

## Catch up: Russia threatens “spiral of tension”; “Hong Kong 47” sentenced



**Russia** responded angrily to President Joe Biden’s decision to allow **Ukraine** to fire ATACM [missiles](#), supplied by America, into Russian territory. The Kremlin warned of a “whole new spiral of tension”. America’s State Department said [Russia](#) was responsible for escalating the conflict “time and time again”. America’s policy reversal follows the deployment of North Korean troops to fight alongside Russians. Olaf Scholz, Germany’s chancellor, said his country would not lift a similar ban.

A judge in **Hong Kong** sentenced 45 activists and former politicians who had been convicted of subversion under a law imposed by China. The [“Hong Kong 47”](#) had organised an unofficial primary in 2020 to improve the chances of pro-democracy candidates in a legislative election. Benny Tai, whom the judge called the “mastermind”, was sentenced to ten years in prison. Two defendants were acquitted in May.

**Germany** and **Finland** said they were “deeply concerned” about the severing of an **undersea cable** connecting the countries. An

“external force” probably cut the fibre-optic cable on Monday morning, according to its operator. The countries’ governments said European security was under threat from both Russian aggression and “hybrid warfare by malicious actors”. [Undersea cables](#) are increasingly becoming military targets.

Tens of thousands of **New Zealanders** protested outside Parliament against a bill that they argue would diminish the rights of indigenous **Maori** people. The ACT New Zealand party, which proposed the legislation, wants to reinterpret the 184-year-old Treaty of Waitangi. It sets out, among other things, [Maori](#) land rights. The bill has little support in Parliament and is unlikely to become law.

Two women said that **Matt Gaetz** paid them for sex, their lawyer told ABC News. Mr Gaetz is Mr Trump’s [nominee for attorney-general](#). The women testified privately to the House Ethics Committee about their encounters. One said that, in 2017, she saw Mr Gaetz have sex with a 17-year-old at a party. Mr Gaetz has denied the allegations.

The chief minister of Delhi, **India’s** capital, declared a “medical emergency” after **air pollution** hit record levels on Monday. Schools and construction sites were closed; hundreds of flights were delayed. Last week [Pakistan’s](#) Punjab province declared a health emergency amid toxic smog. The pollution in Delhi and in Pakistani Punjab is caused in part by farmers who set fire to fields of stubble.

**New York’s** transit board voted in favour of **congestion charging** in Manhattan. The original scheme, [abruptly scrapped](#) in June, proposed a \$15 fee for cars entering the city’s central business district. A lower toll of \$9 will be implemented in January if approved by federal officials. The Democratic governor of neighbouring New Jersey criticised the plan as putting “unfair burdens” on commuters.

**Figure of the day:** \$2trn, the amount by which Elon Musk wants to cut the federal budget—more than the government’s discretionary spending in a year. [Read the full story.](#)

# Raising the stakes in Ukraine



Both sides in the Ukraine war are raising the stakes. On Sunday President Joe Biden at last lifted [restrictions](#) on Ukraine using Western long-range missiles against military targets in Russia. The decision came immediately after possibly the biggest Russian attack of the war against Ukraine's tottering energy infrastructure.

Ukraine can reportedly use the missiles against Russian and North Korean forces trying to push it out of Kursk, but not where they would be most needed, against the bases channelling weapons and troops into the eastern region of Donbas. Nonetheless, the Kremlin warned that the move adds “oil to the fire”, and deepens American involvement in the conflict.

Meanwhile, news from the front remains [grim](#). Russia is making gains in Donetsk, although its losses are staggering: at least 1,700 dead and wounded each day. Russia seems intent on taking as much territory as possible before Donald Trump becomes president and perhaps tries to bully the protagonists into a ceasefire.

# The “Hong Kong 47” are sentenced



On Tuesday a court in Hong Kong handed down 45 sentences in the city’s biggest national-security trial. In May 14 members of the “Hong Kong 47” were [found guilty](#) of subversion because they had held unofficial primaries in 2020 to improve their chances of winning control of the legislature. (Thirty-one defendants pleaded guilty before the trial.) The defendants’ lawyers said that was simply the practice of normal electoral politics.

Sentences included ten years’ imprisonment for Benny Tai, whom the judge described as the mastermind, and four-and-a-half years’ for Joshua Wong, who was a teenager when he became one of the faces of Hong Kong’s pro-democracy protests.

On Wednesday Jimmy Lai, a 76-year-old pro-democracy media tycoon, is expected to testify after the resumption of his national-security trial, which was adjourned in July. For many Hong Kongers, the two trials seem like the stamping out of the embers of the territory’s democratic dreams.



# What America's Democrats do next



On Tuesday Democrats in the House of Representatives will choose their leader, the first big decision the party has made since it lost the presidency and control of the Senate in this month's elections. The result gives the Republicans a “[trifecta](#)”, control of the White House and both houses of Congress. House Democrats are likely to re-select Hakeem Jeffries, a moderate congressman from New York, to be their leader in the chamber. Chuck Schumer, also from New York will probably remain the Democrats' leader in the Senate when they cede control to the Republicans in January.

Still, the Democrats will [not be powerless](#). Republican majorities in both houses are small, so a handful of moderates could block Donald Trump's initiatives, for example [appointments to his cabinet](#), by voting with Democrats against them. That is scant comfort for a party that fared much worse than it expected to in the elections, even losing the popular vote in the presidential contest. The inquest into what happened is just beginning. It will be [painful](#).

# To the tractors! British farmers in revolt



Farmers will rally in London on Tuesday, to [protest](#) against their treatment by Britain's Labour government. Rachel Reeves, the finance minister, is slashing subsidies. And in her budget on October 30th she closed a loophole that had allowed farmers' descendants to inherit large amounts of land and other property without paying tax.

Some very rich people who rarely got mud under their fingernails had bought land to benefit from the loophole. But the new levy, of 20% on property valued above £1m (\$1.3m), will affect many real farmers. In the 2022-23 financial year, 49% of English farms had a net worth of at least £1.5m. More generally, British people seem to dislike inheritance tax, not because they will have to pay it (only one in 20 deaths leads to a bill) but because they think it unfair. Protesting farmers will probably attract more sympathy than the average millionaire.

## A wry satire of Hollywood and race



Charles Yu won America's National Book Award in 2020 for his novel, "Interior Chinatown", a satire of Hollywood's treatment of East Asian and Asian-American actors and stories. Hulu, a streaming service, has turned it into a ten-episode series, which premieres on Tuesday. Mr Yu, who was also a screenwriter for HBO's "Westworld", wrote two of the episodes. The protagonist of this detective drama is Willis Wu, who always feels like "a background character in someone else's story". The twist is that he's right.

Willis is a waiter at a restaurant in Chinatown. He idolises and envies his brother who graduated from bit-part roles—in "Generic Asian Man" and "Disgraced Son"—to become a star—in "Kung Fu Guy"—then mysteriously disappeared. Starring the mopey, droll Jimmy O. Yang, with Ronny Chieng as his friend and Chloe Bennet as an actor playing a detective, "Interior Chinatown" offers a surreal, inventive take on Hollywood's [attitudes to race](#).



## Daily quiz



*The Economist*

We will serve you a new question each day this week. On Friday your challenge is to give us all five answers and, as important, tell us the connecting theme. Email your responses (and include mention of your home city and country) by 1700 BST on Friday to [QuizEspresso@economist.com](mailto:QuizEspresso@economist.com). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

**Tuesday:** What title is most associated with Prince Philip, the late husband of Queen Elizabeth II?

**Monday:** Mikhail Bulgakov is best known for which novel, oft cited as a 20th-century classic?

**I am trying to do two things: dare to be a radical and not a fool, which is a matter of no small difficulty.**

*James A. Garfield*