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Gillian Tett

The good news and the bad about market turbulence — COMMENT, PAGE 11

Time and space

Rocket launch masks Tesla's electric car delays — RICHARD WATERS, PAGE 14



Africa's Mona Lisa

The rediscovery of a legendary painting after decades — ARTS, PAGE 8

Japanese let cat out of bag in Downing St

The European chief of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Kazuo Okamoto, tries to stroke Larry the Downing Street cat before a meeting between Theresa May, the prime minister, and Japanese executives. Afterwards, Japan's ambassador to the UK told Mrs May that Japanese groups in the UK expected to maintain free access to EU markets after Brexit.

"If there is no profitability of continuing operation in the UK — not Japanese only — no private company can continue operation," said Koji Tsuruoka. "So, it's as simple as that. This is all high stakes that I think all of us need to keep in mind."

Davis anger page 2
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Daniel Leal-Olivas/AFP/Getty

Hawkish BoE signals swifter rate rises to keep inflation in check

Stronger global economy bolsters UK • Pound gains on dollar • Equities still volatile

CHRIS GILES AND GEMMA TETLOW

10 per cent correction. The broader Euro Stoxx 600 index fell 1.6 per cent.

The pound jumped more than 1 per cent against the dollar and the euro after the BoE signalled that it was turning hawkish. The FTSE 100 index dropped 1.6 per cent.

All nine members of the Monetary Policy Committee agreed a statement accompanying its quarterly inflation report that the bank was no longer willing to tolerate inflation above its 2 per cent target over the next three years.

Mark Carney, governor, said the MPC expected that "to return inflation sustainably to target . . . it will probably be necessary to raise interest rates . . . somewhat earlier and to a somewhat greater extent than we had thought in November."

The language was similar to that of September's MPC meeting, which preceded the UK's first interest rate rise in a decade in November, to 0.5 per cent.

Analysts have now priced in a rate rise as soon as the bank's May meeting. "We should expect a [0.25 percentage point] hike in May and another before the end of the year," said Karen Ward, chief market strategist at JPMorgan.

In a letter to Philip Hammond, the chancellor, explaining why inflation had overshot the 2 per cent target, Mr Carney said that the MPC had been willing to tolerate above-target inflation "in order to support jobs and activity at a time when uncertainty was elevated and the economy was slowing".

But he added that this trade-off had diminished further since the November



The BoE had to write to the chancellor, explaining why inflation had overshot its 2 per cent target

meeting. "It is therefore appropriate to set monetary policy so that inflation returns sustainably to its target at a more conventional horizon," he said.

Alan Clarke of Scotiabank said this additional analysis "scream[ed] hike, hike, hike!" Fiona Cincotta of City Index said the announcement was "even more hawkish than most market participants were anticipating".

The MPC's statement and Mr Carney's letter were not specific about the number of rate rises the bank thought would be needed. In November, Mr Carney pencilled in two or three 0.25 per cent rises over the next three years. But later forecasts suggest a steeper curve.

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Germany has won the most medals at the Winter Olympics (377), with Russia trailing in second. Twenty-eight Russian athletes had Olympic doping bans overturned last week, after their appeals were upheld

Briefing

► **Davis takes swipe at 'discourteous' EU**
David Davis, UK Brexit secretary, hit out at the EU yesterday, accusing Brussels of trying to intimidate the UK as Brexit tensions intensified.— PAGE 2;
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Glimmers of hope shone from Europe's banking sector after big Italian, French and German lenders reported better than forecast results yesterday, lifted by the strengthening eurozone economy.— PAGE 13

► **Le Maire warns on reforms 'red line'**
French finance minister Bruno Le Maire has hit at German-backed plans to impose debt write-downs on investors in bailed-out countries, saying it is a "red line" in eurozone reform talks.— PAGE 4

► **Mexican architect wins pavilion honour**
Mexican architect Frida Escobedo is set to bring her homeland to life at London's Kensington Gardens with her design for the Serpentine Gallery pavilion.— PAGE 2



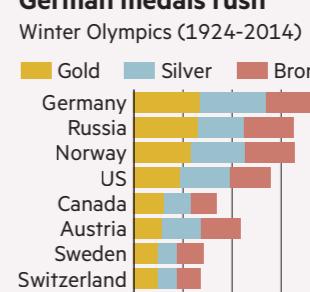
► **Harassment toll for Westminster staff**
One in five parliamentary employees have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment or inappropriate sexual behaviour at work in the past year, a survey reveals.— PAGE 2

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Jacob Zuma, South Africa's president, has been accused of playing for time and holding out for concessions as he remains locked in a power struggle with Cyril Ramaphosa, leader of the ANC.— PAGE 6

Datawatch

German medals rush



Source: International Olympic Committee



First Twitter profit hints at growing ad challenge for Google and Facebook

ALIYA RAM — LONDON
TIM BRADSHAW — LOS ANGELES

Twitter reported its first profit yesterday, sending its shares to their highest levels in two years and suggesting that advertisers are beginning to spread their online spending beyond Facebook and Google.

Its \$91m in net income in the fourth quarter comes after a similar upbeat pre-Christmas performance by Snap, Snapchat's parent, which posted strong revenue growth on Wednesday following unexpected increases in users and advertising.

For years, Wall Street has been sceptical that smaller internet companies such as Twitter and Snap could challenge Google and Facebook, which together account for more than three-quarters of global spending on digital

advertising. But this week's turnarounds at Twitter and Snap follow signs of strain in their larger rivals' dominance.

Alphabet's shares weakened last week after it spooked Wall Street with a big jump in the cost of distributing Google's advertising and services on mobile platforms. Facebook also came under pressure as it reported its first drop in North American usage and a decline in time spent on its apps at the end of last year.

Yet the two companies' financial might, with a combined market valuation of more than \$1tn, still dwarfs their smaller rivals.

Investors have waited 12 years for Twitter to report a profit and yesterday's announcement sent its shares up as much as 29 per cent.

Twitter's \$91m in net income was an improvement on losses of \$167m a year earlier. Snap remains heavily loss

making even though it beat Wall Street's sales forecasts for the first time since going public almost a year ago.

Both companies have been forced to overhaul their products for consumers and advertisers. Twitter made a radical break with its history by doubling its 140-character limit on tweets, which it said had been a popular move with advertisers despite a backlash from some longstanding users.

Twitter beat Wall Street estimates on revenue growth of 2 per cent to \$731.6m, when most analysts had expected a decline. Ad sales, which comprise the bulk of Twitter revenues, rose 1 per cent year on year to \$644m, because of the popularity of new video adverts.

However, monthly active users of 330m came in below investors' expectations, even as the company insisted that engagement was improving.

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STOCK MARKETS

	Feb 8	prev	%chg
S&P 500	2650.40	2681.66	-1.17
Nasdaq Composite	6964.66	7051.98	-1.24
Dow Jones Ind	24521.29	24893.35	-1.49
FTSEurofirst 300	1466.26	1492.15	-1.74
Euro Stoxx 50	3361.34	3454.52	-2.70
FTSE 100	7170.69	7279.42	-1.49
FTSE All-Share	3941.25	4002.51	-1.53
CAC 40	5151.68	5255.89	-1.98
Xetra Dax	12260.29	12590.43	-2.62
Nikkei	21890.86	21645.37	1.13
Hang Seng	30451.27	30323.20	0.42
MSCI World \$	2101.07	2098.85	0.11
MSCI EM \$	1173.38	1176.18	-0.24
MSCI ACWI \$	513.30	512.97	0.06

CURRENCIES

	Feb 8	prev	
\$ per €	1.226	1.229	0.816 0.813
€ per \$	1.400	1.398	0.714 0.720
£ per €	0.876	0.886	1.142 1.129
¥ per \$	109.240	109.270	133.900 134.331
£ per €	152.914	151.694	78.744 78.701
€ index	95.953	96.155	97.022 96.846
Fr per €	1.152	1.161	1.315 1.312

INTEREST RATES

	price	yield	chg
US Gov 10 yr	94.97	2.84	0.07
UK Gov 10 yr	97.26	1.56	0.03
Ger Gov 10 yr	98.34	0.68	0.04
Jpn Gov 10 yr	100.37	0.06	-0.01
US Gov 30 yr	92.90	3.12	0.08
Ger Gov 2 yr	101.39	-0.58	0.02

Fed Funds Eff 1.42 1.34 0.08
US 3m Bills 1.55 1.52 0.03
Euro Libor 3m -0.38 -0.38 0.00
UK 3m 0.53 0.52 0.00
Prices are latest for edition
Data provided by Morningstar

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NATIONAL

Brexit

Davis berates EU for 'discourteous' tactics

Brussels suggests it would halt single market access if transition deal breached

GEORGE PARKER — POLITICAL EDITOR

David Davis lashed out at the EU yesterday, accusing Brussels of trying to intimidate the UK as tensions over Brexit bubbled over.

The Brexit secretary reacted angrily to the suggestion by Brussels that it would suspend Britain's access to the single market if the UK breaches the terms of any transition deal.

"I do not think it was in good faith to publish a document with frankly discourteous language and actually implying that they could arbitrarily terminate,

in effect, the implementation period," he said.

British officials also claim privately that Michel Barnier, EU chief negotiator, is deliberately slowing down Brexit talks covering the proposed two-year transition and other issues in an attempt to put pressure on London.

Mr Davis spoke as the Japanese ambassador warned of the "high stakes" that Britain faces after a meeting between Japanese companies and Theresa May, the UK prime minister.

Koji Tsuruoka, speaking outside Downing Street, said international companies could close their UK operations if there was "no profitability" in staying in the country.

"If there is no profitability of continuing operation in the UK — not Japanese

only — no private company can continue operation," he said. "So, it's as simple as that. This is all high stakes — that I think all of us need to keep in mind."

The ambassador said Japanese companies had come to the UK on the basis that they would have access to European markets: "Therefore it is expected that they will have free access."

The warning came after talks between Japanese business leaders — including from Hitachi, Mitsubishi, Mitsui, Nomura, Panasonic, Nissan and SoftBank — and senior government figures, including Mrs May, chancellor Philip Hammond, business secretary Greg Clark and trade secretary Liam Fox.

The UK government has yet to find a common position on a future relationship with the EU, and Mrs May said yes-

terday that ministers would have an "away day" later this month to try to come to an agreement. She convened two meetings of her Brexit inner cabinet this week but little progress was made.

The 11-member Brexit negotiating committee is trying to define what Britain wants from a "deep and special partnership" with the EU ahead of the March European Council.

Mrs Barnier wants to agree details of a transition deal at the March meeting but is also pressing Mrs May to set out her vision of a future EU-UK partnership ahead of the summit.

In Brussels there is mounting frustration and senior officials have warned that unless Britain can explain what it wants, the EU27 will simply offer Britain a Canada-style trade deal — a model that

falls short of the "bespoke deal" Mrs May wants to negotiate.

Hilary Benn, Labour chairman of the Commons Brexit committee, said: "The government is immobilised on Brexit because of the divisions in the cabinet and the Conservative party."

He said that if Mrs May's government could not decide what it wants from Brexit then "parliament will do it for them". He expects MPs to vote for Britain to remain part of a customs union with the EU.

Mr Davis insisted that the atmosphere at this week's Brexit committee meetings was "very constructive" and that there were "a lot of things resolved".

Brexit does not mean Brexit page 4
Editorial Comment; Notebook page 10
Martin Wolf page 11

Parliamentary standards

Fifth of staff at Westminster affected by harassment

LAURA HUGHES

POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

One in five parliamentary employees has experienced or witnessed sexual harassment or inappropriate sexual behaviour while at work over the past year, according to a survey published yesterday.

The study, commissioned by a cross-party working group of MPs and staff, said such behaviour had been "a feature in the lives" of many who worked for MPs in Westminster.

The group also published a proposed independent complaints procedure for parliamentary staff, which could see MPs found to have engaged in sexual harassment or bullying lose their seat.

The report recommends granting the parliamentary commissioner for standards new powers to suspend MPs from the House, which could lead to "recall", a process that can result in the loss of seats. Other measures include compulsory training for MPs on what constitutes bullying, harassment and good employment practice.

Under the plans, people making complaints as well as the accused will have a right to anonymity while an investigation is taking place. The group warned that care must be taken to ensure MPs did not have their reputations ruined by false complaints.

"It is recognised parliamentarians are under a constant media spotlight and that, due to the nature of political discourse, there is a risk of malicious and/or vexatious complaints against those who work in the Palace of Westminster either as MPs, peers or staff," it said.

"The new procedures must ensure checks and balances are in place to guard against such complaints," the group said. "The new scheme must put arrangements in place to minimise the well-documented risk of under-reporting by those experiencing sexual or other forms of harassment or bullying."

MPs and peers are expected to vote on the proposals this month.

The group, chaired by Andrea Leadsom, leader of the Commons, has proposed that independent investigators should be brought in to consider evidence and lead an "informal" resolution process for harassment allegations.

Final decisions would be made by the independent parliamentary commissioner for standards.

"The evidence, particularly from staff, was that a change in workplace culture is both urgent and essential," the report said. "It is unacceptable that inappropriate behaviour, including bullying and harassment and sexual harassment, take place across what we have called 'the parliamentary community'."

The working group surveyed 1,377 parliamentary staff and found that almost 19 per cent said they had experienced or witnessed sexual harassment or inappropriate behaviour in the past 12 months. Thirty-nine per cent reported experience of non-sexual harassment or bullying over the past year.

The report follows allegations against ministers and MPs of all parties. Michael Fallon resigned last year as defence secretary after saying his behaviour in the past had "fallen short".

Two Labour MPs, Ivan Lewis and Kelvin Hopkins, have been referred to their party's internal disciplinary committee after claims of sexual harassment.

Shadow play

Pavilion to get Mexican look

Frida Escobedo, a Mexican architect, has been chosen as the designer of the Serpentine summer pavilion in Kensington Gardens, making her the youngest person to be invited to carry out the annual project.

The 38-year-old is known for work that "reactivates" forgotten or neglected urban areas. Her design for the Pavilion, which will open from June 15 to October 7, features a curved canopy lined with mirrored panels and a triangular pool cast into the concrete floor.

The courtyard-based structure, aligned to the north along the Greenwich Meridian, will include a perforated breeze wall, or *celosia*, common to Mexican houses. It will also incorporate British materials chosen for their dark colours and textured surfaces.



Left and above: artists' impressions of the Serpentine courtyard. Right, Frida Escobedo, the Mexican architect behind the design

Frida Escobedo/Taller de Arquitectura/Armadísfera



Low inspection rating

Private probation groups under fire for pushing up reoffending

ROBERT WRIGHT

Overstretched private probation companies in England and Wales are helping to drive up reoffending rates by failing to monitor offenders properly, according to an official report on the service.

The author, Glenys Stacey, chief inspector of probation, said the service offered by Community Rehabilitation Companies was poor — the lowest possible rating.

However, she dismissed fears that CRCs were recalling offenders to prison unnecessarily, and said that most of the decisions she examined were good.

Dame Glenys' findings are the latest in a series of critical reports on the CRCs, which have proved deeply controversial since they were set up three years ago. Her report says that judges and magistrates are so concerned about the companies' supervision record that they lack confidence they can rigorously manage offenders.

Because fewer offenders are being sentenced to probation, funding to CRCs has dropped, leading the Ministry of Justice to allocate extra money to offset lossmaking contracts.

A previous inspection report in December 2016 found that services provided by MTCnovo, a US company, in London were so poor they were putting people at risk.

Dame Glenys said that good enforcement relied on good quality probation supervision, but CRCs were "stretched beyond their capacity" and were focused on "contract compliance".

"Not seeing people often enough, or not engaging meaningfully with them, [they] are inevitably behind the curve on enforcement," she said.

Because of their lack of engagement, staff might not know when enforcement — such as a return to prison — was called for, or whether it was better to undertake "purposeful work" to re-engage the individual with the probation programme, according to Dame Glenys.

She added that poor supervision made it more likely offenders would commit more crimes, and some would end up in prison as a result.

The CRCs took over management of low to medium-risk offenders across England and Wales from February 2015,

'Not seeing people often enough, or not engaging meaningfully, [CRCs] are behind . . . on enforcement'

under a programme devised by Chris Grayling, now transport secretary, during his period as justice secretary. Management of high-risk offenders passed to a new National Probation Service, which remained in the public sector.

In addition to MTCnovo, services are provided by Sodexo of France, Ingeus of Australia and Staffline, Interserve and Working Links of the UK.

The report shows their record con-

trasts unfavourably with that of the publicly-run NPS. Only 37 per cent of CRC assessments were considered good, compared to 83 per cent of those carried out by the NPS. Also, only 58 per cent of decisions made by CRCs about offenders' management and behaviour were assessed as appropriate, against 85 per cent for the NPS.

But the CRCs fared better when deciding whether offenders who had breached the terms of their release should be returned to prison. The report found that 89 per cent of their decisions were appropriate, against 92 per cent by the NPS.

"Often, the level of disengagement or deterioration in the person's behaviour were such that they could not be safely managed in the community," Dame Glenys said.

Decision-making about returns to prison appeared to be better as the conditions for revoking an offender's release were clear and because higher-risk offenders who were typically

returned to prison appeared to be supervised by "higher-grade staff", the report found. It recommends the government ensures probation services are "sufficiently resourced" to fully supervise individuals with complex needs.

It also says CRCs must "ensure effective assessment" and "planned and purposeful" levels of face-to-face contact with those under probation supervision.

The justice ministry said it had already taken action by setting up a working group to drive improvement.

"We will continue to monitor CRCs' performance and will work closely to ensure they meet the high standards of probation services we expect," the department said.

Frances Crook, chief executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, the criminal justice pressure group, said the report was the latest in a long line of critical inspection reports on the CRCs.

"It is time for the government to end this dangerous experiment and recreate a single, successful, probation service."

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Hiscox case

Insurer accused of data breach over £30,000 watch

JANE CROFT

An insurance company went on trial yesterday, accused of breaching data protection laws in its handling of a customer's claim about the loss of a £30,000 Swiss luxury watch.

Hiscox is charged with three offences under the 1998 Data Protection Act, in what is thought to be one of the first prosecutions of its kind brought by the Information Commissioner's Office, the authority responsible for upholding information rights.

Hiscox is alleged to have required Irfan Hussain, one of its policyholders, to supply information about any criminal convictions before the company would pay out on a claim over the loss of his Audemars Piguet Royal Oak watch.

Hiscox denies the charges. If convicted in the case, the company could face an unlimited fine.

Ben Summers, barrister for the Information Commissioner's Office, told a jury at Southwark crown court in London that Hiscox had required Mr Hus-

sain to supply any information on him held by the Criminal Records Office, in a move that breached the law.

Mr Summers said Mr Hussain had taken out a policy in 2010 with Hiscox covering his London home, including his watch, which was insured for £30,000. In his application form he declared he had no criminal convictions.

When he lost the watch in October 2010, Hiscox "suspected [Mr Hussain's] claim was fraudulent" and asked him to make a so-called subject access request to the Criminal Records Office for information about any criminal convictions or police cautions relating to him, the jury heard.

Hiscox is accused of asking Mr Hussain to supply these records on three occasions in 2015, after legislation updating the 1998 Data Protection Act had come into force which prohibited companies from making such demands.

The court heard that Hiscox will argue it was in the public interest to request Mr Hussain to seek the information. The trial continues.

KATRINA MANSON — WASHINGTON
ALIYA RAM — LONDON

MPs yesterday attacked Facebook, Google and Twitter in Washington over what the parliamentarians regard as failures by the technology groups to fully investigate Russian interference in the Brexit poll and 2017 election.

The Commons digital, culture, media and sport committee held a special hearing in the US capital with the tech companies as part of an inquiry into fake news, after previously accusing the groups of not co-operating sufficiently in efforts to establish the extent of Russian manipulation of the EU referendum and 2017 election.

The move comes after Facebook's revelation last year that 150m Americans saw political content published by Russian entities in the two years before the US presidential election in 2016.

MPs, unlike their US counterparts, do not have the power to compel information from US tech companies.

"You guys have all the information

Washington visit

MPs criticise big tech trio in Russian fake news hearing

and we don't have any of it and you won't tell us what it is," Ian Lucas, a Labour committee

NATIONAL

Wage growth spurs BoE policy rethink

Inflationary pressures have central bank officials looking to increase rates faster

CHRIS GILES AND GEMMA TETLOW

The Bank of England always expected that Britain's low levels of unemployment would sooner or later see wages start to rise and feed through into rising prices.

But for several months, the labour market appeared to defy gravity, continuing to tighten without any significant effect on wages.

Now the bank believes it can see hard data that wages are rising and that interest rate policy will need to move faster than previously expected.

Wage growth lagged behind inflation last year, despite unemployment falling to a 42-year low of 4.3 per cent.

But the last official wage statistics showed the gap narrowing: the annualised rate of growth of pay rose to about 3 per cent in the second half of 2017.

Meanwhile those changing jobs have in recent months achieved wage rises of a similar level to those witnessed before the financial crisis and employers have reported that they expect pay settle-

'[It is] appropriate to set monetary policy so that inflation returns sustainably to its target'

ments to average 3.1 per cent in 2018, compared with 2.6 per cent in 2017.

The sharp rise in inflation last year is thought by the bank to have been largely driven by the depreciation of sterling, which increased the cost of imported goods, and rising global oil prices. But even once these effects dissipate over the coming months, the bank expects domestic inflation to take up the baton.

The Monetary Policy Committee assumes in its forecasts that the UK will leave the EU through a "smooth" Brexit. But the committee acknowledged yesterday that leaving the EU "remains the most significant influence on, and source of uncertainty about, the economic outlook".

Mark Carney, BoE governor, said that "the most important decisions by orders of magnitude that will be taken that will affect UK households' and businesses' likely prospects in the years to come" would be those taken as part of the Brexit negotiations rather than those taken by the MPC.

But despite Brexit uncertainties, the BoE is now increasingly confident that pay growth is already picking up in a tight labour market with low unemployment.

The bank has just carried out its annual detailed assessment of the UK's

capacity to produce output. On the basis of this, the MPC concluded that there was no reason to upgrade its forecasts for the future sustainable rate of output growth. There was, it said, no reason yet to think that productivity growth was recovering faster than expected.

"We've been making the case for quite some time for an accelerated pick-up [in productivity], but the economy just didn't co-operate," Mr Carney quipped yesterday.

The main change in the bank's latest forecasts from three months ago was an upward revision to its expectations of the strength of the global economy, which helps Britain's exporters. The central bank therefore increased its forecast for UK growth for the current year from 1.7 per cent to 1.8 per cent.

This rate of growth, the MPC said, was faster than the 1.5 per cent annual rate that the economy could sustain without generating inflationary pressure.

"As growth in demand outpaces that of supply, a small margin of excess demand emerges by early 2020 and builds thereafter", generating persistent upward pressure on inflation, the committee concluded.

The combination of faster near-term growth, evidence of a pick-up in wage inflation and no change in long-term growth prospects left the MPC no longer willing to accept that it could safely "set policy so that inflation returned to its target over a longer period than two years", according to Mr Carney.

It was now "appropriate to set monetary policy so that inflation returns sustainably to its target at a more conventional horizon", which has traditionally been two years.

Although the MPC's message yesterday was more hawkish than previous communications, Mr Carney stressed that interest rates were unlikely to rise to the levels common before the financial crisis.

The UK's official interest rate averaged 5 per cent over the decade between BoE independence and the start of the financial crisis.

But, referring to the interest rate rises likely over the next few years, Mr Carney said: "These are interest rate cycles unlike those [the public] have experienced in the past. We're not talking about going back to those levels."

In the February meeting, the committee voted unanimously to keep interest rates on hold at 0.5 per cent and not to expand its quantitative easing programme beyond the £435bn of gilts it currently holds. It added that it still thought that any future rate increases should happen "at a gradual pace and to a limited extent".

Additional reporting by Michael Hunter

Edinburgh university

Scientists raise fertility hopes for women fighting cancer

CLIVE COOKSON — SCIENCE EDITOR

Mature human eggs have been grown for the first time in the laboratory from ovarian tissue, in a research project at Edinburgh university aimed at extending fertility treatment for women.

The researchers took "primordial follicles"—the earliest stage of egg development—from the ovaries of volunteers giving birth by caesarean section. These cells were nurtured through four stages of growth in different nutrient cultures over about three weeks, until they were fully mature and ready to be fertilised.

The first application of Edinburgh's work is likely to be safeguarding the ability of girls and young women about to undergo cancer treatment to have children, by removing and freezing ovarian tissue which can later be used to generate eggs for in vitro fertilisation, or IVF.

In the future lies the prospect of combining egg maturation with stem cell technology to make artificial human eggs from skin or other body cells.

"This is an exciting breakthrough which shows for the first time that complete development of human eggs in the laboratory is possible, more than 20 years after this was achieved in mice," said Daniel Brison, professor of clinical embryology and stem cell biology at Manchester university, who was not involved in the research.

Evelyn Telfer, the project leader at

Edinburgh university and a professor of reproductive biology, described the breakthrough as "an important milestone" building on more than 30 years of human fertility research at the higher education institution and its associated hospitals. The results are published in Molecular Human Reproduction, a medical journal, today.

Prof Telfer said the eggs were fully mature at the end of the process and ready for fertilisation, though they did not look completely normal. Their "polar body", a small cell produced during the final stage of maturation, was abnormally large—a potential problem that the scientists are investigating.

"We are now working on optimising the conditions that support egg development in this way and studying how healthy they are," she said.

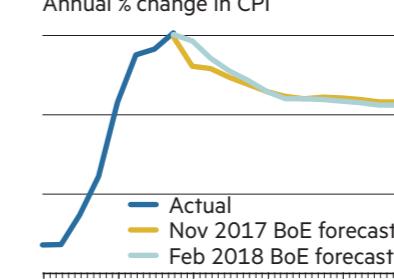
"We also hope to find out, subject to regulatory approval, whether they can be fertilised." At this point fertilisation would be for research rather than clinical purposes.

It is already possible for girls or women with cancer to have a piece of ovary removed and frozen before having chemotherapy or radiotherapy that might damage the eggs, and then have it re-implanted. But this procedure risks re-introducing cancer. The risk would be removed if the ovarian tissue is used to generate eggs for IVF, using the Edinburgh maturation procedure.

State of play



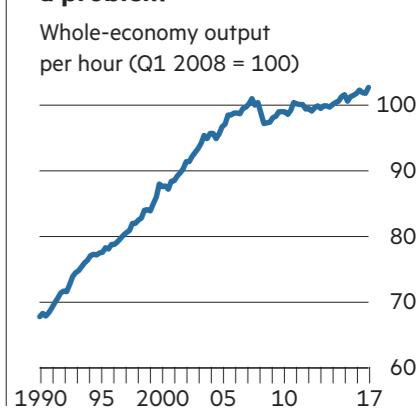
Inflation is not falling as fast as previously thought
Annual % change in CPI



Interest rates are likely to rise further and faster



Productivity remains a problem



2017, a year of delivery and growth

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INTERNATIONAL

Private investors

France draws 'red line' on eurozone bailouts

Finance minister attacks German-backed plan to impose debt write-downs

JIM BRUNSDEN AND MEHREEN KHAN
BRUSSELS
ANNE-SYLVAIN CHASSANY — PARIS

France's finance minister has hit out at German-backed plans to impose debt write-downs on investors in bailed-out countries, warning that the issue was a "red line" for Paris in talks on eurozone reform.

Speaking at a Politico conference in the French capital yesterday, Bruno Le Maire said France was opposed to any "automatic" mechanism that would force private-sector holders of sovereign debt to take losses when a eurozone country applies for a bailout.

He said the step would make the

eurozone more vulnerable and fuel Eurosceptic populism.

"I believe in policies and democracies and responsibility of elected governments. I can guarantee you, you would be handing a gift to extremists," he said.

The broadside from Paris comes after Angela Merkel struck a coalition deal with the centre-left SPD to pave the way for her fourth term as German chancellor. Emmanuel Macron, French president, is pushing for a pact with Berlin on reinforcing the single currency's stability, paving the way for a grand bargain between all eurozone governments.

While an automatic debt restructuring mechanism is not included in the German coalition deal, it has long been touted by Berlin as a crucial building block of a reinforced eurozone.

The German finance ministry argued in a paper last year that it would force investors to be more careful when

buying eurozone sovereign debt, increasing market discipline on member states and reducing the size of taxpayer-funded bailouts. The idea is strongly backed by the Dutch government.

'I can guarantee you, you would be handing a gift to extremists'

Bruno Le Maire

Greece is the only eurozone country so far to go through a sovereign debt restructuring, with private investors accepting a haircut of more than 50 per cent on the face value of the bonds they held in 2012.

Opponents of the measures, who include many eurozone finance ministers, argue automatic write-downs such

as maturity extensions, would create a self-fulfilling cycle of crises and spark investor panic.

Analysts warn that Italy, which has the highest ratio of debt to gross domestic product of any eurozone country apart from Greece, would be particularly vulnerable to market pressures should debt restructuring become part of the eurozone's bailout playbook.

"We all know we need something to prevent unsustainable debt stocks moving from private balance sheets to the ESM [European Stability Mechanism] before they get restructured," said Lucas Guttenberg at the Delors Institute in Berlin. "The big question is how to get there without causing a market panic."

While the idea is divisive, compromise ideas under consideration include handing greater powers to the ESM, the currency bloc's bailout fund, to take debt-restructuring decisions, and also

steps to reform bondholders' rights so as to prevent small groups of investors from resisting losses that have been accepted by the majority.

Klaus Regling, head of the ESM, has said that, if a deal is reached on a sovereign debt restructuring framework, then the ESM "could provide the debt sustainability analysis, and help organising negotiations between creditors and the debtor".

Germany's central bank has touted a plan where any country asking for a bailout must have an automatic three-year maturity extension on its bonds to avoid using programme funds to pay off its debt-servicing costs.

This idea has been rejected by Mr Regling. Analysts warn it could lead investors to dump a troubled country's bonds before it asked for a bailout as they will fear not being paid back on time.

Campaign pledge

Macron backs long-term increase in defence spending

ANNE-SYLVAIN CHASSANY — PARIS

French president Emmanuel Macron has reversed a decade of defence budget cuts by approving nearly €300bn in spending for the military by 2025, as France combats Islamist terror groups at home and abroad.

The decision, announced yesterday, fulfils Mr Macron's campaign promise to lift defence spending to 2 per cent of gross domestic product, from 1.7 per cent last year.

The budget increase comes amid rising geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and pressure on Nato members from Donald Trump, US president, to inject more funds into armed forces.

It will soothe the tensions between Mr Macron and the French army, laid bare last year when France's highest-ranking military chief stepped down following a public spat with the president over budget cuts.

The military budget is set to rise by €1.7bn annually until 2022, when Mr Macron's presidential term ends, and by €3bn thereafter. The government has already announced a 5.6 per cent increase in spending, to €34.4bn, for this year.

About 6,000 jobs will be added by 2025, including 3,000 in cyber security and intelligence services, according to the government. About 60,000 jobs were cut between 2005 and 2015, when Islamist extremists began to target France with terror attacks.

"It's a bill that repairs — equipment but also army men and women," Florence Parly, defence minister, said yesterday. "It's a bill for a renewal."

Unease has mounted in the French armed forces, the largest in Europe, as soldiers have been deployed to help police thwart Islamist attacks at home and sent to Iraq and Africa to fight extremist groups. A bug in the army's pay software has left many soldiers' families without money for weeks. Officers have complained about the declining quality of their equipment.

This anger peaked a few days before last year's annual Bastille Day military parade when General Pierre de Villiers suggested that the €850m cuts planned for 2017 were endangering the country.

"I may be stupid, but I know when I'm being had," Gen de Villiers told MPs. Shortly afterwards, Gen de Villiers resigned. Mr Macron's approval ratings plummeted partly because of the dispute.

Gen de Villiers on Wednesday voiced scepticism at the additional spending, stressing that the bulk of the increase would come after Mr Macron's presidential term. Governments frequently renege on their promises, he noted.



Emmanuel Macron meets troops at a military base in Istres, south France

Germany. Foreign minister post

Schulz faces SPD backlash over top cabinet role

Senior party figures fear move will overshadow grassroots vote on coalition agreement

CLAIRE JONES AND PATRICK MCGEE
FRANKFURT

Senior figures in Germany's Social Democratic party have attacked their leader Martin Schulz's decision to enter the new coalition government as foreign minister, saying it creates a credibility problem that could overshadow a critical member vote on the deal.

Mr Schulz, who led the SPD to the worst result of the postwar period in federal elections in September, took the job having previously insisted he would "never enter" a government led by Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The SPD and Ms Merkel's CDU/CSU bloc on Wednesday sealed an agreement to revive the grand coalition that governed Germany between 2013 and 2017, bringing an end to the political paralysis that has gripped the country since the vote.

However, many Social Democrats are upset about Mr Schulz's volte-face. "There are discussions about credibility," said Michael Groschek, head of the SPD in North Rhine-Westphalia. "We can't just sweep this under the carpet... I can understand this build-up of feeling and these fists on the table."

In another sign of the disgruntlement, outgoing foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel cancelled all his forthcoming engagements, leading to speculation in German media that he was furious at his exclusion from the new cabinet.

A number of SPD backbenchers in the Bundestag were also unhappy with Mr Schulz's handling of the coalition deal and his decision to take over at the foreign ministry.

"[He] should have known that this would anger the grassroots, bearing in mind the current mood in the party," said Jens Zimmermann, an SPD MP. "It was a mistake not to have come up with some kind of narrative to explain his decision to enter the government, having originally said he wouldn't."

The SPD will put the coalition deal to its 460,000 members for a vote later



Martin Schulz on Wednesday after sealing the deal. The SPD chief had previously said he would 'never enter' another government led by Chancellor Angela Merkel
Kay Nietfeld/AFP/Getty

this month that would allow Ms Merkel to begin her fourth term as chancellor. This is likely to test the split in the party between SPD leftwingers who are highly reluctant to prop up Ms Merkel for another four years, and pragmatists who support the grand coalition.

In a sign of the discontent that the coalition deal has created, many Conservatives are also angry with Ms Merkel for giving the SPD the finance ministry, a department the centre-right has run for the past eight years. Christian von Stetten, a CDU MP, said the move "is not exactly going to make the CDU membership enthusiastic".

The backlash against Mr Schulz has been led by the party's more left-leaning youth wing, which fears another grand

coalition with Ms Merkel's bloc will further erode the party's identity and aid fringe parties such as the rightwing Alternative for Germany.

Kevin Kühnert, influential leader of the SPD youth wing, will begin a nationwide tour to campaign against the grand coalition today and has challenged both Mr Schulz and Andrea Nahles, the new party chairman, to a debate.

The youth wing believes four more years of a grand coalition will solidify the AfD as the country's main opposition party. After securing 12.6 per cent of the vote in September, the AfD is now on 15 per cent, according to an Insa poll earlier this week. The SPD was at 17 per cent, down from 20.5 per cent in September. Support for the CDU/CSU fell to

'We can't just sweep this under the carpet... I can understand the build-up of feeling and fists on the table'

30.5 per cent, down from 32 per cent in the election.

Bild, Germany's leading daily, criticised Ms Merkel for securing the top job "at any price". Volker Ullrich, a CSU MP, railed against Bild's concerns, tweeting that the balance of power in the coalition had not actually shifted. "Exchanging finance for business is not a cause for complaint, but an occasion for design."

A poll by Die Welt found nearly two-thirds of Germans view Ms Merkel as weakened by the negotiations.

Kurt Kister, editor of the Süddeutsche Zeitung, another German daily, said: "This government could be captioned 'Won't last long'."

Additional reporting by Guy Chazan
Philip Stephens page 11

International treaties

UK to pretend Brexit does not mean Brexit to avoid legal chaos

JIM BRUNSDEN — BRUSSELS

Britain has called on the rest of the world to consider it still an EU member after Brexit, in a U-turn intended to ensure the country remains covered by hundreds of international treaties.

A "technical note" prepared by the British government argues non-EU nations should treat the UK during a transition period after Brexit takes place in March 2019 as still covered by more than 700 agreements Brussels has struck with other third countries on everything from fishing rights to data sharing.

"To coin a phrase, they are going to tell the world that Brexit does not mean Brexit," said one EU official.

Unless a deal is reached to keep the UK fully covered by such international agreements, Britain risks being bound by the obligations of the treaties during its post-Brexit transition period, without enjoying any of the benefits, a prospect that is leading to a scramble in Whitehall to try to find a solution.

The paper published yesterday represents an about-turn in the UK's approach to the agreements, which it initially attempted to replicate with UK-

only bilateral agreements with the relevant countries.

Under the revised British plan, third countries would agree to "interpret relevant terms in the international agreements, such as 'European Union' or 'EU member state' to include the UK".

"This approach is underpinned by international law and practice," the document says, adding that it "represents the simplest way of ensuring the continued application of these agreements" during the post-Brexit transition period, which is set to run until the end of 2020.

Sam Lowe, a research fellow at the Centre for European Reform, said the

move marked a U-turn from previous British policy to renegotiate UK-only versions of the deals. "It is not great for our credibility as a reliable negotiation partner," he tweeted.

Michel Barnier, EU chief Brexit negotiator, warned last month that there is no guarantee that the UK will be able to continue benefiting from the agreements once it leaves the EU, saying that was something in the gift of the over 100 countries with whom Brussels has negotiated the agreements.

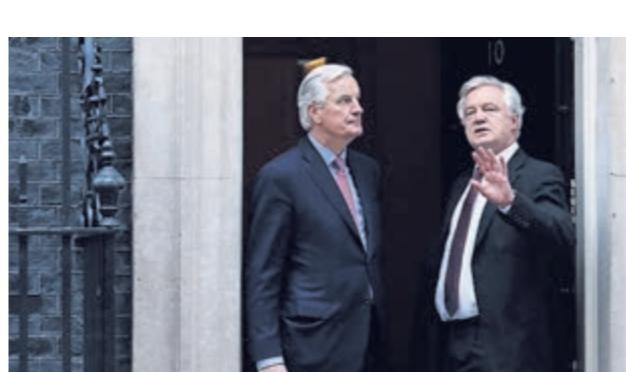
"Our partners around the world may have their own views on this," he said.

The post-Brexit status of the interna-

tional treaties has turned into one of the biggest problems for the UK government as it navigates the complexities of its exit talks. The unique nature of the transition period means that Britain will remain bound by its obligations under EU law, including respect of international agreements, while at the same time non-EU countries will be under no pressure to grant Britain the rights it enjoyed as an EU member.

As the agreements are with so many different countries, renegotiating new UK-centric versions of them could be a logistical nightmare, especially as Britain faces restrictions on its rights to negotiate international deals while it remains an EU member. The UK document emphasises the importance of the agreements to post-Brexit Britain, noting that they "cover a wide range of key policy areas" including "trade, nuclear co-operation and aviation".

Some of the most vital agreements are those concerning air services. EU bilateral treaties in this field underpin the right of British planes to land in countries such as the US, Canada and Israel. Editorial Comment page 10
Martin Wolf page 11



Doorstep politics:
Michel Barnier,
chief negotiator
for the EU, left,
and David Davis,
British Brexit
secretary, in
Downing Street
this week

Luke MacGregor/Bloomberg

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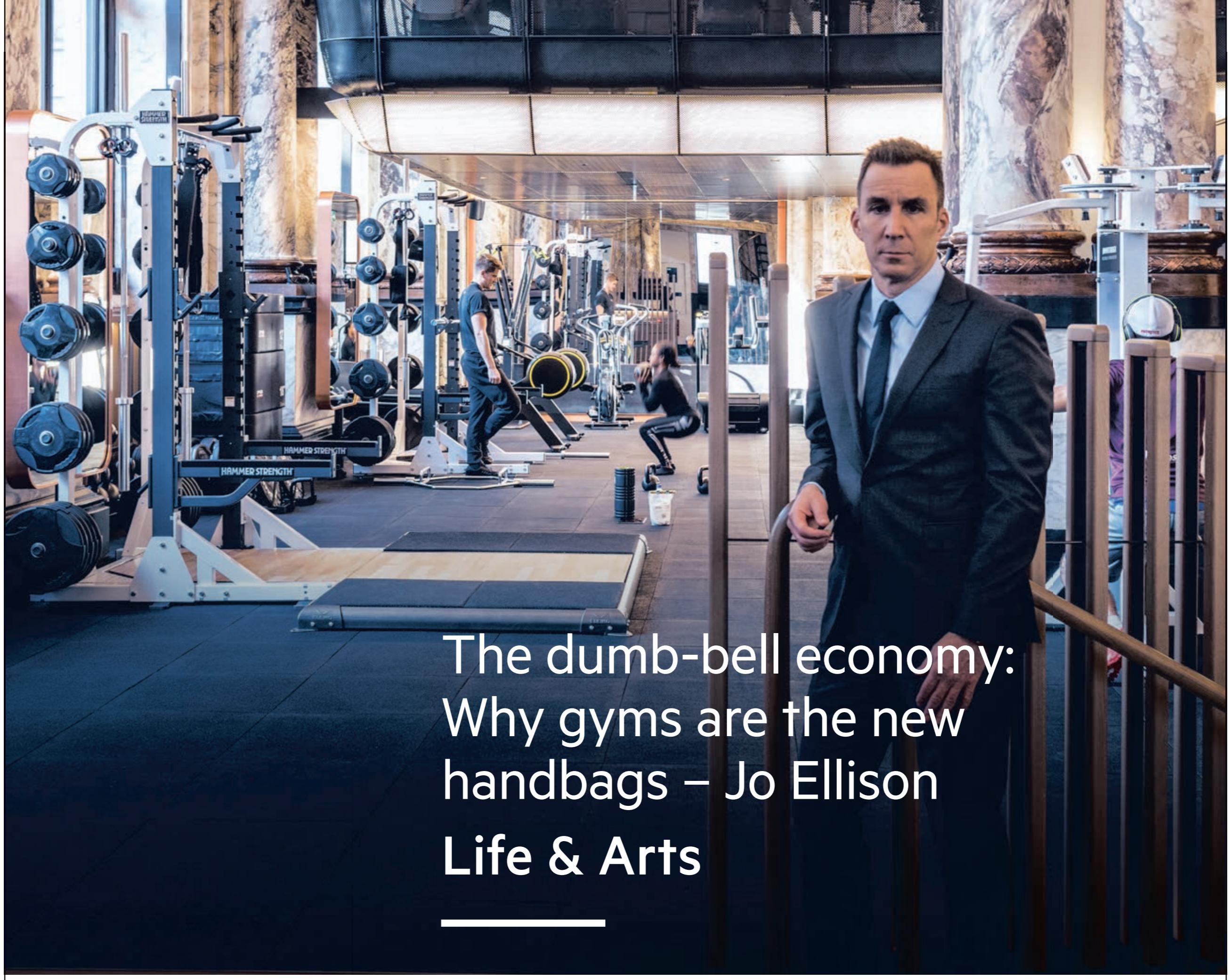
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INTERNATIONAL

Zuma's last stand pits ruthless operator against top strategist

President viewed by some as outfoxing ANC leader in talks over power switch



Resignation demand: members of the ANC protest outside party headquarters in Johannesburg, calling for Jacob Zuma, below, to step down — Themba Hadebe/AP

JOSEPH COTTERILL — JOHANNESBURG
DAVID PILLING — LONDON

After more than a decade in which Jacob Zuma has survived a procession of lurid scandals and corruption claims, few South Africans believed removing him as president would be easy.

As the days have stretched on since Cyril Ramaphosa, the new leader of the ruling African National Congress, began a final heave to oust Mr Zuma as head of state, frustration has been building in some quarters that the incumbent is outfoxing his rival.

The battle pits Mr Zuma, former head of party intelligence and a ruthless operator who knows where the bodies are buried in the ANC, against Mr Ramaphosa, considered one of the party's top strategists and a man credited with negotiating the end of apartheid.

Mr Zuma, in what South Africans have called "the Stalingrad defence", is seen as making a last-ditch stand, playing for time and holding out for concessions and assurances, above all that he can avoid prosecution over a string of corruption allegations.

Save South Africa, a civil society umbrella group that has called for Mr Zuma to face prosecution, has accused Mr Ramaphosa of trying to strike a deal behind closed doors.

"Mr Ramaphosa should know better, and be aware that the perception is already forming that he is replicating the arrogance and covert operations of Zuma's ANC," Sipho Pityana, an ANC veteran and Save South Africa's leader, said in a statement.

"It is an ominously bad start for the

new leadership of the movement, and it must be stopped."

But Branko Brkic, editor of The Daily Maverick, a South African online newsletter, said criticism of the ANC leader was misguided.

"Cyril Ramaphosa is being accused by many of being weak and Zuma of somehow outsmarting him, which is ridiculous," he said. Instead, Mr Ramaphosa had outplayed the president, he said, winning December's election as head of the ANC in spite of the fact that Mr Zuma controlled the party machinery and had tried to manoeuvre his former wife into the top position.

Having succeeded Mr Zuma as head of the ANC, Mr Brkic added, Mr Ramaphosa found himself in an asymmetric battle. He had to concentrate on seeking to unify a bitterly divided party, while Mr Zuma's priority was simply saving his own skin, he said.

That meant resolving the power struggle within the party and not taking the fight to a no-confidence vote against the president in parliament, a last resort that could split the ANC.

"Ramaphosa can afford for Zuma to remain president of South Africa for a few more days. He won," Mr Brkic said. "What he is trying to avoid is a showdown over Zuma in parliament."

After holding talks with Mr Zuma, Mr Ramaphosa on Wednesday said he was aware "our peo-

ple want and deserve closure", adding that his talks with Mr Zuma offered "the greatest opportunity to conclude this matter without discord or division".

ANC members are fully aware of the risks of rupturing the party ahead of 2019 elections, when it will face a fierce battle to maintain its majority — a faction loyal to former president Thabo Mbeki broke away from the ANC after he was forced to step down in 2008.

Cyril Ramaphosa cannot talk anti-corruption, yet broker an amnesty deal for the corrupt in the ANC'

Yesterday the ANC denied local media reports that Mr Ramaphosa had told the party's MPs he would not grant Mr Zuma immunity from prosecution.

Adam Habib, vice-chancellor of Witwatersrand university, said Mr Zuma could not ask for an amnesty, since that was constitutionally beyond Mr Ramaphosa's power to give. But he could ask for access to funds to prolong his legal battle and even the prospect of a presidential pardon should he ultimately be convicted. Mr Zuma might also ask for some political concessions, such as a place for his ex-wife, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, in the cabinet, or a promise not to overturn cherished policies, such as a pledge for free education.

"It's realpoli-

tik. Some concessions he [Ramaphosa] will have to make and others he won't," said Mr Habib.

He believed there might be room to engineer a deal in which the president avoided jail. Some people, though, would have to face the full force of the law, Mr Habib said, naming the Gupta business family, which has close links to Mr Zuma, as possible fall guys.

"You have to send out a message. You can't plunder the state and get away with it," Mr Habib said.

Mr Zuma and the Guptas, who are alleged to have used their political connections to influence government appointments and win state contracts, have repeatedly denied any wrongdoing.

Analysts say Mr Ramaphosa, who has promised to crack down on corruption at the highest levels of government, and to end so-called state capture, cannot be seen to be interfering in institutions, such as the prosecutor's office, whose independence was allegedly eroded during the Zuma years.

As the backroom negotiations between the two protagonists drag on, South Africa's opposition parties are piling on the pressure. They are demanding that parliament bring forward a no-confidence vote against Mr Zuma to next week.

"Cyril Ramaphosa cannot talk anti-corruption, yet broker an amnesty deal for the corrupt in the ANC," said says Mmusi Maimane, the leader of the Democratic Alliance, the biggest opposition party. "Any attempt to do so will be opposed with everything we've got."

Bribery allegations

Netanyahu hits at police chief as decision looms on charges

MEHUL SRIVASTAVA — JERUSALEM

Benjamin Netanyahu has criticised Israel's police chief and questioned the credibility of investigations into alleged bribery and misconduct as investigators prepare to wrap up the long-running probes, some of which involve him.

After the Israeli media reported that the police were considering recommending that the prime minister be indicted in one of the two cases, Mr Netanyahu first sought to reassure his supporters that any such move would have little impact on his premiership, as the final decision on whether to indict him would fall to the attorney-general, not the police.

Hours later he attacked Roni Alsheikh, the police chief, for saying that powerful people had employed private investigators to collect information — "sniff around" — on officers investigating the prime minister. One officer has said publicly that he was accused in a sexual harassment suit because of the sensitivity of his investigation.

"These are facts," Mr Alsheikh said on an investigative news programme on Wednesday evening. "We are not talking about a conspiratorial mind here."

Mr Netanyahu hit back by saying the police chief's comments cast a "large shadow" over the investigation.

"Every decent person will ask himself: how can people who say such outlandish things regarding the prime min-

ister then question him objectively and be impartial when it is time to reach a decision about him?," Mr Netanyahu said on Facebook.

The attacks on the police's credibility come as the prime minister prepares for the results of two separate investigations into him and his close aides and colleagues.

Mr Netanyahu's criticism of the police has echoes of Donald Trump's tirades against the Federal Bureau of Investigation and justice department officials over probes into whether the US president's campaign improperly colluded with Russia.

Israeli media reported on Wednesday that Mr Alsheikh and his colleagues were likely to recommend Mr Netanyahu be indicted in what is commonly

referred to as "Case 1000", which centres on allegations that Mr Netanyahu, his wife Sara and other members of his circle accepted lavish gifts from benefactors.

In a second investigation, dubbed "Case 2000", which involves allegations that the prime minister held talks with a prominent newspaper publisher in the hope of securing favourable coverage, the police have not reached a conclusion, local media said.

Mr Netanyahu has not been named as a suspect in a third investigation, "Case 3000." It is probing the purchase of submarines from Germany, but an adviser of his has been questioned and others detained. The prime minister has consistently denied all the allegations, and described the investigations as a witch-

hunt. But they have cast a shadow over his government. Mr Netanyahu has spent months reacting to local media stories on the cases, while his wife and son have had their private behaviour scrutinised as tapes of their phone calls have been leaked to the press.

The police's recommendations in "Case 1000" could come as early as next week, Ynetnews and other Israeli media reported. If the investigators call for the prime minister to be indicted, it would trigger an unwelcome debate on whether Mr Netanyahu should continue in his post and risk triggering a constitutional crisis, political analysts say.

Ehud Olmert, a former prime minister who served time in prison after being convicted of bribery, suggested that Mr Netanyahu resign.

"I haven't been in touch with Netanyahu since 2009. I wish for the prime minister that he end his term quickly and in a seemly manner," he said.

He demanded that the police chief's allegations be fully investigated.

But opposition politicians rounded on Mr Netanyahu. Avi Gabbay, leader of the Labour party, called the prime minister a "thug".

Yair Lapid, the leader of Yesh Atid, the second-largest party in the Knesset, called the prime minister's attack on the police chief an "act of desperation".



Police chief Roni Alsheikh, centre, rejects conspiracy claims — Gali Tibbon/AFP/Getty

Syria

Dozens die in US-led coalition attack on Assad-loyal fighters

ERIKA SOLOMON — BEIRUT

The US-led coalition has killed dozens of fighters loyal to President Bashar al-Assad in a rare use of air strikes against Syrian government-backed forces that the coalition said was carried out to defend its allies.

Forty-five fighters were killed as regime forces tried to advance towards an oil-rich part of eastern Syria, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based activist group, said yesterday. US officials told Reuters the death toll hit 100 as the coalition repelled the offensive, which it said was on Wednesday.

The Syrian regime and Russia, Mr Assad's main foreign backer, have condemned the attack as the strikes underlined the risk of a direct confrontation between international players in the Arab state's multi-sided war. The US-led coalition backs a Kurdish-dominated ground force in eastern Syria, which has an increasingly uneasy and sometimes antagonistic relationship with Mr Assad, who is also backed by Iran.

Both these rival alliances are ostensibly fighting Isis, but with the jihad group's territorial control all but over, and the resources they once controlled falling into the hands of competing forces, the risk of these two sides turning on each other has grown. Fighters on both sides have warned emerging ten-

sion has already given room for Isis to start regrouping in parts of Syria.

"The coalition conducted strikes against attacking forces to repel the act of aggression against partners engaged in the global coalition's defeat-Daesh mission," the coalition said, using the alternative term, Daesh, for the jihadis.

The Pentagon said it was not looking for conflict with the Syrian regime, Reuters reported. Vassily Nebenzia, Russia's UN envoy, said that the US-led coalition strikes were "very regrettable". He said he would raise the issue at UN Security Council meeting yesterday.

US-led coalition warplanes and artillery hit the pro-Assad forces as they advanced across the Euphrates river into areas held by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, the observatory said. The Syrian government forces, with tanks and artillery, were targeting SDF forces near oilfields in Deir Ezzor province east of the Euphrates.

Syria's state news agency, Sana, called the attack a new attempt to "support terrorism", and the Syrian foreign ministry sent two letters to the UN condemning the US aggression as a war crime, arguing it showed the "dirty US intentions against Syria's sovereignty and territorial unity".

Rex Tillerson, US secretary of state, said last month the US aimed to counter Iran's increasing presence in the region.

Free speech

Saudi journalist jailed for criticising royal court

AHMED AL OMRAK — RIYADH

A Saudi court has jailed a prominent newspaper columnist after he criticised the country's royal court, in the latest sign of the diminishing margin for free speech despite the kingdom's push for more social liberalisation.

Saleh al-Shehi, who writes for Al Watan, the daily paper, was sentenced to five years in prison followed by a five-year travel ban for insulting the royal court and its employees, state news television reported yesterday.

Shehi was reportedly arrested in December after a televised appearance on the privately owned Rotana Khalejia channel, where he accused the royal court of being "one of the institutions that reinforced corruption" in the country, citing examples such as granting plots of land to citizens based on personal connections.

"If we want to end financial corruption then we must first shut the windows for administrative corruption," he said. "There are in the royal court many windows from which people can enter."

His comments came weeks after Saudi authorities detained more than 200 princes, business and former officials over alleged corruption. The majority of the suspects, held at Riyadh's Ritz-Carlton hotel, were released late last month after agreeing settlements with the government.

Open Society Foundations

Soros gives £400,000 to Best for Britain anti-Brexit group

HENRY MANCE — LONDON

George Soros, the billionaire financier, has given £400,000 to an anti-Brexit group founded by businesswoman Gina Miller for its campaign against Britain's decision to leave the EU.

Mr Soros's Open Society Foundations said it donated the money to the Best for Britain group after last year's general election.

A person familiar with the matter added that Mr Soros also hosted a dinner for Conservative party donors at his London home last week to encourage them to follow his lead.

Best for Britain was set up by Ms Miller, who brought a legal action that forced the government to gain parliament's consent before beginning Brexit negotiations. It says it has received £413,000 in donations of less than £50 each, amounting to slightly more than Mr Soros's contribution. Campaign organisations are not required to declare the donations officially outside of election periods.

The Open Society Foundations said it had also pledged £303,000 to other pro-EU organisations and a think-tank working on protecting European rights.

Patrick Gaspard, its president, said: "Human rights protections, hard-won civil and labour rights, safeguards on key issues such as clean air or food

standards are at stake here for British citizens."

Mark Malloch Brown, chairman of Best for Britain, said the group had "never hidden our agenda; we have been campaigning hard to win a meaningful vote on Brexit, which we did, and to keep all options on the table, including staying in the European Union".

The news comes as Prime Minister Theresa May's cabinet is struggling to

George Soros successfully bet against the UK remaining in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism

agree a position on issues such as the customs union.

Pro-EU politicians are working on a number of fronts to avert a hard Brexit or any form of Brexit. They have taken heart from a parliamentary vote that forced the government to hold a full vote on any Brexit deal.

Mr Soros is best known in the UK for successfully betting in 1992 against Britain remaining in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism, which cost the Treasury billions.

Among the attendees at his recent dinner was Martin Sorrell, chief executive of advertising group WPP.

INTERNATIONAL

Venezuela

Maduro declares victory before election

Socialist president has sidelined opposition despite economic collapse

GIDEON LONG — BOGOTA

Venezuela is to hold a presidential election on April 22, with President Nicolás Maduro the overwhelming favourite after sidelining his main opponents during nearly four years of increasingly authoritarian rule.

The electoral commission announced the date on Wednesday evening, five days after the ruling Socialist party confirmed Mr Maduro as its candidate and hours after talks between the government and the opposition in the Dominican Republic broke down.

"The people have decided already!" Mr Maduro crowed at a rally of his sup-

porters shortly before the announcement was made. "Nicolás Maduro is president of the republic for the period from 2019 to 2025!"

The US and most big Latin American countries have already dismissed the forthcoming election as unfair and some say they will not recognise the results.

Henrique Capriles and Leopoldo López, the two best-known figures from the opposition, are ineligible to stand.

The former has been barred from office for alleged irregularities while he was a state governor and the latter is under house arrest, found guilty of inciting protesters during demonstrations against Mr Maduro in 2014. Other senior members of the opposition have been driven into exile and some political parties have been banned from the electoral process after boycotting municipal

polls in December. A few more moderate opposition leaders have said they will stand against Mr Maduro. They include "the two Henris" — veteran politicians Henri Falcón and Henri Ramos Allup — but many opponents regard

'Nicolás Maduro is president of the republic from 2019 to 2025'

Nicolás Maduro

them as lackeys of the Maduro regime who will only legitimise his rule if they run.

Mr Maduro has led Venezuela since April 2013 following the death of Hugo Chávez, his mentor and the father of the country's leftwing revolution. Opinion polls show Mr Maduro with an approval

rating of about 25 per cent after presiding over one of the biggest economic collapses in Latin American history.

Despite that, the government used its formidable propaganda machine and handouts of subsidised food to secure significant electoral victories last year.

In July it won a widely discredited vote for a bogus parliament, the constituent assembly, which is packed with government supporters. In October it defied expectations by trouncing the opposition in regional elections and in December it took more than 90 per cent of council seats in the municipal vote, which the opposition largely boycotted.

The two sides have been talking sporadically in the Dominican Republic in recent months but those discussions fizzled out on Wednesday. The opposition said the government refused to concede ground on the issue of freeing political

prisoners and allowing humanitarian aid into Venezuela to feed its hungry people, while the government accused its opponents of sabotaging the talks on orders from Washington.

Rex Tillerson, US secretary of state, completed a week-long tour of Latin America this week in which "the Venezuelan tragedy", as he described it, was a constant theme. He hinted the US might consider oil sanctions against Caracas, to add to the political and personal sanctions imposed last year.

That could cripple an economy that has already lost a third of its value in recent years and is forecast only to get worse. The International Monetary Fund expects gross domestic product to contract a further 10 per cent in 2018 and inflation to hit 13,000 per cent.

About 2m Venezuelans have left the country.

Investment bid

Australia seeks to join US and UK in cutting corporate tax

JAMIE SMYTH — SYDNEY

Australia's government has appealed to lawmakers to back its flagship economic plan to cut corporate taxes as it seeks to respond to falls in US and UK company tax rates.

Canberra wants to progressively cut corporate taxes from 30 per cent to 25 per cent by 2025 for all companies in a bid to boost growth and compete for investment.

MPS in the lower house backed the government's plan in a vote by 75 to 71 yesterday. However, the bill is struggling to win support in the Senate, where opponents allege the A\$65bn (\$51bn) tax cut will increase the budget deficit, mainly benefit shareholders of foreign companies and do little to boost the economy.

Scott Morrison, Australia's treasurer, warned parliament against keeping taxes high and highlighted how Britain had cut company taxes despite its high budget deficit.

"I cannot understand how keeping taxes high for these businesses helps them employ more Australians or boost their wages," he said. "It just doesn't make any sense."

Australia's system of "dividend imputation", which is designed to eliminate the double taxation of dividends in the hands of Australian shareholders, raises questions over whether corporate tax cuts would lead to a surge in investment.

'This plan is a disaster that would cost every Australian about A\$1,600'

Peter Swan, professor of finance

Under this system shareholders are allocated tax credits on dividends paid by local companies, which can then be used to offset tax on other income.

"This corporate tax plan is a disaster that would cost every Australian man, woman and child about A\$1,600," said Peter Swan, professor of finance at the University of New South Wales business school. "Because of dividend imputation it would simply benefit foreign companies without increasing investment in Australia."

The business lobby supports Canberra's drive to cut taxes, with the Business Council of Australia warning the country risks slipping to "the back of the pack" in terms of global competitiveness.

Increasing competition for inward investment is prompting some developed countries to reduce corporate taxes. UK rates have fallen progressively from 28 per cent in 2010 to 19 per cent, while the US cut the company tax rate to 21 per cent from January 1.

"US moves, along with other nations' commitments, will leave Australia with the second-highest company tax rate in the OECD," said Jennifer Westacott, BCA chief executive.

Many economists are more sceptical, noting that Australia already provides generous tax breaks that reduce the burden on companies. A report by the US Congressional Budget Office published last year shows Australia's effective rate of corporate tax was 10.4 per cent in 2012.

Jeremy Lawson, Aberdeen Standard Investments' chief economist, said cutting corporate taxes in isolation would add to the budget deficit while not providing a large enough boost to growth to justify them.

Since it proposed cutting taxes, the Australian government of Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has legislated tax cuts only for companies with annual revenues of less than A\$50m.

Olympics detente



On a high: North Korean athletes dance with mascot Soohorang during their entrance into the Olympic Village yesterday — YNA/DPA

Tension on ice as Koreas unite for 'peace' games

BRYAN HARRIS — SEOUL

As South Korea was preparing for the Winter Olympics, officials in Seoul must have been experiencing a measure of satisfaction.

Only weeks ago, the games in Pyeongchang risked careering off-piste as provocations from North Korea threatened to disrupt the safety and success of the global sporting tournament.

But in a remarkable turnaround in relations, the two Koreas — adversaries for more than 70 years — have found common ground just in time for the games.

In addition to a joint women's ice hockey team and a host of cultural exchanges, the two sides were due to march together in the opening ceremony today under a "unification flag".

The developments are almost certain to ensure the safety of the event, which will be the largest Winter Olympics on record with almost 2,000 athletes com-

peting for more than 100 gold medals. Yet questions abound about how long the detente can last.

"Even at the end of last year, many were concerned over the North's possible provocations during the Olympics, but that element has now disappeared," said Park Jin-kyung at Catholic Kwandong University.

"The risk factors have gone. If this amicable atmosphere continues, and South Korean athletes perform well, we'll see a surge in positive sentiment," Mr Park added. "The problem, however, lies in whether the North's attitude will change after the games."

The Seoul city government expects the number of tourists to spike by more than 350,000 during the period of the Olympics and Paralympics, which run until the middle of March.

Presiding over the opening will be South Korea president Moon Jae-in, who is betting that a so-called peace

Olympics featuring North Korea can

pave the way for deepening diplomatic engagement on the Korean peninsula.

Yesterday, Pyongyang staged a military parade featuring its arsenal of ballistic missiles as well as tanks and artillery to celebrate the anniversary of the foundation of its army.

Unlike previous displays, the proces-

'The problem lies in whether the North's attitude will change after the games'

sion was not broadcast live — a move that analysts believe was aimed at keeping the event low profile. The parade also featured a reduced line-up of weaponry compared with previous years.

More significantly, Pyongyang is sending Kim Jo Yong, the sister of leader Kim Jong Un, to attend the games' opening ceremony.

Additional reporting by Kang Buseong

Plot claim

Bangladesh instability feared after former prime minister jailed for corruption

KIRAN STACEY — NEW DELHI
REUTERS

The former prime minister of Bangladesh has been sentenced to five years in prison for corruption, in a decision that may make her unable to contest this year's general election.

Khaleda Zia, head of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist party, was convicted yesterday in Dhaka, the capital, of embezzling nearly \$250,000 from an orphanage trust set up when she was last prime minister, from 2001 to 2006.

The case has proved highly controversial, with police enforcing a ban on protests in the capital yesterday and firing tear gas at protesters who defied it.

Zia's son, Tarique Rahman, the BNP's vice-chairman, was sentenced to 10 years. "She was given a shorter term considering her health and social status," Judge Mohammad Akhteruzzaman said, as he passed sentence in a packed courtroom amid tight security.

Zia was escorted to the central jail in the capital after the verdict, said prison officials. Her lawyers said she planned to appeal against her conviction and was likely to be freed on bail during that process.

"We didn't get justice. We'll go to the higher court," Khandker Mahbub Hosain, leader of Zia's legal team, told reporters.

Zia and the BNP say the charges are

part of a plot to keep her and her family out of politics. Party leaders said more than 3,500 supporters had been detained over the past few days.



Anger: a BNP supporter is led away yesterday during a protest in Dhaka

Sheikh Hasina, prime minister, and Zia, who are both related to former national leaders, have nursed a long and bitter rivalry as they have dominated politics in poverty stricken Bangladesh for more than two decades.

The renewed tension between them raises the spectre of a long, destabilising spell of unrest for Bangladesh and its economy. Zia is due to run in parliamentary polls set for December and can still do so if an appeal is pending.

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, a BNP senior leader, denounced the sentence, calling it "an attempt to eliminate the opponent". Her party announced a plan for protests today against what it called a "biased and compromised" ruling.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, BNP secretary-general, said: "This verdict will deepen the country's existing political crisis and will damage people's faith in the judiciary."

Zia's conviction "proves that Bangladesh has the rule of law and that no one is above the law", Anisul Huq, law minister, told reporters. "She can challenge the ruling in the High Court after getting a certified copy of the verdict. She can also seek bail."

Earlier, police fired tear gas to disperse protesters who gathered to support Zia, even though authorities cut bus and ferry links into the capital and deployed thousands of riot police to quell likely unrest.



President Rodrigo Duterte faces allegations linked to a war on drugs

Girl to woman, war to peace

A newly discovered Nigerian painting shows a princess and a country in transition, writes Ben Okri

In London, a legendary African painting that had been lost for nearly 50 years has been discovered – a significant cultural event which could alter the perception of African art.

The story goes back to the summer of 1973. It was three years after the end of the Nigerian civil war that had nearly torn the country apart. The mood of despair and destruction that hung over the country was beginning to be dispelled.

In the western town of Ile-Ife, one of the spiritual centres of Yorubaland, a 56-year-old artist was walking in the countryside when he encountered a beautiful young woman. The artist, at the height of his powers, was already one of the most famous in Africa, hailed as a great modernist and celebrated as a sculptor and painter who had made a controversial statue of Queen Elizabeth II. He straddled the colonial past and the confident, contradictory post-independence moment. He was an easterner in the west, a man of the secessionist tribe in the heartland of the republic. His presence there was the sign of the beginnings of a modest national reconciliation.

The young woman he met had extraordinary poise, an African beauty that combined serenity with an uncanny sense of self-worth. He asked if he could paint her.

History does not record the number of sittings, but the astonishing result became justly famous. It is a portrait of a fresh young African woman, looking over her shoulder. She is wearing a head tie. She has a piquant beauty. Her gaze is dewy and hopeful and a little detached.

The painting is executed in gentle strokes of yellows and browns. The touch is delicate, the paint applied thinly, with minimal impasto. The mint-fresh light, the three-quarters pose, the centrality of youth, make it a meditation on the fragility of a moment and a contemplation of African beauty. There is something joyous about the work, something untypical in the oeuvre of the artist. His name is Ben Enwonwu. The painting is known as "Tutu".

In fact, the sitter's full name is Adetutu Ademiluyi, and she was the daughter of the former Oni of Ife – one of Enwonwu's supporters and collectors – which meant that she was a princess. The three-quarters pose, with the sitter looking over the shoulder, avoids a frontal confrontation and preserves a certain modesty as well as distance. It shows off the fine length of her neck, which in a traditional African sculpting might have been elongated to emphasise her beauty and nobility. This pose also reveals her profile, the sweep of her back and the rich texture of her Yoruba dress and head tie. This is not a society portrait. It is symbolic of renewing hope.

Since the 1940s, Enwonwu (who died in 1994) had been one of the most important African artists. Born in 1917 in eastern Nigeria, he inherited from his father the spirit of sculpture and the Igbo gnosis of making. He trained under Kenneth Murray in Nigeria, at the Slade School in London and at the Ruskin School in Oxford. He was of the generation that negotiated both the colonial and the African worlds. Coming to maturity in the years after the catalytic effects that African art had in the creation of modernism, it was his generation that had to find a new direction for African art in the contemporary world.

He had come to painting early, drawing elaborate figures in the sand in the village when he was a child. He had his first group show of African arts at the Zwemmer Gallery, in London, in the



At the heart of Enwonwu's oeuvre stands this mysterious work. Its reproduction hangs on the walls of many Nigerian homes



Nobility: left, 'Tutu, 1974' by Ben Enwonwu, above, pictured c.1950

Brian Seed/The LIFE Images Collection/Getty Images

modern art. For apart from the seminal role that traditional African sculpture played in the birth of modernism in the early years of the 20th century, the presence of modern African artists has been largely absent from the story of art.

The rediscovery of "Tutu, 1974" is an excellent place to begin that re-evaluation. Painted a year after the first version, it is in some ways a darker painting. Something mysterious has happened: the artist has caught that delicate, almost imperceptible moment in which a girl changes into a woman. The depth of her character is more evident; she is a strong determined woman who knows her own mind and grasps her own power. She is more than the powerful image of African womanhood. She is perhaps the secret image of a nation coming back into the light after a time of darkness.

This painting is unique in Enwonwu's oeuvre. He never rises to this level of mastery in portraiture again. Perhaps he never encounters a more fascinating subject. Perhaps it was something about the times. For after the civil war, the nation enjoyed, without knowing it, a second, bruised innocence, what Yeats might have called a terrible innocence. It existed between the end of carnage and the resumption of a lost unity.

But then maybe the painting conforms to something private in the artist, of which those muted yellows and those ambiguous browns and that steady, slightly forbidding gaze are but deflected signs of inward troubles. All true portraits are self-portraits.

Bonhams includes the picture in its Africa Now auction on February 28, estimated at £200,000-£300,000

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Telluride, Colorado

1940s. Max Ernst, the surrealist, attending the exhibition, threw up his hands in admiration and said: "Why go on?"

Enwonwu worked in a variety of forms as a painter, sculptor and draughtsman, and his output was astonishing. His responses to the cultural and historical realities of Nigeria were rich and unique: from masquerades to iconic images of dancers, from sculptures of Yoruba and Igbo gods to life-size statues of royalty and politicians. But at the heart of his oeuvre stands this mysterious work, "Tutu". Its reproduction hangs on the walls of many Nigerian homes, but the lost original of the painting is as famous for its absence as for its beauty.

There were in fact three versions of "Tutu", constituting a royal series, but all three were presumed lost. Then, in

December 2017, something magical happened. A painting that had been hanging for 30 years in the modest north London apartment of someone who prefers to be unidentified turned out to be the only version of "Tutu" in existence. Giles Peppiatt, director at Bonhams, the expert who was called in, said: "I was absolutely staggered when I first saw the piece. The owners, who had inherited it, had no idea of its current value."

It amounts to the most significant discovery in contemporary African art in more than 50 years. It is the only authentic "Tutu", the equivalent of some rare archaeological find. The discovery of the painting could also furnish the occasion to ask fundamental questions about the African artistic contribution to the story of

Carmen through Kosky's looking glass

OPERA

Carmen
Royal Opera House, London
★★★★★

Richard Fairman

It does not take a gypsy fortune-teller to predict that a new production of *Carmen* is likely to be flawed. The cards are stacked against the director who has to wrestle with the work's uneasy mix of dialogue and grand opera, of light-hearted musical and gutsy realism.

In bringing Barrie Kosky's Frankfurt production of *Carmen* to London, the Royal Opera has uncharacteristically opted for some radical answers. Kosky is a director who likes to shake things up, which will explain the boos among the cheers at the final curtain.

He started by taking two big decisions, and neither was a good one. The first involves adopting swathes of music discarded or re-written by Bizet before the premiere, so we get, for example, two versions of Carmen's entrance aria, one after the other. The second was to replace the dialogue with a spoken narration, drawn from Mérimeé's novella,

which kills the drama stone dead. The protracted first half feels as if it will never get going.

It is not for want of trying. Kosky has ditched the usual *Carmen* clichés and taken the opera for a night out at the Folies Bergère, pepping up the party atmosphere with a chorus line, disco dancers and a celebrity appearance by a gorilla (don't ask who). The showbiz



Francesco Meli and Anna Goryachova

raze-dazzle of it all is hugely brash and self-confident. But a high price is paid: when everything is a cabaret number, the relationships at the opera's heart get lost along the way.

It is a relief that Carmen herself, charismatically sung and played by Anna Goryachova, is able to hold her own. Francesco Meli veers between gentle delicacy and searing intensity, sometimes from phrase to phrase, but his Don José has straightforward commitment. Kristina Mkhitarian is a touching, vulnerable Micaëla and Kostas Smorigas a not-quite-magnetic Escamillo. Pierre Doyen and Jean-Paul Fouchécourt, as Le Dancaïre and Le Remendado, stand out as two authentically French voices (would there be more) and conductor Jakub Hruša keeps the orchestra sounding slim and trim, though he is apt to linger.

After the dreary, traditional production the company had previously, this comes as a wake-up call. Think of it as an alternative *Carmen*, exploring the opera's artistic hinterland – a *Carmen* through the looking glass. All the Royal Opera needs now is a new production of Bizet's standard masterpiece.

To March 16, roh.org.uk

THEATRE

Gundog
Royal Court Theatre (Jerwood Upstairs)
London
★★★★★

Ian Shuttleworth

Displays of support and appreciation are all well and good, but I can't recall when last I saw a play to which the pseudo-joyous whooping it received was a less apposite response. Simon Longman's play is not in any sense an uplifting work.

We are on a bleak hillside: designer Chloe Lamford has piled mounds of earth at the rear corners of the broad, shallow stage. Behind a glass wall lowers an undifferentiated sky. On the dirt live sisters Becky and Anna, trying to scabble a subsistence living through

sheep-farming . . . trying and, since this is more or less the present day and they are not running an industrial hyperfarm, failing. At various times they are joined by their truculent brother Ben, incipient-demented grandfather Mick, and/or an immigrant who has assumed the name Guy Tree. Their father is an offstage presence.

Scenes are more or less chronological, though there may be flashes back or forward or sudden jumps in time. For this is Longman's real focus: how, in an environment so spare, with only a few cyclical internal referents and no external ones at all, time can somehow be oppressive and illusory, still and in motion at once. The same things keep happening, from Mick's repetitions of bad-taste anecdotes out of the far past to Ben's resentful thoughts that things have not collapsed in apocalypse after their mother's death.

The trouble is that they're bleak,

dispiriting things, and they grow more so with each recurrence. Mick (Alan Williams) is given a wonderful speech about being aware of his decline and wanting to stop time "for you to be brave", but when Anna (Rochenda Sandall) repeats its core later it is devoid of power. Ria Zmitrowicz's Becky seems to make a psychological journey in the course of the 100 uninterrupted minutes, but you can be fairly sure that if it were 110, she too would be back at square one.

Vicky Featherstone directs with what James Joyce once called "scrupulous meanness", but no amount of discipline is enough to dispel the suspicion that, presented as it is in London SW1, it may attract accusations of condescending towards the entire rural component of the country. Above all, you may just feel that you will never whoop again.

To March 10, royalcourttheatre.com

ARTS

FT BIG READ. PROPERTY

A cocktail of loose lending, overseas cash and mounting household debt has triggered concern that Canada's housing market is overheating. Recent rate rises have stirred fears that the bubble is set to burst.

By Ben McLannahan

Stephanie Clark does not want to leave New Westminster, a town about 45 minutes southeast of Vancouver where she was born and raised and, two years ago, had a baby. But she fears she will have to, driven out by a property market that seems to have lost touch with reality.

The two-bed condominium she bought for C\$259,000 in 2015 was revalued last year at C\$490,000 (\$391,000), meaning higher annual property taxes and maintenance fees to pay. Friends of the 35-year-old web coordinator who rent their homes live in fear of "renovation" – landlords turfing tenants out under the guise of refurbishment, then ordering them to pay much more in rent if they want the place back.

Canada is in the grip of a housing crisis more severe, by some measures, than anywhere else in the world. Household debt amounts to more than 100 per cent of the country's gross domestic product, according to the Bank for International Settlements, one of the highest of any developed nation. House prices have raced ahead of wages for years, boosted by loose lending, low interest rates and lax controls on foreign money.

Ms Clark says there are parallels to America a decade ago, when defaults in the subprime mortgage market tipped the country into its worst recession in a century. "I remember thinking when all that stuff went down [in the US], 'you could never get approved for that kind of thing up here,'" she says. "It's frustrating to see it happen."

For now, the number of home loans in arrears across Canada is still very low, suggesting that people are finding ways to cope with ever-larger debts. But rising interest rates are beginning to bite, while a new stress test for mortgages issued by regulated banks has tightened the supply of credit. This week the Toronto Real Estate board said that sales in Canada's biggest city dropped 22 per cent in January, the weakest for that month since 2009.

Bearish analysts have long argued that Canada's housing market has a date with disaster. But even people within

"Trends are developing . . . that we took for granted were not an issue in Canada. There are puffs of smoke, but I don't want to yell fire'

the industry are wondering if a full-on collapse can be averted. "I don't know how this all shakes out, but based on the amount of household debt we have, and the way prices have gone up . . . a strong gust of wind could send us down a pretty scary path," says Steve Saretzky, an agent based in Vancouver.

Insurance issue

Bullish observers say fears of a meltdown are overblown. Canada can sustain high house prices, they argue, because they reflect the country's high levels of net migration, restrictive zoning laws and low unemployment.

Henry Lotin, a retired diplomat and principal at research group Integrative Trade and Economics, says the same forces that have pushed up prices in global hubs such as New York are now doing the same to the most attractive parts of Canada. "Torontonians should be thankful and we should manage it as best we can. We really have to be prepared that demand is going to exceed supply for the foreseeable future."

Many also note that mortgage books at the big banks look rock-solid. Royal Bank of Canada, for example, which recently joined the club of the world's most systemically important banks thanks to years of rapid asset growth, had a Canadian residential mortgage portfolio of an average C\$231bn in the year to October. Defined as estimates of losses on impaired loans and losses incurred but not yet identified, provisions for credit losses were just C\$35m – or one one-hundredth of 1 per cent.

Others say pristine loan books are not a good indicator of the stress lurking in the system. For one thing, every homebuyer with a downpayment of less than 20 per cent of the purchase price (if less than C\$1m) has to buy insurance against default. That has the effect of flattering the banks' books but shifts the risk of default to insurers such as the state-backed Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

CMHC was set up after the second world war to help house returning veterans. It insures about C\$480bn of residential mortgages, or almost one-third of the outstanding stock in Canada, using an automated system to process about two-thirds of applications.

Meanwhile, the uninsured segment is growing. As the market has barrelled upwards in recent years, borrowers have been able to convert insured mort-



says Scott Ingram, a property agent at Century 21 in Toronto.

The tightening of credit could be a "tipping point, when senior people at the banks realise they're making loans unlikely to be paid back", says Hilliard MacBeth, an Edmonton-based investment manager and author of a 2015 book on Canada's real estate bubble. The question now, he says, is how the banks react. "Do you go cold turkey or gradually wean yourself off the drug?"

If the federally-regulated banks keep turning people away, activity is likely to be pushed into the margins, where lending standards are looser. Canada's shadow banking system was more than half the size of the traditional one in 2016, according to Bank of Canada estimates, with about C\$1.1tn in liabilities.

Marc Cohodes, who shorted Home Capital, criticises the central bank's language on the mortgage market



Much of that is in home loans. Bank of Canada's official numbers show that non-banks – trusts, credit unions and other financial institutions – held C\$313bn of residential mortgage credit in December.

A good chunk of the alternative lending goes through mortgage investment corporations – private, provincially-registered vehicles selling shares to the public to buy pools of mostly short-term home loans. One of the big MICs is Ryan Mortgage (slogan: "Tired of the stock market rollercoaster?"), a fund with C\$260m in assets. It boasts 10-year average annual returns of 9.41 per cent.

Then there are private, bilateral deals, typically set up by real estate brokers freelancing as peer-to-peer lenders. A typical transaction might see a homeowner taking out a home equity line of credit (HELOC) at a 4 per cent rate of interest and then lending to a subprime borrower at, say, 10 per cent. That borrower then looks to refinance after a year or so, having built up enough equity for a conventional mortgage.

Harold Gerstel, a jewellery buyer in the Toronto suburb of Forest Hill, set up a sideline in mortgages using "friends and family money" in 2013. One of his TV advertisements describes first, second and third mortgages in "five business days, no income statements necessary. Bad credit? No problem!"

He says volumes have risen about a fifth under the new OSFI rules. "The housing market is crazy high so even people making relatively good salaries have a hard time getting first mortgages." He says he normally caps loans

"The housing market is crazy high so even people making relatively good salaries have a hard time getting first mortgages'

at about 80 per cent of the value. "Like an aeroplane, sometimes you hit turbulence, but the key in this thing is not to get carried away and not to over-lend."

Pain for 'mom and pop' investors

Are regulators on top of this? Hardly, says Ben Rabidoux, president of North Cove Advisors, a Toronto-based firm which advises institutional investors.

Last month he scored a victory, after the Financial Services Commission of Ontario cracked down on four brokerages that raised private funds for a condo and townhouse developer known as Fortress Real Developments. Mr Rabidoux had argued for years that the agency needs to take action, warning that "mom and pop" investors were putting money into investments marketed as safe and secured against real property, when in most cases they involved risky unsecured equity financing with no direct collateral coverage.

He says the sanctions on the brokers – fines of \$1.1m, plus banning orders for four individual brokers – were too little, too late. In a letter to the FSCO last week, seen by the FT, he said "a fifth grader" could have seen that small investors were being exploited. The FSCO was not available to comment.

As for Ms Clark, she is beginning to despair. This week she sent an open letter to the mayor of New Westminster about a huge new high-rise development, saying it would force more families into small condos out of necessity rather than choice. The letter was a big hit on Facebook. She now wishes she had gone direct to the government of British Columbia, or even to Ottawa.

"I had no idea it would be as far-reaching," she says. Writing it "was an emotional reaction to coming home one night and seeing no place to park, and no green space around us. It feels like things are getting worse and worse."

gates into uninsured mortgages simply by buying a property, waiting for the price to rise, then refinancing.

Uninsured buyers made up about three-quarters of new loans at federally regulated banks in 2017, up from two-thirds in 2014, according to the Bank of Canada.

In Vancouver, where the average sales price of condos hit a record of C\$1.1m in January, more than double

the level a decade earlier, about 90 per cent of new mortgages are uninsured.

Laurentian Bank, Canada's seventh-biggest by assets, said in December that it would have to buy back about C\$300m of mortgages it had sold to third parties, having found that borrowers had "embellished" income and assets. Last month, the Montreal-based bank said the buyback obligations had increased to about C\$400m, and it would have to raise more capital.

Credit tightening

More strains could emerge. With interest rates rising – three increases in the central bank's policy rate since July has left it at 1.25 per cent – many borrowers may be facing a struggle to refinance in a market where almost all mortgages are renewed every five years or less.

"Good luck to anyone renewing a mortgage at a significantly higher rate,"

says Marc Cohodes, a California-based short-seller who has waged a long campaign against Home Capital, Canada's largest provider of home loans to the newly arrived and self-employed. Shares in the Toronto-listed company plunged last April after the Ontario Securities Commission said it failed to give a proper account of a rash of fraudulent mortgages in 2015.

Mr Cohodes is still betting on further falls in the stock, even after Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway provided a C\$2.4bn financing package in June. At the time, figures such as Bill Morneau, the country's finance minister, and Bank of Canada governor Stephen Poloz described Home Capital's problems as "contained" and "idiosyncratic".

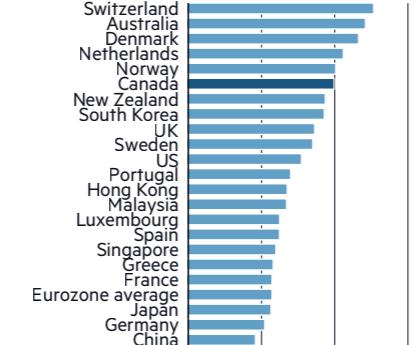
"It's exactly the same language we heard when New Century went," says Mr Cohodes, alluding to the April 2007 collapse of America's biggest independent subprime lender. "Instead of saying 'it's a problem, it's a blemish, we'll deal with these bad actors swiftly and severely,' they try to shuffle it under the rug and pretend it's a one-time deal."

Anecdotal evidence suggests tougher rules on underwriting are also beginning to curb lending. On January 1 the federal banking regulator, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, introduced a rule requiring all new mortgage applicants to show they could cope with interest rates substantially higher than their contracted rate. Previously, stress tests applied only to insured mortgages.

The higher bar is "definitely making it more difficult" for people to get loans,

Canadian household debt looms large

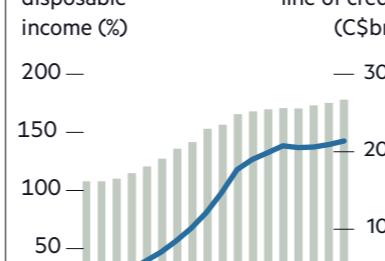
As % of GDP, Q2 2017, selected countries



Sources: Thomson Reuters Datastream; Bank of International Settlements; Financial Consumer Agency of Canada

Home loans make up a large part of household debt

Ratio of debt to disposable income (%)



Sources: Thomson Reuters Datastream; Bank of International Settlements

Concerns over the stability of the housing market in major cities such as Vancouver and Toronto have grown in recent years — FT montage



75%

Portion of new loans that were extended to uninsured buyers from federally regulated banks in 2017, according to Bank of Canada

>100%

Household debt as a proportion of Canada's gross domestic product, according to the Bank for International Settlements

C\$2.4bn

Financing package provided by Warren Buffett to stricken mortgage lender Home Capital last year

Speed read

Loan boom Low interest rates and lax controls on foreign money have helped to inflate Canada's housing market

Shadow shift With federally regulated banks turning people away, activity is likely to be pushed into the margins

Finding cash Many homebuyers turn to private deals. Real estate brokers often freelance as peer-to-peer lenders

Perell, a superior court justice, in October. In his ruling he wrote that the non-English speaking pair could not explain how they sustained themselves in Canada. He also noted that the defendants believed Mr Zhang had moved his money from China to become a money launderer in Canada. "I make no finding other than saying that it is unknown how Ms Wang and Mr Zhang acquired their considerable wealth or how they got it out of China," he wrote.

Canada has long been open both to migrants and overseas money. Ms Wang and Mr Zhang were both beneficiaries of the federal immigrant investor programme which welcomed experienced business people with a legally obtained

net worth of at least C\$1.6m. It was scrapped in 2014 but every province now runs similar schemes.

It is time for tighter controls, says Alba Arboleda, a California-born technology consultant who moved to British Columbia in the mid-1990s. She is angry at developers pre-selling their high-rise developments offshore and then allowing units to be flipped three or four times for higher prices before a cent is paid in taxes.

As for the thousands of immigrants arriving each year with sacks of money, "it doesn't really matter if they're from China or Zimbabwe", she says. "It's people not really joining society, totally skewering the market."



FINANCIAL TIMES

'Without fear and without favour'

FRIDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2018

Where Brexit hits hard, a customs union will help

The regions of the UK that voted to leave have the most to lose

Imagine a British politician stepping into – for example – a car factory in the country's north-east. She tells the assembled workers that she will fight to keep the UK in a customs union with the EU. The reception would likely be mixed. The north-east voted by a solid margin to leave the EU, and to listen to hardline Brexiteers today, a customs union with the bloc amounts to continued vassalage. But there is a powerful argument she could offer sceptical workers: a customs union is the best way to protect their jobs.

On the back of this simple point, it should just be possible to reach a broad political compromise, despite the government's premature rejection of the idea. Leaving the EU and the single market, while staying in a customs union for goods, would give Brexiteers much of what they want, on freedom of movement in particular. At the same time it could help to minimise the economic pain of leaving the EU, especially for areas at the most risk of harm.

The need for compromise has been put in sharp focus by the government's leaked Brexit impact assessment. It projects that the effect of different forms of Brexit would vary widely across regions – with London suffering the least and the north-east and the West Midlands hit hardest. The key reason, presumably – only MPs have seen the full assessment – is varying industrial mix. The exporters of cars, food, and other goods stand to lose most if tariffs and other trade barriers rise with Europe. Service industries based in London do not, at least, have to worry about customs checks.

Local councils and business groups in Brexit-voting regions are aware of the danger they are in. The representatives of food processors in Grimsby, farmers in Cornwall, and potters in Stoke-on-Trent are keen for barrier-free trade with the EU, and for keeping

the protection of the EU's external tariffs. But the UK government cannot hand out special deals for particular regions. It needs a deal for the country.

Remaining outside of the single market but within a customs union for goods would stop tariff and rules-of-origin checks at EU borders. It would give certainty to global companies that produce in Britain – as Japan's ambassador emphasised after Thursday's meeting with Prime Minister Theresa May and Japanese auto executives. It would give the UK government control of immigration, significantly limit the authority of the European Court of Justice over British affairs, and give Britain freedom to try for bilateral service trade deals with non-EU countries. Finally, it would make it easier to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Of course, staying in a customs union would mean hewing quite closely to European regulations on goods. This undercuts the Brexiteers' dream of an entrepreneurial state free to strike any trade deal with any partner. But no bilateral deal with a partner smaller or more distant than the EU will make up for the damage a hard Brexit will do. Many companies based as far away as Asia conform to EU regulations for their global operations because it is efficient to do so; non-EU countries' regulatory regimes often echo the EU's for the same reason. The idea that there is prosperity to be found in rejecting the globally respected standards of an enormous neighbour is fantastical.

It is not a foregone conclusion that the UK and the EU will be able to strike an agreement on a customs union that satisfies both sides. But it is an economically sensible target for the government to aim at – and one a domestic political argument can be built around. The same cannot be said for more hardline options.

Letters

Don't let stereotypes limit our children

Sir, Saadia Zahidi's fascinating and uplifting op-ed "A new generation of Muslim women is driving global growth" (February 8), on how technology and the gig economy are enabling women in the emerging world, including many Muslim countries, to enter the workforce, also illustrates the negative influence of stereotypes and social norms.

A recent global survey by the UK-based charity Education Employers, #DrawingtheFuture, launched last month at the World Economic Forum in Davos where Ms Zahidi is head of education, gender and work, shows the significance of gender stereotypes as early as age seven on children's career

aspirations. In the emerging world, children overall are more likely to aspire to become engineers or doctors, whereas in the western world more children want to be sportsmen or YouTube stars. This has an implication for education choices. Ms Zahidi cites five countries in the world where women make up a larger proportion than men of students enrolled in science, technology and engineering subjects. Two are Muslim-majority countries.

The second point on social norms is also illustrated by the #DrawingtheFuture survey, which shows that what your parents do for a living is one of the main things to

influence children's career choices. As Ms Zahidi illustrates, in the Muslim world where there are fewer women role models, women are freer to choose what to study and which job pursue – aided by the rise of technology and work flexibility.

Of course, the conclusion isn't that women shouldn't have role models, but that children should be exposed to a range of options and possibilities in order not to be limited by social norms and gender stereotypes in their education and career choices.

**Katarina Wallin Bureau
Chief Operating Officer,
Burson-Marsteller EMEA,
Brussels, Belgium**

Turkey welcomes EU's latest strategy for Balkans

Sir, Regarding your editorial "The EU seeks to regain influence in the Balkans" (February 7): you state that "if the EU steps back, others – Russia and Turkey – are ready to fill the gap". Please let us know what gap you are talking about. This kind of evaluation only causes confusion. Turkey has always supported the Balkan countries' aspirations with regard to both Nato and the EU. Turkey wishes for stability and progress towards democracy in the Balkans, and these can be achieved by working towards membership of these two entities. In this respect, we can only welcome the EU's latest strategy for the Balkans. Thus, it is rather difficult for us to understand the implication that Turkey has other ideas for the region.

**Selim Yenel
Undersecretary,
Ministry for EU Affairs,
Ankara, Turkey**

As in Singapore, so in South Yorkshire

Sir, Patrick Dransfield (Letters, January 30) observes that the lack of roundabouts makes Singapore a favoured site for the testing of driverless cars. Sheffield's inner ring road has a number of three-lane roundabouts and a driving population with a strong belief that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line: I have seen two cars crash at right angles. It is also the only place where (twice) I have stopped at a red light and had the car behind pull out to be driven through the lights on red.

Google et al should beat a path to South Yorkshire.

**Roger Oldham
Sheffield, S Yorks, UK**

IG Metall's tactics bear no resemblance to CGT's

Sir, Further to "German union wins 28-hour week after workers flex muscles in French manner" (February 7): IG Metall ran this industrial action as it has run every similar movement for many years, with minimal damage and disruption, and starting in Baden-Württemberg because of its successful industrial base. Its strategy bears absolutely no resemblance to the primitive tactics used by the CGT union in France.

The result is a two-year pay agreement and the possibility for a limited percentage of the workforce to



reduce their working week, for family reasons and for a limited period, to 28 hours at the same hourly rate. This comes with more flexibility on extending the rest of the workforce's 35-hour week back up to 40.

Far be it from me to defend IGM, but allow me to ask that you get your stories straight.

**Paul Samengo-Turner
Berlin, Germany**

Monnet's planification is on the march again

Sir, Redistributing their countrymen's money is what Germany's Social Democrats have proved to be really good at for decades. But these days it is not only about more "goodies" to be spread in Germany, but increasingly around the EU. French president Emmanuel Macron's outstretched hand for more Europe has already been interpreted by SPD leader Martin Schulz as "a new dawn for Europe" and an "end to the diktat of austerity". Great marketing ploys, but inherently bad policy proposals by the party-book career politician.

Does nobody really realise that the traditional *planification française* is on the march again? That is, not only broadening the coffers for transfers but institutionalising the whole system at the same time, away from the control of the German Bundestag and on the basis of a slippery European oversight with cumbersome decision-making instead ("Merkel pressed on transfer union fears", February 6).

More, and more easily available, transfer money might stop structural reform efforts in their tracks in countries such as Italy and France, or at best slow those measures down

substantially. Show us results of these reforms first, then we have a much better basis on which to "show you the money". Otmar Issing, the European Central Bank's former chief economist, is absolutely right that nothing more than the stability of the EU is at stake.

The coalition will be expensive enough (less tax relief but more social "goodies"); hopefully it will not be completely unaffordable in view of Europe.

**Dr Reinhard Fischer
Economist,
London SW14, UK**

What is 'uniting' about Facebook?

Sir, John Thornhill urges the billions of Facebook users (aka "workers") to strike against the unfair algorithmic parasitism that sucks billions from their unpaid labour ("Social media users of the world unite!", February 6).

In 1854 Henry David Thoreau published his masterpiece *Walden or, Life in the Woods*, in which he drily commented on the furore accompanying the invention of the telegraph that instantly linked Texas and Maine, asking: what if those states had nothing to say to one another? And then in 1861 came our Civil War calamity. In 1917 Freud wrote a short essay praising the telegraph because it united family members. Today we see couples on park benches tapping at their cell phones. United?

**Jascha Kessler
Santa Monica, CA, US
Emeritus Professor of Modern English & American Literature, UCLA**

Changing indexation will cost pensioners thousands

Sir, Lex is the latest in your newspaper to attack the Retail Prices Index (February 6). There may be logical arguments but there are also legal problems. To alter pension indexation to the Consumer Prices Index or similar is to deprive members in their sixties of tens of thousands of pounds.

Some of these pensioners have had their entitlements bought out with an insurance company. These insurers would have windfall gains.

There is a need in the market for RPI giffs for matching purposes. The government could start to issue CPI paper if it likes. The fact that nobody is certain what should replace RPI is an argument for retaining it for limited purposes.

**Steve Harrison
London SE15, UK**

Allow Poles to discuss uncomfortable truths and place them in context

Sir, Jan Gross's response to the new Polish law ("Poland's death camp law distorts history", February 7) has moved me, as a Briton of Polish descent, to add my support for his position. The events of the Holocaust have shaped Polish cultural discourse into one of disbelieving grief. Both Polish Jews and Polish Gentiles seek resolution of the enduring pain and anger caused by the Holocaust. Both seemingly struggle as, historically, not enough has been said about what actually happened. Professor Gross is one voice that has sought that truth, but he has been met by the voices of disbelieving grief that can only see him as a messenger of untruth.

The wounds felt by Polish Gentile and Polish Jew alike, arising from the moral collapse created by the Nazi occupation of Poland, have not yet been healed. The healing process can succeed through open, honest and informed debate undertaken by Polish society as a whole, assisted by the highest quality research and analysis, and inclusive of all people of Polish origin, wherever they live. The Polish government has little or no role in that process save as a neutral facilitator of debate. It certainly must not take sides.

The current Polish government's motive of protecting the good name of Poland, the site of the Holocaust's worst crimes, committed when Poles had no political, military or territorial authority over their own land, is defensible. All that is necessary is to make clear, and Prof Gross does, that it is unacceptable to use a phrase like "Polish death camps" to describe the Nazi concentration camps.

However, the Law and Justice Party in government is abusing the tragedy of the Holocaust as a political weapon. It not only insults the Jewish survivors, by pretending that no Pole could have engaged in evil acts against their Jewish neighbours during the heroic struggle of the second world war, but also ignores the true identity of Poland as a Judeo-Christian nation, an identity traduced by generations of dishonest politicisations of what it means to be Polish, usually for cynical, short-term, political advantage. The Polish government is condoning the "othering" of a historically belonging section of its own nation, and potentially criminalising their stories.

The correct approach is to allow the Polish people the freedom to discuss uncomfortable truths and set them in a proper, informed, context. Only then will the true extent of Polish heroism and guilt be seen. The one cannot exist without the other in a confident and culturally secure nation that looks forward to a better future.

**Peter Muchlinski
Emeritus Professor of Law,
SOAS, University of London, UK**

Correction

• RSE Ventures has invested in neither Equinox nor SoulCycle as incorrectly stated in an article on February 5.

COMMENT ON FT.COM

Instant Insight
Forget the bravado; the achievement of SpaceX is stunning, writes John Thornhill www.ft.com/instantinsight

it you said? "Boris cannot provide the leadership for the task ahead." Don't think I'll forget your treachery. The Tiber overflows with tears. *Tiberim cum lacrimis redundat.*

MG: We have to put that behind us. It won't be just you and me this time. It will be you, me and Jacob Rees-Mogg. *Rees-Mogg arrives in a three-piece pin-striped suit.*

BJ: Here he is; the man of the people.

JRM: An inestimable joy to be here.

MG: We have to do this Boris. For Brexit. For Britain. Floreat Britannia.

Fulfil your destiny. Carry out the will

of the people. We are the dream team!

BJ: More like the scream team.

JRM: We must unite to save Brexit from its enemies.

BJ: Which enemies?

JRM: Theresa May, Philip Hammond, the dishonest Treasury, civil servants, citizens of nowhere, citizens of somewhere outside Somerset,

Europeans, the BBC, experts, out-of-touch elites, 48 per cent of the public.

MG: Theresa is wobbling. We need to

stiffen her sinews, straighten her back

and keep her shoulder to the wheel.

BJ: How do we straighten her back and keep her shoulder to the wheel?

JRM: Through British ingenuity and faith in our nation.

BJ: You want to re-form. You've given up all your doubts about me?

MG: Your record as foreign secretary speaks for itself.

BJ: What would we do?

MG: We let it be known that the dream team is back in business.

BJ: And the party rallies to our cry?

MG: In one possible scenario. **BJ: And then you stab me again and put Moggie in Number 10.**

MG: No, we don't put anyone in Number 10. Do you think we actually want to own this mess?

BJ: So you don't want me as leader?

MG: Of course not, we just want Theresa so frightened that she hangs tough on Brexit.

BJ: And the dream team?

MG: A promised land, like Arcadia, Shangri-La, Middle Earth – all places with which we'll be free to trade once we've left the customs union.

BJ: So, no unity ticket to save Brexit?

MG: Are you kidding? A leadership contest would be a bloodbath, there'd be about 10 candidates from our side alone – make *Game of Thrones* look like an episode of *Friends*. Jacob would finish you off in the first ballot.

BJ: But he's not serious. He's a comic figure. Who'd vote for him?

Gove and Rees-Mogg fall silent.

BJ: Surely Theresa will see it's a bluff. She knows that a leadership contest could tear us apart, destroy Brexit and put Corbyn in power.

MG: But she also thinks we are mad enough to do it if we're betrayed.

BJ: But we're not really are we? Gove and Rees-Mogg fall silent again.

MG: A wonderful dream.

BJ: I think I'll call it a night. (Musing quietly) the dream team . . . to sleep, perchance to dream.

MG: Ay, there's the rub.

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Notebook

by Robert Shrimley



Comment

The corporate debt problem refuses to recede

FINANCE

Gillian Tett



was bound to explode after last year's supernatural calm, spelling disaster for anybody who – like "Lilkanna" – held ETNs that bet on low volatility.

But this week's gyrations nevertheless came as a shock. And while nobody knows whether Lilkanna really exists, since Reddit is anonymous, the post exemplifies a bigger point: though markets have since stabilised, this week's correction is a potent warning sign of bigger risks that lie ahead.

The financial world faces at least three key issues, with echoes of the past: cheap money has fuelled a rise in leverage; low rates have also fostered financial engineering; and regulators are finding it hard to keep track of the risks, partly because they are so fragmented.

The debt issue is the easiest to understand. When the financial crisis exploded a decade ago, the trigger was excess borrowing among American consumers and financial institutions. Thankfully, this has receded. Western banks and hedge funds have dramatically less leverage than before.

This is important and reassuring. It means the core of the financial system is

much healthier. We are unlikely to see a 2008-style crisis where strings of banks topple over.

But this does not mean that debt has disappeared. Far from it. The Bank for International Settlements calculates that global debt to gross domestic product is now 40 per cent higher – yes, higher – today than it was a decade ago. That is partly due to rising government

up from 32 per cent in 2007. And while this is easy to service in a world of low interest rates, central banks are starting to raise rates. Indeed, this week the 10-year treasury yield rose above 2.8 per cent.

One way to make sense of this week's events, then, is that investors are starting to wake up to these issues.

This highlights a second point: financial engineering has proliferated in the low-rate era. A decade ago, investors tried to manufacture higher returns with products like collateralised debt obligations, or CDOs. This week it was other three-letter acronyms, such as those ETNs, that blew up.

Thankfully, the scale of the exotic products creating havoc this week is a mere \$6bn-\$8bn, and they only affect equity markets, not credit channels. But the bigger point is this: in recent years many investors have built their portfolios assuming that rates would stay low. It will not be easy to unwind this calmly.

To make matters worse, the structure of markets is changing due to a digital revolution. JPMorgan estimates that today a mere 10 per cent of equity trad-

ing is being conducted in the old-fashioned way, by discretionary human traders; the rest is mediated by computer programs.

This appears to have contributed to the wild market swings we saw last week. It also creates a practical problem for regulators: the officials (and investors) who understand cyber issues tend to sit in different departments from those who study finance.

The good news is that these issues will not necessarily spark a full-blown crisis – at least not anytime soon. The core of the financial system is much healthier than before, regulators are (a little) wiser, the global economy is still growing and many investors remain flush with cash.

But the crucial point to understand is that as rates rise we will almost certainly see more financial shocks. So scoff, if you like, at Lilkanna's folly. But his or her bad bet was a merely an extreme version of the game that many investors have played in a world of cheap money and rising debt. Ignore that at your peril.

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**Five Star
struggles to sate
Italy's hunger
for change**

OPINION

Bill Emmott

It is a sign of Silvio Berlusconi's Trump-like talent that the wily 81-year-old has got everyone talking about him in the campaign for Italy's general election on March 4, even when his party is running a distant third in the polls. The party that should really be the centre of attention is the frontrunner, the Five Star Movement. For it, not Mr Berlusconi, is both the country's true hope and its greatest despair.

Five years ago, when Italy held its last general election, two forces emerged proposing radical change, both from outside the mainstream. One was the young mayor of Florence, Matteo Renzi, who a year later stabbed his Democratic party colleague, Enrico Letta, in the back and took over as prime minister despite never having been elected to national office. The other was Five Star, which grabbed more than 25 per cent of the votes despite having been born only four years earlier and being led by a comedian, Beppe Grillo, who wasn't even running for parliament.

Mr Renzi, like Nicolas Sarkozy when he was elected French president in 2007, promised a rupture with the old ways of politics that he struggled to deliver. After less than three years in office he crashed and burnt, losing a referendum on constitutional change on which he had unwisely bet his future.

With Mr Renzi's centre-left Democratic party split and slipping in the polls, 11 per cent of the workforce unemployed, youth unemployment stuck at nearly 33 per cent and economic growth under-performing

With the opposition divided, the way should be clear for a reforming force to sweep into power

rest of the eurozone, the way should now be clear for the other reforming force to sweep into power.

If Mr Renzi resembles Mr Sarkozy, the party the Five Star Movement resembles most is Emmanuel Macron's *La République en Marche*. It too draws support and membership from both left and right, young and old and, crucially for Italy, north and south. Like *En Marche*, its activists and voters are mainly middle class. Now it has dropped Mr Grillo's former insistence on an (unconstitutional) referendum on Italy's euro membership, it even looks potentially constructive in European terms.

Moreover, let there be no doubt: Italy needs change. Burdened by a public debt of over 150 per cent of gross domestic product, inherited from the profligate 1980s but worsened by economic stagnation over the past 20 years, the country went backwards during the eight years Mr Berlusconi served as prime minister in 2001-06 and 2008-11. The old vice of corruption revived, the justice system worsened and no significant reforms were even attempted by his governments.

Five Star is the party that should be offering a new future, and the nearly 50 per cent of the electorate backing it are surely hoping for one. The trouble is it needs 40 per cent to form a government. The reason it does not look like getting it is that although it is Italy's *En Marche*, it lacks a Macron.

It is not just a matter of a person, although Five Star's 31-year-old candidate for the prime minister, Luigi Di Maio, plainly lacks Mr Macron's experience, expertise and savoir faire, and is being populist on the issue of trans-Mediterranean migration, putting off centrist voters. It is that the party lacks any cohesive team that looks like a credible government in waiting. This is the fault of Mr Grillo and his insistence on running the party through a fake online democracy, with candidates chosen by handfuls of voters.

With less than four weeks to go, there is scarcely time to make up for this. Announcing a potential cabinet, including a candidate for the crucial post of finance minister, could help. If the only viable government after March 4 proves to be a grand coalition for which Mr Berlusconi acts as kingmaker, Five Star will have just itself to blame. It will have failed its change-hungry voters and it will have failed Italy.

The writer is author of 'The Fate of the West'



the grim but inspiring Holocaust memorial next to the Brandenburg gate and the bleak account of the rise of Nazism in the museum of German history.

Next week foreign and defence policy chiefs from across the advanced western democracies will gather for the annual Munich Security Conference. Two of the conclusions of their deliberations can be written in advance. Donald Trump's disavowal of global leadership in favour of "America first" nationalism leaves Europe to do more to safeguard its own security. And the nation most able to shoulder more of the defence burden? Germany.

The hosts cannot complain. It was in Munich that chancellor Angela Merkel last summer offered a caustic assessment of Mr Trump as an unreliable

partner. Only last month in Davos she called for Europe to "take its destiny into its own hands". Talk to policymakers in Berlin and you get the same message: as Europe's most powerful nation, Germany will play its part.

I wonder. Ms Merkel may tell international audiences that Germany will pay up for defence and security, but the draft coalition agreement her Christian Democrats have negotiated with the Social Democrats tells a rather different story. Beyond a few bromides – "German foreign policy is dedicated to peace" – the draft says nothing about Germany's role in preserving an open international order. As for defence, well, "the Bundeswehr remains an indispensable element of German security policy".

Critics call this freeriding. And there is something of that. Germany is a stable, prosperous society and its citizens have grown wealthy as others paid for Europe's security. But no one should underestimate the weight of history.

Berlin's Invaliden cemetery was built more than 250 years ago on the orders of

Frederick the Great to memorialise Prussia's war heroes. Among the graves is the tomb of the warrior Gerhard von Scharnhorst. But do not expect grandeur – the monuments sit on a small scrap of ill-tended land hemmed in by apartment blocks and the canal behind the city's main railway station.

Scharnhorst shares the ground with the authors of Operation Valkyrie, the abortive attempt by military officers to assassinate Hitler. Somewhere, in an unmarked grave, lies Reinhard Heydrich, the SS officer who chaired the infamous Wannsee conference.

This is our "Arlington", a former German foreign minister told me laconically. Another way of putting it would be to say that Germany's stubborn pacifism keeps clear sight of history. That is inconvenient for those of us who believe that Europe does indeed need to do more to defend itself. But Germany at least has held on to a true account of events that angry nationalists pretend to have forgotten.

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There is one country that has never sought to escape the history of the continent

Brexit has replaced the stiff upper lip with quivering rage

ECONOMICS

Martin Wolf



ish conservatism was once associated with the stiff upper lip. It now quivers with rage.

So what is going on? The answer is that the country is in the middle of a civil war. The EU referendum did not resolve this war: the two sides are too evenly matched and contemptuous of each other for that. The war is over the sort of country this is, maybe even over whether the UK is to be a country at all. True, this is a peaceful civil war. That is the abiding virtue of the democratic political process. But it is still a schism between irreconcilable opponents.

Civil war has happened in Britain before, in the 17th-century conflict over whether sovereignty lay with king or parliament. A more peaceful conflict accompanied the long march towards universal suffrage. We celebrated a milestone on that journey – the granting of votes to some women in 1918 – this week. The 20th-century conflict between labour and capital might have been far more brutal, without the unifying force of two world wars.

The conflict this time is over the UK's destiny: over whether it is just another

European country; over who determines laws binding on British people; over who decides who may live here; and over whether the European project is the path to a better future, or a socialist plot, a capitalist plot, or merely a plot against democratic sovereignty.

The most fascinating feature of the debate is that the far left and far right agree against the centre. They may

agree on little else. But they concur that the EU is a conspiracy against parliamentary sovereignty – against the right of a temporary parliamentary majority to do as it pleases with the people. For a leftwing socialist, the aim is to create a socialist paradise. For a rightwing free-marketeer, it is to create a capitalist one. Either way, the EU is the enemy.

Successful parties must embrace the

extremes, yet also spread far into the centre. That is why Brexit has split both parties. This is also why 20 months after the referendum and nearly 11 months after triggering Article 50, the government has barely discussed what Brexit means and the opposition has no idea what it ultimately desires. The public was persuaded to vote for departure, with next to no discussion of the destination. This was no accident. The various Brexit factions know what they wanted to leave; they have no shared view of where they want to go.

The intensity of feeling is also not so surprising. In part, the UK is victim of its past successes. A small offshore island became, temporarily, a superpower. It defined itself against Europe and, inevitably, against any power wishing to dominate Europe. In this, it found allies. Now, Europe is uniting while the UK is very much not a superpower. So what does it choose? Is it to be an irrelevant offshore island or a part of a united Europe? The choice has to be divisive.

When divisions are so deep, nobody is considered neutral. This is particularly true for the Brexiteers, since they are the

revolutionary and so the more passionate faction. Anybody not for them is against them. All the great institutions of the state, carefully designed to be neutral, have become suspect. A *soi-disant* conservative, such as Jacob Rees-Mogg, becomes a weapon of constitutional destruction.

How will this end? The answer is that anything is possible. Could there still be a "no-deal Brexit"? Yes. Could there be another referendum? Yes. But the likelihood is that the UK will exit on terms laid down, in detail, by the EU. When a country is this divided and its political processes are in such disarray, someone else has to sort things out. The EU will do so, because that is in its interests.

The EU will not let the UK have its cake and eat it. It is led by people who also have a historical goal: not to return to the past. Their history was not British history and their aims are not British aims. They will determine the terms of the separation. We will then see whether the UK's civil war is resolved, or renewed in other, yet more bitter, ways.

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The referendum did not resolve the UK civil war; the two sides remain mutually contemptuous

B

ewildered foreigners often ask me what is happening to my country. This reminds me of my youth, when the UK was known as "the sick man of Europe". This time their concern is not over the economy, but politics.

The surprise is also greater. British economic superiority faded long since. But how, they ask, has a country famed for stable and pragmatic parliamentary democracy fallen into such an embarrassing mess: a government unable to govern; the two main parties split; parliament cowering before "the will of the people" as determined by a referendum; politicians assailing officials, media assailing the judiciary – all happening in the hysterical atmosphere of a witch hunt? This does not seem British. Brit-

Lex.

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SoftBank/Swiss Re: tome slip

Think of SoftBank boss Masayoshi Son as the owner of the Library of Babel envisaged by writer Jorge Luis Borges. Many of the infinitely expanding collection of tomes, and deals, make no sense. True to form, SoftBank plans to add to it shelves a slice of Swiss Re, the reinsurance group. As with SoftBank's other follies, this one does not offer good value for its shareholders.

Mr Son's plan with Swiss Re is to disrupt the insurance industry. This would add to a SoftBank bibliography of business already covering fields as diverse as energy, robotics and baseball. Organising these stacks takes something more than the Dewey Decimal System. Adding a minority stake in a big reinsurer would only add to the complexity. So far, SoftBank's foray into insurance is represented by a holding, alongside Alibaba, in Zhong-An, a Chinese purveyor of esoteric insurance. Flight-delay insurance anyone? How Swiss Re connects to this quirky business is obscure.

Shares in Swiss Re jumped reflexively 4 per cent, although what the reinsurer hopes to get from any transaction is as mysterious as the motives of Mr Son. We can assume that Swiss Re does not require more capital. A superfluity of that is depressing returns in global reinsurance. Net profits have fallen at a compounded rate of 12 per cent over the past three years. Perhaps SoftBank expects to suck data from Swiss Re's collected works, for use in digital disruption. If so, paying up to \$10bn for less than a third of the group looks an expensive way of obtaining a reader's card.

Paying that much does buy yearly dividends of more than \$500m. Yet SoftBank separately confirmed yesterday that it planned to list about 30 per cent of its Japanese mobile phone unit. Compare that affiliate income to the post tax stream to be sold – not less than \$1.2bn. Even with a capital inflow, over time that hardly looks a good spread. SoftBank's market value lies below the net value of its businesses, especially its holding in Alibaba. Given that the domestic wireless initial public offering is meant to help unlock this conglomerate discount, another investment with unmeasurable contributions to

SoftBank can only confuse matters further. Expect dazed looks from researchers poring over SoftBank's books seeking answers. In black and white, buying a stake in Swiss Re does not read well.

Tesla: spirited guide

Earnings guidance is a dangerous drug. In 2007, a US bipartisan commission argued it should be scrapped: it creates "adverse incentives to forgo value-added investments in long-term projects". Executives become obsessed with hitting the next quarter's numbers. Often they issue soft targets for a sugar high. Even that gets harder as investors wise up.

Not Elon Musk. The Tesla chief, who blasted a car into space, cannot be accused of being distracted by his Wall Street promises. Nor has he been corrupted by conservatism. On Wednesday, the electric carmaker's earnings were unremarkable – little more than a pit-stop on the way to the glory of the chequered flag or a wipeout. Guidance, though, spewed out of Mr Musk. Nothing as pedestrian as earnings per share – perhaps because Tesla does not have any – but an array of other promises and bets.

Among the goals for this year: sustained positive quarterly operating income, which Tesla has recorded for only one quarter in its history; 5,000-a-week production of the Model 3, which was originally due by the end of 2017; to be profitable according to generally accepted accounting principles, which Tesla has achieved in only two previous quarters in tiny amounts; to have a car drive autonomously from Los Angeles to New York, which was expected last year; an improved gross margin on Tesla's existing S and X models, which has fallen for the past two quarters.

And proving that Mr Musk is not fixated on the short term, he offered guidance that four years from now Tesla would be producing 100,000 electric haulage trucks a year, a vehicle that was unveiled only in November.

Sifting through this guidance and sorting it into buckets of missed targets, achievements that have been realised and those that may still come to pass is exhausting and perhaps ultimately fruitless. The loyalty of

European banks: the yield field

Banks are becoming more consistent dividend payers as capital issues are resolved, economies recover and costs are cut. Over the past 10 years, there has been surprisingly little correlation between maintaining payouts and share price performance. That may change as managers focus on profits, not growth

Dividend scorecard

■ Cut/axed altogether ■ Increased or reinstated ■ Held

	2008	10	12	14	16	17*	10-yr TR %
Deutsche Bank	■	■	■	■	■	■	-72
Commerzbank	■	■	■	■	■	■	-89
UniCredit	■	■	■	■	■	■	-83
Intesa Sanpaolo	■	■	■	■	■	■	17
Société Générale	■	■	■	■	■	■	-17
BNP Paribas	■	■	■	■	■	■	62
Santander	■	■	■	■	■	■	13
BBVA	■	■	■	■	■	■	-7
Nordea	■	■	■	■	■	■	117
Lloyds	■	■	■	■	■	■	62
Barclays	■	■	■	■	■	■	23

FT graphic Source: Bloomberg *2017 dividends for Santander, Barclays and Lloyds are forecasts

Dividends are back. Two of Europe's most popular banking recovery stocks are restarting payouts. So long as lenders focus on profits rather than growth, owning high dividend banks will be a more crowded trade.

Yesterday, Italy's UniCredit said it would pay a 32 cent dividend after beating forecasts. German lender Commerzbank pledged to pay an unspecified amount in respect of 2018. It could arguably have paid out this year given the progress made on its restructuring. Shares in both, already trending up, rose further.

Dividends serve two purposes. One, obviously, is to reward providers of capital. This is an emotive subject for shareholders of investment banks, given how well the men in red braces

have been rewarded for destroying shareholder wealth. And dividends are generally responsible for the lion's share of long-term equity returns.

Payouts also have a valuable signalling effect. A steady or rising dividend suggests a business is managed and financed well. In cyclical industries, a consistent ratio of payouts to profits fulfils the same purpose. Here, banks have sent mixed messages, with dividends switched on and then off again, sometimes more than wiped out by huge capital increases.

So far, there has been less correlation between consistency and share prices than one might expect. Yes, Scandi paragons of virtue such as Nordea have the best dividend records and also turned in the best share price

performances. But the UK's Lloyds, which paid nothing for six years, has done better than Intesa of Italy, which paid out 74 per cent of total net profit between 2014 and 2017.

This is partly down to company-specific issues such as worries over capital or non-performing loans; and partly to the 2010-12 eurozone crisis, which had less effect on UK, Swiss and Scandinavian banks.

With Europe's economy growing again, serious capital issues mostly resolved and Augean efforts under way to cut costs and resolve bad loans, expect banks to reward shareholders more often. Fairly or not, that may mean banks which have always done so will get rather less recognition for their generosity.

Tesla shareholders is proven. Only evidence that long-term profits are not achievable will shake their faith.

Ashmore: jubilation

Billions of dollars have flowed to countries with patchy reputations for solvency in the post-crisis years of cheap money. Yet there is no need to launch another Jubilee campaign of debt forgiveness just yet. A week or so of global market volatility has not undone the combination of a weak dollar, low global interest rates and GDP growth that keeps problems at bay for indebted emerging economies – and the funds that invest in them.

Yesterday, UK-listed specialist fund manager Ashmore said assets under management increased 18 per cent on the previous half year to \$69.5bn. It should see demand for its products continue to rise in 2018.

After a brutal few years, Ashmore's recovery matches that of the bonds in which it invests in. Its shares trade at about 19 times next year's earnings, higher than both its peer group and its historical average. The market environment warrants this, so long as the focus remains on cost control.

Ashmore has decided to absorb its research costs, rather than bill clients, following the introduction of Mifid II last month. Rivals half the size estimate their costs at about £1m. If Ashmore's were double that sum it would almost eliminate the reduction

in operating costs earned by a headcount reduction.

Better client money inflows plus investment gains have not been enough to improve profits. Blame adverse currency moves and smaller gains from "seed capital" investments. More client money means higher management fee income. But landing some big new clients has lifted assets at the expense of fee margins, which are down to 50 basis points from 54 a year ago.

Offering more alternative products would bump up that margin. And higher-yielding EM debt should attract more client interest while rates remain low in the developed world, meaning higher overall fees. The capacity is there. Ashmore is back on an upswing, and it could add another \$10bn to assets before it regains its 2013 high.

TDC/Macquarie: felicific calculus

Denmark is among the world's happiest countries. So what happens when its largest pension fund teams up with an Australian infrastructure investor deemed so aggressive it has been dubbed the "vampire kangaroo"?

Nothing as nasty as cost-cutting, if comments from Macquarie and three Danish pension funds can be believed. After approaching TDC, the country's biggest telecoms company, to discuss an all-cash deal of DKr38bn (\$6.2bn) they stressed the positives. Their plans include investing to improve Danish networks. Job cuts are not envisaged.

The mooted offer is at a 25 per cent premium to the average three-month share price. At a mooted price of about DKr47 per share, the enterprise value of TDC would be about 7.5 times forecast earnings before usual deductions. Too low, said TDC. It argued investors would be better off with its current strategy, exemplified by its \$2.5bn offer for entertainment assets of Sweden's Modern Times Group, the latest in a series of telecoms-media convergence deals.

But the approach should gladden TDC's long-suffering investors. They have watched the company's return on equity drop nearly two-thirds to 6.2 per cent over five years. Nor are they enthusiastic about the company's strategy – news of the MTG deal sent the shares down 8 per cent.

What about the pension funds, which invest for every worker in Denmark? They have good reason to like the low risks of infrastructure. TDC has been a reliable generator of cash flow, and there is scope to increase debt which is currently about 2.7 times forecast earnings before standard deductions.

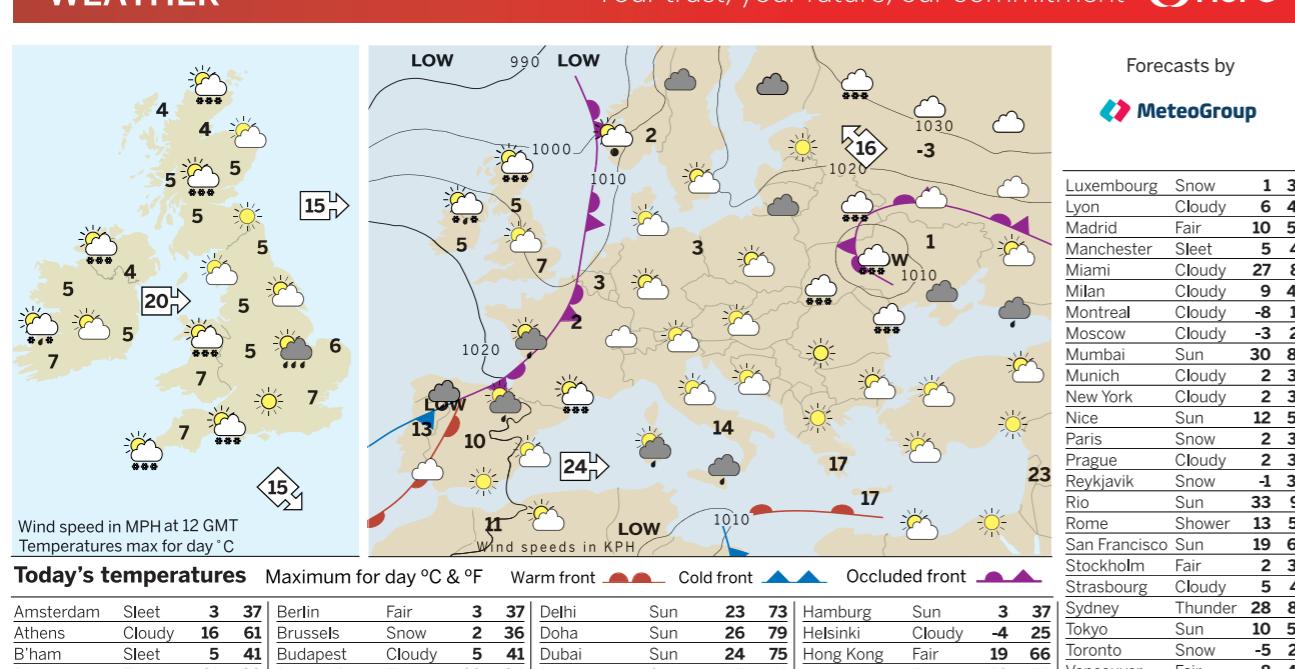
Yet the investment would face uncertain returns. TDC is a dominant player in the most difficult telecoms market in Europe.

Competition is unlikely to diminish in a small, flat and densely populated state where it is cheap to build networks. A takeover would boost the happiness of TDC investors more than Danish pensioners.

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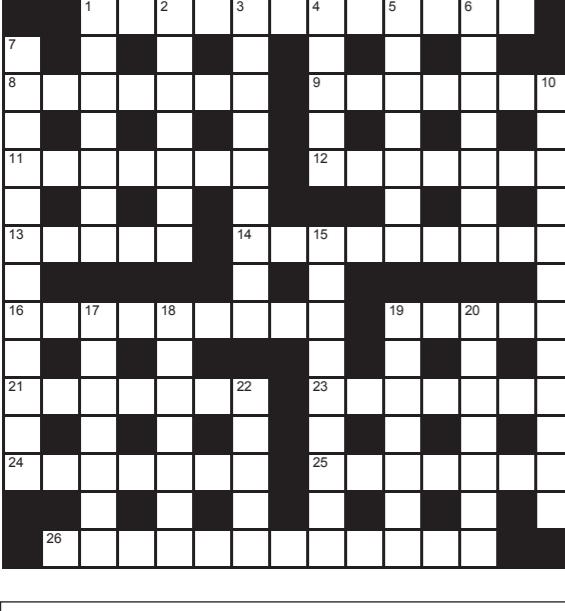


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Companies & Markets

FINANCIAL TIMES

Lure of LNG China to the fore as host of willing buyers emerge — DAVID SHEPPARD, PAGE 26

Seeking insurance SoftBank's puzzling bid for a chunk of Swiss Re — ANALYSIS, PAGE 15

TalkTalk profit fears hit dividend

► Broadband provider to raise £200m ► Balance sheet woes undercuts network plans

NIC FILDES
TELECOMS CORRESPONDENT

TalkTalk said its profits would be lower than forecast and cut its dividend for the second time in a year while revealing plans to provide new superfast fibre optic broadband to 3m UK homes and businesses.

Shares in the broadband provider fell 13 per cent in response to the news and the announcement that TalkTalk would shore up its balance sheet with a £200m share placing. This and the "temporary" cut to the dividend are designed to ease concerns that it might breach banking covenants.

TalkTalk said the dividend would be cut from 7.5p a year to 2.5p, to allow investment in fibre broadband, and that the final dividend for 2018 would be 1.5p. It said earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation this year would be between £230m and £245m, compared with previous guidance of between £270m and £300m.

Revenue rose 1 per cent in the third quarter, it said, and 37,000 new customers signed up, while its forecast for full-year customer growth has been raised to between 150,000 and 160,000.

The balance sheet concerns overshadowed TalkTalk's plans to battle BT's Openreach in the market for superfast

broadband. TalkTalk said yesterday that it would form a new company with Infracapital, part of M&G Prudential, to lay full fibre networks to 3m homes.

The plan will cost £1.5bn, about £1bn of which will be debt. Infracapital will fund 80 per cent with TalkTalk supplying the remainder. TalkTalk will include its fibre network in York in the new vehicle. The network is expected to take five to six years to build.

Tristia Harrison, chief executive, said the company was aware of the scale of the job but that provision of full fibre was important because the current access rates of 3 per cent in the UK were "completely woeful".

'We see real opportunity to grow the business while investing in full fibre'

TalkTalk is confident it will continue to expand its customer base, which will enable it to reduce debt, fund fibre and restore its dividend, she said.

Charles Dunstone, executive chairman, said: "Looking ahead, we see real opportunity to keep growing the core business while investing in full fibre."

The fibre plan increases pressure on Openreach, which this month raised its target of providing 2m full fibre lines by 2020 to a 3m target. Vodafone is working with CityFibre to lay full fibre lines to 1m homes with the ultimate aim of 5m lines. A number of smaller companies have also been investing.

Lombard page 18

Payout restraint Rising yields spell pain

Rising bond yields as central banks slowly retreat from the era of easy money have already become a challenge for dividend-paying companies. So far this year, Wall Street dividend payers are lagging behind the broad market.

An interesting trend is also emerging in the UK, where some companies have issued profit warnings and cut their payouts.

Andrew Lapthorne at Société Générale says that its monthly dividend risk screen of high-dividend-yield stocks with poor-quality balance sheets is dominated by the UK. Of the 50 companies that make up the list, 21 are listed in the UK.

Is the UK the canary in the coal mine? Loading up balance sheets with debt and keeping dividends flowing has not just been a UK story during the easy money era.

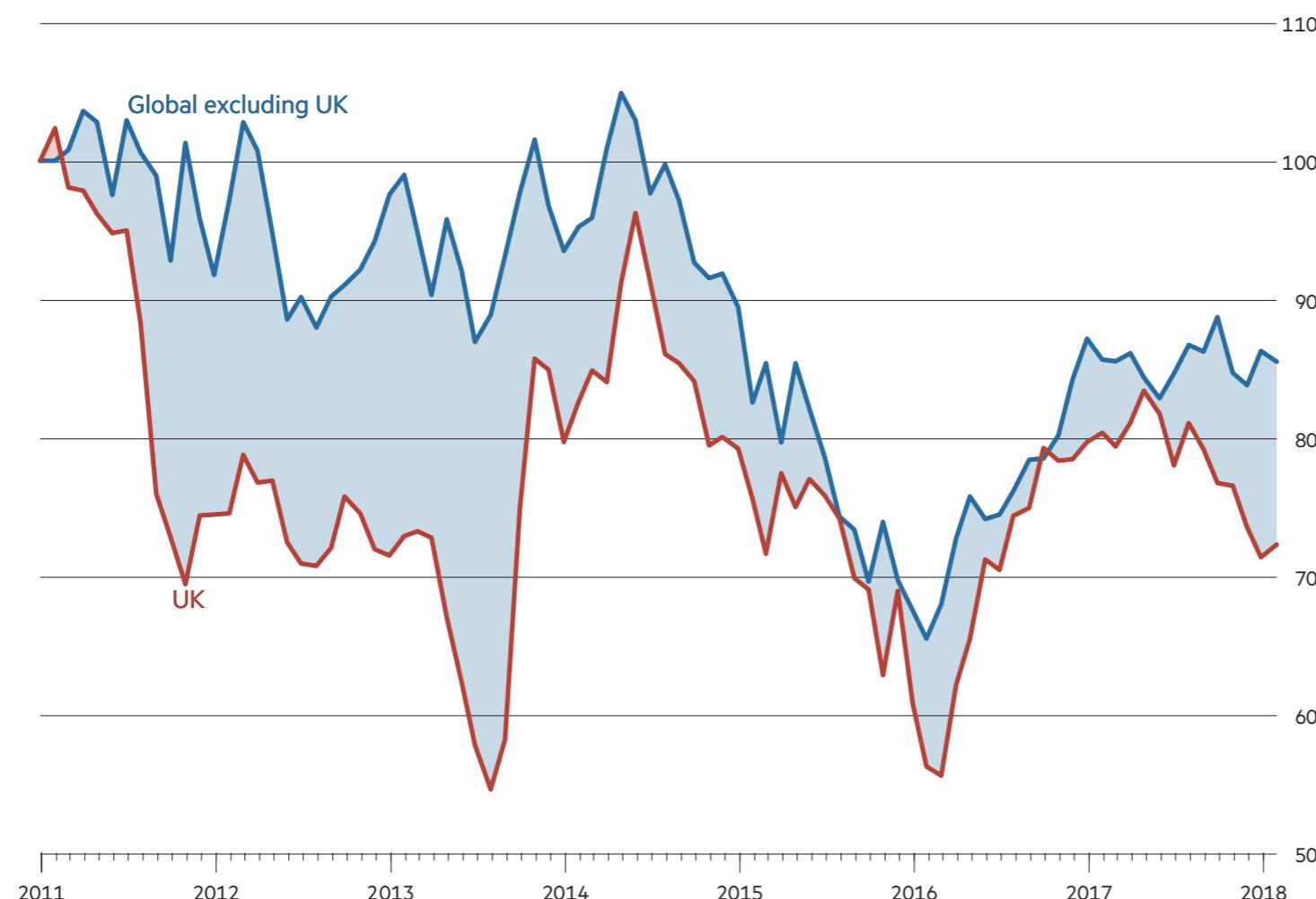
Longview Economics estimates that some 12 per cent of US companies are zombies – defined as having earnings before interest and tax that do not cover their interest expense.

The big difference at the moment is that a weaker UK economy compared with the rest of the world is a catalyst for profit warnings from indebted companies that herald a dividend cut.

As global bond yields rise, Mr Lapthorne says that we are seeing a substantial move against low-quality credit. Any tempering of global growth will weigh against companies with weak balance sheets that pay chunky dividends. Michael Mackenzie

Expect more dividend cuts in the UK

Relative performance of high dividend risk stocks (Rebased, 100=31 December 2010)



Smart Money

John Authers



Everyone could see Monday's financial accident coming. Exchange-traded notes that bet on volatility to stay low tripled their investors' money last year – obviously unsustainable. The US stock market had never managed to go so long without even the mildest hiccup. A jolt was coming. The many who said they were not surprised by the market's brief freefall were telling the truth. But none could claim to have known just when it was going to happen.

What signs might have given away that the end of the Big Calm was imminent? No timing model is perfect, which is why most of us should hedge our bets. But by coincidence, Andrew Lapthorne at SocGen published on Monday a model that would have worked. It involves looking at junk.

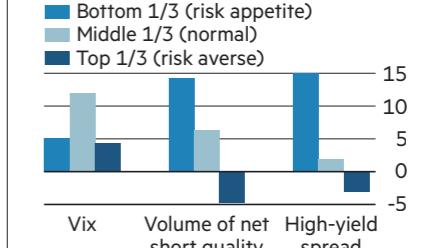
The nub of the argument is that the volatility of stocks and bonds backed by companies with poor balance sheets will indicate a coming drawdown better than a rise in the popular Vix index, which covers the volatility of the market as a whole. When investors get jittery about the weakest companies, it is a sign of trouble. Since 2000, SocGen indeed found that when the volatility of the worst quality companies in both equities and bonds is highest, S&P 500 drawdowns follow (shown in the chart). By contrast, the Vix sent no such signal: subsequent returns were roughly equal no matter what the level of the Vix.

What happened this time? When bond yields began to rise, there was a straightforward rotation from defensive stocks that investors were holding for their dividend income – such as utilities, which have sold off most in the last two months – into more cyclical stocks. This said little about the overall market. But then the stocks with the weakest balance sheets began to wobble, shortly before that worry afflicted the entire market. Last week, the volatility of lowest-quality companies rose into the top 30 per cent of its range. Junk companies did function just like canaries in a coal mine.

Meanwhile Vix remained unnaturally calm ahead of its explosion, as did high-yield spreads. They may well be unnaturally depressed by the lingering effects of central bank intervention in bond markets. So those who really want to try timing this mess should watch the stock of over-levered companies. There are plenty to choose from.

S&P 500 after different risk regimes

Annualised total returns, 2000-15 (%)



When the volatility of the worst quality companies in both equities and bonds is highest, equity drawdowns follow. The Vix sent no such signal

john.authers@ft.com



Ricard chief shows naked ambition for vodka sales

The new ads for Pernod Ricard's Absolut, pictured, say it is 'the vodka with nothing to hide'. Alexandre Ricard, chief, borrowed the idea in a naked video for the campaign. 'I spend a lot of time saying we need creativity and audacity: someone said: Walk the walk.'

Analysis ► PAGE 14

UniCredit leads way as robust economy sparks revival for eurozone lenders

MARTIN ARNOLD — LONDON
DAVID KEOHANE — PARIS

Europe's banking sector offered a rare glimmer of hope as leading Italian, French and German lenders reported better than expected results, boosted by the strengthening eurozone economy and their cost-cutting efforts.

Eurozone banks have been laggards for several years, weighed down by negative interest rates and high levels of bad loans. But analysts welcomed nascent signs of recovery in fourth-quarter figures published by UniCredit, Société Générale and Commerzbank.

"It's been a decent week for European banks," said Eoin Mullany, analyst at Berenberg. "Cost-cutting is starting to

bear fruit for some, others have strong fee growth, but there is no one theme that unifies them."

Italy's UniCredit posted its best fourth-quarter profit for a decade, lifted by lower operating costs, a drop in provisions for bad loans, strong revenue growth, and a lower tax bill. Jean-Pierre Mustier, who has targeted costs and bad loans since becoming chief executive, hailed the "increasingly strong commercial dynamics across the group".

Italy's biggest bank by assets reported net profit of €801m, against a €13.6bn loss a year ago, and said it planned to restart its dividend at 32 cents a share after scrapping its payout last year. Its shares, which have gained 45 per cent in the past year, rose 3 per cent yesterday.

SocGen outstripped forecasts, helped by strong revenue growth in eastern Europe and Africa and resilience at its investment bank compared with rivals.

The French bank's net income fell to €69m in the fourth quarter, down 82 per cent over the previous year. However, analysts had expected a loss of €300m, due to restructuring costs and a hit from tax reform, according to Reuters data. Revenue was €6.32bn, beating expectations. The stock was up 2.2 per cent.

Germany's Commerzbank posted fourth-quarter net income of €90m, down from €182m a year ago but ahead of forecasts at €64m.

Additional reporting by Patrick McGee in Frankfurt
Lex page 12

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Oil & gas

Total boosts payouts as earnings soar

French producer promises 10 per cent dividend rise and \$5bn shares buyback

ANDREW WARD — ENERGY EDITOR

Total says it will increase its dividend 10 per cent in the next three years and buy back up to \$5bn worth of shares in a sign of oil investors beginning to reap the benefits of higher crude prices.

Shareholders spent much of the past three years worrying about the sustainability of oil companies' dividends as the industry experienced its deepest downturn for a generation. But those concerns have dissipated as higher oil prices help to repair producers' balance sheets and investors are refocusing on the prospect for improved returns.

Total announced yesterday a 1.2 per

cent increase in its full-year dividend for 2017 to €2.48 and said there would be a further 3.2 per cent rise in 2018 with an aim to lift the payout by 10 per cent over the next three years. A further \$5bn would be returned to shareholders through buybacks between 2018 and 2020, said the French oil and gas group.

"The board is confident today that we will deliver growing cash flow and we can increase returns to shareholders," said Patrick Pouyanne, chief executive.

Fourth-quarter net earnings jumped 19 per cent to \$2.9bn, slightly ahead of analysts' expectations.

BP and Royal Dutch Shell have also reported sharply increased profitability in the past week as deep cost cuts made during the downturn have led to soaring cash flow now that oil prices are recovering. Oil prices averaged \$54 per barrel in 2017, up a fifth from 2016, and the

\$2.9bn
Fourth-quarter net earnings, an increase of 19 per cent

2.57m
Barrels per day produced in 2017, a rise of 4.6 per cent on 2016

recovery has continued this year with Brent crude, the international benchmark, hitting three-year highs above \$70 last month before falling back to about \$67 in recent days.

BP announced on Tuesday that it had repurchased \$345m of shares during the fourth quarter after becoming the first of the European oil majors to launch a buyback scheme since the downturn.

Royal Dutch Shell is yet to act on its promise, made at the time of its \$50bn deal to purchase BG Group in 2015, to buy back \$25bn of shares by 2020 but reiterated the pledge last week and said it would start "sooner rather than later".

The buybacks will end a period in which investors in European oil and gas companies have seen shares diluted. Most large European producers avoided cutting their dividends during the downturn by issuing some of their pay-

out in shares, or scrip, rather than cash. Shell ended its scrip programme last November and BP and Total have vowed to counter the dilution by buying back shares equivalent to those issued as scrip. The latest \$5bn of buybacks announced by Total would be in addition to the scrip offset already promised.

Shares in Total were up 2 per cent at €45.66 yesterday afternoon.

Over the full year, Total's adjusted net profits, excluding one-off items, were up 28 per cent at \$10.6bn. Operating cash flow, excluding working capital changes, rose 25 per cent to \$6bn during the quarter and \$21.1bn for the full year.

Production averaged 2.57m barrels per day in 2017, 4.6 per cent higher than the year before. Annual cost savings since 2014 reached \$3.7bn in 2017 and production costs fell to \$5.40 per barrel from \$9.90 three years ago.

Telecoms

TDC shares jump after spurning bid

RICHARD MILNE — OSLO

Shares in TDC surged after the Danish telecoms operator received an unsolicited bid from three pension funds and Macquarie.

TDC's board rejected the offer of Dkr47 per share, a 25 per cent premium to Wednesday's closing price, but its shares rose 16 per cent yesterday morning to Dkr43.60. The bid values it at about Dkr38bn (\$6.3bn).

The former Danish monopoly operator made a poorly received \$2.5bn offer last week for the entertainment assets of Sweden's Modern Times Group, the latest in a series of proposed media-telecoms convergence deals.

The consortium of the PFA, ATP and PKA pension funds and Macquarie Infrastructure said it wanted to start a dialogue with TDC's board, as its offer represented "excellent value" for shareholders.

Rumours have swirled in recent months of broader interest in TDC. Telia, the former monopoly operator in Sweden, has expressed its interest, particularly in TDC's broadband assets in Denmark and Norway.

The consortium said it had prepared "detailed plans for TDC", including large investments in network infrastructure and no job losses. It said it would aim to offer Danish households broadband speeds of 1GB per second by the mid-2020s, pointing out that the government's target was 100MB per second.

TDC has been taken off the stock market before with five private equity firms buying it in 2005, before relisting it five years later. It now has a diverse shareholder base with only T Rowe Price, the US fund manager, owning more than 5 per cent of its shares.

Its board reiterated its support for its own bid for most of MTG, a deal it said would create Europe's first true integrated telecoms and media group offering everything from TV channels to broadband and mobile subscriptions.

But so-called convergence deals around the world have been punished by investors and this was no different, with TDC falling 8 per cent after announcing its bid.

The board said this week's bid was not "in the best interest" of shareholders. It added: "We are confident in the standalone prospects of TDC and convinced of the incremental value creation potential of the announced combination with MTG's Nordic Entertainment and Studio division."

Meanwhile, Swedish investment group Kinnevik wants to combine Tele2 and ComHem, two of its biggest shareholdings, in another convergence deal.

See Lex

Food & beverage. Alcohol



Ricard heir reveals modernising spirit

Owner of Absolut vodka and pastis brands is working to keep up with changing tastes

HARRIET AGNEW — PARIS

Alexandre Ricard likes to think of himself as "the chief executive who has nothing to hide". The Pernod Ricard chief executive took this idea literally this week when he appeared naked in an internal video to introduce a new advertising campaign for the group's Swedish vodka brand, Absolut.

Styled as "the vodka with nothing to hide", Absolut's employees took off their clothes in what the company said was an attempt to reflect how transparent the spirit's manufacturing process was — from the seed through to the bottle.

Explaining his decision to strip off, Mr Ricard said: "I spend a lot of my time as I travel saying that we need creativity and audacity. Somebody said: 'Walk the walk'. If you want to engage with consumers, you have to be creative and audacious."

Mr Ricard is one of 15 grandchildren of Paul Ricard, the pastis maker who formed Pernod Ricard 43 years ago. In 2015 he took over as chief executive of the world's second-largest distiller by

revenues. Yesterday, Pernod Ricard reported organic sales up 5.1 per cent to €5.1bn during the first six months of its fiscal year, with growth across all geographical regions and categories. It also raised profit forecasts: it expects organic profit growth from recurring operations in 2018 of 4-6 per cent, up from guidance of 3-5 per cent at the end of August.

"A lot of the things that we started working on a few years back are starting to come to life," said Mr Ricard.

When he took over the reins following the sudden death of his uncle and then-chief executive Patrick Ricard, he embarked upon a sweeping transformation of the company triggered by consumers' changing habits.

"The most fundamental change over the last few years has been the consumer," he said. "Loyalty to one brand has moved to loyalty to a repertoire of four to six brands, depending on the environment, people or time of week or day." He also said that "people are tending to drink less but better quality".

Pernod Ricard has switched its focus away from brands or categories such as vodka, gin or whisky towards what it calls "consumption moments", based on the social contexts in which its drinks are drunk. It has pushed hard into premium spirits and travel retail, and

Alexandre Ricard has highlighted the need for creativity and audacity — Leo Novel

ramped up innovation. The shift appears to be paying off. In its first half, 2 percentage points of the 5 per cent growth in the top line came from innovation, said Mr Ricard, who at age 45 is one of a new generation of chief executives in corporate France.

He defines innovation as brands or special editions of brands that did not exist a few years ago, such as Jameson Caskmates, an Irish whiskey that has been aged in craft beer barrels, and Absolut Lime, a flavoured vodka.

Pernod Ricard has also improved its data analysis; it can now assess how its brands are doing on social media, a strategy it calls "social listening". By tracking the profiles of customers to see what they buy and when, it uses the data to target similar consumers.

Geographically, Pernod Ricard's growth in the first half was driven by its largest market of Asia, which grew 6 per cent. The acceleration was led by China, where high-end spirits had in the past suffered from a clampdown on luxury gifts. The negative impact of a later Chinese new year was offset by strong demand for the group's Martell cognac.

"There is a new normal in China where middle-class households are reaching levels where they can afford premium brands," Mr Ricard said. "We see significant growth potential there."

Loyalty to one brand has moved to loyalty to a repertoire of four to six brands'

Alexandre Ricard

Industrials

ABB upbeat on prospects for global economy

RALPH ATKINS — ZURICH

Swiss engineering group ABB expects improving global economic conditions to power growth in profits and sales this year, despite reporting weaker than expected results for the final quarter of 2017.

After contracting in each of the three previous years, revenues at the Zurich-based company rose 1 per cent to \$34.3bn in 2017, it said yesterday. But orders in the final three months of the year fell 3 per cent to \$8.48bn compared with the same period a year earlier.

Full-year operating profits also fell, by 2 per cent to \$4.13bn. ABB's share price

closed at SFr23.05 in Switzerland. Ulrich Spiesshofer, chief executive, has streamlined ABB to focus on higher growth markets and to cut costs, but has struggled to increase sales. Describing 2017 as a "transition year", he said the annual results showed "the dampening effect of our massive transformation".

Orders in the fourth quarter were also hit by fewer big orders in its power grid unit, after a deal from India in 2016.

ABB's products and services are based on automating industries and delivering electricity from power stations to final users, with much of its revenue depending on investment spending by governments and utilities.

It returned to the acquisition trail last year, buying Bernecker & Rainer, an Austrian specialist in factory computer operating systems, for a price estimated at up to \$2bn, and General Electric's underperforming industrial solutions division for \$2.6bn.

The fall in ABB's share price reflected disappointment about the results relative to analysts' forecasts, said Guillermo Peigneux, a UBS analyst. "Growth will re-emerge later in 2018 and ABB sits in very interesting markets long term, but short term we have our doubts."

Despite the weaker than expected figures, ABB highlighted strong growth in "base orders", worth less than \$15m.

MEHUL SRIVASTAVA — JERUSALEM

Shares in Teva Pharmaceutical, the world's largest generic drugmaker, fell sharply after it forecast a drop in revenue in 2018 in spite of aggressive cost-cutting that will lose as many as 14,000 workers by the end of 2019.

The Israeli group said that revenue this year could fall to \$18.3bn, from \$22.4bn in 2017, with about half of the decline caused by competition to its largest branded drug, the multiple sclerosis drug Copaxone.

Copaxone sales fell nearly 20 per cent to \$821m in the fourth quarter as generic alternatives, such as those made

by rival Mylan, took nearly 15 per cent of the market according to IHS Markit.

In the second half of the year, the company will also face competition for its asthma inhaler, Pro Air, amid wider pressure on prices for drug manufacturers in key US and European markets.

Fourth-quarter profits fell to 93 cents per share excluding one-time items, from \$1.38 a year earlier, while revenue fell to \$5.5bn, 16 per cent lower than the year earlier.

Kare Schultz, who took over as chief executive in November, said the results for the fourth quarter "were as expected" but "reflect the pressure that the business has been under since 2015".

The company took a \$17.1bn impairment on goodwill in 2017, mostly on its US generics business. Teva's shares fell more than 7 per cent.

The company has been hobbled by the \$40.5bn purchase of Allergan's generics business in 2016, which was followed by the dip in US drug prices. Mr Schultz has pledged to cut debt aggressively. The company paid down \$2.2bn in debt in the fourth quarter.

For Teva, managing the relationship with the government of Benjamin Netanyahu has been key. Mr Netanyahu has insisted Teva keeps its headquarters in Israel, and tries to keep as many factories open in Jerusalem as possible.

INSIDE BUSINESS

TECHNOLOGY

Richard Waters



Time is a commodity Musk cannot control despite SpaceX success

Silicon Valley has always been driven by imitation and enhancement. There are few true break-out ideas: perfecting what someone else has already tried is usually the name of the game.

With the right formula — like Google in search, or Facebook in social networking — the results can be spectacular, even if other companies have already tried to blaze the same trail. The obsessive pursuit of building a better mousetrap can leave entire fields unexplored.

This provides one more reason to ponder the meaning of Elon Musk. Rarely, in a potentially giant new tech market, does anyone gain a lead that can be measured in years. To do it in two new markets at the same time is unheard of. That kind of leadership, however, puts severe stress on the business and funding model of the pioneers.

This week, Musk-world provided a perfect demonstration of the ups and downs that come with his brand of expansive thinking.

First came the long-awaited blast-off of the Falcon Heavy, a giant rocket from Mr Musk's SpaceX. No matter that it is four years later than first promised: it still has a big lead over rival heavy-lift rockets.

SpaceX has followed a classic venture capital model. People who have worked close to Mr Musk say that, to protect his ultimate goal of putting humans on Mars, he is adamant about keeping the company private. Venture investors seem happy with the progress: SpaceX has raised \$1.6bn and the most recent fundraising valued it at \$21bn, double what it was deemed to be worth two years earlier.

The other part of SpaceX's funding has come from customers for the company's Falcon 9, which has gone rapidly from marvel — the first privately funded rocket to reach space at the start of the decade — to workhorse. The risks in rocket programmes are huge: a launch failure could put the company's entire business on hold. But SpaceX bounced back from an explosion less than a year and a half ago to pull off 18 successful launches in 2017.

Tesla's Model 3, the first attempt at a mass-market electric car by the other company Mr Musk runs, is also a vehicle ahead of its time. Like the Falcon Heavy, he used smaller-scale products to work his way up to this point. Mr Musk even managed to scrape, briefly, into profit on those earlier cars, before plunging back into the red for the new model.

But he did not have the luxury of keeping Tesla private, and it has taken huge injections of cash from the public markets to get this far.

A mark of Mr Musk's achievement has been to keep stock market investors faithful through a succession of long product delays and manufacturing problems. He was at it again this week, seeking to buy time for the Model 3 after interim production targets slipped by six months. Once again, investors familiar with seeing his short-term promises and predictions come to nothing have been more than willing to give him the benefit of the doubt.

The twin ventures produced a powerful halo effect. It was in full view this week, in the shape of a red Tesla Roadster, with dummy spaceman at the wheel, orbiting Earth.

Mr Musk did not miss the chance to draw on the SpaceX success to rally the faithful. "People think that if we can send a Roadster to the asteroid belt, we could probably solve Model 3 production," he told Wall Street analysts yesterday. "It's just a matter of time."

But it would be a mistake to count too much on this halo staying in place. This week's lurch in the stock markets was a reminder that the end of the era of cheap capital — a commodity that Mr Musk has freely tapped — is approaching. More important, every quarter that the Model 3 falls behind schedule is another when Tesla's lead is eroded.

Its technical achievements — whether in batteries and electric drivetrains, or progress towards autonomous driving — are rapidly being matched by an automobile industry now racing to go electric. This is in no small part because of Mr Musk's own successes. It is now nearly two years since he pulled off the unthinkable: persuading thousands of people to line up for the privilege of handling over \$1,000 to join the Model 3 waiting list. Most of those people are still likely to be waiting a year from now.

He may have conquered space, but time is one commodity that even Mr Musk cannot control. The Tesla boss told Wall Street this week that there is no thought at the moment for him to hand over the CEO title — a possibility envisaged in his latest long-range remuneration plan. But if the delays stretch much longer, even Tesla shareholders may be content for him to join the one-way car ride to the asteroid belt.

richard.waters@ft.com

See Lex

COMPANIES

SoftBank seeks unlikely partner in Swiss Re

Move for stake in insurer comes as Japanese group unveils expansion plan, but benefits for its target look unclear

OLIVER RALPH AND ARASH MASSOUDI
LONDON
KANA INAGAKI — TOKYO
RALPH ATKINS — ZURICH

The culture clash could hardly be more stark. On one side, SoftBank, the expansionary Japanese conglomerate led by billionaire founder Masayoshi Son. On the other, Swiss Re, the buttoned down 154-year-old reinsurance company for which stability and solidity are a competitive advantage.

Mr Son's attempt to take a minority stake in Swiss Re, confirmed on Wednesday, potentially puts these two unlikely partners together. The move left analysts and bankers confused. "I find it difficult to see the attraction," said Stefan Schürmann, who follows Swiss Re for Vontobel in Zurich.

One banker was more direct. "I don't understand the strategic logic," he said, "but I understand the megalomaniac logic."

Mr Son, who has often talked about turning his group into an Asian version of Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway, on Wednesday unveiled a grand vision to create a "strategic holding company" by acquiring a 20 to 30 per cent stake in each of the top operators across a wide array of sectors.

"It's easy to say let's create a coalition of number one companies across the world, but implementation is hard," Mr Son said.

He has already expanded from the core telecoms business into fields as diverse as energy, chip design and e-commerce via a series of prominent deals and canny investments.

Now financial services are starting to take centre stage. Last year Mr Son launched a \$95bn Saudi-backed tech investment fund called the Vision Fund, in which SoftBank is an investor and a

'I don't understand the strategic logic, but I understand the megalomaniac logic'

fee-earning manager. He also bought Fortress, an alternative investment company.

Insurance acquisitions have so far been limited to stakes in start-ups Lemonade and Zhong-An. The Swiss Re investment — which would come from SoftBank itself rather than the Vision Fund — would be a much bigger piece in the jigsaw puzzle.

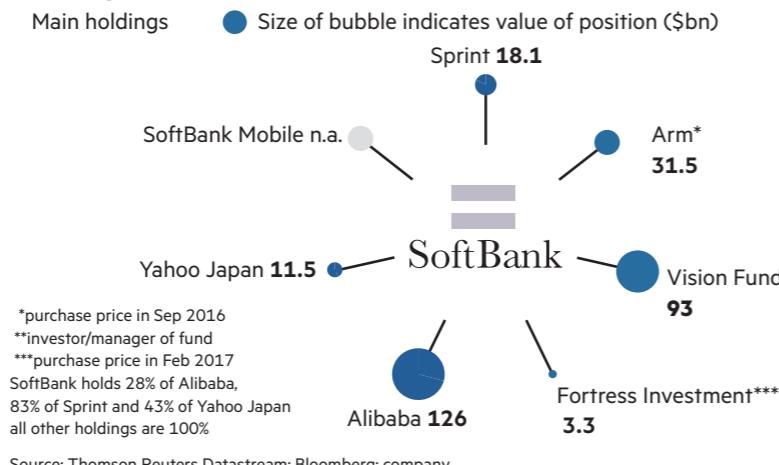
As well as broadening Softbank's portfolio, an investment in Swiss Re would also provide some welcome dividends. In the past, SoftBank has funded its expansion partly with the cash generated by its mobile operations. But it is planning to list its Japanese mobile unit in Tokyo within the next 12 months.

Cash could also be used to pay down debt. The group's interest-bearing debt stood at ¥15.8tn (\$143bn) at the end of December even as Mr Son has promised

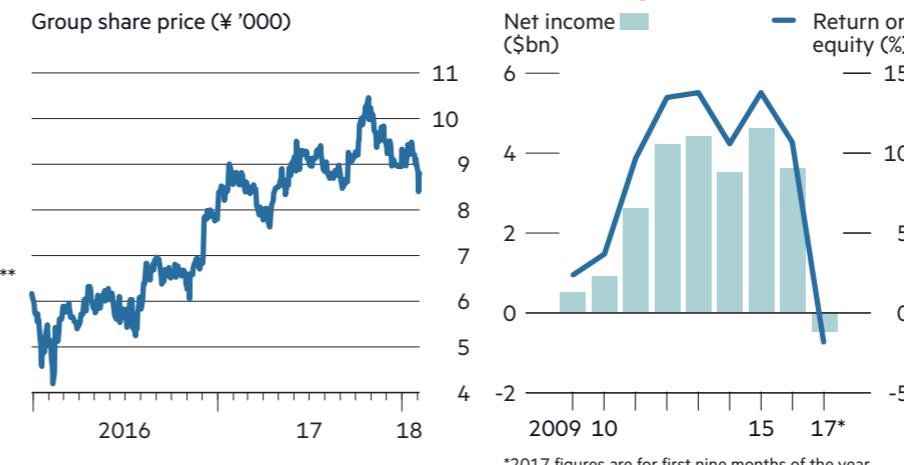
Hot property



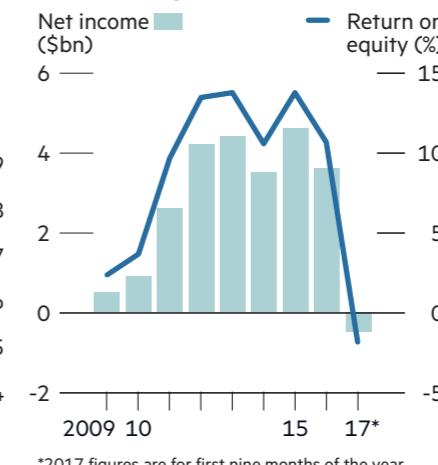
Galaxy of SoftBank's interests



Group share price (¥ '000)



Swiss Re's performance



information, which they use to try to find an advantage when pricing policies.

"Chief executive Christian Mumenthaler has positioned Swiss Re as more of a knowledge company than a risk carrier. The idea is that you go to them as much for their knowledge as their capital," said Mr Hossain.

But it is not clear how SoftBank would gain access to Swiss Re's data if it is just a minority shareholder.

Other analysts say the deal could help SoftBank to hedge against the risks posed by its diverse operations. That includes Mr Son's ambitious plans for a north-east Asian energy "super grid" that would aim to connect the electricity networks of South Korea, China, Japan, Mongolia and Russia. The pan-Asian super grid "would certainly be a big customer for insurance and re-insurance", Csla analyst Oliver Matthews said.

Elsewhere, SoftBank has stakes in sharing economy companies such as Uber and WeWork where Swiss Re's insurance could play a role.

For Swiss Re, the benefits of an investment from SoftBank are less clear.

'The idea is that you go to them [Swiss Re] as much for their knowledge as their capital'

"They definitely don't need any more capital," said Mr Hossain. The reinsurance industry is awash with too much capital chasing too little business. That has led to falling prices and profits.

Since 2015, Swiss Re has spent SF3bn on share buybacks, on top of its regular dividend. Its shares rose 2 per cent yesterday in response to the news about SoftBank's interest.

Unlike its rivals such as Munich Re, Swiss Re has not used spare capital to invest in so-called insurtech start-ups. In an interview with the Financial Times last year, Mr Mumenthaler said: "If we see a start-up that can help us, either it's very strategic and then we would buy them 100 per cent or copy what they do, or if it's not that strategic then I think we can collaborate with them. But investing 10 per cent, 15 per cent, 20 per cent in them, I can't make a case. We're not a VC fund."

That view suggests a potential clash with Mr Son, who is happy to take small stakes in a large number of tech companies. But Mr Hossain said Mr Mumenthaler would probably appreciate the investment. "Swiss Re feels under-appreciated by the market. And the Japanese usually think about the long term so I think Swiss Re's management would be quite happy."

SoftBank's investors might not be quite so relaxed. "Unless it [SoftBank] discloses fee structure for Vision Fund or rewards its own shareholders [through dividends or buybacks] it is not clear if and when any of these investments will benefit SoftBank shareholders," said Jefferies analyst Atul Goyal.

See Lex

'I don't understand the strategic logic, but I understand the megalomaniac logic'

Vision Fund

Tycoon's joy in searching for disruptors of the future

Since the launch of his \$93bn Saudi-backed investment fund last May, Masayoshi Son, SoftBank's chief executive and founder, has been tirelessly searching for start-ups that could disrupt every aspect of life from pets, real estate and cars to healthcare.

"I spend my time everyday analysing new deals and interviewing new companies for the Vision Fund. It's just simply too exciting and fun. This is not work but my joy," Mr Son told analysts this week.

His latest interest in Swiss Re, one of the world's biggest reinsurers, may not involve the Vision Fund, but it underscores his appetite for investing in any sector that could benefit from technology innovation.

In the nine months to December, the Vision Fund and its affiliate have invested \$27.5bn in 26 companies including German online car dealer Auto1, chipmaker Nvidia, shared-office provider WeWork, and SoFi, the San Francisco-based online lender.

The two funds contributed ¥50bn to SoftBank's third-quarter operating profit of ¥274bn, which was down 2.8 per cent from a year earlier.

Mr Son's particular fascination has been service providers that may play a central role in the future of mobility and transportation.

SoftBank recently invested \$7.7bn to buy a 15 per cent stake in Uber, adding to its portfolio of ride-sharing companies including China's Didi Chuxing, Grab, which operates across Southeast Asia, and India-based Ola.

"In the future, cars may become a commodity and the hardware may just become one component so a platform would have much higher value."

"That is why we want to be the 'platformer' for the broader transportation system," Mr Son said.

Kana Inagaki

investors to improve its debt-ridden balance sheet.

But people close to the situation say Mr Son is not seeking to replicate Mr Buffett's strategy of using the insurance balance sheet to fund acquisitions. A minority shareholder would not necessarily be able to influence Swiss Re's investment strategy. In any case, reinsurers are naturally cautious investors.

"If you are Swiss Re, your credit rating directly impacts your business, so you can't get too aggressive with your asset allocation," said Kamran Hossain, analyst at RBC Capital Markets.

Further down the line, there could be strategic benefits for SoftBank. People close to the Japanese company say that Swiss Re's data would be a significant attraction. Reinsurance companies are notorious collectors and hoarders of

Media

Publicis chief eyes pick-up in advertising agency M&A

HARRIET AGNEW — PARIS

Mergers and acquisitions involving advertising agencies and consulting or IT services companies are likely to pick up this year as the industries converge, according to the chief executive of Publicis, the world's third-largest advertising group by revenues.

"The future of our business lies in the convergence of marketing and business transformation," said Arthur Sadoun. "The big trend will be IT services companies who try to qualify themselves on the marketing side, and marketing groups who try to qualify themselves on the tech side . . . There will be deals."

Mr Sadoun was speaking yesterday as the French agency announced its 2017 results, his first full-year numbers since taking over from Maurice Lévy as chief executive in June.

Publicis said organic revenues rose 2.2 per cent in the fourth quarter, to €2.6bn. This was its fastest quarter of revenue growth in 2017 and helped push revenues for the full year to €9.7bn, up 0.8 per cent on an organic basis. Fourth-quarter and full-year revenues were roughly in line with the consensus of analysts' expectations.

Growth accelerated each quarter during the year. North America was a standout performer with organic revenues up 4.4 per cent in the fourth quarter, reflecting good momentum from client wins in 2016 including Hewlett-Packard, USAA and McDonald's.

Publicis swung to a profit of €862m in 2017, after posting a loss of €527m during the previous year related to an impairment charge. It plans to pay a dividend of €2 for 2017, an increase of 8.1 per cent on 2016.

Investors welcomed the results, sending shares up nearly 4 per cent yesterday to €57.94.

The world's largest advertising agencies, including Publicis and rivals WPP and Omnicom, are grappling with several challenges: their clients are cutting advertising budgets, they face the threat

of disruption through disintermediation and new competitors are emerging. These include the likes of Facebook and Google in digital advertising and consulting and IT services companies that are competitors in the field of business transformation.

Analysts said last year that advertising agencies could be takeover targets and highlighted Accenture and Capgemini as potential buyers. Paul Hermelin, Capgemini chief executive, said in October that the group could be pushed towards a deal in the advertising sector if Accenture made a takeover in the industry.

Ant Financial, the financial affiliate of Alibaba, and Tencent's WeChat Pay dominate China's \$16tn third-party mobile payments market, and are increasingly moving overseas — enabling Chinese tourists to pay for everything from shopping to boat trips down the Seine with a swipe of their phones.

Financial services

Alibaba and Tencent fined for overseas payment breaches

LOUISE LUCAS — HONG KONG
EMILY FENG — BEIJING
GABRIEL WILDAU — SHANGHAI

China tech groups Alibaba and Tencent have been caught up in Beijing's war on capital flight, with both being handed fines for breaches of cross-border foreign exchange payments at their financial services units.

The clampdown on overseas payments by affiliates of the two internet heavyweights follows similar tightening of controls at China UnionPay, the state-owned bank-card network that increasingly competes with Visa and MasterCard overseas. Since 2016, UnionPay has sought to limit the use of its cards to pay for investments in foreign property and insurance.

In the long term, the government supports these payment groups to expand overseas, but at the operational level, they need to strengthen compliance and monitoring," said Wang Han-yang, fintech analyst at 86Research in Shanghai.

Ant Financial, the financial affiliate of Alibaba, and Tencent's WeChat Pay dominate China's \$16tn third-party mobile payments market, and are increasingly moving overseas — enabling Chinese tourists to pay for everything from shopping to boat trips down the Seine with a swipe of their phones.

But that expansion has also piqued the attention of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, which man-

ages foreign currency reserves and has been cracking down on capital flight and illicit transfers in the past two years. Safe has issued a steady stream of notices in recent months about its crackdown on illegal money changers, improper forex transactions by banks and fake trade invoices.

The breach by Alipay, run by Ant Financial, is understood to involve payments for Uber rides. While the transactions took place in China — before Didi Chuxing acquired Uber's operations in the country in 2016 — regulators fretted about money going overseas to the ride-hailing app's US headquarters.

According to China Forex, the official magazine of Safe, Alipay was fined Rmb600,000 (\$95,000) for "foreign exchange payment business scope problems [and] cross-border foreign exchange payment balance of payments statistical reporting problems".

Tencent's payments arm was fined the same amount for "failing to transmit unusual risk report materials to the related departments according to regulation" and "processing cross-border foreign exchange payments for non-residents without making a filing".

Ant Financial said the fine related to forex payments made in 2014 that were in breach of its payment services at the time. "Alipay corrected the irregularities as soon as they were identified," the company said. Tencent did not respond to a request for comment.

Additional reporting by Yizhen Jia

HARRIET AGNEW — PARIS

The chief executive of L'Oréal has said it would be a buyer if Nestlé wanted to sell its 23 per cent stake in the French cosmetics company.

When asked if L'Oréal was ready to repurchase the €22.6bn holding, Jean-Paul Agon said in an interview: "Yes, of course."

He added: "We have all the resources for that. We are cash rich. We have our Sanofi stake, we are absolutely financially very solid and we have what it takes to do anything."

Mr Agon was referring to L'Oréal's 9 per cent stake in pharmaceuticals company Sanofi, which it could sell to help buy out Nestlé. That holding is valued at about €7.6bn. In addition, L'Oréal had €1.87bn in cash on its balance sheet at the end of last year.

His comments, which came as L'Oréal

reported a 15.3 per cent rise in net profit during 2017 to €3.6bn, are the first by L'Oréal on the Nestlé stake since activist hedge fund Third Point bought a small position in the Swiss group last June.

Dan Loeb, Third Point's founder, has urged Nestlé to offload the stake, which it has held for more than four decades.

Nestlé's stake became the subject of further scrutiny following the death last year of Liliane Bettencourt, the matriarch of L'Oréal's founding family, which analysts said could be a catalyst for a shake-up of L'Oréal's share capital.

Nestlé declined to comment.

L'Oréal's profit growth was driven by strong performances from its luxury division — including the Lancôme, YSL and Giorgio Armani brands — and from Asia. Revenue growth accelerated to 5.5 per cent on a like-for-like basis in the fourth quarter, bringing full-year sales to €26bn, up 4.8 per cent year on year.

"Chinese consumers everywhere are a large part of the growth of the luxury market," Mr Agon said. "Chinese in China, Chinese in Hong Kong, Chinese in Japan, Chinese in travel retail, but also Chinese in Europe."

Growth was more muted in North America, up 1.7 per cent, and in western Europe, up 2.6 per cent. It was also slower in professional products, which includes brands like Kérastase and Redken, which was up 0.2 per cent in 2017. Consumer products grew 2.2 per cent. Additional reporting by Ralph Atkins in Zurich



Publicis chief Arthur Sadoun expects more ad agencies and IT services companies to join forces



Technology

Samsung tycoon to be charged with tax evasion

Critics say move against ailing chairman Lee aims to allay 'chaebol' unrest

BRYAN HARRIS AND SONG JUNG-A
SEOUL

The 76-year-old chairman of Samsung, South Korea's largest conglomerate, is to be charged with tax evasion in the latest twist to the fortunes of the global technology-to-shipbuilding group.

Lee Kun-hee, who is incapacitated in a hospital in Seoul, is suspected of evading \$7.5m in taxes and using bank accounts in other people's names that held more than \$350m, police said yesterday.

Police referred the case to prosecutors, who will indict the ailing tycoon for tax evasion. Mr Lee is also accused of embezzlement as police believe funds of Samsung C&T, the group's construction unit, were misappropriated for interior renovations of Mr Lee's residence in central Seoul.

But the Samsung patriarch will not face the embezzlement charge, as police cannot investigate him, as he reportedly remains unconscious after suffering a heart attack in 2014.

The move comes just days after his son and likely heir, Lee Jae-yong, was released from prison with a suspended sentence for bribing the country's previous president. His release was criticised by many in South Korea as another example of the judiciary showing leniency towards the country's most powerful businessmen.

Some critics said police unearthed the case and made it public to appease the public after the lenient verdict for the billionaire Samsung heir dashed hopes for reform at the country's big family.

Police said Mr Lee and one of his executives at Samsung dodged the taxes in 2007-10 by hiding his assets in 260 bank accounts under the names of 72 Samsung executives. They added that about Won3bn (\$2.8m) of company funds were misappropriated in 2008-14 as Samsung C&T paid for refurbishment costs for the group's controlling family.

Lee Jae-yong is expected to resume his activities officially by attending the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang today. Samsung Electronics said it could not comment on the latest charges against its chairman.

run conglomerates known as *chaebol*.

"Public sentiment on the Lee verdict is very bad so authorities had to show their determination for corporate reform somehow," said Park Ju-geun, head of research group CEO Score. "It is important for authorities to keep pressure on Samsung to improve its governance, ahead of local elections later this year."

In 2009, the elder Mr Lee was convicted for tax evasion, but pardoned by then president Lee Myung-bak. Following the decision, he played an instrumental role in lobbying for the Winter

'It is important for authorities to keep pressure on Samsung to improve its governance'

Olympics to take place in South Korea.

The case, coupled with Lee Jae-yong's release from jail, is expected to intensify calls for chaebol reform in South Korea as the public remains unsatisfied with a lack of progress made since President Moon Jae-in took power last May, calling for better corporate governance.

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Its shares jumped more than 16 per

cent in afternoon trading in New York, their highest level since 2007.

At a time when publishers are juggling the decline of printed media and difficulties competing with Google and Facebook for digital advertising budgets, the newspaper has shifted its commercial strategy from marketers to readers.

"We still regard advertising as an important revenue stream, but believe that our focus on establishing close and enduring relationships with paying, deeply engaged users . . . is the best way of building a successful and sustainable news business," said Mark Thompson, chief executive.

To hang on to subscribers it gained during the frantic news cycle of the 2016 election and the first year of the Trump presidency, the company has emphasised the quality of its reporting. This has included a television ad that highlighted its coverage of sexual harassment that ran during the Golden Globes awards broadcast last month.

'We believe there remains a large opportunity to continue to extend our subscription reach'

Mr Thompson said the company was encouraged by "strong retention" of the readers it gained at the end of 2016. "We believe there remains a large opportunity to continue to extend our subscription reach and will continue to invest in areas of the business that will allow us to

achieve that growth," he said.

The company had set a five-year goal of doubling digital sales to \$800m by 2020 and yesterday announced it was more than halfway there. "Pure-play" digital revenue, from online subscriptions and advertising as well as affiliate sales revenue from its product review site Wirecutter, reached \$607m at the end of 2017. Total revenue rose 8 per cent to \$1.68bn.

In the fourth quarter, revenue rose 10 per cent to \$484.1m, well above the \$467.3m analysts had forecast, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Digital advertising sales gained 8.5 per cent, accounting for 46 per cent of overall ad revenues. Print advertising slipped 8.4 per cent, however, and total ad sales were down 1.3 per cent.

COMPANIES



Times they are a changing: the news institution has shifted its commercial strategy to focus on paying readers rather than advertisers — Emmanuel Dunand/AFP

Media

New York Times reports 49% surge in online subscribers

SHANNON BOND — NEW YORK

New York Times shares rose to their highest level in more than a decade, as the US newspaper reported a surge in digital subscribers at the end of last year.

The company signed up 157,000 paying

online readers in the fourth quarter, a 49 per cent increase over the previous year, which included the US election and the so-called "Trump bump", a boom in readership among some of the US president's favourite media targets.

The New York Times now has more than 2.6m digital subscribers. Overall subscription revenue passed \$1bn for the first time in 2017, accounting for 60 per cent of the company's sales.

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SOUTHERN PACIFIC SECURITIES 04-2 PLC

Notice to the holders of all outstanding

\$100,000,000 Class A1a Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2025
(Common Code Reg S: 019660982; Common Code 144A: 019695204; ISIN — Reg S: XS0196609829; ISIN — 144A:
US\$4359VA08) Issue Price: 100 per cent.

U.S.\$100,000,000 Class A1b Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2025
(Common Code Reg S: 019661083; Common Code 144A: 019695208; ISIN — Reg S: XS0196610835; ISIN — 144A:
US\$4359VA80) Issue Price: 100 per cent.

\$180,900,000 Class A1c Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2025
(Common Code Reg S: 019661156; Common Code 144A: 019695344; ISIN — Reg S: XS0196611569; ISIN — 144A:
US\$4359VAH50) Issue Price: 100 per cent.

\$100,000,000 Class A2a Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
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US\$4359VA4D7) Issue Price: 100 per cent.

\$235,200,000 Class A2c Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
(Common Code Reg S: 019661296; ISIN — Reg S: XS0196612963) Issue Price: 100 per cent.

(with Class A2c Detachable Coupons) (Common Code: 019741273; ISIN: XS0197412736) Issue Price: 100 per cent.
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U.S.\$22,500,000 Class B1b Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
(Common Code Reg S: 019661342; Common Code 144A: 019695891; ISIN — Reg S: XS0196613425; ISIN — 144A:
US\$4359VAK89) Issue Price: 100 per cent.

£31,000,000 Class B1c Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
(Common Code Reg S: 019661482; Common Code 144A: 01969594; ISIN — Reg S: XS0196614829; ISIN — 144A:
US\$4359VAJ17) Issue Price: 100 per cent.

£5,000,000 Class C1a Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
(Common Code Reg S: 019661539; Common Code 144A: 019696197; ISIN — Reg S: XS0196615396; ISIN — 144A:
US\$4359VAN29) Issue Price: 100 per cent.

£19,400,000 Class C1c Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
(Common Code Reg S: 019661636; Common Code 144A: 019696278; ISIN — Reg S: XS0196616360; ISIN — 144A:
US\$4359VAM46) Issue Price: 100 per cent.

£5,000,000 Class D1a Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
(Common Code Reg S: 019666152; Common Code 144A: 019696332; ISIN — Reg S: XS0196661527; ISIN — 144A:
US\$4359VAN29) Issue Price: 100 per cent.

£19,400,000 Class D1c Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
(Common Code Reg S: 019661806; Common Code 144A: 019696333; ISIN — Reg S: XS0196618069; ISIN — 144A:
US\$4359VANQ59) Issue Price: 100 per cent.

£7,000,000 Class E3a Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
(Common Code Reg S: 019661849; ISIN — Reg S: XS0196618499) Issue Price: 100 per cent.

(together the "Notes")

issued by Southern Pacific Securities 04-2 plc (the "Issuer")

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to the Noteholders that the Mortgage Administrator has delivered a notice to the Issuer in accordance with the provisions of Clause 30 (*Option*) of the Mortgage Administration Agreement, confirming that it is exercising its option to purchase all (but not some only) of the Loans and the Collateral Security from the Issuer on the Interest Payment Date falling in March 2018.

Accordingly, the Issuer is hereby providing notice to the Noteholders in accordance with Condition 5(d) (*Early Redemption*) that it will, on the Interest Payment Date falling in March 2018, redeem the Notes in accordance with Condition 5(d) (*Early Redemption*).

Noteholders who have queries in relation to the above matters should contact the Issuer - email: spvservices@linkgroup.co.uk; attn.: The Directors for further information.

Defined terms used in this notice will have the meaning given to them in the prospectus of the Issuer dated 29 July 2004.

9 February 2018

for and on behalf of
Southern Pacific Securities 04-2 plc

SOUTHERN PACIFIC FINANCING 04-A PLC

Notice to the holders of all outstanding

£305,200,000 Class A Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
(Common Code: 019020312; ISIN: XS0190203124)
(with Detachable A Coupons) (Common Code: 019020410; ISIN: XS0190204106)
£21,000,000 Class B Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
(Common Code: 019020444; ISIN: XS0190204445)
£11,550,000 Class C Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
(Common Code: 019020517; ISIN: XS0190205178)
£8,750,000 Class D Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
(Common Code: 019020568; ISIN: XS0190205681)
£3,500,000 Class E Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2042
(Common Code: 019020614; ISIN: XS0190206143)
(together the "Notes")

issued by Southern Pacific Financing 04-A Plc
(the "Issuer")

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to the Noteholders that the Mortgage Administrator has delivered a notice to the Issuer in accordance with the provisions of Clause 30 (*Option*) of the Mortgage Administration Agreement, confirming that it is exercising its option to purchase all (but not some only) of the Loans and the Collateral Security from the Issuer on the Interest Payment Date falling in March 2018.

Accordingly, the Issuer is hereby providing notice to the Noteholders in accordance with Condition 5(d) (*Early Redemption*) that it will, on the Interest Payment Date falling in March 2018, redeem the Notes in accordance with Condition 5(d) (*Early Redemption*).

Noteholders who have queries in relation to the above matters should contact the Issuer - email: spvservices@linkgroup.co.uk; attn.: The Directors for further information.

Defined terms used in this notice will have the meaning given to them in the prospectus of the Issuer dated 26 April 2004.

9 February 2018

for and on behalf of
Southern Pacific Financing 04-A Plc

SOUTHERN PACIFIC SECURITIES 05-1 PLC

Notice to the holders of all outstanding

€153,000,000 Class A1a Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2025
(Common Code Reg S: 021269069; Common Code 144A: 021300527; ISIN — Reg S: XS0212690696;
ISIN — 144A: US\$4359WA80)
£160,850,000 Class A1c Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2025
(Common Code Reg S: 021269085; Common Code 144A: 021300535; ISIN — Reg S: XS0212690852;
ISIN — 144A: US\$4359WAB63)
€153,000,000 Class A2a Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2043
(Common Code Reg S: 021269115; Common Code 144A: 021300543; ISIN — Reg S: XS0212691157;
ISIN — 144A: US\$4359WAC47)
£20,850,000 Class A2c Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2043
(Common Code Reg S: 021269131; ISIN — Reg S: XS0212691314)
(with Class A2c Detachable Coupons) (Common Code: 021269140; ISIN: XS0212691405)
£11,500,000 Class B1c Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2043
(Common Code Reg S: 021269166; Common Code 144A: 021300560; ISIN — Reg S: XS0212691660;
ISIN — 144A: US\$4359WAE03)
£26,250,000 Class C1c Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2043
(Common Code Reg S: 021269174; Common Code 144A: 021300578; ISIN — Reg S: XS0212691744;
ISIN — 144A: US\$4359WAF77)
£22,750,000 Class D1c Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2043
(Common Code Reg S: 021269212; Common Code 144A: 021300586; ISIN — Reg S: XS0212692122;
ISIN — 144A: US\$4359WAG50)
£3,500,000 Class E Mortgage Backed Floating Rate Notes due 2043
(Common Code Reg S: 021269247; Common Code 144A: 021300597; ISIN — Reg S: XS0212692478)
(together the "Notes")

issued by Southern Pacific Securities 05-1 Plc
(the "Issuer")

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to the Noteholders that the Mortgage Administrator has delivered a notice to the Issuer in accordance with the provisions of Clause 30 (*Option*) of the Mortgage Administration Agreement, confirming that it is exercising its option to purchase all (but not some only) of the Loans and the Collateral Security from the Issuer on the Interest Payment Date falling in March 2018.

Accordingly, the Issuer is hereby providing notice to the Noteholders in accordance with Condition

COMPANIES

Lawyers frozen out of Chinese deals where price triumphs over advice

M&A boom provides slim pickings for global firms as Beijing gives preference to local competition

BARNEY THOMPSON — LONDON

EMILY FENG — BEIJING

For the world's top law firms, winning advisory work on cross-border mergers and acquisitions usually comes down to a combination of reputation, track record and client relationships.

But when it comes to the tens of billions of dollars worth of Chinese outbound M&A advisory work at stake for global firms and their Chinese partners, one factor counts above all: cost.

With a boardroom emphasis on price over advice, lawyers working for top firms tell tales of game show-style bidding sessions where they need to pitch for work before a prospective client — what one lawyer familiar with such contests calls "a bizarre kind of open outcry".

This means that while lawyers should be making healthy profits from China outbound advisory work, the reality is often very different.

Several top mergers and acquisitions lawyers have told the Financial Times that Chinese businesses, particularly state-owned enterprises, are unwilling to pay the kinds of fees for which western companies routinely budget. In a

'Lots of people chasing a relatively small number of clients ... has resulted in fierce competition'



Chinese businesses are unwilling to pay the kinds of fees for which western companies routinely budget, say M&A lawyers — Olai Shen/Bloomberg

country where the legal system is relatively new, state-to-state negotiations and personal relationships are regarded as far more valuable than legal advice.

"Some Chinese parties will still say 'we've worked at the deal, now we just want the attorneys to draw up the documents,'" says a US lawyer whose firm has worked on some of the biggest China outbound deals of recent years. "Attorneys can just look like a cost centre," he says, without a belief in the "financial and strategic value" that lawyers can add.

The problem is particularly acute for firms seeking work from China's state-owned enterprises. Another M&A lawyer says the "vast majority" of the work done by his US firm was with private companies, where there had been a more "significant change in the sophistication of many clients in China over the past 10-15 years".

With SOE clients, he adds, "it's much more of a crapshoot" as to whether a company will recognise the need for legal services and pay accordingly — or, some lawyers warn, pay at all.

"Lots of people chasing a relatively small number of clients and mandates has resulted in fierce competition, driving prices low," says a Hong Kong-based M&A lawyer. "Added to that, the idea in China of needing a lawyer for transactions [as opposed to disputes] is new."

Consequently, fees are "on the low end of what you would expect from a European or US deal".

Some firms have decided to withdraw.

office in 1993. "You need to understand the market and what sort of business you want to do. A number of global firms are in the queue but we're not seeing a flood."

Even so, without partnering with a Chinese firm, legal work would be all but impossible. Non-Chinese lawyers are not allowed to practise Chinese mainland law, although they can provide informal advice. Recruiting Chinese lawyers into global firms does not solve the problem as they have to give up their local licences.

Preferential access to SOE-related legal work, furthermore, often goes to a Chinese firm in good standing with the

government, according to a lawyer who now works in the diplomatic arena.

Following Beijing's recent clampdown on outbound deals by some of the most active private Chinese companies, such as HNA and Dalian Wanda, these connections have become even more vital.

To get to the front of the queue, foreign firms have adopted various forms of partnership with Chinese counterparts. One is the full-on merger: in 2012, King & Wood Mallesons was created by an Australian-Chinese alliance, while in 2015 Dentons joined with the Chinese entity Dacheng to create a legal giant that now has about 7,800 lawyers.

A few others have taken advantage of

the Shanghai Free Trade Zone, opened in 2013, to launch "joint operations" with Chinese firms. In 2015, Baker McKenzie was the first to announce such an arrangement with FenXun Partners, while Linklaters is establishing a joint venture with a new firm formed by its former employees, Zhao Sheng.

Formal tie-ups are still rare. Most common are co-operation agreements, where firms agree to refer work to each other as needed.

But ambitious domestic lawyers are looking to do more than play second fiddle to an outside firm. Over the past five years both the UK "magic circle" firms and their US counterparts have had partners poached by Chinese rivals — most recently last month when Fangda Partners, one of China's largest firms, hired the former head of the UK firm Linklaters' Chinese practice.

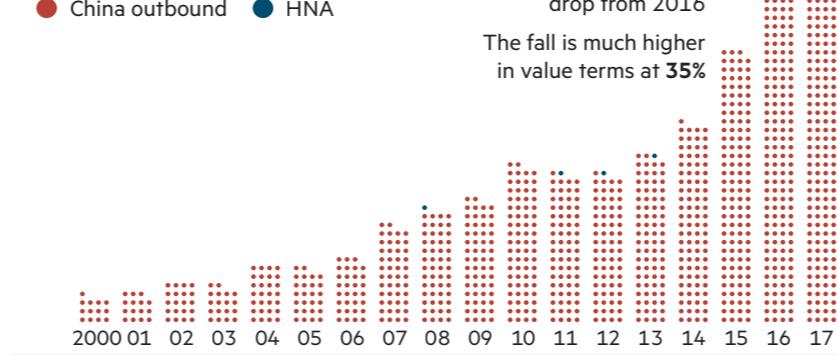
Chinese firms' ambitions are being boosted because Beijing has become wary of letting international firms too close to domestic businesses.

"About two years ago, the state started to strongly encourage companies ... to use domestic law firms only," said a former lawyer at a Chinese firm who now works in diplomacy.

"Even SOEs who are permitted to 'go out' [and invest abroad] are still encouraged more and more to use domestic firms. They are not objectively the best but it's what the state wants them to do."

China outbound M&A falls

Deal volume, circle = 5 deals
● China outbound ● HNA



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Sr. Engineer (PPX-T)

Legal Notices

In the matter of A.B. Aeterna Capital Ltd
and
In the matter of the Cyprus Companies Law Cap 13

Notice is hereby given that the creditors of the above-named company which is being voluntarily wound up are required on or before the 9th day of March 2018 to send in their full names, their addresses and descriptions, full particulars of their debts or credits and the names and addresses of the debtors (if any) and the amount due from them. The Company Secretary of the Company is located at 2nd Floor, 37A, Denis Street, CY-1986 Nicosia, P.O.Box 21612, CY-1981 Nicosia, Cyprus, the joint liquidator of the said company, and is so required by notice in writing from the said joint liquidator, to come in and prove their said debts or claims at such time and place as shall be specified in such notice, or in default thereof they will be excluded from the benefit of any distribution made before such debts are proved.

Dated this 9th day of February 2018

Constantinos Constantiou
ProteivathousCoopers Limited
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INTESA SANPAOLO

EXTRACT OF THE NOTICE OF CALL OF THE EXTRAORDINARY SHAREHOLDERS' MEETING

(pursuant to Article 125-bis, paragraph 1, of Legislative Decree 58/1998)

The Extraordinary Shareholders' Meeting of Intesa Sanpaolo S.p.A. is convened, on single call, at the New Headquarters in Torino, Corso Inghilterra no. 3, at 10:00 on 27 April 2018, to discuss and pass resolution on the following

Agenda:

Mandatory conversion of savings shares into ordinary shares and concurrent removal of the indication of nominal value for the shares of Intesa Sanpaolo from the Articles of Association. Amendment of Articles 5 and 29 and removal of Article 30 of the Articles of Association. Pertinent and consequent resolutions.

Information on the share capital and on:

- participating and casting votes in the Meeting (in this regard, please note that the record date is 18 April 2018),
- participating and casting votes in the Meeting by proxy and through the Appointed Representative (Computershare S.p.A.),
- exercising the right to add items to the agenda, the right to submit new proposals for resolution and the right to ask questions on the items on the agenda,
- the availability of the report on the items on the agenda and the documentation relating to the Meeting,

is set forth in the full notice of call available on the website group.intesasanpaolo.com ("Governance"/"Shareholders' Meeting" section).

This extract is published in the daily newspapers "Il Sole 24 Ore", "La Stampa", "Corriere della Sera", "Financial Times" and "The Wall Street Journal".

for the Board of Directors
The Chairman - Gian Maria Gros-Pietro

INTESA SANPAOLO

EXTRACT OF THE NOTICE OF CALL OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF SAVINGS SHAREHOLDERS

(pursuant to Article 125-bis, paragraph 1, of Legislative Decree 58/1998)

The Special Meeting of Savings Shareholders of Intesa Sanpaolo S.p.A. is convened, on single call, at the New Headquarters in Torino, Corso Inghilterra no. 3, at 16:00 on 27 April 2018, and in any case at the end of the Meeting of Ordinary Shareholders convened on the same date at 10:00, to discuss and pass resolution on the following

Agenda:

Approval, pursuant to Article 146, paragraph 1, letter b) of Legislative Decree no. 58 of 24 February 1998, of the resolutions of the Extraordinary Shareholders' Meeting concerning the mandatory conversion of the Company's savings shares into ordinary shares of the same Company, as well as the removal of the indication of the nominal value of the shares from the Articles of Association and the relative amendments to the Articles of Association. Pertinent and consequent resolutions.

Information on the share capital and on:

- participating and casting votes in the Meeting (in this regard, please note that the record date is 18 April 2018),
- participating and casting votes in the Meeting by proxy and through the Appointed Representative (Computershare S.p.A.),
- exercising the right to add items to the agenda, the right to submit new proposals for resolution and the right to ask questions on the items on the agenda,
- exercising the right of withdrawal of the savings shareholders who do not take part in the approval of the resolution,

is set forth in the full notice of call available on the website group.intesasanpaolo.com ("Governance"/"Shareholders' Meeting" section).

This extract is published in the daily newspapers "Il Sole 24 Ore", "La Stampa", "Corriere della Sera", "Financial Times" and "The Wall Street Journal".

for the Board of Directors
The Chairman - Gian Maria Gros-Pietro

Mining

Sibanye chief confident of support for Lonmin bid

NEIL HUME — CAPE TOWN

The chief executive of Sibanye-Stillwater is confident shareholders and regulators will back his \$285m offer for Lonmin, the platinum producer on the brink of collapse.

Neal Froneman said initial engagements with the Public Investment Corporation, Lonmin's biggest shareholder, had been very constructive. "If I am able to judge by the body language . . . they are supportive," Mr Froneman said.

PIC, South Africa's powerful state-owned pension fund manager, has yet to make a statement on the deal, which will see Sibanye become the second biggest platinum producer in the world. But with a 30 per cent stake, it has the ability to scupper the transaction.

"The fact they haven't said anything is actually a positive sign," Mr Froneman added. "If they were unhappy I'm sure they would have said so."

He said he also expected South Africa's Competition Commission to back the takeover because in the long-run it would safeguard thousands of jobs in a country where unemployment is running at almost 30 per cent.

'Would we have preferred to wait a year? Yes but the company [Lonmin] was about to implode'

"Again, I think if there was any unhappiness we would have heard about it," said Mr Froneman, who has turned Sibanye into a leading player in precious metals through a series of takeovers.

When the dealmaker launched his offer for Lonmin in December, he said Sibanye would stick with the miner's plans to close older shafts and to cut more than 12,600 jobs, of a total workforce of 32,500, over the next three years even if that was unpopular.

With his latest deal, Mr Froneman is betting he can restructure Lonmin and use its smelters and refineries to process the ore Sibanye digs out of the ground. This he says will help the company gain better prices for its metals and move closer to its customers.

The timing of the deal surprised many analysts and investors because Sibanye is still digesting the acquisition of Stillwater in 2016, which left the South African-listed company with a large debt pile it is still trying to reduce. "Would we have preferred to wait a year? Yes but the company [Lonmin] was about to implode," said Mr Froneman.

As vice-president of the Chamber of Mines, which represents the mining industry in South Africa, Mr Froneman has been a fierce critic of new mining laws the government wants to introduce. Under a revised mining charter — suspended pending a judicial review — miners will be forced to give more ownership to black shareholders in an effort to redress sharp economic inequality.

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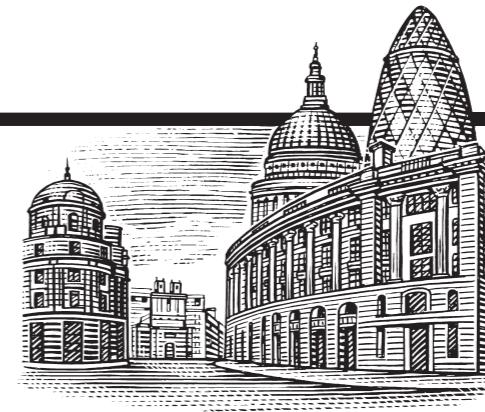
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Intesa Sanpaolo S.p.A. Registered office: Piazza San Carlo, 156 10121 Torino Secondary registered office: Via Monte di Pietà, 8 20121 Milano Share capital 8,731,584,115,92 euro Registration number on the Torino Company Register and Fiscal Code 0079960158 VAT number 10810700152 Included in the National Register of Banks No. 5361 ABI Code 3069,2 Member of the National Interbank Deposit Guarantee Fund and of the National Guarantee Fund. Parent Company of the "Intesa Sanpaolo" banking group, included in the national register of Banking Groups.

Intesa Sanpaolo S.p.A. Registered office: Piazza San Carlo, 156 10121 Torino Secondary registered office: Via Monte di Pietà, 8 20121 Milano Share capital 8,731,584,115,92 euro Registration number on the Torino Company Register and Fiscal Code 0079960158 VAT number 10810700152 Included in the National Register of Banks No. 5361 ABI Code 3069,2 Member of the National Interbank Deposit Guarantee Fund and of the National Guarantee Fund. Parent Company of the "Intesa Sanpaolo" banking group, included in the national register of Banking Groups.

Lombard

UK COMPANIES



TalkTalk's £1.5bn broadband plan seeks to change the mood music



"What did I tell you before when I was up? Anxiety was bringing me down.

I'm tired of listening to you, talking in rhymes, Twisting round to make me think you're straight down the line.

All you do to me is TalkTalk . . .

Is TalkTalk executive chairman Charles Dunstone a fan of '80s pop songs? Hard to imagine, but he does seem to have named his telecoms business after one. And its lyrics would certainly explain the motivation for Thursday's profit warning, dividend cut, fundraising and fibre broadband investment: he has finally grown tired of listening to analysts talk down his company's weak finances and strategy. Now, with TalkTalk shares hitting a record low on the news, investors must decide whether the only way is up — or money's too tight to mention.

Airlines

Vote secures easyJet's right to fly after Brexit

Carrier will be able to force sales of shares to meet EU ownership rules

TANYA POWLEY
TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

EasyJet has pushed ahead with plans to protect its flying rights after Brexit following a shareholder vote in favour of legal changes to help ensure the low-cost airline meets EU ownership rules.

The move makes it the latest carrier to make changes in preparation for Britain's departure from the EU as fears grow that a turbulent exit could cause disruption across the aviation market.

'Brexit is one of the biggest issues facing the European airline industry'

John Barton, easyJet chairman

Airlines are grappling with a range of regulatory puzzles in the wake of Britain's decision to leave the EU.

These include agreeing a new legal basis for British airlines to operate flights between EU countries and ownership rules requiring carriers operating in the region to be majority controlled by entities within the bloc.

Yesterday, shareholders at easyJet's annual meeting approved changes to its articles of association that will ensure it is EU-owned and controlled after Brexit.

The move means it has the power to force UK shareholders to divest their shares if the airline needs them to.

John Barton, chairman, said: "Brexit

Profit guidance has been cut to £230m-£245m, from £270m-£300m, to reflect the cost of acquiring 70,000-80,000 more customers than planned, to reverse declining revenues. Last week, analysts at Exane BNP Paribas warned that TalkTalk might struggle to compete for broadband customers at the "value" end of the market. So yesterday's other news, of a 1 per cent rise in third-quarter revenue, against a 4 per cent fall a year ago, at least suggests customers can be won over. However, a roughly £40m hit to profit, to add the 70,000 or so, implies a less than "value" acquisition cost of about £500. Churn will need to be kept low so they don't say hello, wave goodbye.

A dividend cut to 2.5p, from 7.5p and 2017's 10.3p, seems a long-overdue admission that TalkTalk's payouts were just an illusion. Dividends have not been covered by free cash flow for some years and, as one analyst noted, were, in effect, funded from debt between 2014 and 2016. Even last year, £150m was paid out despite free cash flow being £110m. Yesterday's cut, begs the question: why might 31 per cent shareholder Sir Charles have let this go

on so long? And why has he not cut the payout to zero now?

A share placement to raise £200m, ostensibly to be split between debt reduction and fibre investment, has been supported by investors, with directors contributing £40m. Still, that means Sir Charles put in less than 20 per cent, ie less than his stake, despite the funds being needed to make up for his debt-funded brass in pocket.

Investing £100m into a 20/80 company with M&G Prudential, to lay fibre connections to 3m premises, does at least address the problem with TalkTalk's strategy, though: reliance on wholesale providers such as BT Openreach. If it can convert enough of its customers to its own higher speed, higher price product, its 3 times leveraged investment should quickly pay for itself.

But paying for it in the first place is what some now question. If TalkTalk's warning on earnings and debt means its FY18 cash flow is £100m worse than expected, that may not leave so much for fibre investment — making some of the fundraising look a bit like money for nothing.

Logic? Or Sophos-try?

As a specialist in detecting computer viruses and other types of malware, Sophos is used to looking for nasty bits of code in data that appear quite harmless. But, the trouble is, all the analysts that now cover its shares think it's their job to do the same.

This is one explanation for why a quarterly trading update largely in line with expectations — and expressing confidence in the full-year outlook — caused the Sophos share price to crash like a PC running Windows XP riddled with WannaCry ransomware. Although Sophos made no changes to its full-year guidance, many saw a malicious coded message in the 14 per cent rise in third-quarter revenues it reported — because they had previously been 20 per cent.

Numis's diagnostics program detected a logic error in these slowing sales and generated a query to the Sophos database about "why billings have slowed so much in the third quarter, when there is a benefit of circa 400 to 500 basis points from a bigger renewals book". But an answer including the string "tough

comparatives" resulted in Sophos being auto-deleted from the Numis buy list.

A web forum for those of a geekier persuasion, known as "ft://alphaville", also hosted posts doubting that strong sales last year — after the WannaCry outbreak — could explain such a slowdown. A mysterious user known only as "BE" wrote: "That's not entirely convincing . . . because Sophos is a repeat business. Once you get into the blood of your customer's IT system, you're there for good."

A full system check later suggested the source of the problem may have been user-generated content. Sophos raised its own full-year growth forecasts to between 20 per cent and 22 per cent in November, making 14 per cent look suspicious. Its timing of investment in product releases also meant unlevered free cash flow came in 20 per cent below estimates. And it gave no update on renewal rates, which it calculates in such a complex way that they last came out as 139 per cent.

Little wonder, then, that so many analysts found their computers said no.

matthew.vincent@ft.com

City Insider



Edited by
Patrick Jenkins
[patrick.jenkins@ft.com](mailto:patrik.jenkins@ft.com)

Brunswick US pivot

PR outfit Brunswick is 30. To celebrate, it hosted top bankers and lawyers this week at the super-fancy Ned restaurant in the City.

Morgan Stanley's Colm Kelleher and star boutique adviser Simon Warshaw were among the bigwigs. Waving a copy of the FT from 30 years ago, founder/chairman Sir Alan Parker gave a rousing speech about not looking backwards. It was all about the future of the City post-Brexit (without explicit mention of the B-word).



Brunswick itself is clearly looking further afield. It has set up a new geopolitical arm, led by former World Bank chief Bob Zoellick. And yesterday it revealed a new chief: former Obama adviser Neal Wolin, pictured, replaces Susan Gilchrist.

Wolin, who was number two to former Treasury secretary Tim Geithner, will be based in Washington, suggesting a US pivot for Brunswick. In Trump's US there is always room for another force in the news vs fake news war.

Tim Steiner Little red number

Tim Steiner insisted this week that Ocado, the online grocer he runs, was in "good shape financially". Really? The shares fell 7 per cent after it announced a capital raising to fund a cash-hungry expansion plan, even as it fell to a £0.5m loss for 2017. Not the time to shed customers.

And yet, Steiner has chosen to ignore a Twitter protest about his attendance at last month's Presidents Club dinner, exposed by the FT over incidents of sexual harassment. Angry customers cancelled accounts after Steiner ignored requests he apologise for attending the event, serviced by 130 female hostesses, some in short black dresses, others in red.

As he announced his own little red number, Steiner said the bad behaviour which he "did not see" was "unacceptable". He did not apologise and said he was there "in a personal capacity". But customers quitting over the issue is corporate, not personal — and a pricey error for a lossmaking company.

Totally Gaming Big gamble

Talking of dinosaurs, this week's ICE Totally Gaming event at Excel London, with speakers from big names including Google Cloud, kicked off with a caution from the gambling regulator that the sector needs to stamp out sexism.

Sarah Harrison warned exhibitors against staffing stands with women who "wear nothing more than swimsuits". Some heeded the call.

As the Guardian revealed on Wednesday, though, others took no notice. Some gambling execs at the event were visibly exasperated.

As one senior woman — Laila Mintas of Sportradar — was giving a talk, there were pole dancers in fishnet tights, high heels and black leotards performing in the next room. City Insider's spies spotted middle-aged men kissing mini-skirted hostesses as they purported to discuss the products the women were promoting.

One industry veteran said: "I thought with the current mood, people would respond. Some of it was worse than ever."

Helena Morrissey Winning ways

To the swanky new Bloomberg HQ for the launch of *A Good Time to be a Girl*, the new book on pragmatic feminism by City fund manager and 30% Club founder Helena Morrissey. Fellow founders of the pro-women club, Sir Roger Carr and Sir Win Bischoff, were name-checked in both speech and book. Carr bought four copies for friends. Sir Win joked that he was buying the same number as the mentions he got in the book (five at City Insider's count). Sir Win wins.



Cost cutting Debenhams to shed 25% of store managers

Struggling department store group Debenhams will cut a quarter of its in-store managers in the latest example of a retailer battling challenging conditions on the high street by shaking up staff and axing jobs.

Debenhams, which warned on profits after Christmas and has pledged to cut tens of millions of pounds in costs in a reorganisation led by chief executive Sergio Bucher, is scrapping 320 shop manager roles.

"We are reviewing our retail structure," Debenhams said yesterday. "The review looks to identify how we can reduce cost and complexity in store processes so that we can focus our

resources on serving customers better."

The affected staff will be redeployed if possible, the company said.

Debenhams has been tackling weak consumer spending and a shift towards online shopping, and in response Mr Bucher launched a turnaround focused on revamping stores and expanding digital revenues. But the strategy has shown little success so far. UK sales fell 2.6 per cent in the 17 weeks to December 30 on a same-store basis, as Christmas ranges failed to lure shoppers. *Naomi Rovnick*

Leon Neal/Getty Images

Mining

Petropavlovsk picks new chief

HENRY SANDERSON

The Russian gold miner Petropavlovsk has appointed Roman Deniskin, a former consultant and deputy chairman of Eurasian Resources Group, as its new chief executive.

The appointment caps an almost six months search by the board of the London-listed company following the loss of Petropavlovsk's two co-founders including its former chief executive in July after a shareholder revolt.

The move is a setback to the company's newest shareholder, the Kazakh entrepreneur Kenges Rakishev, who flew to London last month to try to convince the board to bring back the company's former CEO Pavel Maslovskiy.

Mr Rakishev, 38, bought 22 per cent of Petropavlovsk in December from Rus-

sia's Renova Group. He has said he wants Petropavlovsk to expand into a larger gold mining company through acquisitions.

"The appointment of Roman Deniskin . . . is the board's decision and the culmination of a recruitment process, which had begun before I invested in the company," he said. "In my capacity as a shareholder I am not in a position, legally, to interfere in the process."

Petropavlovsk also appointed Beketas Mukazhanov, a Kazakhstan national, as a non-executive director. He will represent Mr Rakishev on the board.

Mr Deniskin started his career with the global consulting firm McKinsey before becoming chief executive of Severstal Resource Company, which supplies the iron ore and coking coal to its parent's steel business.

Technology

Sophos slides after slowdown in orders

NIC FILDES TELECOMS CORRESPONDENT

UK cyber security company Sophos lost almost a fifth of its value after a slowdown in orders raised fears that it would miss its full-year forecasts.

The Oxfordshire-based business has been popular with investors, more than doubling in value over the past year as demand for cyber security products has continued to grow, against a backdrop of increasing threats.

Performance in the quarter ending December continued to be strong, with revenue rising 18 per cent to \$166m.

Kris Hagerman, chief executive, said: "As our business continues to post strong growth, the board is confident both in the outlook for the full year and the longer-term prospects of the group."

Yet the stock slumped 19 per cent to 506p as some investors grew concerned about slowing growth in new orders, which rose 14 per cent in the third quarter, compared to more than 20 per cent in previous quarters.

That reflected the strong performance of its Intercept X product launched a year ago which, according to the company, was a "home run" in terms of sales. Intercept X sits on a user's desktop and uses artificial intelligence to spot malicious programmes. The WannaCry attack increased sales of the software earlier in the year and the third quarter was the first time the figures went head-to-head with a quarter boosted by Intercept X sales.

Michael Briest, an analyst at UBS, said that the slowdown in end-user software orders was in line with his expectations. See Lombard

FTFINANCIAL
TIMES

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MARKET DATA

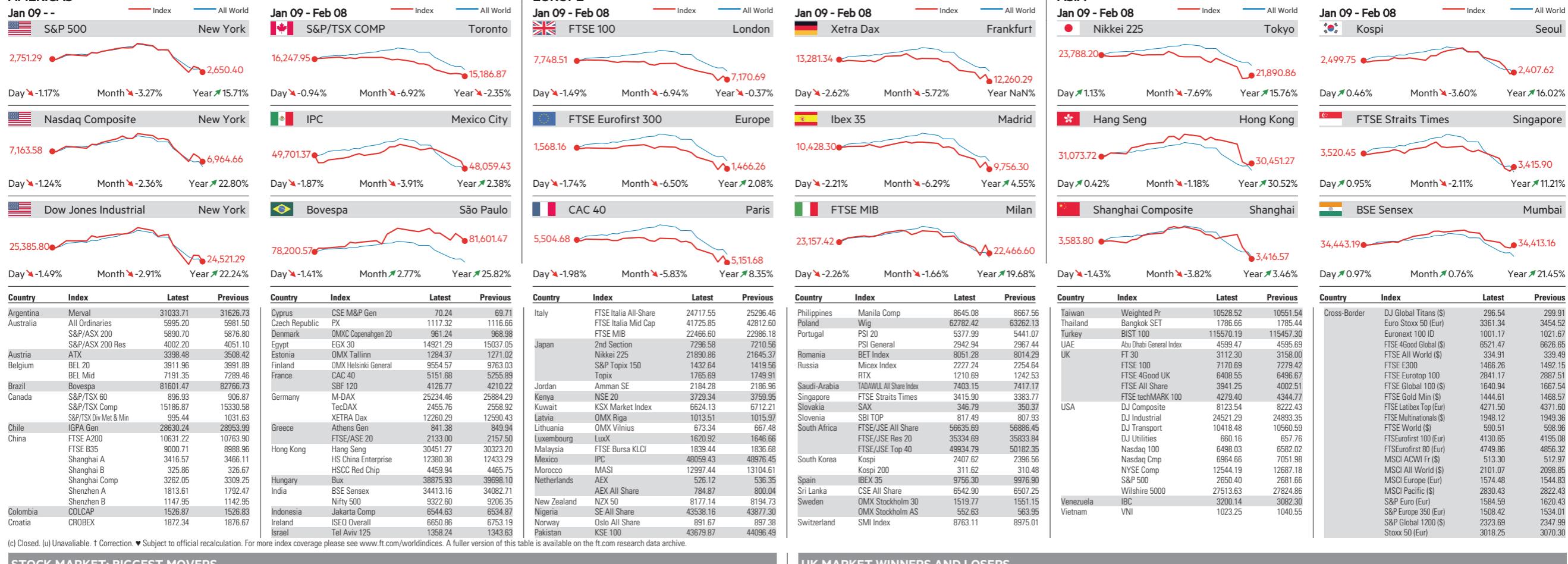
WORLD MARKETS AT A GLANCE

FT.COM/MARKETSDATA

Change during previous day's trading (%)



Stock Market movements over last 30 days, with the FTSE All-World in the same currency as a comparison



(c) Closed. (u) Unavailable. ↑ Correction. ♦ Subject to official recalculation. For more index coverage please see www.ft.com/worldindices. A fuller version of this table is available on the ft.com research data archive.

STOCK MARKET: BIGGEST MOVERS

AMERICA																																					
ACTIVE STOCKS	stock traded'm	close price	Day's price change	LONDON	ACTIVE STOCKS	stock traded'm	close price	Day's price change	EURO MARKETS	ACTIVE STOCKS	stock traded'm	close price	Day's price change	TOKYO	ACTIVE STOCKS	stock traded'm	close price	Day's price change	FEB 08	%Chg week	%Chg month	%Chg year	FTSE 100	Feb 08 price(p)	%Chg week	%Chg month	%Chg year	FTSE SmallCap	Feb 08 price(p)	%Chg week	%Chg month	%Chg year	Cross-Border	Feb 08 price(p)	%Chg week	%Chg month	%Chg year
Amazon.com	47.9	139,517	-21.61	Royal Dutch Shell	856.5	22,793.50	-52.00	Unicredit	823.0	17.84	0.37	Softbank	931.1	877,000	-260.00	Investec	614.00	9.5	14.4	6.2	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	6061.54	296.54	-0.23%	-0.23%	-0.23%	Global Titans (\$)	296.54	-0.23%	-0.23%	-0.23%		
Apple	31.8	160,417	-0.57	British American Tobacco	290.0	450,550	-147.50	Santander	699.7	5.58	-0.15	Sony	703.1	532,000	-97.00	Admiral	197.95	1.3	2.8	5.8	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	3361.34	3454.52	-0.23%	-0.23%	-0.23%	Non-life Insurance	3068.94	-0.23%	-0.23%	-0.23%		
Facebook	31.3	177,223	-2.95	Glaxosmithkline	267.9	1,303,800	-44.00	Total	581.4	45.07	0.32	Toyota Motor	625.9	755,000	-17.00	PSI	537.79	0.04	1.1	3.6	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1100.17	1021.67	-0.23%	-0.23%	-0.23%	Euronext 100 ID	1100.17	-0.23%	-0.23%	-0.23%		
Nvidia	22.5	173.73	-3.07	Rio Tinto	258.9	375,000	-123.50	Intesa Sanpaolo	476.3	3.15	-0.06	Mitsubishi Ufj Fin.	593.3	800,600	-8.60	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE Good Global (\$)	651,27	-0.23%	-0.23%	-0.23%	FTSE 100	651,27	-0.23%	-0.23%	-0.23%		
Microsoft	13.5	88.37	-1.24	Glencore	247.1	365,600	-12,500	Santander	105.90	-2.80	-0.20	Fanuc	531.8	281,000	-10.00	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	334.91	-0.23%	-0.23%	-0.23%	FTSE All World (\$)	334.91	-0.23%	-0.23%	-0.23%		
Alphabet	13.4	108.38	-16.24	Bechtel	236.7	1,203,600	-53.00	Intesa Sanpaolo	420.7	-0.48	-0.05	Fast Retailing	502.0	450,000	-10.00	Xetra Dax	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%		
Austria	12.6	103.11	-17.51	Hollings	181.7	147,500	-23.00	Nikkei	420.7	-0.24	-0.05	Meiji Seika Na O.n.	420.7	1,100,000	-10.00	CAC 40	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%		
Belgium	12.0	111.95	-11.55	BHP Billiton	181.7	147,500	-23.00	Neftex N	410.0	-0.24	-0.05	mitsui Mitsui Fin.	390.0	1,100,000	-10.00	FTSE Eurofirst 300	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%		
Bel.Mid	12.0	111.95	-11.55	BHP Billiton	181.7	147,500	-23.00	Neftex N	410.0	-0.24	-0.05	mitsui Mitsui Fin.	390.0	1,100,000	-10.00	FTSE Eurofirst 300	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%		
Brazil	10.69	108,040	-8,000	Unilever	801,040	1,100,000	-10.00	Softbank	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	mitsui Mitsui Fin.	390.0	1,100,000	-10.00	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%		
Canada	5.83	52,730	-88.33	Avon	201,089	210,889	-10.00	Unilever	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	mitsui Mitsui Fin.	390.0	1,100,000	-10.00	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%		
Canada\$	5.83	52,730	-88.33	Avon	201,089	210,889	-10.00	Unilever	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	mitsui Mitsui Fin.	390.0	1,100,000	-10.00	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%		
FTSE 100	10.69	108,040	-8,000	Unilever	801,040	1,100,000	-10.00	Softbank	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	mitsui Mitsui Fin.	390.0	1,100,000	-10.00	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%		
FTSE 100	10.69	108,040	-8,000	Unilever	801,040	1,100,000	-10.00	Softbank	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	mitsui Mitsui Fin.	390.0	1,100,000	-10.00	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%		
FTSE 100	10.69	108,040	-8,000	Unilever	801,040	1,100,000	-10.00	Softbank	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	mitsui Mitsui Fin.	390.0	1,100,000	-10.00	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%		
FTSE 100	10.69	108,040	-8,000	Unilever	801,040	1,100,000	-10.00	Softbank	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	mitsui Mitsui Fin.	390.0	1,100,000	-10.00	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	1,152.50	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%	FTSE 100	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	-0.05%		
FTSE 100	10.69	108,040	-8,000	Unilever	801,040	1,100,000	-10.00	Softbank	1,152.50	-0.05%	-0.05%	mitsui Mitsui Fin.	390.0	1,100,000</td																							

FINANCIAL TIMES SHARE SERVICE

Main Market

	52 Week										Vol										000s			
	Price	+/-Chg	High	Low	Yld	P/E	000s	Price	+/-Chg	High	Low	Yld	P/E	000s	Price	+/-Chg	High	Low	Yld	P/E	000s			
IndiaCap	105.00	-2.75	120.00	80.25	-	3.96	389.0	Herg Lens	1716.5	-46.00	1935	1251.36	1.69	36.37	1945.4	TedBaker	3054	+54.00	3120	2286	1.76	27.51	114.1	
Aerospace & Defence								ICG	194.30	-7.00	220.00	173.20	1.80	3.11	751.7	Bodycote	908.50	-27.00	1043	673.00	1.74	22.38	796.8	
Avon Rubber	1230	-	1320	885.00	0.85	17.52	41.1	Investec	614.00	-1.20	630.50	451.20	3.25	12.71	4098.8	Castings	442.50	-0.50	490.00	421.20	3.16	15.92	12.1	
Cherring	187.00	-2.60	208.00	162.00	0.70	28.77	3423.4	Jupiter	540.00	-24.00	638.80	402.60	2.72	17.42	2284.9	Goodwin	183.5	-45.00	2129	1511	1.67	14.47	0.1	
Meggitt	454.00	-4.80	530.00	407.40	3.32	12.12	3284.0	NB Grifff	93.20	-0.70	100.65	92.70	4.12	25.38	1705.6	Renold	47.95	-1.30	65.00	41.00	10.66	5.5	55	
RollsRoyce	825.50	-3.40	994.50	664.00	0.56	22.12	4456.9	Man	189.80	-11.20	219.20	131.70	3.72	16.55	10886.7	Rotor	284.70	-8.00	308.20	221.30	1.79	23.72	3042.5	
Senior	202.00	-3.00	303.20	173.00	1.55	28.16	1605.8	NEX Group	635.00	-8.00	691.50	537.91	6.07	34.51	4079.3	Severfield	77.40	-1.00	88.00	58.23	2.97	12.56	163.8	
UltraElec	1340	-24.00	2245	1138	3.54	16.45	245.8	Paragon	471.40	-8.60	520.00	400.00	2.97	11.25	843.5	Hochschild	208.30	-6.50	337.50	204.30	1.32	33.82	1596.2	
Automobiles & Parts	FordMtr Sys#	10.56	-20.20	13.48	10.19	-	-	Provident	692.40	-39.60	3294	426.60	19.40	4.91	725.4	Kennarow	116.00	-3.00	357.50	236.75	1.57	19.8	155.5	
GKN	405.50	-6.20	449.40	280.00	2.18	13.93	11702.1	Reinhardt	47.50	-1.30	53.42	37.00	4.21	15.84	262.5	Record	47.50	-1.30	60.00	52.00	1.71	19.68	15.3	
Banks	ANZ AS#	27.99	0.22	32.95	27.19	8.57	12.65	5108.0	Schroder	313.40	-12.00	598.00	24.00	2.45	17.92	1230.1	S&L	2.00	-6.00	3444.00	1854.00	3.64	13.01	4.3
BosSant	490.75	-16.58	568.99	361.23	3.78	19.93	81217.5	Bankrie	7.65	0.07	8.25	6.18	-	12.00	4001.1	Teekay	12.40	-2.00	270.00	217.00	3.84	12.70	18.3	
BrkGeorgia	3500	-22.00	3884	7789	2.27	11.41	72.7	BankLife	140.20	-1.20	630.50	451.20	3.75	12.71	4098.8	Corporation	116.60	-1.00	140.00	104.00	2.78	20.17	425.9	
BNB Grp C\$#	76.79	-0.82	85.50	73.31	4.09	11.49	1076.4	MidCo	124.00	-4.00	140.00	114.00	2.40	16.20	1805.5	Metres	116.00	-1.00	140.00	104.00	2.78	20.17	425.9	
Barclays	31.20	-0.90	244.40	173.00	1.55	16.31	64720.1	Goodwin	183.20	-4.50	212.00	114.00	2.15	16.47	1049.0	Metres	116.00	-1.00	140.00	104.00	2.78	20.17	425.9	
CanImc CS#	114.16	-2.39	124.37	103.84	5.15	9.86	791.1	Goodwin	183.20	-4.50	212.00	114.00	2.15	16.47	1049.0	Metres	116.00	-1.00	140.00	104.00	2.78	20.17	425.9	
HSBC	733.60	-5.70	798.50	61.81	3.95	30.76	3076.7	Goodwin	183.20	-4.50	212.00	114.00	2.15	16.47	1049.0	Metres	116.00	-1.00	140.00	104.00	2.78	20.17	425.9	
LloydsBkg#	67.60	-0.24	73.50	39.84	3.95	19.47	225748.9	Goodwin	183.20	-4.50	212.00	114.00	2.15	16.47	1049.0	Metres	116.00	-1.00	140.00	104.00	2.78	20.17	425.9	
PermTSB	2.16	-	2.95	1.61	-3.06	3.04	-	Goodwin	183.20	-4.50	212.00	114.00	2.15	16.47	1049.0	Metres	116.00	-1.00	140.00	104.00	2.78	20.17	425.9	
RBS#	2.30	-2.00	30.20	21.80	1.20	-10.58	21802.3	Goodwin	183.20	-4.50	212.00	114.00	2.15	16.47	1049.0	Metres	116.00	-1.00	140.00	104.00	2.78	20.17	425.9	
StndOff	18.90	-3.00	25.00	21.80	1.20	-10.58	21802.3	Goodwin	183.20	-4.50	212.00	114.00	2.15	16.47	1049.0	Metres	116.00	-1.00	140.00	104.00	2.78	20.17	425.9	
StndOff	18.90	-3.00	25.00	21.80	1.20	-10.58	21802.3	Goodwin	183.20	-4.50	212.00	114.00	2.15	16.47	1049.0	Metres	116.00	-1.00	140.00	104.00	2.78	20.17	425.9	
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StndOff	18.90	-3.00	25.00	21.80	1.20	-10.58	21802.3	Goodwin	183.20	-4.50	212.00	114.00	2.15	16.47	1049.0	Metres	116.00	-1.0						

MANAGED FUNDS SERVICE

MARKETS & INVESTING

Analysis. Capital markets

Environmental qualms cloud Poland's green bond sale



On some winter days Warsaw's Palace of Culture and Science vanishes behind a dense layer of smog — Alamy

Debt issued by coal-focused economy attracts criticism while tapping demand

KATE ALLEN — LONDON
JAMES SHOTTER — WARSAW

Warsaw's Palace of Culture and Science — a towering communist-era landmark — is normally visible from miles away. But on some days this winter, as the Polish government drew up the paperwork that would cement the country's reputation as a pioneer in green finance, the complex vanished into the smog that sometimes haunts the city.

Poland last week became the first country in the world to sell a second green bond, after a debut issue in December 2016 that launched the market for sovereign borrowers.

France and Fiji have since followed suit, with other countries, including Belgium and Indonesia, planning to do so. Companies and banks have also piled into the market, tapping demand from investors who want to lend to institutions with environmental aims.

But the eastern European country's starring role in green finance has not won applause from everyone. Environmental campaigners argue that the €1.75bn of debt sales are a publicity stunt that obscures the Polish government's poor record on green issues. It is

a view echoed by some investors who are sceptical of Warsaw's self-avowed belief in sustainability.

"There is a clear inconsistency between issuing green bonds by Poland and the major strategic direction that our country is following," says Piotr Wojcik, energy market analyst at Greenpeace in Warsaw. "Investors buying those bonds should do an in-depth analysis of whether the idea they would like to finance is really reflected in reality."

Lombard Odier Asset Management shares Mr Wojcik's view. It did not buy into Poland's first green bond and last week sat out its second deal.

"When measuring the impact of a specific [bond] issue it is important to look at the direct use of proceeds but also the overall context," says Bertrand Gacon, head of impact investing at Lombard Odier AM. "Our position so far as the Polish climate strategy has not changed — we are still not positive on that."

In his maiden speech in December, Poland's new prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki recognised that the fight for clean air was a big challenge, but said coal would remain the foundation of its

energy policy. The fossil fuel was the source of 80 per cent of Polish electricity in 2016.

Poland has plentiful coal reserves and the industry employs tens of thousands of people, making it a powerful political lobby.

This is taking a toll. Warsaw's air quality has repeatedly breached EU air standards this winter. It was so bad last month that city authorities sent a notice to schools warning them to keep children inside.

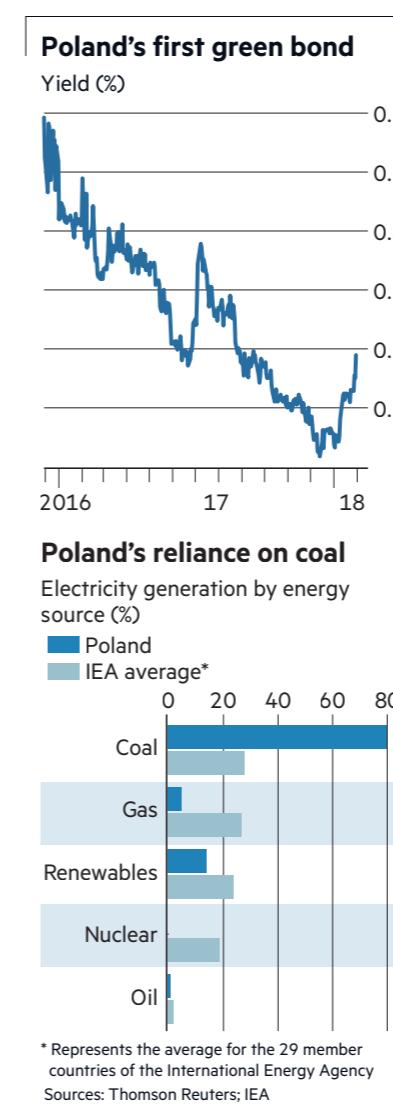
In a bid to address the potential tensions between the broad sweep of borrowers' activities and their desire to raise green-labelled finance, the International Capital Market Association and the Climate Bonds Initiative have both published guidelines that advise issuers on how to demonstrate their use of the money.

The proceeds of Poland's first green bond complied with these rules, an independent report found. A third was spent on clean transport, 40 per cent went on sustainable agriculture, while renewable energy received 20 per cent.

The second bond will also finance projects that meet the standards, the Polish government says.

That is not enough for some investors. Rhys Petheram, who co-manages Jupiter Asset Management's global ecology diversified fund, says the finance ministry is "cherry-picking" its sustain-

'Investors buying those bonds should do an in-depth analysis of whether the idea they would like to finance is really reflected in reality'



* Represents the average for the 29 member countries of the International Energy Agency
Sources: Thomson Reuters; IEA

ability achievements. Its latest green bond sale "does not have much of an alignment with the overall national strategy, which focuses on increasing the role of coal," Mr Petheram argues.

"The green bond principles say that they aim to support issuers towards transitioning to greater sustainability, and for us this bond isn't really doing that at all."

While bankers who helped arrange last week's debt sale agree with critics that the wider context is critical, they draw the opposite conclusion.

"Poland is on a journey, as are other countries, and not everyone is at the same point on that sustainability journey," says Stephanie Sfakianos, head of sustainable capital markets at BNP Paribas.

Piotr Nowak, undersecretary of state at the finance ministry, points to the "huge investor demand [and] high participation of green accounts [in the first green bond] and vocal interest in our second issue", as evidence that investors are comfortable with the country's green credentials. The sale last week was more than three times subscribed, while the yield on its first bond has fallen since it was sold.

"Because of the high share of coal energy in our economy we have to work harder and start our efforts earlier — that's why we were the first to issue sovereign green bonds," he says.

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Tail risk

Tokyo Exchange has nasty news for Toshiba investors

LEO LEWIS

If you squint a bit at Toshiba's share price chart over the past 12 months and ignore the catastrophic, post-write-down plunge last December, you could almost decide that the accident-prone conglomerate was back on track.

The chart bears the scars of inevitable bumps and wrinkles as the company has handled the sale of its memory business, lawsuits of varying acrimony and financial menace, the negative comments of its auditor and the risk of delisting. But, in terms of underlying trajectory, Toshiba's stock has been trudging steadily north at roughly the same pace that it was in 2016, when it was emerging from the accounting and senior management meltdown of the previous year.

Part of the rise, say analysts, has been an assumption in the market that Toshiba, having just about navigated the most fundamental of its existential threats, would fairly straightforwardly unravel one of the more cosmetic humiliations of 2017 — its demotion to the Tokyo Stock Exchange's second section after falling into negative shareholder equity. That demotion, which shoved mighty Toshiba in the same box as some pretty ropey minnows, triggered the automatic selling of its shares, as funds tracking either the (first section) Topix index or Nikkei 225 Average force-ejected one of their longest-standing stocks.

Fine, thought the market: a nasty slap in the face for Toshiba, but surely reversible in the relatively short term once its balance sheet was off the critical list. After all, Sharp made the return journey to the first section after only a year in the drunk tank. There could even be a nice uptick for Toshiba to look forward to as all that passive money streams back in. Wrong.

Like putting on an old pair of trousers and finding an unpaid invoice, Toshiba's (now resolved) dispute with its auditors has a sting in its tail that means it cannot be re-admitted to the first section before March 2022. Travis Lundy, analyst, writing in Smartkarma, pointed this issue out last month after weeks of to-and-fro with the TSE.

As the TSE indicated was the case, Toshiba cannot reapply for re-entry for five years from the third quarter of the year ending March 2017 when its auditor submitted a disclaimed opinion on its financial report. A very long wait, untracked by passive money, in the second division.



Toshiba cannot return to the exchange's first section for years

Capital markets

Spain sheds 'peripheral' tag as weaker eurozone nations show debt resilience

MICHAEL STOTHARD — MADRID
KATE ALLEN AND NICHOLAS MEGAW — LONDON

Eurozone countries that were hardest hit by the bloc's debt crisis just five years ago are proving resilient in the face of rising global sovereign yields, with one leading Treasury official claiming her nation has returned to "semi-core" status.

Spain has shaken off its label as a "peripheral" European country in the eyes of the international financial markets, according to Emma Navarro, its Treasury head.

Yields on eurozone periphery countries' debt are at or near multiyear lows, as are the spreads of those yields over the German equivalent — in effect the eurozone's risk-free rate.

Spanish bond yields this week hit their narrowest gap over the equivalent German debt since 2010, with Bunds rising as a general rebound in riskier assets boosted demand for debt from the eurozone's more "peripheral" markets. The spread between Italian and German debt also hit its lowest level since September.

This comes despite the Italian election, scheduled for March, with Silvio Berlusconi's rightwing alliance leading

the way in polls. Goldman Sachs last month suggested markets were "complacent" about the risks of the election.

Ms Navarro said the sharp fall in Spanish borrowing costs showed investors "do not view Spain as a peripheral country".

"The capital markets have already upgraded Spain to semi-core status," she said in an interview with the Financial Times.

Sales of fresh debt by periphery nations are also thriving. Earlier this month Italy and then Spain set successive records for the size of the order books their debt sales attracted.



Emma Navarro: investors 'do not view Spain as a peripheral country'

Last month a €10bn Spanish 10-year benchmark attracted €43bn of orders, while Italy saw €31bn of demand for a €9bn deal.

Periphery countries are also enjoying improving credit ratings. Fitch upgraded Spain's credit rating to A last month, its first A rating since the eurozone debt crisis.

Rabobank analysts suggested that the relative stability of bonds from the eurozone's weaker states this week "is a particularly bullish signal as it indicates that peripherals have de-correlated to some very significant degree from risky assets more broadly".

Mark Dowding, head of developed markets at BlueBay Asset Management, said periphery yields were reacting to waning geopolitical risk, and argued that "bullish price action may start to reassess itself in February, in the absence of much to dent confidence".

"Italian spreads are being dragged tighter as investors increasingly realise that there is no realistic path towards an 'Italexit' anytime soon, notwithstanding the upcoming election," he said. "We continue to see the most value in Greece in the context of a compression trade."

Greece sold €3bn in seven-year debt with a coupon of 3.375 per cent yesterday, attracting €6bn of orders.

Capital markets

Volatility derivatives have become tail that wags the dog, says Vix futures co-inventor

MILES JOHNSON — CAPITAL MARKETS EDITOR

Vast speculative trading in derivatives tied to stock market volatility is dangerously scrambling key inputs used for risk management by banks, one of the original inventors of Vix futures contracts has warned.

Sandy Rattray, who jointly devised the formula to trade futures contracts tied to the Vix in 2003 when working at Goldman Sachs, said products that allowed investors to trade volatility could be creating a "circular system" of measuring risk in financial markets.

"If the tail was wagging the dog before, you didn't notice it very much. What happened on Monday was the tail grabbed the dog and gave it a swing around the room," said Mr Rattray, who is now chief investment officer of Man Group, which runs some of the world's largest systematic trading funds.

"The Vix has moved from being a measure of something to being something that influences this thing it is trying to observe."

On Monday, a number of so-called inverse Vix exchange traded products collapsed in value and were liquidated following a massive spike in implied volatility, inflicting losses on anyone who had been using them to pocket small, consist-

ent profits by betting on tranquil markets. At the same time US equity markets were jolted as many sectors sold off in unison as the Vix spiked. "I don't think all the people buying these products understand the complex mechanics of it. I think they are terrible products that serve no real purpose," he said.

Mr Rattray said the rise of volatility-linked products had resulted in a distortion of the Vix index as a reliable indicator of market risk and inadvertently created more risk for risk models that

'I don't think all the people buying these products understand the complex mechanics of it'

relied on Vix as an input. "I think the Vix is being used by banks as an important input into models for risk management, credit analysis, bid-ask spreads. The fact that it has been spread into all of these ways of measuring risk is worrying to me," he said.

"You have an incredibly active market now in Vix futures, and now the market is clearly moving Vix itself. You have potential for a circular system. Something changed on Monday. If any-

body doubted that . . . I don't think they will doubt it now."

The boom in speculative trading products tied to Vix futures and options has seen open interest in contracts rise from fewer than 20,000 in 2009, when the first such product was launched, to frequently more than 1m by 2016.

Mr Rattray said that when he had helped to devise a way to trade the Vix using futures contracts in 2003, with Vix futures launching on the Cboe Global Markets in 2004, he and his colleagues had decided that they were unsuitable for any type of exchange traded fund product due to their risks.

Following the launch of Vix futures traded on the Cboe Global Markets, investment banks and exchange traded fund providers launched products that allowed investors to speculate on the outlook for US stock market volatility.

Because of the way these products are structured, which involves them consistently rolling forward futures contracts as they expire, they lose money each time and steadily lose value. Products that allow investors to bet on volatility staying low, such as those that fell this week, make money consistently by pocketing premium but are prone to crash as soon as the Vix index spikes, as they must rush to cover their exposure.

Markets & Investing

FINANCIAL TIMES

The day in the markets

What you need to know

- S&P 500 back in negative territory for 2018 as bond sell-off resumes
- Xetra Dax on verge of 10 per cent correction from record high
- 10-year Treasury yield nears four-year high
- Sterling and gilt yields lifted by hawkish Bank of England comments
- Brent oil hits low for year

Global markets ran into a fresh bout of turbulence yesterday, with US stocks coming under renewed pressure from higher bond yields and another rise for the Cboe's Vix (volatility index).

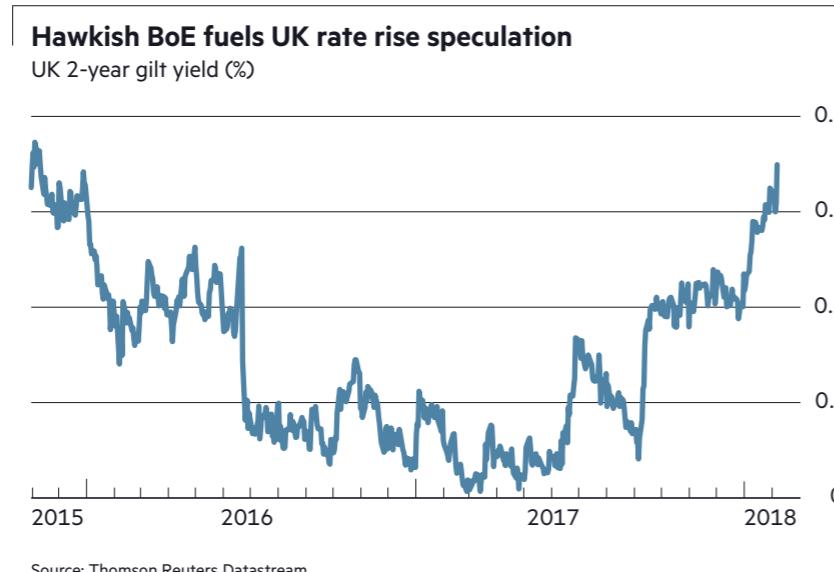
The sell-off on Wall Street once again took the S&P 500 index below where it ended 2017. The US equity benchmark was down nearly 8 per cent from the record high set less than two weeks ago.

The turmoil spread to Europe, with the Xetra Dax in Frankfurt ending the day down 9.8 per cent from its all-time high reached on January 23.

The Cboe Vix index was back up to 32 — some way short of the reading above 50 seen earlier this week, but well above its long-term average of 20.

The latest bout of stock selling came as government bond prices retreated on both sides of the Atlantic. The yield on the 10-year Treasury touched 2.884 per cent — within a whisker of the four-year high reached on Monday — before easing back by midday in New York.

Tomi DiGalam at Seaport Global



Holdings noted that the selling pressure on Treasuries had been intensified by a sharp rise for European bond yields — particularly UK gilts.

Indeed, the two-year gilt yield briefly touched 0.73 per cent, up 9 basis points on the day, and the highest since November 2015, after the Bank of England left interest rates unchanged but delivered some hawkish policy comments.

"The change in tone on the policy outlook looks relatively large compared to the underlying changes in the economic forecasts, in our view," said Sam

Hill, senior UK economist at RBC Capital Markets. "Nevertheless, it is difficult to ignore the message that the Monetary Policy Committee clearly intends to look to increase bank rate again and more quickly than previously intended."

Meanwhile, oil prices continued to retreat after data showed that US weekly crude production had hit a record last week. Indeed, the latest decline for Brent left it more than 9 per cent below a three-year high above \$71 a barrel hit in late January.

Dave Shattock

LNG tests the laws of economics to become a US energy success story

David Sheppard

Markets Insight



US energy secretary Rick Perry was roundly mocked last summer for suggesting that the US coal industry, a key base for the Trump Administration, could simply start producing more of the highly polluting fuel despite signs that demand is stagnating.

"Here's a little economics lesson: supply and demand," Mr Perry is reported to have said when visiting a coal-fired power plant in West Virginia. "You put the supply out there and the demand will follow."

Critics were quick to pile on, arguing that this assertion — known as "Say's Law" in economic circles — has been proved wrong time and again by markets.

Demand, most economists argue, tends to lead supply rather than the other way round, with both, eventually, meeting somewhere in the middle, helped along by the small matter of price, and, yes, sometimes politics.

It was alleged that Mr Perry was peddling dangerous dreams to a coal industry that Donald Trump has promised to revive, despite domestic demand falling by more than third in the past decade, and even dipping worldwide in the previous two years.

But his questionable economic assertion, for all the opprobrium it generated, might have been on slightly steadier ground if he had been speaking instead about a real American energy success story from this century.

A surge in US liquefied natural gas exports, unleashed by the shale revolution, has proven to be highly successful in finding new buyers, despite expectations that the market for seaborne gas was about to become saturated.

The super-chilled fuel, delivered on pipelines to coastal terminals before being frozen and loaded on to tankers, is

supposed to be in the midst of a global glut with supplies growing almost 50 per cent between 2015 and 2020, led by rising exports from the US and Australia.

That was supposed to weigh significantly on prices, leading some analysts to suggest that the industry would face a few difficult years. But major LNG suppliers have instead been pleasantly surprised. Demand for LNG has soared and prices in Asia, the key consumer centre for LNG, recently hit their highest level in three years.

"The LNG glut — conspicuously absent isn't it?" said Royal Dutch Shell chief executive Ben van Beurden last

Demand for LNG has soared and prices in Asia recently hit their highest level in three years

week, in a rare display of public self-satisfaction from the a modern energy major head. He had good reason to allow himself moment's celebration. Shell's decision to buy BG Group in 2015 was, at least in part, a major bet on the future of LNG. It looks now as if it should pay off far sooner than many anticipated.

The reason the market has not been weighed down substantially by rising supplies is that a new host of willing buyers has rapidly emerged, attracted by its flexibility and much lower emission levels than coal or oil.

China, for one, raised its imports of the fuel by 50 per cent last year to about 38m tonnes after Beijing strengthened measures designed to control pollution from coal use, overtaking South Korea as the second-biggest importer globally, after Japan.

Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan and a host of other countries, including in Latin America and Europe, have also become buyers. Some, like Egypt, have faced temporary fuel supply problems at home. Others, like Lithuania, have been pleased to show they have an alternative to Russian pipeline supplies.

In Latin America, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina have taken a large proportion of US LNG exports since they started up on the Gulf Coast two years ago.

While each country has their individual reasons for turning to LNG, what is clear is that they would have struggled — or had to pay far more — to source these supplies just a few years ago.

While it might not quite be a *Field of Dreams* scenario ("If you build it, he will come") for Mr van Beurden and other pillars of this growing market, what has been unleashed by this wave of new supply is pent-up demand for gas imports from countries without easy or ample access to pipeline imports.

Though the industry will still need to find more buyers to absorb additional supplies coming online over the next three years, so far the record suggests that this "glut" may be more easily absorbed than first feared.

It will be helped along by trading giants such as Trafigura, Vitol, Glencore and Gunvor, all of which have increased their focus on LNG in recent years.

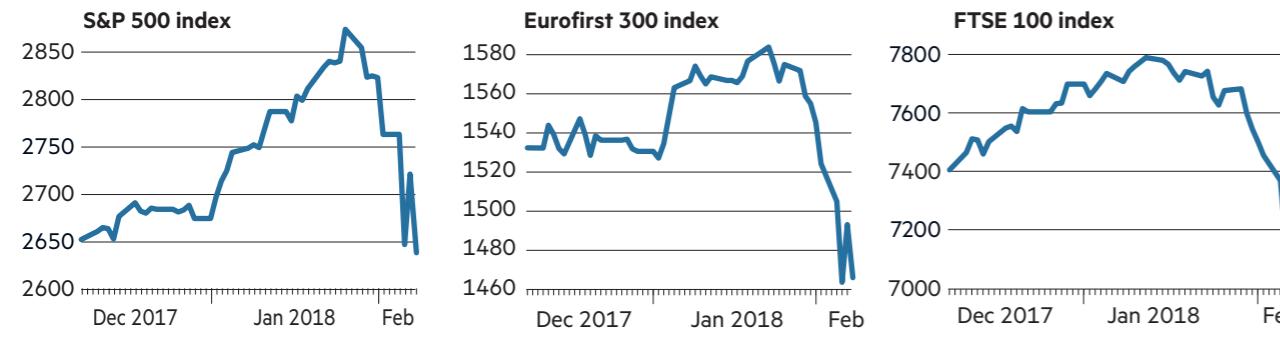
Energy consultancy Wood Mackenzie estimates that they accounted for a fifth of short-term LNG trades in 2016, with the market slowly moving away from longer-term supply deals, allowing gas to trade more like oil globally.

For Mr Perry the lesson may be that supply can, after all, help raise demand. But it needs to be for a commodity where there is untapped potential. LNG fits that bill much better than coal.

Markets update

	US	Eurozone	Japan	UK	China	Brazil
Stocks	S&P 500	Eurofirst 300	Nikkei 225	FTSE100	Shanghai Comp	Bovespa
Level	2635.90	1466.26	21890.86	7170.69	3262.15	81340.96
% change on day	-1.71	-1.74	1.13	-1.49	-1.42	-1.72
Currency	\$ index (DXY)	\$ per €	Yen per \$	\$ per £	Rmb per \$	Real per \$
Level	90.36	1.2239	108.71	1.3901	6.3222	3.2977
% change on day	0.12	-0.22	-0.55	0.12	0.91	0.87
Govt. bonds	10-year Treasury	10-year Bund	10-year JGB	10-year Gilt	10-year bond	10-year bond
Yield	2.828	0.756	0.071	1.615	3.879	4.906
Basis pt change on day	0.70	1.70	0.70	6.70	0.70	9.50
World index, Commods	FTSE All-World	Oil - Brent	WTI	Gold	Silver	Metals (LME)
Level	333.88	\$64.77	\$60.79	\$1,319.99	\$16.41	3318.80
% change on day	-1.65	-1.13	-1.62	1.88	0.23	-2.12

Main equity markets



Biggest movers (%)

	US	Eurozone	UK
Coty	11.2	Publicis Groupe	4.0
Viacom	7.9	Akzo Nobel	2.9
Fiserv	5.5	Pernod Ricard	2.1
Cardinal Health	4.3	UniCredit	2.1
Essex Property Trust	3.4	Jeronimo Martins SGPS	2.1
Newell Brands	-6.1	ASML	-5.0
Nielsen Holdings	-7.2	Deutsche Lufthansa	-5.2
Goodyear Tire & Rubber	-7.7	Infineon Tech	-5.4
Michael Kors	-8.4	Covestro	-5.0
HanesBrands	-9.3	STMicroelectronics	-5.7

Based on the constituents of the FTSE Eurofirst 300 Eurozone index

Wall Street

In another turbulent day for US stocks, Teva Pharmaceuticals registered a mid-session fall of 8 per cent after the US drugmaker cut its profit guidance to between \$4.7bn and \$5bn, compared with a Wall St estimate of \$5.3bn, which analysts said revived fears around a breach of credit covenants if cost cutting did not deliver.

Teva blamed the warning on a further deterioration in the US generics market due to pricing pressure and said drug companies were getting better at retaining market share even after the launch of generics.

iRobot, maker of the automatic vacuum cleaning device Roomba, plunged 28 per cent mid-session on unexpectedly downbeat 2018 earnings guidance, with the company saying it would increase sales and marketing spend to promote product launches in the second half.

JPMorgan highlighted that iRobot had jumped 33 per cent since early December, "when investor expectations for a strong holiday period began to build".

Twitter shares, by contrast, hit their highest level in more than two and a half years — up as much as 30 per cent to \$35 — after the social media site posted its first quarterly net profit alongside upbeat sales. Bryce Elder and Mamta Badkar

Eurozone

Eurozone stocks dropped sharply late yesterday afternoon, erasing gains from the previous day as a bearish correction gathered pace.

Germany's Dax closed down 2.6 per cent and has nearly fallen 10 per cent from its recent high. France's Cac 40 dipped 2 per cent.

The Euro Stoxx 50, Europe's blue-chip index, closed down 2.2 per cent, with 47 of its members' shares falling.

The only sector to escape the rout was energy, which closed up slightly at 0.1 per cent. Technology stocks fell 3.3 per cent, while materials stocks were down 3.2 per cent. Industrials and real estate stocks were both 3 per cent lower.

Dutch chip manufacturer ASML Holdings was the worst hit stock in the Euro Stoxx 50, off 5 per cent by close of trading. Volkswagen, the German carmaker, lost 3.8 per cent of its market value, while Deutsche Post was close behind with a loss of 3.7 per cent.

By contrast, French banking group Société Générale was the Euro Stoxx 50's best performer, rising 2 per cent after reporting a better than expected fourth quarter. Farhad Moshiri, an analyst at independent research house AlphaValue, forecast more relief for SocGen investors in the next quarter. Chloe Cornish

London

A surprise slowdown in sales growth left Sophos, the cyber security software maker, with its biggest daily decline since its flotation in 2015.

Sophos tumbled after posting billings growth of 14 per cent before currency effects, against expectations of about 17 per cent growth. "The beat-and-raise pattern at Sophos looks to be, at least temporarily, on hold for now," said Numis.

Sterling held back the wider market as the FTSE 100 dived. A 4.8 per cent drop in February so far puts the index on course for its worst month since 2015.

Metals and mining companies were laggards as metals prices weakened. Russian steelmaker Evraz was the sector's sharpest faller after quarterly results from Voestalpine, its Austrian peer, missed expectations.

TalkTalk hit a record low after the broadband provider cut its dividend and launched a £200m share sale to reduce debt and invest in a new network venture.

Hospital operator Spire Healthcare drifted lower after NHS data for December pointed to a further slowdown in referrals to the private sector.

WPP outperformed after sector peer Publicis reported improving US demand and predicted a further acceleration of organic growth. Bryce Elder

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