeed have one-tier and consistent standards in policing.

Sir Keir Starmer has obviously put to good use his experience as director of public prosecutions (DPP) during the last round of serious civil disorder in 2011. There is nothing quite like a spell behind bars and the loss of one's livelihood to focus the mind, either for those who are now being rapidly dealt with in the criminal justice system, or those contemplating taking part in the riots. Despite the balaclavas, the ubiquity of CCTV and the quality of police intelligence means that those responsible are being identified and dealt with. They are being named and shamed.

The point is deterrence. It is obviously correct in principle that justice is done and seen to be done with a policy of lawful exemplary sentencing, at the final discretion of a court – but it is also right, and consistent with that principle, that every lever is used to restore the rule of law. These are serious offences, and not confined to physical activity, but also the criminal conspiracies, threats and incitements made online, which have also been such a prominent feature of the disturbances.

The present DPP for England and Wales, Stephen Parkinson, has made it clear that those who have been orchestrating criminal activity outside the UK may also be brought to justice via the usual international cooperation between the authorities. They too will be brought to justice.

It is also right that, in the most egregious cases, the terrorism laws should also be used. Burning down a hotel with terrified people, children included, in fear for their life is prima facie, a form of terror, linked as it is with a political motive, inchoate as it may be. Ofcom is also right to warn the tech giants that their various platforms should not be used to incite racial hatred and commission crimes. The Online Safety Act is, however, inadequate to the task of making a real difference in this context, and will need to be reviewed urgently with a view to strengthening it.

Meanwhile, the likes of Nigel Farage are finding themselves on the wrong side of public opinion. The latest polling evidence suggests that people are sickened by the destruction visited upon communities by the far-right's violence, and support firm action and appropriate punishment. Only 46 per cent of the public believe that the recent violence has really been to do with the Southport murders, with a similar number (47 per cent) viewing the Reform UK leader as holding some level of responsibility for the unrest.

It is argued by some apologists for street violence that these riots are little more than lads having a few drinks too many and falling in with a bad crowd. No doubt many of those lobbing rocks at the police and looting shops haven't paid much attention to the political debate, but arson, assault and looting are very serious offences all the same, and not the sort of thing most people engage in on a night out. They can make their excuses to the judge, in any case.

Neither they, nor an appalled general public, have any sympathy for them. If they are politically engaged or not, and have "legitimate concerns" about immigration, crime, multiculturalism or anything else, then they can pursue those through the usual democratic channels. We have, after all,

recently had a general election and a peaceful change of government, and there were plenty of candidates offering radical far-right “solutions” to their grievances.

There is no need to terrorise British Muslims or anyone else in the name of politics. Rioting achieves nothing, creates fear and misery, and those responsible will be made to pay the price. The sooner that truth is understood, the better.

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News

Prosecutors warn rioters as far-right thugs are jailed

Derek Drummond (left), Declan Geiran (centre) and Liam James Riley were jailed yesterday over the Southport and Liverpool riots (Merseyside Police)

TARA COBHAM

Prosecutors warned yesterday that three far-right thugs handed heavy sentences over nationwide unrest were just “the tip of the iceberg” as the crackdown on rioters continued.

As the three men became the first to be jailed over the Southport and Liverpool riots, Sir Keir Starmer pointed to their

cases as an example of how perpetrators of the disorder breaking out across the UK's streets "will face the full force of the law" after "swift action" from authorities. Prosecutors also warned "those who stir up hate online".

Police were braced for more than 100 protests in 41 of the 43 force areas in England and Wales last night as far-right groups targeted immigration services. Officers were also expecting more than 30 counter-protests, as 6,000 riot officers prepared for another night of potential disorder. More than 1,300 specialist public order officers were ready to be deployed across London alone.

Riot police officers push back anti-immigration protesters in Rotherham (Getty)

The total number of people charged over the unrest in England and in Northern Ireland had reached more than 140 yesterday, the Crown Prosecution Service said, as police chiefs continued to warn rioters they could "expect a knock at the door". The National Police Chiefs' Council said they expected that number to rise "significantly" in the coming days, as officers looked to make further arrests.

A Downing Street spokesperson said the large number of courtroom appearances and arrests – already more than 420 – were "just the start". They added: "Our criminal justice system is showing violent thuggery has no place on our streets."

In the longest prison sentence handed down so far over the far-right disorder, Derek Drummond, 58, was jailed for three years after punching a police officer during the riot that erupted in Southport following the fatal knife attack on three young girls in the town on 29 July.

People who have appeared in court following serious violent disorder during anti-immigration protests (Police/CPS/PA)

Drummond, of Pool Street, Liverpool, previously pleaded guilty to violent disorder and assaulting an emergency worker, after he punched an officer in the face and was later seen dismantling a wall and throwing bricks towards police on St Luke's Road.

He was one of three men to be jailed at Liverpool Crown Court yesterday – alongside Declan Geiran and Liam James Riley, who were sentenced to 30 months and 20 months in prison respectively after Geiran tried to set a police van alight and Riley threw rocks and bricks at police.

Riley, of Walton Road, Kirkdale, Liverpool, and Geiran, of Kelso Road, Liverpool, pleaded guilty to violent disorder following the riots in Liverpool city centre, with Geiran also admitting arson of a police vehicle.

Senior district crown prosecutor Jonathan Egan warned the trio's sentences show how those perpetrating the unrest "will be sent to prison for a long time". He said: "The three men

sentenced today are the tip of the iceberg, and just the start of what will be a very painful process for many who foolishly chose to involve themselves in violent unrest. Many of those involved will be sent to prison for a long time."

Assistant Chief Constable Paul White added: "I hope the speed with which the wheels of justice have turned makes it very clear to anyone considering getting involved in disorder that they could find themselves in a prison cell very soon after."

Riot police hold back protesters near a burning police vehicle after riots broke out on 30 July in Southport (Getty)

The Director of Public Prosecutions Stephen Parkinson has said one case of alleged terrorism is "actively under consideration". At least one man has also been charged with possessing an offensive weapon after taking part in a "counter-protest" in Birmingham.

Nick Price, director of legal services for the Crown Prosecution Service, said: "If you get involved in violent disorder on our streets or stir up hate online, you will feel the full force of the law. Our prosecutors are working round the clock to make sure lawbreakers can be brought before the courts without delay and face the consequences of their actions."

Referring to the disturbances near Southport Mosque on 30 July at the sentencing hearing yesterday, Honorary Recorder of Liverpool, Judge Andrew Menary KC said: "The genuine and

collective grief of the residents of Southport was effectively hijacked by this callous behaviour.”

Keir Starmer says perpetrators ‘will face the full force of the law’ (PA)

Prosecutor Christopher Taylor said Drummond was among around 1,000 demonstrators who clashed with police over several hours. Some 50 officers were injured, with damage caused to police vehicles, residential properties and the mosque. Chants from the group included “England til I die”, the court heard.

Bodyworn camera footage from Police Constable Thomas Ball showed the defendant approaching a riot cordon line before calling “shithouses, shithouses”. Drummond was told to go back but then punched PC Ball in the face.

About 30 minutes later Drummond approached officers again and attempted to break through another cordon. Following a public appeal, the defendant handed himself into the police and said he was “a fool”.

Stabbing victims Bebe King (left), Elsie Dot Stancombe (centre) and Alice Dasilva Aguiar (PA)

Lionel Greig, defending Drummond, said the defendant – who had 14 previous convictions, including for offences of violence – had lost his job since the incident and wished to further apologise to police for his conduct towards them.

Meanwhile, inquests into the deaths of Southport stabbing victims Bebe King, six, Alice Dasilva Aguiar, nine, and Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven, were opened and adjourned at Bootle Town Hall, where senior coroner Julie Goulding said it was "impossible to adequately articulate the devastating lifelong effects of the truly tragic events of Monday 29 July".

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News

Anti-racism crowds defiant against threat of far right

People gathered in multiple cities to stand against the violence from anti-immigration groups (Reuters)

JANE DALTON

Large-scale expected violence by far-right groups failed to materialise after thousands of counter-protesters turned out to stand against them. Huge chants of “we fight back” and

“refugees are welcome here” were heard on the streets of several major cities in England, outnumbering any thugs intent on causing trouble.

It comes after police warned more than 100 demonstrations could take place across the UK yesterday for another evening of unrest after a week of riots in places including Sunderland, Hartlepool, Liverpool and Rotherham.

Some 6,000 riot officers were standing by after gatherings had been anticipated in 41 of the 43 police force areas in England and Wales, with prosecutors warning a “hit list” of immigration centres and lawyers by the far right could amount to terrorism.

Police from southeast England were sent to northern cities yesterday to back up resources in northern cities after intelligence suggested further violent scenes were planned.

But last night, the far right was barely seen in areas such as east London, Bristol, Oxford, Middlesbrough and Brighton. Several hundred demonstrators holding anti-racism banners marched peacefully through the streets in Birmingham. It was estimated more than 1,500 counter-demonstrators turned out in Bristol.

Aldershot, Hampshire, was one of the few places where police officers rushed to separate opposing groups after tempers flared. A group chanting “stop the boats” confronted a Stand Up to Racism group and angry shouting occurred.

Counter protesters gather in Liverpool (AP)

In Sheffield, South Yorkshire, around 500 anti-racist demonstrators gathered and chanted pro-refugee slogans, but there was no sign of any far-right groups. Scores of police were in the area with riot helmets hanging from their belts.

Police in Northampton asked counter-protesters to leave after planned anti-immigration protests in the town failed to materialise. However, there was some isolated disorder in Croydon, south London. The Metropolitan Police said about 50 people had "made clear their intention is to cause disruption and fuel disorder".

The force said people had dragged and thrown objects down the road, and thrown bottles at officers. Eight people were arrested for assaulting emergency workers, possession of offensive weapons and other offences.

Forces across the UK have started issuing CCTV appeals to identify people in connection with the widespread unrest over the past week. Images of more than 50 people were released by detectives investigating trouble in Merseyside, Rotherham and Hull.

More than 400 people have been arrested with some already sentenced to heavy jail terms. The fatal stabbings of three girls at a Taylor Swift-themed dance workshop in Southport last week were initially used by far-right groups to launch riot action.

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News/ Analysis

Why Musk is unlikely to feel ‘full force of the law’

The X owner’s inflammatory remarks on the riots have riled the PM. But stopping the tech guru from using his platform as he wishes will be difficult, writes **Chris Stokel-Walker**

From spats on X with regulators to breaching global data laws, Elon Musk appears to have a knack for causing problems (EPA/Reuters)

Elon Musk has managed to insert himself into the headlines, and into the targets of Keir Starmer and his government in the last week. The entrepreneur and owner of social media platform

X/Twitter has taken potshots at Starmer and his government, claiming that the UK is in the midst of a civil war.

Musk has posted more than a dozen broadsides aimed at the prime minister and his government over their response to the Southport riots. In so doing, he's raised the ire of ministers, who have suggested that "anyone who is whipping up violence online will face the full force of the law" – which presumably would include Musk.

As the man himself put it on X, it's been a "busy week".

Musk isn't shy about courting attention. But his comments in the last week have raised the hackles of UK politicians and commentators, who are calling for authorities to take action against him. In many ways, Musk's public proclamations – made to his more than 193 million followers on X, the platform that he spent $44bn buying in October 2022, and which has subsequently halved in value – are not unusual.

Musk is a culture warrior and a limelight hog. He's also always eager to prod and poke at authority, and to push the limits of decency. As Musk told his biographer, Walter Isaacson, "I've got a bad habit of biting off more than I can chew." The fights Musk picks tend to be against world leaders, with whom he appears to think he is on a similar footing. It's not something he's particularly wary of doing, based on historical precedent.

A mob attacks a Holiday Inn Express, said to be housing asylum seekers, in Rotherham over the weekend (PA)

Musk has previously sought to play chicken with regulators around the world for a variety of different reasons. He continually needles US financial regulators, including the Securities and Exchange Commission, which sued Musk for market manipulation in 2018 after he sent a jokey tweet suggesting he would take his electric car company, Tesla, private. In 2022, he called them "bastards" at a conference.

With X, Musk has insulted and argued with Thierry Breton, who oversees the EU's internal market commissioner, since his ownership of the platform was finalised nearly two years ago. He most recently arguably flouted European data protection laws by automatically opting X users into sharing their data with his AI chatbot, Grok.

And earlier this year he fought with Australia's eSafety commissioner over that country's Online Safety Act, when the government there sought to get X to take down violent footage of a knife attack at a church in the country. Musk used his platform to rail against the commissioner, tweeting, "Should the eSafety commissar (an unelected official) in Australia have authority over all countries on Earth?".

The pattern will be recognisable to Starmer, who is facing many of the same broadsides for his attempts to bring Musk to heel because of his divisive comments. But can anything be done to tame Musk and the platform he treats as his personal fiefdom?

"The government will have to make some tough policy choices in deciding how to enforce applicable laws," says Catalina Goanta, associate professor in law at the University of Utrecht. "Hundreds of rioters have been arrested for engaging in violent crimes, with many more yet to be identified."

Musk is a culture warrior and a limelight hog. He's also always eager to prod and poke at authority, and to push the limits of decency

"England and Wales have long had very broad criminal offences that make it illegal to say something online that would often be legal offline," says Michael Veale, associate professor in technology law at University College London. "Those communications offences are the tools that law enforcement usually reach for when dealing with specific cases like Musk's, prosecuting thousands a year."

And some of those rules have been bolstered by the new Online Safety Act, which was passed into law in the last few months. But there's a catch. "Even in the new act, these do not extend outside of the jurisdiction, meaning it would be hard to see how they could be used to target Musk," says Veale.

Because Musk's X is based in the United States, and Musk was born in South Africa and became a US citizen in 2002, he's not subject to the act. Besides that, Musk has carefully crafted what he's said to divide people, but to not fall foul of the Online Safety Act. The act was watered down during its passage through parliament to rule out harmful but legal speech from being regulated. This means that sending threats of violence, like "I will wage civil war" is illegal, but saying – as Musk has done – that "civil war is inevitable" is not.

"Although he has been posting increasingly unhinged comments on his platform, it might be difficult to interpret them as

incitement to violence," says Goanta.

Another issue that will stymie any attempt to punish Musk is that while the Online Safety Act has become law, with Ofcom tasked with enforcing it, is being staggered into operation.

Rioters clash with police in Manchester on Saturday (EPA)

Ofcom did not immediately respond to a request, but has told technology publication *UKTN* this week that it will take until 2026 for all the elements of the act's enforcement to be complete. The regulator's spokesperson also told *UKTN* that it would have to consult "codes of practice and guidance" before sanctioning social media companies for hosting dangerous content. They also were clear that this "will not involve us making decisions about individual posts or accounts".

It puts the UK government, and its chosen regulator, in a sticky situation. "As the rest of the act is not designed to respond to particular pieces of content, and much of it has not been commenced yet, police would have to get very creative with other offences," says Veale.

One of those routes could be the Communications Act of 2003, which regulates communication offences, says Lilian Edwards, professor of law at Newcastle University. "Prosecuting people abroad is a judgement call," she says. "It has impacts: if they arrived in the UK at any point they could be seized and similarly any assets in the UK."

Taking down X has been one idea mooted by some but could potentially backfire, says Goanta. “Social media has definitely played an important role in disseminating information about the riots, such as conspiracy theories, but it also may serve an evidence-seeking purpose for the arrests,” she explains. “All platforms that facilitate illegal content – not just X, but also Telegram or TikTok, where a lot of lives were monetised during the riots – should be scrutinised for their content moderation activities.”

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Is a Canada-style model a good idea for UK pensions?

Chancellor Rachel Reeves is exploring how a more consolidated system for retirement savings – ie 'pension nationalism' – could boost the economy (PA)

SEAN O'GRADY

Rachel Reeves has been extremely busy in the few weeks since she was appointed. Aside from discovering a £22bn "black hole" in the public finances, she's been to the G20 finance ministers' summit in Rio de Janeiro and is now in Canada meeting the bosses of big pension funds.

She is exploring how a more consolidated “Canadian-style” model for the British pensions system could boost returns to those reaching retirement while, rather more controversially, funding more British investments such as infrastructure projects. Pensions rarely hit the headlines until something goes wrong, but these are potentially significant changes to people’s retirement savings, and there are questions...

What is Reeves up to?

Pension nationalism. She wants the country’s pension funds “to drive investment in homegrown businesses and deliver greater returns to pension savers”.

On the positive side, it’s fair to say that many smaller pension funds can suffer from high overheads and costs, and deliver disappointing returns for pensioners. So there is a case for consolidation to win economies of scale, both for “money purchase” or “defined contribution”, which are entirely dependent on financial markets; and for “defined benefit” or “final salary” schemes, linked to length of service, but also invested in financial markets.

A prime example, often cited, is rolling the current 86 separately managed individual local authority funds in England and Wales into one giant shame, worth approximately £360bn for its 6 million members. The Treasury, under the Conservatives, was already looking at such a plan, which they suggested could be combined with a relaxation in the rules on riskier investments, “unlocking”, for example, a further £25bn going into private equity schemes by 2030. There might also be more money for public infrastructure projects, either in partnership with state bodies such as the National Wealth Fund or with some underwriting by the Treasury to prevent losses.

And the negative?

The fear that funds, public and private, will be steered by a hard-pressed government anxious about economic growth into investments in the UK that yield poorer returns and/or are riskier. Pensions typically invest in government bonds and shares in blue chip and multinational companies such as Shell,

Toyota, Unilever, Amazon, Netflix and Facebook, as well as broad-based investment trusts and some exposure to emerging markets.

By contrast, no sane saver would sleep easily if they knew their hard-earned savings were being funnelled into some no-hope British start-up or politically-motivated vanity UK public transport scheme, rather than, say, some proven enterprise in Asia. There is a looming issue here – as there always is – when politicians and financiers get involved in speculating with OPM - "other people's money". Pensioners and savers have a right to agency, and to demand the accountability of pension trustees and administrators to scheme members. It's their future, after all.

This trend of "pension nationalism" is not confined to the UK, and has become a bit of a trend across the West because the global financial crisis and the Covid pandemic left government finances unable to fund even essential productive investments. Hence the fear that funds will be "raised" by politicians desperate to avoid borrowing, putting taxes up or cutting other public spending.

Will it work?

Well, it could be a win-win – higher growth, better water, energy and transport infrastructure, and a more prosperous economy in harmony with better pension returns. There are dangers. Traditionally infrastructure investment in utilities, for example, was a way for pension funds to almost guarantee steady, if unspectacular, returns for decades on end. But not always. The irony of Reeves's trip to Canada is that a Singapore-registered subsidiary of Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System, which held a 31 per cent stake in Thames Water, has had to write off its entire investment in the troubled company. Even if the British Treasury tried to underwrite all or part of such investments, the sheer scale of the sums involved might, in a doomsday scenario, force a default by the UK on its official debts. More likely it would end up with more inflation and a hike in taxes – and a "haircut" for pensioners.

What does the opposition say?

For the moment, they can't object too much because much of Reeves has embarked upon something started by Jeremy Hunt. It is also early days, and Reeves's natural caution might well mean that the risks to pensions turn out to be modest. But she is meddling with what for many is their biggest asset after their home, and the political price of pushing them into poverty in their old age would be electoral oblivion. Although he was a fraudster, it is a good moment for all concerned to recall the temptations, misdeeds and legacy of a man named Robert Maxwell.

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News

Two-tier policing claim is nonsense, says Met chief

Equality campaigners say claims that far-right riots are being treated differently is ‘racist gaslighting’ and an ‘Islamophobic dog-whistle’ (Owen Humphreys/PA)

NADINE WHITE
RACE CORRESPONDENT

Complaints that far-right riots over the last week have been dealt with more harshly than other recent unrest amount to “racist gaslighting”, equality campaigners have said.

Metropolitan Police chief Sir Mark Rowley has rejected accusations of two-tier policing as “complete nonsense”, and said those making the claims were putting officers at risk.

The government has also dismissed suggestions the riots have been dealt with more stringently than other recent disorder and protests. Prime minister Sir Keir Starmer, who has been dubbed “two-tier Keir” by US Twitter/X boss Elon Musk, has called the accusations a “non-issue”.

The prime minister has also been accused by Tory leadership contender Robert Jenrick of not being “as clear as he could be” that some of the disorder emanated from “sectarian gangs”. The traction that the phrase “two-tier policing” has gained is “yet another example of mainstream media complicit in racist gaslighting”, the UK’s leading racial justice think tank Runnymede Trust said.

Dr Shabna Begum, the charity’s CEO, told *The Independent*: “It is insulting to allege that communities of colour face ‘more favourable’ policing. The traction that the phrase ‘two-tier policing’ has gained is yet another example of mainstream media complicit in racist gaslighting.

“It implies that there was an equivalent level of violence at largely peaceful BLM [Black Lives Matter] protests, and that the BLM protests were softly policed; neither are true. The idea that policing has ever favoured communities of colour is a direct insult, given everything we know about the disproportionality of the use of force against them.”

Statistics show many racial disparities in everyday policing. Official data states police forces across England and Wales disproportionately stop and search people from ethnic minority communities. Black people accounted for 46 per cent of all stop and searches in the year ending March 2023, compared with their 4 per cent proportion of the population, while Asian people account for 39 per cent, compared with their 9 per cent of the population.

Runnymede argues that the evidence of racialised two-tiered policing bears out in the nature of charges applied to those

involved in the ongoing racist riots. “If anything, there should be a question mark about why charges thus far have been for violent disorder rather than the more serious riot charges which were used against Kill the Bill protestors in 2021,” Ms Begum added.

Campaigners argue police also took aggressive action during Black Lives Matter protests (AFP/Getty)

Pointing to the London uprisings of 2011, sparked in response to Mark Duggan’s fatal shooting, barrister Abimbola Johnson said that the current two-tier claims are “ahistorical”. “In 2011, we saw a lot of custodial sentences being handed down to those convicted of participating in the riots,” Ms Johnson, also a former chair of a police race action plan, said.

“Many of them were young, people of colour and first-time offenders. We saw a significant number of people arrested and then charged off the basis of police-led identification evidence from often rather grainy CCTV images – and a significant expansion in the use of controversial suspicionless stop and search powers.

“A lot of first-time offenders were also given custodial sentences due to the context of public unrest. The idea that using similar approaches now signifies ‘two-tiered’ policing is therefore ahistorical and frankly untrue.”

Earlier this year, a study by the Network for Policing Monitoring (Netpol) detailed a “confused”, “racist” and “threatening” police response to pro-Palestine marches with “unusually high” levels of surveillance and harassment

In 2021, Netpol published another report about how Black Lives Matter protests were policed, which uncovered excessive use of force including baton charges, horse charges, pepper spray and violent arrest.

Kevin Blowe, campaigns coordinator at Netpol, described claims of “two-tier” policing as “a deliberate racist and Islamophobic dog-whistle”, as well as a ”distraction”. “They are intended to pretend the far right and its deliberate violence are just “legitimate opinions” that are unfairly policed,” he said.

“I can understand why people might want to prove this is untrue by analysing arrest and sentencing statistics, but this is exactly what the far right wants too: a distraction from its own violent behaviour. The more important question is what a politician like Farage is siding with and embracing, at the worst possible moment, the language of rioters terrorising communities.”

Violent unrest has broken out in parts of the UK after false speculation about the identity of the teenager suspected of killing three young girls in a knife attack in Southport last month. More than 400 arrests have been made at far-right marches, while more than 100 people have now been charged.

Midlands-based bishop Desmond Jaddoo, founder of the Windrush National Organisation, said the two-tier discourse is “an ongoing tit-for-tat diversion”. “There is a lot of political rhetoric being used here; we must not forget our three little girls who have lost their lives and we must not forget that this unrest is sheer racism,” he said.

“These comments are unhelpful in terms of creating a better Britain whose post-war wealth is based upon people of colour and the Windrush generation and the wider commonwealth playing their part. The only tough talk we need as a nation right now is to tackle the root causes of this once and for all – as we have a periodic cycle of racial unrest, which only sparks

comment with no tangible outcome or progression towards us living together as a nation of people from diverse backgrounds."

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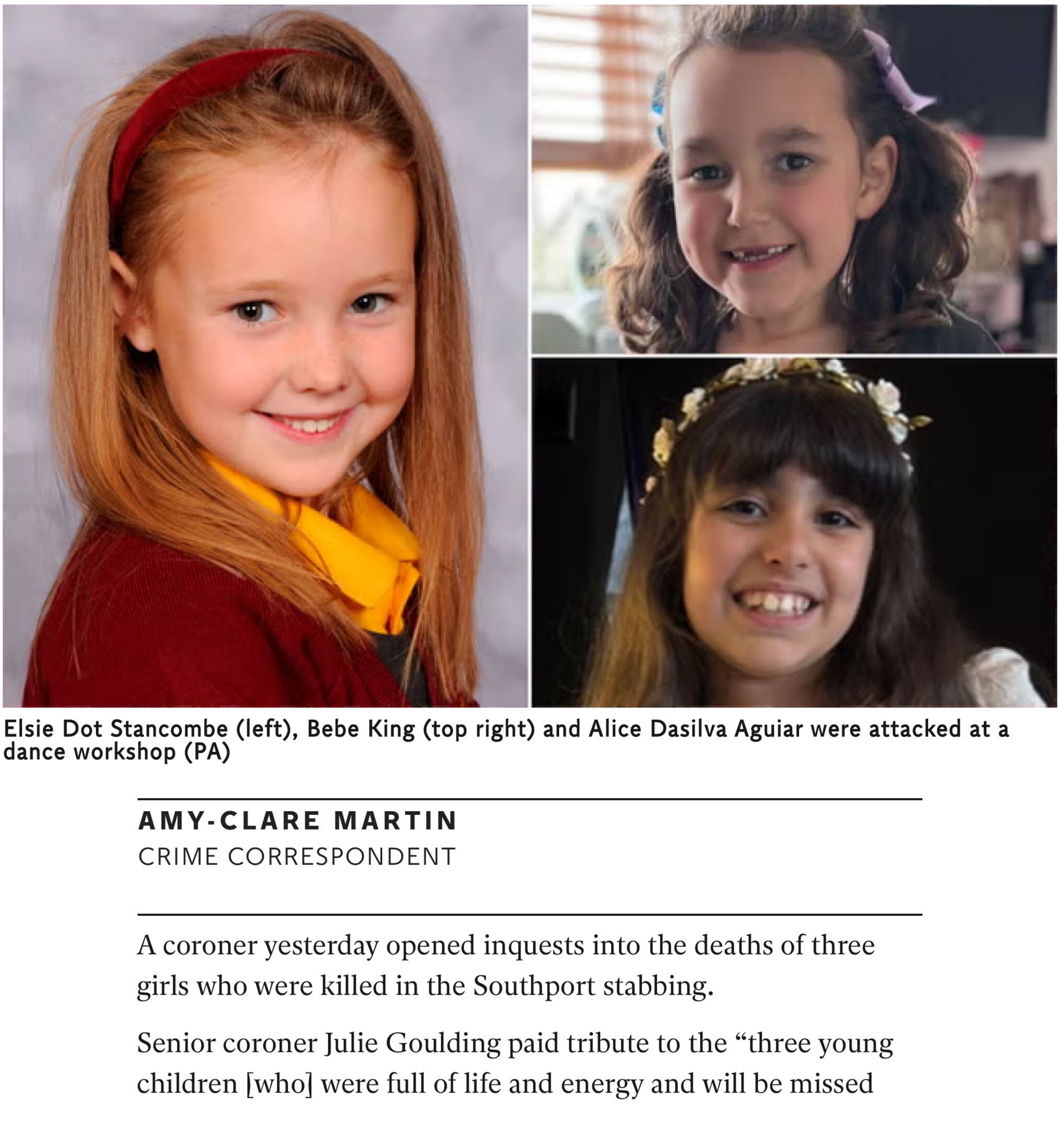
Inquests open into deaths of girls killed in Southport



Elsie Dot Stancombe (left), Bebe King (top right) and Alice Dasilva Aguiar were attacked at a dance workshop (PA)

AMY-CLARE MARTIN
CRIME CORRESPONDENT

A coroner yesterday opened inquests into the deaths of three girls who were killed in the Southport stabbing.

Senior coroner Julie Goulding paid tribute to the “three young children [who] were full of life and energy and will be missed

beyond any description" at the brief hearing at Bootle Town Hall.

Six-year-old Bebe King and seven-year-old Elsie Dot Stancombe were pronounced dead shortly after the knife attack at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class attended by 26 children on 29 July. Nine-year-old Alice Dasilva Aguiar died from her injuries in hospital the following day.

Cardiff-born Axel Rudakubana, now 18, has been charged with their murders. Opening the inquest into Elsie's death, coroner's officer James Martindale told the hearing: "On Monday 29 July, shortly before 10am, a group of 26 children, including Elsie, attended a dance yoga studio at Northwood Business Park, 32-34 Hart Street, Southport, for an organised dance party.

"At some time between 11.40am and 11.50am a male, who has now been identified as Axel Rudakubana, attended the premises and is then alleged to have started attacking those present.

Members of the public take part in a vigil in Southport (PA)

"Three children tragically died and others, children and adult, were injured, some critically. Axel Rudakubana was detained at the scene and has now been charged with Elsie's murder."

Adjourning the inquests to allow the criminal process to take place, the coroner said: "It is impossible to adequately articulate the devastating, lifelong effects the truly tragic events of Monday 29 July 2024 have had, and will continue to have, on the

parents, families and friends of Elsie, Bebe and Alice, who cruelly lost their young lives in such horrific circumstances.

“The three young children were full of life and energy and will be missed beyond any description my woefully inadequate words may attempt to describe. I therefore offer my deepest condolences to Elsie’s, Bebe’s and Alice’s parents, families and friends, and those heartfelt condolences of all of my staff here at the coroner’s court.”

Tributes for victims of the stabbing in Southport (AP)

Rudakubana, 18, from Banks, Lancashire, will stand trial next year after being charged with three counts of murder, 10 counts of attempted murder and possession of a bladed article in a public place. Five other children and two adults were seriously injured in the attack.

On Tuesday, Merseyside Police said one child remained in hospital and all other patients had been discharged. About 400 people have been arrested in riots that spread across the country after the incident.

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News

Jenrick: Police should arrest those yelling ‘Allahu Akbar’

The Conservative leadership contender has been accused of ‘pure unadulterated Islamophobia’ (PA)

MILLIE COOKE
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

Robert Jenrick has sparked outrage after saying people shouting “Allahu Akbar” on London streets “should be arrested immediately”.

“Allahu Akbar” is an Arabic phrase meaning “God is greater” or “God is greatest”, which is commonly used in prayer and as a declaration of faith.

Asked whether he believes the UK has a system of “two-tier policing”, Mr Jenrick told *Sky News*: “I have been very critical of the police in the past, particularly around the attitude of some police forces to the protests that we saw since 7 October.

“I thought it was quite wrong that somebody could shout ‘Allahu Akbar’ on the streets of London and not be immediately arrested. Or project genocidal chants onto Big Ben and that person not be immediately arrested. That attitude is wrong and I’ll always call out the police.”

In February, pro-Palestine activists projected the phrase “From the river to the sea” onto parliament during a demonstration, drawing anger from some pro-Israel supporters who argue the disputed phrase calls for the eradication of the state of Israel.

Sharing a video on X/Twitter of men in balaclavas chanting “Allahu Akbar”, Mr Jenrick later added: “Allahu Akbar is spoken peacefully and spiritually by millions of British Muslims in their daily lives. But the aggressive chanting below is intimidatory and threatening. And it’s an offence under section 4 and 5 of the Public Order Act. Extremists routinely abuse common expressions for their own shameful ends. All violence must end. All violence must be called out.”

Riot police hold back protesters in Southport (Getty)

The Muslim Association of Britain strongly condemned Mr Jenrick's comments. "This is pure unadulterated Islamophobia from Robert Jenrick and is precisely what has been driving these Islamophobic far-right extremists," a statement said on X. "The media and politicians need to be held to account for their role in the terror that has been unleashed on the streets of Britain."

The Muslim Council said the comments showed "institutional Islamophobia is alive and well in the Conservative Party".

"As a prospective leader, Mr Jenrick should be showing leadership, reassuring our communities when fear is palpable," a spokesperson said. "He should apologise, fully retract his comments, and speak to ordinary Muslims to understand why his remarks are so outrageous. Rather than inflaming tensions, he should focus on ways to bring communities together."

Labour's Naz Shah was among the MPs demanding the former minister apologise. Posting on social media, she said: "This is complete ignorance and textbook Islamophobia from Robert Jenrick. It literally equates every Muslim in the world with extremism.

"Allah Hu Akbar means 'god is Great'. It's a basic Islamic saying that every Muslim in the world says in prayer. It is significantly the opening line of the call to prayer and the opening phrase of every prayer. Billions of us Muslims use it every day as part of

our faith within our prayers. It is a common phrase like Christians would say ‘Jesus Christ as your lord and saviour’. Imagine in this climate, either being that ignorant or deliberately trying to stigmatise all Muslims. He should apologise and speak to Muslim communities and learn more about our faith.”

The PM has rejected accusations of ‘two-tier policing’ (PA)

Afzal Khan, Labour MP for Manchester Rusholme, added: “Another day, another senior Tory being Islamophobic. Allahu Akbar means God is great – the Muslim equivalent of Hallelujah. Jenrick’s confidence in going on national TV to say people should be arrested for saying Allahu Akbar exposes his deep-seated prejudice against Muslims.”

Conservative peer Baroness Sayeeda Warsi accused the Tory leadership contender of “nasty divisive rhetoric”.

“Every day before we start parliamentary business in the Commons and Lords we say a prayer and praise God – we say our parliamentary version of Allah hu Akbar at the heart of democracy – a process Robert Jenrick is a part of,” she said.

Sir Keir Starmer has faced accusations of “two-tier policing” in the UK, a far-right claim which has been used to justify the disorder that has swept the country over the last week. The accusations suggest police are taking a softer approach with left-wing and Islamic protesters than they are with white working-class protesters.

The prime minister has flatly denied the claims as a “non-issue” and insisted policing was carried out “without fear or favour”.

When Mr Jenrick was asked about his previous claim that “we have allowed our streets to be dominated by Islamist extremists”, a comment he made in February about a government vote on a ceasefire in Israel and Gaza, the MP for Newark said: “I think I was absolutely right.”

“There were instances back then when we had Islamist extremists on our streets. I’ve just given you one example, where you literally had somebody chanting, or chanting, ‘Allahu Akbar’ on Oxford Street. We saw people commending the Houthis for firing missiles at British-flagged vessels in the seas. That is completely wrong. That is anti-British, we should be calling it out.”

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News

Tinkering with EU deal will not restore growth, PM told

Keir Starmer warned that bolder action is required to boost the economy (PA)

DAVID MADDOX
POLITICAL EDITOR

Sir Keir Starmer has been warned that “tinkering” with Britain’s EU deal will not rescue the economy and bring about the increase in growth or productivity his government has aimed to achieve.

The warning from the independent all-party pressure group European Movement has come with a shopping list of things the new Labour government needs to achieve in order to restore confidence in Britain as a safe place to invest.

It follows a devastating report by economic think tank the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) which showed that “Brexit uncertainty” has harmed external investment in the UK, damaged productivity – particularly in regions like the Midlands which voted for Leave – and held the UK back from recovering from the pandemic compared to other Western countries.

Responding to the report, Richard Kilpatrick, campaign manager of the European Movement UK said: “To grow the economy and invest in our public sector, to build the hospitals and schools that our communities need, we need to accept that Brexit has failed to deliver in every area. The European Movement welcomes the work of NIESR, which confirms that our hard separation from the EU is now seriously holding our country back. We deserve better.”

He warned: “Tinkering around the edges of a broken Brexit deal won’t deliver the long-term certainty that our economy needs. We urge the prime minister to agree to our call for an independent, forward-looking inquiry into the ongoing costs of Brexit on our economy, and what the future for the UK would be with membership of the single market and customs union on the table.”

The intervention comes as the government has already prepared the way for a renegotiation of Boris Johnson’s flawed Brexit deal with the EU. The talks are being spearheaded by European affairs minister Nick Thomas-Symonds. He began his work at the Nato conference in Washington DC in the first week of the Labour government and then played a major role in the European Political Community (EPC) summit the following week at Blenheim Palace.

Sir Keir has disappointed many by saying there will be no attempt to rejoin the EU or its single market and customs union

– even though the entry of any of those things would ease trade with the UK's biggest trading partner and restore credibility in the UK as a place to invest.

Cabinet office minister Nick Thomas-Symonds is leading talks on renegotiating Boris Johnson's Brexit deal (PA)

But the European Movement, which includes experts in several fields, has already laid out ideas for what the government needs to do to restore Britain's credibility economically. This includes:

- Rejoining the Galileo space programme; the 24 European Reference Networks for rare diseases; the single market for medicines (EMA); Euratom (for atomic energy); the international nuclear fusion research and engineering megaproject (ITER); and the Erasmus programme for students
- Agreeing mutual recognition of qualifications
- Getting data adequacy agreements
- Agreeing mobility for musicians and artists, scientists, specialist professions and under-35s
- Getting a mutual veterinary agreement to allow for the free movement of animals
- Rejoining the Frontex border agreement
- Police cooperation improvement
- Securing a clinical trials framework for medicines

Summarising the need for changes in the report this week, Stephen Millard, deputy director for macroeconomic modelling and forecasting at NIESR, said: “If the renegotiation goes in the direction of making it easier to trade compared to where we are now – if the renegotiation manages to achieve that, then that will be a positive for sure.

“By opening up trade more that does lead to productivity growth, it also again if we are trading more with the EU it makes us a better – more attractive – place for direct foreign investment, it makes the UK a more attractive place for business globally because we have those opportunities to trade.

“That has been the really bad thing about Brexit, is that it has reduced the opportunities of businesses to grow by trade and be more productive. So if there is one thing the government could do that would have a serious impact on growth then trying to bring us closer to Europe would be a definite winner in my view.”

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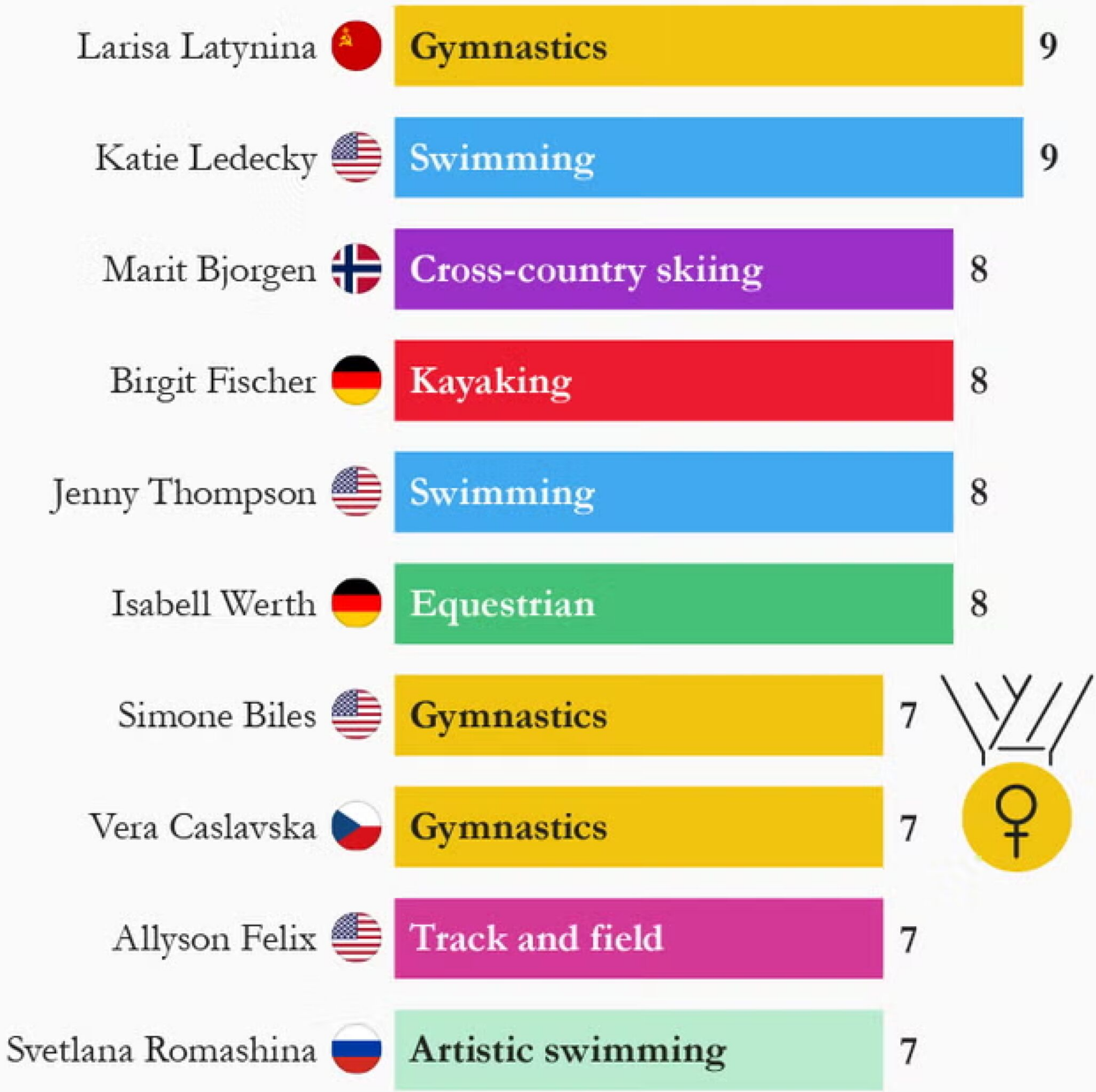
By Numbers Gold standard

Female athletes with the most Olympic winning medals



Source: Encyclopædia Britannica

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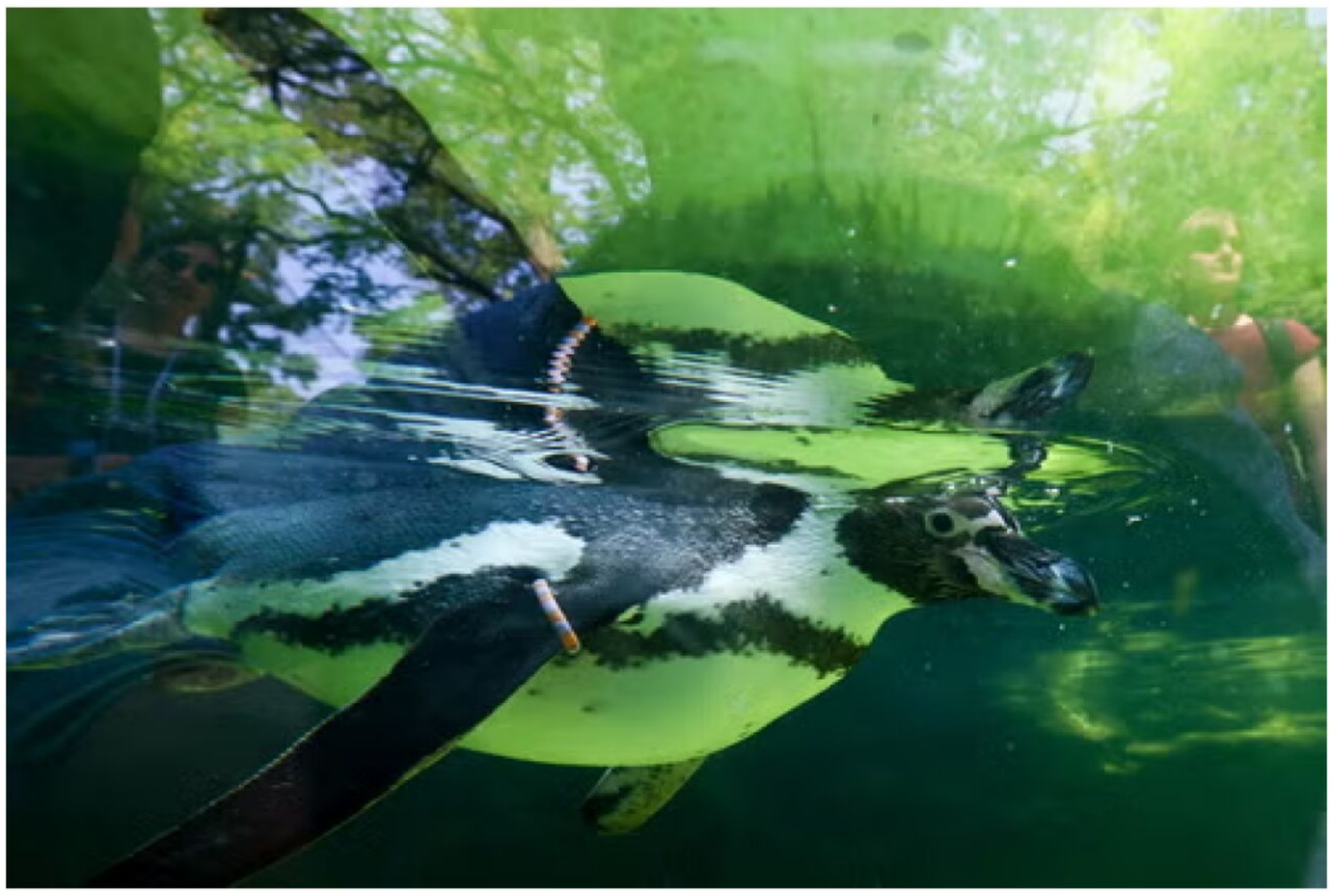
Pictures of the Day

Going overboard

Dinghy medallists for the Netherlands (gold), Norway, (bronze), and Denmark (silver), celebrate, in Marseille. *AP*



Master stroke

An African penguin swims in its enclosure at Berlin Zoo. *EPA*

Sandwich spilling

An Arby's restaurant in Moncks Corner, South Carolina, damaged by a tornado, as Tropical Storm Debby hit America's east coast. *Reuters*

Bar humbug!

Vietnam's Trinh van Vinh fails to make a lift in the men's 61kg Olympic weightlifting event at the South Paris Arena. He failed three times to snatch 128kg and was eliminated. *AP*

Lucky dip

Locals cool off in a water channel in Tehran after the Iranian government declared yesterday to be an extra public holiday with temperatures due to hit 41C. *EPA*

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News

Home news in brief

Shamima Begum travelled to Syria when she was 15 (PA)

Begum loses final bid to challenge removal of British citizenship

Shamima Begum will not be allowed to challenge the removal of her British citizenship at the Supreme Court, justices have ruled. Last year, Ms Begum lost her appeal against the decision to revoke her citizenship on national security grounds at the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC), after she was found in a Syrian refugee camp following her travel to the country as a 15-year-old in 2015. Yesterday, justices at the UK's highest court said Ms Begum could not appeal again after she lost a Court of Appeal bid in February.

In their decision, Lords Reed, Hodge and Lloyd-Jones denied Ms Begum the green light to go to the Supreme Court, finding her proposed appeal grounds "do not raise an arguable point of law". The three justices said that there was no arguable challenge to the Court of Appeal's decision, including on whether Ms Begum should have been able to make representations to the then-home secretary before she was removed of her citizenship.

Dismissing her Court of Appeal challenge in February, the Lady Chief Justice Baroness Carr, said: "It could be argued the decision in Ms Begum's case was harsh. It could also be argued that Ms Begum is the author of her own misfortune, but it is not for this court to agree or disagree with either point of view. The only task of the court was to assess whether the deprivation decision was unlawful."

Thousands complain as Cooper interviewed by own husband

Angry viewers have sent complaints to the broadcaster watchdog Ofcom over *Good Morning Britain (GMB)* presenter Ed Balls interviewing his wife Yvette Cooper on Monday 5 August. It comes in a busy week for the watchdog which also published a letter it had sent to social media companies including Elon Musk's X/Twitter over misinformation and videos being shared on their platforms.

Mr Balls, himself a former Labour leadership candidate and cabinet minister, was interviewing Ms Cooper about the riots and far-right civil unrest spreading across the country. Ahead of the interview, mostly by co-host Kate Garraway, Mr Balls, who has been married to Ms Cooper for more than 25 years, insisted he had "genuine questions" for his wife, as he has "rarely seen her at all in the last week" because of the disorder on the streets.

There was fury over the programme's decision not to ask Mr Balls to stand back from an interview where his relationship with Ms Cooper left his impartiality in question. It was likened to previous cases against broadcaster GB News who Ofcom found to have broken the rules when Tory MPs working as presenters interviewed other Tory MPs.

Girl, 9, dies two days after being hit by London bus

A girl has died after she was hit by a bus while out walking with her family. The girl and her brother, 5, were walking with a family member along Watling Street in Bexleyheath, southeast London, when they were struck last Saturday. She was rushed to hospital but died of her injuries two days later on Monday, with her younger brother also taken there as a precaution.

The driver was arrested on suspicion of causing serious injury through dangerous driving and drug-driving, the Metropolitan Police said. A police spokesperson said: “At 9.05am on Saturday, 3 August, police were called to reports of a bus in collision with two children on Watling Street near the junction with Halcot Avenue. A nine-year-old girl was taken to hospital by London Ambulance Service with life-threatening injuries. Despite the best efforts of medical staff, she sadly died in the afternoon of Monday 5 August.”

Blackstone boss hits newt trouble amid £80m Wiltshire revamp

A billionaire private equity tycoon may have run into one of his most formidable opponents yet: the great crested newt. Stephen Schwarzman, who is the boss of Blackstone and considered one of the most powerful men on Wall Street, has been complaining to chancellor Rachel Reeves about the problems he’s been having on his country pile in Wiltshire. Mr Schwarzman purchased Conholt Park, a 17th-century estate in 2022, and has planning permission for development including a three-storey wing, a renovation of the stables and a new lake.

However, as part of the process, Mr Schwarzman’s contractors will have to follow a habitat strategy prepared by ecologists and check each day for great crested newts, despite a previous survey finding there were none at the site. The private equity tycoon has been regaling Ms Reeves about the various planning issues he has to navigate in order to comply with his planning permission, the *Financial Times* reports. Ms Reeves was due to

meet him in New York on Tuesday night, impressing on her the difficulties of building things in the UK.

However, Ms Reeves can do little about Mr Schwarzman's current newt issue which requires he abide by a number of concessions, according to a plan submitted in May to Wiltshire Council. These include having an ecologist on site during construction and workers checking the site for the great crested newt. In addition, mitigation for the newts should run "for at least 30 years from the completion of the development".

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Harris has a perfect running mate for this vibes election

Walz brings happy Midwest Dad energy as he mocks Trump

‘Bringing back the joy’: Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris and her running mate, Tim Walz, at a campaign rally in Philadelphia on Tuesday (AP)

RICHARD HALL
AT TEMPLE UNIVERSITY, PHILADELPHIA

They’re calling it a vibes election. Vibes are notoriously hard to spot, and they don’t always show up in polls, but as Kamala Harris took to the stage in a cavernous auditorium at Temple

University in Philadelphia on Tuesday with her new running mate, they were measurable in the screams and shouts of 12,000 people.

The replacement of Joe Biden at the top of the Democratic ticket by Harris has changed the energy in the room. And Harris's choice of Minnesota governor Tim Walz as her vice-presidential candidate is a sign that she is banking on that energy taking her to the White House.

It's a strategy based on the idea that campaigns are not won on fear alone, but on feeling. Where Biden spoke sternly and in hushed tones of Donald Trump and the threat he posed to democracy, Harris and her running mate are here to provoke, mock and laugh at their opponents.

Walz set the tone with his first words on stage as the official vice-presidential nominee. "Thank you for bringing back the joy," he said to Harris. Walz is not the most practical pick for the electoral map math – that would have been Josh Shapiro, the popular governor of the must-win Pennsylvania. But he brings a Midwest Dad energy to the ticket that stands in stark contrast to the 4Chan ramblings of JD Vance and the disjointed string of thinly-veiled racism that emanates from Donald Trump.

He was able to land dad jokes and piercing attacks on Trump and Vance with ease. One of the biggest cheers of the night – and there were a lot – came when he combined the two. "Make no mistake, violent crime was up under Donald Trump – and that's not even counting the crimes *he* committed," Walz said.

He then turned his attention to his opponent on the vice-presidential ticket. "Like all regular people I grew up with in the heartland, JD studied at Yale, had his career funded by Silicon Valley billionaires, and then wrote a bestseller trashing that community. Come on. That's not what Middle America is. And I got to tell you. I can't wait to debate the guy... That is, if he's willing to get off the couch and show up," he added, in an apparent reference to a false claim spread online that Vance had intimate relations with a sofa.

Harris appeared to stifle her laughter as Walz made reference to a viral, couch-related story involving JD Vance (Screengrab/CNN)

Harris has been basking in this vibe shift since accepting the Democratic nomination. Here in Philadelphia, her stump speech elicited crowd participation – they knew the words; they knew how to respond. “So hear me when I say,” she said, with a long pause for the crowd to cheer. “I know Donald Trump’s type.”

With the addition of Walz, the Democrats now have two happy warriors on the ticket. It’s a gamble but Republicans are clearly struggling to land an effective response.

As the crowd was waiting for Walz and Harris on stage, Trump seemed to be pining for his former opponent. “What are the chances that Crooked Joe Biden, the WORST President in the history of the U.S., whose Presidency was Unconstitutionally STOLEN from him by Kamabla, Barrack HUSSEIN Obama, Crazy Nancy Pelosi, Shifty Adam Schiff, Cryin’ Chuck Schumer, and others on the Lunatic Left, CRASHES the Democrat National Convention and tries to take back the Nomination, beginning with challenging me to another DEBATE,” he wrote on Truth Social.

Harris supporters at the event have noticed the difference, too. “I think it’s a renewed energy. The city feels different,” said Bridget McKeogh, a Philadelphia resident, as she waited for the rain to pass outside the event. “I love Biden. I think he’s a great president. But things felt kind of old and there wasn’t really an excitement around it. And that’s completely changed. I see

young black people registering people to vote, as well as people that look like me," she added.

Harris will be counting on this new energy to translate into practical advantages – whether that means donations or more volunteer boots on the ground. Some are already seeing it.

"Oh, the vibe shift was immediate," said Marscha Levell. "Within two or three hours, I got a text message from one of my cousins telling me about the Zoom call for Black women for Kamala, and they got 44,000 women, and they raised over $1m in 24 hours. So that was like a major culture shift."

There was a message in the jibes, too. Harris and Walz pitched their ticket not just as joyful versus weird, but as a living representation of what it means to be American.

"The promise of America is what makes it possible for two middle-class kids, one a daughter of Oakland, California, who was raised by a working mother, the other a son of the Nebraska plains who grew up working on a farm... it's the promise of America, because only in America, only in America, is it possible for them together to make it all the way to the White House," Harris said.

White, straight Walz could prove crucial in November

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World

British troops prepare for major Lebanon evacuation

Smoke billows from the site of an Israeli strike on the Lebanese village of Kfar Kila yesterday (Getty)

RACHEL HAGAN

More than 1,000 British military personnel are on standby for a possible evacuation of British nationals from Lebanon “on the same scale” as the operation during the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan.

Soldiers, Royal Marine commandos, sailors and aviators have been deployed to RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus which is just 45 minutes by air from Lebanon and will act as a hub if there is an evacuation mission. Hundreds more men and women are ready in the UK to be deployed to the region at short notice, it has been reported.

The Foreign Office has repeatedly called for its nationals to leave the country after the killings last week of two militant leaders in Lebanon's capital Beirut and Iran's capital Tehran – both attributed to Israel – brought vows of revenge from the militant group Hezbollah.

There are now real fears of an all-out war that would be even worse than the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, believed to have killed around 1,300 Lebanese people and 165 Israelis. Israel warned Dahiyeh, a neighbourhood in Beirut, would be flattened in the next conflict.

UK military personnel board an aircraft departing Kabul on 28 August 2021 in Afghanistan as part of Operation Pitting (MoD/Getty)

The military has prepared for an evacuation on the same scale as the infamous operation to rescue people from Afghanistan's capital of Kabul during the Taliban takeover in 2021, according to *The Times*.

Operation Pitting, as it was formally known, saw more than 1,000 military personnel airlift 15,000 people to safety on more

than 100 flights in the largest British evacuation since the Second World War.

As many as 16,000 British nationals are thought to currently be in Lebanon, foreign secretary David Lammy told the House of Commons last week. He has urged them to leave, saying: "Tensions are high, and the situation could deteriorate rapidly. While we are working round the clock to strengthen our consular presence in Lebanon, my message to British nationals there is clear – leave now."

Neither Israeli nor Lebanese officials have issued any orders to evacuate or prepare, even as many airlines have suspended service.

The US embassy in Beirut also issued a security alert on Saturday to encourage American citizens in the country "to book any ticket available to them, even if that flight does not depart immediately or does not follow their first-choice route"

Hezbollah legislator Amin Sherri said the government has an emergency plan in case of all-out war, and the country has enough fuel and medicine to last between two and four months. Huge diplomatic efforts, led by the United States, have been underway, trying to prevent the explosion of a full-scale Middle East war.

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World

Mastermind behind attack on Israel new Hamas leader

Hardliner Yahya Sinwar picked after Ismail Haniyeh killed

The 61-year-old spent more than 20 years in an Israeli prison and is thought to reside deep inside a tunnel network in Gaza (AP)

JACK JEFFERY

Yahya Sinwar's appointment as the top leader of Hamas formalises a role he assumed in the early hours of 7 October, when the surprise attack into Israel that he helped mastermind

ushered in the bloodiest chapter of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

He is seen as a hardliner with closer ties to Hamas's armed wing than his predecessor, Ismail Haniyeh, who was killed in an explosion in Iran's capital last month that was widely blamed on Israel and could spark an all-out regional war. Sinwar was already seen as having the final word on any ceasefire agreement for Gaza and the release of dozens of Israeli hostages still held by Hamas.

But he is deep in hiding inside Gaza, and mediators say it takes several days to exchange messages with him. That raises questions about how he would manage a sprawling organisation with cadres across the Middle East.

Hamas has survived the killing of several top leaders across more than three decades, while maintaining a high degree of internal cohesion – and tapping Sinwar, who tops Israel's most-wanted list, was a show of defiance. But Hamas has never faced a crisis of this magnitude – and the man who engineered it is now charged with managing the fallout.

Haniyeh was a veteran of Hamas's political wing who had once served as Palestinian prime minister and in more recent years had managed the group's affairs from his base in Qatar. While Hamas has always championed armed struggle, Haniyeh and other exiled leaders had occasionally struck a more moderate tone, even expressing openness to a possible two-state solution, although still officially refusing to recognise Israel.

Sinwar, by contrast, spent more than two decades in Israeli prisons and told interrogators he had killed 12 suspected Palestinian collaborators, gaining a reputation for brutality among people on both sides of the conflict. He and Mohammed Deif, the shadowy head of Hamas's armed wing who Israel claims to have killed in a recent strike, spent years building up the group's military strength and are believed to have devised the 7 October attack. Militants burst into Israel that day, killing some 1,200 people, both civilians and soldiers, and abducting around 250.

In recent negotiations, “Haniyeh had played a big role in trying to convince Sinwar to accept a ceasefire proposal with Israel,” said Hugh Lovatt, an expert on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

Sinwar has stuck to demands for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and a lasting ceasefire – even as nearly 40,000 Palestinians have been killed in the ongoing war, according to local officials, and much of the territory left in ruins.

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to continue the war until Hamas is completely destroyed and all the hostages return home.

A portrait of slain Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh is displayed during a a demonstration in Lebanon (Getty)

“The killing of Haniyeh already brought negotiations back to the drawing board,” said Lina Khatib, an expert on the conflict at Chatham House, a London-based think tank. “This next chess move by Hamas makes negotiations even trickier.”

Sadeq Abu Amer, head of the Palestinian Dialogue Group, a think tank based in Turkey, said that while Sinwar’s elevation might appear to be a “challenge to Israel”, it is still possible to make a deal. He added that Sinwar, in his new role, “might take a step that will surprise everyone”.

Predicting how Sinwar will lead Hamas is difficult because of the secrecy around him. Sinwar has not been seen since the start of

the war and even before 7 October made only rare public appearances. He is likely in hiding deep inside Hamas's tunnel network and largely cut off from the outside world.

While he can be expected to set overall policy and make the final decision on any ceasefire deal, Hamas's day-to-day operations in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and elsewhere are likely to be managed by its exiled leaders in Qatar, Lebanon, Turkey and Iran.

"There are issues that he can make a decision on and there are issues and matters that his deputies and the rest of the members of the political bureau can do," said Hani al-Masri, a veteran Palestinian analyst who has met most of Hamas's leaders over the years, including Haniyeh and Sinwar.

Hamas has a long history of persevering after the killing of its top leaders – including its founder and spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who was killed in an airstrike in 2004. But it has never faced a campaign of targeted killings on this scale.

Israel says it has killed scores of Hamas commanders in Gaza, including Deif, whose death Hamas has neither confirmed nor denied. Another top Hamas leader, Saleh al-Arouri, was killed in an apparent Israeli airstrike in Beirut in January. The string of targeted killings has likely led other Hamas leaders to limit their movements and contacts. That could eventually degrade the organisation, even as it enjoys the support of many – but not most – Palestinians.

"Israel's elimination of senior Hamas leaders who cannot easily be replaced has likely had a qualitative impact on the movement," Mr Lovatt said. "More fundamentally, though, the killing of senior figures such as Arouri and Haniyeh appears to have tipped the movement in a more hardline direction."

Additional reporting by Sarah El Deeb and Abby Sewell

AP

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World

Nobel laureate economist to become Bangladesh leader

Muhammad Yunus is escorted by police in Paris while en route to his homeland yesterday (Getty)

SHWETA SHARMA

Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus will be the new leader of Bangladesh's interim government after the dramatic exit of long-time prime minister Sheikh Hasina following a popular uprising.

Mr Yunus, who is an 84-year-old acclaimed economist and one of the most prominent political rivals of Ms Hasina, has been

announced as the chief adviser of the interim government by president Mohammed Shahabuddin's press secretary. His appointment was favoured by student protest leaders who have led a mass movement against Ms Hasina since late June and rejected any possibilities of accepting a military-led government.

Mr Yunus will be in charge of restoring normalcy in violence-hit Bangladesh after a protest started against a quota system in government jobs turned into anger against the long-running government of Ms Hasina, leaving almost 400 people dead in mass demonstrations. The decision came during a meeting that included military chiefs, organisers of the student protests, prominent business leaders, and civil society members.

In a statement yesterday, Mr Yunus urged everyone to stay calm and refrain from violence. "I congratulate the brave students who took the lead in making our Second Victory Day possible and to the people for giving your total support to them. Let us make the best use of our new victory. Let us not let this slip away because of our mistakes," he said. "This is our beautiful country with lots of exciting possibilities. We must protect and make it a wonderful country for us and for our future generations," he said.

In a separate statement, Prof Yunus said he was initially reluctant to accept the student's request but agreed "given the sacrifices of the students, especially those who have lost their lives for our nation's liberation".

"I am not in a position to say no to them," he said, according to the *Financial Times*. But he said he has no intention to seek any elected or appointed office beyond his role as chief adviser for the interim period. "In the coming days, I will talk with all of the relevant parties about how we can work together to rebuild Bangladesh and how they can help," he added. "It is critical that trust in government be restored quickly," Mr Yunus added.

A man ties a rope around the head of a large statue of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, father of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina who was overthrown (AP)

Other members of the new government were to be decided on yesterday after discussions with political parties and other stakeholders to overcome the current crisis and pave way for elections, student leaders have said.

Mr Yunus is in Paris and will be returning to Dhaka. Mr Yunus, awarded the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, is an economist and banker who mostly stayed away from politics as he spent much of his time in courtrooms defending the more than 100 cases filed against him under the Hasina administration. His supporters describe these cases as a politically motivated vendetta designed to undermine his position as a potential rival.

Mr Yunus won the Nobel for pioneering the use of microcredit to help impoverished people, particularly women. He is known as the “banker to the poor” for founding Grameen Bank and pioneering microcredit. Mr Yunus has never run for office but considered forming a new political party in 2007 after the Bangladesh government split up and the military seized power. But he scrapped the idea within a few weeks.

In January he was sentenced to six months in jail after he was convicted of violating labour laws, in a trial that was criticised as politically motivated ahead of the country’s general election. He, however, remains a respected figure in Bangladesh and has an

international clout among elite businessmen, economists, heads of governments, and European royals.

The president on Tuesday dissolved parliament paving the way for the new interim government after student protesters' ultimatum threatening more protests. Mr Shahabuddin also ordered the release of opposition leader Khaleda Zia, a longtime Hasina rival who was convicted of corruption charges in 2018, from her house arrest.

Hundreds of people gathered at a rally in Dhaka called by the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, whose leader and former prime minister Ms Zia, 78, was freed from house arrest by the president on Tuesday. Appearing via video link, Ms Zia vowed to uphold democracy and not indulge in revenge politics.

Meanwhile, the ousted prime minister, who is currently taking refuge in India, was reported to be exploring options to seek asylum in the UAE, Saudi Arabia or Finland. Ms Hasina's focus appeared to have moved away from her preferred choices of the UK or the US, with reports suggesting she did not receive a favourable response from either.

Her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, who has been speaking to the media on behalf of the family since Ms Hasina's resignation, denied that his mother had sought asylum in the UK or another country. He told NDTV that she could yet travel to meet her family members in the US, the UK or Finland.

How Bangladesh's students led first Gen Z revolution

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World news in brief

Protesters wearing T-shirts reading ‘Stop blessing corridas’ in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican yesterday (AP/Gregorio Borgia)

Animal rights protesters interrupt Pope’s Vatican audience

Activists from animal rights group Peta yesterday interrupted Pope Francis’s general audience, shouting and holding up banners against bullfighting before being escorted out of the Paul VI hall.

The pair were wearing T-shirts reading “Stop blessing corridas” and holding banners saying “Bullfighting is a sin”. Peta has been pleading with the pope to cut the Catholic Church’s ties with bullfighting and condemn the “despicable blood sport”.

According to the organisation, each year tens of thousands of bulls are killed in bullfighting festivals globally, many dedicated to Catholic saints. “As numerous countries are wisely banning this sick form of ‘entertainment’. Pope Francis must immediately denounce this blood sport and cut the Catholic Church’s shameful ties with bullfighting,” Peta said in a recent statement on its website.

The Vatican didn’t immediately comment on yesterday’s protest.
AP

Covid is making a comeback, warns WHO

Covid-19 is on the up, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has warned. A top official said the number of people testing positive for Covid across 84 countries has been rising, with the virus circulating at unusual levels for the summer months.

New waves of infection have been registered in the Americas, Europe and the western Pacific.

Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, technical consultant for the WHO, told journalists in Geneva: “In recent months, regardless of the season, many countries have experienced surges of Covid-19, including at the Olympics where at least 40 athletes have tested positive. Overall, test positivity is above 10 per cent, but this fluctuates per region. In Europe, per cent positivity is above 20 per cent.”

Woman admits faking being left to die in forest

An American woman who was found chained up in a forest in western India has admitted that she shackled herself to a tree, after blaming her “husband” for her ordeal.

Lalita Kayi Kumar, 50, was discovered on 27 July in a dense forest in Sindhudurg by a cowherd, who said she was “screaming like an animal”. After being admitted to a psychiatric hospital in Goa, she claimed her husband had left her to “die without food or water”.

She has now admitted that she is unmarried and that she tied herself up, police and doctors told the BBC.

German hotel collapse proves fatal

Two people have died and several others were trapped after a hotel in Germany collapsed yesterday.

Six people, including a two-year-old child and their parents, were rescued without serious injuries from the wreckage in the town of Kroev, which sits within the steep banks of the river Moselle in an area famous for its wine.

“I have never been so happy to see a stranger’s child,” rescue operation chief Joerg Teusch said of the tearful moment the toddler was rescued from the building. State prosecutor Peter Fritzen said an investigation into what caused the collapse will begin once the rescue effort has concluded. *AP*

Crown princess’s son arrested in Norway

The eldest son of Norway‘s crown princess Mette-Marit has been arrested on suspicion of causing bodily harm and criminal damage, Oslo police said yesterday.

Marius Borg Høiby is the stepson of the heir to the Norwegian throne, crown prince Haakon, and is the son of Mette-Marit from a previous relationship. He has no royal title or official duties.

On Sunday, officers responded to a disturbance in downtown Oslo and a man in his twenties was briefly detained. Police have confirmed it was Borg Høiby, 27, who faces preliminary charges, one stage short of formal charges. Officers said there was “a relationship between the suspect and the victim”. *AP*

Man charged with stealing ‘Bluey’ coins

A man in Australia has been charged with stealing more than £300,000 worth of limited edition coins commemorating the

hit children's TV show *Bluey*. The coins, produced by the Australian mint, are legal tender and resemble regular A$1 coins, but with one face featuring the cartoon dog.

Police say the 47-year-old man and two accomplices stole the coins from the back of a lorry at a warehouse where he worked and where they were being stored on their way to Brisbane. They were sold online within hours. *Reuters*

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Voices

Considering he's a populist, Farage is terribly unpopular

The Reform leader is on the wrong side of public opinion on the riots – only 16 per cent of YouGov respondents think they are 'people with legitimate concerns' (PA)

JOHN RENTOUL
CHIEF POLITICAL COMMENTATOR

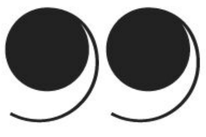
Nigel Farage's first reaction to the riots was to tell Keir Starmer he was wrong to blame them on the "far right". It was striking that the leader of Reform seemed to be more concerned with a political label than with condemning the violence.

We know what he meant: that people are so upset about immigration that he can understand why they might riot, even though he personally wouldn't go that far. And of course, he has a point – it is not "far right" to think that immigration has been too high. It is, however, racist to respond to the killings of three girls at a dance class in Southport by throwing bricks at a mosque. That is how demagoguery works: it starts with a reasonable point and twists it. But the truth about Farage is that he is not a very good demagogue. For a "populist" he is surprisingly unpopular.

A YouGov opinion poll on Tuesday found that most people think that the rioters are "thugs", "racist" and "far right". Those are the words chosen by 67 per cent, 58 per cent and 52 per cent. It would seem that the British people, even though they do tend to think that immigration has been too high, can separate that view from the use of violence as an expression of it. Only 16 per cent of people think that the rioters are "people with legitimate concerns".

We should give Farage credit, therefore, for being more explicit than before in a new video on Tuesday that he is opposed to violence: "Thugs setting fire to hotels, migrant hotels, with people in them is just wrong. We do not support – I do not support street protest, violence or thuggery in any way, and that's why for 30 years I've fought elections because I believe that democracy is the peaceful way to solve problems."

Nigel Farage is a classic demagogue, dealing in emotive half-truths and conspiracy theories, stirring up grievances but failing to offer solutions



And yet he cannot just leave it there. He has to go on with the narrative of grievance that helps sustain precisely what he condemns. He said that Starmer and Priti Patel are "wrong" to

deny that the police are racially biased: “Most of us think that ethnic minority groups are policed entirely differently from white British people. That is what the country thinks, that is what the country feels, and there is evidence to back it up.”

In fact, he is the one who is wrong. He is wrong about the facts: Black people were four times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police than white people last year. And he is wrong about the perception: by 52 per cent to 34 per cent the British public say the police have handled the recent riots “well”.

Starmer and Patel, on the other hand, are right. Patel, who was home secretary at the time of the Black Lives Matter protests, pointed out: “There’s a clear difference between blocking streets or roads being closed [and] burning down libraries, hotels or food banks and attacking places of worship.”

Farage is a classic demagogue, dealing in emotive half-truths and conspiracy theories, stirring up grievances but failing to offer solutions. In the latest video, he asks: “Do we want to deal with the symptom or solve the problem?” But when he was asked to explain how his “one in, one out” policy to “end mass immigration” would work in a TV debate in the election campaign, he became incoherent. And on the specific problem of “undocumented young men crossing the English Channel”, he has no better ideas than either this government or the last one.

The crowning irony of Farage’s video is that he suggests that Starmer has a weak democratic mandate because the government was supported by only 34 per cent of those who voted, which is 20 per cent of the whole electorate. On that basis, only 8.5 per cent of the whole electorate voted for Reform. As I say, for a populist, he is remarkably unpopular.

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Voices

Starmer must not duck the challenge of immigration

The PM risks a repeat of the unrest that has gripped the UK unless he delivers (PA)

ANDREW GRICE

Keir Starmer is handling the violent disorder well. His experience as director of public prosecutions during the 2011 riots is serving both him and the country. He is very obviously playing on his home ground.

I had a feeling Starmer's first crisis as prime minister would be on foreign affairs, but I was wrong. On the riots, the immediate priority is policing, and restoring control on the streets so that no one lives in fear. But when this crisis ends, his government will have some important lessons to learn to prevent a repeat of the unrest.

Labour politicians should resist the temptation to regard the problem as the very evident far-right racism and the solution as a tough response from the police and the courts. They will also need to address the alienation of people in left-behind communities who feel powerless and think mainstream politicians don't respect them. Labour ministers cannot allow the many areas experiencing this wide sense of disillusionment to become a breeding ground for the far right, who will not disappear when some of their followers are in jail.

The far right is not only a British problem. Arguably, the UK is a little behind the European curve, but the 4 million votes won by Nigel Farage's Reform UK last month showed, as Starmer rightly noted, that Britain is "not immune" from the rise of populism and nationalism on the continent.

Although some Labour figures will recoil from it, this challenge will require the government to adopt a policy on immigration that commands majority public support. Immigration is not a fringe issue: four out of five people are worried about the number of illegal migrants and a majority want to see lower a level of legal migration. If Labour ducks this challenge, it will risk losing power. Starmer will have to deliver the "change" Labour promised on this issue.

The lesson from Rishi Sunak's government is that rhetoric is not enough: "stop the boats" became a millstone round his neck, and his party paid the price last month. Nor can Labour resort to a spray job like Ed Miliband's "controls on immigration" mugs in 2015, which were aimed at countering Farage's Ukip but convinced no one and advertised Labour's divisions on this sensitive issue. Having a firm but fair immigration policy is not far right; it is what the country wants. The Tories purported to

do the “firm”, but there was little of the “fair” – Labour can do both.

Labour ministers cannot allow the many areas experiencing a wide sense of disillusionment to become a breeding ground for the far right

Some Labour figures understand this. In what now looks like a prophetic speech, Peter Mandelson told Le Cercle des Economistes think tank in Aix-en-Provence on 6 July that some progressives “run away” from the migration issue out of “discomfort”, rather than find progressive solutions. “There are limits to what is sustainable, and we should start by recognising those limits,” he said.

Mandelson argued that the disillusionment is about cultural as well as economic issues. He said: “Many on the left pursue a politics, as they see it, of inclusiveness, asserting the rights and voice of minorities. This is important. But all too often the left fail to see that their inclusiveness is also selective. And it denies the right of those in the perceived majority to have legitimate grievances of their own, and this further compounds them.”

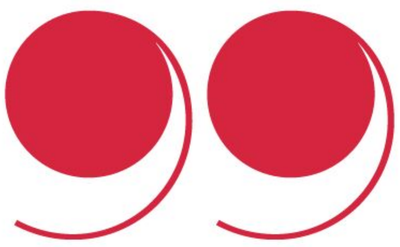
He warned: “We will not reconnect with these voters unless we understand and adequately answer cultural anxieties and their sense of disempowerment. As politicians, we need to start listening to what these voters are saying to us.” Migration is not just a numbers game. It’s time the government invested just as much effort into ensuring integration and social cohesion, not just talking a good game and thinking these boxes have been ticked.

There is no justification for the violence or the racism. But there is a context, and it should not be ignored. Some 85 per cent of Britons oppose the unrest, according to YouGov, but people also

acknowledge longer-term political causes: two in three think immigration policy in recent years contributed to the violence, and 55 per cent think recent Tory governments did.

By coincidence, as I was writing this column John Hayes, one of the heroes of the horrific Southport knife attack, hit the nail on the head in an interview on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme. Hayes, who heard screams, tried to disarm the attacker and was stabbed, said the Southport tragedy was a "catalyst" but not the "root cause" of the violence, which he believes is a "strong current of discontent". Hayes, who has no political axe to grind, felt dismayed by Starmer's and Yvette Cooper's pledges to use "the full force of the law".

He said they "need to address the cause not the symptom" and warned that putting people in prison would not address the core issue. Those in Labour who doubt the need for a much wider response to this crisis should take note.



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Voices

Sunak's tech hero has turned into a very public villain

When the then prime minister and Elon Musk met at the AI Safety Summit last year, it was less a serious encounter and more a love-in (PA)

CHRIS BLACKHURST

In a few years crowded with surreal political moments, the meeting between prime minister Rishi Sunak and tech multi-billionaire and Twitter/X boss Elon Musk at the AI Safety Summit in London last November was right up there.

It wasn't so much a serious encounter between the UK leader and a global entrepreneur as a love-in. And the adoration was mostly one way. In the gold-decorated room at Lancaster House, favoured by former premiers for some of their most historic announcements – Theresa May used it for her landmark Brexit speech – the pair were joined by an audience of cabinet members, tech figures (and inexplicably, the US rapper will.i.am).

Such was the sugary aftertaste created from Sunak's fawning delivery and "questions" that verged on declarations of worship ("You're known for being such a brilliant innovator and technologist," was the prefix to one) that there was little doubt: the entire event appeared like a job application from the soon-to-be-out-of-work prime minister.

Really, it was embarrassing. There was a war going on in Ukraine, China was threatening Taiwan, the world was getting hotter, and the poverty gap in the UK was getting wider – these and much more, could, and should have been occupying his thoughts and time. Instead, we were treated to the sight of the most powerful person in the land reduced to the role of fawning prompter and ego-massager.

"It's been a huge privilege and pleasure to have you here," the prime minister told Musk as they left the stage.

Musk infuriated authorities by reinstating the Twitter/X accounts of the far-right activist Tommy Robinson. It's become personal, with Musk using the hashtag 'two-tier Keir' in reference to right-wing criticism of alleged two-tier policing

Well, if it was designed as securing some sort of rehabilitation for Sunak, post-ejection from No 10, it's backfired now. He

remains kingpin of the Conservative Party – until a replacement is appointed. Meanwhile, his hero is turning into a very public villain where the British government is concerned – suggesting "civil war is inevitable" following the riots and then going even further.

In response to a Keir Starmer tweet with a video of his comments stating his government will not tolerate attacks on "mosques or Muslim communities", Musk replied: "Shouldn't you be concerned about attacks on *all* communities?"

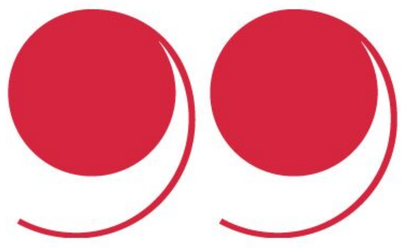
Musk had previously infuriated the authorities by reinstating the Twitter/X accounts of the far-right activist Tommy Robinson. It's become personal, with Musk using the hashtag "two-tier Keir" in reference to right-wing criticism of alleged two-tier policing.

It's hard to know what is in Musk's head. He loves playing the mercurial, unpredictable prophet. He also defends with a passion the right to free speech. Possibly, he feels he must fight back at whatever the Labour government is planning with the Online Safety Bill to curb Twitter/X and other social media.

Noticeably, he has become more voluble in the US against the Joe Biden administration as a similar threat looms. He has also endorsed Donald Trump. There's a sense, though, of someone who is doing it and saying it because he can; who rather enjoys the notoriety. This is an individual with 193 million followers and a fortune larger than the economy of many countries.

He knows, too, that they need him. Not for Twitter/X, but for Tesla and his other tech and AI projects. They would love his investment in factories, laboratories and jobs. That was where Sunak, officially, was coming from. Is Musk bigger than Starmer, than the UK? Possibly, he thinks he is. The battle lines are drawn.

As for his would-be disciple, Sunak has gone strangely silent. Ah well, there is always Bill Gates to try.



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Voices

Why Walz could have the US electorate dancing to his tune

He’s behind you: Kamala Harris introduced Tim Walz as her running mate at a rally in Philadelphia on Tuesday (AP)

MARY DEJEVSKY

At an exuberant public rally in Philadelphia, just a few hours after being formally recognised as the Democratic Party’s nominee for president, US vice-president Kamala Harris introduced her chosen running mate and the candidate to take her place as vice-president in the event of her election victory in November.

He is Tim Walz, the governor of Minnesota – a staunchly Democratic state in the US heartland, "flyover" country par excellence – who has an exemplary all-American profile: former National Guard, former schoolteacher, former school football coach, and a family man married to a schoolteacher.

In choosing Walz, who at 60 is a near-contemporary, Harris, 59, spurned the widely voiced common wisdom that she should select someone from a swing state, who could potentially bring crucial electoral college votes with him in the event of a close race. The favourites here were Josh Shapiro, the Democratic governor of Pennsylvania, which has 19 electoral college delegates, and Mark Kelly, a Democratic senator from Arizona.

At least some of her calculation emerged loud and clear from the first Harris-Walz rally on Tuesday evening, where he had to stand rather awkwardly on the podium as she delivered a half-hour eulogy.

First, he ticks many of the boxes she does not. He is from a modest, provincial and rural background, having grown up on a farm in Nebraska – both Harris's parents were academics in California. He has served in the military. He is a family man – Trump and Vance between them had already pinpointed Harris's childlessness and complicated romantic history as an electoral weakness (which in conservative America it could well be). He is a better orator than she is, allowing himself a dash of humour. Most obviously, he is a white male, who will "balance" a ticket headed by a mixed-race woman.

The nomination of Harris, who made her legal and political career in California, de facto excluded several people who would have been promising candidates in another year. Gretchen Whitmer, the governor of Michigan (an important swing state) may have been a good choice, but would have meant an all-female ticket. Gavin Newsom, the governor of California, would also have been in the frame, but an all-California ticket was hardly going to appeal across the length and breadth of the US.

Bill Clinton's – surprise – choice of Al Gore, rather than an older party sage, gave the ticket a youthful, optimistic feel

And if the US is not ready for an all-female ticket, it probably is not ready for one headed by a mixed-race woman and a gay man. Pete Buttigieg, transport secretary in the current administration, ran in the presidential primaries four years ago and was a much-lauded mayor of South Bend, Indiana. As a gay man, his nomination – either for president or vice-president – could be envisaged in today's United States, but not this year. Once Harris was heading the ticket, the near-certainty was that a white straight man would accompany her – and so one has.

There are other considerations that may have given Walz the edge over the other contenders to be Harris's running mate. One is the sharpness of the rhetoric he has used against Donald Trump, as the Republican nominee, and his running mate, JD Vance.

In what had seemed almost a throwaway line, he had described both of them as "weird", a term that enjoyed instant resonance in popular discourse and social media, and looks set to stick. Walz's early life means that Vance – from a highly dysfunctional background – does not have the monopoly on modest beginnings and the undoubted appeal of such stories to American voters, as, in modern times, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama could attest. He also has a solidity, in terms of his career and reputation, that makes for a heightened contrast with Trump.

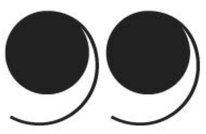
At least as relevant, though, could be Walz's record in Minnesota, where he has governed as an unashamed liberal and progressive – providing free school breakfasts and lunches for all children, defending a woman's "right to choose", following the

Supreme Court decision to rescind abortion as a federal constitutional right, and guaranteeing wide health insurance provision. In this, his first public appearance as vice-presidential nominee, he also spoke of his and his wife's experience of IVF.

Much of this is diametrically opposed to Vance's mix of hard-scrabble self-reliance and Roman Catholic conservatism, and clearly chimes with Harris's own liberal views – albeit they are thought too liberal by some to make many inroads into the Republican vote, though this remains to be seen.

What is shaping up to be quite a sharp ideological divergence, however, means not only that US voters could face a very clear choice in November, but – as could be glimpsed at this first rally – that this could become a campaign in which the way Minnesota is governed is held up as a template for the direction in which a Harris-Walz White House would try to steer the United States.

Walz's early life means Vance – from a highly dysfunctional background – does not have the monopoly on modest beginnings and the undoubted appeal of such stories to American voters, as, in modern times, Clinton and Obama could attest



It should also be noted that Minnesota is a bit more interesting than just another straight-down-the-line Democrat-voting state. While it has voted Democrat in federal elections for decades, it also has an independent streak, having elected Jesse "the body" Ventura, a former navy commando and professional wrestler, as state governor in 1999 under the flag of the US Reform Party (he is now a Green). His tenure proved more difficult than he may have hoped, and he declined to seek re-election, turning to TV presenting instead.

The choice of Tim Walz to be the vice-presidential nominee, and the prospect of Minnesota under his leadership featuring as something of a model of Democratic governance, could in part give the lie to a dismissive claim that is wheeled out before every US election at the stage when running mates are being selected. This is that the choice of vice-presidential candidate really does not affect the outcome of a US election; it is all about who will become president, no one else. This time around, such views have already been voiced by Trump – and, with a nice self-deprecating touch, by his intended vice-president, JD Vance.

Sometimes, though – it seems to me – the choice of running mate does matter, and this may be one of them. In fact, it could be argued that Kamala Harris is living proof that running mates and vice-presidents matter during the campaign. There is probably no way that she would have won the nomination, had she not effectively inherited it from Joe Biden when his own candidacy became a liability and the Democratic Party needed a new nominee, fast.

Yes, it was totally immaterial who Hillary Clinton chose as her running mate – the eminently forgettable Tim Kaine – because she was so much the dominant candidate. But Bill Clinton's – surprise – choice of Al Gore, rather than an older party sage, gave the ticket a youthful, optimistic feel that surely helped deprive George Bush – and his singularly unimpressive vice-president, Dan Quayle – of a second term.

And while Mike Pence may not have helped or hindered Donald Trump's election in 2016, he certainly made a difference when he defied Trump to confirm his 2020 defeat. Today, it could be argued that Trump's campaign has been weakened by the premature choice of running mate for a contest – against Biden – that is not now taking place.

How much, or even whether, Tim Walz will strengthen Kamala Harris's presidential campaign will only transpire as they criss-cross the US in the 90 or so days that remain before the vote on 5 November. Can they match the appeal of Trump-Vance in the depressed heartland? Can they sustain the energy and optimism of their Philadelphia debut through the party convention and

beyond? Their slogan, for public chanting, is “No going back”. We shall see.

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We are failing young boys and paying the price for it

Dr Stephen M Whitehead's article about male violence is the brightest and most hopeful light I have seen shone on our current scenes of aggression (For some men, chaos on the streets is just a good day out, Voices, yesterday).

My wife similarly devoted her life to nurturing early child development and was honoured for her work on the family literacy strategy. There is so much evidence that young children – especially boys – are being failed by the lack of youth development facilities and especially the poisonous promotion of male superiority and dominance on social media.

The need for some radical rethinking is urgent and needs to be a high priority for our new government.

David Buckton *Cambridgeshire*

When you think about it, bad behaviour virtually always arises from a position of weakness, whether it's a toddler having a tantrum, a violent confrontation-relishing rioter (as discussed by Dr Stephen M Whitehead recently) or by a wealthy, power-obsessed owner of a social media platform. These people, in their different ways, all have some sort of deficit. That doesn't justify the bad behaviour, or absolve its adult perpetrators from guilt. But it does support Keir Starmer's reluctance to name names, and give the miscreants more justification.

And it behoves us all to educate our young boys and to abandon toxic social media.

Susan Alexander *South Gloucestershire*

Coming home to roost

David Smith of Taunton, in his letter to *The Independent* (Yesterday), is absolutely correct. The rioting by right-wing extremists has been planned for some time and they were only waiting for an excuse to launch it as soon as possible after the Tories were kicked out. Unfortunately, some sections of the press and political parties who now decry the violence have spent years conceding and promoting the racist positions which these groups disseminate. Chickens are coming home to roost.

Mervyn Hughes *Cambridge*

It is immensely saddening to witness the recent far-right riots across the UK. Britain has always been known worldwide as an

oasis of religious tolerance, cultural inclusivity, diversity and community cohesion. The actions of a tiny minority do not represent in any shape or form the cherished values and principles that are espoused by the overwhelming majority of people in this country. The riots will undoubtedly affect Britain's status as a magnet for international students and as an economic powerhouse.

Let us hope that peace will eventually prevail and that Britain will remain a rich tapestry for tolerance and liberty.

Dr Munjed Farid Al Qutob *London*

Hijacked and hyped up

An astonishing thing happened yesterday. I noticed on social media numerous posts expressing outrage that the government planned to extract national insurance from state pensions. But when I searched to find the details, there were none to be found. Then I stumbled upon a *Telegraph* article saying Andrew Dilnot had told Rachel Reeves this measure would be necessary.

It seems, in the blink of an eye, the views of someone who is not in the government have been hijacked and hyped up on social media to create outrage around a policy which does not exist. Coupled with the riots currently going on, it seems hard not to see this as part of an anti-democratic effort to fan the flames and undermine an elected government in favour of one preferred by hard-line neoconservatives and right-wing racist extremists.

Dr Stephen Riley *Somerset*

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How Bangladesh's students led first Gen Z revolution

After month-long violent protests, young people backed by opposition politicians have overthrown the authoritarian Sheikh Hasina government. **Alisha Rahaman Sarkar** reports

Bangladeshis take to the streets in protest against former prime minister Hasina (AP)

Bangladesh is no stranger to student protests but rarely has the country witnessed such large numbers of inexperienced young people take on a giant political figure such as Sheikh Hasina Wazed.

The protests began in June when thousands of school, college and university students, mostly in their twenties, poured onto the streets across the country, demanding an end to a system ensuring 30 per cent of government jobs went to the descendants of independence war heroes – and later the resignation of the prime minister.

The month-long protest culminated on Monday with extraordinary scenes as Bangladeshis stormed Prime Minister Hasina's palatial official residence, forcing her to flee the country in an abrupt end to her 20 years in power across two spells.

As she fled with her daughter and sister to India, protesters rejoiced in streets still stained by blood from violent clashes between students, the security forces and counter-protesters from the ruling party Awami League's student wing. "There was a sense of ecstasy in the air, a sense of joy and celebration that we had collectively put an end to the barbaric rule of Sheikh Hasina," Saima Rehman, a 22-year-old university student, tells *The Independent*.

Ms Hasina ruled Bangladesh with an iron fist, her time in power characterised by a ruthless approach to her critics, deeply flawed elections and the mass arrest of opposition politicians to the point where there was very little space left for dissent in the country.

People power: protesters on the streets of Dhaka celebrate the prime minister's resignation (Reuters)

For many like Ms Rehman, these demonstrations were a watershed moment, the first time they had felt compelled to take to the streets in protest. “We have heard about the history of protests [in Bangladesh] but I never thought I’d partake in one,” she says. “We didn’t think we had the courage to stand up to the ruling party but it seemed real when we marched toward her official residence.”

“It is a historic day in Bangladesh as what started out as a student-led movement to change the civil service quota system transformed into a revolution that ousted the 15-year rule of Sheikh Hasina,” says Sabrina Karim, associate professor of government at Cornell University. “This might very well be the first successful Gen Z-led revolution.”

If it can be said that they come from a generation notorious for spending their lives absorbed by their screens, protesters used this to their advantage as those same social media platforms were put to good use organising the protests that started as peaceful demonstrations. The situation turned violent when the Bangladesh Chhatra League – the student wing of the ruling party – began counter-protests, leading to clashes.

A man holding a Bangladesh flag stands in front of a vehicle that was set on fire at the Ganabhaban, the prime minister’s residence, following her resignation (Reuters)

Sensing a challenge to her rule, Ms Hasina ordered law enforcement agencies to unleash brute force against the protesters to try to quash them – killing more than 280 people

in July. Soon the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Jamaat-e-Islami threw their weight behind the students, leading the protests to become one of the biggest revolutions in the history of south Asia.

At one point last week it appeared the protests might have fizzled out – restrictions on internet services and an indefinite curfew severed student coordinators from their social networks and seemed to throttle their fury. The internet shutdown forced the student leaders to adopt old-school methods such as telephone calls and word of mouth to gather people.

"Once the internet was briefly back, we put out posts on Facebook calling people to join. Of course, we reached out to the masses through the media but messaging apps were mostly used to circulate the notes," a 25-year-old student, who doesn't want to be named, tells *The Independent*.

The restoration of the internet and the immediate new call for protests that followed, this time demanding nothing short of Ms Hasina's resignation, was answered by millions of people, who gathered in the streets of Dhaka and other cities in defiance of the curfew.

Ms Hasina made one last attempt to quash the protests by force, with Sunday's clashes leaving at least 109 people dead, including 14 police officers, and hundreds of others injured. Another 130 died on Monday morning before the army told the government it would shoot at protesters no more – effectively ending Ms Hasina's rule.

"It is remarkable that all the student groups could come together to organise the second bout of protest this week. We are surprised that people in record numbers joined the agitation despite the police violence and the brutal killings. The people, the students, they were all prepared to die for their country," the Dhaka University student says.

Looted items are carried from the Ganabhaban (Reuters)

After Ms Hasina's resignation, many members of the opposition party joined those on the streets and there were ugly scenes as they vented their anger against the ruling party. Some were filmed vandalising a statue of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman – the founding father of independent Bangladesh and actual father to Ms Hasina. Large-scale arson was reported from Dhaka, and several houses and offices of ruling Awami League members were torched as the overwhelmed police took a step back.

Bangladesh's Gen Z revolution has not been without its casualties. At least 440 people have been killed between 16 July and Monday, according to a tally by Bangladeshi daily *Prothom Alo*. At least 32 children, some as young as four years old, died during the first wave of violence, Unicef said in a statement.

On Tuesday the streets of Dhaka appeared calmer, with no reports of fresh violence as the president dissolved the country's parliament, clearing the way for new elections.

Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, here in March, is set to be sworn into office today (AP)

Ms Karim says there is no guarantee yet that the revolution will be a success – this will be judged on the composition of the interim government, as well as the process going forwards for free elections and "accountability and reparations" for the deaths in the protests.

The army chief, General Waker-uz-Zaman, said on Monday that he was taking temporary control of the country, though protest leaders have said they won't accept any undue influence by the military on the interim government itself. Bangladesh's interim government, headed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, will take oath today, says the military.

Ms Rehman says that despite the ongoing uncertainty, a huge amount had already been achieved by students who refused to give up on their country: "We don't know what will happen to this country but I am proud of me and my brethren for overthrowing a dictator."

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NAVEL GAZING

Thank goodness for stars like Kate Winslet, who recently refused to hide the rolls in her stomach during filming – this fixation about tummy shape isn't healthy, writes **Olivia Petter**

When a crewmember asked the actor to sit up straighter to flatten out her belly, she replied: 'Not on your life!' (Shutterstock/Lev Radin)

I can still remember the shape of Mischa Barton's stomach. In the role of Marissa Cooper in *The OC,* the Noughties teen drama set in sunny, sandy California, the actor was often

wearing a bikini. I watched that show obsessively when I was a teenager – and Barton's body consumed me. I worked out that, in order to be beautiful, I needed my stomach to look exactly like hers: washboard-flat, and framed by two razor-sharp hipbones.

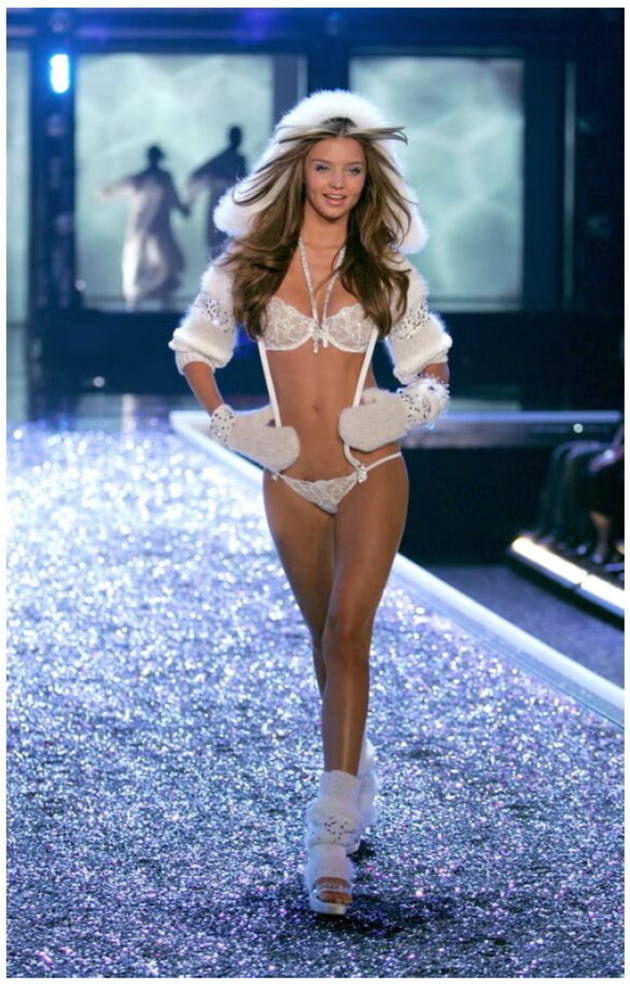
Hers was a stomach I'd seen elsewhere, too. Like on Paris Hilton. And Gwen Stefani. And the bodies of all the Victoria's Secret models I was repeatedly told were definitive bastions of female beauty. Of course, in our apparent era of body positivity, it has since become "acceptable" to have a few curves on our figures. But this doesn't really apply to the stomach, a part of us that society still insists must be completely smooth – have you seen those videos of celebrities getting lymphatic drainage massages on their bellies, too?

The belly is often the body part we fixate on more than almost anything else, yes in men (see: abs) but especially in women, and most of all at this time of year when many of us are gallivanting around in our swimwear. We judge midriffs on other people (soft versus hard) and we judge them on ourselves (flat versus rolls), often to a very nasty, self-flagellating degree.

Thank goodness, then, for Kate Winslet, who reminded us how absurd this all is in a recent interview with *Harper's Bazaar*. Speaking about her new film, *Lee*, in which the 48-year-old plays model-turned-Second-World-War-photographer Lee Miller, she recalled how during filming, a crewmember suggested she shift her position, to change her appearance. "There's a bit where Lee's sitting on a bench in a bikini… And one of the crew came up between takes and said, 'You might want to sit up straighter.' So you can't see my belly rolls? Not on your life! It was deliberate, you know?" She added that she doesn't mind showing her body – and her skin, wrinkles and all – in its natural state on screen. "The opposite. I take pride in it because it is my life on my face, and that matters. It wouldn't occur to me to cover that up."

It's not the first time Winslet has made the case for belly rolls. Speaking to *The New York Times* in 2021 about a sex scene she filmed for *Mare of Easttown*, she recalled how the director, Craig Zobel, assured her he would cut "a bulgy bit of belly" out

of the sequence, to which she replied: "Don't you dare!" It's an important message, one that we seem to have forgotten about in our current Ozempic era, where size-zero bodies have quietly become the desired aesthetic once again.



Model Miranda Kerr walks the runway during the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show in 2006 (Getty)

But why do we place so much importance on stomachs? For me, it's always been the lens through which I see the rest of my body. I know that if I wake up with a flat tummy, it will set the precedent for how I feel about myself for the rest of the day. In short, I'll be confident. Not just about the way I look, either, but about everything else, from how things are going in my career to my personal relationships. It will give me a glow that other people will comment on and notice.

If I wake up feeling bloated, though, then it becomes the single most intrusive thought I'll have all day, one that will slowly infect how I feel about myself in all areas of my life. I will refuse to wear certain items of clothing – anything remotely tight is off the table – and will be conscious of how I'm standing and sitting all day. I will also avoid any cameras that are pointed towards me. God forbid someone tries to touch my stomach, too. There have been moments, when I'm lying on my side, and partners have reached for it and I've swiftly batted them away, disgusted at how my own body naturally falls and recoiling at the prospect of anyone coming close to it.

This is such deeply embedded messaging that I can only think stems from growing up in the Nineties and Noughties. It was in the shows and films I watched, and in the pages of the magazines I fawned over. Even as a teenager, I can remember standing in front of the mirror next to friends, all of us pinching at our bare stomachs together, wishing parts of our flesh away. In hindsight, it wasn't unlike that famous scene in *White Chicks*, when Jennifer Carpenter's Lisa has an outburst in a changing

room, tugging at her (completely flat) stomach and hysterically calling it “Tina the talking tummy”. I should add that all this is despite the fact that I’ve always been slim and consequently have, for all intents and purposes, matched up to society’s beauty standards.

We have internalised a dark message that tells us not to sit a certain way, or pose from a certain angle

Winslet’s comments were heartening, sure, but they also made me feel desperately sad. Because they reminded me just how loud the noise around women’s bodies still is. That’s true regardless of whether you’re a pre-pubescent teenager or an Academy Award-winning actor. What kind of person feels compelled to tell Winslet she should hide parts of her body? How dare anyone try to oppress a woman’s bodily autonomy like that? Had that comment been directed at a younger, more inexperienced and insecure actor, it could be exactly the kind of thing to spark a decade-long battle with body dysmorphia.

It makes me angry. For Winslet, for my younger self and for the other women I know for whom this way of thinking has become more destructive, leading to a lifetime of disordered eating habits. Thankfully, for whatever reason, I’ve been spared that particular path. But that doesn’t make any of this much better.

We have internalised a dark message that tells us not to sit a certain way, or pose from a certain angle. One that forces us to suck in if we feel our bellies protruding too much, or to avoid certain items of clothing to hide them. It’s tedious and

exhausting and I'm fed up with it. Hard or soft, a stomach is a part of us and, as Winslet said, we should take pride in it.

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What are the must-sees for an October Rhodes holiday?

Walk through history: a highlight of the city is the intensely atmospheric Old Town (Getty)

Q Just booked a week in Rhodes in early October. What are your highlights?

Name supplied

A Excellent timing: no chance of the searing temperatures that, in July 2023, saw wildfires spread across Rhodes, but good prospects for warm, sunny weather and few crowds – the half-term rush will fill the island in the latter part of October.

Rhodes is one of my favourite Greek islands, and I have three particular highlights. The first is Rhodes Town itself, which has an extraordinary depth of history and an intensely atmospheric walled Old Town. The New Town, dotted with Art Deco buildings from the Italian era, is also attractive. Devote a couple of hours to the Archaeological Museum of Rhodes, housed in the Hospital of the Knights – one of the Crusader complexes that transformed the city.

Wander across the port where the Colossus of Rhodes once stood, and where instead you will now find a row of windmills. At exactly the other end of the island – around 47 miles away as the raven flies – is Prasonisi. This is an island at high tide, and a peninsula at low tide, connected to the village of Macheria on the mainland by an isthmus in the form of a narrow beach. The International Hydrographic Organisation says that the Aegean (to the west) and the Mediterranean (to the east) meet at this beach. Prasonisi is well worth exploring if you are up for a hike.

Best of all: Lindos, halfway down the eastern shore. This is the location for the archaeological highlight of Rhodes: the Acropolis, perched high on a cliff. Lower down, a 14th-century Crusader castle. Beneath that is a tranquil village of twisting, narrow lanes, which include some excellent places to eat, drink and stay. And there is even a decent beach.

Between Lindos and Rhodes town, Kallithea Springs is a fascinating Italian-built spa complex. If one island is not enough, take a ferry across to unspoilt Halki to the east. And if one country is not enough, make the day trip to Marmaris in Turkey. But I think you will find more than enough in Rhodes to fill a week.

Email your question to s@hols.tv or tweet @SimonCalder

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Section 2

ON THIS DAY

Journalist John McCarthy returned to the UK in 1991 after five years as a hostage in Beirut (PA)

1876: Charles Hamilton, who created schoolboy Billy Bunter under the pen-name Frank Richards, was born in London.

1900: The Davis Cup for tennis was contested for the first time at Brookline, Massachusetts, and won by the United States.

1963: The Great Train Robbery took place at Sears Crossing, Buckinghamshire, when a gang of 15 men, including Ronnie Biggs and Buster Edwards, stole more than £2.6m.

1974: Richard Nixon announced his resignation as US president, the first to do so, because of his implication in the Watergate scandal.

1991: Journalist John McCarthy came home, five years and three months after being kidnapped and held hostage in Beirut, Lebanon.

2008: The opening ceremony of the Olympics took place in Beijing at the "Bird's Nest" Stadium.

On this day last year: Scientists said Antarctica was "suffering" because burning fossil fuels was causing extreme events that were unthinkable 30 years ago.

Birthdays

Dustin Hoffman, actor, 87; **Connie Stevens**, actor and singer, 86; **Keith Carradine**, actor, 75; **Nigel Mansell**, former racing driver, 71; **The Edge** (David Evans), rock guitarist (U2), 63; **Angus Fraser**, former cricketer, 59; **Chris Eubank**, former boxer, 58; **Princess Beatrice of York**, 36.

PA

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BETWEEN THE LINES

Lucy Cotterill tests colouring books to help kids get creative

Growing up in a world full of smart devices and social media, finding screen-free activities for your children can be challenging.

Whether you're seeking entertainment for rainy days or while travelling, or simply trying to tempt kids away from their tablets, colouring books make a calm and mindful activity for children.

These books come with many educational benefits, too, enabling children to get creative and use their imagination, honing those

fine motor skills, as they bring their masterpieces to life.

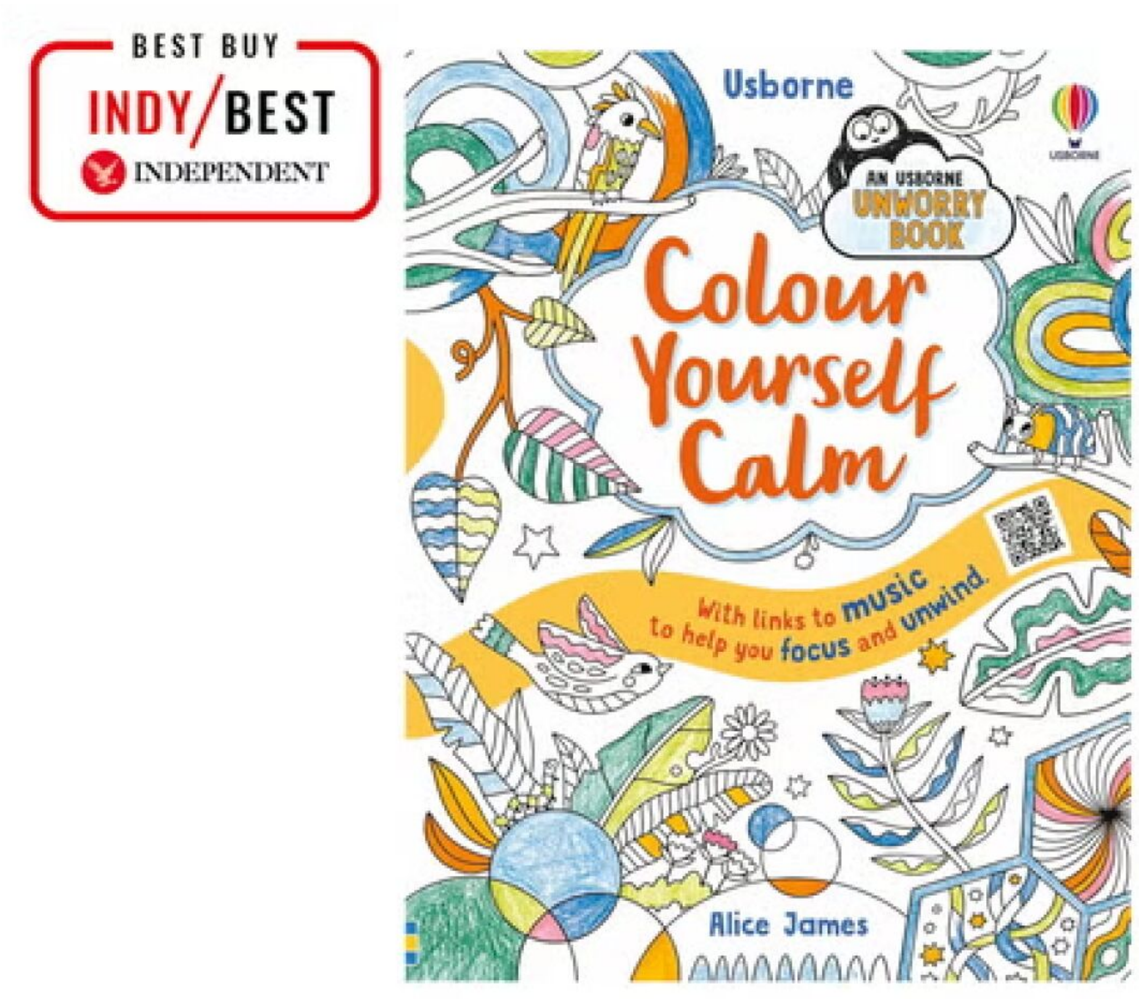
With so many colouring books to choose from, it can be hard to decide which one to buy. From choosing age-appropriate designs to selecting a theme, considering paper quality and overall value for money, we've done the research for you, to help you find the best colouring books for children of all ages.

Whether they love detailed, intricate illustrations or big bold designs, pull up a chair, bring out their best crayons or felt tip pens and check out our pick of the best colouring books for kids in 2024.

How we tested

Our reviewer tested colouring books with their two daughters, aged seven and 11, using a variety of art mediums, ranging from crayons to felt tip pens and markers. As well as assessing each colouring book's overall entertainment value, factors such as paper quality, variety of illustrations, educational benefits, durability and overall value for money were considered.

After putting a wide variety of books through their paces, we then narrowed down the list to the top 10 colouring books for kids, with options to suit every age, category and budget.



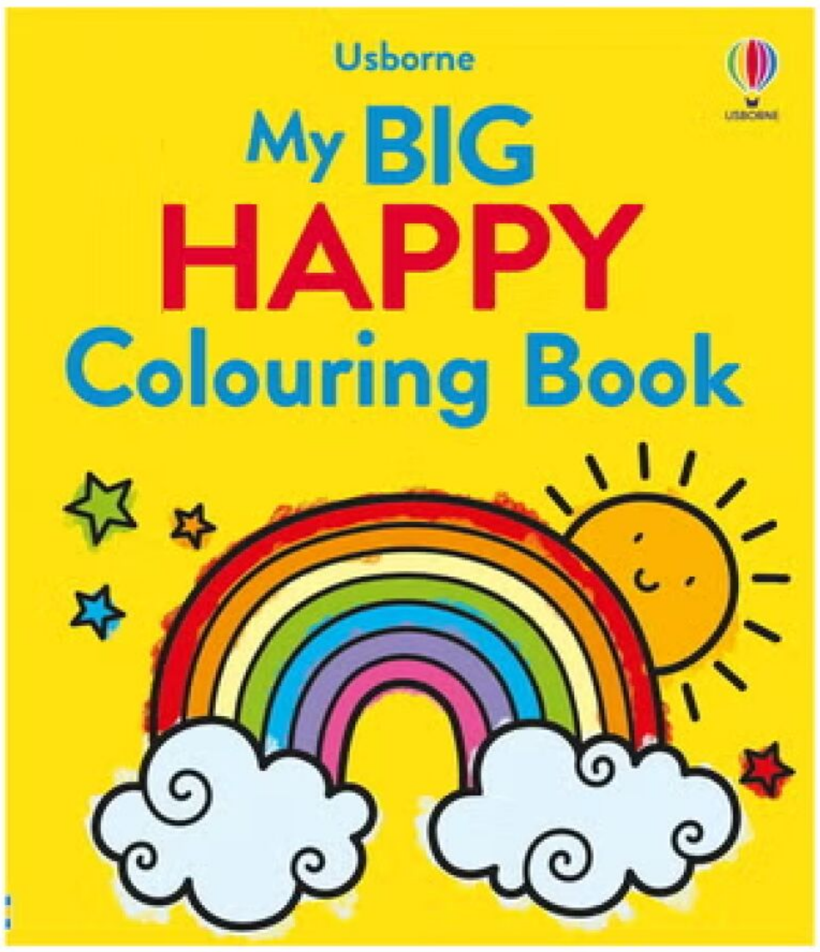
'Colour Yourself Calm', published by Usborne: £5.03, Amazon

Our testers loved everything about this small but beautifully illustrated colouring book, which is part of the Usborne Unworry Book range. Aimed at helping children relax and unwind, this book is filled with mindful colouring activities, from colouring repeated patterns to sketching, doodling, experimenting with different shading techniques and choosing colours to express their emotions.

Each page offers a unique colouring experience, with engaging illustrations providing just the right amount of detail to hold our testers' attention. Thanks to the thick, high-quality paper, a variety of colouring tools could be used, including felt tip pens, without any bleeding through to the other side.

While some people may prefer to keep their kids' colouring activity completely screen-free, we love the inclusion of QR codes on several pages, which lead to mindful music to accompany the colouring.

Buy now



'My Big Happy Colouring Book', published by Usborne: £3.80, Amazon

It may be relatively simple in terms of concept, but this book certainly raised a smile from our younger tester. With a real

positive feel throughout, each page features bold designs and happy, cheerful characters – everything from smiling sunflowers to fluttering butterflies. There's also a small amount of text on each page, ideal for reading with an adult, to add context and storytelling to kids' creations.

There are an impressive 96 pages, and younger children will love the simple outlines that provide the freedom to practise their pen control, while parents will love the thick quality paper, so pens won't leak through the pages.

Overall, it's a great all-rounder for younger children – it's one our seven-year-old reached for time and time again – with an affordable price point to boot.

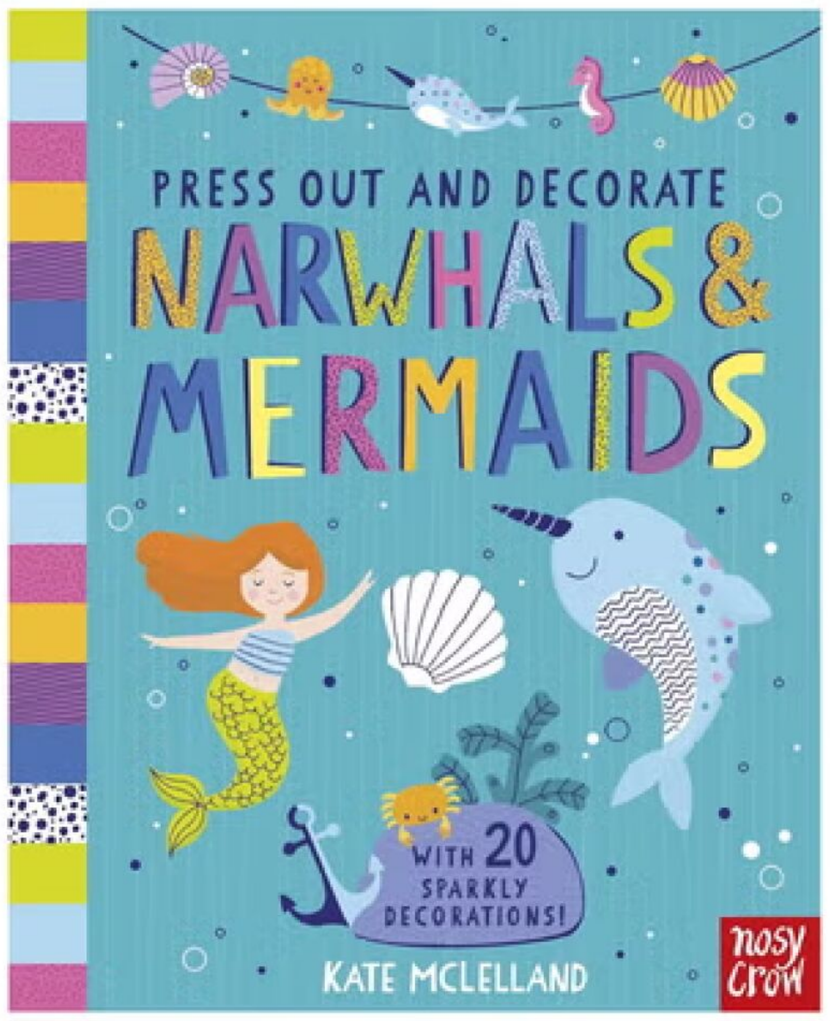
Buy now

'I Heart Unicorns', published by Buster Books: £4.80, Amazon

We loved the portable design of this pocket-sized colouring book, which is perfect for popping in your bag as entertainment when travelling, at restaurants or in waiting rooms. While this particular edition has a unicorn theme, there are plenty of other options to choose from in the range – including everything from bees and butterflies to koalas and kawaii.

Despite its compact size, this colouring book has more than 100 pages, alternating between bolder illustrations and incredibly detailed designs. It's worth noting that, while our mini-testers loved the overall theme, both struggled with the level of detail on the left-hand pages, requiring fine liners to colour them effectively. Despite this, we felt this colouring book offered excellent value for money, with a strong binding and thick, high-quality paper.

Buy now



'Press out and Decorate: Narwhals & Mermaids', published by Nosy Crow: £8.30, Amazon

This is a colouring book with a difference. Presented in a beautiful A5 hardback binder, it contains thick cardboard pages with 20 foiled designs to colour and create.

Our testers loved popping out the shiny characters from the pages and bringing them to life with markers, before slotting them together to create cute three-dimensional decorations. While younger children may need some assistance, we were impressed with our testers' attention to detail, continuously flipping their designs to ensure the colours were consistent on both sides.

We loved the adorable narwhal and mermaid designs in this particular set, however, you'll also find other themes in the range, including unicorns, dinosaurs and several seasonal editions. A big plus point is that, once all the pages are empty, you can use them as stencils, to help continue the creative fun.

Buy now

'ABC Sticker Colouring Book', published by Orchard Toys: £3.25, Amazon

With large, age-appropriate illustrations and an educational alphabet theme throughout, this 24-page colouring book is a great choice for preschool children.

The bold designs are engaging and easy to decorate, even for children still mastering their pen control and the art of colouring inside the lines. Each design is then combined with a group of corresponding letters to trace, providing plenty of practice for your child's letter recognition and handwriting technique.

Our tester loved the wide variety of illustrations in this book, as well as decorating each page with matching stickers, once the colouring was complete. While it has fewer pages than some other colouring books on our list, it offers excellent value for money overall, making learning fun at a budget-friendly price.

Buy now

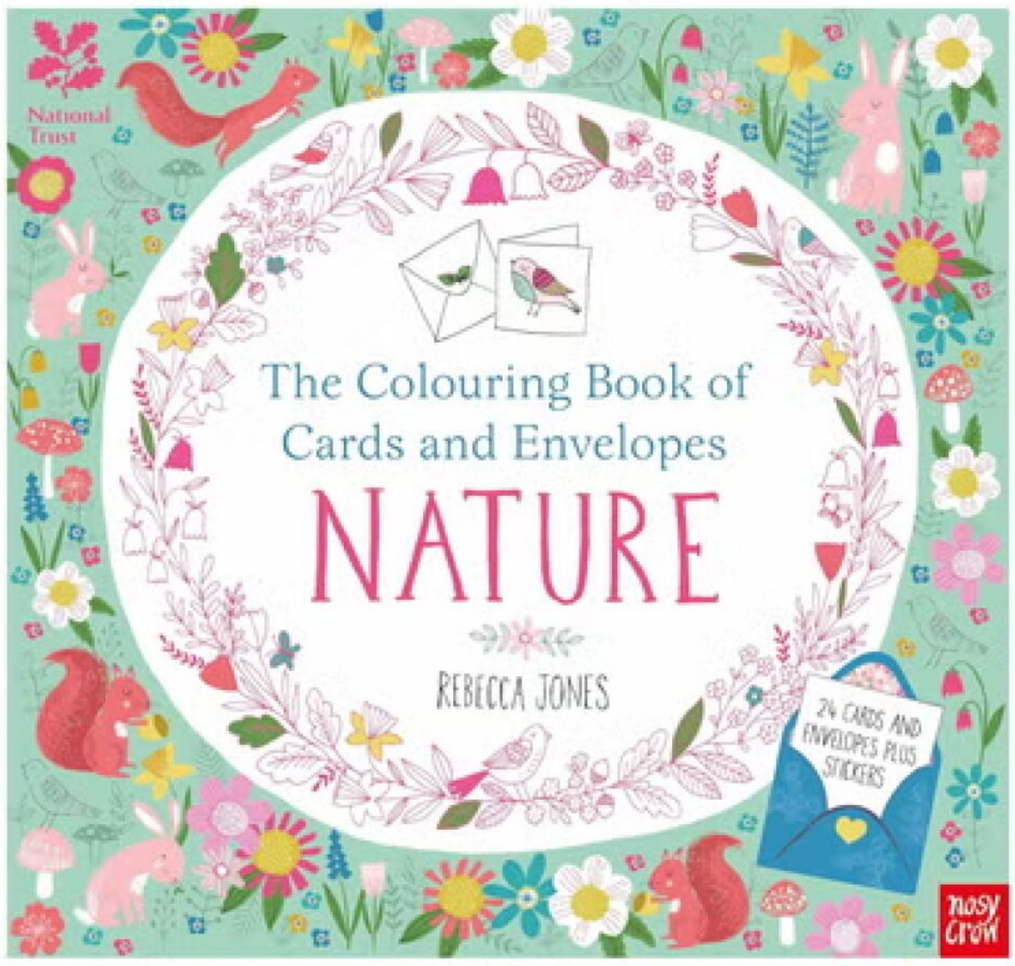
Melissa & Doug jumbo colouring pad: £8.36, Amazon

With oversized pages that are large enough for siblings to colour side by side, this pad offers ample entertainment for rainy days, doubling up as a creative place mat to occupy the kids while they're waiting for their dinner.

There are 50 pages packed full of animal designs, and we loved the quality of the premium white bond paper, which we were able to easily tear out without ripping. Our testers were able to use a wide range of colouring tools, including markers and felt tip pens, without any bleeding through to the other side.

While younger children may prefer more animated designs, our testers loved the illustrations in this nature-themed pad. You'll also find a variety of other themes in the Melissa & Doug range, including vehicles, "pink" and "blue".

Buy now



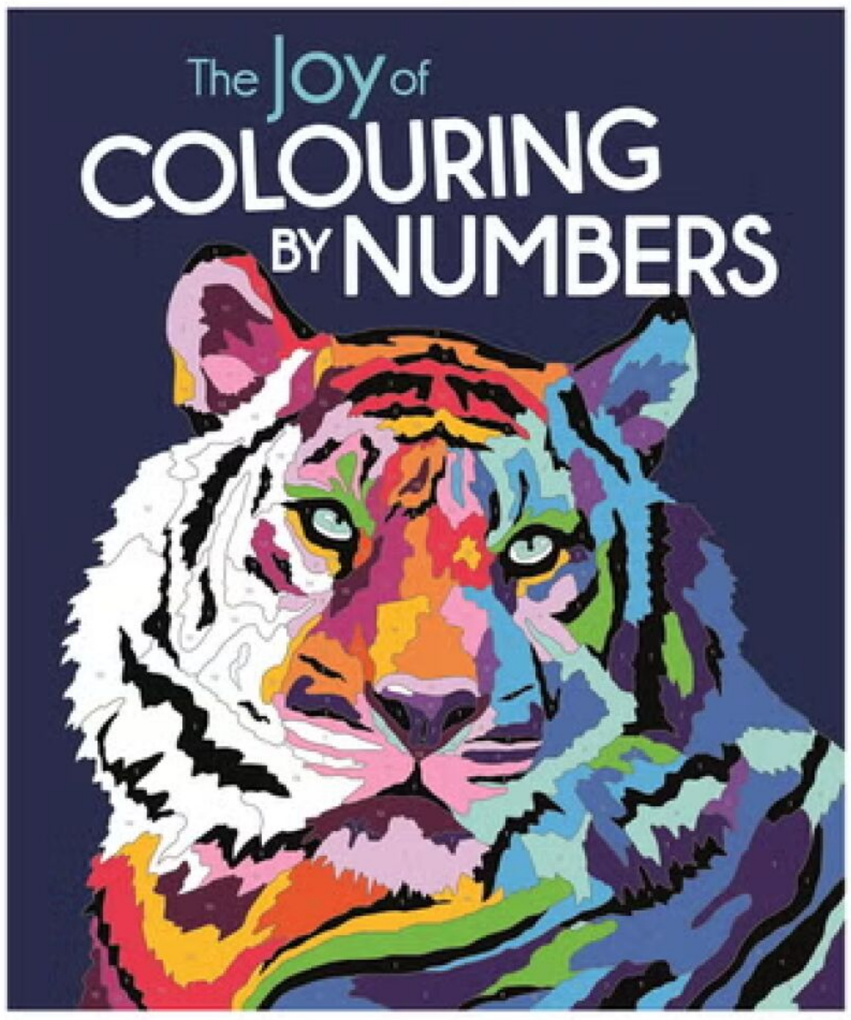
‘The Colouring Book of Cards and Envelopes: Nature’, published by Nosy Crow x National Trust: £11.95, Amazon

Part of Nosy Crow’s collaboration with the National Trust, this large colouring book of cards and envelopes makes a unique and thoughtful gift for children who love nature and animals. We found the illustrations in this colouring book quite simply stunning - with every page bursting with intricate designs of woodland animals, flowers, butterflies and birds.

Colouring in is just the beginning, however. Inside, children can find everything they need to create and colour 24 double-sided cards and coordinating envelopes, before folding along the pre-scored lines and using the included stickers to seal – a great way to add a personal touch when sending letters to relatives.

Our testers loved the creative side of this set, preferring to use crayons and watercolours, due to the level of detail. While it's recommended for children aged 4-8 years, it’s fair to say our younger tester lacked the patience required to finish the entire design, as each one requires considerable effort. On the flip side, our older tester enjoyed chipping away at regular intervals until all the elements were complete. You may even find yourself tempted to colour a little of this one.

Buy now



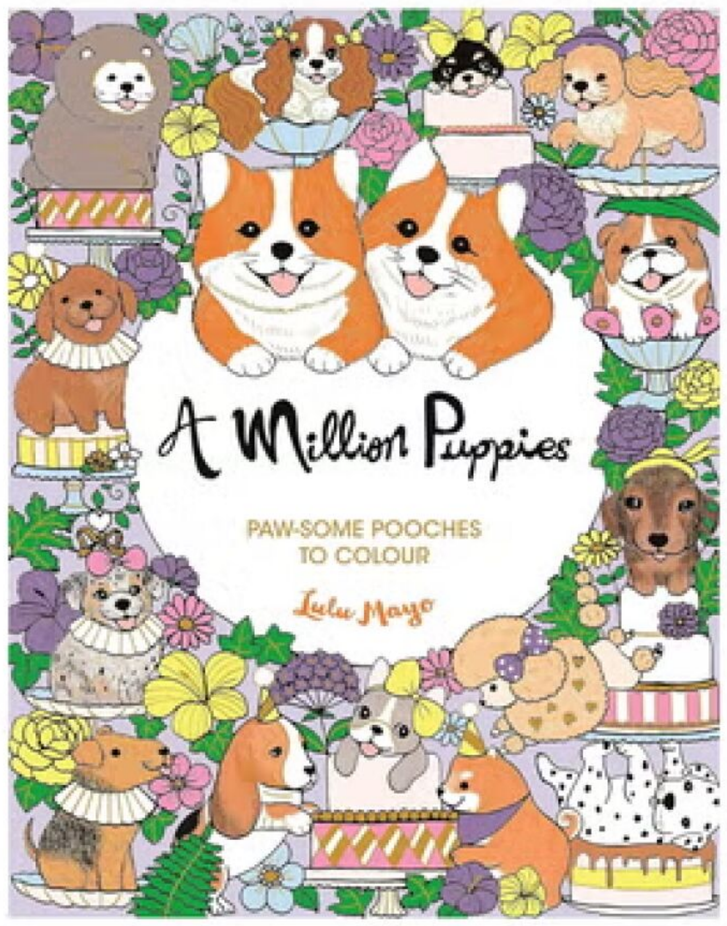
‘The Joy of Colouring by Numbers’, published by Michael O'Mara: £9.19, Amazon

If you grew up in the 1980s or 1990s, chances are a colour-by-numbers set made an appearance at some point during your childhood. Using a key to guide creativity, colouring by numbers is a calm and mindful activity that can relax and entertain, while teaching children important life skills, such as following instructions and the importance of attention to detail.

Our mini-testers loved the 25 stunning illustrations in this book, with majestic mammals and beautiful birds brought to life by a bold and vivid colour palette. The kids really enjoyed choosing their pens and pencils at the start of each piece, matching the shades to the clearly marked key at the base of each page.

Our only gripe is we wish some of the backgrounds had been left blank, as colouring large areas with one colour often felt like a bit of a mammoth task. Some mini-perfectionists may also feel frustrated that some numbers are still visible even after the design is complete.

Buy now



‘A Million Puppies: Paw-some Pooches to Colour’, published by Michael O’Mara: £7.31, Amazon

If cute characters are high up on their wish list, you can’t go far wrong with the A Million colouring book range from Lulu Mayo – particularly the most recent release: *A Million Puppies*.

Recommended for children aged six and above, each of the 64 pages features an adorable scene that’s absolutely full to the brim with ‘paw-some’ puppies – everything from cute corgis to dotty dalmatians. Our testers really enjoyed experimenting with different shading techniques, in an attempt to create the illusion of texture and fur, and the thick paper certainly didn’t disappoint.

We loved the full-page spreads and high level of detail in this book, including stunning patterns and fun florals. It also definitely lived up to its cute credentials, with our testers regularly pausing to highlight another cute character they’d found nestled among the pages.

Buy now

‘Water Wow! Fairy Tale’, published by Melissa & Doug: £13.49, Amazon

If the thought of bringing out felt tip pens is enough to break you out in a cold sweat, this on-the-go colouring book could make a great alternative – with no pens, paints or crayons required.

Well suited to travel, this portable, spiral-bound board book features eight hidden fairy-tale scenes, each brought to life using the water pen and red lens that are conveniently stored on the cover.

While they appear to be simple line drawings when dry, our younger tester loved filling the chunky water pen with the tap, before running it across the pages to see colourful scenes appear right before her eyes. While she found it slightly less appealing, the red lens “magnifying glass” also makes a fun addition, with several “silly things” to spot on the pages.

While we did notice slight curling of the pages when wet, each scene dries relatively quickly, fading away, so it’s ready to be reused over and over again. One little tip from us, however: stick to using cold water, as the transformations are much slower when the water is warm.

Buy now

The verdict

With so many impressive options to choose from, selecting the right colouring book for your child will ultimately depend on their age and interests. That said, we absolutely adore the *Colour Yourself Calm* colouring book, which is not only entertaining and engaging but also a practical tool to support your child's mental health and emotions.

For younger children, you can't beat the fun learning that can be achieved through the Orchard Toys colouring book collections, which offer the ideal balance of entertainment and education, at a really affordable price.

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Is the X-rated 1970s movie Caligula a lost masterpiece?

The Roman epic was a fiasco, despite a cast that included Malcolm McDowell and Helen Mirren. **James Mottram** talks to the ‘Clockwork Orange’ star and the producer who has tried to restore its reputation with a new, three-hour recut

The swill is gone: McDowell and Mirren in ‘Caligula’, which was described by one critic as ‘a trough of rotten swill’ (Images Penthouse Films International LLC)

When Malcolm McDowell first heard that a new cut of *Caligula* was being worked on, he simply rolled his eyes. “That’s what I did,” he says. “Because I never, ever wanted to talk about

that damn film ever again." The actor famed for roles in *If…* and *A Clockwork Orange* had high hopes when he originally signed up for *Caligula*, a portrait of the Roman emperor scripted by esteemed writer Gore Vidal, directed by the Italian filmmaker Tinto Brass and co-starring Helen Mirren, Peter O'Toole and Sir John Gielgud.

While Brass and Vidal didn't exactly see eye-to-eye, the real problem came with the film's financier, Bob Guccione, the founder of the erotic magazine *Penthouse*. McDowell had raised concerns even before the film was made, only to be told by a hopeful Vidal: "Think of him as one of the Warner Brothers." But Guccione fell out with the director, firing Brass.

Worse was to come. After the film wrapped, Guccione covertly shot pornographic scenes with some *Penthouse* girls, and spliced the material into the film. When McDowell saw the final version, released in 1980 almost four years after shooting had concluded, he felt betrayed. "I advise people never to see it. It is a terrible film: exploitive and pornographic." Mirren, who plays Caesonia, Caligula's wife, took it in good humour, calling the film "an irresistible mix of art and genitals".

But critics were appalled. "A trough of rotten swill," wrote *The New York Observer*'s Rex Reed, while fellow reviewer Roger Ebert called it "sickening, utterly worthless, shameful trash". McDowell was left shell-shocked. "I was really very depressed about it. Actually. I think I went into a depression. It affected me badly. Honestly, I think it was one of the reasons I left England." The actor made a new home in Los Angeles.

I ask McDowell if he ever spoke to his good friends and collaborators, the directors Stanley Kubrick or Lindsay Anderson, about it. "I don't think they cared! I mean, it's like, you make your bed, you got to lie in it, you know? I mean, look, it's just one of those awful things. That was an anomaly. Because normally, you have a production company that's got a certain track record, you have a studio behind you… they are really very interested to see the film go as according to the script. Not this megalomaniac. Basically, at one point I said to him, 'Bob, why didn't you play the part yourself?'"

McDowell says he ‘went into a depression’ after critics panned ‘Caligula’

Guccione did, at least, have the sense to hire Danilo Donati, the visionary Italian production designer who went on to create the outlandish sets for Mike Hodges’ *Flash Gordon*. Similarly, Donati’s work for *Caligula* astounds, from the lavish sets to the costumes, jewellery and even wigs. As Guccione once said in an interview with *Penthouse*, “Danilo Donati is the real star of *Caligula*… next to him, Brass is a crude and uncomprehending lout.”

While McDowell advised his agents never to forward any requests connected to *Caligula* to him, things changed when Thomas Negovan, an art gallery owner and short filmmaker, was hired by the management company that took over the *Penthouse* brand. “Many people over the years had told them that the archives surrounding *Caligula* were notable,” says Negovan. “And they basically asked me to assess that statement.”

Brought onto the project in 2019, Negovan had never even seen the sexed-up *Caligula*. “I was never a *Caligula* fan, I was a Malcolm McDowell fan,” he says. The producer soon became familiar with the original movie, however. “It’s a train wreck, by any measure. I understand now the charm of that. Everyone likes to watch a car crash. So there is that huge budget, terrible movie spectacle idea around this that does have a charm, and I

do understand that. But the problem is that people like Malcolm McDowell have been the butt of that joke for 50 years."

What Negovan discovered in a Los Angeles storage facility was dusty cans filled with original camera negatives and audio material. All of it was unused, previously unseen or heard. "No one had had cause to go through all these boxes in decades," he says. "So they knew it was there. They just hadn't ever opened them." It was enough to begin a painstaking process of reconstructing the film to something akin to Vidal and Brass's original vision.

> **Caligula was sort of like an original. The way I decided to do it was play him as an anarchist but destroying the Roman empire from the top**
>
> *Malcolm McDowell*

Now running at almost three hours, *Caligula: The Ultimate Cut* is a vastly different animal to its lurid predecessor. While there is still some eroticism to certain scenes – erect penises still abound – the grubby sexploitation feel has been freely excised. "It wasn't supposed to be a porn movie," says Negovan. "You think Helen Mirren and John Gielgud took a job in a porn movie with no plot? No, that's the point. Like it had a script. It had incredible sets, incredible costumes. And people really sweated to make this film."

Negovan sweated too, initially drawing a blank when he tried to contact McDowell, Brass and Mirren. He only got to McDowell by connecting over Instagram with Mark Critch, the creator of

the TV show *Son of a Critch*, which stars the actor. It was Critch who advised McDowell to watch the recut. “I was in bed, in Newfoundland, in St John’s, the furthest rock on the east coast of the Americas,” recalls McDowell. “And I was amazed – it all came flooding back. And I was sort of vaguely stunned. I sat there in silence for quite a while thinking about what I’ve seen.”

It took McDowell back to his original intentions for playing Caligula, who was famed for burning through the treasury collated by his predecessor Tiberius (played in the film by O’Toole). “I mean, he was very popular because he was always giving gold sovereigns away for the populace. I think people really loved him though. He was quite a character. And he was sort of like an original. The way I decided to do it was play him as an anarchist but destroying the Roman empire from the top.”

Negovan went back to Vidal’s original script as his starting point. “What I did in my head and in my heart was created like the Venn diagram: here’s Malcolm’s circle, here’s Gore’s, here’s Tinto’s and here’s Bob’s. Bob, hiring people like Danilo Donati to make those incredible sets was in complete opposition to Gore’s vision. But when you look at what everyone wanted, there is a space, there is a flag that’s in the middle of that circle, which is a sense of realism and historical accuracy.”

McDowell says he is ‘thrilled that the real film is there now for everyone to see’

With so much new footage, *Caligula: The Ultimate Cut* certainly rescues the film’s reputation from the trashy doldrums. Helen

Mirren's role for example is greatly expanded, from 17 minutes' worth of material in the Guccione cut to almost an hour here. "The last 45 minutes of the film is all new," adds McDowell. "Or never been seen before. I guess Guccione just got bored with it and said, 'Let's just wrap it here and just have him killed and that's it. Put it out.'"

For those that might be concerned the film has been sanitised, you can rest easy. The scene where a jealous Caligula rapes the virginal Livia and her bridegroom, the officer Proculus, at their wedding, remains intact. When Critch suggested to McDowell that they screen the film for a children's charity event in St John's, under the belief the film's porn elements had been removed, he was shocked. "I said, 'Yeah. But that's not porn!' That is who Caligula was," recalls McDowell, gleefully. "Ultimate power corrupts absolutely. Absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Still, McDowell is delighted by this new cut, that a lost performance he gave half a century ago has been resurrected. "[I'm] thrilled that the real film is there now for everyone to see." His only sadness surrounds Brass, who is now 91. "He is still alive, but he has got some kind of dementia, I believe. And so he will never really know [about this new cut]. I think he'd be very happy with his movie because all the major sequences are in it. And they are really beautiful." No longer is *Caligula* the butt of anyone's joke. As McDowell says: "Even 50 years later, almost, there's nothing like it."

'Caligula: The Ultimate Cut' is in cinemas from tomorrow

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The bland leading the bland

‘Love Is Blind: UK’ promised to be a ‘very British’ affair with lots of banter but this feels copied and pasted from the tired US format – even Matt Willis looks bored, writes **Ellie Muir**

Presenters Matt and Emma Willis deliver the same unimaginative one-liners with the same sing-songy intonation as their US counterparts (Images Netflix)

★★☆☆☆

When Netflix announced a UK edition of its hit dating show *Love Is Blind*, fans were promised a “very British” affair. Episodes were billed as “self-deprecating” and “full of banter” – but there were equal amounts of scepticism as there was

excitement. Would it work to graft British silliness onto such a glossy American format?

Things got off to a promising start when it was announced that former Busted singer Matt Willis and his wife Emma would be inheriting hosting duties from Netflix stalwarts Vanessa and Nick Lachey. Who better than the charming, down-to-earth couple who got candid about their own marriage struggles in Matt's 2023 documentary *Fighting Addiction*? All signs, then, pointed to a series that would be less preened than its tired US predecessor, which has been churning out the same formula for six identical seasons.

That hope, though, is quickly lost in episode one when an unenthused Matt asks "Is love *truly* blind?" through gritted teeth. Everything is copied and pasted from the US edition, minus the accents. Rinse and repeat. The Willises are essentially reading from the same script as the Lacheys, delivering the same unimaginative one-liners with the same sing-songy intonation. In one moment, Emma gives Matt a cringeworthy on-camera bum tap; Matt looks like he'd rather be anywhere else but here.

Here come the girls: inside the women's quarters at 'Love Is Blind: UK' HQ

The original show has been one of Netflix's biggest success stories in recent years. Released in 2020, season one was wildly popular. People were taken aback by the then-fresh format, which sees a group of singles date one other through a wall, eventually getting engaged "sight-unseen" before meeting in

real life to determine if they still want to go through with the wedding (which, I might add, is only weeks away). Even romantically speaking, the concept has proven fruitful; around 10 of the couples from across the six seasons remain married today.

The UK season, for which Netflix granted critics access to the first four episodes, is a case of watching contestants plough through conversational platitudes. No topic is too dull, ergo the 10-minute discussion on gym routines. Slowly, conversation digs deeper – but meditation and gratitude journals prove even less interesting than workouts. The chatter does, at times, feel nice and familiar. It's relatable, for example, when Ollie gets the ick for Catherine when she admits to going to the ultra-bougie Mayfair club Cirque le Soir.

The novelty wears off quickly, though. Largely because the casting criteria for the show generates contestants that are clones of one another. Every season, there's the guy – this year it's Sam – who dishes out the same perfectly crafted sentences to the girls before they begin to suss him out. And then there's the girl who worries she's too attractive for men to take her seriously. In fact, all of the contestants lament the state of a "superficial" modern dating scene "based on looks" – but the funny thing is everyone here is conventionally hot, making the concept of "love is blind" sort of redundant.

The funny thing is everyone here is conventionally hot, making the concept of 'love is blind' sort of redundant

The uglier side of the experiment comes out, too, in a grimacing moment when Sam speculates about a woman's weight when she doesn't sound immediately keen about his desire to physically lift her in the air when they meet IRL. This very much echoes past seasons of the American series, such as in series two when a male contestant faced backlash for saying any wife of his would have to be small enough to put on his shoulders at a festival. It's an uncomfortable aspect of the show that Netflix never seems willing to challenge. Or perhaps a clever bit of rage-bait they know it pays to include.

When the couples eventually meet in person come episode four, the successful pairings (ie the ones who go through with the engagement) are flown out to Corfu where they will attempt cohabitation for two weeks ahead of the weddings. In the next four episodes, the couples will also begin to mingle. As ever, I suspect there will be a few wandering eyes. Things will inevitably get more heated – and potentially a bit more exciting. But I'd wager nothing new will be added to this knackered format.

The first instalment of 'Love Is Blind: UK' is on Netflix

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Are public sector pensions more generous than private schemes? Maybe for MPs...

The stress of teaching means few stay on until retirement age (Alamy/PA)

JAMES MOORE
CHIEF BUSINESS COMMENTATOR

A retirement gravy train after years in the corridors of Whitehall – or a fair reward for years of public service? Generous civil service pensions have been attacked by the Taxpayers' Alliance

as unsustainable now that public sector wages are catching up with the private sector. It says that, based on the same level of employee pension contributions throughout their working life, a private sector worker would get £7,068 a year in retirement compared to £25,084 for a civil servant, £26,594 for an NHS worker, or £25,694 for a teacher.

This is because large parts of the public sector still offer guaranteed benefits linked to average salary and length of service. Almost all private sector workers now have to put up with "defined contribution" schemes, whose rewards are based on level of savings and investment performance.

"This racket cannot go on," snarled former *Sun* editor Kelvin MacKenzie, who called the old-school "defined benefit" schemes "unfair and unreasonable". But a lot of assumptions are being made by the Taxpayers' Alliance figures. And MacKenzie's suggestion – cutting public pensions and letting them go on strike if they don't like it – is akin to taking a stick of dynamite to your front door instead of paying a locksmith if you've forgotten your keys.

Recent strikes were partly fuelled by the public sector missing out on a surge in private sector wages during the inflation crisis. Official figures show average pay rises beating inflation by some distance. True, some public sector pensions are very large – notably those for doctors (who are highly skilled, who we are badly short of, and who can quit the NHS for far more generous terms overseas). However, most payouts are much smaller than the Taxpayers' Alliance would have you believe. According to a 2021 House of Commons briefing paper, members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme received an average of £12,300 per year. For those in the civil service scheme, the figure was just £8,100.

Part of the reason public sector pensions look good is because private sector provision is so bad. Perhaps that is something for the government to look at?

Why the discrepancy? Pay attention to that phrase “throughout their working life”. There may be the odd Sir Humphrey who kicks off a career in the civil service straight from university and stays put until retirement age, but most people move jobs or take career breaks or flit back and forth between public and private sectors. Many retire early because of stress. For example, it is vanishingly rare to see teachers who stay in post until they are 67. imagine trying to teach maths to teenagers dreaming of careers as TikTok influencers when you’re 60. Even 55. Or having to stay on your feet all day in a reception class.

The TUC says there are 300,000 vacancies across the public sector, while its own polling found that nearly two-fifths of public sector workers have either taken steps to leave their profession or are actively considering it. What would launching an attack on pay and benefits do to those figures? What would be the impact on schools or the NHS?

“Schools, hospitals, police stations, and other essential services can’t run themselves,” says Unison assistant general secretary Jon Richards. “They need a workforce of public servants to deliver services for local communities.” Lucille Thirlby, assistant general secretary at the civil service union, FDA, adds: “Does the Taxpayers’ Alliance believe people should be able to retire

and live with dignity? The biggest pension issue we face is not the value of public sector pensions, but the fact that people are not being encouraged to save enough for their retirement and the existence of pensioner poverty."

We can put that another way: part of the reason public sector pensions look good is because private sector provision is so bad. Perhaps that is something for the government to look at? Pensions can be used as a recruitment tool – a point made by expert John Ralfe, who points out the generosity of the copper-bottomed scheme offered to retiring MPs.

If ministers are ever inclined to start talking pension cutbacks, it would be the worst sort of hypocrisy for them not to start with their own retirement benefits. Ralfe has dug around in the small print of the MPs scheme and based on this, he suggests that the annual cost is not 12.9 per cent of their salaries – just over £82,000 for MPs and substantially more for ministers – but a whopping 39.4 per cent. The real value of MPs' pay and pension package adds up to more than £114,000, he says.

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Business news in brief

The average price of a house was up by more than £2,200 last month compared to June (Getty/iStock)

House prices higher than expected in July, says Halifax

Average house prices were more than £2,200 higher in July than June, according to Halifax, which said UK prices increased by 0.8 per cent month on month to £291,268, from £289,042. The unexpected rise comes after the Bank of England base rate was cut from 5.25 per cent to 5 per cent last week, in a move property professionals said could boost the autumn housing market.

Amanda Bryden, head of mortgages at Halifax, said the rate cut was “encouraging” but added: “Affordability constraints and the lack of available properties continue to pose challenges for prospective homeowners. Against the backdrop of lower mortgage rates and potential further base-rate reductions, we anticipate house prices to continue a modest upward trend throughout the remainder of this year.”

Vodafone to hand £430m to shareholders in latest buyback

As part of a broader plan to boost investor returns, Vodafone has said it will give £430m back to stakeholders over the coming months. The telecoms giant said the latest stage of its share buyback programme will last until 29 November, and that it had hired Goldman Sachs to carry it out.

Vodafone is midway through a turnaround plan which has included selling off its Italian and Spanish businesses and cutting thousands of jobs. It said in May that it had returned to growth in its key markets, despite overall revenue and operating profit dropping last year. Meanwhile, it is still waiting to find out if a £15bn planned merger with Three has the seal of approval from the UK’s competition regulator.

Ad giant WPP sells FGS stake for £609m in cost-cutting drive

WPP has agreed to sell its share in FGS Global for around $775m (£609m), as the advertising giant continues its drive to cut costs and automate its work. Its 50 per cent stake in the communications agency will be sold to investment firm KKR. The deal values FGS, which provides public affairs and media advice to large corporates, at about $1.7bn.

WPP chief executive Mark Read said the sale is an “excellent outcome” for the firm and that it has “achieved an attractive price”. WPP revealed a slight increase in revenues to £7.2bn for the first six months of the year; its headline operating profit, which strips out the effect of one-off costs, dipped to £646m

from £666m the prior year, partly due to cost inflation and investing in future growth.

Legal & General profits exceed forecasts amid new strategy

Dividends were raised at Legal & General amid stronger-than-expected profits as it pushes ahead with a major overhaul. Boss Antonio Simoes said the company's half-year financial results reflect the "ongoing strength of the business". The asset management and insurance firm revealed adjusted operating profits of £849m for the first half of the year, up from £844m a year earlier and also surpassing analyst guidance.

The profits boost came as the firm sold £1.2bn of individual annuities in the period, more than double the total reported a year earlier. Meanwhile, it saw operating profit in its institutional retirement business lift by 6 per cent. The firm has plans to merge some key divisions and consider the sale of its housebuilding division.

PA

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Hudson-Smith denied gold after agonising 400m finish

The Brit won silver as American Quincy Hall produced the fourth-fastest time in history to win (PA)

JACK RATHBORN
AT STADE DE FRANCE, PARIS

Matt Hudson-Smith roared in frustration. Four-hundredths of a second had denied him a glorious gold to complete the most remarkable redemption story. In one of the most gripping 400m finals in Olympic history, the USA's Quincy Hall summoned a kick from the gods.

Charging like a train, while rocking from side to side, Hall somehow conjured up the fourth-fastest time in history. He was only fourth in this race with 100m remaining, yet he snatched victory away from Hudson-Smith in a scorching 43.40 seconds as Zambia's Muzala Samukonga claimed bronze.

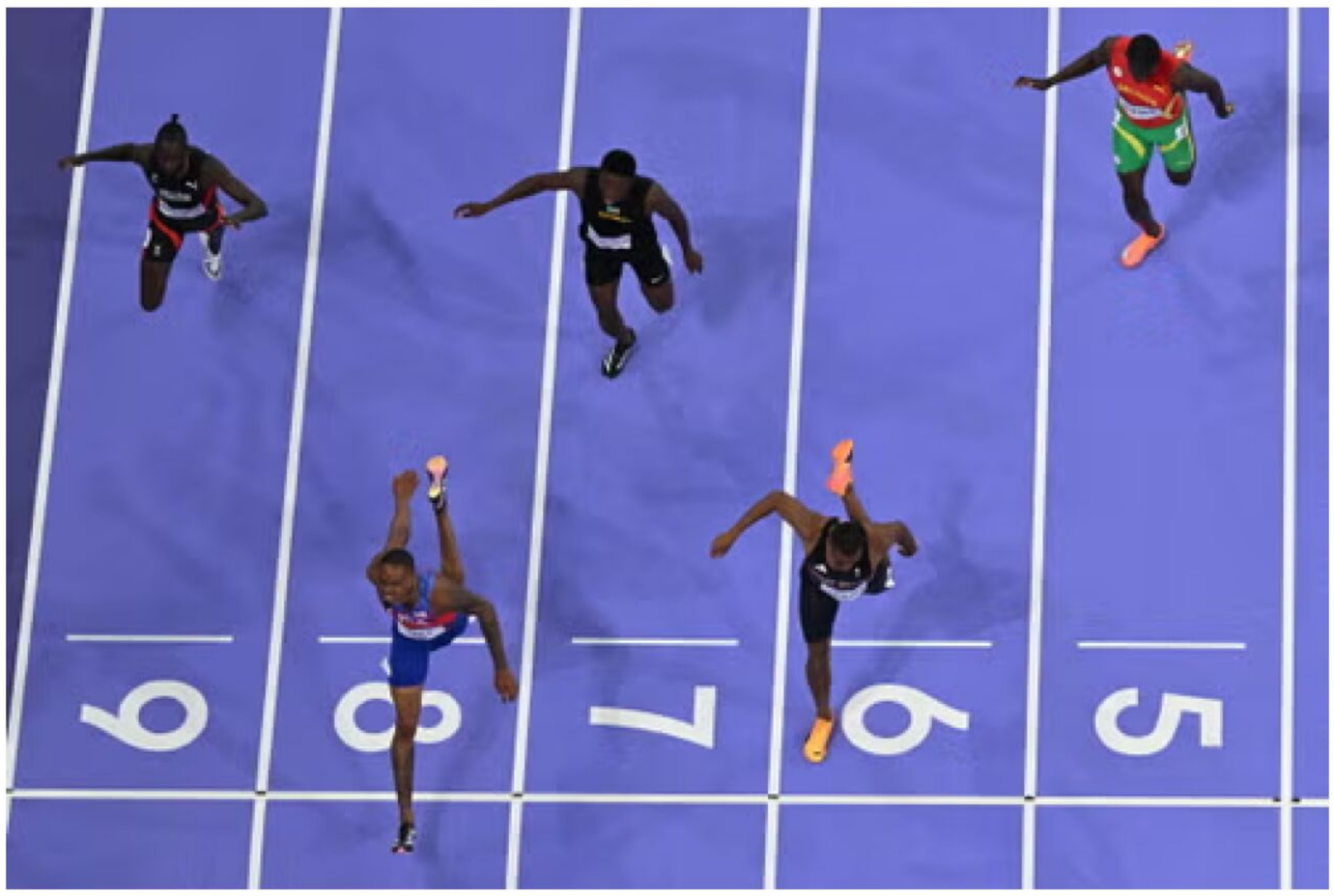
The Briton's pursuit of gold on the world stage rumbles on then, but at 29 years of age and now possessing the fifth-fastest time ever (43.44 seconds), the European record holder believes more than ever. How could he not after everything he has endured up to this point?

For so long Hudson-Smith could only show glimpses of his scintillating best: a torn hamstring and Achilles tendinitis dashed hopes of a world medal for so long. Then the Covid pandemic arrived and a battle with his mental health and even an attempt to take his own life. Hudson-Smith had emerged from "absolute hell".

A first major medal at the 2022 World Championships arrived, upgraded 12 months later to silver. And a statement performance at the London Diamond League, in a European record, suggested Hudson-Smith had peaked at the perfect time. Even in the semi-finals this week, there was a swagger, slamming on the breaks with 30 metres remaining and still running 44.07 seconds. But Hudson-Smith met a possessed Hall and while the Briton is not satisfied, he can at least accept defeat against such a historic performance.

"I said, if you're gonna win, you gotta take it from me," Hudson-Smith remarked. "That's exactly what he did. I can't complain. Fifth fastest time overall. I think it's the healthiest I've ever been at a championship.

"I almost got it. And you know what? Sometimes the journey is better than the outcome, and it's been a hell of a journey, so I can't complain. The better man won at the end of the day. So it's just the start. I know there's a bigger time in there. My time is gonna come."



So close: Hall and Hudson-Smith cross the finish line (Getty)

It was a flawless race from the Briton, too, supremely controlled throughout with his immaculate form. And Hudson-Smith could almost touch the gold after hitting the front with 150m remaining, having wrestled clear of Jereem Richards.

But Hall appeared to come out of nowhere, taking 0.50 seconds off Hudson-Smith in the final 100m. Yet the man from Wolverhampton kept pumping his arms and legs in hope, barely able to sense what was coming from Hall. But the American's lean within two metres of the line proved emphatic, securing a comeback for the ages.

Hudson-Smith is getting closer, though, and after settling for silver at last year's World Championships by nine-hundredths of a second, he has now delivered Great Britain's first medal in the event since Roger Black took silver at Atlanta 1996.

"I just said it [f***] because I was like, you know, it just came out. I'm not angry, I'm not upset," Hudson-Smith clarified. "It's life at the end of the day. There's always gonna be one winner. He's the better man. I can't complain at the end of the day, because I ran the fifth fastest time overall.

"I just came for the win. It's a championship. I don't really care about times. I've said it in the past, I just want the win. We knew it was gonna take a 43. That's why I was a little bit more calculated coming into the championship. There's a bigger time

in there. It's just the start. I've got another four years left, and then I'm out."

It was an act of defiance to shine a light on Hudson-Smith's personal growth. Four years to Los Angeles 2028, then, when he will be 33 years of age. Yet an early warning that Hudson-Smith is not done yet.

"Everyone was proud," Hudson-Smith concluded. "They know what I've been through. They know that it's been a rough journey. There's been incredible highs and so, so many deep lows and, man, it's sports.

"It's just a crazy one. They know what's to come and I think the world does as well. Because, like I said, I think I was a bit of an unknown quantity, in the sense that no one really knew what I was going to do, whether I was going to finish, for one.

"Whether I was going to blow up in the final like I did in Budapest, where my Achilles basically blew up on the top end. So I was a bit of an unknown quantity. And I saw people say that I ran too fast in the semis.

"And I was like, ah, I jogged it! So I knew I could drop the time. I also know as well, finishing this, it didn't take as much out of me as I thought. So I'm just gonna keep building on it, and I'm gonna shock the world. I'm gonna shock the world. It's just a matter of time."

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GB boxers have been floored by harsh draws

Hard times: Lewis Richardson (left), coach Rob McCracken and Rosie Eccles are part of a team who have only picked up one medal in Paris (Getty)

STEVE BUNCE
IN PARIS

The Olympic dream finished for Lewis Richardson late on Tuesday night in Paris, in the semi-final of the light-middleweight division.

Richardson was beaten 3-2 by Mexico's Marco Verde Alvarez inside the exceptional main court at the Roland Garros tennis centre. He became the fifth of six GB boxers to be eliminated by the heartbreaking 3-2 split decision margin.

It was a close fight, but Richardson had a good third and final round and appeared to have done enough to deserve the verdict. The Mexican was exhausted and holding on during the last minute of a quality fight. It was not a blatant robbery, but it was very harsh on Richardson.

"I'm devastated and will need to watch it back," said Richardson. "I can still look back with pride on the Olympic experience." Richardson will collect a bronze, the only GB medal.

In Tokyo, three years ago, the team of 11 managed to win six medals, including two golds. Since that glorious haul behind closed doors, 10 of the 11 boxers turned professional. The professional defections were just part of the problem; the short three-year cycle and exclusion – for political reasons – from the world championships restricted the boxers from gaining valuable experience.

Richardson was the last of the six GB boxers to take to the ring and boxed with calm and skill to win twice and reach the semi-final against the Mexican. In his opening fight, he remained cool under extreme pressure when a defeat would have led to some severe and unnecessary criticism.

There will still be a lot of talk about the defeats and that is understandable, but the draw was harsh and the losses both tight and controversial. The Rosie Eccles loss was a shocker, the others were extremely close.

Under Robert McCracken's guidance, the GB team has now won 15 medals, including six golds, in four Olympics; at the previous nine Olympics, the total medal haul was 10 medals with two golds. Winning an Olympic medal is incredibly difficult and just reaching the Olympics is hard; over 2,000 boxers took part in 2,115 contests at the seven global qualifiers during the past 13 months. In the end, just 249 reached Paris and the dream.

“There is never an easy fight at the Olympics,” said McCracken. And he is right, but you also need a bit of luck, and the GB boxers never had a single bit of luck. Richardson was just one point away from the final – if one of the five judges had just scored him one extra round he would have won. It was that tight.

“It’s been a great Olympic journey,” said Richardson. “I will not dwell on the loss, but celebrate the medal and the experience.” That was spoken like a true Olympic medalist.

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Can trophy-magnet Alvarez shine in Simeone's system?

Julian Alvarez has joined Atletico Madrid from Manchester City for £82m (Getty)

RICHARD JOLLY
SENIOR FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

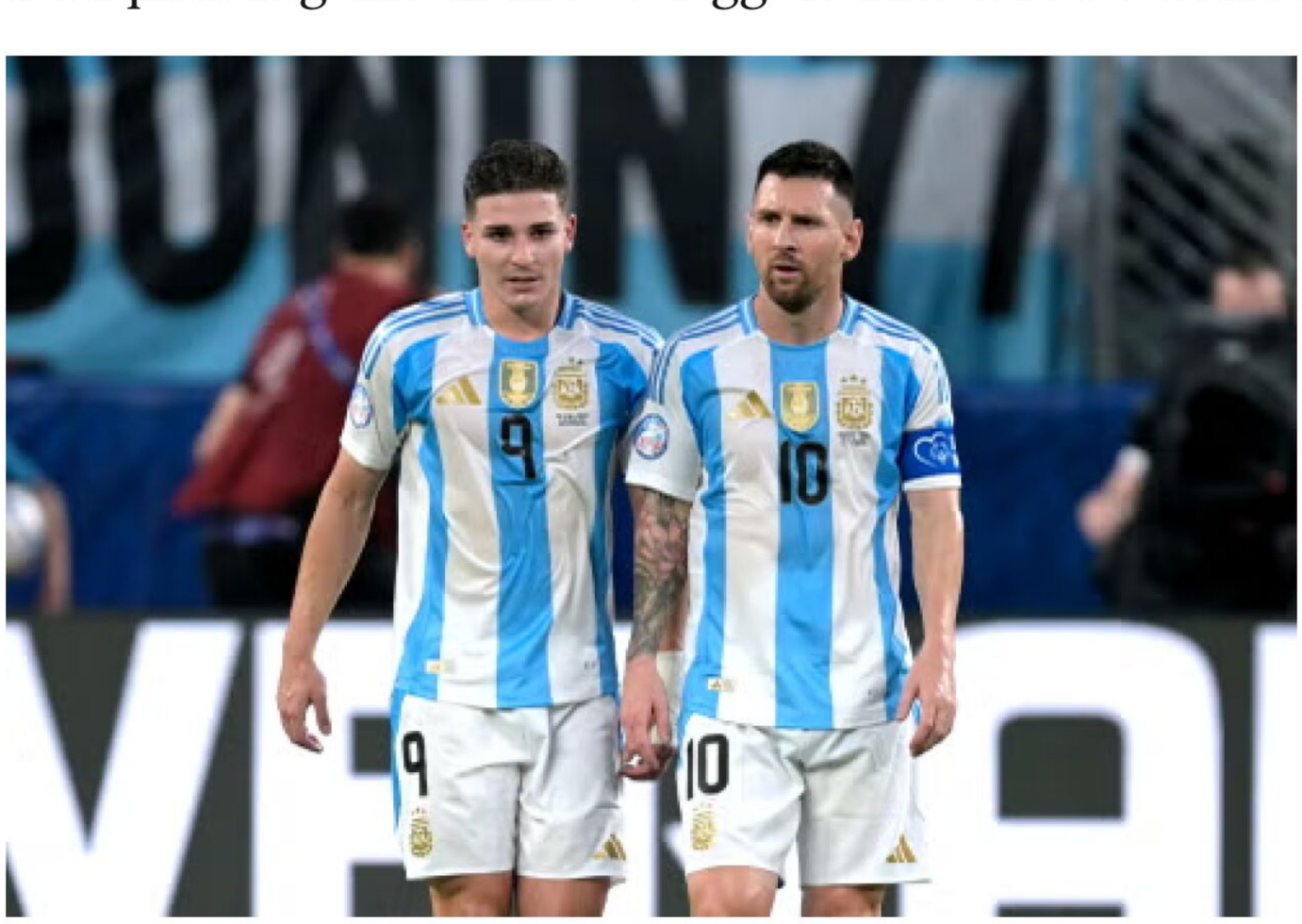
The man who completed football had everything except a starting berth for the biggest club games. Julian Alvarez's medal collection includes the World Cup and the Copa America, the Champions League and the Copa Libertadores, the Club World

Cup and the European Super Cup, the Premier League and the Argentine Primera League, some of them more than once.

He has been at Manchester City for two seasons and won more silverware than the club earned in the first 85 years of their history.

So perhaps the £82m fee City will receive from Atletico Madrid includes a premium for the guarantee of silverware that seemingly accompanies him to Spain. Certainly it represents a remarkable piece of business, and negotiating, by City: signed for a bargain £14m from River Plate – a price that looked still better when, a year later, Chelsea paid £107m for Enzo Fernandez, another of that River team, but who went to Stamford Bridge via Benfica – they will sell him for a club-record amount.

They can note that Erling Haaland's deputy will go for a sum that is around £30m more than the Norwegian cost. At a point when many a club on mainland Europe appears cash-strapped, they are squeezing one of the 20 biggest fees ever from Atletico.



With Argentina teammate Lionel Messi (AFP/Getty)

And that for a player who seemed to have the bittersweet billing of the best second-choice striker in the game. Not, admittedly, for much of last season when Pep Guardiola seemed to think a match lacked official status if Alvarez did not start it in some position, but Alvarez did not begin the FA Cup final, nor either leg of the Champions League quarter-final against Real Madrid,

or the visit of Arsenal, or the game at Tottenham where the title was all but won, or the match against West Ham when it actually was.

His season still brought 54 appearances, 19 goals and 13 assists. Alvarez was invaluable in the two months when Haaland was injured, useful during Kevin de Bruyne's five months on the sidelines.

It could render him difficult to replace: the job description could change from starter to substitute, from No 9 to No 10 to even No 8. Alvarez showed a resourcefulness, a willingness to turn his hand to anything and everything: in De Bruyne's absence, he – perhaps surprisingly – emerged as City's set-piece specialist.

And he was the most durable of footballers. In the two years since his City debut, he has made 130 appearances, 103 for his club, 27 for Argentina, with the kind of work ethic that should endear him to Diego Simeone. Indeed, Argentina's World Cup-winning strike force did the running of two men: the difference being that Alvarez did all of it to allow Lionel Messi to stand still.

And yet his departure comes with a question perhaps still unanswered: how good is Alvarez?

He was definitely City's jack of all trades. At Atletico, he will have to be master of one: the Metropolitano – and the Vicente Calderon before it – has felt the spiritual home of the No 9 during a time when many another ground has been graced by false nines. Simeone has liked the genuine article, especially if they have had a forcefulness and a physicality.

Diego Costa, Luis Suarez, Alvaro Morata and Mario Mandzukic have all scored goals in copious quantities for Simeone's Atletico, even if the task for the man who leads the line has often been providing a foil for the more prolific Antoine Griezmann. Whether, with the Frenchman in the autumn of his career, Alvarez represents some succession planning remains to be seen but Simeone has often been unafraid to overload with No 9s: now he is signing two at a time, with Alexander Sorloth also arriving.

Erling Haaland's deputy will go for a sum that is around £30m more than the prolific Norwegian cost City (Getty)

If Atletico can feel the antithesis of City, Alvarez may get more starts but for a team who can fashion fewer chances. He should begin the biggest games, but they are less likely to include Champions League finals. He kept City in contention last season when others were out; Atletico's fortunes, however, could stand or fall with him.

In a summer when Real Madrid have recruited Kylian Mbappe, Atletico are getting Alvarez, and if his salary will be rather smaller, as it stands his fee will be the biggest paid in 2024. That confers a pressure on a man who has been a deluxe back-up; a World Cup winner now has to prove himself one of the world's best centre-forwards.

And the jury is still out.

He had a different status at City; they had other requirements. But he did not always exude class. And given Phil Foden's preference for operating centrally, Alvarez may not have had many opportunities as a No 10 this season had he stayed. But, even if many of Alvarez's 19 goals came against weaker opponents and were aided by the supply line City possess, finding a striking understudy who was forever fit and sufficiently prolific was quite a feat for £14m. It could be altogether easier if City now have £82m to spend on Alvarez's successor.

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Sports news in brief

Fantastic four: Team GB took silver in the men's team pursuit (PA)

Coach's heart 'still going' as cyclists claim GB's 1,000th medal

Ethan Hayter's former coach has said he struggled to calm his heart rate after watching the cyclist race, as the men's team pursuit won Team GB's 1,000th Olympic medal. Hayter – alongside teammates Dan Bigham, Ethan Vernon and Charlie Tanfield – claimed silver in the event at the Paris Games, finishing just behind Australia after Hayter lost control of his bike and narrowly avoided a nasty crash.

A short while after the men's event, Team GB's women's team pursuit quartet – comprised of Elinor Barker, Josie Knight, Anna

Morris and Jessica Roberts – claimed bronze, storming back in the final kilometre after being behind Italy for much of the race.

Phil Wright, the father of GB cyclist Fred Wright, "swears" he did Hayter's induction at the Herne Hill Velodrome (HHV) when the Olympian was around 13 years old, but caveated his statement by making clear that many have claimed the same. Mr Wright watched the men's team pursuit at home with his son who has returned to the UK after competing in the men's road race in Paris, and said it is "so exciting" to see Hayter go from beginner to "superstar". "My heart's still going a little bit actually," he said. "So excited. We thought they were going to bring it back. We had faith in Ethan to bring it back. *PA*

Cigs not to blame for golfer's Olympic hopes going up in smoke

Golfer Charley Hull refused to blame a smoking ban for her Olympics hopes turning to ashes at Paris 2024. The Team GB star, who regularly lights up while competing at major tournaments, shot 81 at Le Golf National yesterday and sits third from bottom on the leaderboard. Hull, 28, arrived in the French capital earlier this week only to be informed that smoking was prohibited at all Olympic venues.

The world No 11 suffers from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and after her practice round on Tuesday, claimed smoking while playing kept her "relaxed". She appeared to be struggling to adjust during an abject opening round – but insisted a freak injury sustained while travelling back from the US last month was the problem.

Asked if being unable to smoke affected her performance, the two-time LPGA Tour winner insisted: "No, not at all. Definitely not – it's just because I've been injured. I don't think a lot of people realise that I took 10 days off golf and had an MRI and everything. That is 100 per cent why [I played the way I did] – and not because of the smoking. This is my first week back after injury, and it's just about getting that first round out of the way."

Spain pair banned after Gibraltar chants

Manchester City midfielder Rodri and Spain teammate Alvaro Morata have been handed one-match bans for chanting about Gibraltar during a Euro 2024 victory event. Rodri, who was chosen as player of the tournament, took the microphone during a celebration event in Madrid on 15 July and sang "Gibraltar es Espanol" – Gibraltar is Spanish – leading to a complaint from the Gibraltar FA.

Gibraltar has been under British rule since the 18th century, with local authorities consistently opposing switching sovereignty to Spain. The Gibraltar FA described Rodri and Morata's actions as "deeply offensive" and filed a complaint saying they "noted the extremely provocative and insulting nature of the celebrations around the Spanish Men's national team winning Euro 2024 [...] football has no place for behaviour of this nature." Rodri and Morata will miss Spain's opening fixture of the Nations League, away to Serbia on 5 September.

McLaren boss says team's F1 challenge has surprised him

Zak Brown, the boss of McLaren, has admitted that his team are ahead of schedule, leaving him shocked that they are in with a real chance of winning the F1 Constructors' Championship. The Woking-based team are just 42 points behind leaders Red Bull, with 10 races still to go, and far exceeding pre-season expectations when a dominant victory for Max Verstappen and Sergio Perez's team was expected.

But Perez has badly struggled for Red Bull, while McLaren are currently on a 10-race run of consecutive podium finishes, which is their best sequence since achieving 13 in a row in 2011-2012. "If I were to sit here and say I'm not surprised, that would be disingenuous," Brown told BBC Sport. "Red Bull had such an advantage over everyone and Mercedes has been so dominant. Did I think we would be here at the summer break, one race away from getting the lead? I thought we might get where we are now by 2025. But I'm not complaining."

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