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Rishi Sunak wants to await Gavin Williamson inquiry result before deciding whether to sack him – as it happened

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[Gavin Williamson](#)

Rishi Sunak refuses to sack Gavin Williamson over abusive texts

PM's spokesperson says Sunak believes Williamson has 'important contribution to make'

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The Times reported that Gavin Williamson threatened to reveal details about a Tory MP's private life when he was chief whip. Photograph: Jacob King/PA

[Peter Walker](#) and [Aletha Adu](#)

Mon 7 Nov 2022 09.49 ESTFirst published on Mon 7 Nov 2022 03.53 EST

Rishi Sunak has “full confidence” in the Cabinet Office minister [Gavin Williamson](#) despite the emergence of bullying claims and abusive text messages he sent to the former Conservative chief whip Wendy Morton.

The texts were revealed over the weekend to include angry remonstrations about not being invited to the Queen's funeral and one that said "there is a price for everything".

On Monday the prime minister's spokesperson said Sunak had a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, but had refused to sack Williamson, claiming he had an "important contribution to make to government". No 10 has been unable to spell out Williamson's current responsibilities as a Cabinet Office minister.

Asked if the prime minister had full confidence in Williamson, the spokesperson said: "Yes." Pressed on why Sunak gave Williamson a job, he added: "Obviously he thinks he has an important contribution to make to government."

Sunak is facing mounting criticism over his decision to bring Williamson back into the cabinet with knowledge of Morton's claims.

Meanwhile the Times reported on Monday that Williamson, as chief whip in 2016, threatened a now minister with potentially revealing details about her private life.

She told [the paper](#) that Williamson called her to his office when she was campaigning on a politically sensitive issue and raised something about her private life "which she interpreted as a tacit threat".

Unnamed "allies" of Williamson said this had not been a threat, and that he had raised the issue in a "pastoral capacity".

No 10 says Sunak has "welcomed" that Williamson has "expressed regret" for sending the text messages to Morton. When asked why Sunak decided to give Williamson a seat at the Cabinet table, the PM's spokesperson said Sunak "was aware of a complaint", adding: "He knew there was a disagreement but didn't know the substance of those messages."

The PM's spokesperson said he was "not aware" whether Sunak had spoken with either Williamson or Morton since the matter came to light, but

stressed he would not normally get into details of private conversations.

Sunak brought back Williamson to the frontbench as a junior Cabinet Office minister. On Sunday, the prime minister said that while he was aware Morton had made a complaint about Williamson, he had not seen the messages beforehand.

“I hadn’t seen those texts before last night, I had not,” Sunak told the Sun newspaper in an interview en route to the Cop27 climate summit in Egypt. “I was aware there was a disagreement between him and the former chief whip.”

Labour and the Lib Dems have called for Sunak to sack Williamson. Sunak said the messages were “not acceptable or right”, but did not say if he would take any action.

“It was a difficult time for our party at the time, but regardless, people always should be treated with respect,” Sunak said. “I am glad Gavin has expressed regret. There is an independent complaint process, which is running. It is right and reasonable we let that conclude.”

Grant Shapps has added to the condemnation of [Williamson’s abusive text messages to a colleague](#), saying the messages should not have been sent.

Shapps told Sky News: “I don’t think it was the right thing to do, to send messages like that. I see they must have been sent in a moment of frustration. I think, generally, it is the case that it’s much better to write things which you would not live to regret later.

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'He was not right to send them,' says Grant Shapps on Gavin Williamson's abusive texts – video

“And especially with colleagues, writing things which are polite, even if you have a point of view to express, I think is not unreasonable. So, I don’t think he was right to send them. The prime minister said the same. I know that the party is going through a process looking at them at the moment.”

Morton is said to have cited the messages from Williamson in an email to the party on the day before Sunak was elected leader. She is also said to have informed the Cabinet Office and accused Williamson of “bullying and intimidation”.

After he was not among ministers or former ministers invited to attend the Queen’s funeral, Williamson texted Morton saying it was “very poor and sends a very clear message” that members of the privy council who were not “favoured” by Truss were being deliberately excluded, and said it looked “very shit”.

“Also don’t forget I know how this works so don’t puss [sic] me about,” he wrote.

“It’s very clear how you are going to treat a number of us which is very stupid and you are showing fuck all interest in pulling things together,” one message said. “Don’t bother asking anything from me.”

Another read: “Well let’s see how many more times you fuck us all over. There is a price for everything.”

Williamson was sacked first by Theresa May as defence secretary for leaking details of a national security council meeting and then by Boris Johnson as education secretary over [the Covid-19 A-levels debacle](#).

He was seen as a key figure in Sunak’s campaign over the summer to become party leader.

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UK house prices in steepest fall since February 2021; global inflation ‘may be nearing peak’ – as it happened

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[House prices](#)

UK house prices fall after ‘significant shock’ of mini-budget

Halifax reports steepest monthly drop since February 2021 amid interest rate rises



The decline in the average price to £292,598 was the third in the past four months. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

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Mon 7 Nov 2022 04.53 EST Last modified on Tue 8 Nov 2022 00.13 EST

UK house prices fell by 0.4% in October after Liz Truss’s mini-budget drove a sudden rise in mortgage rates, the lender Halifax said.

The decline in the average price to £292,598 was the third in the past four months and the steepest since February 2021. The annual rate of growth in house prices slowed to 8.3% in October from 9.8% in September.

The mini-budget on 23 September, under the previous prime minister, Liz Truss, and her chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, caused financial market turmoil that [pushed up borrowing costs](#) and eventually resulted in Truss's replacement by Rishi Sunak.

[UK house price chart](#)

Sunak and his chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, responded to the chaos by signalling [tax rises and government spending cuts](#) are likely, which could add to the downward pressure on house prices, Halifax said.

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Kim Kinnaird, the director of Halifax Mortgages, said the mini-budget had added to other trends that could push prices down, including the rising cost of living and the high level of house prices compared with earnings. [Higher unemployment during an expected long recession](#) would also add to downward pressure on prices.

“While a post-pandemic slowdown was expected, there’s no doubt the housing market received a significant shock as a result of the mini-budget which saw a sudden acceleration in mortgage rate increases,” she said. “While it is likely that those rates have peaked for now – following the reversal of previously announced fiscal measures – it appears that recent events have encouraged those with existing mortgages to look at their options, and some would-be homebuyers to take a pause.”

The Halifax report echoed Nationwide, which last week said house [prices dropped by 0.9% in October](#). Economists said the price declines probably marked the start of a period of extended drops. NatWest Group last month [forecast prices would drop by 7% next year](#).

Martin Beck, the chief economic adviser to the EY Item Club, an economic forecaster, said he expected price declines of between 5% and 10% – in part because the government’s change in policy under Sunak and Hunt had lowered expectations for interest rate increases.

Matthew Pointon, a senior economist at the consultancy Capital Economics, said: “With mortgage rates set to remain over 5% in 2023, demand will remain depressed and lead to a 12% peak-to-trough fall in house prices.”

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2022.11.07 - Spotlight

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‘I came second in everything’: Martin Kemp on Spandau Ballet, George Michael and stepping out of his brother’s shadow

[Paula Coccozza](#)



‘Parenting is all about listening ...’ Martin Kemp. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

The bass player publishes his third book this month, reflecting on life in one of the 80s biggest bands. He talks about recovering from two brain tumours, acting and why he would like to apologise to Tony Hadley

[@CocozzaPaula](#)

Mon 7 Nov 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Mon 7 Nov 2022 05.47 EST

After [Martin Kemp](#) had two brain tumours removed, people kept teasing him. “A few of my friends said: ‘I don’t know what they’ve done but they’ve put something in, instead of taking something out. They’ve put intelligence in, Mart.’” He is laughing. “Making light of it,” he says. “But all I mean is: we all learn at different parts of our lives.” Kemp turned 61 last month, and is very much still learning and creating. He took up writing in the late 1990s as part of his psychological recovery from those tumours, and next week publishes his third book, *Ticket to the World – My 80s Story*. He has had all his old [Spandau Ballet](#) outfits out of their vacuum packs in the loft. But it’s his older writing self that is the real hero.

Kemp read a lovely thing in a self-help book after the tumours – that “every cell in your body is replaced every seven years. So you’re a completely

different person.” The idea has stuck with him, because on this basis, he’s “about six times removed from that kid” of the 80s. And he does have a newly made look: with those glittering blue eyes and silver hair, he positively gleams. He says it’s the makeup, but his skin glows as if he has just shed an old one.

It’s this sense of self-renewal that has allowed him to look back at himself as “somebody else”, with unflinching honesty and – occasionally – guilt. I wonder whether he ran the book past [Gary](#), his older brother and Spandau bandmate. They remain close, and text every other day. But Kemp says no. “I will leave it to him to buy one from Amazon. Then he can talk to me about it when he has time.”



Spandau Ballet at Live Aid in 1985 ... (from left) Martin Kemp, Gary Kemp and Tony Hadley. Photograph: Pete Still/Redferns

They might need to set aside a few hours, because Gary features quite heavily. “I love Gary dearly,” Kemp says. He has a habit of reaching for an affirmation, especially a loving one, after saying something hard.

The relationship with his brother has clearly been defining, loving and sometimes challenging. All the stresses and tensions of life in a five-man

band seem to have been pressed through the funnel of the Kemps' brotherhood. "It was always his band," Kemp says. "We gave the impression that it was a joint democracy. But it wasn't." (The three non-sibling members [would later sue Gary unsuccessfully](#) for a share of the songwriting royalties.)

Kemp's role was "mediator", he says. "If there were arguments, me and Gary could go into a room, argue it out. Even to the point where we used to have proper fist fights. Because the pressure of the whole thing was too much."

Fist fights sound like a failure of mediation, but maybe they were the best form of communication available. "Because I knew that me and Gary were the only ones that could do that. If two of the other boys had that fight, it would be all over. Once, we were rolling around on the floor, fighting," he says. "Then all of a sudden we called it off. And we'd walk outside and the others would be standing around as if the band was finished. And you could feel the atmosphere that you'd created. And it wasn't nice."

A book for Gary? I will leave it to him to buy one from Amazon. Then he can talk to me about it when he has time

You would call it dysfunctional, except "it really worked", he says. "It was easy for me and Gary. We loved each other underneath all of it. We could forget about it because we'd been doing it all our lives."

There was verbal abuse, too. "If you imagine five boys in the playground, there's always going to be one guy that's going to take the brunt of the jokes." In [Spandau Ballet](#), Kemp says, that guy was the lead singer, Tony Hadley.

"Now, I'm not saying that Tony was bullied, as such" – though in the book Kemp does say the behaviour "tipped over into bullying" – "but he took all the banter. I can look back at it now with space. And I don't like the way that we used to group up on Tony, and I feel guilty about that ... If it was me, I think it would have been too much for me.

“It was mainly singer envy,” he says (Kemp played bass, while Gary was guitar, synthesiser and backing vocals). “If you asked Tony about it, he might not even say he recognised it. But I recognise it. And there was part of me that recognised it at the time.” But Kemp kept quiet because he was so young, he says. He was only 17 when he joined and 19 when Spandau had their first Top 10 hit. “I didn’t want the focus to be on me.”

Has he said any of this to Hadley, who has always refused to explain publicly why he left the band in 2017? (They originally broke up in 1990, then reunited in 2009.) “It’s something that I’d never spoken to him about. But I do feel guilty when I look back.”

In the book, Kemp stops short of an apology. “Oh, listen,” he says immediately. “I would apologise to Tony, absolutely, for the way that he was treated. I think it was really poor.”

Why doesn’t he pick up the phone and say all this to Hadley? He really sounds as if he wants to. But he says: “I haven’t spoken to Tony for ages. I reach out to him, but I rarely hear back. I send little messages” – he mimes texting – “if I get two words back, I’m happy.

“Tony is *lovely*,” he says. “He is a lovely man. I will always, always love him, in the same way I love all the rest of the band. But you drift apart, don’t you?”

Kemp’s book celebrates the 80s as the decade that made him, but in a funny way, it was only as the decade drew to a close that he stepped out of his brother’s shadow. “Quite late on,” he says. Most of the time with Spandau, he “didn’t feel he was doing anything artistic enough. Kemp was so celebrated for his appearance, earning [a solo cover of the Face magazine](#), for instance, that he always felt he was “getting away with it” because of his looks.

The turning point came when he and Gary were cast as Reggie and Ronnie in the 1990 film [The Krays](#). Maybe it was the fact they played twins; maybe it was the way [Anna Scher](#), who had taught them drama as children, got

them crawling around the floor in a refresher session, pretending to be preschoolers, but something about the experience “equalised” them.

Before that, Kemp says, pretty cheerfully, “I came second in everything”. We’ve been talking about his and Gary’s Porsches, which must have looked magical parked outside the family’s council house in Islington, north London. Gary bought first, and chose red. “Yeah, I was the blue one,” Kemp says, and all of a sudden he does sound blue. The red one was “the perfect 80s car”.

In Hollywood, where they went on the back of The Krays, it was Gary who “hit a bit of a goldstream”, winning parts in The Bodyguard and Killing Zoe while Martin “was working in C-list movies. Maybe they were D-list,” he says. “Maybe E-list, even. But I was working ... And I absolutely loved it.” There he goes again, counterbalancing disappointment with affirmation. (“Always finish on a positive! Always have the answer to a negative” is a habit he picked up in Scher’s youth classes.)



Gary as Ronnie and Martin as Reggie in The Krays. Photograph: Rank Film Distributors/Allstar

Presumably his envy of Gary had boiled over by this point? “No. Not at all, really. Because at that point,” he says, clearing his throat, “Gary and my

personalities are so different. We recognised that. So the parts Gary was getting, I wasn't right for anyway."

In any case, in 1995 he noticed the lump on his head, and life took a different turn.

You can see why the idea of self-renewal appealed, because on top of the health worries, being unable to work plunged his family – by then he and his wife, Shirlie, had two young children – into financial difficulty. No wonder that in 1998 when he was offered the part of [Steve Owen in EastEnders](#), he jumped at it.

"Everybody said: 'Don't do it, don't do it – you're going to ruin your career.' And I'm thinking: 'What career? What have I got to ruin?'" At the time, he barely knew if he was "walking left, right, walk over here or walk over there ... I knew that I had to do it, not for any other reason but to cure my brain of the leftover effects of the trauma that I'd been through. It was such a good thing," he says. Learning lines was "brain exercise", and it brought him back to himself.

These days, if people think of the Kemps, they are more likely to picture Martin and his son [Roman](#) than Martin and Gary. He has surely overtaken his brother. "No. We're a dynasty, I think," Kemp says. And, sounding as if he is remembering how things were settled in childhood, adds: "We take it in turns."

Mostly, though, it is Kemp's own family that takes centre stage. Kemp and Shirlie, a former backing singer (alongside Pepsi) in Wham!, released an album together in 2019 (also featuring their daughter, Harley), and co-authored a book about their relationship. Then there's Roman, with whom Kemp appears on Celebrity Gogglebox. They also co-presented Martin & Roman's Weekend Best breakfast show on ITV – surely the dispensing of surnames signals the ultimate uncoupling from Gary? Even Kemp and Shirlie's house has [its own Instagram account](#).

Mind you, there always was a domesticity to Kemp's fame. He fell in love with Shirlie from the comfort of his living room while watching her dance

with Wham! on Top of the Pops. He first heard Wake Me Up Before You Go Go in George Michael's bedroom in *his* family home.



At Christie's for the launch of a George Michael art sale in 2019 ... from left: Kemp, Harley, Shirlie and Roman. Photograph: Mike Marsland/WireImage

Indeed, Kemp's favourite memory of Michael, who was godfather to Roman, was "one day, maybe about a year before he left us. And I was painting my living room. The night before, we'd gone out to dinner. He'd said: 'Oh, I'll come round tomorrow. I'll help.' So at the end of the day there's me and George in these white painters' hazmat suits with a glass of wine each, looking round at the job that we'd done ... He was just a lovely man."

The domestic-themed stories make me wonder if the Kemps aspire to a Kardashian-style fame, a *Keeping Up With the Kemps*. "People have spoken about it several times over the years," he says. "But I can imagine Roman not wanting to do that."

Besides, they all get on too well. On Gogglebox, "you see me and Roman absolutely how we have been since he was a kid", Kemp says. Years ago, he

and Shirlie discussed their parenting philosophy and agreed “to bring Harley and Roman up as if they were mates”.

At primary school, “lots of parents said: ‘You’re doing it wrong. You’ve got to have boundaries.’ But we didn’t like to have those boundaries. I never had the naughty step,” he says.

“Parenting is all about listening ... If you are going to shut your ears off and say: ‘Sit over there!’, it’s not going to work. You’ve got to listen to kids. What’s the reason they’re telling you to fuck off? Don’t worry about the word. The word is just a word, right?” Roman, for instance, “was allowed to swear at football”. At Arsenal matches, he would shout: “‘Beckham, you wanker!’ and he was only tiny,” Kemp says. “Everyone looking at him, thinking: ‘Where’s this come from?’”

Kemp thinks he gets his approach from his own father, a printer, who was encouraging and nonjudgmental. In the early Spandau days, when Kemp was heading for the front door in a crimplene dress and makeup, he would call out: “Goodnight!” hoping to provoke his dad’s disapproval. But his dad would only glance up from his chair and say: “Have you got your keys?”

Oh, it was “the most disappointing thing!” Kemp says. “I wanted my dad to say: ‘You can’t go out like that!’” But he never did. “Not once.”

Even when Kemp wanted to leave the printing apprenticeship that his dad had organised, his dad didn’t bat an eyelid. He wrote a letter that went something like: “Dear sir, can you release Martin from his apprenticeship because he wants to be a pop star.”



‘I wanted my dad to say: “You can’t go out like that,” but he never did. Not once.’ Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

“My dad wasn’t taking the mickey,” Kemp says. “He believed in what me and Gary were doing.”

“Do you know what it is? My dad was a really good artist. He used to paint beautiful pictures.” Mostly in oil crayons; Kemp has some on his walls. “But he worked in a factory. And I think in another life my dad would have been an artist. And he knew that he wanted to give me and Gary that chance.”

Kemp became so famous with Spandau Ballet, and later as Steve Owen, that for decades, he says, he “spent his life walking around with my head down, my cap on, sunglasses on”. What he remembers above all from those years was “having a sore neck from looking down all the time”.

Now that he is mostly playing himself – in books, and in all those reality TV shows and presenting roles – he feels much better about being recognised. With the band he used to feel he was “never putting enough of me into it”. “Now it’s different,” he says. “Someone sees me and waves, that’s great. Am I coming into my own? I think I’m a lot more relaxed about life.”

Ticket to the World: My 80s Story by Martin Kemp (HarperCollins) is out on 10 November (£14.99). To support the Guardian, buy your copy from bookshop.theguardian.com. Delivery charges may apply.

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Rio Ferdinand: ‘Racism will be in players’ minds in high-pressure World Cup situations’

[Donald McRae](#)



Rio Ferdinand: 'We wanted to make a solution-based documentary, rather than just highlighting the issues'. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

Former England defender talks racism, sexuality and mental health in football after making a trilogy of films on those subjects



[@donaldgmcrae](#)

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“If you’re a black player who is a great penalty taker, [like Ivan Toney](#), it will be on your mind,” Rio Ferdinand says as he anticipates [the anxiety that may ripple](#) through the England squad which flies to Qatar for the World Cup next week. “If Toney gets in the squad one of his first actions in the World Cup could be being brought on to take a penalty. There’s no doubt in my mind he’ll be thinking: ‘Shit, I know what happened to [Bukayo] Saka, [Jadon] Sancho and [Marcus] Rashford.’”

Those young black footballers [missed penalties](#) in the shootout that secured Italy’s victory over England in the final of the European Championship last year. They suffered sustained racial abuse online in a depressing example of the way in which prejudice is still rife. Ferdinand, who won 81 caps for England and played in two World Cups, has spent the last few years immersed in making [a trilogy of films](#). Two documentaries about racism and sexuality consider how to overcome the bigotry that scars football while the third explores the consequences for mental health in a game which Ferdinand believes has reached a tipping point.

The World Cup will feature heavily on social media’s febrile platforms and Ferdinand knows that more hate and prejudice are likely. “That’s why the rules need to be changed to allow players to feel there aren’t repercussions from a racial standpoint if they fail, or make a mistake,” he says. “But at the moment the laws aren’t in place to protect players. So I definitely think that will be in the back of players’ minds going into high-pressure World Cup situations. It’s not just England. All players of colour around the world will be thinking that.”



England's manager Gareth Southgate embraces Bukayo Saka after the player's missed penalty in the final of Euro 2020. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

An [online safety bill](#) could take another two years to be ratified. In the meantime, as Ferdinand reiterates, social media companies have the means to block and expose racist and homophobic abuse. “The problem is that they rely on toxic behaviour and hate speech so they won’t quash that element,” he says. “Racism and all forms of discrimination are welcomed on social media because that interaction equals more advertising money. We saw with Covid that if a message needs putting out on social media there are algorithms and technology for these companies to make a difference. But they can’t tackle discrimination. So it shows there is no real intention to change. We spoke to [the social media giants] but you get wishy-washy feedback: ‘Yeah, we’re trying all we can.’ No, you’re not.”

In a powerful section of his documentary on racism, Ferdinand meets technology experts at a data company called Signify and they show him how easy it is to trace abusive messages and to identify the people responsible for those postings. They are even able to pinpoint where such racists live and work. Ferdinand shared some of their findings with the Football Policing Unit and, so far, 12 cases of racist hate crime are being investigated.

Signify also suggests that 50% of online racial abuse relating to football is aimed at three players: Raheem Sterling, [Wilfried Zaha](#) and [Adebayo Akinfenwa](#), who retired in May. Ferdinand meets Zaha and Akinfenwa and they agree to join a WhatsApp group of socially conscious footballers he formed with Romelu Lukaku. Ferdinand is emphatic that, as shown by the ability of NBA stars such as LeBron James and Chris Paul to confront racism in the US, the real power lies with current players who have the fame and social media followings to force governing bodies to take action.



Adebayo Akinfenwa, pictured in May 2022, was one of the players who spoke to Rio Ferdinand. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

“More than just highlighting the issues again we wanted to make a solution-based documentary,” Ferdinand says. “I’m not stupid enough to think a documentary is going to end these issues. But the fact we’ve been in parliament lobbying and we’re now going to board meetings at the Premier League means we’re at those decision-making tables, bringing current players and ex-players together to talk.”

Ferdinand meets Richard Masters, the Premier League’s chief executive, to stress that occasional campaigns and statements of support are not enough to combat bigotry in football. “By the time the documentaries are available I will have been at a Premier League board meeting to discuss these issues.

The ball's rolling now but it's not about me. I want to kick that door open and say 'come on' to the current players because they know the problems. They're living and breathing them every day. So they need to be heard."

Does Masters share Ferdinand's desire to involve current players in the battle against racism? "The fact that he's invited me to the board meeting is a step in the right direction. But he needs to prove himself. Far too often we've had people in these positions engage in tokenism and box-ticking exercises. I hope he and the Premier League are true to their word."

Ferdinand is in close communication about racism with "over 50 current players from around Europe and England. We are going to the stakeholders within the game to discuss meaningful action".

Sexuality is an area in which Ferdinand is less familiar when campaigning against prejudice. He should be commended, however, for facing up to his own past homophobia. In the second documentary he visits his sister, Remi, who is gay, and he plays her an audio clip in which he is heard using homophobic language during [a 2006 interview](#) with Chris Moyles. A reminder of that embarrassing behaviour had been sent to Ferdinand when, on Twitter, he asked why no Premier League footballer has ever come out as gay.

"That [interview] was done so long ago and culture and language is very different now," he says. "Yes, it was an awkward scene to shoot but my sister obviously knows how genuine I am around sexuality. She recognises the strides I've made since she told me and my brother, Anton, and our dad, how hard she found it to hear some of the language used when we were growing up. So it was difficult for me to admit it but that vulnerability probably makes other people think: 'That was me as well.' It shows a way out to the other side [of homophobia] as long as you educate yourself and have empathy."



Rio Ferdinand (left) comes up against his brother Anton while playing for Manchester United against West Ham in 2006. Photograph: John Peters/Manchester United/Getty Images

In another revealing moment Ferdinand asks whether it is acceptable to participate in “banter”, which borders on homophobia, in straight company. He quickly shuts down the suggestion as totally unacceptable. “It’s mad to even ask,” he says now. “If you asked the same question to do with race, you know it’s not right. Flip it to sexuality and why is it different? So for me this is definitely a learning experience.”

As part of that education process Ferdinand meets gay footballers at grassroots level, including players for Stonewall FC, as well as Collin Martin, in America, and Josh Cavallo in Australia. Alongside [Jake Daniels](#), the teenager on Blackpool’s books, Martin and Cavallo are among the very few openly gay professionals currently playing in men’s football. Two years ago Landon Donovan, the former US international who manages San Diego Loyal, [led his team off the pitch](#) after Martin had been subjected to a homophobic slur. Ferdinand contrasts the praise Donovan received for standing up to prejudice with the [fate of Darren Wildman](#), the academy head at Skelmersdale United in the Northern Premier League.

“Darren was at the low end of the pyramid as a coach and one of his players was abused about his sexuality. Homophobic words were said and Darren took his players off the pitch. He reported it to the referee but the other team wasn’t happy and all of a sudden his life changed because he was getting abuse. The FA then made him feel like he was the perpetrator when he was actually trying to protect his team and an individual player. He got banned and fined for abandoning the game. It’s unbelievable. When we saw him he was like a broken man.”

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[Wildman was told](#) on Twitter that he should have been “gassed like the Jews” as antisemitism merged with homophobia.

“Look at Landon Donovan who was put up in lights, rightly so, for the way he handled the same situation,” Ferdinand says. “It was amazing to see his team walk off the pitch – but such a difference to what happened here.”



Jake Daniels of Blackpool is one of very few openly gay professionals in men's football. Photograph: News Images/Alamy

What advice would Ferdinand offer if a gay Premier League footballer told him privately he was considering coming out? "I would say it very much depends on the network of people around you. A strong core of people can alleviate some of the pressure. It's going to be difficult, and hard, but the experiences [of coming out] I've heard are very positive. I would say you will gain a lot but be prepared for it to be tough."

It's obvious why there are so many mental health issues surrounding football – particularly among young players released by professional academies. Eighty per cent of those discarded players develop depression and Ferdinand explains that of the 1.5 million boys who play representative youth football in England, only 180 make it to the Premier League. He describes the 0.012% rate as "crazy" and acknowledges the struggle his two teenage sons, who are at Brighton's academy, face in their quest to play elite level football.

Ferdinand also meets some of his former West Ham academy teammates who were not lucky enough to match his success. "[Lee Boylan](#) is the one that stands out for me," the 44-year-old says. "He played in the same team at West Ham as me and Frank Lampard. He was our top goalscorer in a

youth team that won the league two years on the bounce. In the small town in Essex where he grew up he was a mini-superstar. But Lee didn't make the first team at West Ham. He slips into depression, with massive anxiety, and breaks down. He never really recovers and you can see he's still really scarred from that experience."

Ferdinand invites all the leading academies to a forum to discuss how to deal with mental health problems among young players and he is disappointed when only four clubs attend. "They are very guarded around the media. But the subject matter should have overridden all of that."

Each one of Ferdinand's three documentaries faced the same problem. Whether trying to get footballers, their agents or clubs to discuss racism, sexuality and mental health, even a former player as famous as Ferdinand struggled to engender open conversations. "Trying to penetrate the ecosystem of football was so difficult. Even with my background in football, you could still see doors closing and people unwilling to talk. Agents getting in the way or players not wanting to talk because they have been on the receiving end of these issues. I was thinking; 'What the hell? Why would you not want to be part of a process that is not just about highlighting the issue but trying to find solutions?'"

"Zaha, Lukaku and Akinfenwa have had so much prejudice thrown at them. But they listened and asked good questions. As soon as they heard we were looking for solutions they wanted to be part of it. But there weren't enough brave people like that."

Rio Ferdinand's Tipping Point is available on Prime Video on Friday 11 November

Ireland

‘Era-defining scandal’: Ireland revisits ‘Gubu’ murders 40 years on

Scandal over Malcolm MacArthur killings destabilised a government and spawned an acronym



Garda officers bundle Malcolm MacArthur into the back of a vehicle after his court appearance over the murder of nurse Bridie Gargan in 1982. Photograph: Art O'Callaghan/Independent News and Media/Getty



[Rory Carroll](#) *Ireland correspondent*

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Mon 7 Nov 2022 00.00 EST Last modified on Tue 8 Nov 2022 00.11 EST

No single adjective could do justice to the events that rocked [Ireland](#) in July and August 1982, so the then taoiseach, Charles Haughey, used four: “Grotesque, unbelievable, bizarre and unprecedented”. An acronym was soon born: Gubu.

That summer, Malcolm MacArthur, a socialite with a yen for bow ties and cravats, had bludgeoned a young woman to death, killed a farmer with his own shotgun and attempted to rob a retired US diplomat, sparking a huge manhunt.

Police tracked MacArthur down to the Dublin apartment of the then attorney general, Patrick Connolly, who had hosted the fugitive as a guest, unaware of his crimes. After police led MacArthur away, Connolly flew to London to catch a Concorde flight to New York for a holiday.

Haughey was left to try to explain the affair at a chaotic press conference in which he unwittingly gave rise to the new acronym and undermined his government, which tottered and finally fell on 4 November 1982.



Government Press Secretary Mr. Frank Dunlop (right) leads Taoiseach and Fianna Fail leader Charles (Charlie) Haughey into the GUBU press conference, after it was discovered that Malcolm McArthur, later convicted for the murder of a young nurse, had been hiding in the home of Attorney General, Mr. Patrick Connolly, 1982 Photograph: Eamonn Farrell/RollingNews.ie

Forty years later, the saga and its strange aftermath has again transfixed Ireland. A seven-part Irish Times podcast, [Gubu](#), topped the charts in Ireland this summer, while another seven-part podcast, [Obscene: the Dublin Scandal](#), narrated by actor Adrian Dunbar, launched in September on the BBC. Both span the anniversaries of the crimes and the political convulsions that followed.

Irish Twitter users have suggested the acronym should be dusted off and applied to Britain's political turmoil.

Haven't heard of GUBU before? It's time, [#UK](#)
<https://t.co/LbkWWFG4UI>

— Tom Gerald Daly (@DemocracyTalk) [October 20, 2022](#)

“I can’t think of a story that was more sensational. You had this extraordinary series of murders, and then the jaw-dropping revelation that the chief suspect was found in the home of the state’s top law enforcement officer,” said Harry McGee, who presented and produced the Irish Times podcast. “What surprised me is that there was also a very large number of younger listeners, most born many years after the events.”

[Haughey](#)’s reputation for intrigue fuelled conspiracy theories that destabilised his government, even though, in this instance, the taoiseach was blameless, said McGee. “But that acronym followed him around like a stray dog for the rest of his career. The scandal defined the whole era.”

The podcasts debunk several myths, including that the state covered up a clandestine paedophile ring in the upper echelons of Irish society.

The case inspired [John Banville](#)’s 1989 novel *The Book of Evidence*, which was shortlisted for the Booker prize.

In some ways the drama still plays out. MacArthur, released in 2012 after 30 years in prison, pops up at Dublin cafes and book launches.

It was haunting to see the murderer so unchanged, as if frozen, the author and commentator Fintan O’Toole told the BBC podcast. “It was as if this figure had disappeared and come back as he was. It’s a sort of weird, ghostly presence that he still has in Dublin.”

Another contributor said he confronted MacArthur in a cafe: “I went over and said: ‘You murdered my best friend’s daughter.’ He glanced up at me, and then put his eyes back down and never gave me any recognition whatsoever.”

MacArthur has declined interview requests, saying that as a condition of bail he cannot discuss his crimes.



Malcolm MacArthur being taken from Dublin's central criminal court in January 1983. Photograph: Independent News and Media/Getty Images

What drove him remains an enigma. The only child of wealthy landowners, his parents had a toxic marriage and he grew up a loner. He studied in the US, then returned to [Ireland](#) in the 1970s, a tweedy, raffish figure who never worked, lived off his inheritance and frequented fashionable bars.

He had a child with his partner, Brenda Little, and it was through her that he met Connolly. In early 1982 the couple moved to Spain, but MacArthur's inheritance was spent; he was broke. He returned to Dublin alone, intending to steal a car and a gun to rob banks, believing that the police would blame the IRA.

Described by some as a fantasist and others as amoral, MacArthur stalked sunbathers in the Phoenix park on 22 July. He forced a young nurse, Bridie Gargan, into her car and beat her savagely with a hammer. He drove off and abandoned the car, leaving Gargan fatally injured.

Two days later he took a bus to County Offaly to meet a farmer, Dónal Dunne, who had advertised a shotgun for sale. MacArthur shot Dunne in the head and drove off with his car, and the shotgun, back to Dublin.

On 4 August he called on Harry Bieling, a retired US diplomat living in Dalkey, an affluent suburb of Dublin. Brandishing the gun, MacArthur demanded £1,000. Bieling managed to flee, prompting MacArthur to move to the nearby apartment of Connolly, who agreed to host him.

The guest had taxis deliver bottles of Perrier water, plus copies of the Irish Times and Private Eye – all paid for on Connolly's account. He also accompanied the attorney general to an All-Ireland hurling semi-final at Croke Park.

With clues scattered across the city, the manhunt soon closed in. On 13 August detectives arrested MacArthur. He confessed everything, saying he could not cope with his dwindling finances. "This all goes back to money," he said.

As for Connolly, his fate was sealed as he was summoned back home after just one night in New York, to resign. Haughey's government collapsed a few months later.

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Food

Spam is back! Chefs on their favourite recipes from katsu curry to Spam fries with cheesy kimchi sauce

Sales of the tinned meat are on the rise as households tighten their belts. But you can do more with it than you thought



‘One of the world’s elite sandwiches’ ... Spam bánh mì. Photograph: SPAM



[Stuart Heritage](#)

[@stuheritage](#)

Mon 7 Nov 2022 03.00 EST

There is at least one hint of a silver lining to the cost of living crisis. That's right, Spam is back. According to Waitrose, sales are up 36% this year, as consumers turn their backs on more expensive fresh meat.

But Spam – tinned cooked pork – need not be a compromise. Thanks to American GIs, who introduced it during the second world war to the Asia-Pacific nations, the product has become a mainstay of their cuisine. During the festival of Chuseok, South Korean supermarkets brim with elaborate Spam gift sets. In 2014, Burger King in Japan introduced a Spam and cheese burger. The biggest consumers of Spam globally are the people of the tiny Pacific island of Guam; not only do they each eat on average 16 tins a year, but Spam produces a special variety just for islanders.

Basically, you can do more with a tin of Spam than you might have thought. Here, top chefs and food experts explain how they like to use it.

Spam french fries with cheesy kimchi dipping sauce

Judy Joo, [Seoul Bird](#), London



Spam french fries with dip. Photograph: The Food Studio/SPAM®

Spam has a long, beloved history in Korea because of the war. My mum used to feed me fried Spam and eggs for breakfast, and rice porridge studded with cubes of Spam as an after-school snack.

This is a recipe from my book [Judy Joo's Korean Soul Food](#). To make the cheesy kimchi dipping sauce, whisk together 1 tbsp cornflour and 340ml evaporated milk in a small saucepan over a low heat until smooth. Turn up the heat. Once the mixture has thickened and is bubbling, reduce the heat to low and stir in 125g grated cheddar and 3 to 4 tbsp chopped cabbage kimchi. Cook until smooth and velvety. Remove from heat, and keep in a warm place.

Meanwhile, cut a block of Spam lengthways into six slices, and cut each slice into four even matchsticks. Set up three dipping stations: 80g flour, two beaten eggs, and 160g panko breadcrumbs. Coat the Spam sticks with

each in turn. Heat 10cm of oil in a wide heavy-based saucepan to 180C (160C fan)/350F/gas 4. Working in small batches, fry the Spam sticks until golden brown. Place on a rack to drain the oil. Serve immediately with the cheesy kimchi dipping sauce on the side.

Spam jam 3.0 sandwich

Katie Harrington, [Nosh](#), Leeds



Spam jam 3.0 sandwich. Photograph: Courtesy of Nosh

We are well known locally for our love of Spam, and cook many variations of our favourite porky product. Our bestseller is the Spam jam 3.0 sandwich. We toast three slices of bread, and butter them liberally. We start by smothering the bottom slice in chilli jam, and then top with fried Spam and grated cheddar cheese. Add another layer of toast, and then add two hash browns and a couple of spoonfuls of baked beans before topping with the final slice of toast.

Spam katsu curry

Simon Rimmer, [Greens](#), Didsbury

Katsu curry works with pretty much everything, and Spam is no exception. That slightly peppery pork flavour encased in crispy panko breadcrumbs is a match made in heaven.

Cook some chopped onion, garlic and carrot until soft. Add 20g flour and 25g curry powder, then gradually stir in 750ml chicken stock, 15g honey, 15ml soy and 5g garam masala. Simmer for 20 minutes, blend until smooth, then thicken with a paste of 1 tsp cornflour mixed with 50ml water and simmer for another five minutes.

Meanwhile, cut your Spam into strips. Mix 100g flour with 5g salt and 15g curry powder. Dip the Spam strips in flour, then beaten egg, then panko and fry for three minutes. Drain and pour over the curry sauce. Serve it with some rice and chips, and enjoy the adulation.

Spam mì

Helen Graves, [Serious Sandwiches newsletter](#)



Spam mì. Photograph: Courtesy of Helen Graves

A bánh mì is one of the world's elite sandwiches. Spam works because it is salty and highly savoury, so it contrasts with the crunchy pickles, chilli and sprigs of fresh herbs that generally make up a [classic bánh mì](#).

Mix 2 tbsp coarse ground black pepper, 2 tbsp fish sauce, 1 tsp sesame oil and a large clove of crushed garlic together, then rub over 1cm thick Spam slices and allow to marinate for an hour. Then fry the slices in a small amount of vegetable oil until golden and crisp on both sides. Drain on kitchen paper.

Lightly warm your baguette in the oven and then smear on mayo, add the Spam, and then add coriander and mint leaves, sliced red chilli, thinly sliced red onion, de-seeded cucumber slices, carrot and daikon pickle as desired.

Spam Musubi

Ben Ebbrell, [Sorted Food website](#)



Spam musubi. Photograph: Philip Kinsey/Alamy

This is our recreation of a classic Hawaiian street food item, so loved [in the US state] that there is even a National Spam Musubi Day every August.

Slice the Spam into eight rectangles and sear on either side for 1 to 2 minutes in a hot pan. Place the slices on an oven tray, return the pan to the heat and add two garlic cloves, 1cm of ginger and 2 tbsp sesame oil. When fragrant, add ½ tsp chilli flakes, and 1 tbsp each of oyster sauce, sweet soy sauce, fish sauce, mirin, black vinegar and honey, and bring to the boil. Turn down the heat and simmer until reduced by half. Load the Spam slices back into the pan and flip over to coat in the sticky glaze. Remove the pan from the heat.

On a clean chopping board, slice four nori sheets in half. Lay the rectangles of nori out and load 1 heaped tbsp of cooked rice on to the bottom quarter of each sheet. Lightly moisten your hands with water and flatten the rice out so that it is the same thickness and dimensions as a piece of Spam. Lay a slice of glazed Spam on to each rice mattress, and then carefully roll the nori sheet around the rice and Spam to form your musubi.

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2022.11.07 - Opinion

- The Tories concocted the myth of the ‘migrant crisis’. Now their survival depends on it
- Cindy Crawford has a midlife coach? I’d LOVE someone to help me with middle-aged feet and wild swimming
- ‘Grey rocking’ to repel your tormentors? We Brits have been doing it for years
- Britain had a far-right terrorist attack a week ago. Why the failure to call it by its true name?

[Opinion](#)Immigration and asylum

The Tories concocted the myth of the ‘migrant crisis’. Now their survival depends on it

[Nesrine Malik](#)



Brexit is exposed, the economy is in shreds, the party has imploded – and the government is running out of people to blame



A patrol vessel in Dover marina carries migrants picked up at sea: ‘This is a crisis not of arrivals, but by government design.’ Photograph: Ben Stansall/AFP/Getty Images

Mon 7 Nov 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Mon 7 Nov 2022 09.38 EST

Britain exists in an imaginary state of crisis about immigration. Nothing soothes this anxiety – not facts, not real numbers of arrivals, not the distinction between migrants in general and asylum seekers in particular. In the past week alone, reports have emerged of illegally detained migrants at overcrowded centres falling ill, of [underage sexual assault](#), and of others being dropped off in the middle of cities and [promptly forgotten about](#). These appalling failures have occurred not because there are too many migrants, but because the government has broken its own asylum system.

This is a crisis by design, not of arrivals. The government is keen to stress the recent increase in Channel crossings, yet asylum applications are [half](#) what they were 20 years ago. The real and only cause of the debacle at Manston and other failing centres is this: the number of asylum applications processed within six months has [fallen](#) from almost 90% to about 4%. It's not that more people are arriving than ever before, it's that more of them aren't being processed, and so are stuck in the asylum system for years. Efficiency has been dropping sharply since 2014, one year after Theresa

May established the “hostile environment” and in the middle of George Osborne’s austerity programme. The intersection of those two forces created an underfunded, cruel Home Office, and with it Britain’s immigration “crisis”.

And it is a crisis that the government has every interest in maintaining, or at least no pressing interest in resolving. The Tories have finessed a narrative in which the country is under a migrant siege that the government is trying valiantly to rebuff, but is frustrated in its efforts by a string of culprits – “[activist](#)” lawyers, human rights law, tofu eaters, the Labour opposition. It is that tired fallback of failing rightwing government: plead helplessness in the face of a ubiquitous fifth column, an abstract leftwing blob that only last week the Sunday Telegraph editor, Allister Heath, [promoted to the status](#) of wielding “near total intellectual hegemony”.

This pretence is most fruitful with immigration. The government’s failure to maintain living standards and public infrastructure, from health to housing, can be disguised – with the help of the rightwing press – by presenting migrants as a constant drain on those resources. As a bonus, the fear of more of these imaginary parasites pushes voters to the only party that seems appropriately appalled by the threat. Immigrants provide such a valuable alibi for political dereliction that it makes no sense for the Conservative government to fix its broken immigration system. And so the state of emergency must be fostered and, if need be, escalated. In this country, there has never been an immigration crisis and there has always been an immigration crisis.

'It's not fit for habitation': protesters demand Manston asylum centre is shut down

The illusion of deluge is more easily maintained at certain times than others, giving the false migrant crisis a rhythm that feels genuine as it ebbs and flows in and out of the political and media agenda. But that pulse hasn’t correlated with arrivals – indeed, concerns about immigration [waned for a period](#) after Brexit, even as the number of arrivals rose.

Sometimes it is a reflection of shifting patterns of migration. Covid made travel by road – in which migrants are less visible – more challenging, thereby increasing travel by sea. A landing on a shore is much more evocative of the “invasion” of a vast, impossible-to-police border than an unseen stowaway on a truck. At other times, all it takes is a particularly volatile or incompetent person at the top. The framework is so rickety that a loose cannon like [Suella Braverman](#) need make only one bad decision, such as failing to find alternative accommodation for those in overcrowded detention centres, for the entire structure to collapse.

But the other reason these landings are high on the government agenda, first under Priti Patel and now under the clumsier Braverman is, well, everything else. Brexit is spent, the economy is in shreds, the Tory party has imploded and there’s no one to blame. The government could never deliver the transformative Brexit it had promised, but what it *could* do was pretend it was being blocked from delivering it. With the end of EU free movement and the “taking back” of our borders, the [Conservatives](#) are exposed. They got what they wanted, and are now in the position of the dog who has caught the car. What use is all this new “control” if it means the government now has to take full responsibility for immigration? Enter Dover, a vast vulnerability.

Asylum seekers have become the government’s own refuge. In them, there is an evergreen problem for which a Tory crusade is the only solution. This is a valuable asset for a government that has run out of road, but can play on everything from fears of terrorism, sexual assault, economic drag and cultural overwhelm to extend its relevance. Like Donald Trump’s wall, or the windmill in Animal Farm, our borders will always be vulnerable and sabotaged by enemies, while our government fights like hell to build them back up.

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The only way for progressives to dispel this mythology is to create a competing one. If Britain's attitudes towards migration could be summoned in a word cloud, the phrases that loom largest would be negative – “hostile environment”, “invasion”, “swarm”, “legitimate concerns”, “illegal migrants”. Not to forgive xenophobia, but when you are constantly barraged by this sort of rhetoric from most of the press and the government, it's unrealistic to expect any other outcome. The panic strengthens and recedes in line with public messaging and perceptions of how compromised our borders are.

These concerns are not logical. They are based not on the premise that numbers are too large but on the hysteria that when we have no control, no numbers are small enough. So Labour can try to win the immigration argument [from the right](#) and stick “Controls on Immigration” on crockery again, but unless the party is willing to crack down and go full-on fascist in its language and policies, the Tories will always be seen as the stronger party on a border that they have successfully painted as weak and porous. In this regard, as well as on patriotism and British identity, Labour has taken a defensive position and simply borrowed from the right rather than created its own distinct, ambitious imagining of a better country, a different border – its own word cloud.

British patriotism and values are not restricted to the flag, the anthem, the royal family, the military and abstract notions of hard work and fairness. They can be about compassion – about a place that we never hear about, one that is welcoming – not full up, but punching above its weight as a refuge and safe harbour. This country isn't even an aspiration: it is already here, sketched out, waiting for the colours and details to be filled in. It is the same country that, when politicians and the press were cowed by circumstance and withheld their poison, turned up for people from [Ukraine](#), [Afghanistan](#) and Hong Kong, whose numbers dwarf arrivals on the southern

coast. Kindness has been so stigmatised, rebranded as “virtue signalling”, that people forget it’s out there.

Yes, the risks of openly challenging the immigration crisis myth are high in a political and media culture so utterly hooked on the lie’s benefits. But the result could be the disarming of the right’s most powerful, and, perhaps soon only, political weapon. With a payoff so huge and a lead in the polls, is it not worth a shot?

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist

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Cindy Crawford has a midlife coach? I'd LOVE someone to help me with middle-aged feet and wild swimming

[Emma Beddington](#)



The supermodel can keep her Dior lingerie and shimmering gold jumpsuits. What I need is someone to guide me through the dark forest of my 40s



‘I thought the only thing I had in common with Cindy Crawford was moles. But no, she too is asking: what the hell is all this for?’ Photograph: Angela Weiss/AFP/Getty Images

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I found out recently that supermodel Cindy Crawford has hired a coach to help her negotiate midlife. In [a cover story for the wonderfully named Haute Living magazine](#) (how haute is your life, hmm?), Crawford is pictured at 56, goddess that she is, wearing a lacy bralette so tiny and delicate it looks like it was woven by the guild of fairy spiders in 15th-century Flanders. It would disintegrate if it even saw a washing machine. Do you wear it once then throw it away? Sorry, I’m getting distracted by Dior lingerie: the main point was the midlife coach.

Crawford says she had an epiphany at [Burning Man festival](#) (or hell as I’d call it, given that it’s a happening with sand, 40C heat, camping and “radical self-expression”, four of my least favourite things). The unprecedented freedom apparently prompted a realisation that, in her normal life, her time was not sufficiently her own. “It’s me questioning, at this point in my life, do I still want to be all of those things that I unconsciously signed up for?” she said.

I thought the only thing I had in common with Crawford was moles. But no, she too is grappling with the traditional midlife question: what the hell is all this for? It's reassuring to realise you can be legendarily beautiful, [worth approximately a quarter Sunak](#) (the new high-net-worth individual unit of measurement) and still look around and say to yourself: "I'll be dead soon; why am I still..." (fill in as appropriate – I presume Crawford's response is, "doing this stupid interview").

Her idea of hiring someone to help answer that question filled me with an envy I normally reserve for people with pet owls and private chefs. Who wouldn't want a coach for every stage of their life, after all? From cradle to grave, it's confusing and often terrible. No one wants to listen to their parents, our friends are often as clueless as we are, and therapy is slow, hard (and yes, hugely important) work. Part shaman, part doula, part Dr Capybara (the ferocious rodent alter ego my best friend invented to kick me up the arse when required), the ideal life coach – at least the way I imagine it – would provide answers, an action plan and accountability.

I once had a single session with a coach – a man of cast-iron confidence, superpowered positivity and a wholly flawed belief I could project the same – then ignored every scrap of his advice, but that was before I entered the dark forest of my 40s. There are many conflicting narratives around midlife (existential questioning, leather trousers, throwing plates), but the one about having more certainty and self-assurance resonates the least. I have never felt more baffled and I would take every coach on offer: life, intimacy, career, financial, a sensitivity reader to vet my every utterance and someone to tell me what to do about my proliferating skin tags.

The list of questions I need a life coach to help me answer is endless, actually. Can I silence the ceaseless internal narrative negatively comparing myself with others? What is the deal with middle-aged feet? Am I frittering away my retirement trying to find a decent vegan cake? Is there any point in striving for anything but loving and being loved, when everything feels unprecedentedly catastrophic? And perhaps most importantly, can I reach 60 without succumbing to wild swimming?

That's why I want what Crawford is having. It's not that I aspire to be her, cycling across the baking desert in a "shimmering gold jumpsuit" to have a

sculpture made of burnt-out Teslas and Barbie heads mansplained to me by a naked leprechaun. My midlife mood board hero is Isabella Rossellini, living her best, uncompromising, creative life on her farm surrounded by rare breed animals and her loving family, occasionally dressing up in a chimpanzee suit to distribute Halloween candy from her hairy hands, [according to her Instagram](#). The right midlife coach feels like it might be the way to make that happen. But then, of course, I would need to tackle yet another question: how do you find the right one? I'd need a coach to answer that, too.

- Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist
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[Opinion](#)Psychology.

‘Grey rocking’ to repel your tormentors? We Brits have been doing it for years

[Emma Brockes](#)



For those whose cultural backgrounds incline towards passive aggression, this self-preservation tactic is almost too natural



‘You give them nothing, while being perfectly, mercilessly pleasant, until they crack.’ Photograph: Big Cheese Photo/Getty Images/Big Cheese Photo RF

Mon 7 Nov 2022 03.00 EST Last modified on Mon 7 Nov 2022 09.30 EST

There is a technique for dealing with hostile people that maps almost exactly on to the British national character. Do you know about this? I only recently discovered it, lagging behind followers of therapy Instagram and those seeking urgent strategies to survive the holiday season. It is called – with due deference to how Alan Partridge this sounds – “[grey rocking](#)”. But it might as well, for its evasive politeness, be called the “up to a point, Lord Copper” approach to neutralising aggressors.

If you’ve ever smiled blandly in the face of someone you violently dislike; if you’ve ever done a flat, “oh, wow”, or “right” to everything they say; if you’ve ever given the sketchiest details when they ask what you’re up to – then, along with millions of other Britons, you have probably been unwittingly grey rocking it like a pro.

Officially, the removal of an emotional response from someone who feeds off disharmony – for the sake of argument let’s call this person a narcissist – is supposed simply to bore them into retreat. Cut off their oxygen, deny

them the drama even of refusing to engage, and you put them in an unbearable limbo. Through sheer force of blandness, the theory goes, you can transform yourself from a victim with responses that gratify your tormentor, into, er, a grey rock. You give them nothing, while being perfectly, mercilessly pleasant until they crack and stagger off to find a new target.

The difficulty with this, particularly for those of us who grew up in an era before these kinds of discussions were commonplace, is that the power rush can be almost overwhelming. Most people over 40 were not, I'd hazard, raised to identify "boundaries" or "gaslighting" or "toxicity" or "red flags", words we now use to pathologise the people we hate. Much of it is legitimate and helpful. It puts an end to guiltily picking up the phone to the person who rings at 7am or 11pm and resentfully giving them 40 minutes to talk. It allows us to dispatch harassers in a fraction of the time it used to take. Access to justifications about boundaries can also, I'd say, be a thrilling and vaguely addictive way to act badly and still feel in the right.

Clearly, I'm not the first person to think about this. If you type "grey rock method" into a search engine, one of the first returns is, "Is grey rocking abuse?". As a behavioural approach, it's a form of withdrawal that can itself be emotionally damaging. Is the person I'm thinking of doing this to genuinely a narcissist, or are they just a bit annoying? Am I "taking a break" from a friendship because that person threatens my wellbeing or because I can't be bothered – which is allowable, perhaps, but less so if I dolly up my laziness as something more profound. Is it greyrocking or is it being an arsehole?

I guess the bigger question is why, if you're grey rocking (I'm slightly ashamed of myself for deploying this term as if it's real, although the dynamic is one I recognise and use) someone close to you, why keep them in your life at all? Bland evasion doesn't seek to fix a relationship, merely to recognise that it is unfixable and offer shelter while keeping the door vaguely open. Other schools of therapy would suggest that this is an unhealthy fudge: a skimmed-milk version of actually dealing with a problem.

But I recognise its uses. A toxic parent, say, whom it is too hard or too damaging to cut out of one's life may be held indefinitely at arm's length via this method. Or, at the other end, it may be a useful dodge when dealing with peripheral relatives too minor to go to the bother of excommunicating. Families are complicated, and it is a way of paddling safely around difficult people for long enough to get to the other side of Christmas.

For many of us the good, or possibly bad, news is that we're doing it without even trying. As a piece of self-preservation, grey rocking is, I suspect, harder for Americans to pull off than for those of us whose cultural backgrounds incline towards passive aggression. For those of us who are happy for things to go unacknowledged and not confronted for as long as it takes, it's the legitimisation we've been waiting for.

Right? Hmmm. Right. Oh, wow.

Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist and author

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[Opinion](#)[The far right](#)

Britain had a far-right terrorist attack a week ago. Why the failure to call it by its true name?

[Miqdaad Versi](#)



The perpetrator of the firebombing in Dover openly expressed hatred of Muslims. Yet the reaction has been remarkably muted



The firebomb attack on a migrant centre in Dover. Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

Sun 6 Nov 2022 11.43 ESTLast modified on Mon 7 Nov 2022 08.08 EST

Counter-terrorism police have finally [concluded](#) that a firebomb attack on a migrant centre last week was terrorism motivated by the far right. But you'd never have guessed it from this past week.

There haven't been column inches from counter-terrorism ideologues laying out the drivers of this terrorist attack, nor has there been round-the-clock media coverage of the community where the perpetrator is from, asking why they hate so much. [Most national newspapers](#) didn't give the attack front-page prominence the next day.

The day after the attack, the home secretary [appeared to go out of her way](#) to say that the attack was not being treated as terrorism. This is despite the fact that the perpetrator had [tweeted](#) that he planned to "obliterate Muslim children" an hour before his attack. He [referenced](#) the far-right [Islamophobe](#) Tommy Robinson, repeatedly wrote about Muslim "grooming gangs" and shared content from far-right Islamophobic groups including [Act for America](#).

Is it possible that the comparatively muted reaction to this despicable act of terror is because the perpetrator was not “foreign”, but instead a Briton hating immigration: a cause much of the rightwing media and our government stand behind?

At the Muslim Council of Britain’s Centre for Media Monitoring, we [analysed](#) the media reporting of 16 officially designated terrorist attacks between 2015 and 2020 in painstaking detail. The report uncovered a huge disparity in the way the term “terror” (and related terms) has been used by the media. Unsurprisingly, “terror” was used far less commonly when the perpetrator was from the far right.

For example, the report cites how many were [unwilling](#) to call Thomas Mair, who murdered Jo Cox, a terrorist, despite the murder [being described by the Crown Prosecution Service](#) as a terrorist act. ITV’s Rohit Kachroo, a contributor to the report, highlighted how a young man inspired by white supremacists in El Paso, Texas, shot 20 people dead in a supermarket, yet media outlets were initially unwilling to call it a terrorist attack. These should not be challenging cases.

On a side note, it is worth noting that mainstream reporting appears to have become more consistent since the Christchurch terrorist [attack](#) that killed 51 Muslims. This has included a greater willingness to call attacks by the far right “terrorism” where appropriate, and being more circumspect and not jumping to conclusions about motivation when the terrorist is, for example, inspired by Islamic State.

But it’s not merely about the reporting of terrorism. It’s also about why this far-right terrorist had such disgusting views about Islam and Muslims.

It’s important not to assume that media discourse about Islam, Muslims and immigration directly led to this attack, but given the [awful](#) reporting about Islam, Muslims and immigration that has become commonplace in the rightwing press, the correlation is worth exploring.

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Columns by Melanie Phillips were [quoted](#) several times in the manifesto of the anti-Islam far-right terrorist Anders Breivik, who [murdered](#) 77 people in Norway more than a decade ago. Unfortunately, however, rather than this prompting some reflection, sections of the press have since doubled down.

In the week following the far-right terrorist attack on a migrant centre in Dover, the home secretary, Suella Braverman, [claimed](#) asylum seekers were engaged in an “invasion” of the south coast, [defended](#) by newspaper columnists such as Allison Pearson; and the Spectator [published](#) an article hostile to immigration with an image of a tidal wave of Muslim-looking individuals hitting the white cliffs of Dover. The Daily Mail, which did report the Dover centre attack on its front page, described it as an “intensification of Britain’s migrant crisis”, which came “amid new fears over the number of arrivals”.

It appears that even after a terrorist attack from someone who used such language, incendiary language about Islam, Muslims and immigration has not died down, but has actually escalated.

The question to ask is, why has this happened? First, there is a deliberate unwillingness to take far-right extremism seriously across the media and political establishment. In fact, there are even attempts to [decrease](#) focus on the far right, including most worryingly by the reviewer of Prevent, William Shawcross, although also across the [pages](#) of news outlets such as the Spectator.

Second, it is because anti-Islam sentiment remains acceptable in mainstream discourse. Why else would people like [Rod Liddle](#), [Douglas Murray](#) and [William Shawcross](#) be considered reasonable interlocutors at

the BBC, for example? And why else would Islamophobia in our governing political party be ignored?

Finally, it's because in parts of the media and politics, narratives blaming an "other" for society's ills play a crucial role. They distract from the real forces undermining British society, and get a lot of clicks.

We are at a crucial moment. And things look set to worsen as we face a probable recession, far-right voices are poised to return to social media platforms and far-right forces across the globe continue to rise.

If our media and political establishment cannot reflect and confront far-right terrorism and its drivers after a terrorist attack on a migrant centre, when will they?

- Miqdaad Versi is part of the public affairs team of the Muslim Council of Britain. He is writing in a personal capacity.
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***

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2022.11.07 - Around the world

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[Tanzania](#)

At least 19 people dead after plane crashes into Lake Victoria

Precision Air plane with 43 people onboard came down in bad weather on its approach to Bukoba airport

Rescue operation under way after passenger plane crash-lands in Lake Victoria – video

[Jason Burke](#) and agencies

Sun 6 Nov 2022 10.34 ESTFirst published on Sun 6 Nov 2022 03.44 EST

At least 19 people have died after a plane plunged into Lake Victoria in [Tanzania](#) during bad weather shortly before it was due to land in the north-west city of Bukoba, according to the state-owned Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation.

“There was an accident involving a Precision Air plane which ... crashed into water about 100 metres from the airport,” the regional police commander William Mwampaghale told reporters at Bukoba airport.

The regional commissioner, Albert Chalamila, said 43 people – 39 passengers, two pilots and two cabin crew – were onboard flight PW 494 from the country’s financial capital, Dar es Salaam, to the lakeside city in the Kagera region.

“As we speak, we have managed to rescue 26 people who were taken to our referral hospital,” Chalamila said.

“The rescue operation is still ongoing and we are communicating with the pilots,” he said, adding that the aircraft was an ATR-42, manufactured by the Toulouse-based Franco-Italian firm ATR.

The two pilots were reported to have been seriously injured. No details of the cause of the crash have been made public.

Family members waiting for passengers at Bukoba airport witnessed the crash.

“We were really shocked,” Abdul Nuri told the BBC. “People panicked and some started crying and shouting ... At the arrivals gate people panicked as well – most of them were waiting to welcome their relatives.”

Fishers are thought to have been the first to reach the aircraft and helped some passengers escape through a rear door.

Precision Air, Tanzania’s largest private airline, released a brief statement confirming the incident. “The rescue team has been dispatched to the scene and more information will be released in two hours’ time,” the airline said.

Video footage broadcast on local media showed the plane largely submerged as rescuers waded through water to bring people to safety.

Emergency workers attempted to lift the aircraft out of the water using ropes and assisted by cranes as local residents also sought to help in the effort.

The president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, expressed her condolences to those affected by the accident. “Let’s continue to be calm while the rescue operation continues as we pray to God to help us,” she said on Twitter.

The African Union Commission chair, Moussa Faki Mahamat, shared his condolences, as did the secretary general of the regional East African Community bloc, Peter Mathuki.

“Our hearts and prayers go to the families of passengers onboard a plane that crashed into Lake Victoria, with our full solidarity to the government & people of 🇹🇿 Tanzania,” Mahamat said on Twitter.

“The East African Community joins and sends our condolences to Mama Samia Suluhu Hassan, families and friends of all those who were affected

by the Precision Air plane accident,” Mathuki tweeted.

Precision Air, which is partly owned by Kenya Airways, was founded in 1993 and operates domestic and regional flights as well as private charters to popular tourist destinations such as the Serengeti national park and the Zanzibar archipelago.

The incident comes five years after 11 people died when a plane belonging to the safari company Coastal Aviation crashed in northern Tanzania.

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Global development

‘My mission is to die every day’: the dangerous dedication of Yemen’s body collector

Hadi Jumaan has been recognised for his work reuniting the war dead and their families in a country stricken by years of conflict



Hadi Jumaan and his team collect bodies from the frontline. Photograph: Courtesy of Humanitarian Mediators for Development

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[About this content](#)

[Isabel Choat](#)

Mon 7 Nov 2022 02.45 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Nov 2022 11.29 EST

The first time Hadi Jumaan collected bodies from a battlefield in [Yemen](#) it was at the request of a friend who asked him to bring home the remains of two men who had been killed in combat.

It was August 2015, a year into the conflict that has killed 150,000 people, displaced millions and left the country with one of the highest child malnutrition rates in the world.

Jumaan, a youth social worker, was an unlikely candidate for such a mission, but he hails from the northern governorate of Al-Jawf – the same province as a rebel commander who was stationed in the south of the country, where the men died.

He didn't know the commander but agreed to help nonetheless and, after negotiating access to the frontline, set off from the city of Taiz in a borrowed ambulance to a valley 30 miles south. He walked the last half a mile into the valley holding a white flag.

When a family sees the dead body it somehow relieves their suffering

The next thing he knew he was lying in a bed at the military hospital in the Yemen capital, Sana'a, surrounded by the families of the dead men, thanking him for locating the bodies of their loved ones, while his own family were oblivious to the drama. Jumaan had been shot in the chest, the bullet narrowly missing his heart, after a breakdown of communication between warring commanders.

Jumaan spent 45 days in hospital, initially telling his wife he was working in Sana'a to avoid upsetting her. Despite the trauma, he was so moved by the gratitude of the families he decided he would say yes if anyone asked for his help again. And they did.

Since that dramatic first mission, Jumaan estimates that he has retrieved 1,700 bodies, risking his life each time he ventures into conflict areas. He describes his work as “like a suicide action”. He has been shot at three times and detained on eight occasions. “My mission is to die every day, this is what I expect,” he told the Guardian at the [Aurora Humanitarian Initiative](#) award ceremony in Venice last month.



Hadi Jumaan. Photograph: Courtesy of Humanitarian Mediators for Development

As an Aurora finalist he won \$25,000 (£21,700) – money that will help support the work, which was previously funded by the sale of family land, jewellery and small grants. He dedicated the award to his wife and his mother.

While his first job was in the south of Yemen, the majority of subsequent missions have been in Al-Jawf, where he lives with his wife and three children. Sandwiched between Saudi Arabia and Houthi-controlled Sana'a, the rural region is a key battlefield.

Nicknamed the “body collector” by Yemeni media, requests for Jumaan’s help grew with his reputation. His skills have also been called on to negotiate prisoner swaps between Houthi rebels and government forces; and to persuade Houthi fighters to allow aid into shattered, starving communities. Sometimes that means stripping the branding off aid packages and persuading commanders. “I never take sides. I’m there as a neutral mediator,” he says.

Volunteers have come and gone – at one point he had 75, now he has 15 – but he doesn’t blame them for not sticking around. “I appreciate everyone who contributes even one hour. It is understandable that they may leave halfway. Those who stay are going to face death.”

But he keeps at it. “There is always this feeling when a mother, father, brother, sister or son contacts me asking for my help, I cannot say no,” he says.

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“The feeling I get when I return bodies to families helps me continue ... when a family sees the dead body it somehow relieves their suffering.”

Once, when he was tasked with tracking down the body of an 18-year-old Houthi fighter, he was directed to a mortuary and shown the body. But he noticed it looked different from other corpses he’d seen and called for a doctor, who confirmed the young man – who had been shot in the head – was still breathing. “I told the family I’m bringing him back – alive. They said, ‘Are you going to resurrect him?’ Today the young man is walking and talking.”

Jumaan smiles at the memory but living in a warzone is traumatic, made worse by the sense that the world is looking away.

“There is an entire people facing death on a daily basis. People fighting to find bread. We suffer from hunger, climate change, famine, in addition to missile strikes. We are forgotten people, without identity,” he says.



Jumaan on the border between Yemen and Saudi Arabia with prisoners whose release he helped secure. Photograph: Courtesy of Humanitarian Mediators for Development

A six-month ceasefire agreed in April raised the hope that the Yemeni people might begin to rebuild their lives after seven years of war – “living like the rest of the world,” says Jumaan.

But the [failure to extend the truce](#) last month has left people facing a resumption of airstrikes, ground shelling and missile attacks.

Jumaan has an estimated 1,300 names of the missing on his books and is committed to finding them. Hope that hostilities will end giving Yemen a chance to recover and prosper keeps him going. “My message is to stop this chaos and stop destroying our country. Stop it. We’ve had enough.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/nov/07/my-mission-is-to-die-every-day-the-dangerous-dedication-of-yemens-body-collector>

[A common condition](#)[Global development](#)

‘I applied for radiotherapy nine times and got no reply’: living with cancer in Gaza

For specialist treatment, Palestinians often need to be referred to a hospital outside Gaza – then apply for a travel permit. Tight budgets and restrictions mean few are granted. Here, one woman details the obstacles she has faced



Ghada Hammad and her children. The family live in Khan Younis, on the Gaza Strip. Photograph: Loay Ayyoub/The Guardian

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As told to [Bethan McKernan](#)

Mon 7 Nov 2022 04.30 EST Last modified on Mon 7 Nov 2022 09.44 EST

My name is Ghada Hammad. I grew up in Khan Younis in the [Gaza](#) Strip, and I studied chemistry before becoming a public health worker. I was 27 when the Israeli blockade began, and I'm 42 now. I've lived through all the wars between Hamas and Israel.

Khan Younis is my home. I live here now with my husband, Islam, a teacher, and our five children. The first time I tried to leave Gaza after the siege started was 2013, because we were having fertility problems. The restrictions on movement were not as tough then, and I remember the process being quite smooth, which is part of the reason I am shocked at how difficult it is now for me to get cancer treatment.

I was referred to an IVF clinic in Nablus in the West Bank and ended up having six babies, although one of them died. Our quintuplets are now nine, and our eldest daughter is 13. As you might imagine, our family life is pretty busy.

Quick Guide

A common condition

Show

The human toll of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is huge and rising. These illnesses end the lives of approximately 41 million of the 56 million people who die every year – and three quarters of them are in the developing world.

NCDs are simply that; unlike, say, a virus, you can't catch them. Instead, they are caused by a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioural factors. The main types are cancers, chronic respiratory illnesses, diabetes and cardiovascular disease – heart attacks and stroke. Approximately 80% are preventable, and all are on the rise, spreading inexorably around the world as ageing populations and lifestyles pushed by economic growth and urbanisation make being unhealthy a global phenomenon.

NCDs, once seen as illnesses of the wealthy, now have a grip on the poor. Disease, disability and death are perfectly designed to create and widen inequality – and being poor makes it less likely you will be diagnosed accurately or treated.

Investment in tackling these common and chronic conditions that kill 71% of us is incredibly low, while the cost to families, economies and communities is staggeringly high.

In low-income countries NCDs – typically slow and debilitating illnesses – are seeing a fraction of the money needed being invested or donated. Attention remains focused on the threats from communicable diseases, yet cancer death rates have long sped past the death toll from malaria, TB and HIV/Aids combined.

'A common condition' is a new Guardian series reporting on NCDs in the developing world: their prevalence, the solutions, the causes and consequences, telling the stories of people living with these illnesses.

Tracy McVeigh, editor

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

When I was still nursing, I had a fever and felt ill but I was so preoccupied with the babies I didn't pay attention to it. Then I could feel something in my breast, and it was painful, but I went to a doctor who said that everything looked fine. They took a sample, though, and it came back as stage 2 breast cancer.

The hospital in Gaza scheduled a single mastectomy, and I also had chemotherapy and hormonal therapy, which ended in 2015. It was a very difficult time because the babies were still so young. The problems really began when I was referred for radiotherapy after those treatments ended, as there are no medical facilities in Gaza that can do it. You have to get permission from the Israelis to travel to Jerusalem or the West Bank for treatment, or from the Egyptians to go to Cairo.

To get medical treatment outside Gaza, normally you have to get a referral appointment from the hospital in the West Bank, and then apply to the Palestinian body that coordinates travel permits for medical treatment with the Israelis. Budgets for medical coverage from the Palestinian Authority

are really tight; there are more patients for complicated surgeries and cancer treatment. Usually, only people in a critical condition get permits quickly.



Ghada Hammad has received medication, and has had surgery, but was not able to organise radiotherapy for her breast cancer afterwards. Photograph: Loay Ayyoub/The Guardian

Getting a travel permit for Egypt is a bit easier, but the journey is much longer and harder, and you might need to get all your tests done again in the Egyptian medical system. Islam and I would have to cover much more of the costs ourselves, and we can't afford it.

It's difficult to think about the future. Most of the time I focus on being strong for my children

We'd also have to leave the children with relatives for an unknown amount of time. If I could go to Jerusalem, my mother would travel with me as an escort and Islam would stay with the kids. There's no point in trying to get Islam a visa to travel through Israel; they hardly ever give permission to men under 50.

I applied with my doctor to go to the Augusta Victoria hospital in Jerusalem for radiotherapy nine times, and we never even got a reply saying yes or no. Apparently, radiotherapy is useless if you don't have it within a certain time frame of a few weeks after surgery, so in the end, more than a year later, I just gave up.

Once during that process in 2015, I did go to the Erez Crossing for a security interview with the Israelis. That in itself is a big deal, because most Palestinians worry about what they will be asked.

In the meeting the officer didn't ask me anything about why I wanted to travel or my medical case, they just wanted to know about the men in my family: who they are, what they do, phone numbers. I had been so busy with the babies I didn't even know Islam's phone number off by heart, let alone those of other relatives and friends. Maybe they thought that was suspicious.



Ghada looks at her prescriptions and some of the papers she needs to access treatment. Photograph: Loay Ayyoub/The Guardian

The Israelis said recently they never received my travel applications in 2015, but that doesn't make sense, because otherwise, why was I asked to go to the interview at Erez?

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This May, I felt something in the same place, the same breast, when I was taking a shower. I immediately went to the doctor, and it turns out the cancer has come back in my chest muscle. I had another surgery to remove it, and I'm going through chemotherapy. I had forgotten how ill and exhausted it makes you; I am struggling to do anything at home, so that burden is now on Islam and our relatives.

This time my doctor says I must get the radiotherapy. She was angry with me, and blamed me for giving up before. She said that's why the cancer came back.

I have an appointment scheduled in Jerusalem on 6 November. Based on my past experiences, I am not optimistic I will get permission to leave, but my husband believes since I'm over 40 now I might get luckier.

Most of the time they only tell you if you have a permit the day before you are supposed to travel, or they don't tell you anything at all. Even if this one works, I'll have to apply again if I need appointments in future, and they might be denied. That's not an efficient way to treat cancer.

Psychologically, it's a struggle, and the kids are old enough to understand what is going on this time, which is hard for them. I hate the way some people in the community act as if I need sympathy. I want to be treated normally.

It's difficult to think about the future. Most of the time I focus on being strong for my children. The only thing I want to hear is a doctor telling me I have the all clear, so I can live my life again.

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[Myanmar](#)

‘We worked alongside our worries’: Myanmar resumes hot-air balloon festival

Rival teams begin launching aerial artistic creations that explode with fireworks once (hopefully) in the sky



A hot-air balloon carrying fireworks is released during the Tazaungdaing light festival at Pyin Oo Lwin in Mandalay, Burma, on Sunday. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

Agence France-Presse

Mon 7 Nov 2022 04.02 ESTLast modified on Mon 7 Nov 2022 04.18 EST

Thousands of people have gathered in the hills of central [Myanmar](#) for the annual Tazaungdaing light festival marking the end of the rainy season with a fiery display of exploding hot-air balloons.

The celebration in the former British hill station of Pyin Oo Lwin has not been held for two years because of the Covid pandemic and unrest after a military coup.

But on Sunday night, rival teams began launching 76 aerial artistic creations that will take flight over the next five days, competing for marks in aesthetics, teamwork, height reached and time spent in the air.

Their balloons are propelled upwards to about 100 metres (320ft) using the heat from a fire before fireworks inside explode, obliterating months of work in a spectacular burst of lights across the dark sky.

The festivities are a rare respite from the economic misery and violence gripping much of the country almost two years after the [military's power grab](#).



People preparing lanterns to attach to hot-air balloons during the Tazaungdaing light festival at Pyin Oo Lwin in Mandalay on 6 November. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

“We are holding our festival here but we are sorry for what is happening elsewhere,” said Aung Myat Thu, 37, who had spent months working with

friends on their balloon. “When we were preparing for the competition, we all worked alongside our worries.”

The hot-air balloons featured an array of artworks, from images of Buddha to traditional motifs, with one made in the shape of a polar bear.

Some participants hooked dozens of red, white and yellow candles to their balloons before releasing them into the chilly night air, to huge cheers.

While the Tazaungdaing tradition is rooted in Buddhism, the hot-air balloon contest was started by British colonialists in the late 19th century. Previous editions have drawn tens of thousands of local and foreign visitors, attracted by the colour – and danger – of the gathering.

The balloons are loaded with fireworks, and any miscalculation on when to light the rockets can result in catastrophe.

In 2014, three people were killed at Tazaungdaing celebrations in Taunggyi, in the neighbouring Shan state, when a balloon crashed on to spectators below.

Tin Mar Lwin, 41, was beaming on Sunday night after sending off her balloon, which was decorated with a huge red and gold Buddha seated on a lotus leaf. “I want the situation to be stable like this,” she told AFP of her country. “I want peace. I’m hoping for it. I’m happy coming to this event.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/07/we-worked-alongside-our-worries-myanmar-resumes-hot-air-balloon-festival>

Violence against women and girls

Majority of female journalists have been target of online violence – report

Chilling report highlights the link between gender-based digital threats and offline attacks



Carole Cadwalladr was the target of 10,400 instances of abuse between December 2019 and January 2021, the report found Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

[Helen Pidd](#)

Sun 6 Nov 2022 19.01 ESTLast modified on Mon 7 Nov 2022 00.09 EST

Online violence against female journalists is one of the most serious global threats to press freedom and has contributed to female reporters being murdered, according to researchers behind a new global report.

Academics who interviewed over 1,000 female journalists in 15 countries found the vast majority of journalists who took part had suffered from

online abuse and threats.

They urged social media companies to overhaul algorithms that have been found to drive hate against women, and for perpetrators of gender-based online violence to be de-platformed and penalised.

The authors of *The Chilling* are calling for governments, as well as the news industry and the giant tech corporations, to do more to tackle what they say is “a crisis of online violence towards women journalists”.

The report illuminates the evolving challenges faced by female journalists dealing with prolific and sustained online violence around the world. It calls out “the victim-blaming and slut-shaming that perpetuates sexist and misogynistic responses to offline violence against women in the online environment, where patriarchal norms are being aggressively reinforced.”

Among the interviewees was award-winning investigative Guardian and Observer journalist Carole Cadwalladr, who exposed how personal data belonging to millions of Facebook users was secretly collected by British consulting firm Cambridge Analytica, largely for political advertising.

The team’s analysis found that Cadwalladr was the target of 10,400 separate instances of obvious abuse between December 2019 and January 2021.

It found that the abuse was highly gendered and designed to “humiliate, belittle and discredit” the journalist on both a personal and professional level.

Cadwalladr told researchers how “a few hundred years ago I would have been burned at the stake” and how she has become a “national punching bag”.

The report, which is based on research by the International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ) and the University of Sheffield, also maps the online-offline violence trajectory, showing how digital harassment and threats beget offline attacks. It highlights the [murder of Mexican journalist María](#)

[Elena Ferral](#), who denounced online harassment from the son of a city mayor before she was killed.

Prof Kalina Bontcheva, senior researcher in the UK arm of the study, said: “Our report has found that we are now at a crisis point in the level of violence being directed towards women journalists.

“The vast majority who took part in the study had suffered from online violence, so UK policymakers need to take urgent action now in order to protect the lives of those who are doing such an important job in society.”

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Bontcheva called for the much-delayed online safety bill to be passed urgently as the report laid out a series of other recommendations.

The UK arm of the research found that online violence against female journalists is frequently associated with polarising political debates – such as that surrounding Brexit – and that the Covid pandemic has worsened the situation for female journalists.

Globally, the research found that nearly three-quarters of the female journalists surveyed had experienced online violence in the course of their work.

Threats of physical violence, including death threats, were identified by 25% and sexual violence by 18%.

And 13% described threats of violence against those close to them, including children and infants.

Almost half – 48% – of the female journalists surveyed reported being harassed with unwanted private social media messages.

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[Gavin Williamson](#)

PM thinks Williamson bullying accusations are serious, says aide

Rishi Sunak considering ‘appropriate’ action against Cabinet Office minister, says spokesperson

- [UK politics live – latest news updates](#)



Gavin Williamson is reported to have told a former senior civil servant to ‘jump out of the window’ and slit your throat’. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

[Pippa Crerar](#) and [Jamie Grierson](#)

Tue 8 Nov 2022 11.27 ESTFirst published on Tue 8 Nov 2022 03.44 EST

Rishi Sunak believes that fresh bullying allegations against [Gavin Williamson](#) are serious, and is considering whether further action should be taken against him, Downing Street has said.

[The Guardian](#) revealed that Williamson, who was brought back to the cabinet by Sunak last month, allegedly told a senior civil servant to “slit your throat” and “jump out of the window” in what they claimed was a bullying campaign while he was defence secretary.

The prime minister’s official spokesperson said no formal complaint had been received over the claims but that No 10 wanted to “check due process” before commenting further – and did not rule out an investigation by the Cabinet Office’s propriety and ethics team.

Williamson has rejected the allegations that he bullied any staff, claiming to have had “good working relationships” with his “brilliant officials”, but has not denied using the specific words.

With the prospect of a third inquiry into Williamson’s behaviour on the cards, Sunak is under increasing pressure over his decision to bring his ally back into government.

Downing Street said that the prime minister still had confidence in the Cabinet Office minister. Challenged over whether this meant Sunak accepted his minister’s account of events, the spokesperson replied: “Yes.”

“Obviously, there have been further allegations reported this morning,” the spokesperson said. “Those are serious allegations that have come in. It’s true that no formal complaint has been made but we want to consider all proper processes before commenting further.

“We have teams in the Cabinet Office who are able to look at issues if required. I’m not saying that is necessarily the case in this instance, but as these are new allegations, we will want to consider what is appropriate.”

The spokesperson denied that keeping Williamson in his job would amount to the prime minister giving carte blanche to ministers to tell their officials to slit their throats.

“The prime minister has been clear about the approach that he wants from ministers, and the high standards that they will be held to,” he said.

“I think the public would understand that, in order to achieve that, you need to follow the correct processes before setting out any further action.”

It follows another key ally of the prime minister saying that no one was “unsackable” and it was “utterly unacceptable” if Williamson had made the remarks to the former senior civil servant.

The latest claim comes after the former Conservative chief whip Wendy Morton said Williamson had [sent her offensive WhatsApp messages](#) because he was upset he had not been invited to the Queen’s funeral.

Speaking on Sky News, the work and pensions secretary, Mel Stride, who was a strong backer of Sunak in both of this year’s Conservative leadership contests, said it would be unacceptable if Williamson had used those words.

“If that is the case, that is utterly, utterly unacceptable, but at the moment it is in the realm of media speculation,” he said.

Asked if Williamson was “unsackable”, he replied: “I don’t think anybody is unsackable; I’m not unsackable.”

'We are all sackable', says Mel Stride as pressure grows on Gavin Williamson – video

He confirmed that a complaint made by Morton was being investigated by the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme, the parliamentary watchdog set up after the #MeToo movement. It is also the subject of an internal Conservative party investigation.

Stride said he served in the whips’ office under Williamson and saw him as someone with “this sort of aura or mystique around him”.

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“There was always this great aura of ... do you remember Cronus, the spider, the tarantula etc? And the reality with Cronus is he was much touted but he never actually was released to bite anybody.

“So that was how I always saw Gavin – as somebody who had this sort of aura or mystique around him – but the reality was he just generally got on with his job.”

Asked later on Times Radio if he thought Williamson was a “good bloke”, Stride said he had “particular talents” and a “particular understanding of the parliamentary party”.

The shadow home secretary, Yvette Cooper, earlier suggested Sunak had done “grubby political deals” in the cases of the home secretary, Suella Braverman, and Williamson.

The prime minister reappointed Braverman as home secretary six days after she was forced to quit over a security breach and her short second stint in the great office of state has been marred by controversy.

He also handed Williamson his government job despite being warned that he was under investigation for allegedly bullying Morton.

Cooper told BBC Breakfast: “In both cases, this really looks like [Rishi Sunak](#) has just done grubby political deals that aren’t in the national interest. It really looks like we have got more of the same. That is not good enough.”

With regards to the most recent allegations, she told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme: “He doesn’t deny using the language. The language is horrible and you can’t imagine people being treated like that at work.

“Gavin Williamson was reappointed to the cabinet even when Rishi Sunak knew there was a new complaint in against him. He has admitted that the language, even in the previous complaint was unacceptable.

“Bear in mind he has also appointed him to the Cabinet Office, which supports the national security council, even though Gavin Williamson was previously sacked by Theresa May for leaking from the national security council.

“We have also got this other case where Rishi Sunak reappointed Suella Braverman just six days after she was effectively sacked for breaching the ministerial code and security lapses, and where further information and allegations have also come to light since then of security lapses and the leak investigation as well.

“You have got this lack of proper standards. A lack of ethics. We have still not got an ethics adviser appointed and [the Tories are] also not taking security issues seriously.”

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[Gavin Williamson](#)

Senior civil servant claims Gavin Williamson told them to ‘slit your throat’

Exclusive: MoD official says minister subjected them to campaign of bullying when he was defence secretary



The Whitehall aide has claimed Gavin Williamson ‘deliberately demeaned and intimidated’ them on a regular basis. Photograph: Alkis Konstantinidis/Reuters

[Pippa Crerar](#) *Political editor*

[@PippaCrerar](#)

Mon 7 Nov 2022 16.17 ESTFirst published on Mon 7 Nov 2022 15.19 EST

A senior civil servant claims [Gavin Williamson](#) told them to “slit your throat” in what they felt was a sustained campaign of bullying while he was defence secretary.

The [Ministry of Defence](#) official told the Guardian Williamson made the extraordinary remarks in front of other civil servants in a meeting, and on a separate occasion told them to “jump out of the window”.

The Whitehall aide, who worked closely with the cabinet minister, claimed Williamson “deliberately demeaned and intimidated” them on a regular basis.

They reported the behaviour unofficially to the MoD’s head of human resources and took contemporaneous notes of the alleged incidents, but decided against making a formal complaint against the cabinet minister at that time.

Williamson, who was defence secretary from November 2017 until May 2019 [when he was sacked](#) after a leak from the national security council, was said to have “shouted and raged”.

The senior civil servant, who later left government, said the abuse was so bad that a senior military aide working in the department had later apologised for not calling it out.

Williamson denied that he bullied the civil servant and said he had good working relationships with his officials. However, the Guardian understands that he is not denying that he used those specific words.

In a statement, he said: “I strongly reject this allegation and have enjoyed good working relationships with the many brilliant officials I have worked with across government. No specific allegations have ever been brought to my attention.”

The claims come after Downing Street said No 10 had “full confidence” in the Cabinet Office minister despite the emergence of bullying claims and [abusive text messages he sent](#) to the former Conservative chief whip Wendy Morton.

Speaking at the Cop27 summit in Egypt, [Rishi Sunak](#) said: “There’s an independent complaints investigation that is happening and it’s right that we

let that process run its course before passing judgment. I want to see the results of that, obviously, but I've been very clear that language is not right, it's not acceptable. And that's why I welcome the fact that Gavin Williamson has expressed regret about that and now we wait to see what the investigation says."

The latest allegation poses yet more questions for the prime minister about his political judgment after he decided to reappoint Williamson – a close political ally who is seen to have played a key role in his leadership campaign – to government despite being aware of Morton's complaint.

Text messages revealed over the weekend included angry remonstrations about not being invited to the Queen's funeral and one that said "there is a price for everything".

The prime minister's spokesperson said on Monday that Sunak had a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, but had refused to sack Williamson, claiming he had an "important contribution to make to government".

Meanwhile, [the Times reported](#) on Monday that an MP claimed Williamson, when he was chief whip in 2016, threatened her with potentially revealing details about her private life. The MP was now a minister, the paper said.

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She told the paper he called her to his office when she was campaigning on a politically sensitive issue and raised something about her private life "which she interpreted as a tacit threat". Unnamed allies of Williamson said

this had not been a threat and he had raised the issue in a “pastoral capacity”.

'He was not right to send them,' says Grant Shapps on Gavin Williamson's abusive texts – video

Grant Shapps, the business secretary, said the messages should not have been sent, telling Sky News: “I don’t think it was the right thing to do, to send messages like that. I see they must have been sent in a moment of frustration. I think, generally, it is the case that it’s much better to write things which you would not live to regret later.”

Williamson was sacked first as defence secretary by Theresa May after it was alleged he leaked details of a national security council meeting – an allegation he has always denied; and later as education secretary by Boris Johnson over the [Covid 19 A-levels debacle](#).

Labour and the Lib Dems have called on Sunak to sack Williamson. Anneliese Dodds, the Labour party chair, said on Monday night: “These allegations are extremely serious and speak to the toxic culture at the top of the Conservative party. The prime minister knew there was a complaint against Gavin Williamson but appointed him anyway.

“He was given a seat around the cabinet table because Rishi Sunak was too weak to face a vote of his own party. Here again we see the grubby deal made by Rishi Sunak to put party management over the national interest.”

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[Gavin Williamson](#)

Leaks, grades and texts: Gavin Williamson's political blunders

Gaffes have dogged the minister across various departments and roles, from A-levels to 5G

- [UK politics live – latest news updates](#)



Gavin Williamson in August 2020, during his time as education secretary.
Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

[Peter Walker](#) *Political correspondent*

[@peterwalker99](#)

Mon 7 Nov 2022 09.01 EST Last modified on Tue 8 Nov 2022 00.13 EST

Gavin Williamson's return to government under Rishi Sunak has already been marked by a propensity for mishap and controversy, which have

tended to follow him around as a minister. Here are the more notable moments of his public ignominy.

‘Don’t puss me about’

Williamson’s current political turmoil predates his appointment by Sunak as a Cabinet Office minister, relating to furious and abusive messages he sent during the summer to Wendy Morton, who was Liz Truss’s chief whip. Incandescent at not being invited to attend the Queen’s funeral, Williamson messaged Morton to say this was “very poor” and seemed to indicate the style of treatment received by MPs not favoured by Truss. “Also don’t forget I know how this works so don’t puss me about,” he wrote, adding: “Well let’s see how many more times you fuck us all over. There is a price for everything.”

Alleged threat as a whip

After the messages to Morton emerged, the Times reported that a female Conservative MP claimed that, when Williamson was chief whip in 2016, he threatened her with potentially revealing details about her private life. The MP, who is now a minister, told the paper that Williamson called her to his office when she was campaigning on a politically sensitive issue and raised something about her private life “which she interpreted as a tacit threat”. An ally of Williamson did not deny the conversation, but said he had raised the personal issue in a “pastoral capacity”.

A-levels fiasco

Williamson lasted just over two years as education secretary under Boris Johnson, but nobody is quite sure how. His low point came with the debacle of A-level grading in 2020, at the peak of the Covid crisis. No one doubted that replacing exam marks with an alternative method of grading students would be difficult. But Williamson was vilified, first for ignoring warnings that it would be a problem, and then, once the obviously unfair marks were in, for standing by the controversial combination of computer algorithm and teacher assessments. There was, inevitably, a [U-turn 48 hours later](#), but by

then much of the damage – to students’ university chances and public confidence – had already been done.

Schools and Covid

There is an argument that many of the main decisions regarding school closures and catchup attempts were largely made in Downing Street. But [teaching unions had little confidence in Williamson](#) and his department over many associated issues, such as providing laptops and other technology to pupils who needed them, and helping schools become more Covid-secure once they reopened.

Free school meals – and not meeting Marcus Rashford

Again, it was arguably the fault of Boris Johnson that the government twice held out against calls to extend free school meals or meal vouchers for poorer children into holidays, only to subsequently back down under PR pressure from Rashford, the Manchester United footballer and anti-poverty campaigner. However, it was Williamson’s department that was in charge. And it was very much Williamson’s fault when [he told a newspaper](#) he had held a Zoom meeting with Rashford, when in fact he had met a different black sportsman, the rugby player Maro Itoje.

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Sacked for leaking

In another situation that would have permanently sunk the career of almost any other politician, Williamson was [sacked as defence secretary](#) in 2019 by the then prime minister, Theresa May, who had brought him into the cabinet, initially as chief whip. May said she had seen “compelling” evidence that Williamson leaked information from a meeting of the highly sensitive national security council about the involvement of the Chinese telecoms firm Huawei in the UK’s 5G network. Williamson conceded he had talked to the media, but denied that he had discussed anything about the meeting.

‘Russia should go away and shut up’

It is fair to say that, before his sacking, some had worried that Williamson lacked the necessary gravitas to be defence secretary. This impression crystallised in March 2018 [during a question-and-answer session](#) after a speech in Bristol. Asked about the expulsion of Russian intelligence staff from the UK after the Salisbury nerve agent attack, Williamson condemned Russian actions before saying: “Frankly, Russia should go away and should shut up.”

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2022.11.08 - Spotlight

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‘Y’all ready for this?’ Can Britain resist America’s fast food giants?



Queueing round the shopping centre ... the first UK branch of Popeyes in Westfield, Stratford. Photograph: Teri Pengilley/The Guardian

Southern fried chicken, taco supremes and doughnuts are on the menu as US companies eye the UK's seemingly endless appetite for cheap meals. But will our health pay the price?



[Amelia Tait](#)

Tue 8 Nov 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 8 Nov 2022 10.28 EST

At midnight on 1 October – less than two weeks after 250,000 people queued for up to 24 hours to say farewell to Queen Elizabeth II – a gaggle of Nottingham residents started a queue of their own: outside a former Burger King in the city centre.

Gradually, over the course of the next 11 hours, more and more people joined. Some arrived at 5am, others around 7am; many were wrapped in padded jackets and beanies as they waited to get inside an orange store with “Y’all ready for this?” above the door. This was the launch of Nottingham’s first Popeyes, a fried chicken restaurant founded in New Orleans in 1972.

“It was a long wait but it’s really beautiful to finally dig in,” 18-year-old McKinley Chambers [told the local news](#) after waiting 11 hours for some chicken and gravy. For being first through the door, he and three friends won free chicken sandwiches for a year.

Scenes such as this are likely to become commonplace in the next few years. Britain’s appetite for American fast food shows no signs of being sated, and a host of US chains are lining up for a piece of the action. The first British Popeyes opened in November 2021 in Westfield Stratford, in east London; within a decade, the brand hopes to have [350 branches](#) in the UK. In June 2021, Reading welcomed the UK’s first Wendy’s in 21 years. The burger brand first reached our shores in 1980 but left at the turn of the millennium because of high property and operating [costs](#); it aims to have [35 UK branches](#) by the end of 2022. Rival burger giant Carl’s Jr also has plans to enter the UK market. Meanwhile, after brief forays across the pond in the 1980s and 90s, the Mexican-inspired chain Taco Bell is making a concerted push: it has opened 115 outlets across the country since opening an Essex branch in 2010. Then there is Wingstop, with its spicy chicken wings, which landed in London in 2018 and plans to open [100 UK restaurants](#), naming the country as a “[high-chicken consumption market](#)”.



Amelia Tait tries a Popeyes milkshake in Westfield, Stratford. Photograph: Teri Pengilly/The Guardian

Why did the chicken cross the pond? What has inspired this fast-food invasion, and why now? In May 2021, research by CGA and AlixPartners found that the number of casual dining venues in the UK fell [by almost 20%](#) during the first year of the Covid-19 crisis, meaning valuable [sites](#) were vacant for prospective investors. But Popeyes had eyes on the country before the pandemic.

“The brand owner, RBI, has been looking at the UK for quite a few years,” says Tom Crowley, CEO of Popeyes UK. Covid just “delayed it slightly”. That same company, Restaurant Brands International, also owns Burger King, as well as the Canadian coffee-and-doughnuts chain Tim Hortons, which came to Glasgow in 2017 and opened its first London branch this July. The UK is an attractive market for US brands, Crowley says, because of the “cultural similarities”.

The global dominance of American popular culture means that Britons know all about US restaurants before setting foot in them. Teens across the land were introduced to Taco Bell in the 2004 film *Mean Girls* (“I can’t go to Taco Bell – I’m on an all-carb diet!”), while Popeyes says many customers reference the 2000 Adam Sandler film *Little Nicky* (“Popeyes chicken is the shiznit!”). A number of rap songs also feature the brand, from Lil Wayne’s *Family Feud* to Kanye West’s *30 Hours*.

“We have a strong sense of borrowed nostalgia for all things American,” says food trends expert Shokofeh Hejazi. “Because so many of us have grown up watching American films and TV shows, we have warm, nostalgic feelings towards dishes like s’mores, corn dogs, deep pan pizza, savoury biscuits, fried chicken and waffles, even if we didn’t grow up eating them.”



A Taco Bell restaurant and drive-thru at Monks Cross, York. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Then there is the internet. “Social media has played a huge part in this,” says Monica Pool, Taco Bell’s marketing director in the UK and Europe. Pool says there was “a gap in the market” for Mexican food when the brand launched here more than a decade ago, but since 2019 its presence has grown rapidly, doubling from 50 to more than 100 stores.

The chain’s “bold expansion agenda” has been helped by TikTok, she says. In March 2022, rapper Doja Cat made an organic, unpaid [video](#) about Taco Bell that was viewed almost 40m times. “Yeah! I got beans, I need meat, I need a shell with the sauce and cheese,” she sang. As Pool puts it, people “want to be part of what’s happening in popular culture”.

It’s quite the PR comeback for fast food after years of bad press in the early 00s thanks to works such as Eric Schlosser’s bestselling exposé [Fast Food Nation](#) and Morgan Spurlock’s documentary [Super Size Me](#). In 2003, the New York Times [quoted a 26-year-old](#) who said eating at McDonald’s was “uncultured, unclassy and uncool. Nobody brags about going to McDonald’s.” In 2020, however, the brand partnered with rapper Travis Scott and saw an almost [5% boost](#) in sales. Scott also released a 60-item

merchandise line, including [a \\$155 hoodie](#) bearing the words “I ordered the Travis Scott meal at McDonald’s”.

Yet there is also the potential for culture clashes. In 2020, the US chicken sandwich chain Chick-fil-A left the UK after only six months; activists had protested about the brand’s charitable foundation’s history of donating to anti-LGBTQ+ organisations. (In the US, conservatives had previously [supported the brand for its position](#).)



Spicy wings at a London branch of Wingstop. Photograph: Ray Tang/Shutterstock

American and British consumers also have differing palates. At Popeyes, “we’ve turned the spice up a bit,” says Crowley: the restaurant is famous for its spicy chicken sandwich but it seems Britons can handle more heat than Americans. It took British consumers a while to get a handle on “biscuits”, however – a southern US staple similar to a savoury scone. Crowley says initial market research showed we were confused by Popeyes’ offering: “This is a scone, why would I have that with fried chicken?” He nearly didn’t launch the product in the UK. Now Popeyes has “sold thousands”.

Success in the UK is not guaranteed, though. Hejazi notes that price inflation, chronic staff shortages and a lack of delivery drivers are all risk factors for food chains.

In 2020, the US burger chain Wahlburgers shut its only UK restaurant after a year. The closure was ostensibly because of Covid, but there had been [six months of declining trade](#) by the end of 2019. It is possible that the co-owners, actors Mark and Donnie Wahlberg, don't have the same cultural sway in the UK as in the US. Food writer Grace Dent also [noted](#) that references to "Mom's" recipes and cute family photos on the napkin holders reflected an "unabashed, touchy-feely, American" attitude to family that "sits curiously with us in Blighty".

The cost of living crisis may also affect the big American chains' plans, but not necessarily negatively. "What I'm seeing right now across Europe in my restaurants is that people are trading down from casual dining," says Tim Lowther, general manager of CKE [Restaurants](#), which owns the US brands Carl's Jr and Hardee's. His company is opting for QSR ("quick service restaurants", or fast food joints to you and me) instead. "The other point that makes it interesting at the moment is, of course, the dollar is strong," he adds, "and that can help incoming investment into the market." He does not have a UK launch date for Carl's Jr yet.

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Crowley, of Popeyes, says fast food "can be reasonably resilient in good and bad times." He says he has received good feedback from customers about affordability; Pool, of Taco Bell, similarly points out that the Mexican

chain offers a number of 99p menu items. “It’s tough – costs of goods are increasing for business and we see that as well,” Crowley says, “but equally you’ve got to hold your nerve. You’re building a brand for the future here, not just for 2022 and 23.” It is worth noting that [the number of fast food outlets in the UK grew](#) during the 2008 recession.

The UK could become even more appealing to fast food firms: post-Brexit, the government is considering replacing up to [1,500 food laws](#). Previously, American brands have had to swap ingredients to comply with UK regulations. At present, for example, McDonald’s fries in the UK [are made with](#) oil, salt and potatoes, while [US fries are made from](#) potatoes, oil, beef flavour (containing hydrolysed wheat and hydrolysed milk), dextrose salt, and sodium acid pyrophosphate (for colour).



Popeyes’ chicken sandwich deluxe, and a shake. Photograph: Teri Pengilley/The Guardian

In late September, during her brief spell as health secretary, Thérèse Coffey [ditched a white paper](#) on health inequality, and Conservative ministers have threatened to [scrap the government’s anti-obesity strategy](#), in an attempt to benefit business. A Popeyes Po’ Boy chicken sandwich contains [more than half an adult’s daily recommended salt intake](#), while a large portion of

cheese- and beef-topped fries at Taco Bell represents almost half a woman's recommended daily calorie intake.

The fast food invasion worries anti-obesity campaigners such as Fran Bernhardt, co-ordinator of the children's campaign at food industry reform organisation Sustain. "All children deserve to grow up healthy and yet our high streets, school routes and public spaces are flooded with unhealthy food," she says. "American fast food chains have swamped under-resourced councils with planning applications for new sites. It's a recipe for disaster."

The calorific, fat, and salt content of some takeaway meals were more than 100% of your recommended daily allowance

In March 2019, Gateshead council [rejected a planning application](#) from Taco Bell because of the area's high childhood obesity rates. "We're really keen to improve the health of residents and takeaways aren't going to help," says Gateshead's senior planning officer, Lucy Greenfield, who led a [supplementary planning document](#) controlling the locations of hot food takeaways in 2015. "The more access there is to unhealthy food, the less access there is to healthy food because those establishments can't open or they are out-competed."

The planning document was drawn up after the council's environmental health team sampled food from almost 200 takeaways in Gateshead. The results were "shocking", says Greenfield: "The calorific, fat, and salt content of some meals were more than 100% of your recommended daily allowance. And because so many takeaways were competing against each other, the calorie per pound was massive." Since it was adopted, all planning applications for hot food takeaways have been refused, and the council has been successful on every single one of the appeals.

Greenfield says there was concern that the policy would negatively affect the economy, but the council monitored vacancy rates and found that they actually fell. "We desire local businesses to thrive and not have an influx of massive multinationals taking over," she says.

For now, though, Hejazi says, we have a “seemingly bottomless appetite for American food and drink”. In east London, at the company’s Westfield Stratford launch in 2021, the queue snaked round the shopping centre; people who wanted to join asked Popeyes’ marketing director how long it would take to get to the front and order food. When she told them it was a six-hour wait, they smiled and joined at the back.

Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).

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Business

The trend to mend: how repair shops are leading a fixing revolution

More everyday items are being salvaged, with cost of living crisis expected to increase such interest



Dermot Jones of the Fixing Factory in London gets to work on an item.
Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian



[Sarah Butler](#)

[@whatbutlersaw](#)

Tue 8 Nov 2022 01.00 EST

The Lonely Parts Club sits in a plastic box just along from a couple of tired-looking tea urns, a slick inkjet printer and a line of “rescue toasters”. The motley collection of technology is neatly stacked on the shelves of the Fixing Factory, where volunteers in bright orange aprons chat to people seeking to give their gadgets a second life.

The small shop in Camden, north London, which opened officially last month after operating in “stealth mode” without publicity since September, is at the forefront of a revolution in consumption.

While there has always been a market for restoring antiques – given a recent fillip by the hit BBC show *The Repair Shop* and its [cameo by King Charles](#) – and most urban high streets have a place that repairs expensive items such as mobile phones, computers and appliances, a new wave of fixers are setting their sights on salvaging cheaper, everyday items such as radios and juicers.

Share & Repair in Bath, the Edinburgh Remakery and Re:Make Newport are just some of the establishments springing up across the country working to prevent electronic waste, or e-waste, from entering landfill. In Wales, the government is helping fund [a scheme](#) that aims to open repair cafes in every community.

“E-waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the world and we need local solutions,” says Dermot Jones, who is a project manager of the Fixing Factory for the climate charity Possible and is also involved in pop-up repair events in Tooting, south London.

“We are facing a consumer goods crisis ... we have become used, over the past 40 years, to buying something that can’t be fixed and we accept that as a kind of trade-off for it being cheap.”



The Fixing Factory, a shop in Camden, London, officially opened last month after operating in ‘stealth mode’ without publicity since September. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

Part of the Fixing Factory’s plan is to show those who bring along an item that they may be able to easily repair it themselves. Jones says it is often a myth that it takes longer and costs more to fix an item than to buy a new

one. “We are inspiring and surprising people that some things are very easily fixable,” he says.

The enterprise, which is funded by the [National Lottery Climate Action Fund](#) and the Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformations, has trained up 11 young people and a number of other local volunteers. One joy is finding local experts, for example, an 85-year-old former BBC engineer, who are adapting their years of technological knowhow to work out how to get into and then fix modern gadgets.

Bath’s Share & Repair says it has repaired more than 3,000 items in the five years since it opened

Jones says the project has had a 90% success rate in mending easier items such as toasters and other small kitchen appliances but has had less success with laptops – fixing about 60%. He has just fixed a digital radio worth more than £100 with a 10p part.

Bath’s Share & Repair says it has repaired more than 3,000 items in the five years since it opened, 60% are electrical or electronic items, mainly kettles, toasters, radios and lamps. The project also lends out household items and runs workshops on how to maintain your bicycle, use a sewing machine or darn a jumper.

Such outlets reflect a booming global network of fixing fans sharing knowledge via YouTube videos, pop-up repair cafes and blogs, and a long British tradition of reusing old items that stretches back to the second world war directive to “make do and mend”.

Currys, the UK’s biggest electrical goods retailer, expects the cost of living crisis to further accelerate the trend. It typically carries out 860,000 fixes a year on laptops, TVs and phones but forecasts a 10% rise this year as customers’ budgets come under pressure. Demand is also increasing for its refurbished electrical goods, which it is testing out selling from its own website for the first time.

However, one of the biggest hurdles to the mending movement is the fact much of modern technology isn't designed to be fixed. The leading online repair resource iFixit gives reviews of how repairable gadgets are – criticising, for example, Apple for its AirPods, which are constructed in such a way that it is not even possible to replace the battery.

Often parts are not made available, or are costly, and cases may be sealed shut or the screws to open them are only accessible with strangely shaped tools that are not available in your local hardware store.

“It’s like an escape room in reverse,” Jones says. “On an old record player you find arrows on the bottom of the case pointing at where to get in. Now those screws can be covered with a sticker or rubber feet or it may be closed with a system of plastic clips that can break. It’s a challenge getting in sometimes.”



The Fixing Factory’s Dermot Jones repaired a digital radio worth more than £100 with a 10p part. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

The time and ingenuity required to get into and assess a broken toaster, for example, means that, once labour costs are taken into account, fixing it does not make economic sense. The solution, for now, is teaching people how to fix more things themselves and using volunteers.

Jones says training up young people could be vital for the future economy as an army of experts may be required after the introduction of legislation that makes it easier and more cost-effective to fix things.

Manufacturers of phones, tablets and laptops [now face legal obligations](#) to make their products easier to repair and reuse, under an EU recycling plan to lengthen the life of products, with only 40% of electronic waste in the zone thought to be recycled.

The UK government's version of these rules – the right to repair regulations, which apply to products bought from July 2021 onwards but will not come into full effect until next summer – cover only a limited selection of household electricals, including washing machines, dishwashers, refrigerators, and televisions.

Some manufacturers are even making it harder to source spare parts

Under the regulations, manufacturers are obliged to produce spare parts for a minimum period of seven to 10 years and enable repairs to be made using “commonly available tools”. They must also make maintenance and repair information available to professional fixers.

The UK regulations do not cover smaller items such as laptops, mobile phones, electric toothbrushes, headphones, phone chargers or toasters. Some manufacturers are even making it harder to source spare parts – only selling them as part of expensive kits rather than individually.

While campaigners say the regulations are too weak to really boost the market, they are hoping the growing British passion for repair will override government inaction and encourage the public to lengthen the life of their belongings.

Twitter

What is Mastodon, the social network users are leaving Twitter for? Everything you need to know

Verification is free, toots are twice as long as tweets – but you might find it hard to replace your Twitter follower list. Here's how to use it, find a server to join and navigate the fediverse



Mastodon is emerging as an alternative social media to Twitter after Elon Musk's troubled takeover. Find out what it is, and how to choose and join a server. Photograph: Davide Bonaldo/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

[Josh Taylor](#)
[@joshgnosis](#)

Mon 7 Nov 2022 22.57 EST Last modified on Tue 8 Nov 2022 00.41 EST

Interest in the open source social media platform known as Mastodon has [spiked again](#) as users look for an alternative to Twitter, should [Elon Musk's](#)

[takeover spell the end](#) of that website as we know it.

If you're fleeing the sinking ship of Twitter for the [potential life raft of Mastodon](#) – or wondering whether to – here's what you need to know.

Welcome to the Fediverse

The first thing to get your head around is that Mastodon is what's known as a “federated” network, a collection of thousands of social networks run on servers across the world that are linked by the common Mastodon technology, on a platform known as the “Fediverse”.

You sign up for a specific server, which is run by whoever set it up, usually volunteers doing it out of their own pocket or taking donations through Patreon. They'll have their own rules and policies on, for example, who can join and how strictly the conversation will be moderated.

You can even start your own server if you want to set the rules yourself. Otherwise, there's [a list of servers](#) which focus on specific locations or topics of interest. The servers on that list have all signed up to the “Mastodon covenant” which promises “active moderation against racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia”.

Whichever Mastodon server(s) you sign up for, however, you can follow users on a different one with no problem.

Oh, and as this is a volunteer-run system, there are no paid-for ads in your feed.

Username are different

Once you choose a username and set up your account with an image header and profile picture, you can begin. Unlike [Twitter](#), your username will be @[username]@[the Mastodon instance you signed up to]. So for example, you could be @MuskyElon@aus.social. Think of it like an email address –

the first part is your chosen identifier, the second part is the organisation that looks after your inbox.

There are apps on iOS and Android which allow you to sign into your Mastodon account(s).

Finding Twitter users is a chore

If you want to track down on Mastodon all the people you follow on Twitter, unfortunately there's no easy way to do this.

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You could start searching for those you know, or go back to Twitter and see if they have announced their move. Services like [Twitodon](#) allow you to log in with both your Twitter and Mastodon accounts and scan to look for users you follow. But it will only be able to find those users who have also used Twitodon.

Once you follow a few people you have found from Twitter, you could go through their lists to find others you might know.

Posting is similar but different

For a start, you may have to get used to your posts being called “toots” rather than “tweets”.

On the plus side, you'll have almost twice as many characters (500) to write a post, and additional features such as click spoiler warnings for text and

images.

You will have more control over who can see your post, from being discoverable across the server, down to only those who you mention in the post – similar to a DM.

Hashtags work similar to Twitter for trending topics, and you can share someone else’s post with your followers by boosting it – which works the same as retweeting. But there’s no such thing as “quote tooting”.

Verification is easy – and free

There has been much drama on Twitter over Musk’s move to require people to pay for verification, while at the same time not actually verifying they are who they say they are. Mastodon has a verification system that’s available to everyone with their own website.

If you link to a website you control on your profile, then it can recognise you as the owner of that website, which will give followers some justification in trusting you are who you claim to be.

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TikTok's ties to China: why concerns over your data are here to stay

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2022.11.08 - Opinion

- Nurses will be striking for their pay, your health – and the future of the NHS
- Sometimes I just want to share rude stories with a large number of people – and that's why I am not leaving Twitter
- An intervention from Rishi Sunak today is all that stands between my brother and death
- Rishi Sunak has surrounded himself with yes-men. What he really needs is a Willie

[OpinionNursing](#)

Nurses will be striking for their pay, your health – and the future of the NHS

[Polly Toynbee](#)



There is nothing ‘militant’ about demanding less than what you were paid in 2010. The government needs to zip up and stump up



Staff on a hospital ward in 2020. 'Public support for a nursing strike stands at 65% for and 27% against.' Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA

Tue 8 Nov 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Tue 8 Nov 2022 06.19 EST

The gloves are off. The 106-year-old Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is about to [strike nationally](#) for the first time. They strike, they say, to send up distress flares about the state of their service.

Their case is strong: pay for experienced nurses has fallen in real terms by [at least 20% since 2010](#) across the country. Roles are reclassified to different paybands to save on wages. In gruelling 12-hour shifts, in often understaffed wards, they have ever-sicker patients staying shorter times – they worry they can't care as they should. They are not being sanctimonious when their leader, Pat Cullen, says this is a strike about the state of the NHS and safety of patients, as well as pay.

Nurses' burnout rate is accelerating, with a record 47,000 vacancies in England and 40% fewer working in social care than 10 years ago. For a government missing its recruitment targets, the only enticement is better pay, so facing down the nurses is not an option. Oliver Dowden sounds absurd when he tells Sky, "We have well-oiled contingencies in place". Where is his phantom army of spare nurses? Agencies will not provide

strike-breakers. Brexit stopped the flow of EU nurses; 48% of new nurses still come from abroad, many of them from countries, [such as Nepal](#), that the World Health Organization says should not be targeted by the rich world for recruitment.

Dowden's empty defiance bodes ill for good negotiations, as does the last three health secretaries (Steve Barclay, Thérèse Coffey, Barclay again) failing to make any contact with the RCN, the union complains. How long before it dawns on the Tories that they have zero bargaining position?

Not only are nurses leaving the profession, but new entrants have fallen by a record 8% in the past year. Recruiting students, who face the prospect of £50,000 of debt, gets harder when half new recruits' time is spent working on wards unpaid. Though in theory these student nurses are "supernumerary", while under instruction they are increasingly used as spare hands caring for patients, doing the same exhausting shifts but paying instead of being paid. Unlike other students, they work too hard to take bar jobs to cover living costs; the age profile is older, and many will have children to look after too.

Remember how abolishing that crucial bursary for nursing students in Jeremy Hunt's time as health secretary led to a sharp drop in nursing students? Wisely, Wes Streeting, Labour's health shadow, is preparing to bring it back, to be announced when Labour's whole higher education policy is ready. That may force the Tories to restore it.

Now chancellor, Hunt must surely know he has no choice but to settle – or resign. Only months ago, as a protesting chair of the health select committee, he roused up royal colleges – yes, RCN included – to back his push for a workforce strategy in the health and social care bill. He argued vehemently that a rolling 10-year staff plan was essential to train enough doctors and nurses for an ageing population. He complained to me, as to everyone, about a shortsighted Treasury blocking any commitment to future funding.

He can't now escape his own reasoning as to why locum doctors and agency nurses waste a fortune that is better spent on training and higher pay

to attract new entrants. His long campaign, and his [own book on patient safety](#), rely on enough well-trained staff. Cullen says the nurses she talks to as she travels the NHS speak of their daily dread facing the wards, where they take on not just their own work but that of those missing 47,000.

Streeting, visiting hospitals with food banks for their staff, says: “I can’t blame the nurses for voting to strike.” He hears the acute anxieties of nurses, ambulance crews and all working in A&E. “No one wants a strike. Their pay demands are reasonable.” Would Labour pay up? He says, as in their 1997 manifesto, that they will pledge to restore public sector pay “as circumstances allow”, but as in 1997, he can’t set a date. “We did restore public pay and we will again when we can.”

Will there be rows about Labour MPs joining NHS picket lines? Christina McAnea, head of Unison, dismisses that as an irrelevance: it makes “absolutely no difference” whether shadow ministers join striking workers. She [tells the Daily Mirror](#) that Labour frontbenchers on picket lines are a “distraction”, and warns off selfie poseurs, saying strikes are “serious”, not a “photo opportunity”. Nurses will not leave their wards or A&E, but their strike will stop elective non-emergency admissions, increasing that 7m waiting list.

The RCN ballot, by law, was conducted in each [NHS](#) facility: it is expected that Wednesday’s results will show most voted to strike, but some narrowly missed the stringent requirement for a majority on a 50% turnout. A flotilla of strikes will follow, as public sector pay averages just a 2% rise, compared with the private sector at 6% – both far behind inflation, at 10.1%. The RCN’s demand for inflation plus 5% still leaves them paid less than in 2010 – hardly “militant”.

If the Tories hope the politics will go their way, public support for a nursing strike stands at [65% for and 27% against](#). The government has no choice but to negotiate immediately and reach a good enough agreement to keep hold of precious NHS staff and appeal to others to join up. As Margaret Thatcher might say: Tina, there is no alternative.

Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#)Twitter

Sometimes I just want to share rude stories with a large number of people – and that’s why I am not leaving Twitter

[Zoe Williams](#)



Users are quitting in their droves after Elon Musk’s purchase. But where else would I go to babble on?



‘I’m too old for TikTok’ (posed by model). Photograph: Keep It 100/Getty Images

Tue 8 Nov 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 8 Nov 2022 12.24 EST

When we were young, my sister was going out with someone called Will Lee and I was going out with someone called Jon Thomas and people were like: “Why don’t you two just admit that you don’t have boyfriends, rather than put us through this farce?” And we were all: “No, no, these are real people. There genuinely are parents in the world who think nothing of calling their sons slang names for penis.” “Yeah, right,” everyone said, and we replied: “Hello? Dick much?”, and they said: “Dick Much? Is that your other ‘boyfriend’?”

Anyway, I split up with Jon Thomas (lol, no, we were never really going out, he was somewhat out of my league), while my sister stayed with Will Lee and now no one ever laughs at his name. About 15 years in, we just got tired.

This is why I don’t want to leave [Twitter](#), whatever happens to it: every now and then, I am seized by the desire to tell a large number of people about a tiny thing that happened, long ago, before the internet. Perhaps it will have a consoling life lesson at the end, for anyone else out there with a

double-entendre name; perhaps it will contain no wisdom at all. I just want to say it. Some people have made lasting friends on Twitter, and still others find rich troves of expertise in the fields of law, warfare and immunology. They achieve that by having serious minds and steering clear of dog videos. Not me.

As people leave in their droves after Elon Musk's purchase, another tweeter distilled the problem, saying she was "too old for TikTok, too young for Facebook, too weird for LinkedIn, not weird enough for Reddit, too ugly for Instagram", and I was able to acknowledge [@keelyflaherty](#)'s joke while simultaneously stealing it, by the simple act of retweeting. I didn't have to figure out whether she was a real person or just a "fan account for the 1996 movie Twister", as her Twitter bio says. I didn't need to do a deep dive into whether it really was her joke, or she had stolen it from [@dhtoomey](#).

So there are two things I treasure Twitter for: stealing and babbling. And don't say "go to Mastodon", it would be like trying to teach a dog to crochet.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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[OpinionEgypt](#)

An intervention from Rishi Sunak today is all that stands between my brother and death

[Sanaa Seif](#)

My brother Alaa Abd el-Fattah is on hunger strike in an Egyptian prison and is now refusing water. The prime minister is his last hope

- [Alaa Abd el-Fattah: family await news on day two of prison water strike](#)



A candlelit vigil outside Downing Street for Alaa Abd el-Fattah, who is on hunger strike in an Egyptian prison, 6 November 2022. Photograph: Wiktor Szymanowicz/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Mon 7 Nov 2022 09.35 ESTLast modified on Tue 8 Nov 2022 03.04 EST

At 10am on Sunday morning my brother Alaa drank his last sip of water in an Egyptian prison. He has been on hunger strike for more than 200 days and now, as world leaders arrive for Cop27, he has [stopped drinking water](#).

He's been in prison for nine years. He's not doing this now because he wants to die, but because it's the only way he might get to live again. He's been in prison for all but one year of his son's life for his writings about democracy and technology, and his anti-authoritarian stance. The whole world is watching what happens in Sharm el-Sheikh, where I write this from, and he is staking his life on a belief that the world will today stand with him.

The British prime minister, Rishi Sunak, is in Egypt right now. He wrote to me on Saturday saying he was [committed to my brother's release](#), both as a British citizen and as a defender of human rights. He will probably leave Egypt in a few hours. If Alaa isn't on the plane with him, I fear for the worst.

He's already so weak from his hunger strike, I don't know how many hours he can last without water. My mother is outside the prison now, waiting for the letter we usually receive on Mondays. It might be the last proof of life we ever get.

I flew to Sharm el-Sheikh and arrived in the early hours of this morning [to continue to campaign for my brother's release](#). It's a risk to return to Egypt, where I've also been imprisoned three times in my struggle to free my brother, but I have to do everything I can to save his life. He could die at any moment, and we wouldn't even know. So we're asking that the UK government from now on to at the very least secure "proof of life" once a day.

So far, the UK government has not even been able to gain consular access to Alaa in prison, a basic request. It is an international humiliation for the UK government that the Egyptian regime can treat a British citizen in this way. Sunak has the opportunity to use his authority to fix this today. This is his first international visit, a test of his stature on the world stage.

I can only hope and believe that in a few hours, Alaa will be on a plane back to London with him.

- Sanaa Seif is a film-maker, activist and sister of the imprisoned writer Alaa Abd el-Fattah

Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).

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OpinionRishi Sunak

Rishi Sunak has surrounded himself with yes-men. What he really needs is a Willie

Simon Jenkins



As Margaret Thatcher knew, a PM's success depends on wise advice – and Sunak should look to his backbenches to find it



Rishi Sunak at prime minister's questions in the House of Commons, London, 2 November 2022. Photograph: Jessica Taylor/Reuters

Mon 7 Nov 2022 10.24 EST Last modified on Tue 8 Nov 2022 00.23 EST

Rishi Sunak needs help. Most prime ministerial decisions are no-brainers, as in reversing a mini-budget or sacking a Jacob Rees-Mogg. Others are strictly personal. These have recently included whether to return [Suella Braverman](#) to the Home Office, allow [Gavin Williamson](#) into the cabinet, or not to [go to Cop27](#). They have damaged Sunak's claim to "[integrity and accountability](#)" and are widely regarded as needing urgent reversal, as has already happened over Cop27.

When Sunak arrived in Downing Street he brought with him a cohort of aides who could have come from central casting. They are young, sneakered, tieless image-makers, and fiercely loyal to him. They are products of today's Westminster, a monastic enclosure of special advisers, thinktanks and lobby groups isolated from the world outside. They have created Brand Rishi as a video hero, a cliched politician of the metaverse. Thus the Braverman and Williamson decisions are interpreted as merely the results of an algorithm for a balanced cabinet.

When Penny Mordaunt was running for leader, [she quoted](#) Margaret Thatcher's famous line that every prime minister "needs a Willie". Mordaunt appeared to think the reference was to gender; Thatcher was, of course, referring her much-loved mentor Willie Whitelaw, and did not realise (until later) the double entendre. But Thatcher's point, that good leaders need friends speaking truth to power, was strongly meant. Nothing did more to undermine Britain's last three prime ministers than their lack of a Willie, of the wisdom, the lessons and the caution long valued by holders of high office but absent from the sycophants often crowded into Downing Street.

Any new prime minister should read Thatcher's memoir of her first appointments. Having spent little time in high office, she judged her colleagues time and again for how well they did their previous jobs – hardly an eccentric criterion. Politics is an avalanche of circumstance, of daily mishaps. There is no substitute for learning its lessons. I have never interviewed a former prime minister who did not say: "I only wish I could have my time over again."

Thatcher made plenty of mistakes, but she survived and achieved what she set out to do. She lived with a stockade of advisers – Whitelaw, [Peter Carrington](#), [Keith Joseph](#), Robert Armstrong, Bernard Ingham, Alan Walters, Charles Powell and others – who she knew would tell her what they thought. They stopped her privatising the NHS. They failed to stop her poll tax, but they surely tried.

Every sensible prime minister has had an "honest friend". Winston Churchill had [Norman Brook](#), who at least claimed to prevent his worst decisions. Harold Macmillan had John Wyndham, Harold Wilson had [Lady Falkender](#), Tony Blair had Alastair Campbell and Peter Mandelson. The nearest Boris Johnson came to a Willie was Dominic Cummings, whose zest for change was enormous but whose experience of its route map was zero.

In each of these cases, the individual chemistries were different and the outcomes not always happy. But success, for a prime minister, is now nearly impossible. Luck and the demons of publicity bedevil every decision. All a

leader can do is widen the range of advice, loyal and possibly not too loyal, available to Downing Street on a daily basis.

Sunak has come to office as one of the more intelligent, decent and sober figures to lead a British government in a long time. He inherits a starved and creaking public sector that is defective in almost all departments. He and his chancellor respond to every policy question that all is “up for reconsideration”. We only know that they are about to inflict on the country a devastating austerity, which will require meticulous leadership in every Whitehall department. Yet the talent pool for that leadership has been devastated by the past decade of Tory party infighting and defenestration.

In the past 10 years, Britain has seen five prime ministers, plus seven chancellors, six home secretaries and 10 education secretaries. It has been government as a joke. In the process, ministerial experience and the essence of wisdom have been exterminated. Yet on parliament’s backbenches are sitting men and women of ability whose only crime was their disbelief in Brexit and Boris Johnson. It is hard to believe Sunak could not gather a handful of them together to sit round his fire of an evening and give him the benefit of their advice. He badly needs a Willie.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist

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2022.11.08 - Around the world

- Counting the cost Developing countries 'will need \$2tn a year in climate funding by 2030'
- 'Fundamentally unfair' Barbados PM launches blistering attack on rich nations
- Alaa Abd el-Fattah Family await news on day two of prison water strike

Climate crisis

Developing countries ‘will need \$2tn a year in climate funding by 2030’

Report co-written by Nicholas Stern says figure required to switch away from fossil fuels and cope with extreme weather impacts

- [Cop27 live – latest news updates](#)



The Cerro Dominador solar plant in the Atacama desert, Chile. The report says the funding figure would enable a global transition to green energy. Photograph: John Moore/Getty Images

[Fiona Harvey](#) in Sharm el-Sheikh

Mon 7 Nov 2022 19.01 EST Last modified on Tue 8 Nov 2022 04.10 EST

About \$2tn (£1.75tn) will be needed each year by 2030 to help developing countries cut their greenhouse gas emissions and cope with the effects of climate breakdown, new data suggests.

The cash will be needed so that poor countries can switch away from fossil fuels, invest in renewable energy and other low-carbon technology, and cope with the impacts of extreme weather, according to a report that was commissioned jointly by the UK and Egyptian governments, and presented at the [Cop27 UN climate summit](#).

The figures, which would cover the needs of all of the world's developing economies except China, are far higher than any climate finance that has yet been forthcoming to help poor countries.

“Around half of the required financing can be reasonably expected to come from local sources, from strengthening domestic public finance and domestic capital markets, including tapping into large pools of local finance that national development banks are able to mobilise,” the report says.

However, external finance, as well as the World Bank and other multilateral development banks, must also play a key role.

Nicholas Stern, the climate economist who wrote a landmark 2006 review of the economics of climate change, was a lead author of the report. He said: “Rich countries should recognise that it is in their vital self-interest, as well as a matter of justice given the severe impacts caused by their high levels of current and past emissions, to invest in climate action in emerging market and developing countries.

“Most of the growth in energy infrastructure and consumption projected to occur over the next decade will be in emerging market and developing countries, and if they lock in dependence on fossil fuels and emissions, the world will not be able to avoid dangerous climate change, damaging and destroying billions of lives and livelihoods in both rich and poor countries.”

Funding low-carbon economic growth in poor countries would help to lift billions of people out of poverty, create jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The money is also needed to help poor countries adapt to the effects of the climate crisis, for instance by building more robust infrastructure, and protections such as seawalls and early warning systems. For the most severe impacts of climate breakdown, which countries cannot adapt to, known as [loss and damage](#), the money would help to rescue those at risk, repair vital infrastructure and help to heal the social fabric – services such as health and education – of countries torn apart by extreme weather, such as devastating floods, droughts, storms and heatwaves, that is likely to worsen as a result of climate breakdown.

Loss and damage is one of the [main priorities for discussion at the Cop27 summit in Sharm el-Sheikh](#), which started on Sunday and will continue for a fortnight.

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'We have the collective capacity to transform,' says Mia Mottley at Cop27 – video

Poor countries have been promised since 2009 that by 2020 they would receive at least \$100bn a year to help them cut emissions and cope with the impacts of extreme weather. But that target has repeatedly been missed, and is not likely to be fulfilled until next year.

Lord Stern said: “Given the pressure on public budgets in all countries, the role of the multilateral development banks, including the World Bank, will be critical in increasing the scale of external finance for emerging market and developing countries, and bringing down the cost of capital for investors. The flow of finance from these institutions should triple from

about \$60bn a year today to around \$180bn a year within the next five years. This requires a strong sense of direction and support from the country shareholders, and real leadership from the top of these institutions.”

The World Bank has come under increasing criticism in recent months for its perceived failures to direct sufficient funds towards the climate crisis. The Bank will engage in discussions at [Cop27](#).

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[Cop27](#)

Barbados PM launches blistering attack on rich nations at Cop27 climate talks

Mia Mottley warns of a billion refugees by the middle of the century unless governments act now to tackle crisis

'We have the collective capacity to transform,' says Mia Mottley at Cop27 – video

[Patrick Greenfield](#), [Fiona Harvey](#), [Nina Lakhani](#) and [Damian Carrington](#)

Mon 7 Nov 2022 18.11 ESTFirst published on Mon 7 Nov 2022 13.04 EST

Mia Mottley, prime minister of Barbados, has criticised industrialised nations for failing the developing world on the climate crisis, in a blistering attack at the [Cop27 UN climate talks](#).

She said the prosperity – and high carbon emissions – of the rich world had been achieved at the expense of the poor in times past, and now the poor were being forced to pay again, as victims of climate breakdown that they did not cause.

“We were the ones whose blood, sweat and tears financed the industrial revolution,” she said. “Are we now to face double jeopardy by having to pay the cost as a result of those greenhouse gases from the industrial revolution? That is fundamentally unfair.”

She warned of a billion climate refugees around the world by the middle of the century if governments failed to tackle the climate crisis.

[One of the biggest issues at the talks is climate justice](#) – the fact that poor people are bearing the brunt of the damage to the climate, in the form of extreme weather, while rich countries have failed to live up to their

promises to cut emissions and to provide finance to help the poor with climate breakdown.

Mottley, who was speaking at an event organised by Scotland's first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, was scathing about the World Bank, which many countries think has not done enough to focus on the climate, and on countries that offer loans instead of grants.

“We need to have a different approach, to allow grant-funded reconstruction grants going forward, in those countries that suffer from disaster. Unless that happens, we are going to see an increase in climate refugees. We know that by 2050, the world's 21 million climate refugees today will become 1 billion.”

Mottley is working with the French president, [Emmanuel Macron](#), on an initiative to provide new means of finance to the developing world.

Macron used his speech to the Cop27 conference to insist that the war in Ukraine would not cause [France](#) to backslide on commitments to tackle the climate crisis.

'We are in the fight of our lives,' says UN chief at Cop27 climate summit – video

More than 100 world leaders attended the conference on Monday, greeted by António Guterres, the UN secretary-general, [warning that the world was on a “highway to hell”](#). He called on rich and poor governments to make a “historic pact” to help each other through the climate crisis, instead of being at loggerheads.

“We are in the fight of our lives and we are losing ... And our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible.

“We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator.”

He said the world faced a stark choice over the next fortnight of talks: either developed and developing countries working together to make a “historic pact” that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and set the world on a

low-carbon path – or failure, which would bring climate breakdown and catastrophe.

“We can sign a climate solidarity pact, or a collective suicide pact,” he added.

He said the world had the tools it needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in clean energy and low-carbon technology.

“A window of opportunity remains open, but only a narrow shaft of light remains,” he said. “The global climate fight will be won or lost in this crucial decade – on our watch. One thing is certain: those that give up are sure to lose.”



Abdel Fatah al-Sisi speaks at Cop27. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, the president of [Egypt](#), said in his opening address to the summit that poor and vulnerable people around the world were already experiencing the effects of extreme weather. “The intensity and frequency of climate disasters have never been higher, in all four corners of the world, bringing wave after wave of suffering for billions of people. Is it not high time today to put an end to this suffering?”

Elsewhere at the conference, [Boris Johnson, the former UK prime minister](#), said he embodied “the spirit of Glasgow”, referring to the Cop26 conference hosted by the UK last year that produced an agreement to limit global temperatures to 1.5C.

Rishi Sunak, the current UK prime minister, refused to answer a question from the Guardian on whether the £11.6bn of UK overseas aid earmarked for climate finance in developing countries would be spent within the five-year timeframe originally promised. Some fear that he could try to reduce the budget by stretching the spending over a longer period.

Sunak also announced the [extension of a global initiative to reverse deforestation by 2030](#), originally set up at the Cop26 summit in Glasgow.



Rishi Sunak with Emmanuel Macron at Cop27. Photograph: Reuters

However, last night the Telegraph reported that Sunak is poised to announce a major gas deal with the US after [Cop27](#), with talks about an “energy security partnership” in their final stages. The US is reportedly planning to sell billions of cubic metres of liquefied natural gas to Britain over the coming year.

Cop27 is likely to be a fraught and difficult fortnight of negotiations. Countries are meeting in the shadow of the war in Ukraine, a worldwide energy and cost of living crisis, and rising global tensions.

The talks got off to a slow start, with negotiators spending more than 40 hours over the weekend [wrangling over what would be on the agenda](#). In the end, it was agreed that the vexed issue of “loss and damage”, which refers to the worst impacts of the climate crisis that are too severe for countries to adapt to – would be discussed.

Poor countries suffering loss and damage want a financial mechanism that will give them access to funding when disasters such as hurricanes, floods and droughts strike, destroying their infrastructure and tearing apart their social fabric.

It is not likely that these talks will provide a final settlement on loss and damage, but countries are hoping for progress on ways of raising and disbursing finance.

Nabeel Munir, chief negotiator for the G77 plus China negotiating block, said loss and damage was one of the [principal demands for almost all developing and climate](#) vulnerable nations.

“This is the beginning of what will be a slow and painful process, for developed and developing countries, and it wasn’t easy to get it on the agenda, but it’s there and it’s a beginning, and we wanted that to happen at a Cop hosted by a developing country,” Munir said. “It’s a big achievement that the other side is beginning to accept that what we’re saying is fair. Loss and damage is not charity, it’s climate justice.”

At most UN climate summits, activists and protesters play a key role. However, Egypt clamps down on dissent and its jails are full of political prisoners. Sisi’s government has promised that climate activist voices will be heard, but their activities have been curtailed, with protesters kept at a separate site and required to register in advance to be granted permission for even minor demonstrations.

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Egypt

Alaa Abd el-Fattah: family await news on day two of prison water strike

British-Egyptian activist and figurehead of 2011 uprising now refusing water after six-month hunger strike

- [Sanaa Seif: An intervention from Rishi Sunak today is all that stands between my brother and death](#)



Mona Seif (centre), one of Abd el-Fattah's sisters, at a candlelight vigil outside Downing Street on Sunday. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[Ruth Michaelson](#)

Mon 7 Nov 2022 13.51 EST Last modified on Tue 8 Nov 2022 00.14 EST

The family of the British-Egyptian activist Alaa Abd el-Fattah are demanding proof of life, after waiting hours in front of the desert prison

where he is currently held, hoping to receive a letter that would provide information about his condition as he continues to refuse all food and water while delegates gather for Cop27 in Sharm el-Sheikh.

Abd el-Fattah has been on hunger strike for more than six months, and told his family shortly before the beginning of the UN climate conference that he would begin a water strike on Sunday. His letter from prison would indicate proof of life on his second day without water, after more than six months without more than 100 calories a day.

His mother, Laila Soueif, was “still waiting since the morning in front of the prison for a letter from Alaa”, his sister Mona [tweeted](#) in the late afternoon. “Still no sign of anything that could tell us he is fine, not hospitalised, let alone alive,” she said. [She later added](#) that Soueif continued to wait long after darkness had fallen and “the prison is locked down, no services left, nothing”.

As world leaders including the British prime minister, Rishi Sunak, arrived in Sharm el-Sheikh to begin negotiations to fight against the growing climate crisis, Abd el-Fattah’s case loomed large over the proceedings despite the Egyptian authorities’ efforts to distract from its human rights record through its role as host. Pressure mounted on Sunak to make good on his commitment to Abd el-Fattah’s family to resolve the case, even as observers grew concerned that his efforts might not be enough to save the detained activist.

James Lynch, a former British diplomat and the head of the human rights organisation Fair Square, who travelled with Abd el-Fattah’s youngest sister, Sanaa Seif, to Cop27, said: “I think it’s very clear that lots of people including at very high levels within the British government are personally invested in this case and see the injustice, the need for resolution and are working very hard. Yet there’s a gap here that remains – we still don’t know whether it’s being made clear that this case could have consequences for ‘business as usual’ relations with Egypt.”

Sameh Shoukry, Egypt’s foreign minister, who is also presiding over Cop27, rebuffed questions from CNBC about the potential impact that Abd

el-Fattah's case could have on the conference, as well as on relations with Britain. "I believe we should all concentrate on the task at hand, which is the priorities as they relate to climate change. We have deep bilateral relations with the UK," [he said](#).

Pressed on the issue of whether Abd el-Fattah's potential death could overshadow proceedings, he replied: "I am confident that the prison authorities will provide the healthcare, the care that is available to all inmates." He added that the Egyptian authorities had yet to recognise Abd el-Fattah's dual nationality, after the democracy activist gained British citizenship last year through his mother while incarcerated.

Abd el-Fattah is a figurehead of Egypt's 2011 uprising, whose writings on protests, technology and democracy have affected a generation across the Middle East, even though he has spent most of the past decade behind bars. Last year, he was sentenced to a further five years in prison for sharing a social media post about torture.

He began a hunger strike in April in protest at his detention conditions, which include the Egyptian authorities' efforts to prevent British officials from visiting him. Abd el-Fattah is [one of an estimated 65,000 political prisoners](#) in Egypt's labyrinthine detention system, which has also witnessed multiple high profile deaths in incarceration due to [medical neglect](#), including of [foreign nationals](#).

Another of his sisters, Sanaa Seif, also arrived in Sharm el-Sheikh on Monday morning after concluding a sit-in outside the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office in London to demand urgent intervention to save her brother.

"Prime minister Sunak sent me a powerful letter on the weekend," she said. "I think he intends to do everything he can to save Alaa; we're pinning our hopes on him. I really believe that if he makes this an urgent political priority, my brother will be on the next flight to London."

Sunak told Seif in a letter published a day earlier that he was "totally committed" to resolving the case, which he described as "a priority for the

British government both as a human rights defender and as a British national”.

Sunak’s spokesperson said he met the Egyptian president on Monday and stressed “the UK government’s deep concern on this issue”.

“The prime minister said he hoped to see this resolved as soon as possible and would continue to press for progress,” he said.

Lynch pointed to other cases in which the British government had managed to free citizens detained abroad by making clear that the detention could affect the bilateral relationship. “That may be happening [here] privately, but it’s certainly not happening in public,” he said.

The UK is Egypt’s largest private trading partner, via fossil fuel giant BP and telecoms company Vodafone. Britain has also sold Egypt at least £24m in arms over the past three years, [according to the group](#) Campaign Against the Arms Trade, while British International Investment, the development arm of the FCDO, recently [pledged more than £87m](#) in investments in Egypt shortly before Cop27.

Abd el-Fattah’s case is already drawing focus from Cop27 despite Egyptian officials’ efforts. Tasneem Essop, the head of the Climate Action Network International, used her plenary address to the Cop27 hall to highlight Egypt’s crackdown on civil society and Abd el-Fattah’s case, saying: “Alaa Abd el-Fattah, the Egyptian prisoner of conscience, has escalated his hunger strike that started more than 200 days ago. He has stopped drinking water. His life is now in severe danger. We call for his immediate release and the release of all prisoners of conscience.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/07/alaa-abd-el-fattah-family-await-news-on-day-two-of-prison-water-strike>

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- [Exclusive Senior MoD figures believed Gavin Williamson caused national security leak](#)
- [Live Sunak seeks to fix relations with Sturgeon and Drakeford at devolved government summit](#)
- [Gavin Williamson PM faces scrutiny over whether he knew of bully claims](#)
- [Public services Sunak warned UK will need £43bn a year to 'stand still'](#)

[Gavin Williamson](#)

Senior MoD figures thought Gavin Williamson caused national security leak

Exclusive: former government insider said it was believed serious breach ‘could have only come from Gavin’



Then education secretary Gavin Williamson arriving at a cabinet meeting in September 2020. Photograph: Toby Melville/AP

[Aubrey Allegretti](#), [Dan Sabbagh](#) and [Pippa Crerar](#)

Thu 10 Nov 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Nov 2022 03.41 EST

Penny Mordaunt was forced to deal with a security leak during her time as defence secretary that the department believed came from her predecessor, [Gavin Williamson](#), amid fears the information put “our people’s lives at risk”.

Three sources told the Guardian that the breach was deemed so serious that Mordaunt was prepared to seek a D notice to warn any media considering publishing the information that it risked endangering Britain's national security.

But Williamson, who denied [leaking national security information that saw him ejected from the cabinet in 2019](#), said he had nothing to do with the second serious alleged disclosure.

A former government insider said it was believed by senior figures in the [Ministry of Defence](#) at the time that the leak "could only have come from Gavin" and that "our people's lives were put at risk by it".

They declined to discuss the details of the alleged leak, for the same security reasons, but said the issue was of significant concern during Mordaunt's short time as defence secretary between May and July of 2019.

Another source said officials believed "100%" the leak "came directly from Williamson" and that Mark Sedwill, the then-cabinet secretary and national security adviser, was told so by the security services.

The third source said Mordaunt successfully ensured the leak was contained and that the move had never previously been publicly disclosed.

A spokesperson for Williamson told the Guardian the accusation he was the culprit behind a second major leak was "categorically untrue" and added: "He has no knowledge of this or any involvement with it."

D notices can be issued by the secretary of the Defence and Security Media Advisory Committee to request for media not to report certain information on grounds it could prejudice the UK's national security.

If deemed necessary, the secretary of the committee, currently a former army officer, will issue a letter outlining specific concerns after consultation with the government department concerned. It is not, however, mandatory to follow the advice.

A government spokesperson said: “We do not comment on matters of national security or alleged leak investigations.” It was also disputed that Williamson had been formally suspected or accused inside Whitehall of being responsible for a second significant leak. Mordaunt, who is now leader of the Commons, declined to comment.

Williamson had been sacked by former prime minister, [Theresa May](#), in May 2019 for leaking details from a contentious discussion at the national security council about how to handle Chinese telephone equipment maker Huawei to the Daily Telegraph. He denied being the source of that leak.

Williamson [dramatically resigned on Tuesday night](#) after a string of complaints about bullying and threatening conduct by him when he was a cabinet minister.

A former official at the MoD made an official complaint on Tuesday after the Guardian revealed that [Williamson](#) told them to “slit your throat”, in what they felt was a [sustained campaign of bullying](#).

It is not clear if the prime minister, [Rishi Sunak](#), was aware of the prior security concern when he appointed Williamson as a minister of state in the Cabinet Office.

Rishi Sunak says he regrets appointing Gavin Williamson to cabinet – video

His short-lived responsibilities included the UK’s global Conflict Stability and Security Fund and the Government Communications Service, to which departmental press officers belong.

Several ministers, advisers and officials believed that Williamson was leaky and tried to brief stories to the press that contained sensitive classified material – although Williamson himself denied passing on information about [Huawei](#).

A former Downing Street staffer told the Guardian that there was “substantial information” that proved Williamson was the leaker, and not all of it was put into the public domain at the time. “We didn’t want to reveal our methods,” the ex-staffer said.

There was surprise within Downing Street that Williamson so strongly denied being the source – at the time, it was reported he swore on his children’s lives that this was not the case – when No 10 believed it had all the evidence it needed to prove his involvement.

“The only explanation for his denials at the time were that he wanted to stage a comeback,” the former staffer said. Williamson was reappointed as education secretary by [Boris Johnson](#), but sacked in a reshuffle before being brought back by Sunak.

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UK set for new wave of strikes as civil servants and train drivers vote for action – as it happened

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Gavin Williamson

Sunak faces scrutiny over whether he knew of Gavin Williamson bully claims

Source claims PM was given ‘general description’ of alleged incident but gave Williamson a job anyway



Gavin Williamson said he was resigning as the claims had become a distraction for the government and he wanted to clear his name. Photograph: Chris J Ratcliffe/Getty Images

[*Pippa Crerar*](#), [*Anna Isaac*](#) and [*Rowena Mason*](#)

Wed 9 Nov 2022 18.06 ESTFirst published on Wed 9 Nov 2022 14.55 EST

Rishi Sunak is facing scrutiny over whether he knew about Gavin Williamson’s alleged bullying of a senior civil servant whom he told to “cut your throat” before reappointing him to government.

Two sources claimed the prime minister had been alerted to Williamson’s “credible and substantiated bad behaviour” while defence secretary when he

drew up his cabinet.

One of them said Sunak was given a “general description” of the alleged bullying incident at the Ministry of Defence but gave Williamson a job regardless.

However, Downing Street has strongly rejected the claims that the Sunak and the cabinet secretary, Simon Case, knew of the bullying allegations before they were [reported by the Guardian](#).

A government spokesperson said: “All the allegations made in this story are categorically untrue.”

At prime minister’s questions, Sunak conceded that he regretted bringing Williamson back into the cabinet as he faced questions over his judgment, but insisted he was unaware of “any of the specific concerns” relating to Williamson’s time in previous roles.

Rishi Sunak says he regrets appointing Gavin Williamson to cabinet – video

He told MPs: “I obviously regret appointing someone who has had to resign in the circumstances. But I think what the British people would like to know is that when situations like this arise, that they will be dealt with properly.

“That’s why it is absolutely right that he resigned and it’s why it is absolutely right that there is an investigation to look into these matters properly.”

Williamson resigned from the cabinet on Tuesday after the Guardian revealed claims that while he was defence secretary he told a former senior civil servant to “slit your throat”. Williamson said the claims had become a “distraction” for the government and he wanted to clear his name.

It followed allegations he sent [expletive-laden messages](#) to the former Conservative chief whip Wendy Morton complaining about not being invited to the Queen’s funeral.

The former deputy chief whip Anne Milton alleged that Williamson used “unethical and immoral” methods while he was in charge of party discipline as chief whip. She told Channel 4: “I think he feels that he’s Francis Urquhart from House of Cards.”

Another former colleague told the Guardian they recalled Williamson being “spectacularly rude” to civil servants who were giving him a presentation.

He is now subject to three separate investigations into his behaviour – two by parliament’s independent complaints and grievances service, and one internal Conservative party investigation.

PMQs: Williamson is 'cartoon bully with pet spider', says Starmer – video highlights

Keir Starmer accused Sunak of being unable to stand up to “a cartoon bully with a pet spider” as he condemned him for having appointed Williamson – who as Theresa May’s chief whip kept a pet tarantula in his office as part of a calculated image of menace – and then expressing “great sadness” at his departure.

“Everyone in the country knows someone like [Williamson], a sad middle manager getting off on intimidating those beneath it,” the Labour leader said at PMQs. “But everyone in the country also know someone like the prime minister, the boss who is so weak, so worried the bullies will turn on him, that he hides behind them.”

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Williamson's resignation prompted fresh doubts among some Conservative MPs about Sunak's political judgment, after he faced questions for reappointing Suella Braverman as home secretary after she was forced out for breaking the ministerial code.

The Guardian has been told that Case and his team informally briefed Sunak, as is standard practice, on any potential risks associated with ministerial appointments.

One well-placed Whitehall insider claimed Case gave the prime minister a "general description, rather than the exact wording", of the MoD incident.

Another source said the PM was told of Williamson's reputation for "gathering and using kompromat" and "violent and vulgar language" when speaking to aides and MPs, as well as being "irresponsible" with secure information.

Allies of Sunak suggested the Cabinet Office had no record of even the generalities of the MoD incident. However, the Guardian has been told that Stephen Lovegrove, then permanent secretary of the Ministry of Defence, was aware of the specific allegation of Williamson having bullied a senior civil servant and was believed to have passed this on to the Cabinet Office.

One senior Tory source confirmed that Lovegrove had informed both the political side of the No 10 operation and then Mark Sedwill, Case's predecessor as cabinet secretary, that there had been an informal complaint about Williamson – but told them the MoD wanted to deal with it internally.

"We were made aware of problems with how Gavin was behaving towards civil servants in the department. It was the cabinet secretary's responsibility to make the propriety and ethics team aware," they said.

The Cabinet Office said the claims made about Lovegrove and Sedwill were untrue.

Williamson is a divisive figure at Westminster, where he is viewed with suspicion by many Tory MPs because of his reputation as an inveterate

plotter. Downing Street said the MP, who has previously been sacked as defence secretary and education secretary, offered his resignation to Sunak in a face-to-face meeting on Tuesday night.

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UK cost of living crisis

Sunak warned UK public services will need £43bn a year to ‘stand still’

TUC says vital services had been left short-staffed and overwhelmed after over a decade of austerity



Doctors protest against pay cuts in London Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[Richard Partington](#) *Economics correspondent*
[@RJPartington](#)

Wed 9 Nov 2022 19.01 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Nov 2022 00.12 EST

Rishi Sunak’s government has been warned that Britain’s creaking public services will require at least £43bn a year in additional funding just to “stand still” amid the fallout from [soaring inflation](#).

The Trades Union Congress said next week’s autumn statement needed to protect both public services and workers’ pay from the highest rates of

inflation since the early 1980s to avoid a further collapse in the quality of support for health, social care, education, justice, and the environment.

Drawing on research from the New Economics Foundation thinktank, it said the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, would need to provide £43bn a year in today's prices by 2024-25 to ensure adequate protection for public services after years of cuts.

With inflation at 10.1%, the highest level since 1982, it warned there was now a significant shortfall in the spending firepower of each government department compared to the funding settlements they were given in 2021 when Sunak was chancellor.

“The economic crisis of 2022 means public services budgets are now worth far less due to higher prices,” the TUC and NEF said in a report, while warning Sunak that he had told parliament that world-class public services were “the people’s priority”.

According to the report, health and [social care](#) is facing the biggest shortfall in funding after the inflationary burst, with the health service facing a gap of £15.7bn a year by 2024-25 against the 2021 spending review commitment.

Education will face a £7.1bn shortfall compared to its spending review settlement, while there are also shortfalls for the justice department, as well as environment, food and rural affairs.

Frances O’Grady, the TUC general secretary, said public services had been left short-staffed and overwhelmed after more than a decade of [austerity](#).

“Now the double whammy of soaring inflation and the Tories’ catastrophic mini-budget has pushed them to the brink,” she said.

“As chancellor, the new prime minister must keep his promise that he will fund ‘world-class public services’. Our [NHS](#), schools and public services must not be collateral damage to the Tories crashing the economy in 2022.”

A Treasury spokesperson said restoring economic stability and confidence that the UK is a country that pays its way was the government's "number one priority".

"The prime minister and chancellor have been clear that this will require some difficult decisions, but protecting public services and the most vulnerable will be prioritised."

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‘I’d rather face a polar bear than step on the dancefloor’: Strictly’s Hamza Yassin on salsa, Scotland and singledom

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Are we really prisoners of geography?

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**‘Cool kids want to dress like old
crunchy people’: the fashion newsletter
where wholesome is hip**



BBSP is an arbiter of what's in and out, with little of the snark found in other fashion publications. Photograph: Courtesy Blackbird Spyplane

Jonah Weiner and Erin Wylie's blend of insight and humor has drawn tens of thousands of subscribers to Blackbird Skyplane



[Lauren Cochrane](#)

Thu 10 Nov 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 10 Nov 2022 07.31 EST

Subscribers to the [Blackbird Spyplane](#) newsletter never quite know what's going to arrive in their inbox. A post might be dedicated to business shirts found on eBay, an essay on the trend cycle in the internet age, an “auntwave mecca” in Niki de Saint Phalle’s Tarot Garden or style interviews with the likes of Jerry Seinfeld, Rashida Jones, André 3000 and Nathan Fielder.

With its playful snapshots and crudely spliced Photoshop aesthetic – reminiscent of dial-up internet – the “sletter” describes itself as “your No 1 source for style, culture, & ‘unbeatable recon’”. The combination of ahead-of-the-game insidery insight, a goofball sense of humour and private language – a mix of streetwear slang such as “jawn” and “swaggy” and fighter jet lingo – has seen BBSP ranked highly in Substack’s culture newsletters. Its subscriber numbers are in the tens of thousands and include the likes of John Mayer, Lorde and Ezra Koenig. The Instagram account, meanwhile, is followed by Lena Dunham, Mark Ruffalo, Rashida Jones and Ella Emhoff.



‘Your No 1 source for style, culture, & “unbeatable recon”’. Photograph: Courtesy Blackbird Spyplane

BBSP was founded by the culture journalist Jonah Weiner and his partner, Erin Wylie, an Apple design talent scout, in April 2020. Weiner, the more vocal of the duo, describes BBSP’s tone of voice as “a filtering effect”.

Speaking on a video call, he says “X out of 10 people are going to hit this wall ... and their eyes will cross and they’ll say, ‘this is not for me’, but for the Y out of 10 that stick around, they’re going to feel in on something.”

The duo are long-term style obsessives, which gives them an uncanny ability to predict what might be in mainstream wardrobes six months from now. While he downplays a “crystal ball” factor, Weiner does concede it happens. “Last November we did a thing about silver sneakers, the running Y2K era kind of aesthetic,” he says. “There was something that felt almost gross to put in the newsletter ... Now one of the hottest sneakers out is the Asics Gel Kayano, which is exactly that kind of shoe.”



Wylie and Weiner are long-term style obsessives. Photograph: Courtesy Blackbird Spyplane



The newsletter's aesthetic features playful snapshots and crudely spiced images. Photograph: Courtesy Blackbird Spyplane

BBSP is an arbiter of what is in and out, but it has little of the snark found in fashion publications or sneakerhead forums (its chatroom, Classified Spytalk, is endearingly earnest). In the Spyplane universe, an “if you don’t have anything nice to say ...” wholesomeness prevails: “I almost have to bite my tongue when I’m in newsletter mode, because we just lead with what we like and if we don’t like it, it doesn’t come up.” The exception here is Amazon, regularly the subject of derision. Weiner describes the site as “an enemy in the Blackbird Spyplane cosmology”.

The laidback “posi” POV may be influenced by location. The couple is from the east coast – Weiner was born in Brooklyn and grew up in Staten Island, while Wylie is from outside Philadelphia (“Side note, ‘jawn’ originally is Philadelphia slang,” says Weiner proudly). They moved to Oakland eight years ago.



BBSP has an uncanny ability to predict what might be in mainstream wardrobes in six months. Photograph: Courtesy Blackbird Spyplane

Weiner says being in Oakland “allows you to encounter different ideas” in terms of style “like crunchy, old people in the organic produce section of the grocery store, wearing very Bay Area specific outfits”. There’s also a bicoastal synergy that plays to BBSP’s advantage: “For any number of reasons, the cool kids in downtown New York, a lot of them want to dress like old crunchy people in the produce section of the Berkeley supermarket. So it’s a happy coincidence.”

This outdoorsy Californian look – fleeces, hiking sandals, boonie hats – is often described as gorpcore or, to use the BBSP term, gorp. It’s one that the newsletter has continually championed. But, with the look now on the radar of mainstream outlets like Vogue, is it over? “The original gorp moment actually happens in the early 90s, when you’ve got kids in the New York outer boroughs, and then early Wu Tang videos and early Mobb Deep videos, catching wind of these brands like North Face ... and wearing those clothes in an explicitly non-outdoor adventure context ... I feel [it’s] part of my own biography, and so I’m eternally interested in wearing clothes like that.”

Ultimately, it's this idea of personal style above all that BBSP tries to promote. "Fashion is a language and you can't get outside of language but I think that you can be more or less beholden to this manic whiplash mode of trend chasing," says Weiner. "We're interested in trends but it's more than 'This is the thing you need to care about this month.' It's more how do you weave [in] your own biography and things that you consider recurrently true about yourself and your interest."

The newsletter's profile is growing.

BBSP released a small run of merch – caps and T-shirts – in 2022, and a spin-off newsletter, [Concorde](#), helmed by Wylie, launched this month. Weiner says there is no "gender coding" at BBSP. Concorde is more focused on female readers but "speaking as a dude who's interested in clothes, I'm interested in reading Erin because even if she's linking to, say, dresses or other garments that I don't personally wear ... how she covers it is going to help me understand clothes better and dress better."

Weiner is resistant to expanding much beyond the inbox. He says the pair make a small amount of money from affiliate links to eBay and [bookshop.org](#), but any branded content – the bread and butter of many newsletters – would be considered extremely carefully. BBSP subscribers pay \$5 a month or \$50 a year which, even if only half of all subscribers pay, adds up to a decent sum. This has had an impact on the BBSP life, with Weiner now working on the newsletter the majority of the time. Was that always the plan? "I did this interview with the painter, Issy Wood, and she does music on the side. She had a dalliance with a label and her top line takeaway was: don't professionalise your hobby, because anytime you do that you're reconfiguring your relationship to something that gave you a quote unquote pure thrill. On balance so far, the newsletter just still feels like a fun hobby, even if it's one constantly on my mind."



Photograph: Courtesy Blackbird Spyplane

BBSP's essential style guide for autumn

1 Wearing two button-up shirts at once. You've spent spring and summer wearing one shirt like an ascetic. Now the weather is cooler, meaning you can get gluttonous with shirts. Is one shirt hanging open over the other? Are both buttoned? Are they both patterned? It's up to you.

2 [Wearing a hat over a hoodie.](#) Another deceptively simple move that conveys just the right amount of what some people would call "ridiculousness" but we correctly identify as "joie de vivre". It's an appealingly unconventional way to layer, and it creates a pleasing shape, especially but not exclusively with a bucket hat – knit beanies can be very cool over hoodies, too.

3 Mizuno and Brooks running sneakers from the early 2000s into the early 2010s. A trove of overlooked epiphanies whose time has come.

4 Buying nothing on Amazon or Doordash or Good Eggs, etc. Convenience is overrated. Get out of the house and be around other people – a small step with many beautifully and profoundly pro-social

ramifications at a moment when companies want us to be alone all the time for some reason.

5 Look at things through binoculars. Trees, songbirds, lichen growing in high-up places, farm animals if you live near a farm ... These are all nice things to look at through binoculars, which means, among other things, time that you will not be looking at a screen, and a great way to experience the simple but powerful truth that sustained attention can be trippy.

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Newcastle

‘We’re in a hellhole’: Newcastle food bank struggles with drop in donations

Trussell Trust research shows profile of food bank users changing as cost of living bites

[Nurses among rising numbers of workers using food banks, research shows](#)



Newcastle West End food bank has been giving out about 2,000 food parcels a month since June, 400 more than the previous average. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

[Mark Brown](#) *North of England correspondent*

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Thu 10 Nov 2022 04.23 ESTFirst published on Thu 10 Nov 2022 01.00 EST

Jenny estimates she eats four days a week, if she’s lucky. She’s clearly underweight and worryingly thin but she’s not the priority, she said. “I will

go without to let my kids have.”

She lives in a house with her children and grandchildren, including a young baby who, at the moment, is always cold. They wrap themselves in quilts to keep warm. “I daren’t put the heating on. I get a little heater out for the bairn. He’s absolutely gorgeous but I am panicking ... his little hands are cold. The house is absolutely freezing.”

One son is on a zero-hours contract and has just been told there’s no work for a fortnight. Her daughter is still sorting maternity money. “We’re having to live on my universal credit,” said Jenny. “It is getting harder and harder. We’re in a hellhole. I’m not looking forward to Christmas.”

Jenny, who did not want to give her full name, was speaking on Wednesday after picking up a family food parcel from [the food bank in Newcastle’s West End](#), one of the UK’s busiest.

It’s the food bank that featured in [Ken Loach’s 2016 film I, Daniel Blake](#). In 2018 it was visited by the [UN’s then special rapporteur](#) on extreme poverty, Philip Alston. Things were bleak then, they’re worse now.

Research by the [Trussell Trust](#) published on Thursday revealed the cost of living crisis is transforming the profile of the typical UK food bank user. Nurses, shop assistants and youth workers are among large numbers of people in low-paid jobs who feel they have to use food banks.



People collect food parcels from Newcastle West End food bank, one of the busiest in the country. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

It is a trend recognised in [Newcastle](#). Gemma Whaley, the food bank's operations manager, said since June they have been giving out about 2,000 food parcels a month, which is 400 more than the previous average.

"We have been able to cope ... just," she said. "We are having to buy a lot more in to meet that demand."

The increase has coincided with a fall in food donations. "With the cost of living everybody is just struggling themselves. The people who used to give didn't have a lot anyway, but now they're really stretched so giving to charity drops off, I suppose."

The food bank dispenses about 23 tonnes a month of food but only gets about nine to 10 tonnes a month of donations, which means it needs money to buy wholesale. The lifeline is collecting money at Newcastle United home matches with whatever they get [matched by the family foundation of the club's co-owner Jamie Reuben](#).

“It has made a huge difference,” said Whaley. “Some people put pennies in, some people put in £10 or £20. The support you get from the fans, you can’t really describe it to be honest with you, it makes you quite emotional.

“I think its representative of the city as a whole, people just want to help.”

The food parcels are divided into three categories: for single people, couples and families. They have pasta, pasta sauce, tea bags and tinned food such as beans and soup. There’s a table of extras people can ask for including milk, cans of pop, small bags of crisps, bread, fruit and veg.

There are also meals cooked by volunteers and frozen meals. For people who only have a kettle for their meals there might be Pot Noodles.

Ten minutes down the road at St James’ Benwell church is the food bank’s [Pathways operation](#), offering people a wide range of extra help including making sure they get the benefits they are entitled to. Carole Rowland, the Pathways manager, was around when the UN visited in 2018. Things are so much worse now, she said.

“What Covid and the cost of living crisis has done is drag the middle classes kicking and screaming into poverty,” she said. “We’ve got people coming to us who have full-time jobs but they have received a massive bill and they can’t pay it. That’s the difference.”

People gathered in the church on Wednesday were getting welfare advice and picking up food parcel vouchers, but also so much more. There was a representative from the city council and from the Homeless charity Shelter. Or for people who needed a haircut, a barber.

Free mobile phone Sim cards, two per person, were also available and also books were laid out on tables for people to help themselves to.

One of those looking through the books was Nicola Telford, 39, whose family, including two children, was recently made homeless after getting behind with the rent. She is now in a council house with no carpets. “I am back to square one, we’ve had to start all over again,” she said. “We were in

a fully furnished house but now I'm having to spend money for this new house. It's hard. We wouldn't cope without the food bank."

Like many people the Guardian spoke to, Telford said she was trying to ration energy use. "You've just got to be really tight. You pray for a sunny day to put the washing out."

Another woman, who asked not be named, couldn't believe she was there on Wednesday. "Last year I had a good job at Sainsbury's, this year I'm at a food bank," she said.

"My life has done a total 360 turn in the last year, I'm really struggling with all of this ... but it is not just me. I've owned businesses but that's not going to happen again. I can't forgive this government for what they are doing with the cost of living.

"I have lost my confidence. It wears you down, you lose your mojo ... but I will come back."

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2022.11.10 - Opinion

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OpinionConservatives

Discipline the poor, protect the rich – it's the same old Tories, same old class war

[Aditya Chakraborty](#)



Brexit didn't change the party: austerity was as heartless under Cameron and Osborne as it is under Sunak



Rishi Sunak and Suella Braverman at prime minister's questions, Wednesday 9 November 2022. Photograph: UK Parliament/Andy Bailey/PA

Thu 10 Nov 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Nov 2022 13.48 EST

What kind of government is this? You can almost see the puzzlement on pundits' faces as they try to work it out. Is it the technocratic dictatorship of Jeremy Hunt, or the banal nastiness of pound-shop mafioso Gavin Williamson? Is it Rishi Sunak bro-hugging Emmanuel Macron, or Suella Braverman banging up "invaders"? Is this the administration of smooth-cheeked, spreadsheet-speaking sensibiles they long for at the Times, or the [gleeful barbarians](#) the Daily Mail ordered?

It depends on how you look at the shape British politics has taken since 2010. Of the party that has run the country since then, a simple story is usually told. It goes thus: from 2010 to 2016, the Conservatives were a well-spoken and professionally run centrists' club. True, there was some unpleasantness over spending cuts – but don't forget gay marriage, the [huskies](#) and hoodies and London's Olympics!

Then came Brexit, which made the Tories mad, bad and utterly cack-handed. They became hard-right Trumpettes, waging inane [culture wars](#) and

peddling blatant lies. In the 12 years between David Cameron and Boris Johnson, they went from Davos-man centrists to broken-brained Brexiteers. And so to Sunak, who has become the man many in the political classes hope will mark a return to Grownup Government.

A nice tale, you must admit. It's just a shame it isn't true. Let us overlook the breathless commentary that Sunak's anointment was a Big Moment for race politics in the UK. Well, Braverman's war on migrants is also a Big Moment, but it doesn't get half the column inches. From Priti Patel to Kemi Badenoch, diversity on the blue team is always hymned by the newspapers – even as they ignore how black and brown ministers are regularly used to front up attacks on black and brown people.

Never mind, either, how much has remained constant. Many of the faces, from Liz Truss to Michael Gove, have stayed the same over the last decade, as has much policy. Kwasi Kwarteng's supposedly radical plan for growth took up George Osborne's ideas of corporation tax cuts and ditching the top rate of income tax. He merely deployed them at breakneck speed, as if setting all the coalition budgets to the Benny Hill theme tune.

Indeed, the greatest element missing from this supposed tale of two Tory halves is economics – in particular, the kind of austerity economics that will be imposed on the country in next Thursday's budget. That is when Hunt will try to suck £50bn to £60bn out of the economy, the bulk of that money coming from our public services. It will be not the second but the third wave of austerity since 2010 (many forget the cuts made by Sunak at No 11 as the pandemic eased). Each has been about disciplining poor people and protecting the rich, and each has come with a fresh wave of authoritarianism. Just look at what they introduced this year in the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act](#), banning protests and locking up those who take part in them for a year.

First they stole our money, then they robbed our right to protest. And now they are taking away our right to strike too. The very same prime minister who just days ago stood on the steps of Downing Street and promised “integrity and accountability” is pressing ahead with two separate legal attacks on the rights of workers to take industrial action – even allowing drafted-in [agency staff](#) to break strikes.

Do not be fooled that there is a pre-Brexit nice, liberal Toryism trying to get out from underneath the pulverising post-2016 draconian monster. Sunak, who as chancellor made an annual £1,000 cut to universal credit just as the cost of living emergency took grip, is cut from the very same cloth as Braverman, who wants to clamp down on “tofu-eating wokerati” climate protesters for something as trivial as making too much noise. They are not different breeds of Conservative, let alone rival ideologues. They both protect the interests of the wealthy, the company bosses and mega asset-owners against the rest of us. Picture brutal metal studs embedded in the sole of a shiny black Oxford brogue: that is the form of government we face now.

Let us call it authoritarian austerity, for it is an ideology with a long and terrible history. In a new book titled [The Capital Order](#): How Economists Invented Austerity and Paved the Way to Fascism, the economic historian Clara E Mattei reminds us that the greatest austerity the UK ever faced was not under Osborne or Margaret Thatcher but in the early 1920s, when Whitehall slashed spending in short order by 20%. Wages cratered, while the economy was crippled for most of the decade. The technocrats at the Bank of England acknowledged: “The process of deflation of prices ... must necessarily be a painful one to some classes of the community”, which at least is more honest than declaring, as Cameron did, that [“we’re all in this together”](#).

The working classes in Britain emerged from the massacre of the Great War demanding universal healthcare and public housing. Forced impoverishment saw off those demands and tamed the radicals. It was not just that the government clamped down on the right to protest; as Mattei writes, austerity “foreclosed alternatives to capitalism”. It shut down the public’s political imagination.

Mattei points to the fact that Mussolini posed as an austerity politician when he took power. “Thrift, work, discipline ... the budget has to be balanced as soon as possible,” he declared in his first speech in parliament. His ministers were inspired by the spending-cut politics practised in the UK – talk that was lapped up by the Times and the Economist. At the Bank of England, an extraordinary memo went round, which has been unearthed by

Mattei. Titled Fascist Italy – Fascist Methods, it argued: “The Italian people are the descendants of Roman slaves ... Mussolini and his Fascists seized power and restored order ... and the people are reduced to the servitude which had been their lot for a score of centuries.”

Austerity is a one-sided class war, conducted in numbers and defended by economists’ jargon. And when that fails to do the trick, dissenters can be silenced. Already, you can see the forces of law and order mustering. Theresa May’s former right-hand man, Nick Timothy, rails in the Telegraph against the [“weak policing”](#) at our borders and at protests while the deputy prime minister, Dominic Raab, [wants our human rights laws](#) to be ripped up entirely.

A clampdown on public finances, a crackdown on public disorder: the two went together in the 80s, in the 2010s – and they are what lie ahead now.

- Aditya Chakraborty is a Guardian columnist

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New Zealand

To the murderous regime that oppresses Iran, hear this: at home or abroad, we will never surrender

Golriz Ghahraman

Casting so many Iranians into exile is one of the worst acts of these terrorists masquerading as leaders. But it could also be their downfall



Marchers on the road to the home town of Mahsa Amini, whose death at the hands of Iran's morality police set off protests across the country and around the globe. Photograph: UGC/AFP/Getty Images

Thu 10 Nov 2022 00.36 ESTLast modified on Thu 10 Nov 2022 12.09 EST

Being an Iranian woman is a heavy birthright. It comes with knowing a true, deep, feminism, while also knowing violent oppression at the hand of the government ruling our homeland.

And for millions of us, it means displacement.

My parents and I were granted political asylum in Aotearoa [New Zealand](#) when I was nine years old. We were never to return to Iran. Like most Iranian refugees, as long as the Islamic regime remains in power, our fear of persecution persists.

We have missed births and death of loved ones. But what the world has learned over the past 55 days of revolution in Iran is that exiled Iranians have never lost our fervent connection with the plight of our people back home.

I hope that sends a chill down the spine of the Iranian regime.

What is stunning is that our movement today is global, led by the breathtaking courage of protesters in Iran and amplified by Iranians around the world. None of us have slept a full night in these 55 days since [the death of Mahsa Amini](#), the young Kurdish woman who died in the custody of “morality police” after being arrested under hijab laws. She became a symbol of our pain. Every one of us has known the violence of that regime. Every Iranian knows someone flogged, detained, tortured, or killed.

But oppression has never been an inherent part of Iranian culture. We know our rights. We know what democracy should look like. The Iranian revolution of 1979 was one of the biggest popular revolutions in living history because Iranians understood that the Shah’s secular dictatorship was never good enough. Our parents fought against inequality, and while their revolution was hijacked by a far more violent and oppressive dictatorship, they never stopped fighting back.

I was old enough when we left to still remember the hijab I had to wear to school, the terror my mother felt each time we left the house. Checking, double checking her covering. My mother has said since that she doesn’t understand how I leave the house without lipstick.

That was her suit of armour. For Iranian women, patriarchy told us to be colourless, shapeless, desexualised. Iranian women never stopped fighting that. The red lipstick wasn't just about resisting Islamic dress, just as the protests in Iran now and in the [green movement of 2009](#) are not only about the brutality of hijab enforcement. Feminism has become the frontline of Iranian resistance, for human rights, democracy, and regime change.

Last month in faraway New Zealand, we gathered at the Iranian embassy. We knew the ambassador was inside. We shouted chants: "We will fight, we will die, we will take back Iran." We danced and sang about women's rights. We held each other. Police officers dispatched to ensure public safety told us that the ambassador was inside, reporting a public disturbance. But protest is not illegal in Aotearoa.

The diaspora movement of Iranians has the power of freedom. We get to criticise our western governments for their inaction on Iranian human rights. In my case, I get to be elected to New Zealand's parliament as the first ever refugee and a Middle Eastern woman. I get to meet with our minister of foreign affairs and our prime minister, to outline exactly what we need.

What we need is to freeze Iranian assets and bank accounts. Outlaw their funding mechanisms, designate them as terrorists known to be responsible for atrocities against our people. That must include the leaders of the Revolutionary Guard, who have tortured and killed with impunity for 43 years. We want the ambassador, that symbol of tyranny, expelled from his comfortable post in our adopted homeland. These are now some of the swiftly adopted, historically strong actions of many Western nations. This must in part be seen as a reflection of the diaspora movement.

The act of separating so many Iranians from our homeland is one of the worst impacts of this regime. But it could also be the vehicle for its downfall. We grew up with freedom, and we won't rest until all of Iran is free.

Our booming chant will only get louder until that day, *zan, zendegi, azadi*. [Women](#), life, freedom.

- Golriz Ghahraman is a member of parliament for New Zealand's Green party, and the country's first refugee MP
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[OpinionUS midterm elections 2022](#)

What a relief I've been denied my favourite election day hobby – hating fellow Americans

[Emma Brockes](#)



When things going less badly than planned is a small win, the lack of a revival of Trump-backed candidates is cheering



Kathy Hochul, the Democrat New York governor, kept her seat.
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Thu 10 Nov 2022 03.00 EST

In the playground on Tuesday, we stood in a huddle and indulged in the primary joy of election day: loathing one's fellow Americans. In New York, where I live, the only close race was the race for governor, where the choice between Kathy Hochul, the Democrat incumbent, and [Lee Zeldin](#) – a pro-Trump, anti-abortion Republican – threatened to mess with the very idea of the city.

“You know who I really hate?” said a friend who had taken the train in from Long Island to vote.

I did know. Democrats take more pleasure in hating other Democrats than in hating Republicans. “[Andrew Cuomo](#),” I said.

“Yup. If he'd kept his dick in his pants we wouldn't be here.” A line that could, sadly, be applied to any number of men in American politics. “Now we're going to end up with a Republican governor because people won't vote for a woman.”

That was midday on Tuesday, when it still seemed probable, per polling and received wisdom about the midterms, that the dominant party in government would suffer the most losses. Anxiety about the economy and inflation; the impression that President Biden is too old; the ugly face of Trumpism apparently not yet vanquished; plus the usual superstitions and defeatist instincts of the left: all led to a mood among [Democrats](#) on Tuesday that fell somewhere between panic and gloom.

So we did what people in denial do: we told ourselves that, when the results came in overnight, the worst eventuality might actually – sound the counter-intuition klaxon! – be for the best. A friend had a friend who was a political analyst at Brown (this was how the conversations on Tuesday played out), and *she* said that it would be no bad thing if the Democrats lost control of Congress because in two years' time that would mean [Republicans](#) would have to carry the can when people voted in the presidential election.

This kind of worked. But then there were the races that were so starkly depressing that no amount of fancy footwork could neutralise them. Chief among these was the Pennsylvania Senate race between Dr Oz, the rightwing TV host who said in a recent debate that abortion was a matter between “women, doctors and local political leaders”, and the Democratic candidate, [John Fetterman](#).

The importance of this race was underscored when both Biden and Barack Obama turned up to [stump for Fetterman](#) on Saturday, undoing all the detachment I'd managed to achieve about the midterms. Watching Obama do his thing in front of a stadium of people in Pittsburgh was intensely moving. It was also a hard reminder of how far we had fallen since 2008. Accustomed as most Americans are these days to seeing the apparent lunatic in any race win, Obama's appearance seemed to guarantee Oz would ascend to the Senate.

Fetterman won with 50.4% of [the vote](#). Kathy Hochul won with 52.5% of the vote. That the size of the relief was so huge, on Wednesday morning, was an indication both of how slim the margins were, and how little we needed to feel some hope. By midday, while it was still unclear whether Congress would remain in the hands of the Democrats, it was apparent there

would be no red wave. There was no big revival in support for Trump-backed candidates. And there were some hugely cheering results from the centre of the country, where for example in Kentucky voters defeated [the anti-abortion](#) constitutional amendment. For the first time in ages, it was possible to think warmly of people one was used to dismissing as nutters.

There were some let-downs among the reliefs. JD Vance, the bearded memoirist turned ultra-right Republican, [won the Senate seat](#) in Ohio. Beto O'Rourke lost out once again to Greg Abbott in Texas, and Stacey Abrams was defeated in Georgia. The satisfaction of seeing Trump's candidates underperform on Wednesday was, meanwhile, eclipsed in part by [Ron DeSantis winning](#) decisively in the gubernatorial race in Florida. DeSantis, a more credible version of Trump, remains the most dangerous indication that the movement is alive and well.

Still, slight gains, or at least losses on a smaller scale than anticipated, made for a whiplash effect midweek. In the playground on Tuesday, as the kids ran around, we returned to the subject of all the people who were ruining the country. On Wednesday, it was time to feel something else: relief, joy and the disorienting novelty of things going better than planned.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist

[The politics sketch](#)[Rishi Sunak](#)

Rishi Sunak the vanishing man zones out in PMQs pasting

[John Crace](#)



He's now done three and is getting worse each time – you might have got more sense out of the lettuce



Rishi Sunak during PMQs. Photograph: Andy Bailey/AFP/Getty Images

Wed 9 Nov 2022 14.28 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Nov 2022 05.49 EST

Midway through prime minister's questions, [Rishi Sunak](#) appeared to enter an altered state. His eyes went vacant and his body inert. As if he was desperately retreating inside himself, searching for an as yet undiscovered happy place.

Somewhere far away from the scene of his latest humiliation. Dominic Raab looked concerned and nudged him. A parliamentary private secretary tapped him on the shoulder. To remind him that this was the moment he was supposed to get to his feet and deliver an answer from the dispatch box.

As Rish! slowly returned to consciousness, one Labour MP called out: "Bring back the lettuce." He had a point. You might have got more sense out of the lettuce that managed to see off Liz Truss than the man who had been chosen to replace her. Labour knew it. More tellingly, many Tory backbenchers also knew it. You could see the despair on their faces.

Only a few diehard loyalists had bothered to offer a weak cheer when Sunak had entered the chamber. More the memory of acclaim than acclaim

itself. But this was worse – much worse – than even the most pessimistic had feared.

The whole purpose of selecting a Goldman Sachs technocrat as prime minister had been that he could aspire to a basic level of competence. Could give the appearance of knowing what he was doing. But Rish! couldn't even aspire to that. Couldn't manage the mere basics. There was barely a veneer of plausibility to his leadership. Like Boris Johnson and Librium Liz before him, just lurching from one self-inflicted disaster to another. It's what happens when you race though the gene pool of talent and wind up in a puddle.

He'd chosen a duff cabinet. Of course he had. Because who could possibly have guessed that [Gavin Williamson](#) would crash and burn. After all, it wasn't as if he'd twice previously been sacked. The idiot who thought The Thick of It was a style guide. Then there was Suella Braverman. Another unnecessary accident waiting to happen.

But it wasn't just the big stuff where Rish! was failing. He couldn't even master the basics of [PMQs](#). Surely that wasn't too much to ask? Apparently, it was.

PMQs may not be that big a deal in the wider scheme of things, but it's a time for the Tory faithful to feel good about themselves for half an hour a week. To feel as if they are still in the game. That they aren't existentially redundant. Genetically superseded. Most new prime ministers get a free pass for their first PMQs. Rish! has now done three and is actually getting worse each time. The more you see of him, the less there is. The incredible vanishing man.

MPs nudge Rishi Sunak to speak after he appears lost in notes during PMQs – video

The independent Neil Coyle got the session under way by asking whether Sunak would ensure that none of the Tories who had picked up fixed-penalty notices during the Covid lockdowns – always a touchy subject for the not entirely law-abiding prime minister – would be rewarded in the many resignation honours lists currently doing the rounds. Who knows?

Rish! might even be drawing up his own list this very afternoon. Things move quickly in the current Tory multiverse.

Sunak couldn't give that commitment. No point in creating a precedent that might come back to bite him when the time has come for him to be given a peerage. Instead he feigned outrage. No one had worked harder to protect the country during the pandemic than the Tory government. Er ... let's think that one through. That would be the Convict who seemed to have a party a week for his staff.

And Matt Hancock. The health secretary who banned other people from meeting one another. Who insisted that the epidemiologist Neil Ferguson visiting his girlfriend was a matter for the police. Who was then forced to resign after it was revealed he had been having an affair with one of his co-workers. The CCTV image is scarred on all our memories for ever. The former health secretary who dumped his family in a heartbeat to shack up with his lover. And is now earning £400K for eating kangaroo anus on I'm a Celebrity. That level of care from a loving and compassionate Tory government.

Keir Starmer homed in on Gav's latest resignation. Williamson is probably already sitting by the phone expecting to be reappointed to the cabinet. How did Sunak imagine the person on the end of the "slit your throat" bullying felt when the prime minister had greeted Gav's departure with "great sadness"? Gav was just "a cartoon bully with a pet spider" who had been enabled by a weak boss. Surely the prime minister was aware of Gav's management style. After all, everyone else was.

PMQs: Williamson is 'cartoon bully with pet spider', says Starmer – video highlights

"Er ... Um ..." squeaked Rish!, dancing nervously from foot to foot. He had definitely not heard anything about anything, he insisted. Not even sounding as if he was managing to convince himself. Williamson's behaviour had come like a bolt from the blue. Nobody could conceivably have expected someone with Gav's spotless record to turn out to be a bully. But the moment he had heard about the allegations, he had demanded that Gav resign. Except he hadn't. He had pleaded with him to stay. Even going

so far as to dream up various non-jobs for him to do as minister without portfolio.

Rish! hurriedly tried to change the subject. Yeahbutnobutyeahbutno. At least the British people trusted the Tories to run the economy. Cue outright laughter as the Labour leader pointed out that it had been the [Conservatives](#) who had crashed the economy and that no one in their right mind would bet on them fixing it. Sunak visibly winced. Wishing he could dematerialise. All he could do was mutter “But Jeremy Corbyn”. The third week he’d done that and a sure sign he was completely out of ideas. Maybe Corbyn does live rent-free in Sunak’s head.

There was to be no recovery. Rish! lurched from one mini-crisis to the next. He couldn’t say why he was keeping a Scottish secretary who was more interested in being in the Lords than in cabinet. He couldn’t say that he thought the Office for Budget Responsibility was right to highlight the damage caused by Brexit. Worst of all, he didn’t have a clue why he had promised a government of professionalism, integrity and accountability. That had never been going to happen.

Almost no one on the Tory benches bothered to stay for Sunak’s statement on Cop27. Then, why should they? After all, Rish! had shown almost no interest in the climate summit during his three-minute speech on Monday. Best to escape from this very public hell. They might as well be leaderless again. No direction. No hope. Run for the hills.

- [A year in Westminster with John Crace and Marina Hyde](#): Join John Crace and Marina Hyde for a look back at another chaotic year in Westminster, live at Kings Place in London, or via the livestream. Wednesday 7 December 2022, 7pm-8.15pm GMT. Book tickets [here](#).

2022.11.10 - Around the world

- [Elon Musk Joe Biden says connections to other countries 'worthy of being looked at'](#)
- [Iran Prominent actor removes mandatory headscarf in defiant protest](#)
- [Afghanistan Taliban ban women from parks and funfairs in capital](#)
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Elon Musk

Biden says Elon Musk's connections to other countries 'worthy of being looked at'

President had been asked if he thought the new Twitter boss was a threat to US national security

Musk's cooperation with foreign countries 'worth investigating', says Biden – video

Staff and agencies

Wed 9 Nov 2022 19.53 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Nov 2022 06.02 EST

Joe Biden thinks Twitter boss Elon Musk's relationships with other countries is "worthy of being looked at".

Biden was asked at a news conference on Wednesday whether he thought Musk was a threat to national security and if his [acquisition of Twitter](#) with help from a Saudi Arabian conglomerate should be investigated by the US government.

"I think that Elon Musk's cooperation and/or technical relationships with other countries is worthy of being looked at," Biden said. "Whether he is doing anything inappropriate, I'm not suggesting that. I'm suggesting they're worth being looked at."

Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, among the richest Middle East investors, and his investment firm has emerged as the second-largest investor in [Twitter](#) after Musk's takeover of the social media platform.

Two US senators – Democrat Ron Wyden, who chairs the finance committee, and Chris Murphy of Connecticut – last week called for a “thorough vetting” of the Twitter deal.

In a statement, Wyden said: “Given the Saudi regime’s history of jailing critics, [planting a spy at Twitter](#), and [brutally murdering a Washington Post journalist](#), the Saudi regime must be blocked from accessing Twitter account information, direct messages and other data that could be used to identify political opponents or to suppress criticism of the royal family.

“I’ve long argued that the United States has a national security interest in protecting Americans’ data from murderous foreign governments, and this Saudi regime absolutely fits that description.”

The White House said last month that reports the US was discussing launching a national security review of some of Musk’s ventures, including Twitter, were “not true”.

Musk’s purchase of Twitter has sparked concerns that he could face pressure from countries trying to control freedom of speech online.

The world’s richest man, Musk is CEO of electric carmaker Tesla which counts China as a key market and production base. Tesla operates a [factory in Shanghai](#) that accounted for about half of Tesla’s global deliveries last year.

Musk is also CEO of rocket and satellite internet company SpaceX, among others.

Musk previously suggested that tensions between China and Taiwan could be resolved by [handing over some control of Taiwan to Beijing](#). Musk also said China has sought assurances that he would not offer SpaceX’s Starlink internet service there.

He also proposed Ukraine permanently cede Crimea to Russia, while saying SpaceX could [not indefinitely fund Starlink services in Ukraine](#).

Ian Bremmer, the head of political-risk consultancy Eurasia Group, tweeted that Musk told him that he had spoken to Putin and the Kremlin directly about Ukraine. Musk [denied his claims](#).

- *Reuters contributed to this report*

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[Iran](#)

Prominent Iranian actor removes mandatory headscarf in defiant protest

Taraneh Alidoosti posted image on her Instagram account in support of protests sweeping the country



Taraneh Alidoosti has vowed to remain in her homeland ‘at any price’ and support the families of those killed or arrested in the protest crackdown after the death of Mahsa Amini. Photograph: Taraneh Alidoosti/Instagram

Agence France-Presse

Wed 9 Nov 2022 17.07 ESTLast modified on Wed 9 Nov 2022 17.41 EST

One of [Iran](#)’s most prominent actors posted an image of herself on social media on Wednesday without the headscarf mandatory for women in the Islamic republic.

Taraneh Alidoosti’s apparent act of defiance comes as [weeks of protests have rocked the country since the death of Mahsa Amini](#). The 22-year-old

Kurdish Iranian woman died in mid-September after being arrested by the morality police in Tehran for allegedly flouting the country's strict dress rules for women.

Alidoosti, one of the best-known actors remaining in [Iran](#), who has publicly backed the protest movement, posted the image of herself with her head uncovered on her official Instagram account.

She held a Kurdish-language slogan of the protest movement reading “Jin. Jiyan. Azadi.” (Woman. Life. Freedom.)

Alidoosti is a regular star in films by award-winning director [Asghar Farhadi](#), including [The Salesman](#), which took the Oscar for best foreign language film in 2017.

Days ago on Instagram, the actor vowed to remain in her homeland at “any price”, saying she planned to stop working and instead support the families of those killed or arrested in the protest crackdown.

“I am the one who stays here and I have no intention of leaving,” said the 38-year-old, denying having any foreign passport or residence.

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“I will stay, I will halt working. I will stand by the families of prisoners and those killed. I will be their advocate,” she said.

“I will fight for my home. I will pay any price to stand up for my rights, and most importantly, I believe in what we are building together today,” she added.

Alidoosti has been a prominent presence on the Iranian cinema scene since her teens, and also starred in the recent movie by acclaimed director Saeed

Roustayi, [Leila's Brothers](#), which was shown at this year's Cannes festival.

She is known as a forthright defender of women's rights and wider human rights in Iran.

Iranian cinema figures were under pressure even before the start of the protest movement sparked by Amini's death. The award-winning directors Mohammad Rasoulof and [Jafar Panahi](#) remain in detention after they were [arrested earlier this year](#).

When major protests rocked the country in November 2019, Alidoosti declared that Iranians were "millions of captives" rather than citizens.

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[Afghanistan](#)

Taliban ban women from parks and funfairs in Afghan capital

Women ‘bored and fed-up’ at being forced to stay home after latest edict which has hit business hard



Taliban guards standing watch next to an empty ferris wheel ride at the Zazai Park on the outskirts of Kabul. Photograph: Wakil Kohsar/AFP/Getty Images

Agence France-Presse in Kabul

Thu 10 Nov 2022 04.21 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Nov 2022 14.41 EST

The [Taliban](#) have banned Afghan women from entering the capital’s public parks and funfairs, just months after ordering access to be segregated by gender.

The new rule, introduced this week, further squeezes women out of an ever-shrinking public space. They are already banned from travelling without a

male escort and forced to wear a hijab or burqa whenever out of the home. [Secondary schools for girls have also been shut](#) for over a year across most of the country.

“For the past 15 months, we tried our best to arrange and sort it out – and even specified the days,” said Mohammad Akif Sadeq Mohajir, spokesperson for the Ministry for the Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue. “But still, in some places – in fact, we must say in many places – the rules were violated,” he told AFP.

“There was mixing [of men and women], hijab was not observed, that’s why the decision has been taken for now.”

The news was met with dismay by women and park operators – who have invested heavily in developing the facilities.

“There are no schools, no work ... we should at least have a place to have fun,” said one woman, who asked to be identified only as Wahida, as she watched her children play in a park through the window of an adjoining restaurant. “We are just bored and fed-up with being at home all day, our minds are tired,” she told AFP.

At the next table, Raihana, 21, who is studying Islamic law at university, shared her disappointment after arriving at the park to spend the day with her sisters. “We were very excited ... we are tired of staying at home,” she said. “Obviously, in Islam, it is allowed to go out and visit parks. When you have no freedom in your own country, then what does it mean to live here?”

A few miles away, the ferris wheel and most of the other rides in Zazai Park, which offers a spectacular view of Kabul, have ground to a sudden halt because of a lack of business.

Before this week’s ban, it could accommodate hundreds of visitors on days when women brought their children for family gatherings. On Fridays and public holidays, even more people would flock to the park – one of the few attractions in the city.

On Wednesday, only a handful of men wandered nonchalantly through the complex.

Habib Jan Zazai, co-developer of the complex, fears he may have to close down a business into which he has poured \$11m, and which employs more than 250 people. “Without women, the children will not come alone,” he said.

He feared such edicts would discourage investment by foreigners or Afghans living abroad, as well as effect revenue collection. “A government is run by taxes. If an investor is not paying tax, then how can they run?”

Mohammad Tamim, 20, sipping tea in the park during a visit from Kandahar, where he teaches at a madrassa, called the ban “bad news”.

“Every human psychologically needs to be entertained,” he said. “Muslims need to be entertained – especially after 20 years of war.”

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China

Xi Jinping tells China's army to focus on preparation for war

President says China in an 'unstable and uncertain' security situation amid tensions over Taiwan



Xi Jinping on a visit to a military command centre on Wednesday.
Photograph: Li Gang/AP

[Verna Yu](#)

Wed 9 Nov 2022 14.00 EST Last modified on Thu 10 Nov 2022 00.12 EST

Xi Jinping has told the People's Liberation Army to "focus all its energy on fighting" in preparation for war, a Chinese Communist party mouthpiece has reported.

Pictures of Xi, who recently secured a third term as party leader, in his army uniform during a visit to a command centre featured prominently on the front page of the People's Daily on Wednesday.

Xi said the army must “comprehensively strengthen military training in preparation for war”, having warned at a recent party congress of “dangerous storms” on the horizon.

“Focus all [your] energy on fighting, work hard on fighting and improve [your] capability to win,” he was quoted as saying. The army must also “resolutely defend national sovereignty and national security” as [China](#) was in an “unstable and uncertain” security situation, he reportedly said.

While Xi also ordered the army to focus on war preparation in 2013, soon after he took power, and again in 2017, political analysts say he has markedly stepped up his rhetoric this time. In a similar visit to the command centre in 2016, he told officers to be “loyal” and “resourceful” in fighting and “courageous and capable of winning wars”.

“He is sending a message to the United States and [Taiwan](#),” said Willy Lam, a senior fellow at the Washington-based Jamestown Foundation. Although China’s military strength was not yet at par with the US, Xi’s decision-making was not always based on rational calculation, he said.

Xi made a veiled attack on the US’s increasingly explicit support for Taipei at the 20th party congress, which concluded in Beijing last month, blaming “foreign interference” for exacerbating tensions. Xi sees seizing Taiwan as a key part of his legacy and said in his opening speech at the congress: “We will never promise to renounce the use of force.”

Could Xi follow Putin's example and try to annex Taiwan? – video explainer

Joe Biden has repeatedly pledged that the US would defend Taiwan if it was attacked. After the US House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, visited Taiwan in August, the People’s Liberation Army reportedly moved several warships and planes near to the median line, an unofficial border between China and Taiwan in the Taiwan Strait.

Xi in recent months has used increasingly aggressive tones to urge his cadres to “dare to struggle” and boost their “fighting spirit” to defend national interests in a hostile political environment. In his opening speech at

the party congress, he used the word *douzheng* (“struggle”) 17 times, which harked back to Mao Zedong’s emphasis on “class struggle” and combat against foreign, imperialist influence, and he used the word for “security” about 50 times.

This week a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson criticised the UK trade minister Greg Hands’ visit to Taiwan and told the British government to “cease sending wrong signals to separatist forces for Taiwan independence”.

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[Canada](#)

China ‘increasingly disruptive global power’, says Canadian foreign minister

Mélanie Joly hints at new Indo-Pacific strategy and asks firms to be clear-eyed in business with China



Mélanie Joly’s comments come ahead of several global summits that the Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, is to attend. Photograph: Blair Gable/Reuters

Staff and agencies in Ottawa

Wed 9 Nov 2022 14.16 EST First published on Wed 9 Nov 2022 14.13 EST

[Canada](#)’s foreign minister, Mélanie Joly, has said China has become “increasingly disruptive” on the world stage as she hinted in a speech at a new Indo-Pacific strategy expected to be released this month.

Her comments come ahead of several summits that Canada’s prime minister, [Justin Trudeau](#), is to attend, including the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations in Cambodia, the G20 in Indonesia, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation in Thailand.

“China is an increasingly disruptive, global power,” Joly told a Toronto audience. “It seeks to shape the global environment into one that is more permissive for interests and values that increasingly depart from ours.

“And China’s rise as a global actor is reshaping the strategic outlook of every state in the region, including [Canada](#).”

In an outline of Ottawa’s new policy strategy, which is due to be released in the coming weeks, Joly said it would be critical to expand relations with India and other countries in the region, as well as Taiwan. She did not discourage further trade with China, which has become Canada’s second-largest trading partner, despite strained diplomatic ties. But she warned Canadian firms they “need to be clear-eyed” about doing business in and with China.

Her comments came days after [Trudeau](#) said that China is “play[ing] aggressive games” to undermine democratic institutions amid reports that Beijing had actively interfered in Canada’s federal elections.

His comments on Monday came after reports that Beijing had funded a clandestine network of candidates in Canada’s 2019 election and just days after the federal police force said it was [investigating](#) a secret network of illegal Chinese police stations in Toronto.

Bilateral relations soured after Canada’s 2018 arrest of a Huawei executive on a US warrant, and Beijing’s detention of two Canadians in apparent retaliation. All three were released last year as part of a deal with US prosecutors.

Joly said Canada must continue to deal with China on global issues such as the climate crisis. Notably, China will chair a UN biodiversity conference in Montreal in December. But she promised Ottawa would be vocal on China’s poor treatment of Uyghurs and other minorities, its crushing of free

speech in Hong Kong, [military threats against Taiwan](#), and any moves to curtail international navigation rights in the region.

She said: “We will challenge China when we ought to. We will cooperate with China when we must.”

“The Indo-Pacific region is the epicenter of a generational global shift,” she added, predicting it will account for half of the global economy by 2040.

Joly also noted an increased Canadian military presence in the Pacific and promised more staff at its embassies tasked with analysing the impact of Chinese policies.

At global forums she said Canada and its allies will be “pushing back against behaviours that undermine international norms”.

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Headlines saturday 12 november 2022

- [US midterms Mark Kelly holds on to Arizona seat in critical win for Democrats](#)
- [Vote count All eyes on Nevada as Senate control hangs in balance](#)
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- ['DeSanctimonious' Angry Trump lashes out at Republican rival](#)

[US midterm elections 2022](#)

Mark Kelly holds on to Arizona seat in critical win for Democrats

The senator defeated the Donald Trump-endorsed Blake Masters after a campaign in which Kelly pitched himself as a moderate



Senator Mark Kelly has won re-election in Arizona in a closely watched race that will help determine control of the Senate. Photograph: Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images

[Maanvi Singh](#) and agencies

Fri 11 Nov 2022 22.46 ESTFirst published on Fri 11 Nov 2022 22.24 EST

Democrat Mark Kelly has won re-election in Arizona, defeating his far-right challenger Blake Masters in a critical race that puts the [Democrats](#) one victory away from securing control of the US Senate.

The Arizona race is one of a handful of contests that [Republicans](#) targeted in their bid to take control of the 50-50 Senate. It was a test of the inroads

that Kelly and other Democrats have made in Arizona, a state that was once reliably dominated by the GOP but has emerged as a purple battleground.

Kelly's victory suggests that [Democratic success](#) in Arizona – Joe Biden beat out Donald Trump in the state in 2020 – was not an aberration.

Other [Arizona](#) contests, including the closely watched race for governor between Democrat Katie Hobbs and Republican Kari Lake, were too early to call Friday night.

With Vice-President Kamala Harris' tiebreaking vote, Democrats can retain control of the Senate by winning either the Nevada race, which remains too early to call, or next month's runoff in Georgia. Republicans now must win both those races to take the majority.

Kelly, a former Nasa astronaut who's flown in space four times, is married to the former US congresswoman Gabby Giffords, who inspired the nation with her recovery from a gunshot wound to the head during an assassination attempt in 2011 that killed six people and injured 13. Kelly and Giffords went on to co-found a gun safety advocacy group.

Kelly's campaign had focused on winning over the state's independent voters. He had at times sought to distance himself from Joe Biden and pitched himself as a moderate foil to his opponent.

Masters, a Donald Trump-endorsed 36-year-old venture capitalist without political experience, had denied the 2020 election results and repeated false claims of election fraud, but reeled in his most extreme stances in the weeks leading up to Saturday.

Kelly first won election in 2020 to serve out the remainder of the late John McCain's Senate term. He had the advantage of incumbency and raised more money than his opponent. Kelly maintained a narrow lead in polls ahead of the election, though his margin tightened in the final weeks.

He has said he will fight to protect access to abortion, which the majority of Arizonans believe should be a right. On border security, the senator has sought to distance himself from the Biden administration, calling the situation at the border a “mess”. Kelly has advocated against ending Title 42, a Trump-era public health policy that uses the Covid-19 pandemic as justification to expel migrants at the southern border.

Kelly’s victory in 2020 gave Democrats both of Arizona’s Senate seats for the first time in 70 years. The shift was propelled by the state’s fast-changing demographics and the unpopularity of Trump.

Kelly’s 2022 campaign largely focused on his support for abortion rights, protecting social security, lowering drug prices and ensuring a stable water supply in the midst of a drought, which has curtailed Arizona’s cut of water from the Colorado River.

Masters, 36, is a venture capitalist without political experience who was backed by the billionaire tech investor Peter Thiel. Like other Republicans running for statewide positions on Arizona’s ballot, Masters denied the 2020 election results and repeated false claims of election fraud. He has falsely suggested that the January 6 insurrection was secretly directed by the FBI, has endorsed the white supremacist “great replacement” theory and blamed Black Americans for gun violence.

But after emerging bruised from a contentious primary, Masters struggled to raise money and was put on the defense over his controversial positions. After the primary, he scrubbed some of his more controversial positions from his website, but it wasn’t enough for the moderate swing voters who decided the election.

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[US midterm elections 2022](#)

All eyes on Nevada as Senate control hangs in balance

Counting continues in key Senate battleground, while Republicans look on course for slim majority in House

- [US midterm elections results 2022 – live](#)



Joe Biden and the vice-president, Kamala Harris, hug at a Democratic post-election event in Washington on Thursday. Photograph: Shawn Thew/EPA

[Edward Helmore](#) in New York and agencies

Fri 11 Nov 2022 22.49 ESTFirst published on Fri 11 Nov 2022 00.51 EST

The eyes of the political world remained focused on Nevada on Friday, where thousands of uncounted votes held the key to control of the US Senate, three days after Americans cast their final ballots in midterm elections.

It comes after [Democrat Mark Kelly won re-election in Arizona](#), defeating his far-right challenger Blake Masters in a critical race that puts the party one victory away from securing control of the [Senate](#). With a tie-breaking vote from vice-president Kamala Harris, Democrats are now poised to retain control of the Senate by winning either the Nevada race, which remains too close to call, or next month's runoff in Georgia. Republicans now must win both those races to take the majority.

In Nevada, election officials had estimated a finish by Friday but, again, the high number of ballots cast means counting will continue through next week. However, a winner could be called as soon as any candidate is judged to have passed a majority threshold.

If Democrats or Republicans can capture a majority by sweeping the contests in both states, it will settle control of the Senate. A split, however, would transform a 6 December runoff Senate election in Georgia between incumbent Democratic senator Raphael Warnock and Republican Herschel Walker into a proxy battle for the chamber, which among other powers holds sway over [Joe Biden's](#) judicial appointments.

Meanwhile, [Republicans](#) were slowly inching closer to wresting control of the House of Representatives from Biden's Democrats, which would in effect give them veto power over his legislative agenda, allow them to launch investigations into his administration and have greater control over the budget.

Biden conceded on Thursday that [Democrats](#) face long odds to keep control of the House.

"It's still alive. It's still alive. But it's like drawing an inside straight," Biden said, using a poker term for an unpromising situation.

Biden said he had spoken to the House minority leader, Kevin McCarthy, a day earlier, after an upbeat press conference at the White House.

“I said: ‘If you win the majority, congratulations,’” Biden recalled, in a fine distinction after McCarthy told Fox News that the president had congratulated him on winning a majority.

Republicans had secured at least 211 of the 218 House seats they need for a majority, Edison Research projected late on Thursday, while Democrats had won 197. That left 27 races [yet to be determined](#), including a number of close contests.

The Republican House leader, Kevin McCarthy, has already announced his intention to run for speaker if Republicans win, an outcome he described as inevitable on Wednesday.

But his path could be blocked by a handful of conservative Republicans known as the Freedom Caucus. McCarthy needs 218 votes, so fewer than a dozen caucus members have power to block his path.

“No one currently has 218” votes, Chip Roy of Texas [told NBC News](#) as he emerged from a private Freedom Caucus meeting.

Tuesday’s results fell far short of the sweeping “red wave” that Republicans had expected, despite Biden’s anaemic approval ratings and deep voter frustration over inflation.

Democrats portrayed Republicans as extremist, pointing to the supreme court’s decision to eliminate a nationwide right to abortion and the hundreds of Republican nominees who promoted former president Donald Trump’s false claims that the 2020 election was fraudulent.

Some of Trump’s most high-profile endorsed candidates lost pivotal races on Tuesday, marring his status as Republican kingmaker and leading several Republicans to blame his divisive brand for the party’s disappointing performance.

The outcome may increase the chances that the Florida governor, Ron DeSantis, who routed his Democratic challenger on Tuesday, opts to run for the 2024 presidential nomination. While Trump has not officially launched

a third White House campaign, the former president has strongly suggested he will do so and has said he [will make a “special announcement”](#) at his Florida club on Tuesday.

Trump lambasted DeSantis in a statement on Thursday, taking credit for the governor’s political rise, while attacking critics on his social media site, Truth Social.

Even a narrow Republican House majority would be able to demand concessions in exchange for votes on key issue such as raising the nation’s borrowing limit. But with few votes to spare, McCarthy might struggle to hold his caucus together – particularly the hard-right faction that is largely aligned with Trump and has little interest in compromise.

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[US midterm elections 2022](#)

Joe Lombardo, Trump-backed Republican sheriff, wins Nevada governor race

Lombardo, a career police officer, defeats Democrat Steve Sisolak to regain governorship for GOP



Joe Lombardo at a rally held by Donald Trump ahead of the midterm elections in Minden, Nevada. Photograph: Carlos Barría/Reuters

Associated Press

Fri 11 Nov 2022 21.51 EST Last modified on Sat 12 Nov 2022 09.58 EST

Republican Joe Lombardo, a career police officer and sheriff in Las Vegas who was endorsed by [Donald Trump](#), has been elected governor in Nevada.

Lombardo defeated Steve Sisolak, regaining the governorship for the GOP and making Sisolak a one-term Democrat amid two decades of

Republicans.

“It appears we will fall a percentage point or so short of winning,” Sisolak said in a statement conceding the race to Lombardo shortly after a batch of vote results was reported in Clark county. “That is why I reached out to the sheriff to wish him success.”

The count of ballots in [Nevada](#) took several days partly due to a provision of a broad mail voting law passed by the state legislature in 2020. It requires counties to accept ballots postmarked by election day if they arrive up to four days later.

Lombardo, 60, started as a police officer in Las Vegas in 1988 and served two terms as Clark county sheriff, the non-partisan elected head of the Las Vegas metropolitan police department, the largest police agency in the state.

He weathered campaign attacks on rising crime by acknowledging the increase during the last two years and blaming funding limits and mandates from a Democratic-controlled legislature.

Lombardo sometimes distanced himself from Trump during the campaign, and never offered an endorsement of unfounded claims that the 2020 presidential election was marred by fraud. Lombardo said during his only campaign debate with Sisolak that any irregularities were not enough to change the outcome of the election.

Lombardo, who emerged for the general election from a crowded GOP primary field, derided a state public health insurance option that the legislature passed and Sisolak signed, and said he looks at abortion through a “pro-life lens”.

But he acknowledged that state law approved by Nevada voters in 1990 allows abortions up to 24 weeks into pregnancy. “There’s nothing the governor can do,” he said, to change that law.

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US midterm elections 2022

‘Ron DeSanctimonious’: angry Trump lashes out at Republican rival

Former president, who is still expected to announce candidacy, posts diatribe against possible White House contender and others

- [US midterm elections results 2022 – live](#)



Donald Trump and his wife, Melania, in Palm Beach on polling day.
Photograph: Eva Marie Uzcategui/AFP/Getty Images

[Chris Stein](#) in Washington and [Joanna Walters](#) in New York

Fri 11 Nov 2022 13.19 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Nov 2022 13.26 EST

Donald Trump has lashed out at other high-profile Republicans after the failure of the predicted “red wave” in the US midterm elections, which has chilled enthusiasm for his promotion of extremist candidates and a possible new run at the White House.

At Mar-a-Lago on Tuesday night, as Democrats had a better election than expected, the former US president was seen to be in a mood ranging from subdued to exasperated, but later in the week he became angry, attacking fellow [Republicans](#) including two popular governors.

On Thursday night, his target was the Florida governor, [Ron DeSantis](#), once a close ally but now seemingly an arch-rival for a presidential run in 2024, particularly after DeSantis easily won re-election over his Democratic challenger, Charlie Crist.

In a long diatribe on social media, Trump, astonishingly and seemingly spuriously, claimed to have abused his presidential office by sending in the FBI to stop what he called “vote-stealing” in [Florida](#) to swing the 2018 election in DeSantis’s favor.

“I was all in for Ron, and he beat [Democratic candidate Andrew] Gillum, but after the race, when votes were being stolen by the corrupt election process in Broward county, and Ron was going down 10,000 votes a day, along with now Senator Rick Scott, I sent in the FBI and the US attorneys, and the ballot theft immediately ended, just prior to them running out of the votes necessary to win. I stopped his election from being stolen,” Trump wrote.

He also used his new nickname for the governor: “Ron DeSanctimonious”.

There is no evidence of tampering with Florida’s 2018 election, nor of any federal intervention to stop any supposed irregularities. Trump continues to lie that Joe Biden’s victory over him for the White House in 2020 was due to widespread election fraud, a wholly discredited allegation.

DeSantis is widely seen as mulling his own run for the Republican nomination for president in 2024, a campaign that could pose the most serious challenge to Trump’s own White House ambitions. Trump has teased an announcement next Tuesday, with the widespread expectation that it will a declaration he is running again.

On Friday, Trump turned his ire on Virginia’s Republican governor, Glenn Youngkin, who last year managed to win in a state that typically leans

Democratic.

In [a post on his Truth Social network](#), Trump said Youngkin “couldn’t have won without me” – even though at the time Youngkin distanced himself from the then president.

Trump wrote: “I endorsed him, did a very big Trump rally for him telephonically, got Maga to vote for him – or he couldn’t have come close to winning. But he knows that, and admits it.

“Besides, having a hard time with the Dems in Virginia – but he’ll get it done!”

Trump, who has [used anti-Asian rhetoric](#) before, also began his post with a snide take on Youngkin’s name: “Young Kin (now that’s an interesting take. Sounds Chinese, doesn’t it?)”

On Thursday, Youngkin’s deputy, the lieutenant governor, Winsome Sears, [called Trump](#) “a liability” for Republicans, and said if Trump ran in 2024 she “could not support him”.

Even Trump’s family members are divided about the prospect of him running for the presidency again, [according to CNN](#). His eldest son, Don Jr, is reportedly enthusiastic about campaigning for him, but other members, such as his eldest daughter, Ivanka, are said to be fed up with Washington politics.

Trump also reportedly blamed his wife, Melania, for encouraging him to back the failed Senate campaign of Mehmet Oz in Pennsylvania, though he has since attempted to walk back the criticism.

The family will gather this weekend for the wedding of Trump’s youngest daughter, Tiffany, at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

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‘Is everyone doing this perfectly but me?’ Michelle Obama on the guilt and anxiety of being a mother - and her golden parenting rules



Michelle Obama. Photograph: Miller Mobley/AUGUST | Image R

In an exclusive extract from her new book, the former first lady shares what she learned about raising a family while living in the White House

[Michelle Obama](#)

Sat 12 Nov 2022 02.00 EST

After Barack was elected president, word got out that Marian Robinson, my 71-year-old mother, was planning to move to the White House with us. The idea was that she'd help look after Sasha and Malia, who were seven and 10 at the time, at least until they were settled. She'd make sure that everyone adjusted OK and then move back to Chicago. The media seemed instantly charmed by this notion, requesting interviews with my mother and producing a slew of stories, dubbing her "First Granny" and "Grandmother-in Chief". It was as if a new and potentially exciting character had been added to the cast of a network drama. Suddenly, my mother was in the news. She *was* news.

If you've ever met my mother, however, you'll know that the last thing she wants is to be well known. She agreed to do a handful of interviews,

figuring it was just part of the larger transition process, though she said, again and again, that she was surprised that anyone would care.

By her own measure, my mom is nothing special. She also likes to say that while she loves us dearly, my brother and I are not special, either. We're just two kids who had enough love and a good amount of luck and happened to do well as a result. She tries to remind people that neighbourhoods like the South Side of Chicago are packed full of "little Michelles and little Craigs". They're in every school, on every block. It's just that too many of them get overlooked and underestimated. This would probably count as the foundational point of my mom's larger philosophy: "All children are great children."

My mother is now 85. She operates with a quiet and mirthful grace. Glamour and gravitas mean nothing to her. She sees right through it, believing that all people should be treated the same. I've seen her talk to the pope and to the postman, approaching them both with the same mild-mannered, unflappable demeanour. If someone asks her a question, she responds in plain and direct terms, never catering her answers to suit a particular audience. This is another thing about my mother: she doesn't believe in fudging the truth.

What this meant as we transitioned into the White House was that any time a reporter posed a question to my mom, she would answer it candidly rather than soft-peddalling her thoughts or hewing to any set of talking points generated by nervous communications staffers.

Which is how she surfaced in the national news, describing how she'd been dragged kicking and screaming from her quiet little bungalow on Euclid Avenue and more or less forced to live at the nation's most famous address. She was not being ungracious; she was just being real. How my mom expressed herself to the reporters on this matter was no different than how she'd expressed herself to me. She had not wanted to come to Washington, but I had flat-out begged her. My mother was the rock of our family. Since the time our daughters were babies, she'd helped us out around the edges of our regular childcare arrangements, filling the gaps as Barack and I often improvised and occasionally flailed our way through different career

transitions, heavy workload cycles, and the ever-burgeoning after-school lives of our two young girls.

So, yes, I did kind of force her to come.

The problem was that she was content at home. She had recently retired. She liked her own life in her own space and was uninterested in change more generally. The house on Euclid had all her trinkets. It had the bed she'd slept in for more than 30 years. Her feeling was that the White House felt too much like a museum and too little like a home. (And yes, of course, she voiced this observation directly to a reporter.) But even as she made it known that her move to Washington was largely involuntary and intended to be temporary, she affirmed that her love for Sasha and Malia in the end eclipsed everything else. "If somebody's going to be with these kids other than their parents," she told a reporter, giving a shrug, "it better be me."

After that, she decided she was pretty much done giving interviews.



'My mother steadies us all.' Michelle Obama with her mother Marian Robinson and daughters Malia and Sasha. Photograph: Courtesy of the Obama-Robinson Family Archive

Once she'd moved in, my mother became very popular in the White House, even if she wasn't looking to be. Everyone referred to her simply as "Mrs R". People on staff enjoyed her precisely because she was so low-key. The butlers, who were mostly Black, liked having a Black grandma in the house. They showed her photos of their own grandkids and occasionally tapped her for life advice. Secret Service agents kept tabs on her on days when she wandered out the gates and headed to the CVS [pharmacy] on 14th Street or when she dropped by Betty Currie's house – Betty being Bill Clinton's former secretary – to play cards. The staff housekeepers were often trying to get my mother to let them do more for her, though Mom made it clear that nobody should wait on or clean up after her when she knew perfectly well how to do all that herself.

"Just show me how to work the washing machine and I'm good," she said.

Aware of the favour she was doing us, we tried to keep her duties light. She rode with Sasha and Malia to and from school, helping them adjust to the new routine. On days I was busy with Flotus duties, she made sure the girls had snacks and whatever else they needed for after-school activities. Just as she had when I was an elementary-school student, she listened with interest to their tales about what had unfolded over the course of the day. When she and I had time alone, she'd fill me in on anything I'd missed in the kids' day and then she'd do the same sort of listening for me, acting as my sponge and sounding board.

When she wasn't looking after the girls, my mom made herself deliberately scarce. Her feeling was that we should have our own family life, independent of her. And she felt that she, too, should have a life independent of us. She liked her freedom. She liked her space. She had come to DC with only one intention, and that was to be a reliable support to Barack and me and a caring grandmother to our two kids. Everything else, as far as she saw it, was just fuss and noise.

Sometimes we would host VIP guests for a dinner party in the White House residence. They'd look around and ask where my mother was, wondering whether she'd be joining us for the meal.

I'd usually just laugh and point up towards the third floor, where she had a bedroom and liked to hang out in a nearby sitting room, which had big windows that looked out at the Washington Monument. "Nope," I'd say, "Grandma's upstairs in her happy place."

This essentially was code for: "Sorry, Bono, Mom's got a glass of wine, some pork ribs on her TV tray, and Jeopardy! is on. Don't for one second think you could ever compete ... "

My mom ended up staying with us in the White House for the whole eight years.

As teens do, our girls tested a few limits. Someone posted an eyebrow-raising bikini selfie on Instagram. Someone talked back to the president

Our girls morphed from wide-eyed elementary-schoolers into teenagers in full bloom, intent on achieving independence and the privileges of adult life. As teenagers do, they tested a few limits and did some dumb things. Someone got grounded for missing curfew. Someone posted an eyebrow-raising bikini selfie on Instagram and was promptly instructed by the East Wing communications team to remove it. Someone once had to be dragged by Secret Service agents from an out-of-hand, unsupervised high-school party just as local law enforcement was arriving. Someone talked back to the president of the United States when he had the audacity to ask how she could possibly study Spanish while listening to rap.

An episode of even mild disobedience or misbehaviour from our adolescent daughters would set off a ripple of unsettling worry in me. It preyed upon my greatest fear, which was that life in the White House was messing our kids up.

One tiny thing would go wrong, and my mother-guilt would kick in. I'd start second-guessing every choice Barack and I had ever made. Self-scrutiny is something women are programmed to excel at, having been thrust into systems of inequality and fed fully unrealistic images of female

“perfection” from the time we were kids ourselves. None of us – truly none – ever live up.

For mothers, the feelings of not-enoughness can be especially acute. The images of maternal perfection we encounter in advertisements and across social media are often no less fake than what we see on the enhanced and Photoshopped female bodies that are so often upheld as the societal gold standard for beauty. But still, we are conditioned to buy into it, questing after not just the perfect body, but also perfect children, perfect work-life balances, perfect family experiences, and perfect levels of patience. It’s hard not to look around as a mother and think, *Is everyone doing this perfectly but me?*

I am as prone to this type of self-laceration as the next person. At any sign of conflict or challenge with our kids, I would instantly and ferociously start scanning for my own mistakes. Had I been too tough on them or too indulging? Had I been too present or too absent? Was there some parenting book I’d forgotten to study 15 years earlier? Was this a bona fide crisis, a sign of bigger problems? Which critical life lessons had I failed to impart? And was it too late now?



With Barack. Photograph: Courtesy of the Obama-Robinson Family Archive

As a parent, you are always fighting your own desperation not to fail at the job you've been given. There are whole industries built to feed and capitalise on this very desperation, from baby brain gyms and ergonomic strollers to Sat coaches. It's like a hole that can't ever be filled.

I'm sorry to say that this doesn't end with any one milestone, either. The desperation doesn't go away when your kid learns to sleep or walk, or graduates from high school, or even moves into their first apartment and buys a set of steak knives. You will still worry! You will still be afraid for them! Even now, my husband, the former commander-in-chief, can't help but to text cautionary news stories to our daughters – about the dangers of highway driving or walking alone at night. When they moved to California, he emailed them a lengthy article about earthquake preparedness and offered to have Secret Service give them a natural-disaster-response briefing. (This was met with a polite “No thanks”.)

Caring for your kids and watching them grow is one of the most rewarding endeavours on Earth, and at the same time it can drive you nuts.

Over the years, I've had one secret weapon to help stem the tide of parental anxiety, though – and that's my own mother.



‘My mother is prone to dropping little pearls of wisdom into everyday conversation, almost like stray pennies. For years, I’ve been collecting these.’ Photograph: Miller Mobley/AUGUST | Image R

If you’re around her enough, you will start to notice that she is prone to dropping little pearls of wisdom into everyday conversation. Usually, they’re connected to her belief that it’s possible to raise decent children without drama or fuss. These are never blustery proclamations delivered with fury or passion. They tend to be wry thoughts that just slip out quietly, almost like stray pennies falling from her pocket.

For years now, I’ve been collecting these pennies, stuffing my own pockets full of them, using them for guidance and as a tool to offset my own doubts and worries as a parent. For a while, I was thinking that maybe my mother should write her own book, that she could tell her life story and share some of the insights that I personally have found to be so valuable. But when I suggested it, she just waved me off, saying: “Now, why on earth would I do that?”

She has given me permission, however, to share a few of her more tried-and-true maxims here, some of the points she’s made that have helped me to become a slightly calmer, slightly less guilt-ridden, slightly more decent parent to my own kids. But only if I attach the following disclaimer, which comes direct from my mom herself: “Just make sure they know I’m not in the business of telling anybody how to live.”

1. Teach your kids to wake themselves up

When I was five and starting kindergarten, my parents gifted me with a small electric alarm clock. It had a square face, with little green glow-in-the-dark hands that pointed toward the hour and the minute. My mom showed me how to set my wake-up time and how to turn the alarm off when it buzzed. She then helped me work backwards through all the things I’d need to do in the morning – eat my breakfast, brush my hair and teeth, pick out my clothes, and so on – in order to calculate how many minutes it would take to get myself up and out the door to school. She was there to

provide instruction, she'd furnished me with the tool, but the challenge of using it effectively became mine to figure out.

And I freaking loved that alarm clock. I loved what it gave me – which was power and agency over my own little life. My mom, I realise now, had passed on this particular tool at a deliberately chosen window early enough in my development, before I was old enough to be cynical about having to get up for school in the morning, before she'd ever have to start shaking me awake herself. It spared her the hassle in some ways, but the real gift was to me: I could wake myself up.

If I ever did sleep through my alarm, or otherwise get lazy and drag my feet about going to school, my mother was not interested in doing any nagging or cajoling. She remained hands-off, making clear that my life was largely my own. “Listen, I got my education,” she'd say. “I've already been to school. This isn't about me.”

2. It isn't about you. Good parents are always working to put themselves out of business

The alarm-clock approach was representative of an even more deliberate undertaking on my parents' part, and that was to help us kids learn to get on our feet and stay on our feet, not just physically but emotionally. From the day she birthed each of her children, my mother was striving toward a singular goal, and that was to render herself more or less obsolete in our lives.

My mom made no bones about the fact that especially when it came to day-to-day practical tasks, her plan was to become as unnecessary in our lives as possible, as quickly as possible. The sooner that time arrived, the more successful she'd deem herself to be as a parent. “I'm not raising babies,” she used to say. “I am raising adults.”

It may sound scandalous to say, especially in an era when helicopter-parenting has become de rigueur, but I'm pretty sure that most of my mom's decision-making was guided by one basic question: *What's the minimum I can do for them right now?*

This was not a cavalier or self-serving question, but rather a deeply thoughtful one. In our home, self-sufficiency mattered above all else.

My mom believed that her hands only got in the way of our hands. If there was something new we needed to learn, she'd show us a way to do it and then quickly step aside. This meant that with the aid of a step stool, Craig and I learned how to wash and dry the dishes long before we were tall enough to reach the sink. We were required to make our beds and do our own laundry as a matter of habit.

On days when I came home stewing about a teacher, my mom would ask one simple question: 'Do you need me to go in there for you?'

We did a fair amount of this stuff imperfectly, but the point was we were doing it. My mother wasn't stepping in. She didn't correct our errors or squelch our way of doing things, even if our way was slightly different from hers. This, I believe, was my first taste of power. I liked being trusted to get something done. "It's easier for kids to make mistakes when they're little," my mom told me recently when I asked her about this. "Let them make them. And then you can't make too big a deal out of it, either. Because if you do, they'll stop trying."

She sat by and allowed us to struggle and make mistakes – with our chores, our homework, and our relationships with various teachers, coaches and friends. None of it was tied to her own self-worth or ego, or done for bragging rights. It was not about her at all, she would say. She was busy trying to wash her hands of us, after all. This meant that her mood didn't rise or fall on our victories. Her happiness wasn't dictated by whether we came home with As on our report cards, whether Craig scored a lot of points at his basketball game, or I got elected to student council. When good things happened, she was happy for us. When bad things happened, she'd help us process it before returning to her own chores and challenges. The important thing was that she loved us regardless of whether we succeeded or failed. She lit up with gladness any time we walked through the door.

On days when I came home stewing about something a teacher had done (and, I'll admit, this happened with some regularity), my mom would stand in the kitchen and listen to whatever tirade I had to unleash about the unfairness of some teacher's remark, or the stupidity of an assignment, or how Mrs So-and-So clearly didn't know what she was doing. And when I was finished, when the steam of my anger had dissipated to the point that I could think clearly, she'd ask a simple question – one that was fully sincere and also, at the same time, just a tiny bit leading. “Do you need me to go in there for you?”

There were a couple of instances over the years when I did genuinely need my mom's help, and I got it. But 99% of the time, I did not need her to go in on my behalf. Just by asking that question, and by giving me a chance to respond, she was subtly pushing me to continue reasoning out the situation in my head. How bad was it actually? What were the solutions? What could I do?

This is how, in the end, I usually knew I could trust my own answer, which was: “I think I can handle it.”

My mother helped me to learn how to puzzle out my own feelings and strategies for dealing with them, in large part by just giving them room and taking care not to smother them with her own feelings or opinions. If I got overly sulky about something, she'd tell me to go do one of my chores, not as punishment, exactly, but rather as a means of right-sizing the problem. “Get up and clean that bathroom,” she'd say. “It'll put your mind on things other than yourself.”

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Inside of our small home, she created a kind of emotional sandbox where Craig and I could safely rehearse our feelings and sort through our responses to whatever was going on in our young lives. Once, when I was in high school and unhappy about having to deal with a math teacher who struck me as arrogant, my mom heard my complaint, nodded understandingly, and then shrugged. “You don’t have to like your teacher, and she doesn’t have to like you,” she said. “But she’s got math in her head that you need in yours, so maybe you should just go to school and get the math.”

She looked at me then and smiled, as if this should be the simplest thing in the world to grasp. “You can come home to be liked,” she said. “We will always like you here.”

3. Know what’s truly precious

My mom remembers that the house she grew up in on the South Side had a big coffee table at the centre of the living room, made of smooth, delicate glass. It was breakable, and so everyone in the family was forced to navigate around it, almost on tiptoe.

She was a studious observer of her own family, my mother. She sat squarely in the middle of seven children, which gave her a lot to watch. She had three older siblings and three younger ones, plus two parents who appeared to be polar opposites and didn’t much get along.

She saw how her father – my grandfather Southside – tended to baby his kids. He drove them around in his car so that they wouldn’t need to take the bus, afraid of what lay beyond his control. He woke them up in the mornings so they wouldn’t need to set an alarm. He seemed to enjoy their dependence on him.

My grandmother Rebecca – my mom’s mom – meanwhile, was stiff and proper, patently unhappy and possibly (my mother believes now) clinically depressed. When she was young, she dreamed of being a nurse, but

apparently her mother, a washerwoman who'd raised seven kids, had told her that going to nursing school cost a lot of money and Black nurses rarely got good jobs. So Rebecca married my grandfather and had seven children instead, never seeming terribly content with what her life had yielded.

The governing edict in Grandmother Rebecca's house was that children should be seen and not heard. At the dinner table, my mom and her siblings were instructed to stay silent, to listen mutely and respectfully to the adult conversation around them. When her mother's friends came to visit their home, my mom and her siblings were required to join the adults in the living room. All of them – from toddlers to teens – were expected to sit politely at the edges, permitted to say nothing more than hello.

My mother describes long evenings spent in that room with her mouth clamped shut in agony, hearing plenty of adult-speak she wanted to engage with, plenty of ideas she'd want to quibble with or at least better understand. It must have been during these hours that my mother arrived at the idea, even unconsciously, that her own kids some day would be not just allowed but encouraged to speak. No earnest question would ever be disallowed. Laughter and tears were permitted. Nobody would need to tiptoe.

One night, when someone new stopped in for a visit, my mom remembers the woman surveying all the young faces and restless bodies packed into the living room and finally posing a logical question: "How possibly could you have a glass table like this and all of these kids?" She doesn't recall how my grandmother responded, but my mom knew what the real answer was: her own mother had missed a fundamental lesson about what was precious and what was not. What was the point of seeing children without hearing them?

One evening, finally, when my mom was about 12, some grown-up friends came over to their house to visit and, for some foolish reason, one of them happened to sit down on the table. To my grandmother's horror, and as her children watched silently, it shattered into pieces on the floor. For Mom, it was a bit of cosmic justice. Even today, this story still cracks her up.

4. Parent the child you've got

The apartment my parents raised us in had nothing resembling a glass table. We had very little in our lives that was delicate or breakable at all. It's true that we couldn't afford anything too fancy, but it's also true that in the wake of her own upbringing, my mother had no interest in owning showpieces of any sort.

At home, Craig and I were permitted to be ourselves. We were respectful of our elders and abided by some general rules, but we also spoke our minds at the dinner table, threw balls indoors, cranked music on the stereo and horsed around on the couch. When something did break – a water glass or a coffee mug or, every once in a while, a window – it was not a big deal.

I wanted Sasha and Malia to feel both seen and heard – to always voice their thoughts and to never feel like they had to tiptoe in their own home

I tried to carry this same approach into my parenting of Sasha and Malia. I wanted them to feel both seen and heard – to always voice their thoughts and to never feel like they had to tiptoe in their own home. Barack and I established basic rules and governing principles for our household: like my mom, I had our kids making their beds as soon as they were old enough to sleep in beds. Like his mom, Barack was all about getting the girls interested early in the pleasure provided by books.



The Obamas in 2009 on the South Lawn of the White House. Photograph: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

What we learned quickly, however, was that raising little kids followed the same basic trajectory we'd experienced with both pregnancy and childbirth: you can spend a lot of time dreaming, preparing and planning for family life to go perfectly, but, in the end, you're pretty much just left to deal with whatever happens. You can establish systems and routines, anoint your various sleep, feeding and disciplinary gurus from the staggering variety that exist. You can write your family bylaws and declare your religion and your philosophy out loud, but, at some point, sooner rather than later, you will almost surely be brought to your knees, realising that despite your best and most earnest efforts, you are only marginally – and sometimes very marginally – in control.

Here's a story I'm not necessarily proud of. It happened one evening when we still lived in Chicago, when Malia was about seven and Sasha was just four. I was home after a long day of work. As was often the case in those days, Barack was across the country in Washington DC, in the middle of a Senate session that I was probably feeling resentful of. I had served the kids dinner, asked how their days had gone, supervised bath time, and was now cleaning up the last of the dishes, sagging a little on my feet, desperate to be off duty and find even just a half hour to sit quietly by myself.

The girls were supposed to be brushing their teeth for bed, but I could hear them running up and down the stairs to our third-floor playroom, giggling wildly as they went.

“Hey, Malia, Sasha, it’s time to wind down!” I called from the foot of the stairs.

“Now!”

There was a brief pause – three whole seconds, maybe – and then more thundering footsteps, another shriek of laughter.

“It’s time to settle down!” I yelled again.

Yet it was clear I was shouting into the void, fully disregarded by my own kids. I could feel the heat starting to rise in my cheeks, my patience disintegrating, my steam building up, my stack preparing to blow. All I wanted, in the whole wide world, was for those children to go to bed.

Since the time I was a kid myself, my mom had always advised me to try to count to 10 in moments like these, to pause just long enough that you might grab on to some reason – to respond rather than react. I think I got as far as counting to eight before I couldn’t stand it another second. I was angry. I ran up the stairs and shouted for the girls to come down from the playroom and join me on the landing. I then took a breath and counted the last two seconds, trying to quell my rage.

When the girls appeared, the two of them in their pyjamas, flushed and a little sweaty from the fun they’d been having, I told them I quit. I was resigning from the job of being their mother.

I summoned what little calm I could find in myself and said: “Look, you don’t listen to me. You seem to think you don’t need a mother. You seem perfectly happy to be in charge of yourselves, so go right ahead ... You can feed and dress yourselves from now on. And you can get yourselves to bed. I am handing you your own little lives and you can manage them yourselves. I don’t care.” I threw my hands in the air, showing them how

helpless and hurt I felt. “I am done,” I said. It was in this moment that I got one of my life’s clearest looks at who I was dealing with.

Malia’s eyes grew wide, her lower lip starting to tremble. “Oh, Mommy,” she said, “I don’t want that to happen.” And she promptly hustled off to the bathroom to brush her teeth.

Something in me relaxed. *Wow, I thought, that sure worked fast.*

Four-year-old Sasha, meanwhile, stood clutching the little blue blankie she liked to carry around, taking a second to process the news of my resignation before landing on her own emotional response, which was pure and unfettered relief.

No sooner had her sister shuffled obediently off, Sasha turned without a word and scampered back upstairs to the playroom, as if to say, *Finally! This lady is out of my business!* Within seconds, I heard her flip on the TV.

In a moment of deep fatigue and frustration, I’d handed that child the keys to her own life, and it turned out she was plenty happy to take them, long before she was actually ready to. Much as I liked my mom’s idea about eventually becoming obsolete in my kids’ lives, it was far too early to quit. (I promptly called Sasha back down from the playroom, marched her through the tooth-brushing, and put her to bed.)

This one episode provided me with an important lesson about how to proceed with my children. I had one who wanted more guardrails from her parents and one who wanted fewer, one who would respond first to my emotions and another who would take my words at face value.

Each kid had her own temperament, her own sensitivities, her own needs, strengths and ways of interpreting the world around her. Barack and I would see these same dynamics manifest over and over again in our children as they grew. On the ski slopes, Malia would make measured, precise turns while Sasha preferred to bomb straight downhill. If you asked how Sasha’s day at school had been, she’d answer with five words before bouncing off to her bedroom, whereas Malia would offer a detailed breakdown of every hour she’d spent away. Malia often sought our advice – like her dad, she

likes to make decisions with input – whereas Sasha thrived, just as I once had as a kid, when we trusted her to do her own thing. Neither was right or wrong, good or bad. They were – and are – simply different.

In the end, the child you have will grow into the person they're meant to be. They will learn life their own way. You will control some but definitely not all of how it goes for them. You can't remove unhappiness from their lives. You won't remove struggle. What you can give your kids is the opportunity to be heard and seen, the practice they need to make rational decisions based on meaningful values, and the consistency of your gladness that they are there.

5. Come home. We will always like you here

My mother said this to me and Craig not just once, but often. It's the one message that stood out above all else. You came home to be liked. Home was where you would always find gladness.

I recognise that, for many folks, "home" can be a more complicated, less comfortable idea. It may represent a place, or set of people, or type of emotional experience that you are trying to move past. Home could well be a painful spot to which you never want to return. And that is OK. There's power in knowing where you don't want to go.

You may need to courageously remake your idea of home, fostering the parts of your flame that may have gone unrecognised when you yourself were a child. You may need to cultivate a chosen family rather than a biological one, protecting the boundaries that keep you safe.

My mom moved (yes, kicking and screaming) to Washington with us, in part to help with our kids, but also in part because I needed her gladness. I am nothing but a grown-up child myself, someone who at the end of a long day comes through the door feeling worn out and a little needy, looking for solace and acceptance and maybe a snack.

In her wise and plain-spoken way, my mother built us all up. She lit up for us every day, so that we could in turn light up for others. She helped make the White House feel less like a museum and more like a home. During

those eight years, Barack and I tried to throw open the doors of that home to more people, of more races and backgrounds, and particularly to more children, inviting them in to touch the furniture and explore what was there. We wanted it to feel like a palace of gladness, telegraphing one simple, powerful message: *We will always like you here.*

Mom will take no credit for any of it, of course. She'll be the first to tell you – still – that she's nothing special, and it's never been about her, anyway.

Late in 2016, about a month before a new president was sworn in, my mother happily packed her bags. There was little fanfare and, at her insistence, no farewell party. She just moved out of the White House and went back to Chicago, returning to her place on Euclid Avenue, to her old bed and old belongings, pleased that she'd gotten the job done.

This is an extract from *The Light We Carry* by Michelle Obama, published by Viking on 15 November at £25. For a limited time, save 15% on your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply.

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England's united nations of football: 32 teams, one World Cup – and a lot of excited kids

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Blind date: ‘Did we kiss? Just a little bit’



Joseph (left) and Cole. Photograph: Christian Sinibaldi/The Guardian

Joseph, 23, a digitiser, meets Cole, 22, a postgrad student

Sat 12 Nov 2022 01.00 EST



Joseph on Cole

What were you hoping for?

To meet someone new and have a nice meal.

First impressions?

He was cute – great hair – and better than I was expecting. I got lost so was a bit late and he was already there.

What did you talk about?

Differences between the UK and the US. Politics. Pubs. Favourite movies (Toy Story 2). University ... He was really easy to talk to.

Any awkward moments?

Only that all the restaurant staff knew exactly why we were there.

Good table manners?

Yeah, I basically followed his lead.

Best thing about Cole?

Really easy to talk to, asked lots of questions and had really interesting things to say. He's really smart, too.

Would you introduce Cole to your friends?

Yeah, if they behave themselves.

Describe Cole in three words.

Smart, American, sweet.

What do you think Cole made of you?

I hope I came across well – maybe even funny.

Did you go on somewhere?

We just walked around talking until we got to a tube station – I turned into a bit of a tour guide. It was the middle of the week so we both had to get home.

And ... did you kiss?

Just a little bit.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?

More veggie options at the restaurant.

Marks out of 10?

A solid 8.

Would you meet again?

Hopefully. We talked about it and exchanged numbers.

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Q&A

Want to be in Blind date?

Show

Blind date is Saturday's dating column: every week, two strangers are paired up for dinner and drinks, and then spill the beans to us, answering a set of questions. This runs, with a photograph we take of each dater before the date, in Saturday magazine (in the UK) and online at theguardian.com every Saturday. It's been running since 2009 – you can [read all about how we put it together here](#).

What questions will I be asked?

We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

Can I choose who I match with?

No, it's a blind date! But we do ask you a bit about your interests, preferences, etc – the more you tell us, the better the match is likely to be.

Can I pick the photograph?

No, but don't worry: we'll choose the nicest ones.

What personal details will appear?

Your first name, job and age.

How should I answer?

Honestly but respectfully. Be mindful of how it will read to your date, and that Blind date reaches a large audience, in print and online.

Will I see the other person's answers?

No. We may edit yours and theirs for a range of reasons, including length, and we may ask you for more details.

Will you find me The One?

We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

Can I do it in my home town?

Only if it's in the UK. Many of our applicants live in London, but we would love to hear from people living elsewhere.

How to apply

Email blind.date@theguardian.com

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.



Joseph and Cole on their date



Cole on Joseph

What were you hoping for?

A friendly face in an unfamiliar city. I'll also admit to hoping to meet someone special.

First impressions?

He walked in two minutes late, which is a respectable time to arrive.

What did you talk about?

So much! Three hours talking to someone new is a long time and we made good use of it.

Any awkward moments?

My not-very-romantic questions about how to live in London, like, "Do you have a Travelcard or do you use pay-as-you-go?". He laughed at me for those.

Good table manners?

I didn't notice anything off.

Best thing about Joseph?

He's unafraid to talk about what he's passionate about.

Would you introduce Joseph to your friends?

Right now, no – I tend to be a little closed about these things. But after a few more dates, maybe.

Describe Joseph in three words.

Relaxing, smart and conversational.

What do you think Joseph made of you?

I like to think he enjoyed my company – it didn't seem like he wanted the night to end, which is a good sign.

Did you go on somewhere?

A sweet night walk across Tower Bridge.

And ... did you kiss?

There was a small goodnight kiss on the train home. Just enough to catch everyone's attention, but not enough for a show.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?

I would have taken my unfinished sides home from the restaurant.

Marks out of 10?

A well-earned 7.

Would you meet again?

I would.

*Joseph and Cole ate at [The Coal Shed](#), London SE1. Fancy a blind date?
Email blind.date@theguardian.com*

[Politics books](#)

‘You have to fight for democracy’: Maria Ressa and her lawyer Amal Clooney on their quest for justice

In this extract from her new book, the Nobel peace laureate reflects on technology’s ‘power to infect us with a virus of lies’. Plus, Amal Clooney pays tribute

[Maria Ressa: ‘In 2024, democracy could fall off a cliff’](#)



Maria Ressa. Photograph: Jam Sta Rosa/AFP/Getty Images

Maria Ressa and [Amal Clooney](#)

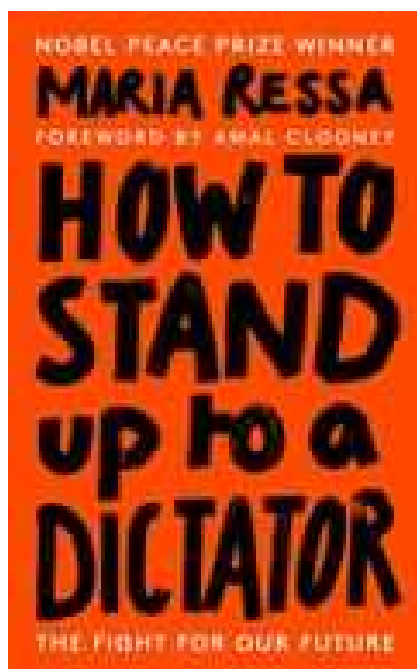
Sat 12 Nov 2022 04.00 EST Last modified on Sat 12 Nov 2022 07.09 EST

Let me tell you why the rest of the world needs to pay attention to what happens in the Philippines: 2021 was the sixth year in a row that Filipinos – out of all global citizens – spent the most time on the internet and on social

media. Despite slow internet speeds, Filipinos uploaded and downloaded the largest number of videos on YouTube in 2013. Four years later, 97% of our country's citizens were on Facebook. When I told that statistic to Mark Zuckerberg in 2017, he was quiet for a beat. "Wait, Maria," he finally responded, looking directly at me, "where are the other three percent?"

At the time, I laughed at his glib quip. I'm not laughing anymore.

The Philippines is ground zero for the terrible effects that social media can have on a nation's institutions, its culture, and the minds of its populace. Every development that happens in my country eventually happens in the rest of the world – if not tomorrow, then a year or two later. As early as 2015, there were [reports](#) of account farms creating social media phone-verified accounts, or PVAs, from the Philippines. That same year, [a report](#) showed that most of Donald Trump's Facebook likes came from outside the United States and that one in every 27 Trump followers was from the Philippines.



The absence of the rule of law in the virtual world has been devastating. We live in only one reality, and the breakdown of the rule of law globally was ignited by the lack of a democratic vision for the internet in the 21st

century. Impunity online naturally led to impunity offline, destroying existing checks and balances. What I have witnessed and documented over the past decade is technology's godlike power to infect each of us with a virus of lies, pitting us against one another, igniting, even creating, our fears, anger, and hatred, and accelerating the rise of authoritarians and dictators around the world.

In 2021, I was one of two journalists awarded the [Nobel peace prize](#). The last time a journalist received this award was in 1935. The winner, a German reporter named Carl von Ossietzky, couldn't accept because he was languishing in a Nazi concentration camp. By giving the honour to me and Dmitry Muratov of Russia, the Norwegian Nobel committee signalled that the world was at a similar historical moment, another existential point for democracy. In my Nobel lecture, I said that an invisible atom bomb exploded in our information ecosystem, that technology platforms have given geopolitical powers a way to manipulate each of us individually.

Disinformation has changed history in front of our eyes

Just four months after the Nobel ceremony, Russia invaded Ukraine, using metanarratives it had seeded via online propaganda since 2014, when it invaded Crimea, annexed it from Ukraine, and installed a puppet state. The tactic? Suppress information, then replace it with lies. By viciously attacking facts with its cheap digital army, the Russians obliterated the truth and replaced the silenced narrative with its own – in effect, that Crimea had wilfully acceded to Russian control. The Russians created fake online accounts, deployed both armies, and exploited the vulnerabilities of the social media platforms to deceive real people. For the American-owned platforms, the world's new information gatekeepers, those activities created more engagement and brought in more money. The goals of the gatekeepers and the disinformation operatives aligned.

That was the first time we became aware of information warfare tactics that would soon be deployed around the world, from Duterte to Brexit to Catalonia to Trump supporters' "Stop the Steal". Eight years later, on February 24, 2022, using the same techniques and the same metanarratives,

Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine. This is how disinformation, bottom up and top down, can manufacture a whole new reality.



Ferdinand Marcos Jr during his presidential campaign in Metro Manila, earlier this year. Photograph: Ezra Acayan/Getty Images

Less than three months later, the Philippines fell into the abyss. May 9, 2022, was election day, when my country voted for a successor to Duterte. Although there were 10 candidates for president, only two mattered: opposition leader and vice-president Leni Robredo, and Ferdinand Marcos Jr, the only son and namesake of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos, who declared martial law in 1972 and stayed in power for nearly 21 years.

The evening of the election, Marcos Jr took an early, commanding lead and never dropped it. The election was a showcase for the impact of disinformation on social media that from 2014 to 2022 transformed Marcos from a pariah into a hero. The disinformation networks didn't just come from the Philippines, but included global networks, such as one from China taken down by Facebook in 2020. They helped change history in front of our eyes.

You can't have integrity of elections if you don't have integrity of facts. Facts lost. History lost. Marcos won.

Today, we need new global institutions and a reiteration of the values we hold dear. We are standing on the rubble of the world that was, and we must have the foresight and courage to imagine, and create, the world as it should be: more compassionate, more equal, more sustainable. A world that is safe from fascists and tyrants.

Democracy is fragile. You have to fight for every law, every safeguard, every institution, every story. You must know how dangerous it is to suffer even the tiniest cut. This is why I say to us all: we must hold the line.

This is what many westerners, for whom democracy seems a given, need to learn from us. What you do matters in this present moment of the past, when memory can be so easily altered. Please ask yourself the same question my team and I ask every day: What are *you* willing to sacrifice for the truth?

This is an edited extract from *How to Stand Up to a Dictator* (WH Allen). Join Maria Ressa in conversation with the Guardian's editor-in-chief, Katharine Viner, on 21 November. Book a [Guardian Live ticket](#) at [membership.theguardian.com](#)

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Amal Clooney ... ‘If Maria, a US citizen and a Nobel peace laureate, can be locked up for doing her work, what chance is there for others?’ Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

Amal Clooney

‘Maria’s legacy will be felt for generations’

When you think of a superhero, you may not imagine a 5ft 2in woman with a pen in her hand. But today, journalists operating in authoritarian countries need superpowers.

They face daily threats to their reputation, their freedom, and – in some places – their life.

To say that [Maria Ressa](#) fights against the odds is an understatement. In an autocracy, a journalist’s opponent is the state – which makes policy, controls the police, hires the prosecutors and readies the prisons. It has an army of bots active online to vilify and undermine anyone deemed an opponent. It has the power to take down broadcasters and online sites. Most important: it has a need to control the message in order to survive. Its existence depends on ensuring there is only one side to every story.

As a famous philosopher once said, there is no greater tyranny than that which is perpetrated under the shield of the law and in the name of justice. Yet under President Duterte, the Philippine government did not hesitate to use legal tools to try to intimidate perceived opponents. The authorities revoked Maria's media licence and filed civil suits that threaten to bankrupt her. She faces a barrage of bogus prosecutions that threaten her with life behind bars.

Not because she has committed any crime – but because the leaders in her country do not want to hear criticism. So she has a choice: toe the line and be safe, or risk everything to do her job. She has not hesitated to choose the latter.

Maria's struggle is one that defines our times

Maria's struggle is one that defines our times. Data gathered in the last few years show that more journalists all over the world are being imprisoned and killed than at any time since records began. And there are, today, more autocracies in the world than there are democracies.

This is why Maria refuses to leave the country, and is determined to defend the charges against her. She knows that an independent voice like hers is always valuable, but becomes essential when others are silent. She is holding up the ceiling for anyone else who dares to speak. Because if Maria, a US citizen and a Nobel Peace laureate, can be locked up for doing her work, what chance is there for others?

Elie Wiesel warned us that there may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest. Maria's legacy will be felt for generations – because she never failed to protest, to try to bend the arc of history towards justice. And when young Filipino students study history, they will find that the first Filipino person ever to be awarded the Nobel peace prize was a courageous journalist determined to tell the truth. I hope, for the sake of future generations, they will be inspired by her example.

- How to Stand Up to a Dictator by Maria Ressa (Ebury, £20). To support The Guardian and Observer, order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply.

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Ex-US president tries to reclaim the unhinged ‘stable genius’ as a joke –
and a small part of me thinks good luck to him



Donald Trump said he is ‘very busy and looking to the future’ on his social media platform, Truth Social. Photograph: Stephen Maturen/Getty Images

Sat 12 Nov 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Sat 12 Nov 2022 01.20 EST

Monday

In among the serious analysis of the US midterms this week, a small nugget of pure joy.

“It’s all over,” says a friend, calling from her desk at the heart of the evil empire.

“What?”

“The New York Post has dropped Trump.”

There it is: [on the front page](#) of Murdoch’s New York tabloid, Trump’s face superimposed on to a picture of Humpty Dumpty, alongside the words, “Don (who couldn’t build a wall) had a great fall – can all the GOP’s men put the party back together again?”

Hmmm. What it lacks in sense, scansion, or the acknowledgment that Republican women exist, it makes up for in mockery and the certainty it'll drive Trump round the bend. Murdoch, moving to stand squarely behind Ron DeSantis, celebrated the Florida governor's election win with the splash "[DeFuture](#)" – the first in what we must assume will be a long series of similarly constructed DePuns.



Rupert Murdoch's New York Post is now squarely behind Florida governor Ron DeSantis. Photograph: Crystal Vander Weit/AP

Trump reacted on Truth Social, the social media platform with an apparent user of one, with his usual combination of defensiveness and random capitalisation. "For those many people that are being fed the fake narrative that I am Angry about the Midterms, don't believe it. I am not at all angry, did a great job (I wasn't the one running!), and am very busy looking into the future. Remember, I am a 'Stable Genius.'" This is one of those infinitely weird examples of Trump trying to reclaim as a joke something unhinged said in earnest, although a small part of me thinks good luck to the man. In Trump vs Murdoch, my money's on the Digger.

Tuesday

I receive a \$2,000 bill from a New York hospital and call my insurers to politely enquire wtf. It takes years of living in the US to learn the exact phrasing required to challenge the endless stream of refused claims. In this case – calmly, in a tone more tender and endearing than any I have used on my children – I murmur a chain of words that will have the desired effect while quelling my rage.

“This claim has been miscoded on your end,” I say sweetly, as if into a lover’s ear. “It was diagnostic, not routine and as such falls under the auspices of the benefit schedule for follow-up referrals.” I sigh, as if contemplating life’s endless wonder, which, in all of humanity, only me and this helpful man in the call centre understand. “If you could send it up to the escalation team I’d be incredibly grateful.” It’s as close to begging as I can decently get.

There are other phrases; the “loyalty discount” you must know to ask for to lower your renewal quote; the phrase “put me on the do not call list”, which, by law in the US – but only *if you use that exact wording* – ensures that the scores of insurance brokers calling during open enrolment are compelled to stop the harassment.

Most importantly, you must learn to recognise the terrible danger lurking in the innocuous-sounding phrase “limited benefit plan”. This plan, which will cost half the amount you’re currently paying – with the promise of vision and dental! – is in reality a “wellness policy” that covers you for jack shit in the event of a medical emergency. Get out your magnifying glass, because there it is at the bottom of the page: should you and your family wind up in the hospital, you will be responsible for “the first \$17,000 in expenses”.

Wednesday

How much would you pay for Joan Didion’s pans? Or her ratty old sofa? Or her pens? Her pens!

It’s a poignant situation; Didion’s husband, John Gregory Dunne, and her daughter, Quintana, both died years before the writer’s death in December

last year and so her effects, right down to her scissors and paperclips, are [going under the hammer](#).



Joan Didion pictured in 2005. Photograph: MJ/Sb/Keystone USA/REX/Shutterstock

The estate sale in Hudson, New York, is scheduled for 16 November, but bidding has already opened online. If you want Didion's set of six Le Creuset saucepans, you will have to outbid the current offer of \$1,800. For her iconic, faux tortoiseshell glasses by Celine: \$3,500. A group of shells and pebbles of a kind one picks up on the beach and puts into a jar never to consider again? Current bid \$1,100.

There are solid pieces of furniture, chairs and side tables, none of which, so far, have attracted remarkable bids. The major activity of the auction is clearly focused around what might be characterised as the semi-religious items connected to Didion's writing.

For a loose collection of stationery described in the catalogue as a "group of writing ephemera" – that's the scissors and paperclips, with a single ballpoint pen thrown in – the bidding is already at \$1,300. An old typewriter, Didion's collection of books, and bits and bobs from her desk, all attract substantial bids. The biggest gap between material and symbolic

value, however, is vested in her 13 unused notebooks. Whoever has bid \$2,200 on these blank pages is clearly hoping, with the kind of delusional fervour Didion spent her career dismantling, that once the spines have been cracked, her spirit will move them.

Thursday

For any women suppressing flashbacks to netball skirts and PE knickers, cheering news from Wimbledon this week, which is [moving to expand](#) the range of allowable underwear for players on the women's tour. For years, female players have complained to the Lawn Tennis Association that extending the all-white dress code to players' underwear puts undue pressure on women playing while they have their periods. In an interview last week, Judy Murray spelled it out: "If you are wearing all white and then possibly have a leak while you're playing. I cannot think of a much more traumatic experience than that."



Campaigners from Address the Dress Code protest outside Wimbledon against its all-white dress code in July. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

She's right. For many of us, being made to prance around the gym in tiny navy skirts and big knickers when you had your period was among the top anxiety-inducing experiences of high school. Make that outfit white, change

the venue to Centre Court, and it's a category of nightmare up there with public nudity or being forced to do standup.

Friday

I order a book of children's stories by Oscar Wilde, remembering how much I loved them as a child and forgetting the Christian allegory at the end of the Selfish Giant. It baffles my children, who have received no religious instruction, either at home or at school. Awkwardly, I try to explain the crucifixion.

"Why did he die?" says my daughter.

"He –"

"What?" Ugh.

"He –"

"What?!"

A long sigh. "He died for our sins. I mean, that's the gist of it." The cult of Didion would've been an easier sell.

Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).

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OpinionCop27

The 1.5C climate target is dead – to prevent total catastrophe, Cop27 must admit it

[Bill McGuire](#)

Acknowledging that climate breakdown is unavoidable is key to making fossil-fuel companies and governments take action



Activists from the Nuclear for Climate movement at the Cop27 climate summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, 11 November 2022. Photograph: Mohamed Abd El Ghany/Reuters

Sat 12 Nov 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 12 Nov 2022 08.09 EST

In his Cop27 speech this week, [our will-he-go, won't-he-go](#) prime minister said that stopping the planet dangerously overheating was still within our grasp, leaving many wondering just what planet he was on.

According to Rishi Sunak, last year's Cop26 climate conference in Glasgow was all about [keeping alive the possibility](#) of preventing the global average temperature rise since the [Industrial Revolution](#) from climbing above 1.5C. That is "alive", as in connected to a drip, in a coma and suffering cardiac arrest every few hours.

One year on, the picture is even bleaker. Over the course of the past 12 months, while the UK has held the Cop presidency, [only 24 nations](#) tightened plans (known as NDCs – nationally determined commitments) to cut their own emissions, while global carbon output continued to climb remorselessly. Now, surely, the goal of 1.5C must be on life support, just awaiting someone to flick the switch and wheel it off to the morgue.

I write this in my recent book, Hothouse Earth: An Inhabitant's Guide, and in the run-up to Cop27, the UN Environment Programme suggested the same when it announced that there was [no longer any credible pathway](#) to achieving the 1.5C target. But still, voices can be heard at Cop27 claiming that this is achievable – including that of the former British prime minister [Boris Johnson](#). In theory, this is correct, in the same way that someone tied to railway tracks in front of a speeding express train can, in theory, save themselves. Both are delusional.

In 2015, at Cop21 [in Paris](#) governments agreed to pursue efforts to limit the global average temperature rise to 1.5C. To say that progress made since has proceeded at a snail's pace would be an insult to molluscs. Instead, we are in a position whereby, to achieve this, emissions [would need to fall 45%](#) in the next seven and a bit years – when they are actually on track to [rise by 10%, compared with 2010 levels](#). Seven years ago, the 1.5C target seemed a sensible one. Now, it is at best, irrelevant, and at worst, dangerous. It has to go.

Continuing to argue for the viability of 1.5C is misleading and raises false hopes. As such, it is vital that [Cop27](#) squashes claims that the goal is still alive. Not only this, it needs to hold up its hands and acknowledge the fact that missing this critical target represents a colossal failure for the whole Cop apparatus.

In retrospect, it is clear that having a specific target, rather than fighting to stop every fraction of a degree in temperature rise, has actually been counterproductive. There is a perennial problem with targets, and that is that they are always still reachable – until they aren't. In this way, they can be used to justify inertia right up until it is too late. And this is exactly how fossil-fuel corporations, world leaders and others have used 1.5C – as a get-out-of-jail card [to justify inaction](#) on emissions. Continuing to present this temperature threshold as an attainable target provides a fig leaf for business as usual. Take it away, and this dangerous jiggery-pokery is exposed for all to see.

Only if Cop acknowledges that 1.5C is now lost, and that dangerous, all-pervasive climate breakdown is unavoidable, will corporations and governments no longer have anywhere to hide, and no safety net that they can use as an excuse to do little or nothing. Only if they finally lay bare the bankruptcy of efforts to achieve the goals of Cop21 will we be able to move on to acknowledging that every 0.1C temperature rise needs fighting for.

We also have to accept that we are going to crash through the 1.5C climate breakdown guardrail, so that we are forced to face the brutal reality of desperately challenging climate conditions in the decades to come. This means facing the fact that we have no choice but to adapt rapidly to a very different world, one that our grandparents would struggle to recognise.

The failure of the Cop process to avert the arrival of Hothouse Earth conditions doesn't mean that it's all over, that the battle is lost. Far from it. Above and beyond 1.5C, each and every 0.1C rise in global average temperature that we can forestall becomes critical; every ton of carbon dioxide or methane we can prevent being emitted becomes a vital win. Knowing that the world we are leaving to our kids and their kids is certain to be grim, we should be motivated to do everything in our power to ensure that we don't hurtle past the 2C marker, too, allowing global heating to continue until wholesale climate mayhem becomes unavoidable.

As for 1.5C, we may well get a taste of what is in store for us in the next year or two. Over the past five years, the [average global temperature rise](#) – compared with 1850-1900, which is often used as a benchmark for the pre-

industrial period – was a shade under 1.3C. Despite [La Niña](#) conditions – which typically bring cooler temperatures – prevailing in the tropical Pacific in 2022, it is likely that this year will still prove to be one of the warmest on record. If La Niña gives way to hotter, so-called El Niño, conditions – as it often does – either later next year or in 2024, we may well see an increase in global temperatures so that the 1.5C mark will be threatened or even matched.

One would hope that, even if it is temporary, hitting this fateful milestone will at last galvanise the action on emissions that is needed to stop a perilous future becoming a cataclysmic one.

- Bill McGuire is professor emeritus of geophysical and climate hazards at UCL and the author of [Hothouse Earth: An Inhabitant's Guide](#)

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[Opinion](#)**Matt Hancock**

What's more cringey than a Matt Hancock bushtucker trial? The Tory MPs voting for it

[Marina Hyde](#)



These MPs have found their imaginary backbones only when he is washed up. That tells you everything about their calibre



‘Matt Hancock is a fugitive from self-reflection; a flight risk from the truth.’ Photograph: ITV/REX/Shutterstock

Fri 11 Nov 2022 09.41 EST Last modified on Sat 12 Nov 2022 00.20 EST

What drives Matt Hancock? What propels the erstwhile health secretary to fly home after getting [trench foot in Thailand](#) on *Celebrity SAS: Who Dares Wins*, then to almost immediately fly out to the Australian rainforest, pausing only to update his out-of-office bounceback in case West Suffolk constituents want to contact him about boring little things like their problems? Is Hancock himself right when he answers that question by identifying as “an adventurer”: the hero of his own story – and perhaps yet the world’s?

No. No, he is not. To watch *I’m A Celebrity’s* [latest campmate](#) for more than two minutes is to know what was already abundantly clear from his career as a minister: Matt Hancock is driven by the urge to resist self-knowledge at all costs. Matt Hancock is a fugitive from self-reflection; a flight risk from the truth; a guy compelled to loudly self-narrate in order to drown out the real story. There is a chasm between thinking you’re a good person who made mistakes, and accepting that things were always going to end the way they did because of who you are. Matt Hancock’s greatest fear is not snakes, as he told the show producers, but of crossing that chasm.

Thus we learn from Matt that it is only possible for him to be on the show at all because the government has regained stability. “Rishi’s great,” Hancock explained reassuringly to one campmate. “He’ll be fine.” At this point I reflexively sought to cover my eyes with my hands, only to realise they were already there. Yet they were somehow insufficient. No disrespect to ITV, who have pulled off one of the greatest reality TV bookings of all time, but they should provide a second set of hands for all viewers.

You don’t so much want to hide behind a sofa as get an entire DFS superstore between you and the [various Hancockisms](#) unfolding on screen. Asked by another contestant to give an example of a conspiracy theory, Hancock claimed: “One said Bill Gates and I conspired to create the vaccine for Covid in order to put microchips in all the vaccines in order to control people.”

Wut? I think we’ve all heard the Bill Gates one, but has any human heard a variant where the microchipping is a double-act masterplan cooked up by the Microsoft founder/fifth richest person in the world and ... [Matt Hancock](#)? This feels like a version of the Kennedy assassination conspiracies where Matt Hancock claims some people believe the second gunman on the grassy knoll was Matt Hancock. Or Matt Hancock claiming there’s a 9/11 theory that Matt Hancock melted steel beams. It didn’t happen – in any sense.

Matt Hancock would like you to think he is a good sport, much more than he would like you to consider the fact he has three children: two teenagers and one towards the end of primary school. Last year, when he learned the story of his affair was going to break, that youngest child was got out of bed and brought downstairs to be told the news along with the others, followed by the revelation that Hancock was leaving the family home.

In general, I think it best never to even mention the children of politicians – but in this case, it feels like the entire point. How can a parent who put them through the pain and indignities of [“that” photo](#) and its immense fallout – barely 18 months ago – now be actively choosing to make an arse of himself on an immensely high-profile ITV reality format night after night? Surely his children would have preferred him simply not to have done this? Who could possibly be so sociopathic?

The answer, yet again, is Matt Hancock. Those of us not related to him, though, should be glad he did sign up to the show – because it’s already producing a spectacle of shameful rarity. Namely: an emotional public debate with a few real people who lived through his failures. (As you’ll recall, tens of thousands of real people ended up needlessly dying through them.)

Two and a half years after the start of the pandemic, it says something about the utter absurdity of our politics that the ONLY place we have seen even mild confrontation of this type happen is on a jungle-based light entertainment format. Our pandemic overlords’ [lack of accountability](#) to people who aren’t fellow politicians has been so total that we’re now reduced to hoping ex-con Boy George or tax dodger Chris Moyles sticks it to Hancock and gets some answers.

I’m sorry that they have to be celebrities, and I’m sorry that they end up doing it between complaining about their food rations, but in the absence of anything other than the odd defensive select committee appearance by Hancock, let the record state that this was all the ordinary people of this country have thus far seen by way of a reckoning.

Which brings me to the other horror show on offer: Conservative MPs queueing up to pour scorn on Hancock now. Have you clocked this tendency? It’s exemplified by an actual secretary of state, Chris Heaton-Harris, repeatedly going on telly yesterday to smugly claim that “hundreds of MPs and peers” were downloading the I’m a Celebrity app and [voting for Hancock](#) to face unpleasant trials.

To which the only possible response is: oh NOW you’re voting against him, is it? Sorry, but where were you lot before? Where were you lot every time it turned out one of Hancock’s mates had got a [PPE contract](#)? Where were you when he threw “a protective ring” around care homes, which was an odd way to talk about discharging untested residents from hospital back into them, resulting in a [vast death toll](#)? Where were you when he [lied](#) about this? Where were you when he lied about the fact there had been a [PPE shortage](#)? Where were you when Dominic Cummings was writing to Boris Johnson about Hancock’s [hopelessness](#), saying “I think we are negligently

killing the most vulnerable who we are supposed to be shielding and I am extremely worried about it”? Where were you for any of this? Where were you when it mattered?

The fact that these people have discovered what they imagine is a backbone *only* when Matt Hancock is washed up and doing reality TV tells you everything about their calibre and conviction. MPs who troop obediently through the government lobbies for any old shit currently imagine themselves to have the moral high ground because they’re voting on an app for Matt Hancock to face a bushtucker trial. DO ME A FAVOUR.

I can’t think of anything more pathetic and depressing – it’s literally worse than Hancock going on the show. So spare me so much as one further barb about Hancock from the people who kept shtum when it was a matter of life or death. They’ve got even fewer balls than the kangaroo he’ll be tucking into.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist
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[OpinionUS midterm elections 2022](#)

The Democrats' midterms performance shows how Trump – and his imitators – can be beaten

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



Joe Biden's party abandoned timidity and neutered the Republican right. Labour should take heed



Joe Biden celebrates the Democrats' unexpectedly good results in the midterms at an event in Washington DC, 10 November 2022. Photograph: Samuel Corum/Getty Images

Fri 11 Nov 2022 13.34 EST First published on Fri 11 Nov 2022 11.37 EST

Politics has brought so much angst in recent years that when hope comes along we should savour it. This week delivered a dollop of unexpectedly good news from the US, news that should encourage, and perhaps instruct, those who oppose the menace of nationalist populism the world over – even here in Britain.

True, the struggle against that danger has enjoyed mixed fortunes this autumn. Jair Bolsonaro was ejected in Brazil, only for an Israeli election to seal the comeback of Benjamin Netanyahu two days later. But the message from Tuesday's US midterms is clear: populists can be defeated.

American voters had made that point two years ago, when they showed Donald Trump the door, but few thought they would do it again this time. The talk was of a Republican “red wave”, with both precedent and polls pointing to heavy losses for an incumbent Democratic party saddled with rising inflation and an unpopular president. This was not just a media invention: with [only the odd exception](#), senior Democrats were braced for

defeat. Instead, the party won several of the closest Senate races and kept losses in the House of Representatives so low that even if Republicans do take eventual control of that body – the votes are still being counted – it will not be with the emphatic majority they assumed.

It turns out that, even when Trump himself is not on the ballot, sufficient numbers of Americans will reject Trumpist candidates who have plunged deep into unhinged conspiracy theory and contempt for democracy, and they will defend their rights. There are lessons to learn here, for [Democrats](#) looking to 2024 most obviously, but also for those beyond the US battling their own versions of the Trumpist peril.

A first takeaway is that such an effort requires great discipline. The anti-Netanyahu forces in Israel lacked it: had several small opposition parties put aside their differences and formed alliances, they would have won enough seats to deprive the former PM of a governing majority. As it was, two of those parties [narrowly failed to clear the electoral threshold](#) to enter parliament, leaving Netanyahu smiling.

The Democrats were much more focused, exhibiting “an incredible amount of message discipline”, as the party strategist [David Shor put it to me](#), sticking to those issues where the American public agree with them and avoiding those where they are out of step. They refused to be drawn on to the terrain where Republicans wanted to fight – even leftwing candidates distanced themselves from the “defund the police” slogan – digging in instead on turf where Democrats enjoy public support, whether that be jobs, healthcare or abortion rights. The latter issue was especially galvanising, following the supreme court’s summer decision to overturn Roe v Wade and its constitutional protection of a woman’s right to terminate a pregnancy.

But Democrats also made a case that some feared would bring no electoral reward. They pressed the argument that Trumpist [Republicans](#) posed a threat to democracy itself, reminding voters that this was the first election since the attempted insurrection of 6 January 2021, an event that too many Republicans excused and for which all but a handful refused to hold the former president accountable. Above all, Democrats cast as dangerously extreme the majority of Republicans who perpetuate Trump’s big lie that the election of 2020 was stolen.

Plenty of Democrats worried that was a mistake, fretting when Joe Biden made democracy the theme of [his last major pre-election address](#). This, they warned, was too abstract an issue, of grave concern to liberal elites – to the university seminar rooms and opinion pages – but a luxury consideration for voters preoccupied with the cost of petrol. And yet the argument cut through. While those Republicans who had publicly resisted the big lie – Georgia’s governor, for example – won easily, Trumpist election-deniers fared especially badly, losing winnable contests in Pennsylvania, New Hampshire and Arizona. Moderate might be a dirty word to the Republican faithful, but extremist is a toxic label to the wider electorate. Strikingly, 56% of those American voters who describe themselves as moderate [voted for Democrats](#).

There is encouragement here for anti-populists the world over. Of course, each context is different and few nations will have witnessed proof of the lethal danger posed by nationalist populism as vividly undeniable as the attempted coup of 6 January. Nevertheless, the Democrats’ experience suggests one can be too wary of issues lazily dismissed as of concern solely to a liberal elite.

In Britain, Labour has multiple reasons for steering clear of Brexit, but among the weakest is the notion that it’s of interest only to the “remoaner” chattering classes. Brexit is having an impact on people’s jobs, businesses, education, bills and basic freedom to move. In a way, it has more practical relevance to Britons’ daily lives than the question of democracy has to Americans’. And yet the opposition is shy of touching it. This week’s Democratic successes make a case for the abandonment of such timidity. The Democrats were brave, and it paid off.

There’s more advice contained in the US results. For any party of progress serious about winning, the support of women matters enormously: exit polls confirmed that abortion rights trailed just a few points behind inflation as the issue of greatest concern to voters and, as [one analyst noted](#): “Abortion voters supported Democrats by a larger margin than inflation voters supported Republicans.” Unsurprisingly, those “abortion voters” included more women than men.

Young voters were crucial, too. While the over-45s favoured Republicans, the under-30s backed the Democrats by a [staggering 28-point margin](#). Biden's moves to [shrink student debt](#) deserve some credit for that. And, as always, minorities were an essential part of the Democratic coalition, though the drift rightward of Hispanic voters – most noticeably in Florida, where they helped Ron DeSantis win a landslide – is a warning to progressive parties everywhere that they cannot take the support of minority communities for granted. They have to earn it, demonstrating that they understand – and celebrate – the aspiration to move up and out as well as any conservative.

So no shortage of lessons from America. Of course, the differences between there and everywhere else are obvious and nothing reads across precisely. Except for one thing. What the US election proved once more is that the conventional wisdom is often wrong, that fatalism is always wrong – and that, every now and then, politics can turn out right.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist. Listen to his Politics Weekly America podcast [here](#)

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2022.11.12 - Around the world

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Iran

Thousands of Iranians protest in south-east to mark ‘Bloody Friday’

Video apparently shows crowds marching in Zahedan to condemn 30 September massacre of activists



Protesters marching in Zahedan city, Sistan and Baluchistan province.
Photograph: UGC/AFP/Getty Images

Reuters

Fri 11 Nov 2022 15.37 ESTLast modified on Fri 11 Nov 2022 16.05 EST

Thousands of Iranians protested in the restive south-east to mark a 30 September crackdown by security forces known as “Bloody Friday” as the country’s rulers faced persistent nationwide unrest.

Amnesty International said security forces unlawfully killed at least 66 people in September after firing at protesters in Zahedan, capital of

flashpoint Sistan and Baluchistan province. Authorities said dissidents had provoked the clashes.

A video posted by the widely followed 1500tasvir activist Twitter account purported to show thousands marching again in Zahedan on Friday. Reuters could not verify the authenticity of the footage.

Another video that 1500tasvir said was from the town of Khash in the south-east showed protesters trampling and breaking a street sign carrying the name of top general [Qassem Suleimani, who in 2020 was assassinated by a US drone attack](#) in Iraq.

Nov. 11, Khash, Sistan-Baluchestan: people trampled upon and destroyed a sign naming a boulevard after Qasem Soleimani. [#MahsaAmini#IranRevoLution2022pic.twitter.com/HjaBYFYv0u](#)

— 1500tasvir_en (@1500tasvir_en) [November 11, 2022](#)

Public anger before the 30 September shooting was fuelled by allegations that a police officer raped a teenage girl. Authorities have said the case is being investigated.

Anti-government demonstrations also erupted that month after the death of a Kurdish woman, Mahsa Amini, who had been detained by morality police for allegedly flouting the Islamic Republic's strict dress code imposed on women.

Nationwide, demonstrations have since turned into a popular revolt supported by students, doctors, lawyers, workers and athletes, with fury directed mostly at the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Women have been at the forefront of the protests, with many removing their hijabs. On Friday, video emerged of the archer Parmida Ghasemi removing her hijab during an awards ceremony in Tehran. In the video, Ghasemi, standing along with other athletes on a podium, lets her headscarf fall while

unseen people in the audience clap and shout “bravo”. The athlete next to her tries to pull up Ghasemi’s scarf, but she moves her head away. Reuters could not verify the authenticity of the video.

The government, which has blamed Amini’s death on preexisting medical problems, has said the protests are fomented by Iran’s foreign enemies, including the US, and has vowed to reestablish order.

It accuses armed separatists of perpetrating violence and seeking to destabilise the Islamic Republic.

Some of the worst unrest has been in areas home to minority ethnic groups with longstanding grievances against the state, including Sistan and Baluchistan and Kurdistan.

Sistan and Baluchistan, near Iran’s south-eastern border with Pakistan and Afghanistan, is home to a Baluch minority with an estimated 2 million people. They have faced discrimination and repression for decades, according to human rights groups.

Iran has denied there is discrimination. The region is one of the country’s poorest and has been a hotbed of tension where Iranian security forces have been attacked by Baluch militants.

The activist Hrana news agency said 330 protesters had been killed in the unrest as of Thursday, including 50 minors. Thirty-nine members of the security forces had also been killed, while nearly 15,100 people have been arrested, it said.

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[Journalist safety](#)

Foreign Office asks Iran to explain alleged death threats to UK-based reporters

Deputy ambassador summoned after Met police warns of credible threats to journalists reporting on Iran protests



Demonstration in London last week in solidarity with Mahsa Amini protests in Iran. Photograph: Guy Bell/Rex/Shutterstock

[Patrick Wintour](#) *Diplomatic editor*

Fri 11 Nov 2022 13.27 ESTFirst published on Fri 11 Nov 2022 12.46 EST

The Foreign Office has summoned the Iranian deputy ambassador over allegations that two London-based journalists have faced death threats from Tehran-backed agents over the reporting of the country's protests.

The news channel Iran International took precautionary steps to protect its reporters after being informed by the Metropolitan police earlier this week that it [believes there were credible threats](#) to the journalists' lives. The two reporters have not been named nor the precise threats detailed.

The summons came as the EU prepares to impose sanctions on Monday on a further 30 Iranian officials seen as being at the heart of the human rights abuses in the country. But plans to label the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist group, canvassed by Germany, are not likely to be taken up.

Explaining the diplomatic summons, the foreign secretary, [James Cleverly](#), said that “the UK will always stand up to threats by foreign nations. We do not tolerate threats to life and intimidation of any kind towards journalists, or any individual living in the UK.”

Iran International, BBC Persian and a third channel, Manoto, have been at the forefront of the reporting of [the Iranian protests](#), often relying on video footage sent from mobile phone cameras. The protests were sparked by the death of a 22-year-old Kurdish woman, Mahsa Amini, but spread into a wider uprising over repression in Iran.

Partly due to the censorship imposed on the Iranian media, external satellite channels are disproportionately watched inside Iran, prompting the Iranian government to resort to internet shutdowns to prevent access to the channels.

In a statement earlier this week, an Iran International spokesperson said: “These are state-sponsored threats to journalists in the UK. It is truly shocking that independent journalists on British soil are receiving credible threats to their lives in an effort to prevent free, uncensored information reaching the people of Iran.

“Britain is the home of free speech. We stand as part of that tradition, proud to serve the 85 million people of Iran with the information they cannot

receive at home. The IRGC cannot be allowed to silence a free press in the UK.”

The Metropolitan police formally notified both journalists that these threats represented an imminent, credible and significant risk to their lives and those of their families. Other journalists at the station have also been notified by the police of threats.

Inside Iran, more than 60 journalists have been arrested, according to Amnesty International, with some individuals alleged to have sent videos to UK-based Farsi news channels being described as agents of foreign powers.

The authorities accuse the UK-based channels of pumping out propaganda designed to discredit the regime, and claim they have been exaggerating the scale of the protests and the subsequent repression.

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Iranians protested in the south-eastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan on Friday to mark a 30 September crackdown by security forces known as Bloody Friday, as nationwide demonstrations calling for the end of clerical rule persisted.

Amnesty International said security forces unlawfully killed at least 66 people, including children, after firing live ammunition, metal pellets and teargas at protesters in the provincial capital, Zahedan, a flashpoint in the unrest gripping Iran.

The protests are making the [chances of a revived nuclear deal](#) much less likely. Iran has agreed to a visit by the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), this month to start giving the answers the agency and its 35-nation board have long called for on the origin of uranium particles found at three sites, an agency report said.

Diplomats say they expect western powers to push for a resolution calling on Iran to cooperate at next week's quarterly meeting of the IAEA's board of governors.

Discussions are also under way among western powers on whether the time has come to declare that the talks to revive the nuclear deal are at an end, a position that would then raise questions about how to control Iran's potential nuclear programme.

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[Foreign policy](#)

[Analysis](#)

Rishi Sunak faces first major foreign policy test at G20 in Bali

[Jessica Elgot](#) Deputy political editor

PM's stance on global issues not fully known but he will be keen for Russia not to be seen as calling the shots



A ceremony ahead of the G20 meeting in Bali, Indonesia. Photograph: Antara Foto/Reuters

Sat 12 Nov 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 12 Nov 2022 02.02 EST

When [Rishi Sunak](#) steps off the plane in Bali for what will be his first major diplomatic test as prime minister, there is a forecast for heavy rain on the Indonesian island paradise and a veil of gloom over the prospects for any agreement between G20 leaders.

The longest shadow has been cast by [Russia](#) – and that country's membership of the G20 means that British officials acknowledge it will be nearly impossible for the leaders to agree a communique at all.

It is likely to be written off as a diplomatic failure, thus raising questions about how the group itself can continue to function meaningfully. World leaders will not even take part in an official “family photo” when they meet at the summit due to widespread discomfort at Russia's presence.

Nothing can be agreed that would condemn Russia, because Russia would never agree to condemn itself, but the invasion of Ukraine has sent shockwaves through the global economy, affecting food and energy supplies worldwide, meaning that even agreeing a resolution on those pressing topics looks very difficult.

For months, Moscow has kept open the possible presence of Vladimir Putin himself at the summit, but officials have now confirmed he will not attend. Sergei Lavrov, his longstanding foreign minister, will be there in his place, but Lavrov himself is not averse to some dramatics, [staging a walkout](#) at the G20 foreign ministers meeting in July.

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has been invited to address the summit virtually, but has previously said he would not take part if Putin was present.



India's S. Jaishankar and Russia's Sergei Lavrov after talks in Moscow, 8 November. Photograph: Maxim Shipenkov/AFP/Getty Images

The UK, while not particularly welcoming Putin's presence, will privately acknowledge that there would have been diplomatic advantage in seeing nations give Putin the cold shoulder.

Aside from the initial intervention, G7 leaders have broadly reached a consensus that leaders should not engage with the Russian representative through the summit. It is likely to make for a very awkward dynamic.

"Obviously the prime minister is of the view that it would be right that collectively with our allies we confront any Russian official ... who attends the [G20](#) about their ongoing illegal war and use the same messages we have been using in one voice for so many months now," a No 10 spokesperson said.

Sunak's own views on foreign policy remain something of a mystery and have always been framed in the past via his role as the chancellor. He is said by some of his critics to be inclined to take a softer approach to China.

No 10 sources say Sunak's key objective is to reiterate the UK's support for Ukraine, especially because of the scale of recent political upheaval in the

UK and the extraordinary reputation that Boris Johnson enjoyed among Ukrainians. He is set to use his first intervention at the initial leaders' meeting on Tuesday to address Russia's invasion directly.

There is also the domestic politics – allies of Johnson had briefed that Sunak had been the one who sounded notes of caution as chancellor on Russian sanctions during the first invasion, and Sunak is keen to put any doubts to bed.

UK negotiators have not given up hope of agreeing a communique, despite the fact that none have been agreed for any of the meetings in the buildup to the summit, but there will be an attempt to build something on the global financial crisis and on issues such as technology and the aftermath of the pandemic.

The frustration is that if one is not agreed, it will be a tacit acknowledgment that Russia is able to hold back making progress on any global issue among the group.

The first session poses a major challenge, particularly for European economies, because the focus will be on energy and food, both topics that are almost impossible to reach any kind of consensus on because of the effect the war on Ukraine is having on energy prices and on grain.

The prime minister is hoping for at least some broad agreed words on the global economy and inflation that he can use for domestic purposes. Sunak will fly home just hours before his autumn statement, where his chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, is expected to unveil £60bn of cuts and tax rises, in the aftermath of his predecessor Liz Truss's damaging mini-budget. The UK has been seen around the world as a cautionary tale about how to approach inflation – something Sunak is very keen to correct.

Most important are likely to be the bilaterals with world leaders on the margins of the summit and there is hope he will see the US president, Joe Biden, though the focus for the Americans is likely to be on China.

No 10 has suggested that Sunak will prioritise meeting Indo-Pacific leaders, having met a number of European leaders already in Sharm el-Sheikh. That

is likely to mean Narendra Modi of India and the new Australian prime minister, Anthony Albanese.

With the Australians, there is the AUKUS defence deal to be discussed as well as trade. The UK is keen to progress joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), so Sunak could spend time with the Koreans, Japanese and Canadians.

Negotiators failed to get the “deal for Diwali” done with India, partly down to the political chaos in the UK, and No 10 is keen to give that a new push. There are also potential bilateral energy deals to be discussed, including with the US and the Europeans.

Sunak and other leaders, including the IMF’s Kristalina Georgieva, are likely to repeatedly stress the foundations of the G20 in the 2008 economic crisis. The leaders who Sunak meets for the first time will be well aware of the parlous state of the UK’s economy and the turmoil in the Conservative party – not the strongest position for a prime minister to introduce himself on the world stage.

But he will not be alone among those in [Bali](#) where domestic economic pressures are the highest on the agenda – the global economy is facing an even tougher scenario than 2008 with a third of the world predicted to be in recession next year.

But with one of its major players behind so much of the turmoil, it is hard to see how leaders can find that renewed sense of purpose for the group.

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G20

World leaders to forgo G20 ‘family photo’ over Russia’s presence

Despite Vladimir Putin saying he will not be at summit, attendees do not want to pose alongside deputy Sergei Lavrov



The Indonesian-hosted G20 will be Rishi Sunak’s first introduction to many world leaders. Photograph: Adek Berry/AFP/Getty

[Jessica Elgot](#) *Deputy political editor*

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Fri 11 Nov 2022 13.45 ESTFirst published on Fri 11 Nov 2022 13.24 EST

World leaders will not take part in an official “family photo” when they meet at the G20 in Bali next week because of widespread discomfort at Russia’s presence at the summit.

It is traditional for world leaders to stand together for an opening photograph at the start of summits, usually the source of interesting

dynamics as leaders rub shoulders and greet one another in public. But there will be no photograph at the Indonesian-hosted summit, which starts next Tuesday – even though Russia’s president, [Vladimir Putin](#), has said he will not attend.

His long-serving deputy, Sergei Lavrov, will attend in his place. Lavrov has caused dramatic scenes at earlier summits by walking out at the meeting of foreign ministers after telling his counterparts that Russia’s invasion of [Ukraine](#) was not responsible for a global hunger crisis and that sanctions designed to isolate Russia amounted to a declaration of war.

During the Conservative leadership contest, [Rishi Sunak](#) had said he would not attend if Putin were present, though his position has softened since he entered No 10 with the G20 set to be his first major introduction to many world leaders.

There might have been pressure for other leaders not to attend if Putin had decided to fly to [Bali](#). Western finance ministers walked out of an April G20 meeting to show their opposition to Russia’s presence.

Russia’s membership of the [G20](#) means that British officials acknowledge it will be nearly impossible for the leaders to agree a communique at the end of the summit, and none has been agreed at previous finance or foreign affairs meetings.

Ukraine’s president, [Volodymyr Zelenskiy](#), has been invited to address the summit virtually. He had said he would not take part if Putin was present.

Sunak will use his first intervention at the initial leaders’ meeting on Tuesday to address Russia’s invasion directly and emphasise support for Ukraine.

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Last year's G20 in Rome had an unusual dynamic for the group photograph, with the absence of so many leaders, partly due to lingering Covid concerns. [China](#), Japan, South Africa and Mexico all skipped an in-person appearance. Other ministers attended in their places and leaders stood safe distances apart rather than shoulder to shoulder.

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Economic growth (GDP)

Jeremy Hunt warns of ‘tough road ahead’ as UK economy shrinks

GDP fall of 0.2% for three months to September gives bleak picture in run-up to autumn statement

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The chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, says the ‘fundamental resilience of the British economy is cause for optimism in the long run’. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

[Richard Partington](#) *Economics correspondent*

[@RJPartington](#)

Fri 11 Nov 2022 09.30 EST First published on Fri 11 Nov 2022 02.02 EST

Jeremy Hunt has warned of a “tough road ahead” after Britain’s economy shrank in the three months to September, in what is expected to be the beginning of a lengthy recession.

In its first estimate of growth in the third quarter, the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#), presented a bleak picture of the economy before next week’s autumn statement from the chancellor.

Gross domestic product fell by 0.2% in the third quarter as households and businesses struggled with soaring inflation, while there was also a hit to activity as businesses closed for the extra bank holiday for the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II.

The [Bank of England](#) expects the latest GDP figures to be the start of a prolonged UK recession – as rising interest rates and the cost of living take their toll on activity – lasting until the end of next year. Another negative growth figure for the final three months of 2022 would confirm a technical recession. The economy grew by 0.2% in the second quarter of 2022.

Hunt said that the world economy was facing a period of “extreme turbulence” but that the “fundamental resilience of the British economy is cause for optimism in the long run”.

He added: “I am under no illusion that there is a tough road ahead – one which will require extremely difficult decisions to restore confidence and economic stability. But to achieve long-term, sustainable growth, we need to grip inflation, balance the books and get debt falling. There is no other way.”

Activity in the service sector ground to a halt, with zero growth over the quarter, driven by a fall in consumer spending as households came under mounting pressure from the cost of living crisis.

Jeremy Hunt says it is 'disappointing but not unexpected' that UK could fall into recession – video

Growth in the construction sector slowed, while factory output slumped because of a sharp decline in manufacturing as some businesses continued to struggle with supply chain difficulties and shortages of key materials.

The economy shrank by 0.6% in September alone as shops and other businesses closed their doors as a mark of respect, with about half of the fall attributed to the mourning period, with the widespread shutdown leading to a sharper decline than usual for a bank holiday.

[UK GDP for September](#)

Alpesh Paleja, the lead economist at the Confederation of British Industry lobby group, said that even accounting for the extra bank holiday it was clear that underlying activity had weakened. However, he warned the chancellor against launching an austerity drive that would choke off growth further.

“A weaker growth outlook and persistently high inflation will make for some difficult decisions on economic policy. The autumn statement must learn the lessons of the 2010s,” he said.

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The snapshot comes amid growing fears over the strength of the economy as households rein in spending amid the [highest rates of inflation since the early 1980s](#), alongside a dramatic rise in mortgage costs for some families after Liz Truss's disastrous mini-budget.

The ONS said there had been a sharp decline in the buying, selling and renting of property in September, with a 0.9% drop. Figures this week from Halifax, the UK's biggest mortgage lender, showed a [fall in house prices last month](#) after the ill-fated mini-budget drove up borrowing costs.

Rachel Reeves, the shadow chancellor, said the latest figures represented “another page of failure in the Tories’ record on growth” after a decade of underinvestment and widening inequality. “The reality of this failure is family finances crunched, British businesses left behind and more anxiety for the future,” she said.

Europe's largest economies are also poised to fall into recession as soaring inflation exacerbated by Russia's war in Ukraine hits growth, with the European Commission warning that the EU economy was probably shrinking in the current quarter.

Britain is, however, lagging behind other countries as the only member of the G7 group of wealthy nations whose economy shrank in the three months to September. Britain is also the only G7 economy where quarterly GDP remains below pre-Covid levels.

James Smith, a research director at the Resolution Foundation thinktank, said the figures provided a sobering backdrop to the autumn statement. “The chancellor will need to strike a balance between putting the public finances on a sustainable footing, without making the cost-of-living crisis even worse, or hitting already stretched public services.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/nov/11/uk-heads-for-recession-as-economy-shrinks>

[UK news](#)

Kwarteng told Truss to ‘slow down’ radical measures after mini-budget

Former chancellor says he warned the then prime minister she would be out in two months if she ‘carried on like this’

Kwasi Kwarteng says he warned Liz Truss over radical reforms – video

[Nadeem Badshah](#)

Thu 10 Nov 2022 18.48 ESTFirst published on Thu 10 Nov 2022 16.40 EST

Kwasi Kwarteng has revealed he told Liz Truss to “slow down” and warned her she would “have two months” if she continued at the same rate with her radical mini-budget measures.

Kwarteng, who [was sacked as chancellor](#) last month by the then-prime minister after less than six weeks in the job, also criticised the “mad” decision to dismiss him for implementing her tax-cutting agenda.

The government’s £45bn tax cuts triggered economic turmoil, with government borrowing costs soaring, the [pound plummeting to a 37-year low](#) and the Bank of England intervening to rescue [£65bn worth of pension funds](#).

Truss subsequently resigned after 45 days in office, making her the [shortest-serving prime minister in UK history](#).

In his first interview since he left office, Kwarteng told TalkTV: “After the mini-budget we were going at breakneck speed and I said, you know, we should slow down, slow down.

“She said, ‘Well, I’ve only got two years’ and I said, ‘You will have two months if you carry on like this.’ And that is, I’m afraid, what happened.”

He added: “I think the prime minister was very much of the view that we needed to move things fast. But I think it was too quick.”

Kwarteng was Britain’s shortest serving chancellor since 1970 – clocking up 38 days – and was replaced by Jeremy Hunt.

He said Truss was “very emotional” when she sacked him as chancellor and added he first learned of his firing via a tweet as he travelled to a meeting in Downing Street.

Kwarteng said: “I can’t remember whether she was actually shedding tears but she was very emotional and it was a difficult thing to do.

“I think she genuinely thought that that was the right thing to buy her more time to set her premiership on the right path.

“I disagreed, obviously. I thought that if chancellors are sacked by the prime minister for doing what the prime minister campaigned on, that leaves the prime minister in a very weak position.”

Describing his thinking at that moment, he said: “This is mad. Prime ministers don’t get rid of chancellors. I think I said to her at the time: ‘This is going to last three or four weeks.’ Little did I know it was only going to be six days.”

Kwarteng added: “She can’t fire me for just implementing what she campaigned on. And, you know, we had a conversation.

“And I think it was very much the view that somehow she would survive if I took the fall on that.”

On his disastrous mini-budget in September, Kwarteng acknowledged “there was turbulence and I regret that”.

He said: “I do feel sorry actually for the people who are going through this difficult time in terms of remortgaging. I think that it is a really stressful thing to do.”

The MP for Spelthorne, Surrey, added: “I’m responsible. I’m not gonna wash my hands [of] it.

“I was chancellor of the exchequer. I was also part of the top team. But looking back, I think we could have had a much more measured approach.”

But he said that Hunt, and the new prime minister, Rishi Sunak, could not blame Truss’s government for the black hole in the nation’s finances.

“The only thing that they could possibly blame us for is the interest rates and interest rates have come down and the gilt rates have come down,” he said.

“The black hole and structural problems are already there. I mean, it wasn’t that the national debt was created by Liz Truss’s 44 days in government.”

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Smashing Pumpkins' Billy Corgan: 'I don't want my kids growing up with a has-been father'

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Billy Corgan: ‘If you want to say there’s been 172 rock stars in the last 100 years, OK, well, then I’m one of them.’ Photograph: Ali Smith/The Guardian

The rock singer talks about getting his band back on track, becoming a parent – and how he learned to stop playing the troll in interviews

Fri 11 Nov 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Nov 2022 16.28 EST

If you have ever paid attention to the [Smashing Pumpkins](#), you know that Billy Corgan is a famously self-important rock star: the type who talks at length to the press about how great he is and then complains about being misquoted. We are in a Manhattan hotel, discussing how Corgan came to realise that his lifelong pursuit of music – and the undeniable success that had come with it – had left him unfulfilled, when he says this: “I would watch people quite cleverly try to disassemble what I’d actually built. They were sort of interested in separating me from my own true narrative.”

Now, this reads like something a famously self-important rock star would say. But Corgan says it playfully, with such self-awareness that he gets away with it: suggesting that he knows this is absurd, but it’s how he feels, and actually it’s even appropriate given his stature; that he’d rather risk ridicule than minimise his feelings. Some version of this dynamic repeats

constantly over the next hour. Irony may not always be a healthy coping device, but having fun with an interview seems like the least a rock star should do. I wondered how differently many of his previously controversial quotes – [about social justice warriors](#), a pizza fast-food chain, [the Shrek soundtrack](#) – might read in the context of their delivery.

At any rate, talking like this never seriously impeded the Pumpkins in the 1990s, when they released a handful of classic records, racked up awards and had hit singles in the US and UK. The Pumpkins exemplified their “refuse to choose” Gen X milieu, flitting between noisy and tender musical styles that bridged raucous grunge and emotive indie rock. After 1995’s [hugely popular double album Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness](#), they suddenly pivoted to an electronica-inflected sound on their follow-up LP, *Adore*, a daring shift that repelled some critics but has grown in stature in the following years.



Smashing Pumpkins in 1991 ... (clockwise from left) James Iha, D'Arcy Wretzky, Jimmy Chamberlin and Billy Corgan. Photograph: Paul Natkin/Getty Images

The Smashing Pumpkins were a bold and great band. But although nobody seemed to mind the Gallagher brothers' braggadocio, something seemed to

grate when Corgan did it. Was it his incandescent baldness, a look he adopted before he turned 30? His easily parodied adenoidal bray? The fact that he wasn't "the cute one", which he was known to complain about in interviews? Whatever it was, it hung over Corgan by the time the Pumpkins broke up in 2000, and certainly when [they re-formed a few years later](#) with drummer Jimmy Chamberlin as the only other member of the original lineup. Slowly, Corgan became far more written about for the things he said and did – being [pictured grimacing on a rollercoaster](#), say – than the music he continued to make.

Corgan arrives to our interview in black jeans, a quilted jacket, a multicoloured scarf and a Chicago Cubs hat. He is dressed down from the Pumpkins' show at Madison Square Garden the previous night, where he resembled a techno vampire. Playing alongside Chamberlin and the band's original guitarist, James Iha, who rejoined in 2018, Corgan exuded a good-natured theatricality you might attribute to his ongoing investment in professional wrestling: he has owned and operated the National Wrestling Alliance since 2017, and has worked in the [business for more than a decade](#). During a performance of their latest single, Beguiled, a pantomime wrestling match took place on stage between a shirtless, muscular hunk and a barely dressed biker girl. Moreover, it seemed like Corgan was having fun.

Has his involvement with pro wrestling changed his relationship to performing? Immediately Corgan launches into a full-scale reflection about his public reputation over the years, and how he recently realised he was no longer interested in playing the villain. "I don't really see a value in it any more, honestly," he says. "In fact, I think it's the opposite: I think people need to feel inspired, and so if you want to talk about a narrative, the story for the band overall is just one of coming together and survival."

The Pumpkins are about to celebrate their 35th anniversary, and while that anniversary comes with some caveats – they split between 2000 and 2007, the lineup has fluctuated heavily (bass player D'arcy Wretzky remains on the outs) – it's hard to make a fuss when watching three-quarters of the lineup that made the LP Siamese Dream channel the explosive malcontent of its opener, [Cherub Rock](#). This is itself a wrestling trick: trusting that a

good narrative can wash away the petty details, if you tell it with enough conviction.

“I used to perceive it as sort of a funny game,” Corgan says of playing a troll in the press. “But that sort of stuff works better as it does in wrestling, when you have a hegemonic position. If you’re winning, and you’re being a heel, it’s kind of fun. But if you’re not winning, then the heel thing turns into a grating white noise, and everything that comes out of your mouth, somebody’s rolling their eyes.”

Was there a particular moment where this snapped into focus? Corgan turns matter of fact. “When you get to the point where you’re suicidal. And it’s not because the meta-narrative isn’t working; it’s just your life’s not happy, and then outside of you is this squalling noise that has no bearing to your reality, your accomplishments, to who you are as a human being. You become kind of a pin cushion.”



Corgan in 1992. Photograph: Gie Knaeps/Getty Images

Perhaps it’s not surprising that the past few years have welcomed a handful of profound changes in Corgan’s life. Now 55, he was recently engaged to his longtime girlfriend, Chloe Mendel, whom he notes – with another wry look, like one you might recall from the backseat of the video for single

1979 – he met through his divorce lawyer. (He was married to the art conservator and artist Chris Fabian from 1993 to 1997.) He and Mendel have two children, six-year-old Augustus and four-year-old Philomena. And Corgan’s father died last December, after years of health issues.

“When you start having kids, it’s like – OK, now you gotta not repeat all the mistakes that you’ve been complaining about in your songs for 20 years. Now, you got to be that guy that you wished your father was,” he says. “It has a way of sobering you up. I’ve never had any drug or alcohol issues; it was more like the classic: I guess I better grow the fuck up now.” Corgan admits, sheepishly, that it took until he was 48 for these changes to take root. “I put off adult responsibility about as long as possible, outside of work. It was always my inner rationalisation – ‘I’m working, and so everything’s fine.’ But that turned out not to be the case.”



‘When you start having kids, it’s like now you got to be the guy you wished your father was’ ...Corgan with his daughter. Photograph: Ali Smith/The Guardian

This adult responsibility has resulted in a more adult period for the re-formed Pumpkins, where everyone accepts that they’re older and that it’s a privilege still to be playing packed shows at an age when many of their peers have split up or died. “I was able to rebuild the internal health of the

band, and for the first time prioritise the things that matter – the band's inner life, not the outer life," Corgan says.

In the band's heyday, Corgan concedes he gave too much weight to his boyhood dream of being a rock star. "Music was my saviour," he says. "It was gonna fix all my problems. Suddenly, the stupid thing that happened in second grade has meaning because you're on MTV." What he found was that the bigger the Pumpkins got, the more problems accumulated – and, as the band's leader, it fell on him to solve everything. (To be fair, some of those problems were of his own devising.) "You get to the point where you realise this game only works if you participate, and part of the participation is the emotional need to prove yourself. Once you stop needing to prove yourself, you just go back to what you know, which is: I'm a good musician, I'm a good producer. Why am I not making quality music to the level of my capability?"

This mindset resulted in *Atum*, a new 33-song LP due in three chunks. Act I is out this month, with the remaining parts arriving in January and April. Conceived as the final part in a trilogy that began with *Mellon Collie*, and continued through 2000's *Machina/The Machines of God*, it's a concept record that Corgan lays out like a movie, about artists exiled in space, whose isolation is both beautiful (from the Earth, their spaceships look like stars) and a warning to the human race about the dangers of being exiled.

Admittedly, it's hard to get all that from the music. And even Corgan seems ambivalent about the concept, which he noted was initially received by his bandmates with "a big shrug". The overarching idea was a recent invention, as *Mellon Collie* and *Machina* were never intended to be rounded out as a trilogy. "Some of my own sentimentalism, I find it unbearable – like: 'Oh, jeez, get off the hearts and stars,'" he says. "But sometimes I find myself grappling for something that gives me the same *je ne sais quoi* feeling as when I watch the old silent movies."



Smashing Pumpkins in London in July 1993. Photograph: Paul Bergen/Redferns

The Pumpkins' debut album was named after the silent film star Lillian Gish, and the indelible video for 1995's [Tonight, Tonight](#) – in which they donned old-timey outfits against a backdrop inspired by Georges Méliès's silent film *A Trip to the Moon* – plays on the iconography of that era. The passing of the years gives new dimension to old concepts, says Corgan. "You can say the same thing every year and it changes because you're just getting older." Sometimes, he says, he'll be playing on stage and suddenly have a flashback to sitting in his bedroom in 1985, playing guitar on a crummy carpet, and feel strongly about how everything has come full circle.

Concept aside, Pumpkins fans will be heartened to learn that Atum is more guitar-driven than recent records; the best moments are when jagged riffs give way to ascendant solos where melancholy and fury seem to ripple outward from some evergreen torrent of angst. Nevertheless, Corgan accepts that fans are mostly interested in the older songs. The music industry has flattened out in the streaming economy, and it's harder to get attention with something new. "I'm not competing against Kurt and Eddie," he says of his 90s peers. "I'm competing against the biggest pop stars in the world with like 14 publicists and 30 writers."

I'm not competing against Kurt and Eddie – I'm competing against the biggest pop stars in the world

Playing live remains especially fulfilling for him, even though he feels that the Pumpkins can go underappreciated. “One of my biggest disappointments, sometimes when we play a concert, is you don't get the sense that the audience understands how rare it is that we're actually standing there. It's 34 fucking years later, you got three-quarters of the OG band in front of you, we're ready to play and we want to be here.”

Corgan had mentioned that he could “bore me to tears” with his extended thoughts on what makes bands such as the Rolling Stones and the Beach Boys endure over the years. How does his own band shake out within the broader landscape of rock history? He pauses to think. “If you look at us through a kind lens, we're a wildly successful band for being as weird and as different as we are. If you look at us through another lens, we're just a pile of wasted opportunity.”

True to form, he follows this pronouncement with something less effacing. “If you want to say there's been 172 rock stars in the last 100 years, OK, well, then I'm one of them.” He says it lightly, in the way that suggests he knows how this could read, but again, it's not untrue.



Corgan on stage in 2000. Photograph: Gary Friedman/Los Angeles Times/Getty Images

As the Pumpkins enter what might charitably be described as the back half of their career, Corgan seems intent on preserving the band's legacy and place in the rock firmament. Earlier, when he talked about how being a parent had changed him, he admitted: "I don't want my kids growing up with a has-been father." (At the Madison Square Garden show, he brought his kids on stage in one of those feelgood moments that nobody could really deny.) This is declared bluntly, with no trace of contrarianism or self-pitying defensiveness. He makes it sound like a mission worth pursuing until the very end.

"I won't play games: I believe we're one of the great bands, and it starts with the conviction that we have something unique to say," he says. "I felt that when we were playing to 50 people in 1988, and I don't fucking know why. It was just something that the band had, and it's endured. The sense, at this point, is not one of sort of chest-thumping victory. It's just like: 'No, this is the arc we should have stayed on.' We were the ones who walked away from it; nobody took us off our game. And now we're back to doing what we're good at."

Atum: Act I is released on 15 November via Martha's Music/Thirty Tigers

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Should my partner stop cooking food past its use-by date?



Illustration: Joren Joshua/The Guardian

She thinks he is playing Russian roulette with their health. He says use-by dates are a scam. And you decide what should be on (and off) the menu

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[Georgina Lawton](#)
[@georginalawton](#)

Fri 11 Nov 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 11 Nov 2022 20.56 EST

This article discusses issues related to food safety in colloquial terms. For official advice, and a more detailed explanation of the important difference between use-by and best-before dates, please visit the [Food Standards Agency's advice page](#).

The prosecution: Yara

Marcus says use-by dates are just a scam. But why play Russian roulette with our health?

My partner Marcus has a habit I find really gross. He never pays any

attention to food labels and often eats food that's way past its expiry date. I think it's terrible for him.

Marcus is thrifty in general, but during lockdown he became particularly obsessed with saving money and reducing food waste. He's into apps that help you collect leftover or almost expiring food from supermarkets and restaurants.

I thought it was a good idea at first. In general, there's nothing wrong with the food that is about to be disposed of, and it also saves money. But when you end up eating really old produce, I think it gets dangerous.

Marcus also often collects more food than we need. He doesn't always freeze it, so we have pork pies, chicken sandwiches, eggs and vegetables sitting in our fridge that we can't eat all at once. He will tell me it's fine to eat later in the week, but I find the idea of eating spoiled meat nauseating. We have a toddler, Rosie, and I certainly don't want to risk her getting sick, so I put my foot down.

Once, when I refused to eat chicken drumsticks that were four days out of date, Marcus said I was being wasteful

Once food has gone off, it should be disposed of, simple as that. Marcus tells me use-by dates are just a scam and food is often fine to eat days afterwards, but why play Russian roulette with our health? One time, when I refused to eat chicken drumsticks that were four days out of date, Marcus said I was being wasteful. But it's not that – I'd just rather not get food poisoning.

I also think he could leave some of the food we don't need in the shops for other people. He sees a bargain and totally loses his head. He can't resist taking everything that's available.

Marcus has always done most of the cooking for us and he's very good at throwing delicious meals together, but now when I see that he's trying to cook meals with produce long past the expiry date. I go around analysing labels and sniffing everything before he starts cooking.

I can deal with eating old vegetables and sometimes bread, but when it comes to meat and dairy, I won't budge. Call me wasteful, or spoilt, I don't care.

The defence: Marcus

*I've eaten chicken, eggs and bread that were days past the date on the pack.
It's fine and saves money*

Yara has got a bee in her bonnet about food labelling, but I don't think she has a very good understanding of what is safe to eat. A few times when I've shown her food that is past its expiry date, she's said – without even looking at or smelling it – “That's disgusting, we aren't eating that.”

But best-before dates are only indicative of when food or drink will start to change – they have nothing to do with safety. [Food](#) past its best-before dates is still fine to eat, and legally shops can still sell it. I grab a lot of stuff past its best-by date to save money for our family, and I'll cook with ingredients past their use-by date.

I also love using food waste apps like Too Good To Go and Olio as well as other supermarket apps. It helps us save and the food still tastes great. I got into it during the summer of 2021, when everyone started eating out again between lockdowns. But it took Yara a while to come around to consuming stuff that had expired. She is fine with vegetables, but with everything else she is really picky.

I'm the one buying and sourcing all our food. If Yara has strong opinions, perhaps she should get a bit more involved

If a product is past its use-by date, people say, “Oh you shouldn't touch it”, especially if it's meat, but I've eaten chicken, eggs and bread that were days past this date. They were fine and I'm still here to tell the tale. As long as it's been refrigerated and it's not weeks gone, then I'll risk it.

I had been cooking with a lot of meat that had passed its use-by date but then, a few months ago, Yara read an article about bacteria and cooking and banned me from using it. I'm allowed to freeze and defrost meat that is just

before its use-by date, but she won't eat anything meat or dairy-based that's expired. I think it's a bit over the top.

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Of course I don't want to make Rosie, our child, sick. I never take it too far and always test it out. I have never cooked with food that is visibly off. However, as I do most of the cooking, I'm the one buying and sourcing all of our food. If Yara has strong views, perhaps she should get a bit more involved. Then she can really express opinions about the ingredients we consume.

The jury of Guardian readers

Should Marcus stop buying food past its use-by date?

Reducing food waste is great but Marcus is taking it too far, and him doing most of the cooking doesn't justify risking food poisoning. Yara seems open to compromise on vegetables, so Marcus should avoid expired meat and dairy – and stop buying discounted food they don't actually need.

Ruth, 30

Marcus's efforts to eliminate food waste are admirable and maximises food efficiency for the family. He's not taking undue risks and he is saving money, which in these times is important.

Tim, 41

I agree that best-before dates are only advisory and should be taken with a pinch of preservative. However, eating food past its use-by date is risky. Yara doesn't want to take that risk, and Rosie can't make that decision yet – it's unfair of Marcus to impose his agenda on them.

Mike, 32

Use-by dates are for safety, and food poisoning can kill. Meat and fish don't necessarily show or smell when they're already off. Buy only what you can safely eat or freeze before the use-by date. Follow the science, please!

Victoria, 72

We live in an wasteful society and using common sense to determine whether food is OK to eat is a better approach than punctiliously following the dates on labels. However, "risking it" doesn't sound like a good approach to cooking meat..

Lewis, 33

Now you be the judge

In our online poll below, tell us: should Marcus stop buying food past its use-by date?

The poll will close on Thursday 17th November 10am GMT

Last week's result

We asked whether Leo should decide on where he and his sister Isabelle [buy a house together](#).

94% of you said no – Leo is guilty

6% of you said yes – Leo is not guilty

This article was amended on 11 November 2022. An earlier version referred several times to "sell-by" dates when it meant to refer to use-by dates. Also, a link to the Food Standards Agency's official advice page was added.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/nov/11/should-my-partner-stop-cooking-food-past-its-use-by-date>

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Opera

An explosive act of violence: why Britten's Rape of Lucretia speaks to our brutal times

Britten's opera is a strange, unsettling and unbearably private piece. Set in ancient Rome and written over 70 years ago, its theme is still all too contemporary, writes the director of a new production



Anne Marie Stanley (Lucretia) Anthony Reed (Collatinus) BPA ROH The Rape of Lucretia © Camilla Greenwell 2022 2027-1 Photograph: Camilla Greenwell

Oliver Mears

Fri 11 Nov 2022 02.00 EST Last modified on Sun 13 Nov 2022 00.00 EST

With its origins in ancient Roman myth, the brutal rape that lies at its centre, its mannered libretto and its explicit Christian messages, The Rape

of Lucretia is the quintessential “difficult” opera – despite its extraordinary power. Much of this power comes from its intense intimacy: writing for much smaller forces than the “grand opera” *Peter Grimes* that preceded this work, [Benjamin Britten](#) uses virtuosic vocal writing and eerie orchestral textures to weave together a hard-hitting, atmospheric theatre work that sounds and feels unlike anything else in the repertory.

The Rape of Lucretia premiered at Glyndebourne in 1946 in a staging with studiously “Roman” designs by [John Piper](#) that artfully and deliberately created distance between creator and subject matter. When asked why he wrote the piece, Britten typically (and evasively) answered “because I’m rather interested in that kind of thing, you know”.

But stripped of togas, pillars and heavy makeup, Lucretia becomes a shocking and contemporary work, precisely because it was so personal to its composer. Britten had observed with horror the final stages of the second world war – Germany’s total destruction, [the mass rape of its female population](#), the revelation of the Holocaust and the dropping of the atom bombs. Like a British theatre artist of a later generation – [Sarah Kane](#), writer of *Blasted* – with *The Rape of Lucretia*, Britten makes an absolute connection between the macho exigencies of war and the tragic brutalisation of the individual. Rape and war are products of one another: the most ordinary of spaces (in Britten the family home, in Kane a hotel room) become the settings for explosive acts of violation. In both works, the personal cataclysm of rape is a signifier of war-as-apocalypse – the ultimate symbol of humanity’s conflict-induced degradation.



‘Rape and war are productions of one another in ordinary spaces’: Thomas Thieme (The Soldier) and Ulrich Muhe (Ian) in Sarah Kane’s *Blasted* at the Barbican in 2006. Photograph: Tristram Kenton/The Guardian

In Britten’s works, the subjects of abuse and violation are never far from the surface, from *Grimes* to *Death in Venice*. As a gay man when homosexuality was still illegal, it’s unsurprising that Britten inverted opera’s traditionally overt (and often tediously garrulous) expressions of emotion, and replaced them with utterances that are pithy, repressed, brittle and codified. As with his hero Henry James, in Britten the unsaid is just as important as what is said – a remarkable innovation for a lyric artform, movingly typified in his long and beautiful climactic solo for *cor anglais* in *Lucretia*. Here, words are no longer sufficient to express the endless pain of a woman driven to total despair.

When asked why he wrote the piece, Britten typically (and evasively) answered: “because I’m rather interested in that kind of thing, you know”.

But for all its dramatic and musical strengths, *The Rape of Lucretia* is a difficult work to stage today. Its often awkward text has worn less well than its extraordinary music, while its subject matter sits in a long and

uncomfortable operatic tradition of fetishised female suffering. On the other hand, opera's power – like that of Greek tragedy – rests on its fearless treatment of taboos and the extreme experiences that compel people to sing – that most primal means of human expression. Despite its reputation for decadent artifice, opera is at its most moving when it deals with realities; and rape, tragically, continues to be one of the most bitter realities of contemporary life. As Joanna Bourke notes in her magisterial book [Rape, A History from 1860 to the Present](#), the number of rapes have soared since the 1960s, while conviction rates remain scandalously low (only 3% of [rapes recorded by the police in the year up to March 2022 led to charges](#)). Meanwhile, events in Ukraine have only confirmed Britten and Kane's dismal analysis of the link between conflict and bodily violation. In this sense at least, *The Rape of Lucretia* remains a story with potent urgency: Lucretia's awful predicament is representative of rape victims the world over.

But how to tell this story at all? Britten wisely places the act of penetration off stage, though depicts the moments immediately before it. Representing any act of rape on stage remains a daunting task: few equivalent operas engender a bigger sense of responsibility. As a director (and especially as a male director), it requires a moment of self-reflection. Can a man really tell this story? Yes, if one believes that storytelling is the ultimate exercise in empathy and that the ability to tell a story does not have to be related to one's personal experience. That through deep self-education (from Bourke's work to *A Woman in Berlin*'s famous descriptions of the Red Army's crimes in 1945) one can find the insights to portray this story responsibly and truthfully. That in this story's essentially gendered conflict, it is vital to understand and portray the role of the male perpetrator alongside that of the female victim. And that by working with an all-female creative team, one can foreground female voices and perspectives in a story which absolutely demands them.



Allan Clayton (Male Chorus), Duncan Rock (Tarquinius), Claudia Huckle (Lucretia) and Kate Valentine (Female Chorus) in Glyndebourne Touring Opera's 2013 production of *The Rape Of Lucretia*. Photograph: Tristram Kenton/The Guardian

Finally, directing is about drawing the best from performers: a function not only of rigorous and precise work, but also of a supportive and safe rehearsal room. We worked closely with intimacy coordinator [Ita O'Brien](#) and movement director Sarita Piotrowski on making scenes that honour the truth and continued relevance of this story, while respecting human feelings of discomfort and vulnerability. In the old days, performers and audience alike had merely to accept traumatic material: today we place similar emphasis on alerting our audience to what they will see and hear, treating subjects with the sensitivity they deserve.

The Rape of Lucretia will never be an opera like *Carmen* or *The Marriage of Figaro*, drawing in large crowds. It is a strange, unsettling, at times unbearably private piece, but it will remain a work whose originality and unique force will continue to trouble audiences for as long as the awful crime at its centre blights humankind.

Oliver Mears is the Royal Opera's director of opera. His staging of *The*

Rape of Lucretia, produced by Britten Pears Arts in collaboration with the Royal Opera, is at the [Linbury theatre, London](#), 13-22 November.

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‘It takes more and more’: Camargue under threat from rising seas – photo essay

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2022.11.11 - Opinion

- Thanks to Gavin Williamson, the era of dark arts in the whips' office is over
- Britain has reversed its decline before, but things may get worse before they get better
- Beware The Crown's blurring of fact and fiction in this age of dangerous untruths
- Banks are leaving the Caribbean. It's unfair and will backfire on the west

OpinionGavin Williamson

Thanks to Gavin Williamson, the era of dark arts in the whips' office is over

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



There will always be a place for political enforcers – but they now know their missives will probably see the light of day



Illustration: Nate Kitch

Fri 11 Nov 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Nov 2022 12.06 EST

If only [Gavin Williamson](#) had been allowed to build an underground lair inside a volcano. Or else to dig a moat around the whips' office, and fill it with crocodiles.

But instead, Westminster's wannabe Bond villain was forced to make do with keeping a pet spider on his desk. Like the enormous [bullwhip](#) he showed off to visiting photographers, [Cronus the tarantula](#) was meant to convey an aura of menace, while succeeding only in making one wonder what kind of grown man brings a pet spider to work. Less Lord Voldemort, perhaps, than reedy Gareth from The Office.

It was smart of Keir Starmer, then, to greet Williamson's downfall this week not with outrage but derision, mocking him as the kind of "[sad middle manager](#)" noisily throwing his weight around who most of us will probably encounter somewhere in our working lives. Williamson thrived on the fear he generated in people whose livelihoods depended on him. What he could not survive, however, was scorn. When the former chief whip Wendy Morton published his stropy texts about the Queen's funeral – which were admittedly rude, but about as menacing as a 14-year-old railing at his mum

for grounding him – she sent a powerful signal that the time for being frightened of Williamson was over. In turn, that seems to have emboldened others who had previously felt too scared to speak up. What began as a reckoning for one individual, however, could yet pose a bigger challenge to the way politics is conducted.

Williamson may have been something of a cartoon ogre, but the power he was granted during his cabinet career was all too real. Chief whips on both sides like to say they've moved on from the bad old days, when “persuading” an MP to vote with the leadership involved punches being thrown in corridors, or threatening to tip off the tabloids to the existence of a mistress. The modern whips' office is portrayed instead as a kind of HR department, maintaining order while keeping a pastoral eye on MPs who might be struggling with the stresses of Westminster life. Yet Williamson's former deputy when he was chief whip, Anne Milton, painted a significantly less flattering picture to [Channel 4](#) this week.

She described Williamson gleefully regaling the office with gossip about MPs' sexual proclivities or personal woes which she believes he would later use as leverage “if the need arose”. After arranging an emergency bailout for one MP in financial difficulties, Williamson reportedly told Milton to make sure that “he knows that I now own him”. “I'm sure if you ask Gavin Williamson about this, he will say it was a joke. I don't think it was a joke,” she told Channel 4 News. (Incidentally, the public is surely now entitled to know where exactly that money came from, and whether its recipient subsequently changed his vote in ways his constituents might find interesting.) Williamson's reward for the relish with which he seemingly approached all this, meanwhile, was promotion to the role he craved: defence secretary. He allegedly went on to tell a civil servant to “slit your throat” and “jump out of the window”, causing what the official described as an “extreme impact” on their mental health.

Rishi Sunak insists he didn't know the details of any specific allegations against Williamson when he brought the latter back into government, despite being told that Morton had filed an official complaint. But Sunak has been around Westminster long enough to know exactly what he was getting, and why. You don't bring back the man who, as defence secretary,

once suggested Russia should “[go away and shut up](#)”, before being sacked over an alleged [national security breach](#), and expect distinguished service for the nation. You don’t hire him for his grip on a big Whitehall department either, given his stumbling performance as education secretary during the pandemic.



Gavin Williamson outside No 10 Downing Street on 25 October. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

The point of having him help to run your leadership campaign – the service which originally earned Williamson his third cabinet comeback – and then giving him the usefully vague role of minister without portfolio is to get him to do what he did so very successfully for David Cameron, Theresa May and [Boris Johnson](#), which was to make problems go away. You hire him for the same reason governments of all political stripes have hired their own Williamsons since time immemorial, much as they hate admitting it; to suppress revolts, hush up embarrassments, make the leader’s writ run across a government. The deal is that in return, leaders don’t inquire too closely as to how the sausage gets made. But lately, that deal looks increasingly unsustainable.

It was the inevitable consequences of Boris Johnson’s reckless decision to put Chris Pincher back in the whips’ office, despite claims of sexual

misconduct, that succeeded where all else failed in finally prompting Tory MPs to turn on their leader. Tales of tearful backbenchers being [manhandled through a vote](#) on fracking similarly helped convince them to move more urgently than planned against Liz Truss.

The writing has been on the wall for months now, flashing a neon warning that this generation of MPs – much like millennials in other walks of life – won't put up with the toxic working practices their elders did. They're not prepared just to accept that this is how things have always been, or to be fobbed off with stories about how it was worse in the 1970s. Some are well aware that management techniques have moved on in the corporate world. Others are understandably more frightened of their constituents, or of a social media backlash, than of the whips. And while the wheels of the new independent complaints and grievances scheme to which Morton referred Williamson grind slowly, it's given MPs and staff somewhere to take complaints that would once have been conveniently buried. Times are changing; not fast enough for some, but fast enough to catch out an unwary prime minister.

It would be naive beyond belief, of course, to imagine the era of Westminster enforcers is over now. There will always be arms to twist, revolts to crush, and dirty work to be done on behalf of a leader who needs to keep their hands clean. But what's changed, perhaps, is the idea that the dark arts can remain reliably in the dark. Whoever ultimately succeeds Williamson as enforcer in chief will have to do the job in the uncomfortable knowledge that sooner or later the light will probably find its way in, or else their texts will find a way out. Even cartoon villains, it turns out, must eventually move with the times.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

OpinionEconomics

Britain has reversed its decline before, but things may get worse before they get better

[Andy Beckett](#)



The decay has set in across social classes, and more deeply than when the country last turned itself around in the 90s



‘If you’ve paid off your mortgage and live in a prosperous part of London then Britain’s decline may seem little more than a melodramatic story.’ A London landscape. Photograph: Chris J Ratcliffe/Getty Images

Fri 11 Nov 2022 02.00 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Nov 2022 05.49 EST

Decline is a spectre that has haunted this country for at least a hundred years. Through the retreat from empire, postwar recessions and growth panics, and our inward turn since [Brexit](#), the worry that Britain is falling behind other countries – or deteriorating in absolute terms – has repeatedly gripped journalists, politicians and the public.

We are in one of those periods now. Seven out of 10 people in a recent [Ipsos Mori poll](#) agreed that the country was in decline. Commentators in other countries look on with a mixture of pity and schadenfreude.

The idea of national decline has drama: it provides a story, suggests scapegoats, and offers the possibility of rescue. Yet what it actually means, how it affects different groups, and whether it is in fact unavoidable, for a small country that once controlled a hugely disproportionate part of the world – these more complex topics are less discussed.

Instead, declinism acts as a powerful political simplifier. It can prompt revolts against the status quo, such as Thatcherism, or a kind of mass paralysis, as sometimes existed under the drifting, but dominant Tory governments of the 1930s. Which path Britain follows this time will decide not just the next election, but our longer-term future.

One reason that the decay of so much under the Conservatives since 2010 has not yet provoked decisive opposition is that the decline has been patchy. To adapt the novelist [William Gibson's famous remark](#) about the future, Britain's new reality as a relatively poor country on the fringe of Europe is already here; it's just not evenly distributed. If you've paid off your mortgage, work in finance or a senior corporate role, use private rather than public services, and live in a prosperous part of London or the home counties – still one of the wealthiest regions in Europe – then Britain's decline may seem little more than a melodramatic media story. This year, the pay of FTSE 100 chief executives [has risen](#) by an average of 23%.

But for the rest of us Britain has undeniably become a poorer, colder, less healthy country. Deprivation that is common today, such as people living without heating or regular meals, would have seemed dystopian to most Britons only a few years ago. Yet for some of the most disadvantaged, this decline in living standards began decades ago, under Thatcher and then New Labour. One way to think about Thatcherism, and all the British governments it has influenced, is not as a project to end national decline – as she claimed – but as a way of confining that decline to social groups that mainstream politicians and swing voters don't care a lot about.

The Conservatives' problem now is that this decay has spread again, through much of society. The last time there was such a pervasive sense of stagnation and gloom in Britain was also under the Tories, in the early 90s. Then there was an acclaimed national newspaper largely devoted to the subject, the Independent on Sunday, edited by the great melancholy [journalist Ian Jack](#), who died last month. It was the first paper I worked for, and its downbeat outlook was powerful, even addictive. We felt we were documenting the last days of free-market Tory Britain. When the paper moved to Canary Wharf in east London, then surrounded by disused docks

and abandoned office schemes, we called one of the views from our office tower “the avenue of capitalist defeat”.

Yet the paper’s take on Britain was only half right. The [Conservatives](#) were about to be swept from power, but their economic ideas were not. And apparently rundown London, like some other British cities, was in fact in the early stages of a major revival, featuring bankers and Young British Artists, the invention of the gastropub, a booming dance music culture and new public transport. To an extent, previous decline made this revival possible: by creating dissatisfaction, and derelict spaces where new schemes could start.

Could a similar process happen again? The circumstances for reversing Britain’s decline seem tougher this time. There are no EU subsidies available; the global economy is stumbling rather than surging; there is conflict with Russia rather than a post-cold war peace dividend. The sense of political disillusionment may also be even wider than it was in the early 90s, when rightwing Britons at least still believed that Thatcher had saved the country. Today, even Tories struggle to find positive things to say about their governments since [Brexit](#).

Meanwhile Keir Starmer, though improving as a political performer, lacks the freshness and charisma needed to personify a better future, as Tony Blair did in the 90s as opposition leader. These days, with the Labour left marginalised, the Lib Dems and Greens stunted by the electoral system, and the devolved Scottish and Welsh governments limited in their powers, voters who want Britain as a whole to take a radically different course lack options.

This country has no automatic place in the mainstream of relatively comfortable and liberal European societies. Only a few decades ago, three other countries on the edge of the continent – Spain, Greece and Portugal – were dictatorships; while another – Ireland – was a depopulating backwater. To visit those countries now is to see, sometimes inspiringly, that decline can be reversed. But it’s also to be reminded that things in Britain may have to get worse first.

- Andy Beckett is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#)The Crown

Beware The Crown's blurring of fact and fiction in this age of dangerous untruths

[Simon Jenkins](#)



It might be ‘only’ a TV show, but the boundaries between history and make-believe need to be clear



Jonny Lee Miller as John Major in The Crown. The TV show invented a storyline in which Prince Charles enlisted the help of the then prime minister to usurp the Queen. Photograph: Netflix/PA

Fri 11 Nov 2022 04.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 11 Nov 2022 12.34 EST

Thirty years ago, the present king tried to usurp his mother, the Queen. He [sought to conspire](#) with the then prime minister, John Major, after an opinion poll hostile to the monarch appeared in the Sunday Times. Like all the scenes in Netflix's The Crown, this is claimed to have been "inspired by real events".

In truth there was no such plot, no conspiracy and [no poll](#) hostile to the monarchy. A fictional storyline was put into the mouths of living people and then introduced as "the story of the political and personal events that shaped the Queen's reign".

I carry no brief for the royal family. The institution has shown it can handle the strain of being the butt of inaccuracy and ridicule. For their part, the Crown's apologists shrug and excuse it as entertainment, a sceptical portrayal of celebrities to be taken with a pinch of salt. It enjoys a licence to lie that is granted to all docu-dramatists: that they are "artists". The show's creator, Peter Morgan, has adopted a different defence. He admits to

“forsaking accuracy but not the truth”. His consultant Robert Lacey seems to be stretching things when he writes under the headline, “[Never a truer word was said of the royal family](#)”.

The Crown’s approach to accuracy ill-conceals a different excuse, that depicting famous people on screen lends a plausibility to any plot, however weak. It titillates the audience with familiarity. So what if Prince Philip was still alive when [The Crown](#) implied, on no evidence at all, that he had been unfaithful to the Queen? It made a better story than if he had been a fictional prince.

At one level, making money out of being offensive or cruel to living people is commonplace. They are usually rich, and can always sue if they think they’ve been libelled. We might add that the British royal family brought it on themselves when they decided in the 1960s to project themselves as high-profile celebrities, in pointed contrast to the discretion of Europe’s other hereditary monarchs.

More serious is the abuse of the word “truth”. The series has had its poignant moments but it is blatantly biased against the monarchy. The royal biographer, Hugo Vickers, has noted that many of the falsified scenes are [derogatory about the royal family](#). It claims to be a “fictionalised dramatisation” of reality but it cannot have seriously researched the truth, as did Hilary Mantel in her Thomas Cromwell trilogy. It did not follow Thucydides in declaring his war reports as “the closest possible fidelity on my part to the overall sense of what was actually said”.

People believe accounts of reality portrayed on television. Roughly a third of Americans [believe Donald Trump’s claim](#) that his presidency was “stolen” by Joe Biden. They have seen it on television, with confirmatory “evidence” on social media. That is why lies are so dangerous. Look also at Owen Matthews’ wise new book on Ukraine, as seen from Moscow’s standpoint, [Overreach](#). It shows Russians strongly supporting Vladimir Putin’s view of the war as the result of Nato aggression. They have been told it relentlessly on television and [so it must be true](#).

I accept that these are real people and not just actors peddling fiction. But a casual disregard for truth is the same wherever it occurs. Accounts of real,

historical people cannot depend for their veracity on the vigour of the liar or the plausibility of the actor. The maxim remains the same, that a lie encircles the globe while truth is still getting on its boots.

I am sure Britain's royal family will survive this reputational blitzkrieg. Biographers have already had a field day deconstructing The Crown, and if millions of viewers are misled, too bad. The status of truth is a more fragile casualty. Academic historians and (most) journalists do not see it as their task to distort or glamorise contemporary events by spicing them with lies. The policing of stories about living individuals is subject to a mix of libel law, literary reputation and journalistic ethics. Publishers hire lawyers and factcheckers. The mainstream media has long offered an editorial filter between events and their readers and listeners, one that remains appreciated by the latter. In litigation, truth is always a defence.

Social media has shredded that editorial filter. Regulation of information of all sorts is in its infancy. Much of the internet is not so much a global village as a global Hyde Park Corner. Journalism's "first rough draft of history" is blowing in the wind.

That is why art cannot be licensed to rewrite history as it sees fit. The Crown should have opened with a screaming health warning: "The following events depicted in this drama did not take place ..."

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist

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OpinionGlobal development

Banks are leaving the Caribbean. It's unfair and will backfire on the west

[Kenneth Mohammed](#)

Financial 'de-risking' is making life difficult in vulnerable regions and will lead to more corruption and tax evasion



Bitcoin trading in Barbados. Alternatives to banking become more attractive when access is cut by de-risking. Photograph: David Kilpatrick/Alamy

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[About this content](#)

Fri 11 Nov 2022 01.30 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Nov 2022 16.13 EST

Mia Mottley, once again, [this time at Cop27](#), chastised the west for being the main culprits in the climate crisis. The Barbados prime minister said that the Caribbean and Pacific islands, being the most vulnerable and least responsible, face certain doom if wealthier nations are not held accountable.

The [Caribbean](#) has some of the most resilient and talented people in the world. People who have risen above slavery, indentureship and colonialism. Over the past five decades they have faced corrupt politicians draining their economies, perennial climate disasters and economic discrimination by the west. Now, these small island developing states, still reeling from the Covid pandemic, face further economic challenges inflicted by banks from the US, the UK and EU and Australia.

[Academics](#) and [journalists](#) have been writing about financial “de-risking” in the Caribbean region for at least a decade, and how it has been getting worse over that time. Simply put, de-risking is where foreign banks perceive that the risks of doing business in a region outweigh the rewards.

Mottley has been highlighting the issue this year, [telling the US Congress](#) that de-risking is the “most nonsensical thing” the region has “seen in public policy” and that it will lead to the very money laundering and financing of terrorism that the US and Caribbean governments want to avoid.

But little has improved: banks continue to leave the Caribbean. That makes international trade increasingly difficult, not just for local companies but for foreign corporations and individuals wanting to do business in the region or simply to extend financial support to their families. Sustaining trade has been increasingly difficult for small and medium-sized businesses.

The fallout from de-risking is significant – stagnated economic growth in nations already reeling from Covid and the hurricanes and flooding worsened by the climate crisis. It has discouraged foreign direct investment. International financial centres and development finance institutions, the conduits for investment and aid, are faced with increasing challenges in attracting investors.

De-risking has made it more difficult for the diaspora to support their families with remittances, it has affected tourism – the lifeblood of many island economies – and contributed to some airlines and cruise ships no longer visiting the region. The islands of the Caribbean are now becoming uncompetitive and losing the impetus in their developmental goals. The impoverishing of developing countries by the west is nothing new.

The probable root cause of the banking exodus is the blacklisting of these small island developing states by the [Financial Action Task Force](#), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and more recently [the EU Commission](#).

Sometimes countries at the top of rankings are simply better at corruption than those at the bottom

Blacklisting comes from the global reform movement to clamp down on money laundering and financing of terrorism. Over the past two decades these US and European bodies have held the Caribbean and countries in

Africa and the Pacific to stringent standards not mirrored in their own institutions. This results in the perception that the developing countries engage in rampant corruption and are not applying anti-money laundering regulations or countering the financing of terrorism, while enabling tax evasion and other economic crimes. This is reinforced by Transparency International's corruption perception index but sometimes it can simply mean countries at the top of rankings are better at corruption than those at the bottom.

However, the reality is different. The continued inclusion of countries such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, and even Haiti and Vanuatu, on these lists is largely due to the changing of the assessment criteria and the definition of the money supply. The standard explanation is that these countries did not make commitments to transparency and exchange of information. Moving the goalposts for vulnerable nations once again – while the real money launderers in London, New York, Luxembourg and Switzerland have been [exposed as facilitating Russian oligarchs](#) with parking spaces for their illicit gains.

Closer examination of compliance challenges in the islands show a proactive commitment, even with limited resources, to engage with the rules of “know your customer” processes such as enhanced due diligence, verification of the sources of funds and the beneficial ownership of companies. Implementing these policies takes time and costs money, making setting up a bank account – whether for a business or an individual – protracted and difficult.

Such perceptions are leading an increasing number of banks to de-risk in the region. They have decided that the risk versus the reward is too great, that these countries' economies are too small and compliance is too costly. More than a third have left the region. This has reduced the Caribbean's access to the global financial system that depends on correspondent banking relationships.

Ironically the system sometimes exposes the very institutions that wield the big regulatory stick and whose methodology is rarely questioned. The World Bank's Ease of doing business index was once the go-to guideline for the investment community, even though it often had a negative impact on

developing countries. The index was discontinued in September 2021 after [an independent report found “data irregularities”](#) and “ethical concerns” with a number of officials, including the current IMF managing director, accused of inflating data to boost China’s ranking. The IMF board later found there was no conclusive demonstration of wrongdoing.

While the black and grey-listed countries are subject to such double standards, bias and suspect data, they face the additional blow of being increasingly excluded from financial systems.

The same regulations designed to mitigate money laundering and terrorism financing will result in individuals and businesses seeking alternatives outside the conventional banking system, creating underground networks. Alternatives to the Swift system are becoming available, although not yet in the Caribbean. [The Russian SPFS](#) and [China’s Cips](#) are two examples, as well as cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin. This should be a warning to those concerned about countries such as Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, which supply oil and gas to Europe and the US, and will now be evaluating the one-sided relationship and the inequity of trading with their western allies.

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Rapper who protested over death of Mahsa Amini faces execution in Iran

UN calls for international action as regime announces public trials for protesters and Iranian lawmakers seek harsh punishment



Saman Yasin, a Kurdish rapper who has spoken against the Iranian regime, has been charged with ‘enmity against God’. Photograph: Handout

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[Deepa Parent](#) and Ghoncheh Habibi azad

Fri 11 Nov 2022 01.00 EST Last modified on Sat 12 Nov 2022 00.10 EST

Three weeks after he was violently arrested at his home by Iran's security forces, Saman Yasin, a young Kurdish artist and rapper, is facing execution. He has been charged with waging war against God after posting his support for anti-regime protesters on social media.

His fate, which will be decided in the coming days by the Iranian courts, could be shared by thousands of other young protesters being held in detention as human rights organisations warn that the regime may unleash a bloody campaign of revenge in an attempt to quash continuing protests.

[According to the UN](#), an estimated 14,000 people, including children, have been detained by the regime since the protests began more than eight weeks ago, after the 22-year-old Mahsa Amini died in custody having been arrested by Iran's morality police.

“Over the past six weeks, thousands of men, women and children – by some accounts over 14,000 persons – have been arrested, which includes human rights defenders, students, lawyers, journalists and civil society activists,”

said Javaid Rehman, the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, on Wednesday.

“In another most disturbing development, Iranian authorities have announced earlier this week that they will be holding public trials for over 1,000 arrested persons in Tehran and a similar number outside the capital ... The charges against these persons will include charges ... carrying the death penalty. In the absence of any domestic channels of accountability, I would stress the significance of the role and responsibility of the international community in addressing impunity for human right violations in Iran.”

On 6 November, [227 Iranian lawmakers urged the judiciary](#) to “deal decisively with the perpetrators of these crimes and with all those who assisted in the crimes and provoked rioters”, which human rights activists fear will lead to a wave of executions and life sentences handed down by the courts in the coming weeks. The authorities have announced they plan to hold trials for 1,000 protesters held in Tehran.

Iran: students hold vigil for Mahsa Amini 40 days after her death – video

The Hengaw Organization for Human Rights said that high-profile prisoners like Yasin could be used by the Iranian regime to attempt to terrify those who continue to protest.

Yasin, a well-known and acclaimed artist and rapper, has been a vocal critic of the regime. He wrote messages of support for protesters on his social media channels and has written several protest songs.

“We know the government easily kills people and directly sentences the detainees to death,” said Soma Rostami of Hengaw. “Saman Yasin is in serious danger and we should be his voice.”

Other human rights organisations say the authorities have attempted to silence Yasin’s family, who have not been heard from since he was charged with *moharabeh* (enmity against God) earlier this week.

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The death sentence hanging over Yasin comes amid claims that he and other protesters are being subjected to torture in detention.

Family members of Toomaj Salehi, a 32-year-old musician and rapper, who is also in detention after being arrested on 30 September with two friends, claim that he has been subjected to “severe torture” at the hands of the regime for releasing songs in support of protesters and posting pictures of him chanting slogans against the security forces in Isfahan.



A protest at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin against the arrest of the well-known Iranian rapper Toomaj Salehi. Photograph: snapshot-photography/F Boillot/Rex/Shutterstock

The popular artist's arrest has led to petitions online calling for his release and his supporters have widely shared the hashtag #FreeToomaj.

“When we heard about his arrest, we were devastated but not defeated. We are currently trying to do what we can to carry on what he stood for and urge the international community's leaders to hold the Islamic Republic accountable for their crimes against humanity, to release Toomaj and all Iranian people who are imprisoned and tortured on a daily basis, all because they seek freedom,” said one of Salehi's friends, who is not being named for security reasons.

“We know they want to traumatise us even more and instil fear in us. What matters is that the Islamic Republic's brutal regime is arresting critics and innocent civilians and violating their own laws,” she said.

“Even if the lawyers arrive at the courts on behalf of their families, they, too, are at risk of getting arrested. We have no information about his health, what he has been accused of, or what his condition his health is in, and we are seriously worried for his life.”

Last week two female journalists who helped break the story of the death of Mahsa Amini were [denounced as CIA spies](#) by the Iranian authorities, a charge that carries the death penalty.

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[Greenhouse gas emissions](#)

Carbon emissions from fossil fuels will hit record high in 2022

‘Bleak’ findings come from report at Cop27 that notes ‘no sign’ of urgent cuts needed to stop climate breakdown



Smoke billows from a large steel plant in Inner Mongolia, China.
Photograph: Kevin Frayer/Getty Images

[Damian Carrington](#) *Environment editor*

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Fri 11 Nov 2022 03.07 EST First published on Thu 10 Nov 2022 17.01 EST

Carbon emissions from fossil fuels will hit record levels this year, according to a comprehensive analysis. The finding represents a brutal contrast with the need to [cut emissions by half by 2030](#) to restrict global heating to 1.5C and avoid the most devastating impacts of the climate crisis.

There is no sign of the decline needed, the researchers said, heaping further pressure on the countries whose representatives are meeting at the UN [Cop27](#) climate summit in Egypt to deliver real and rapid action. Other scientists described the news as “bleak” and “deeply depressing”.

[fossil fuel emissions graph](#)

A glimmer of hope comes from assessment of emissions from the destruction of forests. These have been declining slowly over the last two decades, though largely because of more new trees being planted rather than fewer being felled.

When this decline is taken into account, global carbon emissions have been essentially flat since 2015. However, until emissions actually start falling, huge amounts of heat-trapping carbon dioxide are still being pumped into the atmosphere every year.

The UN secretary general, António Guterres, has made clear to world leaders at Cop27 this week what this means: “We are in the fight of our lives and we are losing. Our planet is fast approaching [tipping points](#) that will [make climate chaos irreversible](#). We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator,” he said.

The analysis by the [Global Carbon Project](#) (GCP) uses multiple streams of data from the year to date to estimate emissions for 2022. It found fossil fuel related CO₂ is on course to rise by 1% to 36.6bn tonnes, the highest ever. More burning of oil products is the biggest contributor, mostly because of the continuing rebound of international aviation after the pandemic.

Continued emissions at this level would make 1.5C of global heating become more probable than not in the next decade, the researchers said. Reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050, as pledged by many countries, now requires an annual decrease comparable to the sharp fall in 2020 due to Covid-19 lockdowns.

Emissions from coal will return to the all-time peak seen in 2014, the analysis found. But unlike in the past, this is not driven by China but by

India and the European Union. Gas burning remained level, but at the same record level seen in 2021.

Emissions from China, the world's biggest polluter, will decrease by 1% in 2022, the GCP found, because of the country's stringent Covid restrictions and a collapse in the construction industry. The EU will also see a similar decrease because the 7% rise in coal emissions has been offset by a 10% fall in CO₂ from gas consumption after Russia invaded Ukraine.

In contrast, US emissions will rise by 1.5%, with a surge in flights largely to blame. India will have the largest rise, 6%. This is due to higher coal and oil emissions, and India now emits more than the EU overall – although emissions per capita remain much lower.

“This year we see yet another rise in global fossil fuel CO₂ emissions, when we need a rapid decline,” said Prof Pierre Friedlingstein, a climate scientist at the University of Exeter who led the study. “Leaders at Cop27 will have to take meaningful action if we are to have any chance of limiting global warming close to 1.5C.”

“We are a very long way from where we need to go,” said Dr Glen Peters, a GCP member at the Centre for International Climate Research (Cicero) in Norway. “Many countries, cities, companies, and individuals have made pledges to reduce emissions. It is a stark reminder that despite all this rhetoric, global fossil CO₂ emissions are more than 5% higher than in 2015, the year of the Paris agreement.

“There is clearly no sign of the decrease needed to limit climate change close to 1.5C.”

Prof Corinne Le Quéré, at the University of East Anglia, who was also part of the study, noted that the average annual increase in emissions was 3% during the 2000s but has fallen to 0.5% rise in the past decade.

“We have shown climate policy does work,” she said. “If governments respond by turbo-charging clean energy investments and planting, not cutting down, trees, global emissions could rapidly start to fall.”

A [series of reports](#) released before Cop27 laid bare how close the planet is to climate catastrophe, with “[no credible pathway](#)” of carbon cuts to 1.5C in place. With targets already in agreed at previous summits, Cop27 is hoping to drive action but the disagreements over the provision of climate finance by rich countries is proving a major obstacle.

The GCP’s 2022 analysis is published in the journal [Earth System Science Data](#) and was produced by more than 100 scientists from 80 organisations around the world. The oceans and land absorb about half of humanity’s carbon emissions. However, the GCP found this vital service was increasingly damaged by global heating, with the uptake of CO₂ by the land and ocean reduced by 17% and 5% respectively over the last decade.

The GCP scientists are concerned about future emissions as well. “Given that a further recovery in oil use is expected in 2023, if coal or gas use remains flat or increases, then it is likely that global fossil CO₂ emissions will continue to rise in 2023 without a concerted policy effort,” said Robbie Andrew, a senior scientist at Cicero.

Prof Vanesa Castán Broto, at the University of Sheffield, said: “The results of the [analysis] are bleak. Carbon emissions are continuing to rise, and if this continues, climate change will reach a very destructive stage in a single decade.”

“The report is deeply depressing,” said Prof Mark Maslin, at University College London. “It sends a clear message to the leaders at Cop27 – the world needs to have significant cuts in global emissions in 2023 if we are to have any chance to keeping climate change to 1.5C.”

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Art

Climate activists attacking art ‘severely underestimate’ fragility of works, gallery directors warn

Protesters have thrown soup and glued themselves to famous artworks around the world, prompting response by high-profile galleries including Moma and the Louvre



Two protesters threw soup at Vincent Van Gogh’s famous 1888 work Sunflowers at the National Gallery in London. They caused no damage to the glass-covered painting. Photograph: Antonio Olmos/The Guardian

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Fri 11 Nov 2022 00.39 ESTLast modified on Fri 11 Nov 2022 03.07 EST

Climate activists targeting masterpieces around the world are not fully aware of how delicate the artworks are, the directors of almost 100 galleries

have warned, saying they have been “deeply shaken” by the attacks.

This year, famous artworks have been attacked by protesters from various activist groups demanding action on the climate crisis. The incidents include a German environmental group [throwing mashed potatoes at a Claude Monet painting](#) in a Potsdam museum, activists from Just Stop Oil [throwing tomato soup over Vincent van Gogh’s Sunflowers](#) at the National Gallery in London, a group splashing pea soup on a van Gogh masterpiece in Rome, [Extinction Rebellion campaigners targeting a Picasso painting](#) in Melbourne, and activists gluing themselves to artworks by Botticelli, Boccioni, Van Gogh and other old masters.

Most recently, on Wednesday, two protesters from the Stop Fossil Fuel Subsidies group [scrawled over Andy Warhol’s Campbell’s soup cans, at the National Gallery of Australia](#) in Canberra.

“In recent weeks, there have been several attacks on works of art in international museum collections. The activists responsible for them severely underestimate the fragility of these irreplaceable objects, which must be preserved as part of our world cultural heritage,” the gallery and museum directors wrote in a joint statement published online.

“As museum directors entrusted with the care of these works, we have been deeply shaken by their risky endangerment.

“Museums are places where people from a wide variety of backgrounds can engage in dialogue and which therefore enable social discourse,” the statement continued. “In this sense, the core tasks of the museum as an institution – collecting, researching, sharing and preserving – are now more relevant than ever. We will continue to advocate for direct access to our cultural heritage. And we will maintain the museum as a free space for social communication.”

The statement was co-signed by almost 100 directors of high-profile institutions, many of which have been targeted by activists already.

The signatories include the heads of the Metropolitan Museum of [Art](#), the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim Museum in New York; the British Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum and the National Gallery in London; the Gallerie degli Uffizi and Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Italy; the Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, Centre Pompidou and Musée national Picasso-Paris in France; and the Museo Nacional del Prado and the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in Spain.

Climate activists target Andy Warhol's soup cans at Canberra art gallery – video

Up until now, most of the galleries have remained tight lipped after the attacks, not wanting to draw attention to them or their security protocols. After the defacement of the Warhol work in Canberra, a National Gallery of Australia spokesperson said: “The national gallery does not wish to promote these actions and has no further comment.”

None of the works targeted have had lasting damage as many are covered by glass. The climate activists are seemingly targeting the most famous works not to damage them, but to draw media attention to the lasting damage of the climate crisis.

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During the attack on van Gogh's Sunflowers in London, Just Stop Oil protesters shouted: “What is worth more? Art or life? Is it worth more than food? Worth more than justice? Are you more concerned about the protection of a painting or the protection of our planet and people?”

Last Generation, the German environmental group behind the attack on the Monet painting, echoed the sentiment in a post afterwards, [asking](#): “What is worth more, art or life?”

The US organisation backing the Just Stop Oil protests, the Climate Emergency Fund, [have promised protests will continue across Europe and the US](#).

“More protests are coming, this is a rapidly growing movement and the next two weeks will be, I hope, the most intense period of climate action to date,” said Margaret Klein Salamon, executive director of the Climate Emergency Fund. “So buckle up.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/nov/11/climate-activists-attacking-art-severely-underestimate-fragility-of-works-gallery-directors-warn>

Reptiles

Turtle poaching for pet trade threatens half of world's species

Panama Cites convention considers proposals to protect turtle populations also depleted for food, medication and colorful shells



A Vallarta mud turtle (*Kinosternon vogti*) is seen in a river in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Photograph: Ulises Ruiz/AFP/Getty Images

[Samira Asma-Sadeque](#)

Fri 11 Nov 2022 02.00 EST Last modified on Fri 11 Nov 2022 13.03 EST

Turtle poaching to meet the rising demand for the species as pets has pushed more than half of the nearly 300 living turtle and tortoise species closer to extinction, a global wildlife conference has heard.

The [184-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora \(Cites\)](#), which is meeting in Panama from 11 to 25 November, has seen one proposal that would ban or limit the commercial

trade in more than 20 mud turtle species. More than 10 other proposals have been received that would increase protection for freshwater turtles.

In bringing the proposals, the US and several Latin American countries cited Mexican data that nearly 20,000 such turtles were confiscated between 2010 and 2022, mostly at the Mexico City airport.

Black market turtle sales in the US, Europe and Asia have led to increased levels of poaching that have hurt turtle populations. According to an analysis of US Fish and [Wildlife](#) Service data by a University of Michigan doctoral candidate and cited by the Associated Press, the commercial export trade for mud turtles in the US increased from 1,844 to 40,000 between 1999 and 2017. For musk turtles it rose from 8,254 to more than 281,000 over a similar period.

“It’s getting ruthless where we are seeing thousands of turtles leaving the United States on an annual basis,” said Lou Perrotti of the Roger Williams Park Zoo in Providence, Rhode Island. “Turtle populations cannot take that kind of a hit with that much removal coming out of the wild.”

Freshwater turtles make up some of the most trafficked animals globally. The demand exists due to a variety of reasons: consumers wanting them as pets, commercial breeding, consumption as food, for medication and for the popularity of their colorful shells.

The poaching trade was previously concentrated in south-east Asia but after many species declined the activity grew in Africa, and is now headed to the Americas, according to Matthew Strickler from the US Department of the Interior.

The gender of the turtles is also of concern. Many of the traffickers target female turtles, which is a problem given the slow rate of turtle reproduction. Many turtle species also take a decade or longer before they are grown enough to be able to reproduce.

Dave Collins, director of North American turtle conservation for the Turtle Survival Alliance, told the Associated Press that this can cause a “spiraling

decline” of turtles that may be irreversible.

Associated Press contributed to this reporting

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FTX assets frozen by Bahamas regulator as crypto exchange fights for survival

Founder Sam Bankman-Fried races to find funds to fill multibillion-dollar hole in exchange



Sam Bankman-Fried, the founder of FTX. The Bahamian securities regulator has also appointed a liquidator. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty

[Dan Milmo](#) *Global technology editor*

Fri 11 Nov 2022 09.28 ESTFirst published on Fri 11 Nov 2022 03.51 EST

The [Bahamas](#) securities regulator has frozen the assets of the Bahamas subsidiary of FTX, as the world's second largest cryptocurrency exchange struggles for survival.

The Securities Commission of the Bahamas [said on Thursday](#) it had frozen the assets of FTX Digital Markets and related parties, as well appointing a liquidator for the unit.

“The powers of the directors of FDM have been suspended and no assets of FDM, client assets or trust assets held by FDM, can be transferred, assigned or otherwise dealt with, without the written approval of the provisional liquidator,” the commission said.

The commission added in its statement that it had noted recent reports that FTX customers’ assets were mishandled, mismanaged or transferred to Alameda Research, the crypto hedge fund owned by FTX’s founder, Sam Bankman-Fried.

“Based on the commission’s information, any such actions would have been contrary to normal governance, without client consent and potentially unlawful,” it said.

The move came as Bankman-Fried scrambled to find funds to plug a financial hole in the Bahamas-based exchange that could be as deep as \$8bn (£6.8bn), according to multiple reports, as customers rush for the exit.

On Friday, Changpeng Zhao, the founder of FTX’s rival Binance, warned the crypto market faced a 2008-style crisis with more failures to come. He told a conference in Indonesia that the global financial crisis was “probably an accurate analogy” to this week’s events, the [Financial Times](#) reported.

In the US, the Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission are reportedly examining FTX to determine whether any criminal activity or securities offences have been committed. The Australian Financial Review [reported](#) on Friday that FTX’s Australian arm had been put into administration, while FTX’s US platform – separate from FTX’s international exchange – has warned trading may be halted in “a few days”.

On Thursday, [Bankman-Fried apologised](#), saying he had “fucked up” in his calculations and in his communications during the crisis.

BlockFi, a crypto lender, said on Friday morning it was pausing customer withdrawals after the FTX situation. FTX had bailed out BlockFi in June with a \$250m loan, a week after having loaned almost \$500m to the struggling crypto broker Voyager Digital. BlockFi said it was “not able to operate business as usual” given the situation.

pic.twitter.com/zNF1uP6evl

— BlockFi (@BlockFi) [November 11, 2022](#)

The FTX crisis was triggered last week by reports that the balance sheet of Alameda was loaded with billions of dollars worth of FTT tokens, implying that any volatility in the token’s price could endanger Bankman-Fried’s empire.

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FTX customers withdrew \$6bn in the 72 hours before Tuesday morning, Reuters reported, citing a message to staff at FTX, when the exchange was forced to block further redemptions in an effort to remain solvent. It has yet to restart withdrawals, is blocking new account signups and advising existing customers against making deposits with FTX.

The Alameda reports became a crisis for FTX when Binance, the largest cryptocurrency exchange, announced on Sunday it would sell its holdings – about \$500m worth – in FTT, citing “recent revelations”. The value of FTT subsequently fell far below the \$22 floor that FTX had committed to

support, and customers then triggered the crypto equivalent of a bank run by attempting to withdraw their funds faster than the exchange could process them.

Bitcoin, the cornerstone crypto asset, fell 2.6% on Friday to about \$17,340, having jumped on Thursday when markets rallied after [US inflation fell more than expected](#).

“Confidence is gone on day one of this fallout and there is no sight of it coming back yet,” said Kami Zeng, the head of research at Fore Elite Capital Management, a Hong Kong-based crypto fund manager.

The credit ratings firm Standard & Poor’s said on Friday it expected more crypto industry collapses. “This week’s events amplify an already significant fall in crypto prices that started earlier this year and will likely accelerate collateral calls and liquidations. This could lead to more crypto players defaulting,” S&P global ratings said.

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