

The world in brief, July 9th 2024



In a letter to congressional Democrats, **President Joe Biden** said that he was “[firmly committed](#)” to staying in **America’s** presidential race. While calling into a television program he challenged Democratic “elites” who don’t think he should run to “announce for president”. At least nine senior Democrats have now called for Mr Biden to step aside; on Monday Adam Smith, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, suggested Kamala Harris, the vice-president, should replace him.

A **Russian strike** on [Ukraine](#) killed at least 41 people—the worst attack on the country in months. More than 140 people were injured. In Kyiv, the capital, missiles struck the main children’s hospital. They also hit Dnipro, a central city, and two eastern cities. On Tuesday [NATO allies](#) begin a three-day summit in America, where they are expected to pledge more military support for Ukraine.

Boeing is in talks with America’s defence department over how the aerospace giant’s plan to [plead guilty to fraud](#) could affect its many government contracts, Reuters reported. Boeing allegedly misled

regulators over the cause of two **737 MAX** crashes some five years ago. The firm reached a deal with America's Department of Justice and could be fined up to \$487.2m.

Australia accused **China** of supporting APT40, a cyber-hacking group that is "actively conducting regular reconnaissance against networks of interest in Australia". The statement by the Australian Signals Directorate, the national [cyber-security](#) agency, was backed by several other countries, including America, Britain and Japan. They cited a "shared understanding" of the threat posed by the Chinese "state-sponsored cyber group".

Porsche said its deliveries dropped by 7% in the first half of 2024, compared with the same period a year earlier. The German carmaker said that demand in China, the world's latest car market, dropped by about a third year on year. The EU's introduction of [provisional tariffs](#) on Chinese electric vehicles could prompt retaliation from China, further weakening European manufacturers' exports.

Guangzhou R&F Properties, a **Chinese property developer**, received a winding-up order from Seatown Private Credit Master Fund, a Singaporean private-equity fund, over non-repayment of a loan worth \$614m. It is the latest Chinese property developer to face liquidation suits filed by creditors. Evergrande, a property behemoth, was [ordered to liquidate](#) earlier this year.

Topaz Smith, a former employee of the **World Economic Forum**, has sued the organisation, saying that it denied her professional advancement because she is a black woman. The WEF, which organises a glitzy annual conference for business leaders in Davos, a Swiss ski resort, has been the target of several other allegations by employees of discrimination and sexual harassment in recent months.

Figure of the day: 49%, the proportion of Americans who think that destroying excess embryos is morally acceptable. [Read the full story.](#)

In the run-up to America's presidential election, we've launched The US in brief—a daily update to help you keep on top of the political stories that matter. Sign up here to receive it as a newsletter, each weekday, in your inbox.

America's inflation fades away



Inflation in America appears to be coming under control. But the Federal Reserve is wary of declaring victory for now, lest price pressures bubble up again, as they did at the start of this year. On Tuesday, when Jerome Powell, the Fed's chairman, presents his twice-yearly monetary-policy report to Congress, he is expected to strike a note of **cautious optimism**. He will probably say that there has been progress in taming inflation but that more good data are needed before he will be confident enough to cut interest rates.

Thursday may provide just that. The consumer-price index for June is forecast to have risen by a tiny 0.1% month on month after being flat in May. The easing of inflation comes alongside evidence that the economy is slowing, with the labour market cooling, too. If the Fed waits too long to lower rates, the focus of worries may soon shift from high inflation to tepid growth.

A gloomy NATO celebration



NATO's [75th birthday party](#), which starts in Washington on Tuesday, will be bittersweet. Sweet because the alliance has thrived longer than anyone expected and still attracts members (Finland and Sweden are the newest). But bitter because it faces growing threats.

With Russian forces grinding forward, Ukraine will need much more military and [economic support](#)—and for a long time. NATO countries will also need to spend more on their own armies to fulfil the alliance's regional defence plans, which have been beefed up to counter Russia's belligerence.

Another big worry is the march of populism in some of NATO's biggest members. America's president, Joe Biden, is [enfeebled and old](#). His French counterpart, Emmanuel Macron, has been weakened by his unpopularity at home. Sir Keir Starmer's victory in the British election offers hope that centrist politics can prevail. But if Donald Trump wins America's election in November, the alliance will face an existential crisis. He could abandon Ukraine, and may even forsake NATO altogether.

Britain's new-look Parliament



On Tuesday Britain's Parliament will sit for the first time since the Labour Party swept to power in last week's [general election](#). The number of Labour MPs has more than doubled, rising to 411. The number of Tory MPs, meanwhile, has plunged to 121. The Liberal Democrats have become the third-largest party, totalling 72 MPs. The Scottish National Party, meanwhile, will be a quieter presence: their cohort has been slashed from 48 to 9.

The first job of the House of Commons will be to re-elect the speaker, Lindsay Hoyle. That is a foregone conclusion. New MPs will then be sworn in over three days, taking an oath of loyalty to King Charles. But the real business begins next week, on July 17th, with the formal opening of the new parliament and the publication of [the government's legislative agenda](#). Bills on employment rights and planning reform are expected to be among the first that the government brings before the house.

The Ariane 6 prepares to launch



Europe has been without the ability to launch a large satellite for a year. That should change on Tuesday. The Ariane 6—a much delayed replacement for the Ariane 5 satellite-hauling rocket, which was retired in 2023—is due to make its maiden lift-off from Europe's spaceport in French Guiana on Tuesday evening.

The Ariane 6 is built for the European Space Agency by Safran and Airbus, two aerospace firms. Because it has no reusable stage and will fly just eight or nine times a year, it will not be able to compete on price or convenience with the partially reusable Falcon 9, built by [SpaceX](#), an American firm, which flew ten missions last month. But Europe sees a sovereign launch system as a strategic necessity and is willing to subsidise one. Amazon, which is building a satellite constellation to compete with SpaceX's Starlink, is also keen to avoid relying upon Falcon 9s. The online retailer has already signed up for 18 Ariane 6 flights.

Love and death in the American West



In the 1890s Butte, Montana was “screeching and crazy and loud as the depths of Hell”. So writes [Kevin Barry](#), the author of “The Heart in Winter”. The novel, published on Tuesday, is about the Irish diaspora in the boomtowns of the Mountain West in the 19th century. Mr Barry’s main characters, Tom and Polly, ditch Butte at the first chance they get and strike out for San Francisco. But their forbidden love affair—Polly is married—seems doomed from the beginning.

This is typical of Mr Barry, who was born in Limerick and often writes about Irish melancholy. One character even muses that the Irish are a people “soaked in an ambiance of death from the cradle”. But the book is hardly morose; rather, it is brimming with the author’s dark humour. Though new to writing about the American West, Mr Barry has fashioned a true [Western](#) novel that reveres its landscape and bears witness to its brutality.

Daily quiz



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. We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Tuesday: Which term in ice hockey was used as the title of the film from 1977 about the sport, starring Paul Newman?

Monday: In the imperial system, what measurement equals 0.9144 metres?

49%

The proportion of Americans who think that it is morally acceptable to destroy embryos, which is part of the process of in-vitro fertilisation.

Read the full story.

Most of us really exist at the mercy of other people's formulations of what's important.

June Jordan