

## Catch up: South Korea's Yoon impeached; America in “direct contact” with Syria's new rulers



South Korean legislators voted to [impeach](#) **Yoon Suk Yeol** over his declaration of martial law on December 3rd. The first motion failed last week because of opposition from members of Mr Yoon's ruling People Power Party. This time, enough PPP members changed tack. Thousands of anti-Yoon protesters gathered outside the national assembly ahead of the vote. The constitutional court has up to 180 days to confirm the impeachment.

Antony Blinken, America's secretary of state, said his country had made “direct contact” with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the Syrian group that [led the rebellion](#) against Bashar al-Assad. America, like many Western countries and the UN, considers HTS a terrorist organisation. Meanwhile, satellite images appeared to show **Russian forces** preparing to leave Syria. The overthrow of Mr Assad is a significant blow to the Kremlin's military ambitions in the [region and beyond](#).

**TikTok** failed to win a temporary reprieve from a law requiring it to [divest in America](#). Under a law signed by President Joe Biden, ByteDance, TikTok's Chinese parent company, must sell the video platform to an American buyer by January 19th or be banned. The firm asked an appeals court in Washington, DC for more time to take its case to the Supreme Court.

Crowds gathered outside **Georgia's** parliament to protest against the inauguration of Mikheil Kavelashvili, a former footballer, as president. Demonstrations—which began in October after Georgian Dream, the ruling party, won a fourth term in elections marred by allegations of vote-rigging—have intensified since November 28th, when the government said it would pause EU accession negotiations. Many Georgians fear their country will be dragged back under Russian influence.

[Sam Altman](#), **OpenAI's** boss, will reportedly donate \$1m to **Donald Trump's** inauguration events. He joins a growing list of tech titans contributing to the president-elect's fund; Amazon and Meta have made similar pledges. Technology companies may be hoping to curry favour with Mr Trump, who has talked about clamping down on Big Tech and loosening regulation of AI.

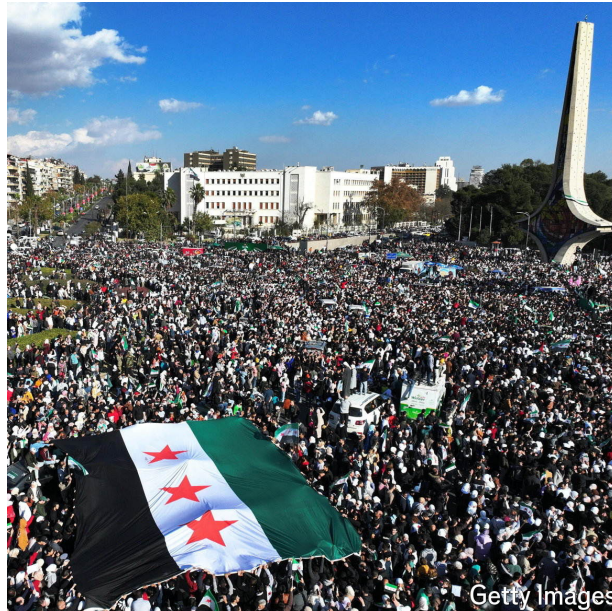
**Prince Andrew** said he had cut contact with a Chinese businessman and [alleged spy](#) whom Britain's national-security court banned from the country. The man, who has not been publicly identified and who denied ties to China's government, had unsuccessfully petitioned to stay in Britain. The court found that he had “been in a position” to leverage his connections for “political interference purposes”.

**Nancy Pelosi**, America's former speaker of the House of Representatives, was hospitalised during a congressional visit to Luxembourg following an unspecified injury. Ms Pelosi, who is 84, “continues to work” but will not attend remaining events on the

trip, her spokesperson said. Ms Pelosi was visiting the country to mark the 80th anniversary of the [Battle of the Bulge](#).

**Word of the week:** *Chuan Jianguo*, a nickname given to Donald Trump by some Chinese nationalists, meaning “Trump the Nation Builder”. [Read the full story](#).

## Syria looks eagerly to a new era



For now, the mood is still exuberant. On Friday hundreds of thousands of people in Syria came out to celebrate [Bashar al-Assad's downfall](#). Muhammad al-Bashir, the interim prime minister, led Friday prayers from the historic Umayyad mosque in Damascus. Syrian exiles are flocking back to visit a country they doubted they would see again.

But a tough reality lies ahead. The [interim government](#) says the economy is a top priority. It wants to raise salaries for civil servants, which are currently as low as \$25 a month. It may also need to find new suppliers for important commodities. In recent years Syria sourced much of its grain from Russia and its oil from Iran, often paying for both on credit (it is thought to owe Iran tens of billions of dollars). Those shipments have been suspended. Western powers do not seem in a hurry to lift economic sanctions—but Syria will need help soon.

# America and Ukraine dispute arms and men



A war of words has broken out between the outgoing Biden administration and Ukraine's president. Several senior American officials have recently argued that Ukraine's biggest problem is a lack of manpower, and that it needs to lower the minimum age of conscription from 25 to 18. A government spokesman said that if Ukraine changes its policy, America will arm and train the recruits.

Volodymyr Zelensky retorted that allies had fully equipped only a quarter of the ten brigades they he had requested earlier in the year. He said that young soldiers should not “compensate” for a lack of arms and training, and argues that preserving lives, and not “weapons in storage”, should be the goal. That reflects Ukraine's worries about its [long-term demographics](#). Meanwhile Russia has suffered some 87,500 [casualties](#) over the past two months, as estimated by Britain's defence ministry, to achieve quite small gains. Russia only controls 0.5% more of Ukraine's territory than a year ago.



## Sri Lanka's new leader visits India



Anura Dissanayake's election as Sri Lanka's president in September raised concerns in India. His Marxist-leaning party has criticised "Indian expansionism" in the past and has ties to China. Some of India's apprehensions will be allayed on Sunday. That is when Mr Dissanayake travels to Delhi, in his first foreign visit since taking office.

His meeting with Narendra Modi, India's prime minister, will focus on economic co-operation, maritime security and infrastructure projects. India provided Sri Lanka with aid during an economic crisis in 2022 and has invested in its infrastructure, including in a controversial wind-power project by the [Adani Group](#), a giant Indian conglomerate. Indian help, however, is dwarfed by support from China, which remains Sri Lanka's biggest lender. Mr Dissanayake will take care in his dealings with the two giants. He plans to visit Beijing next month. Indian officials may become jittery again soon.

## Stardust on the oche



Last year a British teenager, Luke Littler, became an unlikely sensation by reaching the final of the Professional Darts Corporation world [darts championship](#), the sport's biggest event. He will try to go one better at this year's championship, which begins at Alexandra Palace in London on Sunday. Since his breakthrough, Mr Littler has won tournaments in Bahrain and the Netherlands, as well as his first major title, the PDC Grand Slam, last month. He is now ranked fourth in the world.

Those in his way include the world number one, Luke Humphries, who beat Mr Littler in the 2023 world-championship final. Both players have a bye in the first round and are scheduled to meet in a mouth-watering semi-final. The PDC's president Barry Hearn, is looking to capitalise on Mr Littler's eye-catching emergence. The body's broadcasting deal with Sky Sports ends after this tournament—and Mr Hearn is talking up interest from big streamers such as Amazon Prime and Netflix.

# Works on paper at the Pitzhanger



Art often starts with a blank sheet of paper—whether to scrawl ideas in notepads, or to sketch the early shapes of works. Yet a growing number of artists are using the humble material as their [primary medium](#). Works on paper are diverse: they include those painted with oils or splashed with acrylics, as well as experiments with printmaking techniques, from etchings to woodcuts.

A new exhibition at the Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery in west London showcases this diversity, assembling more than 150 original works. The highlight of the show is an assortment of colourful prints by Sir Peter Blake, the “Godfather of pop art”. Striking works by lesser-known artists include Fei Alexeli’s surreal collages and Kristina Chan’s wild landscapes. But the rest of the exhibition feels more random. The gallery that supplied the works, For Art’s Sake, is hoping visitors will purchase the prints. But to properly showcase an oft-overlooked medium, the Pitzhanger might need to go back to the drawing board.



# Weekly crossword



Our crossword has two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:

## Cryptic clues

*1 down* Russian ruler's pet hate—regret, unfortunately (5,3,5)

*1 across* Vegetable dish comes with irregular caution (6)

*2 across* Murmur a little nonsense for someone like you (5)

*3 across* Reversing track critical for country (6)

## Factual clues

*1 down* One of the leaders under which the Russian Orthodox Church flourished (5,3,5)

*1 across* Main ingredient of pancakes popular in Poland (6)

2 across Species for whom tracing a migration pattern is tricky (5)

3 across One of the three countries that bombed targets in Syria the day after Bashar al-Assad fled (6)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to [crossword@economist.com](mailto:crossword@economist.com). We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

## The winners of this week's quiz



*The Economist*

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

**Jeannette Duplessis**, Calgary, Canada

**Emilio J. Ferreira**, Buenos Aires, Argentina

**Ksenia Lenina**, Lewes, Britain

They all gave the correct answers of Alsace and Lorraine, What's up, doc?, Boy George, Marty and the DeLorean Motor Company. The theme is the film Back to the Future; Marty McFly, his parents Lorraine and George, his scientist friend Doc Brown and a time-travelling DeLorean.

The questions were:

**Monday:** Which two provinces suffered repeated transfers of power between France and Germany from 1871 to 1945?

**Tuesday:** What was the catchphrase of Bugs Bunny?

**Wednesday:** Who was the lead singer of the band Culture Club?

**Thursday:** Which movie starring Ernest Borgnine won the Oscar for best picture in 1956?

**Friday:** Which short-lived motor company produced a sports car in the early 1980s with gull-wing doors?





**Where all think alike, no one thinks very much.**

*Walter Lippmann*