

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

The **Biden administration** announced it will introduce new [tariffs](#) on imports from **China**. They will apply to \$18bn worth of Chinese products, including electric vehicles, solar equipment and batteries. The tariff rate on EVs will quadruple to 100%, and in some cases taxes on imports of steel and aluminium will be tripled, months before the presidential election. Lael Brainard, the White House national economic adviser, said that the move intends to ensure that a flood of “unfairly under-priced” Chinese goods doesn’t threaten American jobs.

Georgia’s parliament approved a “foreign agent” bill that will [require](#) NGOs and media outlets which get more than 20% of their funding from abroad to enter themselves into a public registry. The law looks like an imitation of similar measures in **Russia**, which has used the “foreign agent” label to silence critical voices. The passing of the rule may diminish Georgia’s chances of joining the European Union.

Producer prices in **America** rose 2.2% year on year in April, the highest rate since April 2023, and above analysts’ expectations. The core measure—which removes volatile trade services, food and energy prices—increased by 2.4%, also topping expectations. The uptick in producer prices suggests that the **Federal Reserve** may cut interest rates by less than [hoped](#) this year.

Antony Blinken, America’s secretary of state, travelled to **Ukraine**, as a [Russian assault](#) around Kharkiv continued to gain ground. Ukrainian and Russian troops are [locked in a fierce battle](#) for the town of Vovchansk, around 70km north-east of Kharkiv. An American official said that new American weapons, including long-

range missiles and air-defence equipment, are already reaching the front line.

Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, will visit **Xi Jinping**, his Chinese counterpart, in Beijing on Thursday and Friday this week. The trip underscores how China's ties with Russia are growing more [solid](#). Mr Xi has played an important role in supporting Russia's economy, and its war machine, following the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Meanwhile, Russia is providing cheap fuel to China.

Heavily armed men ambushed a prison van to free an inmate in the Eure region of northern **France**, killing two prison guards and injuring at least three others. Both the inmate and the attackers escaped. A huge manhunt was launched to find them. **Emmanuel Macron**, France's president, said that "everything is being done to find the perpetrators of this crime".

Alice Munro, an illustrious [Canadian author](#) of short stories, died aged 92, after suffering from dementia for more than a decade. Ms Munro's insight into her characters' minds and hearts, her illumination of human emotion and deception, placed her among the truly great. She published more than a dozen collections of short stories and earned a Nobel Prize in 2013.

Figure of the day: \$120bn, Russia's spending on its armed forces this year, a third of total government spending. [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.



Photo: Getty Images

Germany's economy under the microscope

On Tuesday Germany published its inflation rate for April, which was 2.2% year on year. That was the same as in March but down from January and February, owing mainly to lower energy and food prices. On the same day an update of the ZEW economics indicator, a leading barometer of the German economy, will be published.

Last month's ZEW figures showed that expectations for the export-orientated economy had improved. That was mostly due to lower inflation and the upswing of the global economy (in particular of countries that import lots of German goods). Even so, according to the German Economic Institute, a think-tank, the country's economy is likely to flatline this year. Both the manufacturing industry and the construction industry are struggling. Although lower inflation will boost spending somewhat, Germans are a parsimonious lot. Their increased consumption will only make up for a bit of the shrinkage across the economy.

Goethe get through it

Germany, consumer prices
% increase on a year earlier



Source: Haver Analytics



Photo: Getty Images

Can Alibaba get the magic back?

Alibaba, [China's top e-commerce giant](#), has been struggling to compete with its rivals. PDD has been growing much faster. A short-video platform known as Douyin, which is owned by the same company that owns TikTok, has been figuring out how to sell things through a form of entertainment-commerce. Growth in e-commerce transactions in China is expected to slow from around 13% annually over the past five years to just 8-9% during the next

two years, and much of that growth will be swallowed up by PDD and Douyin.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, Alibaba's results, a mixed bag, did little to buoy investors when they were published on Tuesday. Revenue for the first three months of the year increased by 7% year on year. But the company also reported a decrease in net income of 96% year on year, primarily due to a net loss from "investments in publicly-traded companies during the quarter". Encouragingly, though, revenues in its core e-commerce business rose by 4% year on year, faster than the 2% recorded in the previous quarter.



Photo: Getty Images

America raises tariffs on Chinese EVs

Two years ago the Biden administration began a review of tariffs imposed by Donald Trump on imports from China. At the time many observers thought it might culminate in a reduction of the levies, in order to lower inflation. Instead, on Tuesday the White House quadrupled tariffs on [Chinese-made electric vehicles](#) to a whopping 100%. The protectionist move is intended to forestall an influx of cars from China. Just as America has invested vast amounts of money to encourage its carmakers to electrify their

fleets, China has ramped up production of EVs—typically at much lower prices and of higher quality.

But Joe Biden is also trying to get ahead of Mr Trump, who is considering 60% across-the-board tariffs on China if he returns to the White House. As well as the announcement on EVs, Mr Biden also hiked levies on other goods, including from 7.5% to 25% on lithium batteries and from 25% to 50% on semiconductors. The measures will inflame trade tensions between the two economic superpowers.



Photo: Getty Images

Crafting a new security arrangement for Ukraine

Should a Ukraine at war be invited to join NATO? At the opening of the Copenhagen Democracy Summit, a talking shop, on Tuesday, [Andriy Yermak](#), Volodymyr Zelensky's chief of staff, and Anders Fogh Rasmussen, a former secretary-general of NATO, will propose just that. They will also recommend new measures to constrain Russia's assault, which is gaining troubling momentum near Kharkiv, Ukraine's second city.

Mr Rasmussen has previously suggested that Ukraine could join NATO with its occupied parts temporarily exempted from Article 5,

the security guarantee that holds that an attack on one member is an attack on all. West Germany's accession to NATO in 1955 offers an imperfect precedent: the Soviet-occupied portion of Germany joined only after reunification in 1990. But a similar approach to accession for Ukraine is unlikely and radical, so Mr Rasmussen's new proposal sidesteps it. With no end to the fighting in sight, initiatives for deterring Russia will probably become increasingly creative.



Photo: Getty Images

The Las Vegas Aces trump their rivals

The first four matches of the Women's National Basketball Association championship take place on Tuesday. Fans will be watching [Caitlin Clark](#), a college phenomenon who has just joined the WNBA. Ms Clark will play for Indiana Fever, who won just 13 of their 40 matches last year. But the favourites remain the Las Vegas Aces: they are looking for their third consecutive title.

The Aces are raising standards in the league. In 2022 Mark Davis, the team's owner, appointed Becky Hammon as coach on a \$1m annual salary. That made her the highest-paid coach in WNBA history. Mr Davis has invested \$40m in a new training facility and bought good players. A'ja Wilson, a forward, may be the best in the

league. Chelsea Gray, a point guard, was “Most Valuable Player” at the 2022 Finals. And Jackie Young was voted most-improved player in the same year. There is good strength on the bench. They may be the first team to score three straight championship wins since 2000.



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 GMT on Friday to [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Tuesday: Which astronaut was the central character in David Bowie's song "Space Oddity"?

Monday: Who played the Joker in the Christopher Nolan film "The Dark Knight"?

The most violent element in society is ignorance.

Emma Goldman