

## The world in brief, July 9th 2024



A **Russian strike** on [Ukraine](#) killed at least 36 people. It was the worst attack on the country in months. In Kyiv, the capital, missiles hit a children's hospital. Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president, said that at least 40 missiles had damaged infrastructure in the capital, as well as in Dnipro, a central city, and two eastern cities. On Tuesday [NATO allies will meet](#) in America, where they are expected to pledge more military support for Ukraine.

In a letter to congressional Democrats, **President Joe Biden** said that he was “firmly committed” to staying in **America's** presidential race. Calling into a television interview the same day, [Mr Biden](#) also challenged Democratic “elites” who don't think he should run to “announce for president”. On Sunday, several senior **Democrats** reportedly called for Mr Biden to make way for another candidate during a private virtual meeting.

Viktor Orban, **Hungary's** Russia-friendly prime minister, met Xi Jinping, **China's** president, in Beijing, to discuss a deal to end the war in Ukraine. Mr Xi told his Hungarian counterpart that a ceasefire would only be possible if major powers “create

conditions” for Russia and Ukraine to “resume direct dialogue”. [Mr Orbán](#) visited President Vladimir Putin last week, drawing condemnation from European leaders.

**Boeing** said it would [plead guilty to fraud](#) after allegedly misleading American regulators over the cause of two **737 MAX** crashes some five years ago. The aerospace giant reached a deal with America’s Department of Justice and could be fined up to \$487.2m. As part of the agreement, Boeing will invest \$455m in its [compliance and safety](#) programmes over the next three years.

**Israeli politicians** argued over a potential ceasefire and hostage deal with Hamas. Yair Lapid, the leader of the opposition, said he would provide [Binyamin Netanyahu](#) with a “political safety net” to get a deal through parliament. But divisions in the government were laid bare by the finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, who said he would not be a part of “a deal to surrender to Hamas”.

**Hurricane Beryl** made landfall in **Texas** with a wind speed of up to 80 miles (129km) per hour before it was downgraded to a tropical storm. At least two people have died, reportedly by trees falling on their homes, and more than 2.6m are without power. The [powerful storm](#) killed at least 11 people in the Caribbean.

A **Russian** military court sentenced Evgenia Berkovich, a poet and theatre director, and Svetlana Petriyчук, a playwright, to six years in prison each. They were charged with “justification of terrorism” for [writing and staging a play](#) about Islamic State, which premiered in 2020. Ms Berkovich, an outspoken opponent of Russia’s war in Ukraine, testified that she “staged the performance to prevent terrorism”.

**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 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](mailto: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 destroying excess embryos is morally acceptable.*

*Read the full story.*

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

*June Jordan*