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THE NEW RIGHT

THE REINVENTION OF J.D. VANCE

by ERIC CORTELLESSA

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The Reinvention of J.D. Vance

Eric Cortellessa is a staff writer at TIME, based in the Washington, D.C. bureau. He covers Congress, Donald Trump, and national politics.

J.D. Vance looks annoyed. It's a Tuesday afternoon in August, and we're sitting near the front of his campaign plane, flying from a rally in Michigan to a fundraiser in Tennessee. Across the aisle is his mother Bev, whose role in Vance's traumatic and disruptive childhood he chronicled in his best-selling memoir, *Hillbilly Elegy*. As flight attendants serve Chick-fil-A, Vance gripes about the ongoing controversy over his three-year-old comments complaining that the U.S. is being run by Democrats, corporate oligarchs, and "childless cat ladies" who "don't really have a direct stake" in the country's future. As with his boss, Vance's instincts are to punch back. "I think it's a ridiculous thing to focus on," he says, "instead of the underlying argument I was trying to make."

Since being tapped by Donald Trump, Vance has been mired in a series of controversies like this. Some have been silly political attacks, like the baseless fabrication, spread widely on social

media, that he committed a sexual act with a piece of furniture. Some have been cringey, like his response to white supremacists' attacking his wife, the daughter of Indian immigrants. ("Obviously, she's not a white person," he replied, "but I just, I love Usha.") Some have been substantive; he's disparaged the millions of Americans who don't have children. And some have had consequences: Vance's willingness to spread the debunked claim—shot down by both local officials and the state's Republican governor—that Haitian migrants in an Ohio city are eating people's pets resulted in bomb threats and the harassment of legal immigrants by right-wing extremists. Surveys show public opinion of Vance has fallen since his debut as Trump's VP.

Vance's penchant for provocation has often obscured the set of ideas he's seeking to advance. The Ohio Senator has positioned himself at the vanguard of an emerging ideology often described as the "New Right" or "National Conservatism." The movement is socially conservative and economically populist. Vance argues that decades of unfettered trade, increased immigration, and market consolidation have led to a loss of jobs and opportunity, the disintegration of families, and widening regional inequality, vesting too much cultural power in the hands of liberal elites and too much economic power in corporate boardrooms. The political project aims to resolve a long-standing issue for Republicans, whose need to win over heartland voters on cultural issues is in tension with an economic agenda that has benefited the wealthy over the working class.

To Vance's allies, his elevation to Trump's No. 2 was an indication their side has the upper hand in the looming battle over what the GOP should be after Trump exits the scene. "It was a very clear message and recognition that the Republican Party has been transformed," says Florida Senator Marco Rubio, whom Vance edged out for the job. And it appeared to position Vance, at 40, as the heir apparent to the Make America Great Again movement, or at the very least one of the figures poised to define the party's post-Trump future.

But for Vance's ideas to carry the day, he has to survive the role. He has been a forceful tribune for much of Trump's agenda, including restrictive immigration measures, across-the-board tariffs, and

limiting foreign entanglements. But Trump is also running as a classic business-friendly Republican who wants to cut taxes and regulations. He recently told some of the nation's wealthiest donors that he would lower their tax burdens to make them even richer. Since locking up the GOP nomination, Trump has cozied up to billionaires such as Elon Musk and the libertarian financier Jeff Yass, who have made no secret of their desire to quash renewed antitrust efforts, disempower unions, and restore laissez-faire Reaganomics.

No running mate agrees with the top of the ticket on everything. Kamala Harris opposed Joe Biden's record on busing. Biden, before becoming Vice President, supported the Iraq War, whereas Barack Obama did not. But Trump sees politics through the prism of power and loyalty, not ideology. His last Vice President, Mike Pence, was a faithful understudy until he followed his conscience and the Constitution on Jan. 6, 2021—at which point Trump appeared willing to sacrifice Pence to a braying mob chanting for Pence's hanging. Vance has endeared himself to Trump through professions of unalloyed fealty; he has said he would have followed Trump's scheme to decertify the 2020 election.

The partnership already shows some signs of strain. Trump has more than once distanced himself from Vance. He told an interviewer that VP picks have "virtually no impact" on elections. In the debate with Harris, he disavowed Vance's claim that Trump would veto a national abortion ban. While Trump has professed satisfaction with his pick, some in his orbit believe he made a mistake. "Vance didn't propel him forward. It kind of pulled him back," says a close Trump ally. "There's a lot of blowback on the J.D. pick."

The former President remains attracted to Vance's bootstrap biography: the kid from a broken home who made it to Yale Law School via the Marines; who parlayed his fame as an author into founding a venture-capital firm; and who evolved from a withering

Trump critic into one of the former President's most vehement boosters. "J.D. Vance is doing a wonderful job," Trump said in a statement to TIME. "I could not be more pleased."

During the final stretch of the campaign, Vance's ideas and political instincts alike will be tested as he attempts to play the dual role of Trump's pit bull and lapdog. At the vice-presidential debate Oct. 1 with Harris' running mate, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, Vance will aim to prosecute the case against the Democrats without alienating either swing voters or his boss. To ideological fellow travelers, the larger task is to win the battle of ideas and reorient the GOP. Winning the election is just the first step. "There's going to be a long debate," Vance tells me. "It's not going to happen overnight."

A few months into Trump's first term, in November 2017, Vance gave an address at Oberlin College in Ohio, one of the most liberal campuses in America. In an auditorium filled with the eager faces of literature professors and art-history majors, Vance spoke of the disintegrating social fabric in blue collar America: fewer people joining churches, jobs shifting overseas, community structures collapsing. Many felt they no longer had a place in the American story. In that void, he argued, the Trump constituency emerged.

Vance had recently published *Hillbilly Elegy*, which earned him a reputation as a MAGA whisperer—a public intellectual who could demystify the phenomenon for cosmopolitan audiences. “He became this kind of agent who would come and tell you from behind the lines what the enemy is thinking,” says Phil Longman, policy director of the antimonopoly think tank Open Markets, who attended the speech.

Vance’s background was always more complicated—and more interesting—than that portrait suggested. He grew up in Middletown, Ohio, with a single mother who struggled with addiction. It was a childhood defined, in his own telling, by a perpetual effort to please the succession of father figures who cycled through his mother’s home. After high school, during which he sometimes lived with his grandparents, he joined the military and served as a combat correspondent in Iraq. From there, he attended Ohio State University and Yale Law School. In New Haven, he gained mentors such as Amy Chua, the original Tiger Mom, and right-wing billionaire Peter Thiel, who hired him to work for one of his Silicon Valley venture-capital firms after graduation.

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At first, Vance was adamantly anti-Trump, calling him “cultural heroin” and “reprehensible.” In a 2016 text message to a former Yale roommate, Vance wrote: “I go back and forth between thinking Trump is a cynical a–hole like Nixon who wouldn’t be that bad (and might even prove useful) or that he’s America’s Hitler.” But as the success of *Hillbilly Elegy* gained him entry to more elite circles—from speaking at the Aspen Institute to writing a column for the New York *Times*—Vance says his views evolved. He noticed, he says, how the elite audiences he encountered looked down on the people he grew up with, and how they championed ideas that had benefited themselves at the expense of American workers.

Read More: *How Far Trump Would Go*.

Gradually, Vance says, he came to rebel against the policy orthodoxies that had prevailed for decades. Before Trump came along, both parties broadly supported free-trade agreements, increased immigration, economic deregulation, and muscular interventionism abroad. Vance was part of a generation skeptical of the effects of such policies. He grew up amid a confluence of crises: the Iraq and Afghanistan wars; the Great Recession; the opioid epidemic. He believed the highest levels of economic concentration since the Gilded Age had ravaged Middle America. “There’s a geographic element to economic growth that didn’t exist before,” he says, describing an economy controlled by fewer and fewer companies, concentrated in fewer and fewer places. As a venture capitalist, Vance recalls seeing biotech startups trying to cure Alzheimer’s disease struggle to recruit neuroscientists because so many were gobbled up by Facebook.

“After Trump won, there was this rethinking going on both on the right and the left about neoliberalism—about unfettered trade, about market consolidation, about immigration, about unionization,” says Matt Stoller, research director for the American Economic Liberties Project. “He’s part of that Republican realignment.” The core assumption of Reaganism—that government is the problem—was challenged by the realization that unconstrained corporate power was threatening Americans’ liberty. For Vance, Trump came to represent an opportunity. It wasn’t just their areas of policy alignment; Trump was waging war against the political establishment, creating the space for new ideological movements to emerge.

Another factor in Vance’s evolution was his conversion to Catholicism in 2019. Vance, who had never been baptized, came to the church through an uncle by marriage and the influence of intellectual heroes like René Girard. It was appealing not only for its social traditionalism but also for its vision of political economy.

One of the forebears of Catholic social thought, Pope Leo XIII, published an encyclical in 1891 that outlined the deleterious effects of unregulated markets on family and community. Allies say Vance's Catholic faith helped to transform a conviction reflected in *Hillbilly Elegy* that blamed the people he grew up with for their own misfortune, rather than recognizing the systemic forces grinding them down. "I think that over the years," says Sohrab Ahmari, a friend and leading voice of the New Right, "he's reached the truer conclusion of his own book."

Around this time, Vance met Tucker Carlson at a conference. The then Fox host was struck by how Vance voiced hostility to a class that still saw him as a cultural conduit. "He was talking about what he had learned from growing up in southern Ohio, going to Yale Law School, being welcomed into this new world, being thrilled by it, and then discovering," Carlson says, "that a lot of these people were just careerist frauds."

Vance's antipathy for them hardened during the pandemic. He had come to believe the government should incentivize the formation of families and promote child-rearing. In his view, COVID-19 mitigation measures, like keeping kids out of school, revealed how policymakers were doing the opposite. "I was kind of astonished at how little real reflection there was about all of the COVID policies," he says. "There's a certain segment of America's leadership class that I think really has become explicitly antifamily and explicitly antichild."

After the pandemic, Vance became a regular on Carlson's show, then the most-watched program on cable news. Often the segments focused on the culture war or on Big Tech, which both Vance and Carlson accuse of censoring conservative speech. "The problem with Google is not just its market power," Vance tells me. "It's the way that it uses its market power to influence politics." The former President saw Vance on Carlson's show and was impressed. In February 2021, when Trump was in exile after the Jan. 6 attack and Vance was eyeing a run for an open Ohio Senate seat, the pair met for the first time at Mar-a-Lago at the suggestion of Carlson, Trump's eldest son Don Jr., and the financier Omeed Malik, who all urged the ex-President to give one of his former critics a chance. For Vance, much was on the line; receiving Trump's backing was the easiest path to rise in the modern GOP.

Read More: *Breakfast With J.D. Vance*.

When Vance walked into Trump's private office, there were printouts on the desk of Vance's past salvos, according to a source familiar with the meeting. "You said some nasty sh-t about me," Trump said. Vance apologized, saying he had bought into media misrepresentations. Over time, he told Trump, he came to realize that the policies Trump championed would help the people he wrote about in *Hillbilly Elegy*. Trump was pleased. They left the

meeting agreeing to stay in touch. Vance told Trump he wanted to earn his support.

For much of the Ohio Senate primary, Vance trailed in the polls despite the largesse of Thiel, the explicitly pro-monopoly libertarian who poured $15 million into a super PAC supporting him. But in April 2022, less than a month before GOP primary voters cast ballots, Trump delivered an endorsement that lifted Vance to victory.

By the time J.D. Vance got to Capitol Hill, he no longer had the boyish face from his book's jacket. He grew a beard and slimmed down. He came to Washington ready to fight the governing class.

In some ways, Vance's Senate tenure was an audition for his current role. He has backed Trump's election lies and expansive vision of presidential power, as well as draconian immigration laws, protectionist trade policies, and limited American involvement overseas, including ending U.S. support for Ukraine. The month Vance took office, he became one of the first GOP officials to endorse Trump for President, at a moment when his dominant victory in the 2024 primary was far from assured. He quickly became one of Trump's most vociferous defenders in Congress.

At the same time, he proposed legislation that can fairly be described as progressive. He introduced bills with Democrats to beef up regulations on railways and CEO pay, and to eliminate tax breaks for large corporate mergers. He called for raising the minimum wage and worked on a bill to prevent insurance companies from charging new mothers co-pays. He proposed legislation to crack down on the Visa-MasterCard duopoly and praised Biden's trust-busting Federal Trade Commission chair Lina Khan.

This agenda reflects a changing Republican Party. In the Bush years, Thomas Frank wrote *What's the Matter With Kansas?*, which argued Americans voted for presidential candidates with whom they culturally identify instead of those who would better serve their economic interests. Wealthy Manhattanites routinely voted for Democrats (who wanted to raise their taxes), while rural Kansans routinely voted for Republicans (who wanted to erode the social safety net). By tacking to the right on culture but to the left on economics, the New Right argues Republicans can chip away at the Democrats' coalition.

Read More: *How Kamala Harris Knocked Donald Trump Off Course*.

Vance had both critics and boosters when Trump set to the task of finding a running mate. Trump liked the way he performed in television interviews and admired his résumé. "President Trump is a big fan of credentials," says his confidante Kellyanne Conway. On July 12, Trump met with advisers and suggested he was leaning toward Vance. The next day, just hours before he was the target of an assassination attempt in Pennsylvania, Trump met with Vance at Mar-a-Lago, but didn't offer him the position. After the shooting, Trump had just two days before delegates at the Republican National Convention would meet to formally nominate his running mate. A battery of advisers and GOP officials begged him to choose someone other than Vance. In Vance's corner were Carlson, Don Jr., and Malik, among others. Internal polling showed that neither Vance nor the alternatives moved the needle, according to a source familiar with the surveys, so Vance's allies argued Trump might as well pick the running mate he preferred, and with whom he felt most aligned.

Vance missed Trump's call offering him the position on the morning of July 15. When Vance called back, Trump ribbed him: "Maybe I should have picked Marco." Trump hard-liners were thrilled at the choice. Says Charlie Kirk, head of the pro-Trump

youth group Turning Point USA: “It represents MAGA having staying power.”

I joined Vance at the rally in Big Rapids, Mich., where a China-based manufacturer is building an electric-vehicle battery plant—a development that captured a mix of Trumpian grievances. Speaking to a crowd of supporters in red MAGA hats, Vance argued that Democrats eased border restrictions to allow more immigrants likely to vote for them into the country, and that corporate titans supported the moves to gain low-skilled workers. The speech reflected his role in the campaign: an attack dog deployed most often to the battleground states of Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan, where the campaign believes its apostate of elite culture connects with the white working-class voters who may decide the election. “That’s where J.D. plays really well,” says Malik.

Back on the plane, I asked Vance about the immigration claim. You think it’s bad when politicians thwart tougher immigration policy to benefit themselves, I say, but didn’t Trump do just that with the bipartisan bill he persuaded Republicans to block, which would have funded thousands of new border agents, allocated $650 million for the border wall, and expedited deportations? “Oh, no, no, no, no,” Vance replies. The bill “was a disaster.” But Republican critics, including GOP Senators, say Trump torpedoed it to prevent Biden from notching a political win before the election.

The exchange is emblematic of Vance's campaign challenge. He must simultaneously reconcile the contradictions of his past and present stances, while juggling the desire to advance a post-neoliberal future with the hard-edged pugilistic style that pleases his boss. The task will require a daunting level of political acrobatics and acumen. It's not clear Vance—or anyone else—has the agility to pull it off.

In the past, Vance has supported abortion bans with no exceptions for rape and incest; now he has adopted Trump's stance that abortion should be a states'-rights issue. Vance has said people with children should pay lower taxes, saying in 2021 that the government should "reward the things that we think are good" and "punish the things that we think are bad." The point Vance was trying to make with his comments, he says now, was that policymakers should promote nuclear families that can stave off the trauma and dysfunction he endured as a child. "I think everybody's viewpoints are influenced by how they grew up and their perspective and their life experiences," he says. "I'm no different."

Critics like Sarah Longwell, the GOP strategist who runs Republican Voters Against Trump, say Vance's hard-line social views are deeply unpopular with most voters in her focus groups. She is also skeptical that Vance's MAGA pivot is fully genuine. "I think he has something in mind right now that he views as an

ideological lodestar," she says. "I wouldn't say that I think he's got a core that's driven by something other than the pursuit of power. He figures out who the richest or most powerful alpha in a room is, and then he sucks up to them and adopts their project. It's what he did with Thiel. It's what he did with Tucker. It's what he did with Trump."

On his plane plastered with Trumpian epigrams, Vance makes the case for Trump's second-term vision of enhanced executive power. After Trump said he wanted to have a say over the Federal Reserve—eroding a division of power that prevents Presidents with political motives from determining monetary policy—Vance endorsed the idea. "In a democracy, you should ask yourself why it's not ideal for the political leadership to have control over most of the questions in the country," he tells me. When I ask whether that means Harris should gain the same powers as President, he takes issue with the question, before conceding that, according to his own argument, the answer has to be yes. "I think it would be a disaster," Vance adds.

As the jet makes its final descent into Tennessee, an aide tells me I have to return to my seat in the back. Before I do, I ask Vance whether he thinks that Trumpism, as a set of ideas, will outlast Trump himself. Vance recognizes the verdict is still out. "I'm going to try to make sure that happens," Vance says. "But a lot depends on this election, and a lot depends on how our party responds to it."—*With reporting by Brian Bennett*

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How We Chose the 2024 TIME100 Next

Sam Jacobs is Editor in Chief at TIME where he leads TIME's global newsroom and its journalism across all platforms. Since joining TIME in 2013, Jacobs has held a variety of senior editorial leadership positions. Previously, he was national political correspondent at Reuters, associate editor at Newsweek and staff reporter for The Daily Beast. His writing has appeared in the Boston Globe and New York Observer.

Growing up outside Boston in the late 1980s and early 1990s, I was, by birthright and by accident of history, a fan of the Boston Celtics. At that time, the team, led by Larry Bird, was one of the best ever. During the season, Bird happened to live in our neighborhood, and I can still remember that it felt like a miracle to see him in the flesh, whether around the corner or at the Boston Garden.

Part of the responsibility of being an editor is to make sure that the choices you make best reflect a publication's values and vision, not just your own, sometimes parochial, concerns. Still, I've learned that when an idea comes your way that does rhyme with your own interests, it's best not to think too hard or too long about it.

So when Cate Matthews, who led the creation of this year's TIME100 Next, suggested that Jaylen Brown be included as one of

the cover subjects of this year's issue—making him the first Celtic since my childhood hero Bird to appear on the cover of TIME in nearly 40 years—I did not take too long to say yes. Brown, who alongside Jayson Tatum led the Celtics to the NBA Championship this year, has become one of the sport's most curious and committed leaders. In August, he launched Boston XChange, with the goal of helping to build innovation and generational wealth in underrepresented communities. Today, he is spreading that vision far outside Boston. "When it's all said and done," the Celtics' GM Brad Stevens says, "I think his impact will be greater off the court than on."

Now in its fifth year, the TIME100 Next list was created to recognize that many of today's most influential leaders are, like the 27-year-old Brown, individuals who are not waiting long in life to make an impact. Nor are they eager to respect the status quo by following the traditional power structures and pathways that have determined what influence looked like in the past. TIME100 Next has no age requirements; its aim is to recognize that influence does not have them either, nor does leadership look like it once did. Indeed, the majority of the individuals on this year's list are leaders of color; more than half are women.

Brown is joined on the cover by singer Sabrina Carpenter, the pop star whose music illuminated the summer, and Aisha Nyandoro, whose group, Magnolia Mother's Trust in Jackson, Miss., is showing how a guaranteed-income project can work. The range of these cover subjects reflects the diversity of leadership and impact

in 2024. That is our ambition for TIME100 Next. We aim with this annual franchise to recognize rising leaders in health, climate, business, sports, and more—and by doing so, not just show the stories that are capturing headlines in 2024, but also introduce you to the people who we believe will play an important role in leading the future.

As with the original TIME100, we invite past TIME100 alumni and other leaders to write tributes to this year's honorees. The Ford Foundation's Darren Walker recognizes Marlene Engelhorn, who, after inheriting the equivalent of $27 million, decided to give almost all of it away—and, in doing so, created a whole new framework for what philanthropy could be. News anchor Judy Woodruff honors the brave and pioneering reporting done by Anna Wolfe and her colleagues at Mississippi Today. Sam Altman measures the impact of OpenAI partner Alexandr Wang, who is creating the data infrastructure that is powering the AI revolution. Lily Gladstone, who appeared on TIME100 Next last year before earning an Oscar nomination, plays tribute to fellow actor Kali Reis.

We are thrilled to introduce you to these individuals along with all of the TIME100 Next, and can't wait to gather together with the 2024 honorees in New York City in October.

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1968 Changed America. So Too Might 2024.

Philip Elliott is a senior correspondent at TIME, based in the Washington, D.C. bureau, where he covers national campaigns, elections, and government. He also writes TIME's politics newsletter, The D.C. Brief.

This article is part of The D.C. Brief, TIME's politics newsletter. Sign up here to get stories like this sent to your inbox.

Former President Donald Trump has now survived at least two credible assassination attempts this election year. The latest, on Sunday at one of his golf clubs in Florida, was not as close as the one that bloodied him at a Butler, Penn., campaign rally on July 13. But it was nonetheless a real and immediate threat—a fully loaded assault rifle allegedly held by Ryan Wesley Routh from 400 yards

in search of the leader of the Republican Party, with the potential to upend American politics and history.

It was just the latest in a series of events unsettling the nation in this summer of disruption. Two weeks before the Butler attempt on Trump's life, President Joe Biden had triggered a crisis in the Democratic Party with his halting debate performance. A week after the attack, Biden dropped his bid for a second term, teeing up Vice President Kamala Harris' extraordinarily rapid consolidation of her party behind her and resetting the competition for the Oval Office. Over the next few weeks, we learned details of two international plots to disrupt the election—one from Iran, which had set in motion operations to hack Trump's campaign and, separately, perhaps take him out, another from Russia seeking to shape public opinion and undermine faith in the vote.

On its own, any one of these shocking events would warrant years of consideration by historians. Yet taken together, they seem less than the sum of their constituent parts, a string of developments that blend, muting the urgency of each and numbing the shock that accompanies. But the latest attempt on Trump's life cannot be another business-as-usual moment. American democracy, at its best, is built on the merits of arguments, the character of its leaders, and the collective judgment of a nation. When the threat of political violence, let alone its execution, becomes normal, democracy itself is undermined. That means it's imperative for the public to see clearly that this summer's assassination attempts are viewed as an affront to patriots of all political stripes, particularly as their impact remains uncertain.

There are echoes in this moment of 1968, an election year that was similarly consumed by the politics of extremity. Lyndon Johnson faced a revolt inside his Democratic Party over American involvement in Vietnam, leading to his stepping aside. After a scramble, the new nominee, Hubert Humphrey, bypassed the primaries entirely and took the nod at a Chicago convention amid

violence in the streets. Republicans, for their part, opted to go with an imperfect figure they knew—former Vice President Richard Nixon—while also flirting with a promising young pol out of California named Ronald Reagan. As the broader public soured on the war, the frustrations of the Civil Rights movement boiled in the face of continuing and pernicious inequality. The assassinations of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy broke the faith that millions of Americans had held in their nation's ability to peacefully engage in debate and the transfer of power.

By the time '68 was in the rearview mirror, the baseline of what Americans demanded from their leaders had shifted in major ways, ultimately remaking both parties and how they engaged with the country. Democrats embraced the emerging coalitions from the anti-war and Civil Rights marches while ditching their Dixiecrat roots. Republicans found value in the early culture war skirmishes and started to help some Christians nibble at political power. The center broke as both parties started a shift toward polarity, setting the stage for the country's first major political reset in the post-World War II era.

It's easy to lose perspective amid such historic events. Amid the onslaught, news triage is as much a survival mechanism as a civic duty. We all find ways to cope with crisis, and brushing past complicated and contradictory moments is the most common. As the threat of political violence tinges so much of this election season, that nothing-to-see-here posture is understandable. The response of our leaders, though, should be held to a higher standard.

A day after federal officials shot at and arrested alleged would-be assassin Routh, Trump thanked the U.S. Secret Service, the local sheriff, and law enforcement officers for their quick action after spotting a rifle poking out of the treeline. But he also soon laid the blame for both recent attempts on his life on the heated political

attack lines of Biden and Harris, who have cast Trump as a fundamental threat to democracy. “Their rhetoric is causing me to be shot at, when I am the one who is going to save the country, and they are the ones that are destroying the country,” the former President said, deploying much of the same rhetoric that helped his polling and fundraising surge after the attempt on his life at a rally in Pennsylvania.

At the White House, Biden briefly addressed the potential shooting, telling reporters Monday morning that the Secret Service “needs more help. And I think Congress should respond to their need.” Over the weekend—but before the drama on Trump’s golf course, Biden had blamed his predecessor for the escalating tensions in the country. He specifically cited Springfield, Ohio, where leaders are dealing with bomb threats and other threats of violence as Trump continues to baselessly suggest Haitian immigrants are feasting on residents’ dogs and cats. Biden pointedly said “any President should reject hate in America” and “not incite it.”

America is a deeply divided nation, as it was in 1968. And because election-year events like those 56 years ago and today can change the course of the country, Americans deserve leaders who will responsibly chart a path through the disruption towards a new political consensus.

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She’s an Icon, She’s a Legend, and She Is the Moment. Meet Viral Baby Hippo Moo Deng

Koh Ewe (Koyu) is a reporter for TIME based in Singapore. She covers the Asia-Pacific region and global overnight news.

Every move she makes is closely watched, each new photo taken of her widely shared and fervently discussed. Her effortlessly dewy glow is the subject of envy and inspiration for fanart and makeup tutorials. Moo Deng, of Thailand, is not your typical A-list celebrity, but she’s certainly being treated like one.

The unbearably adorable two-month-old baby pygmy hippopotamus at Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Chonburi Province has wriggled her way into the hearts and minds of millions on the internet with her seemingly feisty antics and petrified looks. Social media users can't get enough of her screaming face—when being sprayed with water, when being carried by zookeepers, or simply while lying on the ground.

Born on July 10—of course she's sensitive, she's a Cancer!—Moo Deng was unveiled to the public on July 25. Her name, which roughly translates to "bouncy pig" or "pork patty," by various interpretations, was chosen by a popular vote held by the zoo.

Since then, well aware of her star power, Moo Deng's zookeepers have diligently shared photos, videos, and memes of the baby hippo. As Moo Deng's popularity has climbed, the zoo's social media accounts (it has over 50,000 followers on X and over 400,000 on Facebook, while accounts dedicated specifically to its collection of hippos and capybaras now have over 200,000 on Instagram and over 2 million on TikTok) have become Moo Deng stan accounts, offering updates on her every move for her obsessed fans all over the world.

@khamoo.andthegang

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♬ Bye Bye Bye – From Deadpool and Wolverine Soundtrack – *NSYNC

View this post on Instagram

A post shared by □□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□ (@khamoo.andthegang)

Moo Deng—who is almost always eating, sleeping, or being dramatic—has been hailed as a “lifestyle icon.” The unlikely It Girl has become the subject of endless fanart and forthcoming merch from the zoo. The Thai Embassy in Tokyo has embraced her, so has makeup company Sephora Thailand, which shared recommendations for blushes to mimic the baby hippo’s cherubic cheeks. A Bangkok cafe has whipped up cakes in the shape of Moo Deng, who just got her own Wikipedia page.

View this post on Instagram

A post shared by Sephora Thailand (@thaisephora)

Of course, Moo Deng is not the only hippo at Khao Kheow Open Zoo. Over the weekend, the conservation center just celebrated the 59th birthday of Mae Mali, the country's oldest-ever female hippo. While Mae Mali is said to weigh two tonnes (4,400 pounds), pygmy hippos like Moo Deng mature to a measly 500 pounds. Native to western Africa, pygmy hippos are an endangered species, with only about 2,000 of them remaining in the wild.

Also, as social media users don't want to take their eyes off Moo Deng, some fan-made photo collages have actually included a photo of Moo Wan, another pygmy hippo at Khao Kheow Open Zoo that went viral when she chomped on a zookeeper's calf. (Moo Deng has also proven that she can pack a bite.)

Since Moo Deng went viral, visitors to Khao Kheow Open Zoo have more than doubled, with those flocking to see the baby hippo described as a “fan club.”

However, Moo Deng’s meteoric rise has come with concerns for her safety. In one video shared on social media, Moo Deng was lying on the edge of her enclosure when she was jolted by a stream of water that a visitor poured onto her. Some visitors, in an attempt to get her attention, have also reportedly thrown bananas and shellfish at Moo Deng, local media reported, sparking calls from social media users for better safety measures to protect the baby hippo.

On Thursday, Narongwit Chodchoi, the director of Khao Kheow Open Zoo, urged visitors to refrain from throwing things at Moo Deng, adding that the zoo has installed surveillance cameras in the area and would consider legal action against uncooperative humans. “These behaviors are not only cruel but also dangerous,” he said. “We must protect these animals and ensure that they have a safe and comfortable environment.”

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Why Your Pharmacy Experience Is Miserable

Alana Semuels is an economic correspondent at TIME. She covers work, consumer spending, retail, gender, and technology. She is a four-time finalist for the Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Business and Financial Journalism, and has won awards from the Society of Business Editors and Writers and the Los Angeles Press Club.

If you've been to a pharmacy to pick up a prescription lately, you might have wanted to bang your head against the wall.

Chains and independent pharmacies alike are short-staffed, leading to long lines and frustrating experiences. Customers are finding empty shelves and chaotic operations. Satisfaction with brick-and-mortar pharmacies dropped 10 points in 2024 alone, according to a study by J.D. Power.

Running the businesses is getting harder, too. "Without a doubt, this is the worst it's ever been," says Enrique Reynoso, who has been a pharmacist since 1991 and owns Beacon Wellness

Pharmacy, a small shop in upstate New York. Reynoso has tried to do everything he can to stay afloat—putting drugs in smaller bottles to save costs, asking customers to pay by Venmo since credit-card fees are so high, diversifying the merchandise he sells in the front of his stores. Still, drug prices are high—an Adderall shortage, for example, drove the price from $25 to $400, even though insurers' reimbursement hasn't changed—and he loses money on some popular drugs.

It's no easier for the big chains. Across the street from Reynoso's store is a Rite Aid with rows of empty shelves, where customers wait in a line seven deep at the pharmacy. (Rite Aid said on Sept. 3 that it had emerged from bankruptcy protection after closing about a quarter of its stores.) CVS closed 900 stores over three years, citing changes in consumer buying patterns, while Walgreens is planning to close about a quarter of its 8,600 stores because "the current pharmacy model is not sustainable," CEO Tim Wentworth said in a June earnings call. Chain stores also say they've been plagued by shoplifting, which has motivated them to lock up many products behind plastic shields, a practice that has backfired by driving away even more customers.

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Pharmacies are struggling partly because of changes to consumer behavior. After the pandemic drove more shoppers online, customers bought less and less from brick-and-mortar stores like pharmacies. Although in-person shopping has resumed in many other types of stores, pharmacies have not seen the same boost, says Brittain Ladd, a retail and logistics analyst. "Even if they come in to have a prescription filled, consumers are rarely buying anything in the store because they know they can buy it cheaper online," he says. Pharmacies have reacted by cutting prices, which then puts them even more in the red, Ladd says. This then leads to more cost cutting.

As they struggle with expenses, pharmacies are cutting staff. One pharmacist at a Walgreens in Wisconsin, who asked that her name be withheld to protect her job security, says when she started 15 years ago, her department had four pharmacists working. Now it sometimes subsists on half that, despite expectations to process even more prescriptions and immunizations than before. The stress has driven some pharmacists out of the profession, ratcheting up turnover levels even further. “The patients are frustrated, we’re frustrated—they wait longer in line and they’re waited-on by someone who is brand new,” the pharmacist says.

Larretta Dickerson has worked for CVS, Walgreens, and Rite Aid stores in North Carolina and South Carolina. She says all three companies were plagued by staff shortages, especially of technicians, who are lower on the rung than pharmacists. When technicians called out, pharmacists did the work of three people, Dickerson says. “No one recognizes the level of stress they’re putting you under,” she adds. “You’re filling a prescription and the phone is ringing, saying, ‘One pharmacy call, two pharmacy calls, three pharmacy calls.’ I would stand there and feel the sweat come up the back of my neck.”

But there’s a bigger and more complicated reason that pharmacies are struggling right now. It has to do with how pharmacies are compensated for the medications they dispense. Most patients are covered by insurance, and insurers use companies called Pharmacy Benefit Managers, or PBMs, to manage their prescription drug benefits. PBMs are essentially middlemen, but they have a huge amount of power because they determine how much pharmacies get compensated for each drug they dispense. Every year, pharmacists say, PBMs are offering less and less to pharmacies for the drugs they sell, sometimes forcing them to operate at a loss on popular drugs like Ozempic.

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PBMs can do this because the three largest—CVS Caremark, Express Scripts, and Optum Rx—control about 80% of the market. The six largest PBMs control about 90% of the market. PBMs use their market share "to enact anticompetitive practices and protect their bottom line," according to a recent report from the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability. For example, the committee found, pricing models are so opaque that PBMs have overcharged insurance plans and taxpayers by hundreds of millions of dollars.

The staff of the Federal Trade Commission also released a report on PBMs in July 2024, arguing that consolidation in the industry has allowed PBMs to "exercise vast control over huge swaths of the healthcare sector." Since PBMs own their own specialty pharmacies, they'll sometimes steer patients towards their own mail-order pharmacies rather than brick-and-mortar ones, the report alleges. Many PBMs are also part of giant healthcare conglomerates that include health insurers and pharmacies, leading critics to question whether they really have the incentive to negotiate for the best prices. (On Sept. 17, Express Scripts sued the FTC, saying the report made "false and biased claims about the PBM industry" and failed to take into account the value that PBMs deliver. PBMs, Express Scripts said in a news release, lower the cost of medications for customers and for employers.)

Asked for comment by TIME, Express Scripts pointed to the claims made in its lawsuit. CVS Caremark said it protects businesses and patients from price gouging, and that policy limiting PBM negotiating tools would "serve as a handout to the pharmaceutical company." Other leading PBMs did not respond to TIME's request for comment.

PBMs can be especially difficult for small, independent pharmacies like the one run by Enrique Reynoso. Big chains have a little more negotiating power with PBMs because they have so many stores. Small, independent pharmacies have almost no negotiating power,

according to. Reynoso, who says he is constantly puzzled by the amount he gets compensated for filling prescriptions, and the amount it's sometimes less than he pays for the drugs and the labor. "They have us over a barrel," he says. "We can't say no."

Independent and chain pharmacies are struggling as a result, says Douglas Hoey, CEO of the National Community Pharmacists Association. Pharmacies enter into contracts with PBMs, but they're extremely one-sided, Hoey says. If a pharmacy doesn't like the prices a PBM offers, they can say no to the contract—but then they'll likely lose the business, which means they won't be able to offer prescription drug benefits to patients with certain insurance. As PBMs have come under the microscope from congressional overseers and the FTC, "they've doubled down on their behavior," Hoey says, "becoming even more aggressive in their payment contracts with pharmacies, and frankly, the bullying tactics they use in their contracting and business practices."

The loss of independent pharmacies in particular has created pharmacy deserts where access to prescriptions is difficult. Between 2013 and 2022, about 10% of independent pharmacies in rural areas shuttered, according to Hoey. "We're at a tipping point," he says, "where pharmacies are bending, bending, bending until they break." One 2024 study found that 15.8 million Americans now live in pharmacy deserts, and that those communities have a high proportion of people with a high-school education or less and who have no health insurance.

But the shifting economics of pharmacies affects everybody. As pharmacies close their doors, those that remain open see more and more patients—with the same amount of staff and resources, or perhaps even less. The bad news for beleaguered customers is that those long lines and empty shelves may not be going away anytime soon.

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‘Freak Offs,’ Drugs, and Violence: Breaking Down the Charges Against Diddy

Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs, the music mogul who has been embroiled in multiple legal battles over allegations of physical or sexual abuse, pleaded not guilty to three counts of sex trafficking, racketeering, and transportation to engage in prostitution.

Combs was arrested on Monday night in New York, and the federal indictment was unsealed on Tuesday. The indictment alleges that Combs “abused, threatened, and coerced women and others around him to fulfill his sexual desires, protect his reputation, and conceal his conduct.” It accuses Combs of “creating a criminal enterprise” that included sex trafficking, forced labor, and kidnapping, among other crimes.

Combs was arraigned on Tuesday afternoon in a federal courthouse in Manhattan, and a federal judge ordered that he be jailed without bail while awaiting trial. Combs’ lawyer Marc Agnifilo said outside the courthouse after the arraignment that his team had a court appearance scheduled for the following day to appeal the decision.

“Mr. Combs is a fighter. He’s going to fight this to the end. He’s innocent. He came to New York to establish his innocence,” Agnifilo told journalists outside the courthouse after the judge’s decision on Tuesday. “He’s not afraid of the charges.”

Combs allegedly manipulated and forced women to participate in sexual activity with male sex workers in what he called “Freak Offs,” according to the indictment. The indictment describes various incidents of alleged abuse dating back to 2008, including one apparent reference to an attack on his ex-girlfriend, R&B singer Cassie, in a Los Angeles hotel hallway in 2016. Combs’ arrest came after federal agents raided his homes in Los Angeles and Miami in March as part of the investigation, officials confirmed Tuesday.

The indictment follows multiple allegations of abuse perpetrated by Combs, detailed by several lawsuits including one filed by Cassie, born Casandra Ventura. Ventura and Combs reached a settlement in November, just one day after she filed her lawsuit, although Combs denied the allegations at the time. But in May, CNN released CCTV footage that showed Combs punching and kicking Ventura in a Los Angeles hotel hallway in 2016, prompting Combs to release a video statement on Instagram in which he admitted to assaulting Ventura.

Two other women filed lawsuits in November, accusing the music mogul of sexual assault, beatings, and forced drugging in the early 1990s. Another woman sued Combs in December, alleging that he and two other men raped her when she was 17 in 2003.

At a press conference Tuesday, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Damian Williams said that his office, which brought the case against Combs, was “not done.” He added that the investigation is ongoing and encouraged people with any information to come forward.

“This office is determined to investigate and prosecute anyone who engages in sex trafficking, no matter how powerful or wealthy or famous you may be,” Williams said. “A year ago, Sean Combs stood in Times Square and was handed a key to New York City. Today, he’s been indicted and will face justice in the Southern District of New York.” (Combs returned his key to the city in June, after a request from Mayor Eric Adams.)

The indictment doesn’t state the total number of people who were allegedly victimized by Combs or how many people were involved, and Williams declined to disclose that information during the press conference. But in court filings, prosecutors said that officials have interviewed more than 50 victims and witnesses so far.

Here’s a breakdown of the allegations detailed in the indictment.

‘Freak Offs‘

The indictment repeatedly refers to the “Combs Enterprise,” allegedly led by Combs himself and including members of his security staff, household staff, personal assistants, high-ranking supervisors, and other close associates. While the enterprise maintained Combs’ media and entertainment business, it also protected Combs through violence, coercion, and abuse, the indictment alleges. The indictment accuses the enterprise of “fulfilling the personal desires of Combs, particularly those related to Combs’ sexual gratification through the exploitation of women and the use of commercial sex workers.”

The indictment alleges that Combs—and others acting under his authority—used his “power and prestige” to intimidate and lure women into his orbit, “often under the pretense of a romantic relationship.” He would then use force, threats, and coercion to force the women to participate, with male sex workers, in what the music mogul called “Freak Offs,” which were “elaborate and produced sex performances that Combs arranged, directed,

masturbated during, and often electronically recorded," the indictment alleges. These "Freak Offs" could last several days. On some occasions, Combs and his associates would fly women and sex workers across state lines and internationally, the indictment claims.

The indictment accuses Combs' associates of helping to facilitate these incidents by arranging travel, booking hotel rooms and stocking them with items, including drugs, baby oil, lubricant, and extra linens. When federal agents searched Combs' homes in Miami and Los Angeles in March, they seized supplies used in the "Freak Offs," including more than 1,000 bottles of baby oil and lubricant, according to the indictment.

Drug use

During the "Freak Offs," Combs would give the women drugs to keep them "obedient and compliant," the indictment alleges. Williams said during his press conference that those substances included ketamine, ecstasy, and gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB). Federal agents seized narcotics during their search of Combs' residences in March, according to the indictment.

Combs and victims often received IV fluids after these encounters "to recover from the physical exertion and drug use," the indictment claims.

Coercive tactics

The indictment accuses Combs of using various tactics to control the women, including promising them career opportunities, threatening to withhold financial support, tracking their locations, surveilling their medical records, and regulating their housing.

"Victims believed they could not refuse Combs' demands without risking their financial or job security or without repercussions in

the form of physical or emotional abuse," the indictment alleges. "Combs also used the sensitive, embarrassing, and incriminating recordings that he made during Freak Offs as collateral to ensure the continued obedience and silence of the victims." Sometimes the women didn't know Combs kept videos of the activities, the indictment claims.

Physical violence and threats

Combs and his associates also used physical violence or threats of violence to control victims, the indictment alleges. The indictment claims that Combs had a history of assaulting women by "striking, punching, dragging, throwing objects at, and kicking them," referencing the incident in 2016 involving Ventura that was caught on camera. The indictment alleges that Combs attempted to bribe a member of the hotel security staff who intervened in that incident.

More than once, Combs tried to intimidate or threaten victims and witnesses by brandishing firearms, the indictment alleges. When federal authorities searched the music mogul's homes in March, they found firearms and ammunition, including three AR-15s with defaced serial numbers and a drum magazine, according to the indictment.

In some instances, members of the so-called Combs Enterprise helped conceal Combs' abuse by forcing victims to stay in hiding, sometimes for multiple days, to recover from injuries the music mogul had inflicted, the indictment alleges. When people threatened Combs' authority or reputation, he and his associates would retaliate using violence, including kidnapping and arson, or threats, the indictment claims. (At the press conference on Tuesday, Williams declined to reveal further details of the arson allegations.)

According to the indictment, Combs and his associates allegedly pressured and tried to bribe witnesses and victims to stay silent

about these “Freak Offs” in late 2023, after abuse allegations started becoming public.

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Former NFL Star Brett Favre Reveals He Has Parkinson’s. Here’s What to Know

Alice Park is a senior health correspondent at TIME. She covers the COVID-19 pandemic, new drug developments in cancer and Alzheimer's disease, mental health, HIV, CRISPR, and advances in gene therapy, among other issues in health and science. She also covers the Olympics, and co-chaired TIME's inaugural TIME 100 Health Summit in 2019. Her work has won awards from the New York Press Club, and recognition from the Deadline Club. In addition, she is the author of *The Stem Cell Hope: How Stem Cell Medicine Can Change Our Lives*. Follow her on Instagram at @aliceparktime.

Former Green Bay Packers quarterback Brett Favre said that he has been recently diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease.

The three-time NFL MVP made the revelation during his testimony before a House committee on federal welfare reform. Favre had previously been implicated for his connections to Mississippi’s welfare abuse scandal involving the Temporary Assistance for

Needy Families (TANF) program and investments he made in a company that was researching treatments for concussions. The founder of that company pleaded guilty to wire fraud charges and was accused of misappropriating funds received through TANF for personal use. Favre allegedly received TANF money via Mississippi non profit groups for public appearances he did not make, but was not criminally charged. He has paid back some of the money he received, but state auditors say he still owes additional funds to the program.

“I lost an investment in a company that I believed was developing a breakthrough concussion drug I thought would help others, and I’m sure you’ll understand why it’s too late for me, because I’ve recently been diagnosed with Parkinson’s,” he said in his testimony.

Here’s what to know about the disease.

What is Parkinson’s disease?

Parkinson’s is a brain disorder that results in uncontrolled muscle movements and tremors that can affect everything from the extremities to more core body functions such as swallowing and speaking. It generally occurs with age, but can also result from certain genetic changes that are passed down in families, as well as medications, exposure to toxins, and traumatic injuries to the brain. In an interview on Today in 2018, Favre estimated that he suffered from “hundreds, maybe thousands” of concussions during his decades-long NFL career, in which he once played nearly 300 consecutive games. Favre did not indicate whether his history of concussions was directly related to his condition, or provide any additional details about his diagnosis. But since his retirement from the NFL, he has spoken about his concerns about concussions and the dangers of chronic traumatic encephalopathy among football

players, and his own experiences with worsening short term memory.

Are there treatments?

Currently, there is no effective treatment that reverses or slows down the progression of Parkinson's—only medications or surgical interventions that can alleviate some of the motor symptoms by addressing changes in the brain chemical dopamine that contribute to the condition. Patients generally cycle through different medications, which often work for a while, but when the tremors or unpredictable muscle movements return or worsen, doctors can combine or add other medications. For those who no longer respond to available drugs, deep brain stimulation, in which surgeons implant an electrode in the brain to help control tremors, can help. But the implants only address tremors and involuntary muscles movements; they can't slow other Parkinson's symptoms, such as cognitive changes or balance issues.

The future of diagnosis and treatment

Researchers are working on novel treatment strategies and are developing new ways to detect Parkinson's earlier. Most of these target alpha synuclein, a protein that accumulates in patients with the disease. Doctors currently rely primarily on clinical symptoms—like tremors, slow movements, or muscle rigidity—to diagnose the condition. But researchers are developing a new test that looks for alpha synuclein in the spinal fluid, which could be a sign of early Parkinson's.

Until better treatments become available to address the root cause of Parkinson's, however, even such tests might not be so useful. "The problem is that at this point, we don't have any treatment to potentially slow the disease down," says Dr. Rocco DiPaola, a neurologist at Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute. "But

down the road, should those treatments become available, then identifying people who are at risk earlier would be good to know, so we could potentially give them a medication that could either prevent or slow progression of the disease.”

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Inside Ukraine's Effort to Win Over Donald Trump

Simon Shuster is a senior correspondent at TIME. He covers international affairs, with a focus on Russia and Ukraine. For his first book, *The Showman*, he reported inside the Ukrainian President's compound in Kyiv as the Russian invasion unfolded.

Many nations keep a nervous eye on U.S. presidential races, but none have as much at stake this time as the people of Ukraine. For them, the outcome could determine how their war against Russia ends, and their leaders have spent months vying for the support of both candidates. The effort, which culminates with President Volodymyr Zelensky's visit to the U.S. this week, has involved priests and billionaires, highly paid lobbyists, and a former British prime minister.

As of Sunday, when Zelensky arrived to begin his trip, some officials in his entourage seemed to be tempering their expectations. No matter who wins in November, one of them told me, "things will get worse for us."

In their view, the victory of Kamala Harris would likely prolong the policies of the Biden administration, which Zelensky and his advisers see as overly cautious and indecisive in standing up to Russia. Trump's victory, on the other hand, offers both risks and opportunities for the Ukrainians, according to four people familiar with their outreach to the candidates.

"There is a level of hope for Trump," one of them told TIME in Kyiv before Zelensky's visit to the U.S., requesting anonymity to discuss sensitive issues of wartime diplomacy. "Of course we could be mistaken. We don't know how divisive he will be with the West at large. He might weaken it… But someone has to stop this war, and Kamala Harris does not seem like she would play that role. Trump in theory could make some drastic moves, at least that's our perception."

[video id=4Pyartvi autostart="viewable"]

This week, as Zelensky met with world leaders at the United Nations in New York, Trump's rhetoric turned against him, and he began taunting Zelensky at his campaign rallies. The attacks surprised the Ukrainians, because only two months earlier, during a cordial phone call in July, Trump promised Zelensky that he would support Ukraine. "So who is the real Trump?" asked a member of the entourage traveling to the U.S. with Zelensky this week. "It's still an open question."

Given how tight the U.S. presidential race remains, the Ukrainians cannot afford to stop engaging with either candidate. They have tried since the summer to build bridges to the Trump campaign, holding numerous meetings with senior Republicans and former Trump administration officials. Among the most prominent has been Mike Pompeo, the former CIA director and Secretary of State, who has expressed interest in joining a possible future Trump administration. In recent months, he has met several times with senior Ukrainian officials, helping them understand the dynamics

of the U.S. presidential race and the Trump campaign's evolving stance on the war in Ukraine. In mid-September, Pompeo met with Zelensky in Kyiv and offered some practical advice on how to advance Ukraine's diplomatic strategy: appeal to America's interests, not its values.

"It has to be good old-fashioned greed," Pompeo told TIME in Kyiv after his meeting with Zelensky. "It has to be a good old-fashioned, commercial, profit-driven, incentive-forming, risk-taking, entrepreneurial model that delivers that sustainable place for Ukraine." Appealing for American help in the defense of Ukraine's democracy or its survival as a nation would not be likely to secure Trump's lasting support. "It can't be a donor base," Pompeo explains. "It's not, 'Hey, we had a donor conference.' Those are interesting, and they get things rolling perhaps. But they are wholly unsustainable."

In trying to deliver that message to Trump and his supporters, some of Zelensky's Republican allies have pointed to the resource wealth Ukraine could offer the U.S. after the war. Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump ally, hammered on this point in a video he recorded with Zelensky in Kyiv earlier this month. "They're sitting on a trillion dollars of minerals that could be good to our

economy," said the Republican from North Carolina. "So I want to keep helping our friends in Ukraine."

Zelensky, who absorbed that remark with a polite smile, has so far avoided such direct appeals to U.S. economic interests, preferring instead to argue that Ukraine is defending not only itself but the entire free world against Russian attacks. He hoped to deliver this argument to Trump in person, and Trump said last week that he would "probably" meet with Zelensky during his visit to the U.S. Their teams had discussed the idea of a meeting at Trump's estate in Mar-a-Lago, according to two officials close to Zelensky. But the Ukrainians set that possibility aside, as it could be seen as an endorsement of Trump's campaign.

Instead, the Ukrainians asked to meet Trump on more neutral ground, for example, on the set of a U.S. television network for a joint interview. This option was still under discussion when Zelensky landed in the U.S., according to one of the Ukrainian officials. But the first public event of the trip appeared to change the tone of these discussions. On Sunday, Zelensky visited an arms factory in Scranton, Pennsylvania, the city where President Biden was born and grew up.

Touring the facility alongside the state's Democratic governor, Josh Shapiro, Zelensky expressed gratitude to all American workers who are helping produce weapons for Ukraine. But the optics of the visit upset Trump and his allies, and their talks about a possible meeting with Zelensky broke down. "It seems he took offense," one of the Ukrainian officials says of Trump. The problem, he added, seems to have been the choice of venue: the hometown of the incumbent U.S. President in a hotly contested battleground state.

On Monday, the day after Zelensky's trip to Scranton, Trump held a rally in Pennsylvania, where he unveiled a new attack line against the Ukrainian leader, referring to him as the world's "greatest

salesman" for managing to convince the U.S. to send aid to Ukraine. Trump also told the crowd in Pennsylvania that Zelensky wants the Democrats to win in November: "He wants them to win this election so badly." The following day, at a rally in Georgia, Trump used a similar line against Zelensky. "Every time he comes to the United States he walks away with $100 billion," he said, drawing loud jeers from the crowd. "But we're stuck in that war unless I'm president," Trump added.

Such remarks have caused concern among observers in Ukraine, including some inside Zelensky's team. Still, they see no choice but to continue trying to appeal to the Republican candidate and win his support. "Of course we hear all this," one of the Ukrainian officials close to Zelensky said of Trump's recent remarks. "But we still have to try." Their main hope, he added, is that Trump's views on the war are not yet settled, and that his unpredictable nature could leave room for his position to swing Ukraine's way.

Back in Kyiv, Zelensky's allies have spent months trying to influence Trump's views on the war. Leaders of the country's vibrant community of Baptists have reached out repeatedly to Trump's evangelical allies on Capitol Hill, including House Speaker Mike Johnson. Victor Pinchuk, a Ukrainian billionaire on good terms with the Zelensky administration, hired Trump's former aide Kellyanne Conway as a lobbyist in Washington for a fee of $50,000 per month. According to official filings with the Justice Department, Conway will advise Pinchuk's foundation on "the current state of views on Ukraine among US elected officials, candidates, experts, and opinion leaders." The lobbying agreement expires on Nov. 14, about a week after Election Day, unless both sides agree to extend it.

In mid-September, about a week before Zelensky's arrival in the U.S., Pinchuk hosted an annual summit in Kyiv that attracted a range of influential guests from the U.S. and Europe. While working on the program, Pinchuk appealed to Boris Johnson, the

former British Prime Minister, to convince Trump to participate via live video link. “Unfortunately I failed completely to get that,” Johnson said at the conference.

Instead, Trump sent a brief video message that he apparently filmed aboard his private jet while flying to a campaign event. “The war with Russia and Ukraine would never ever have happened if I were president,” Trump said in the video, drawing a few groans from the audience in Kyiv. “One of the first things I want to do is get that war settled with Russia and Ukraine.”

But he has not put forward any detailed plan for achieving that. Earlier this month, Trump’s running mate, Senator J.D. Vance, suggested a “peace settlement” that would entail Ukraine ceding vast amounts of occupied territory to Russia. “The current line of demarcation between Russia and Ukraine, that becomes like a demilitarized zone,” Vance said on a podcast that aired on Sept. 11.

That vision for ending the war alarmed many in Kyiv. “He is too radical,” Zelensky said of Vance in an interview with the *New Yorker*. “For us, these are dangerous signals, coming as they do from a potential Vice-President.” He added: “I should say that it hasn’t been like this with Trump.” During Zelensky’s phone call with Trump in July—their first conversation since Russia invaded

Ukraine in early 2022—the Ukrainian leader came away reassured. “His message was as positive as it could be,” Zelensky said.

It encouraged the Ukrainians to believe they could win Trump over, or at least balance out the views that Vance has brought to the Republican platform. But, as Zelensky admitted on the eve of his trip to the U.S. this week, getting Trump to understand the war will be enough of a challenge. “My feeling is that Trump doesn’t really know how to stop the war even if he might *think* he knows how,” he told the *New Yorker*. “With this war, oftentimes, the deeper you look at it the less you understand.”

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A New Spacecraft Could Help Determine if There’s Life on a Moon of Jupiter

Jeffrey Kluger is an editor at large at TIME. He covers space, climate, and science. He is the author of 12 books, including *Apollo 13*, which served as the basis for the 1995 film, and was nominated for an Emmy Award for TIME's series A Year in Space.

Nearly half a billion miles from Earth, a world may be stirring. Our planet is the only place in the solar system—and indeed the universe—where we know that life exists. But if the basic sciences of chemistry, energy, and biology apply, Jupiter’s moon Europa may be alive as well. On Oct. 10, NASA aims to start finding out, when it launches the $5 billion Europa Clipper spacecraft on a five-and-a-half-year journey to the Jovian system for the most detailed exploration ever of the mysterious icy moon.

Europa has fascinated astronomers and exobiologists for a long time—at least since 1979, when the Voyager 1 and 2 spacecraft reconnoitered the moon and photographed an icy white surface shot through with cracks and fractures, suggesting a churning ocean that was continually disrupting the frozen crust. The later Galileo

mission, which orbited Jupiter from 1995 to 2003, helped confirm the existence of a global ocean, when it discovered that Jupiter's magnetic field was disrupted in the vicinity of Europa in a way consistent with a deep, electrically conductive liquid beneath the surface of the moon. The Juno mission, which has been orbiting Jupiter since 2016, has been studying Europa more closely still, documenting ice walls, scarps, and ridges, all suggestive of a surface in constant motion. The moon's two impact craters also froze in a rough pattern of concentric circles, pointing to ripples in the water below.

Astronomers now believe that Europa has an ice shell 10 to 15 miles thick, covering a global ocean 40 to 100 miles deep. Sloshing around the entirety of the 1,940-mile diameter moon, that comes out to more than twice the quantity of water in all of Earth's oceans combined.

While the temperatures in the vicinity of Jupiter can plunge to -400°F, the water in the ocean is kept liquid as a result of tidal forces: as Europa orbits Jupiter, it is held fast in the planet's tight gravitational grip. But as its large sister moons—Io, Ganymede, and Callisto—repeatedly sail by, they pluck at it with their lighter gravity, causing the moon to flex and heat up, much the way a wire hanger bent rapidly back and forth will become too hot to touch at the point of the bend. Hydrothermal vents, which were first discovered on Earth in 1977 in the Galapagos Rift, may be scattered across the Europan seafloor too, further heating the water.

All of this produces a warm, pulsing, amniotic ocean, one that is believed to include salt, carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, hydrogen, and sulfur—incorporated into Europa during the moon's formation and imported aboard incoming comets and asteroids. Those elements make up 98% of all living matter on Earth, and with 4.5 billion years of stirring and cooking, they could on Europa too.

Potential for life

Europa Clipper will deploy an arsenal of sensitive instruments during dozens of flybys of Jupiter's icy moon Europa to investigate conditions favorable to life

EUROPA CLIPPER IS ABOUT THE SIZE OF A BASKETBALL COURT

Why Europa?

About the size of Earth's Moon, **Europa** likely contains an ocean of liquid water—the top ingredient for life

PLUMES
The spacecraft will hunt for plumes of water vapor that could be venting through Europa's icy crust

ICY CRUST
It will investigate the thickness, composition, and presence of potential cracks or ridges

OCEAN
It will assess the depth, salinity, and habitability of an ocean that could be many miles deep

Europa Clipper

High-tech instruments will analyze Europa's exterior and interior

Cameras and **spectrometers** will produce high-res images and composition maps of Europa's surface

Ice-penetrating radar will penetrate the thick ice crust to find out how it interacts with the ocean below

A surface dust analyzer and a **spectrometer** will capture gas and dust and identify their chemistry

Magnetic field measurements will unlock clues about Europa's thin atmosphere and depth of its ocean

TIME SOURCE: NASA

Europa Clipper is ingeniously designed to find out. The spacecraft, whose main body is a box about 20 ft. to a side, is stuffed with a suite of nine instruments, including optical cameras, temperature sensors, global radar, a magnetometer, and an ultraviolet spectrometer. None of those instruments are able to detect life, but they can all determine if Europa has the environment that could support it.

The spacecraft's relatively small footprint gets a whole lot bigger thanks to its energy-producing solar panels. Out in the vicinity of Jupiter, sunlight is no more than 4% of what it is on Earth, and to produce enough energy to operate the instruments, the panels, which were attached to the spacecraft on Aug. 27, have to be huge. Each of two collapsible arrays measures 46.5 ft. long by 13.5 ft high, giving the total spacecraft a wingspan of more than 100 ft., slightly longer than a professional basketball court. Even at that, the panels will generate only about 700 watts of electricity, or roughly the energy required to run a small microwave oven or a coffee maker. Europa Clipper's radar antenna, which sits perpendicular to the solar wings, adds more size still, rising 57.7 ft. from the body of the spacecraft.

All of that, plus fuel, means the spacecraft tips the scales at approximately 13,000 lbs., which requires a bruiser of a rocket to muscle it off the ground. Europa Clipper will get that rocket, in the form of the 27-engine SpaceX Falcon Heavy, with over 5 million lbs. of thrust, able to launch more than 37,000 lbs. on an interplanetary trajectory.

The spacecraft will not follow an as-the-crow-flies trajectory straight out to Jupiter. Rather, it will loop twice around the sun, passing Mars on Feb. 27, 2025, and swinging back past Earth on January 12, 2026. Both of those flybys will refine the trajectory and add speed to the spacecraft. Europa Clipper will finally reach Jupiter on April 11, 2030 for a minimum of four years of operation in the Jovian system. But all of that is for the beginning of the next

decade. For now, Europa Clipper is being readied at NASA's Kennedy Space Center to be loaded aboard its Falcon Heavy for the Oct. 10 start of its journey. The ship will be leaving one biologically teeming world and may well help discover another.

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15 Things to Say When Someone Comments on Your Weight

Angela Haupt is a health and wellness editor at TIME. She covers happiness and actionable ways to live well.

Figuring out what to say about someone's weight gain or loss is really easy if you follow one of the golden rules of modern communication: Never comment on another person's body.

Not everyone, however, gets the memo.

Cherie Miller, an eating disorder and body image therapist in Southlake, Texas, hears often from clients on the receiving end of body talk. "It reinforces the idea that the way we look matters immensely, that we're on display, and that, to some degree, our purpose is to be pleasing to others, which is really quite gross and harmful," she says. "In our culture, we assume that weight gain is bad, and weight loss is good, and that's just not always the case."

The person you're talking to, she adds, might have lost weight because they're sick. Or they might be depressed or recovering

from an eating disorder. Maybe they packed on a few pounds because of the medication they're taking for the condition they don't want to disclose. The point, she stresses, is that it's impossible to know, and none of your business.

We asked experts as well as people who frequently experience unwanted weight-related comments to share their favorite ways to respond—and why those comebacks are effective.

"I prefer people don't comment on my body."

As a plus-size model who's appeared on the covers of magazines like *Cosmopolitan UK*, Tess Holliday knows that people will have something to say about her body. Lots of that noise comes from internet strangers; some of it is from the people she passes on the street. Other comments fly out the mouths of her friends and family.

When a loved one mentions Holliday's weight—maybe trying to pay her a compliment, like "you're looking healthy lately"—she generally assumes they have good intentions. "From their point of view, they're trying to say something kind," she says. That's why she usually opts for a "nice, gentle" approach: a brief thanks, followed by a reminder that she doesn't discuss her body.

Read More: *Here's How Much Sleep You Need According to Your Age*

Other times, she'll respond to a comment from a family member—"You look like you lost weight"—with something a little snappier: "Nope, still fat, but that's OK." She tells the person that she's happy, and then changes the subject and moves on. The problem, she acknowledges, is that "some people aren't even going to notice that you did that, and it's going to roll right over their head." If you feel up to it, firmly setting a boundary that you don't

talk about your body can provide a more surefire dose of the feedback your conversation partner needs, she says.

“So funny, right?”

During a recent trip to Italy with a plus-size travel group, Holliday encountered unusually brazen, fatphobic comments. “It was pretty jarring, even for me,” she says. One evening, as the group crossed the street, dressed up and excited to see a plus-size opera singer perform, they noticed a cluster of men laughing and pointing at them, egging their friends to “pick one.” “The whole mission is having these size-inclusive tours for people to feel comfortable and safe, but you can’t control the environment,” Holliday says. She had to say something. “I turned around and looked at them, and started laughing with them, and then I stopped, with a stone-cold look on my face, and said, ‘So funny, right?’” She continued staring at them for a few beats. The men quickly stopped laughing and joking, she says, and fell silent, with a look on their faces that indicated they knew they were in trouble.

“My body is different, but my heart is fuller.”

For a long time, thinness has been synonymous with happiness, Holliday stresses—and seeing someone thrive in a larger body can challenge people’s preconceptions. Yet it captures her truth. She’s recovering from an eating disorder and healing from an abusive relationship, she says, both of which took a toll on her health. “My body is bigger than maybe ever, but it’s just trying to make sure I survive,” she adds. “If it’s bigger right now or forever, that’s OK. I’m able to be happy and enjoy my life for probably the first time ever, and I’m able to be present.”

“I’m so sorry you feel that way, but I am so loved and so blessed.”

A couple years ago, Holliday made headlines for the way she responded to a woman who had body shamed her in a waiting room: “Ma’am, I am one of the most famous plus-size models in the world. I think I’m doing OK.” While we can’t all use her words verbatim, we can sub in what we’re most proud of: being a healthy mom of four, a hard-working business owner, a neuroscientist, a pickleball champ.

Read More: *How to Know if Your Friendship Is Toxic—and What to Do About It*

While Holliday still appreciates the occasional well-timed clapback, she increasingly aims to keep things light and move on with her day. That’s the way true change can happen, she believes: People are far more likely to reflect on their words if you “kill them with kindness,” rather than getting sassy. “It’s very easy to snap back with ‘hate’ when you’re being hated,” she says. “I’m definitely recovering from being a very defensive person, and trying to realize, maybe someone’s having a bad day. They might be commenting on my looks, but it usually has nothing to do with me and everything to do with them.”

“Did you know that strawberries aren’t actually berries, but bananas are?”

If someone makes a comment about your weight that makes you uncomfortable, you can simply change the subject, Miller says. She likes to keep a handful of fun facts in her back pocket—like this one about the scientific classification of popular fruit—and then pull them out when a conversation requires a 180° shift. “Some people aren’t going to be comfortable being very confrontational,” she says. “So redirecting the conversation is a great way to handle those situations.”

“Oh, I didn’t realize we were sharing unsolicited opinions. Do you want mine next?”

If you’re feeling provocative, a quip that maintains your dignity while putting the commenter in their place could be the way to go. “Sometimes, depending on your personality—or if directness isn’t really working—you’ve gotta step it up a notch to make your point,” Miller says. “Especially if it’s a person who said something really inappropriate or harmful, or if they’re a repeat offender.” Plus, she adds, “Some of us are just naturally spicy and want to go straight to level three.”

“My body needed a little extra assistance to help with the weight loss.”

Amy Kane has struggled with her weight for as long as she can remember. As a teen, she learned she had polycystic ovary syndrome, which can make it difficult to lose weight, and later, after having three kids, she was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes. At her heaviest, she estimates she weighed 300 pounds and wore a size 4X.

Read More: *Does Text Therapy Really Work?*

Eventually, Kane’s endocrinologist suggested she try Mounjaro, a GLP-1 drug that can help people lose a significant amount of weight. She’s now down more than 160 pounds and says the drug saved her life physically and emotionally. Inevitably, she’s fielded plenty of questions—and judgment—about how she did it. Some people ask why she didn’t “just go to the gym.” Kane likes to respond: “I overhauled my diet and my lifestyle, and I had a tool that was helping me. Your body might not need that, but my body needed a little extra assistance to help with the weight loss.” If someone pushes back and tells her she “cheated” or took the easy way out—she’s heard it all—she emphasizes: “GLP-1s are not

magic," and she's put a lot of work into achieving and maintaining her new body.

"Wow. Do you normally comment on people's weight like this? How do they usually respond when you say that to them?"

This is a terrific way to respond if someone tells you you're fat or makes an otherwise offensive comment, says Kelli Rugless, a psychologist and eating disorder specialist in Los Angeles. "It takes the attention away from your weight and appearance and redirects it to the person making the comment or asking the question," she says. Plus, it encourages them to reflect on their behavior. Rugless thinks of it as an opportunity to provide "honest feedback on how insulted or hurt the other person's comment made you feel," while hopefully spurring them to avoid such language in the future. She suggests delivering it with little emotion and steady eye contact. "In the same way they put you on the spot, you're returning the favor," she says, "and not attempting to relieve or rush through their discomfort."

"While I understand your curiosity, I promise you that how I lost weight is the least interesting thing about me. I'd rather talk about [fill in the blank]."

This is another go-to when Rugless coaches her clients on how to respond to unsolicited comments about their appearance. "It communicates your boredom and disinterest in talking about weight, diets, and health trends," she says, hopefully ensuring the person won't bring them up again. Say it with a light, humorous tone of voice, she advises, and if you happen to have an audience, shift your eye contact to someone else. Doing so "reinforces the reality that you've moved on to not only a new topic, but a new individual," she says.

“I’ve been focusing on my overall health.”

Kane documents her weight-loss journey on Instagram and TikTok, and she often hears from people who don’t want to tell their friends that they’re using a GLP-1 medication. She assures them that “it’s no one’s right to know.” When she first started taking Mounjaro, she didn’t tell many people, either. She recalls neighbors commenting on her weight loss and asking how she did it. “I didn’t lie, but I left out the part about medication,” she says. “I told them I changed my diet, and that since my kids were a little older, I had more time to focus on myself.” If you don’t feel comfortable disclosing your medical information, you could also say, “That’s between me and my doctor,” or “I’d rather not go into the details.”

“I’ll take this loose skin for my physical and mental health to do a 180.”

Being so candid on social media opens Kane up to, well, audience feedback. “The No. 1 thing I get asked about, or get nasty comments about, is my loose skin,” she says. Some people blame it on her medication; Kane responds that any weight loss can lead to loose skin. Others post mean-hearted remarks about what it looks like. “I have no shame—I’ll show it,” Kane says. “I think it empowers people. And I tell them that I’ll take this loose skin for the 180 my physical health has done, and the 180 my mental health has done.”

Read More: *Cuddling Might Help You Get Better Sleep*

“Yes, and?”

Molly Day was a professional dancer throughout much of her 20s, but during the pandemic, complications related to an eye surgery led to her retirement. She gained about 50 pounds after that—weight that masked the six-pack she once had. She was floored by

how many people felt entitled to comment on her new size. These days, Day, who's now a body-neutral fitness instructor in New York, spares few words for those who make comments like, "Oh my God, you've gained weight." She might reply: "Yes, and?" Trying to defend or deflect can bring more attention to the subject she wants to avoid, she's found, whereas a terse response tends to shut down the conversation. "It takes a lot of inner work to be comfortable with your body shifting," she says—but owning the change diminishes the other person's ability to make her feel "less than."

"This is not the appropriate setting to be bringing this up."

In the early months after Day's weight gain, friends brought it up under the guise of concern—"I care about your health"—during social gatherings and in public spaces. She didn't appreciate the so-called good intentions. "If it was truly about my health, which we know it's not because health is every size, this isn't the situation to bring it up in," she says. Day told her friends exactly that. She found that while some doubled down—to which she repeated her boundary—others immediately clocked themselves and apologized for the intrusive comments.

"Can you repeat yourself?"

People often express how they feel about others' bodies by making sly "jokes," Day has discovered. She doesn't see the humor, so she's started asking them to repeat themselves. Some do, to which she responds: "That's what I thought you said." "They want to just make it as a little jab and continue to move on," she says. Making them repeat themselves—and then responding with silence, refusing to engage further—is a powerful way to call them out.

"What a shame you felt the need to say that."

Day still recalls the time a colleague she hadn’t seen in years made a joke about her appearance. Her quick-witted retort: “What a shame you felt the need to say that.” “I could see it in their face—the disappointment,” she says. “It was one of those moments like when you’re a little kid, and your parent doesn’t yell at you, but they’re like, ‘I’m so disappointed,’ and it hits you so much harder.” She now keeps the phrase in her back pocket and has pulled it out in situations in which she might otherwise be at a loss for words. “We don’t have to appease people when they make these comments about our bodies,” she says. “Having a couple statements ready to go can really help you claim back your power.”

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‘It Sounded Like Gunfire.’ Fear Grips Lebanon After Deadly Pager and Radio Blasts

Justin Salhani is a journalist based between Beirut and Paris.

First, on Tuesday, there were exploding pagers. On Wednesday, walkie-talkies began detonating, along with other electronic devices. Panic took hold of whole areas across Lebanon—particularly in Shia communities where Hezbollah are present—as devices designed to be held in the hand and close to the face blew fingers off hands and took out eyes.

“We were confused at first,” Joumana, who was visiting loved ones at a hospital in Lebanon’s capital Beirut on Wednesday, tells TIME. “It sounded like gunfire. Then we saw cars, ambulances, and wounded people.”

The ostensibly targeted devices carried by members of the militant and political group Hezbollah, whose members had been assigned the pagers, and the walkie-talkies pressed into service as back-ups. If the larger goal was fomenting fear, the success of the two-stage attack was palpable across Beirut.

[video id=bBeXnWuQ autostart="viewable"]

The death toll stands at 37, including children. Of some 3,000 people admitted to 90 hospitals across the country, around 300 remained in critical condition on Thursday, according to Lebanon's Minister of Public Health Firas Abiad. The Lebanese Red Cross has provided more than 200 units of blood for the wounded; blood banks were flooded with donors.

Read More: *6 Questions About the Deadly Exploding Pager Attacks in Lebanon, Answered*

Many likened the twin attacks to "terrorism," both because of its effect on the Lebanese population, and its profoundly alarming manner. Ever since Al Qaeda announced itself to the world with consecutive bombings of two U.S. embassies in East Africa in 1998, "one-two" attacks have been a favored way of amplifying fear and uncertainty. During the U.S. occupation of Iraq, a car bomb was often followed a by a second suicide bombing perhaps a half hour later, intended to boost the death count by claiming the lives of those who had rushed to help.

"There is no world in which the explosion of hundreds, if not thousands, of pagers is not an indiscriminate attack prohibited by

international law," Mai El-Sadany, a human rights lawyer and the executive director of the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, wrote on X. "When those pagers were set off, there was no way to know if they would be in shopping markets, homes, or streets with busy traffic."

Israel has neither confirmed nor denied involvement, but multiple press accounts and security officials point the finger at Tel Aviv.

In mourning from Tuesday's attack, nobody seemed to expect Wednesday.

A funeral was underway in Ghobeiry, a predominantly Shia southern suburb of Beirut where Hezbollah enjoys local support, when an exploding electronic device sent the crowd into chaos. "I almost got hit," says Joao Sousa, a freelance photographer covering the event.

Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health had called all of the country's available medical workers to head to hospitals on Tuesday to deal with the large number of cases. Adding the injuries from the second wave, the chief medical officer at one of Beirut's top hospitals says the backlog of operations on Tuesday's wounded would take until the end of Thursday to clear.

On Wednesday, his hospital admitted two more patients. “One was a casualty from yesterday and one was from the day before because he needed a high level of care,” says Salah Zeineddine, of the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC).

“We remain on high alert and are trying to decongest by providing immediate and quick care to the injuries we had two days ago and discharge cases,” he adds. “We’re still not accepting cold or scheduled elective cases just to save our resources should anything happen.”

The country is on eggshells. Attacks on back-to-back days left many worried another one may be in the cards. On Thursday, Lebanese authorities banned pagers and walkie-talkies on flights out of Beirut’s international airport. Industries that rely on such electronics are also changing communication strategies in the short term—with one event planning company telling TIME they will replace their walkie-talkies used to talk during weddings with WhatsApp.

Hezbollah was clearly the military target of the attack. But the organization is at once a heavily armed, battle-hardened militia and a political party with a social aid organization attached. It exists to oppose Israel, having come into existence, with the help of Iran, in

response to the Israeli invasion of 1982 during the country's 1975-1990 civil war, and subsequent occupation of southern Lebanon, which lasted until 2000. The two sides also fought a deadly 34-day war in 2006.

Read More: *The Coming Israel-Hezbollah War*

But the nature of this unprecedented attack has surprised many, and raised questions about how it was executed. The New York *Times* published a detailed account of a Mossad front company manufacturing the pagers as part of an "elaborate ruse" that many have likened to a modern-day Trojan Horse. The most high profile casualty was the Iranian ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani, who lost one eye and sustained damage to the other.

Israel and Hezbollah have been in a low-grade war for almost a year, regularly trading missile and rocket fire across the border since the Oct. 7 attack on Israel by Hamas, a fellow ally of Iran, that killed 1,200 people. The near-daily fire has killed nearly 600 Lebanese, including more than 100 civilians, according to local health authorities. Attacks from Lebanon in that period have killed 46 Israelis, both civilian and military, according to the Israeli government.

Tens of thousands have also fled their homes on both sides of the border and have not returned.

Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah has said that his group will stop firing rockets and missiles across Lebanon's southern border when a ceasefire is reached in Gaza, where at least 40,000 people have been killed, according to the Hamas-run Gaza healthy ministry, figures the U.S. and U.N. deem credible. Meanwhile, Israeli officials recently made a war goal to return the displaced Israelis to their homes in the north and have begun discussing plans to widen the war against Hezbollah—which until now has predominantly targeted south Lebanon and parts of the country's east.

Hezbollah has vowed a strong response. "This strong blow did not and will not bring us down," Nasrallah said. "We will become stronger, more resilient, and more capable."

In the meantime, the rattled people in Lebanon are waiting on tenterhooks for Israel's next move. In the hours following Nasrallah's speech on Thursday, Israel flew jets over Beirut and carried out airstrikes in southern Lebanon.

Earlier in the day, a medical worker from AUBMC was walking through town in her scrubs even though she was not going to or coming from work. "I wear them at all times now," she says, "just in case I have to run to the hospital again."

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