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Headlines tuesday 30 may 2023

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Russia-Ukraine war: Putin accuses Kyiv of trying to intimidate civilians with Moscow drone attack – as it happened

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Video shows drones flying over Moscow in targeted large-scale attack – video report

[Russia](#)

Large-scale drone attack hits Moscow for first time in Ukraine war

Rare strike on Russian capital unnerves Muscovites who had been told conflict would not threaten them

- [Russia-Ukraine war – latest news updates](#)

[Andrew Roth](#) and [Pjotr Sauer](#)

Tue 30 May 2023 06.37 EDTFirst published on Tue 30 May 2023 01.25 EDT

Moscow has been targeted with a large-scale drone attack for the first time in its 15-month-old war in [Ukraine](#), marking a new inflection point in the conflict, with the Kremlin threatening to take the “harshest possible measures” in response to the strikes.

Russia continues to pummel Ukraine with deadly missile and drone strikes on a near-daily basis. Ukraine’s capital, Kyiv, [faced its third air raid in 24 hours](#) on Tuesday morning.

Video posted on social media early on Tuesday showed one low-flying drone exploding in a field outside Moscow, and others flying over houses in the city’s expensive Rublyovka district or tower flats in south-west neighbourhoods. Another video from Moscow’s outskirts showed a Pantsir surface-to-air missile system firing at a target nearby.

[Map of areas targeted](#)

The Russian defence ministry said eight drones targeted the city overnight but Russian media close to the security services wrote that the number was many times higher, with more than 30 drones participating in the attack.

“I woke up at 6.15 from a loud explosion, and then for the next 45 minutes there were around six other booms every 10 minutes or so,” a security guard told the Guardian. He was based in the elite gated community in Zhukovka, near where the strikes took place.

Alexander Khinshtein, a prominent member of Russia’s parliament, wrote on his Telegram channel that drones were shot down in five different areas in the Moscow region, including at least two that were flying over Rublyovka, a wealthy suburb that is home to much of Russia’s political elite including Vladimir Putin’s Novo-Ogaryovo state residence.

“It was fucked up, everyone came out on their balconies or went outside, no one understood what was happening,” said the security guard.

In a television appearance on Tuesday, Putin praised Moscow’s air defences and said Kyiv was trying to scare Russians by striking civilian targets. Putin also claimed Russian forces were only striking military facilities in Ukraine using “high-precision weapons”.

At least one of the drones appears to have been a Ukrainian-manufactured UJ 22, produced by the Ukrjet company. Footage appears to match images of the unmanned aerial vehicle, which Russia has claimed has been used in other attempted attacks. Looking like a scaled-down light aircraft, the UJ22 has a claimed range of 800km and is able to fly for six hours.

[Ukraine’s UJ-22 airborne unmanned aircraft system](#)

Three of the drones hit residential buildings in the south-west of the city but no explosions were reported. Two people were injured in the attack, said Sergei Sobyanin, the Moscow mayor, and the buildings sustained minor damage. Video showed broken windows and a blackened facade at one address hit by a drone early on Tuesday morning.

Damaged apartment block in Moscow following drone strikes – video

Russia blamed the drone attack on Ukraine – which denied responsibility – and threatened retaliation.

The Russian foreign ministry said it reserved the right to take the most “severe measures” in response. “Assurances by Nat officials that the Kyiv regime will not launch strikes deep into Russian territory prove to be completely hypocritical,” the ministry said. “Russia reserves the right to take the harshest possible measures in response to the terrorist attacks by the Kyiv regime.

“This morning, the Kyiv regime launched a terrorist drone attack on targets in the city of Moscow,” the Russian defence ministry said. “Three of them were suppressed by electronic warfare, lost control and deviated from their intended targets. Another five drones were shot down by the Pantsir-S surface-to-air missile system in the Moscow region.”

Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin spokesperson, said Vladimir Putin had no immediate plans to address the country and claimed there was “no imminent threat to residents of Moscow and the Moscow region either”.

Range of Ukraine’s UJ-22 airborne drone

A Ukrainian presidential aide denied Kyiv was directly involved but said Ukraine was enjoying watching the events and predicted an increase in such attacks.

“Regarding the attacks: of course we are pleased to watch and predict an increase in the number of attacks. But of course we have nothing directly to do with this,” Mykhailo Podolyak told the Breakfast Show YouTube channel.

The White House said on Tuesday that it was still gathering information about what happened in Moscow, repeating its earlier statements that it “does not support attacks inside of Russia”.

Similar attacks against Ukrainian cities are a weekly and sometimes daily occurrence, with local people regularly forced to evacuate or shelter in metro

tunnels. The worst strikes have hit large residential buildings or crowded business centres and killed dozens.

At least [one person died in Kyiv and three were injured](#) when falling debris reportedly from a destroyed Russian drone hit a high-rise apartment building early on Tuesday and started a fire, officials said.

Kyiv faces third wave of drone strikes in 24 hours – video

Sobyanin said there had been minor damage to two residential buildings in Moscow and that people could return home once an investigation had concluded.

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Andrei Vorobyov, the governor of the Moscow region, said several drones were shot down on their approach to the city.

Moscow, located more than 620 miles from Ukraine, has only rarely been targeted by drone attacks since the start of the conflict, even though such attacks have become more common elsewhere in Russia. In early May, [two drones were shot down over the Kremlin](#) in an attack blamed on Ukraine.

Several prominent officials and politicians attacked the defence ministry for allowing the drones to penetrate Moscow's airspace. They included prominent war hawks who have called for more aggressive strikes and broader mobilisation for the war in Ukraine.

"To stop the shelling of Moscow, it is necessary to occupy Kyiv. We need to mobilise all forces and means," said Petr Tolstoy, the vice-speaker of Russia's State Duma.

"You are the ministry of defence. You haven't done anything to advance. Why the fuck do you allow these drones to hit Moscow?" yelled Yevgeny Prigozhin, who heads the Wagner mercenary group, in a voice memo. "Let your houses burn. And what should ordinary people do when drones with explosives crash into their windows?"

Some Muscovites played down the effects of the strikes, trying to project an image of calm.

"At 6am it started happening, our house was shaking. There were five to seven explosions, and that was it," said Dmitry, who lives in the pine-forested Odintsovo district, just west of Moscow. "And that's it. Then we went back to sleep."

Others noted that previous strikes had hit higher-value targets, including a drone attack [targeting the Kremlin](#) earlier this month.

"Some people are shocked, but nothing can surprise me any more," said the security guard. "I mean Ukraine already hit the Kremlin before."

Vorobyov attempted to calm Muscovites unnerved by the first attack in a war that has largely played out on television for them. The Kremlin has largely sought to divert Russians from the war, calling it a small-scale military action even as it has stretched into its second year and become the deadliest conflict in [Europe](#) since the second world war.

"This morning, residents of some districts of the Moscow region could hear the sounds of explosions – those were our air defences at work," he wrote on social media.

Observers also noted the careful response by the Kremlin and top officials that sought to spin the effectiveness of Russia's air defences rather than the fact that Russian cities are now vulnerable.

"It is striking, of course, how much the Russian authorities ... unanimously play down the significance of drone attacks on Russian cities," wrote Tatiana Stanovaya, the founder of the R Politik political analysis firm. "They are already hitting Moscow, and in the statements there is widespread pride in how well everything worked."

Other videos posted by Russians to social media showed their shock, even as they had been told that Russian air defences would prevent any attacks from reaching the capital.

"It's flying right over our house!" yelled one man as he filmed a video of a drone gliding over suburban Moscow.

"If the purpose of the raid was to stress out the population, then the very fact of the appearance of Ukrainian drones in the sky over Moscow has already contributed to this," wrote Rybar, a popular Russian military blogger close to the defence ministry.

Observers expect Ukraine to launch its counteroffensive in the coming weeks. One goal of the drone strikes against Moscow may be as a "shaping" operation to pull Russian air defences away from the frontlines in order to protect large population centres.

Additional reporting by Peter Beaumont

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Households have been slow to take up government vouchers worth £5,000 to help cover the cost of replacing a gas boiler with a heat pump. Photograph: David McGill/Alamy

[Energy industry](#)

Heat pumps: more than 80% of households in Great Britain ‘satisfied with system’

Exclusive: England, Scotland and Wales survey reports similar response to people with gas boilers

[Jillian Ambrose](#) Energy correspondent

Tue 30 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 30 May 2023 09.49 EDT

More than 80% of households that have replaced their gas boilers with an electric heat pump are satisfied with their new heating system, according to the first major survey of heat pump users.

Those who use heat pumps to warm their homes reported broadly similar levels of satisfaction to those with gas boilers, the survey commissioned by the innovation charity Nesta found.

Satisfaction levels were also similar between respondents who [installed a heat pump](#) in a new-build home or in older properties, at more than 80%, despite persistent concerns that heat pumps are only effective in modern buildings.

The survey of more than 2,500 domestic heat pump owners and more than 1,000 domestic gas boiler owners in England, Scotland and Wales over the last winter is thought to be the largest investigation into [how households have responded](#) to heat pumps to date.

[Heat pump satisfaction chart](#)

Madeleine Gabriel, the director of a sustainable future at Nesta, said results should put to rest “outdated” concerns about the low carbon heating technology and prompt the government to “redouble its efforts” to phase out fossil fuel heating.

Concerns over the effectiveness of heat pumps have threatened to derail the government’s plan for [600,000 heat pumps to be installed](#) across the UK every year to help cut carbon emissions.

Households have been slow to take up government vouchers worth £5,000 to help cover the cost of replacing a gas boiler with a new heat pump. Slightly more than a third of the scheme’s grants were taken up in the last financial year.

However, the survey, which was undertaken by Eunomia Research and Consulting, found that 81% of households were as satisfied or more satisfied with [heat pumps](#) compared with previous heating systems, including gas boilers, electric heating, or oil and LPG boilers.

Q&A

What are heat pumps and why is the UK government pushing them?

Show



In simple terms, an electric heat pump works like a reverse fridge, extracting warmth from the outside air, the ground or a nearby water source before concentrating the heat and transferring it indoors. They can usually be found outside a home, and they look like a standard air-conditioning unit.

About 85% of UK homes use gas boilers for heating, making it one of the most polluting sectors of the economy. The fossil fuels used in our homes for heating, hot water and cooking make up more than a fifth of the UK's carbon emissions, meaning low-carbon alternatives are critical if the UK government hopes to meet its climate targets.

Jillian Ambrose

Photograph: KBImages/<https://www.alamy.com>

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Satisfaction levels were similar for households living in Victorian or older properties, at 83%, which appears to contradict concerns that heat pumps are only effective in modern buildings or those that have undergone extensive energy efficiency upgrades.

Gabriel said: “The rollout of heat pumps across all property types in Britain is proving that the age of your house doesn’t have to be a big factor when deciding whether to get a greener heating system.”

On running costs, which is another key area of concern for households considering a heat pump, the survey found that two-thirds of heat pump owners and 59% of gas boiler owners were satisfied even without extensive energy efficiency upgrades.

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The survey found that upgrading building fabric alongside heat pump installations was common “but by [no means universal](#)”. About 36% of heat pump users carried out loft insulation before the installation, and 23% installed wall insulation or extra window glazing. Only 14% chose to undertake multiple measures.

Clem Cowton, the director of external affairs at the energy supplier Octopus [Energy](#), said the survey’s findings were reflected in “the astronomical demand Octopus is seeing for our heat pumps”.

The company says it has a waiting list of about 50,000 households that have expressed an interest in having a pump installed. To meet this demand, Octopus is training up hundreds of installers at UK bases. The company has

also invested in a Northern Ireland-based heat pump manufacturer, Renewable Energy Devices, to produce about 1,000 pumps every month.

“The government should now have the confidence to move forward quickly with its proposal to remove punitive levies from household electricity bills, and streamline out-of-date planning rules to make it easier and cheaper for everyone to make the switch to cleaner, safer and more efficient heating with a heat pump,” Cowton said.

This article was amended on 30 May 2023. An earlier version referred to Eunomia instead of Eunomia Research and Consulting.

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- ‘People wanted to believe the fairytale’ The downfall of Elizabeth Holmes



The £25m border post was built according to the government's post-Brexit border control plans for import checks, but the building is sitting empty and idle. Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

[Brexit](#)

Council on hook ‘for £10m’ over border post left in limbo by Brexit

The £25m port facility was built to fit government plans but stands empty while new border strategy is delayed

[Joanna Partridge](#)

Tue 30 May 2023 04.40 EDTFirst published on Tue 30 May 2023 01.00 EDT

As white elephants go, few come larger than £25m. That is the cost of the hi-tech border control post, built to government specifications to handle post-Brexit checks on goods entering the UK, that sits near the waterfront at [Portsmouth](#) international port.

The building has sat empty and unused for almost a year since its completion, after the UK government announced in April last year that the introduction of post-Brexit import checks [would be delayed for a fourth time](#).

Since then, ministers have altered their plans for how goods will be inspected when they enter the country, with a full border strategy expected to be unveiled next month. Meanwhile, the local council faces an estimated £10m bill to cover its debts, maintenance and the cost of catering to the new changed requirements.

“It is frustrating,” says Mike Sellers, director of Portsmouth international port, surveying the echoing, empty rooms inside the enormous, state of the art structure. “Because we’ve built to a design that was specified by the government … So we’ve done what they’ve asked, and we built it in time.”



Mike Sellers, the port’s director, in the enormous, empty border control post structure. Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

Physical checks on fresh produce entering the UK from the EU and the rest of the world, including meat, plants and forestry products, had been expected to begin on 1 July last year, after a [string of postponed deadlines](#).

But they [were delayed again in April 2022](#) amid industry reports that neither the required infrastructure nor technology would have been ready. The then Brexit opportunities minister, Jacob Rees-Mogg, said at the time it was wrong to impose new checks during a cost of living crisis, and risk further driving up food prices.

Ever since, ports, traders and businesses have waited for the government's new post-Brexit border strategy, known as the target operating model (TOM), originally expected last autumn.

The proposals were eventually published in April and the industry consultation window closed earlier this month. Under the plans, the UK's import regime will be lighter-touch and require fewer physical checks on certain types of imports than previously envisaged.

Goods arriving from overseas which are subject to sanitary and phytosanitary controls – including imports of live animals, animal products, plants and plant products – will be ranked as low-, medium- or high-risk according to type and origin.

The TOM proposes phasing in import checks in three stages over a year, starting this autumn. From 31 October 2023, importers will be required to have health certificates for medium-risk animal products, high-risk food, and high-risk feed not of EU animal origin, as well as phytosanitary certificates for medium-risk plant products from the bloc.

Physical checks at the UK border begin on 31 January next year – when the border control posts at places such as Portsmouth will finally spring into action, albeit conducting fewer checks than originally anticipated – while safety and security declarations will also be needed from 31 October 2024.

Given the lighter-touch checks proposed, Portsmouth's border post now looks overengineered, with much of what it offers potentially surplus to requirement. It boasts 14 lorry bays and was designed to receive low- and high-risk goods entering the UK including meat, plants and forestry products, and allow their inspection in air-lock quarantine zones to prevent cross-contamination.



The building was designed to allow the inspection of goods in air-lock quarantine zones. Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

Construction of the facility at the UK's second-busiest cross-Channel port cost £25m, for which it received £17.1m of taxpayer funding through the government's oversubscribed [port infrastructure fund](#), about half of its £32m application.

Despite modifications to cut costs, the port's owners, Portsmouth city council, had to take out a loan to cover the shortfall, which Sellers says cost the city's taxpayers £5.4m, and still needs to be paid back. Running the lights and freezers last summer when electricity prices were sky-high – which it was obliged to do, as it was liable for any defects in the building's first year – is estimated to have cost a further £500,000.

If the government had outlined its latest border strategy straight after Brexit, Sellers says the port would have been able to build a considerably smaller facility, costing about a fifth of what it actually spent. Worse still, it faces spending more to adapt the facility to the new requirements – or even build a second one.

“There is still the £5.4m of council debt, if you like, plus whatever it's going to cost to either make this facility suitable for the target operating model, or

build the alternative, which could be another £4m or £5m,” he says.

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“I think by the time we've finished this, my best guess is we will have spent the best part of £10m for very few inspections that are going to come through the port, and we still have to recover that cost.”

Ports will be able to earn money from charging importers for the goods checks. However, Sellers says they are unclear what the benchmark price will be, as charged at the government-run [inland border facilities](#), built in places like Dover and Holyhead where there was not space for a checkpoint at the terminal. Government proposals have not yet determined the cost, but have forecast it will be between £20 and £43 for each consignment.

Richard Ballantyne, chief executive of the British Ports Association, says: “Unfortunately, the TOM does not contain everything we in the ports sector need. This, at the very least, continues to fuel the uncertainty and frustration, and, most seriously, threatens preparation timelines.”

The reaction to the new border plan in the food sector has also been mixed. While the National Farmers' Union (NFU) and some traders have welcomed the proposals, others have warned the imposition of checks could lead to

gaps on shelves if exporters decide to skip the paperwork and stop sending produce to Britain.

The NFU argues the lack of controls on goods entering Britain since Brexit has been a “significant area of concern” for UK farmers and risks creating an uneven playing field. The EU brought in border inspections on UK goods at the start of 2021, while EU exporters had almost frictionless trade to Britain.

Shane Brennan, chief executive of the Cold Chain Federation, the trade body that represents the refrigerated supply chain, believes that small EU food producers “will not be bothered with the paperwork” required in future, and that many will stop supplying Britain altogether, leading to temporary gaps on shelves [like those seen earlier this year](#) for fresh produce.

“EU businesses in northern Italy or rural Germany probably haven’t thought about Brexit that much in the past few years,” he says. “Now we have to tell those producers to do a load of compliance they don’t currently do. They are not exporters, and up to now have only serviced the single market.”

Brennan believes the impact of post-Brexit checks has not yet been felt in the UK, as the country is, for the most part, a food importer rather than exporter. He also cautions that the added cost and complexity of the proposed border checks could keep annual food price inflation – [already at the elevated level of 19%](#), according to official figures out last week – higher for longer.

A spokesperson for the Cabinet Office says its new border strategy will “provide protection from security and biosecurity threats, while preventing delays at the border through a reduction in the need for physical checks and by ensuring that checks take place away from ports where this is needed to allow traffic to flow freely”.

They added that the decision to remove the requirement for certificates or physical checks for many low-risk goods will help to “save UK importers around £400m each year compared to the previously proposed model”.

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‘You can always eat a bunch of chocolate digestives later’ ... Tim Dowling.
Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

[Tea](#)

Biscuits are great. Tea is great. But do we really need all this biscuit-flavoured

tea?

The shops are full of ‘jaffa biscuit teas’ and ‘malty biscuit brews’. Do they live up to the hype? And who wants to live in a world without crumbs? Time to get tasting



[Tim Dowling](#)

[@IAmTimDowling](#)

Tue 30 May 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 30 May 2023 13.50 EDT

Who would want to drink tea that tastes like biscuits? It is, of course, a classic pairing: personally, I wouldn’t contemplate one without the other. But what is the point of forging them into a single entity? A box of “biscuit tea” that forms part of Aldi’s new range has only this to say: “Nothing better than a brew and a biscuit, so why not taste them together in one cup?” Except for the “not”, this is exactly my question.

If you are intent on adding one taste to another, this seems to be the wrong way round. On opening a box with the words “biscuit” and “tea” on the front, several members of my household were disappointed to find it contained biscuit-flavoured tea, and not tea-flavoured biscuits.

But there is clearly a market for such an innovation. Flavouring drinks with a biscuit-like taste is an emerging trend, and Aldi is, if anything, a bit late climbing aboard the bandwagon. There are even biscuit-flavoured gins that turn up at Christmas. Still, I ask myself: “Why?” In search of an answer, I resolved to test as many examples of the phenomenon as I could find.

Aldi Diplomat biscuit tea

On my first sip, I thought: what are they on about? This is just tea. But a second, more considered sip unleashed a faint malty note and a hint of vanilla. If it is not exactly biscuity, it is certainly biscuit-adjacent, like drinking tea downwind of a biscuit factory.

Even so, it is hard to tell what Aldi is driving at, since the type of biscuit being mimicked isn’t specified and the ingredients list is short and cryptic: “black tea, flavouring”. It is only my opinion, but I do not believe diplomats will care for this.

Yorkshire Tea malty biscuit brew

Aldi’s biscuit tea would appear to owe a great debt to Taylor of Harrogate’s Yorkshire [Tea](#) version, which has been around for a while. Its package design is similar and so is its unenlightening ingredients list (“black tea, natural flavouring”). There isn’t a huge difference in taste either: both give off a similar, nonspecific biscuit smell, although this one is a bit subtler, which I guess is an improvement. The instructions say, “enjoy with or without milk”, but I managed not to enjoy it either way.

Yorkshire Tea does, however, go some way towards offering up a justification for its product, describing it as “a magical mug of biscuity goodness that doesn’t get crumbs on your jumper”. All the joy of biscuits, with none of the thankless hardship of eating them.



‘All the joy of biscuits, with none of the thankless hardship of eating them.’
Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

Aldi Diplomat jaffa biscuit tea

Another new one from Aldi’s Diplomat range. This formula combines tea with cacao husks and orange peel to approximate, I’m assuming, the sensation of drinking a cuppa while someone seated across the table from you eats the last jaffa cake. On its own, this tea is citrussy and perfectly pleasant. If it leaves one with the overall feeling of being deprived of something, it is nothing a packet of jaffa cakes wouldn’t fix.

Bird & Blend chocolate digestives tea

Now we’re talking. This high-end loose tea (£3.50 for a 20g pouch, plus shipping, although I got a couple of free samples with my order) aims to recreate the hot beverage and chocolate digestive experience through a tempting blend of Sri Lankan black tea, cocoa nibs, cocoa shells, fenugreek and liquorice root.

Does it succeed? Yes and no. It is a very nice tea, but the interplay of flavours here is quite subtle and sophisticated, where the taste of a chocolate digestive is anything but – they are, as a rule, light on fenugreek. I tried to

bridge the gap through the addition of four tablespoons of sugar but, in doing so, I created something next to undrinkable. This tea, I think, is best enjoyed on its own, without milk or sugar, while contemplating one's own virtue. You can always eat a bunch of chocolate digestives later, while everyone else is asleep.

Beanies Buckingham biscuit flavour instant coffee

As the eagle-eyed will have spotted, this is not actually tea. Other than that, the ingredients list – “freeze-dried coffee, flavouring” – gives away nothing. Flavourings generally consist of aromatic compounds, which do not have to be specified by law, but I think I detect, along with vanilla essence, a hint of that artificial butter aroma you get from microwave popcorn. I can't be certain, but the smell lingered in the room long after I had stopped drinking the coffee, directly after the second sip.

The Jammie Dodger

This is not any kind of hot drink, but a cocktail. And it's not a product, but [a recipe](#). According to Difford's Guide: “The origin of this drink is unknown, but it is named after and inspired by the classic British biscuit produced by Burton's foods.”

The Jammie Dodger cocktail relies heavily on an ingredient for which there is no ready substitute: black raspberry liqueur, for example Chambord. You are unlikely to have any lying around, but it is widely available. I managed to find some at the supermarket for the reduced price of £6.50 for a stubby 20ml bottle, which I believe constitutes a lifetime supply.

The drink's components are layered in a shot glass: Chambord, then cream, with a garnish of crushed biscuits round the rim and sprinkled on top, to taste. I had to get my youngest son, who has considerable bartending experience, to do it properly, pouring the cream gently over the back of a spoon to keep the layers from mixing.

While he was there, I also made him do a Jammie Dodger shot with me, because it was 2 o'clock in the afternoon and I felt a bit weird drinking a

thing like that on my own.

“Cheers,” I said. “It’s for work.” We downed them, staring at each other in mounting disbelief.

“That’s amazing,” he said.

“It tastes exactly like a Jammie Dodger,” I said.

“It really does,” he said. “An alcoholic Jammie Dodger.” We said nothing at all for a moment, but I could tell we were both thinking the same thing: we should probably do another one.

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Succession ... the Roy clan and co awaits to see the eventual heir arise.
Composite: HBO

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Every Succession episode – ranked!

Kendall crashing, Logan slapping, Shiv cheating, Roman perving, Greg Greggging and Tom eating chicken ... we rate every episode of Succession and relive its most shocking moments



[Stuart Heritage](#)

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Tue 30 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 30 May 2023 10.44 EDT

39. The Disruption (season 3 episode 3)

Even a show as good as this has to have a worst episode. Luckily, picking one wasn't a particularly tough decision. The Disruption was a largely pointless episode of ping pong between Kendall and the rest of the Roys, notable for how uncharacteristically heavy-handed it was. Shiv published a damning open letter about Kendall's mental state; he played Nirvana's Rape Me while she was making a speech. A bewildering outlier for such a good series.

38. Lifeboats (s1 e3)

Aside from the pilot, Succession's first season took a few episodes to fully hit its stride. Nothing really happens here – some characters get nudged around the board to little consequence – which isn't a great thing to say about a show's third ever episode.

37. Honeymoon States (s4 e4)

The big gimmick of season four, according to [Brian Cox](#), is that every episode takes place on subsequent days. In retrospect this might have been a slightly silly thing to announce in public because, while Connor's wedding was a masterclass in depicting real-time grief, Honeymoon States (the next episode) was basically back to business as usual. Less than 24 hours after the death of their father, little of what the siblings did here rang particularly true.

36. What It Takes (s3 e6)

Succession has never had the easiest relationship with politics. A general election has long been brewing here, with Connor announcing himself as a candidate and a shady populist Trump alike angling for office, but it often got relegated to background chatter. What It Takes was the show's attempt to put politics front and centre for once (if ever there was an episode with Something to Say About the World, this was it), but the lack of prior focus meant it landed badly and disrupted the season as a result.



Aftermath ... Jeremy Strong as Kendall Roy, season three episode one of Succession. Photograph: David M Russell/HBO

35. Sad Sack Wasp Trap (s1 e4)

There are signs of the show Succession would become here, but they are few and far between. This is the episode where Tom first learned he had

inherited a world of problems as head of the Parks and Cruises division, but a lot of it comes off as meaningless busywork given the bombshells to come.

34. Mass in Time of War (s3 e2)

The season two cliffhanger was so vast it seemed to even destabilise Succession's own writers. Unsure where to go after that, they offered up this choppy, fragmented episode. The biggest plot point revolved round the delivery of some doughnuts.

33. Secession (s3 e1)

Season two ended with Kendall Roy's loud attempt at regicide, and viewers had spent two agonising years waiting for the fallout. What they got, however, was a lot of people muttering in a lot of airports. In truth, nothing could have met the rabid expectations of fans at that point, but this deliberate anticlimax nevertheless felt a little deflating.



Honeymoon ... Alan Ruck as Connor Roy and Justine Lupe as Willa Ferreyra, season four episode four. Photograph: HBO

32. DC (s2 e9)

Much of this episode takes the form of a senate hearing committee, which would have been incredibly novel if [The Thick of It](#) (which shares much of Succession's writing staff) hadn't got there earlier and better seven years

before. Still, it did give us the line “You can’t make a Tomlette without breaking some Gregs”, which is one of the standout quotes of the entire series.

31. Tailgate Party (s4 e7)

This largely existed to build the stakes for the big election episode, moving all the characters into place for what was always going to be a showstopper setpiece. However, it eventually kicked into gear with Shiv and Tom’s fight. Four seasons of resentment exploded at once. It was worth the wait.

30. The Summer Palace (s2 e1)

Now that we’re able to view the series as a whole, it’s clear that Succession’s favourite pattern is to end each season with a bang then begin the next with a whimper. This was the first instance: a quietly tense episode where Kendall leaves his expensive rehab to do some menial tasks for his dad.

29. The Munsters (s4 e1)

Another careful reentry into the world of Succession. The Roy siblings are united for once, overreaching in their efforts to scupper their father. Meanwhile Logan mopes around his mausoleum of a house on his birthday. Exciting enough at the time, although given what we all know happens in episode three, this retrospectively seems a little like deliberate sleight of hand.



If looks could kill ... Brian Cox as Logan Roy testifies before congress, season two episode nine. Photograph: HBO

28. Shit Show at the Fuck Factory (s1 e2)

The best episode title of the series is also a chance to see who these horrible people really are. Logan's stroke puts him out of action for the majority of the episode, and those around him essentially become a pack of grieving vultures; worried about their father, but eager for the spoils of his death. When people said they found the Succession characters too hard to like at first, they were almost definitely referring to this episode.

27. Chiantishire (s3 e8)

The gang travel to Tuscany to watch their mother get married, and their behaviour disintegrates accordingly. You may remember this as the one where Roman accidentally sends a "dick pic" to his father, but really this episode belongs to Shiv. She is torn apart by her mother (who tells her she never wanted children) then takes it out on Tom in the cruellest way imaginable.

26. America Decides (s4 e8)

Had it landed anywhere else, the big election episode would have been a very good episode of Succession. The full-body dread of watching the 2016 Trump victory play out again – aided by the show's protagonists, no less! –

represented some of the most stressful moments of a programme full of them. However, *America Decides* was let down a little by the fact that it was the antepenultimate outing. At this point in its run, [Breaking Bad](#) stunned us with the searing finality of [Ozymandias](#). This, meanwhile, was a good episode of *Succession* that could have slotted into almost any previous season.



Stress test ... Adrien Brody as Josh Aaronson, season three episode four.
Photograph: HBO

25. Lion in the Meadow (s3 e4)

The one where Adrien Brody's Josh Aaronson, an outerwear-clad Jack Dorsey analogue, was wily enough to test the stamina of Logan Roy by basically walking him around until he collapsed.

24. I Went to Market (s1 e5)

History will show that this was the moment *Succession* really began to motor. Kendall formulates his first vote of no confidence against his father. Logan's brother comes in roaring about the evil family business. Logan hits his own grandson. It is extraordinary.

23. Argestes (s2 e6)

This is where Logan punches Roman in a fit of pique about the unravelling

Pierce acquisition. Logan also ends this episode screaming at a car. We never saw him this untethered before, and we'd never see it again. That's probably for the best, because it is a genuinely terrifying sight to behold.

22. Rehearsal (s4 e2)

Officially this is a quiet episode, full of background machinations, and it would have been lower down the list were it not for the jackhammer emotions on show. This would be the last time Logan Roy would ever speak to his children – he planned to apologise, but ended up telling them they were not serious people.



Hikes and fears ... Alexander Skarsgård as Lukas Matsson (centre), season four episode five. Photograph: HBO

21. Kill List (s4 e5)

Flown to Norway at the height of their grief to negotiate an acquisition, this had the potential to be another slightly boring game of chess. But Kieran Culkin's third-act rant, full of sarcasm and resentment and unprocessed bereavement, belongs on his lifetime showreel. It's been said that Culkin will be put forward as a lead actor for this year's Emmys. On the basis of this, it isn't hard to see why.

20. Safe Room (s2 e4)

A beautifully dark hour of TV. A gun goes off in the Waystar offices, which not only forces the main characters into close proximity but allows Succession one of its bleakest ever punchlines; the shooter wasn't a vengeful gunman as feared, just a depressed employee killing themselves. What's more, this is the episode where Connor – fearing public backlash – gives an astonishingly empty anti-eulogy at the funeral of a sex pest. Possibly Succession's funniest episode.

19. Tern Haven (s2 e5)

And here's possibly the most excruciating episode. The centrepiece of Tern Haven is the ostentatious toe-curling dinner party with the Pierce family where Shiv tells everyone she will succeed her father. If that wasn't enough, it's also where Roman and Gerri's HR nightmare of a phone-sex relationship hits horrifying new heights.

18. Pre-Nuptial (s1 e9)

Succession is at its best when it throws all its characters together for a fancy event. On paper, Pre-Nuptial exists to simply ramp up the tensions ahead of the season one finale. But it does so in such a wildly baroque way that you have to stand back and applaud. Tom was put through so many slights and humiliations from his soon-to-be family here that you can forgive his later betrayals.



Mismatched ... Matthew Macfadyen as Tom Wambsgans and Sarah Snook as Shiv Roy, season two episode two. Photograph: HBO

17. Retired Janitors of Idaho (s3 e5)

Also known as the episode where Logan Roy has a urinary tract infection and becomes, to quote his children, “piss mad”. The episode performs a neat trick, both being incredibly funny while reminding us that Logan Roy probably won’t live for ever.

16. Vaulter (s2 e2)

Vaulter has little connection to the rest of the series, but it is one of the most brutal takedowns of online media companies you will ever see. Vaulter – essentially the hybrid baby of Buzzfeed and Vice – is juvenile and self-congratulatory, and colossally overvalued by legacy media outlets. As soon as employees start to unionise, the whole site is shut down without warning. For many young journalists, Vaulter hit uncomfortably close to home.

15. Return (s2 e7)

Like it or not, Kendall is the main character of Succession, and Return is where he is most brutally put through it. His father forces him to visit the family of the waiter whose death he was responsible for. Then his mother abandons him via a handwritten note. No wonder Kendall turned out like he did.

14. Living+ (s4 e6)

Here, Kendall gets the taste of victory for once. Charged with selling investors on a haywire scheme – a gated community where all the residents will live for ever – the episode set up the seeds for Kendall's downfall. And then, with a manic glint in his eye, he somehow pulls it off.



Best in show? ... Kieran Culkin as Roman Roy, season three episode nine.
Photograph: Graeme Hunter

13. Prague (s1 e8)

Given the emotional torment of later episodes, there's something fun and breezy about Prague. This is the one where Tom eats his own ejaculate at his stag party.

12. Church and State (s4 e9)

For a penultimate episode – especially for those of us invested in how Succession actually ends – this was a frustrating 73 minutes, with very little momentum. But as a showcase for the sheer talent Succession has at its disposal, the funeral of Logan Roy couldn't be better. It had series-best performances, coupled with a script by [Jesse Armstrong](#) that deserves to be carved into marble. What a wrenching, visceral watch.

11. Too Much Birthday (s3 e7)

Kendall spent much of season three a dead man walking, surrounded by more on-the-nose suicide metaphors than the last half of [Mad Men](#) combined. His messiah complex became overloaded by the hollow excesses of the birthday party until you knew something awful was going to happen, but you didn't know what or when. In the end, Kendall suffered a complete breakdown – and you had to remind yourself to breathe as the end credits rolled.

10. Connor's Wedding (s4 e3)

The big one. The episode that launched a thousand online thinkpieces about spoiler etiquette. This was (and look away now if you still haven't seen it, you weirdo) The One Where Logan Roy Dies. His death wasn't exactly a surprise – you can't have a succession unless the guy in charge snuffs it – but the execution, playing out in real time without warning as the corpse remained off screen, was masterful.



No Tomelettes for you ... Nicholas Braun as Greg Hirsch, season two episode four. Photograph: Home Box Office/HBO

9. Celebration (s1 e1)

The pilot, in which we are introduced to the selfish, scheming, thoroughly unpleasant Roy clan. If you ever want to show a newcomer what Succession

is actually like, your first choice has to be this episode's softball game, in which Roman Roy taunts a child with the promise of a million dollars then reneges, instead paying him off with an expensive watch and an NDA.

8. All the Bells Say (s3 e9)

The Roy siblings finally put their pettiness behind them to rally with Kendall against Logan, but Logan recruits their mother (and Shiv's husband) to cut them out of the family business for good. A masterly, seismic finale.

7. Hunting (s2 e3)

Succession's biggest gift is its ability to force you to shift allegiances between the characters. By the end of Logan Roy's life, you could broadly see why he was so disappointed in his entitled, inept offsprings. In season two, though, he was nothing short of TV's greatest villain. And make no mistake, this episode – in which he makes his family and underlings crawl on the floor making pig noises while he hurls sausages at them – saw Logan at his most villainous.

6. Dundee (s2 e8)

Not just the episode where Kendall raps for his father, but the greatest episode of television where someone raps for their father ever.

5. Nobody Is Ever Missing (s1 e10)

Although this was the episode where Shiv told Tom she wanted an open relationship on their wedding night, you'll remember this for the car crash. When the waiter dies and Kendall flees the scene. The only way out is to ask his father to cover it up. Logan agrees but, in doing so, ensures that Kendall will be for ever under his power. A bleak, incredible way to end a season of TV.



An open relationship, you say? ... Tom and Shiv's wedding. Photograph: HBO

4. Which Side Are You On? (s1 e6)

The first truly great episode of Succession. Kendall has slowly arranged the pieces to take down his father with a no-confidence vote, but the motion fails due to the heft of Logan's intimidating presence. He barks, he cajoles, he threatens. A masterclass of menace.

3. Austerlitz (s1 e7)

This is the episode where the warring Roy family retreat to Connor's New Mexico ranch for a group therapy session. The genius here lies in its ending; after an hour of listening to his rich, cosseted children whine about their birthright, Logan retreats to a pool by himself and removes his shirt. He is riddled with ancient scars, presumably at the hands of his abusive uncle. For better or worse, they are what made Logan Roy. You will never see a moment of character exposition as elegant.



Genuinely disturbing ... the Succession season four finale. Photograph: HBO

2. With Open Eyes (s4 e10)

Jesse Armstrong has long said that the title of the series was a promise, and this is what the finale delivered. But the story of who controls Waystar Royco was never the real story. This was a show about siblings, and the final episode showed us this in all its messy glory. It was warm and silly, then bloodthirsty and genuinely disturbing. The final scene of the Roy kids together was one of the most agonising you will ever see. Just incredible.

1. This Is Not for Tears (s2 e10)

In the end, though, this – the season two finale, the one on the yacht – is just too packed with classic moments not to win. The blood sacrifice discussion. Tom eating Logan's chicken. Logan telling Kendall he isn't a "killer", and Kendall retaliating by publicly burning Logan at the stake. Logan's enigmatic smile at his son's betrayal. Was it pride? Fear? Excitement at finally meeting a worthy opponent? Either way, this episode is the reason you love Succession. God, what a show.

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Firecrotch and Normcore are back – for now ... Tom and Shiv in Succession. Photograph: HBO

[Succession: episode by episode](#)[Succession](#)

Succession recap: the finale – probably the most feel-bad ending in TV history

Depressingly realistic but furious and heartbreaking from start to finish, the power balance truly tipped in the finale – and somehow became even more toxic

[Michael Hogan](#)

Mon 29 May 2023 17.40 EDTLast modified on Mon 29 May 2023 18.15 EDT

Spoiler alert: this recap is for people watching [Succession](#) season four. Don't read on unless you've watched the finale, episode 10.

“Carpe the diem, people.” As the curtain came down on the sweary super-rich saga, the sibs self-sabotaged one last time. Here’s your board report on the feature-length finale, titled With Open Eyes …

Early bird catches the Rome

The Roy siblings were scattered. With regulatory concerns about GoJo’s takeover of Waystar receding, Kendall (Jeremy Strong) scrambled to gather support to stop the sale at board level. Meanwhile, sister Shiv (Sarah Snook) schemed for the other side. Behind her back, though, barefoot tech bro Lukas Matsson (Alexander Skarsgård) was sounding out candidates for the US CEO position she assumed was hers. A magazine cartoon of Shiv pulling his strings didn’t help.

That only left Roman (Kieran Culkin), physically and emotionally bruised after imploding at their father’s funeral. Would he even turn up for the vote? Via double agent Greg (Nicholas Braun) and various “ratfuckers”, Kendall got wind that Roman was licking his wounds in Barbados – where their mother, Lady Caroline Collingwood (Harriet Walter), had invited them for a “Caribbean air-clear”. Kendall told his replacement PA, AKA “New Jess”, that he was flying down.



The troika, the trio ... Kendall, Shiv and Roman Roy. Photograph: HBO

Little did he know that Shiv was a few hours ahead, hoping to lure Roman over for “unanimity across the board”. From the PJ, she called estranged husband Tom Wambsgans (Matthew Macfadyen), who was terrified of getting shit-canned by the new regime. She assured him she’d “do her best” before floating the idea of a marital reconciliation. Tom sat on the fence, leaving Shiv a blend of heartbreak and fury. Sarah Snook deserves an Emmy for her eye-work alone this season.

Putting the barbs into Barbados



Ready for a Caribbean air-clear? ... Lady Caroline. Photograph: HBO

In tropical paradise, Lady Caroline looked after the “fragile” Roman the best way she knew how – by delegating it all to her husband Peter Munion (Pip Torrens). Kendall arrived, shouting about the deal pivoting on Roman’s vote. In contrast to Ken’s stress, Shiv was smug. “I won,” she gloated. “Take it like a man and eat it.”

Back in Manhattan, Tom had his third “vibe-hang” with Matsson (“more hanging than a dictator’s birthday”). Fearing he was failing the audition, Tom took out his frustrations on whipping boy Greg. Even if he hung on to his job, his \$200k salary (“the highest-paid assistant in human history”) would be decimated. Matsson suddenly levelled with Tom. Shiv was too pushy, too smart and their sexual chemistry was distracting. Misogynistic, much? He offered the US CEO gig to Tom, reasoning: “Why don’t I get the guy who put the baby inside her, instead of the baby lady?” He needed a “pain sponge” who could shield him from blowback and Tom had a high punishment threshold.

As they celebrated with vodka shots, Greg slyly used an app to translate their Swedish chat about binning Shiv and fed the intel back to Kendall. It was the silver bullet he needed. Saving his siblings from an excruciating dinnertime pitch by Munion’s friend Jonathan – who’d flown in from tax

exile in Monaco – Kendall said Matsson was interviewing alternative CEOs. When disbelieving Shiv confirmed that her name had been deleted from the draft deal announcement, there was an off-camera cry of “motherfucker!”. Matsson had “played her like a pregnant cello” ... but now it was game on.

To kill or crown the king?

With Shiv back, the siblings formed a powerful voting bloc. They needed to present a coherent plan to the board, including a credible leader. Not “a troika, a trio”, not “the incredible fuck brother bandwagon”, not “a cop-out at the fudge factory”. Kendall was the obvious choice – partly because Logan “sat me down in the Candy Kitchen in Bridgehampton when I was seven” and said he was heir. There’s an image to conjure with.



The happiest scene ever? ... Succession. Photograph: HBO

Roman insisted that Logan had said it to him most recently. “He offered it to me too,” piped up Shiv. It was playground squabbling but gradually logic prevailed. Roman didn’t really want it. Shiv had been working for the other side. As Kendall said: “If we wanna hold on to this company, it’s me.” They’d rule over separate fiefdoms: Shiv could change the world with the news division, Roman could disrupt with social media. As they anointed

Kendall king, Roman said: “It’s haunted, cursed and nothing will ever go right but enjoy your bauble.”

There followed one of Succession’s happiest ever family scenes as the siblings horsed around. They impersonated Kendall and joked about murdering him. They mixed “a meal for a king” from random kitchen ingredients, made him down the blended goop, then tipped it over his head. Mocking Peter’s “special cheese” and “frozen nobbies”, they were scolded by their mother for being noisy. Their naughtiness was endearing, but next morning it was back to business.

The Antiques Shitshow



Time for a sticker perambulation circuit! ... Connor and Willa. Photograph: HBO

Just time for a stop-off at “the Great Reallocation”. At Logan’s apartment, new owner Connor (Alan Ruck) presided over a “sticker perambulation circuit” to claim heirlooms. Con was set to relocate to Slovenia, while aspiring playwright wife Willa (Justine Lupe) stayed off-Broadway. When Shiv faux-casually mentioned that ongoing court cases over the Wisconsin result meant that crypto-fascist Jeryd Mencken might not win power and

Con's ambassadorship wouldn't happen, Willa was crestfallen. She'd clearly fancied a long-distance relationship.

Cue another warm family scene as they sat down to watch a home video. Scene-stealing from beyond the grave, Logan did his party piece: reciting "the loser's list" of failed presidential candidates. Gerri (J Smith Cameron) performed a lewd limerick. Karl (David Rasche) crooned Robert Burns' Green Grow the Rashes. As Logan joined in and Kerry (Zoë Winters) rested her head on his shoulder, the siblings welled up. Their unity wouldn't last long.

Tom admitted to Shiv that the CEO was going to be him instead. Betrayed by her husband once again, she was newly galvanised to tank the deal. Tom berated Greg for his treachery and the Disgusting Brothers had the worst on-screen fight since Colin Firth v Hugh Grant in Bridget Jones's Diary. He told Matsson they had a "big fucking problem". "Wake up, zombies," bawled Matsson at his team. "Time to activate." Boardroom battle loomed.

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'The losers never triumph'

As the sibs swaggered into Waystar HQ, it was all systems go. Chairperson Frank (Peter Friedman) ran around “like his testicles were on fire”. PR chief Karolina (Dagmara Domińczyk) hailed it as a “chance to change the culture”, which happened to include sacking her boss Hugo (Fisher Stevens). “Activist backtivist” Stewy (Arian Moayed) was on-side. But it was the siblings who wobbled.

Rattled by the sight of Gerri, Roman became tearful that it could have been him but he’d “pussied out”. Kendall clutched him in such a tight bear-hug that Romey’s forehead stitches popped. If it was a power move, he was cowed for now. Come the vote, it was Shiv’s turn. With the count tied at 6-6, she had the casting decision but dramatically stormed out. Just when we thought we might get a happy-ish ending, sibling rivalry reared its head. “I don’t think you’d be good at this,” she told Kendall coldly. “I love you but I can’t fucking stomach you.” She wanted the job, didn’t want him to have it, but also knew he wasn’t capable.

As he pleaded, Pinkie dropped her bombshell: “You can’t be CEO because you killed someone.” Chekhov’s dead waiter had to be brandished some time. Deep in denial, Kendall feebly claimed the Chappaquiddick-echoing car crash never happened. “I’m the eldest boy!” he declared pathetically. Now Roman turned too, taunting Kendall that he wasn’t “the bloodline” because he wasn’t the biological father of his children. The fight turned physical in full view of their colleagues. They really weren’t serious people. The vote went 7-6 against the Roys. Desolate Kendall departed. He’d sat in his father’s chair for all of an hour. Nobody does a haunted corridor walk like Jeremy Strong.

Jubilant in his polo neck of power, Matsson arrived for a deal-signing photo op, Tom in tow to survey his new fiefdom. Golden parachutes beckoned for Karl and Frank but he’d bring back Gerri. What of quad squaddie Greg Sprinkles? Emperor Nero couldn’t be without his Sporus. He stuck a sticker on the leggy princeling’s forehead, signalling ownership.

The final fuck-off



Better off out? ... Roman Roy. Photograph: HBO

A flip-flopping, feel-bad ending but a masterly one. True to form, the scions were their own worst enemy, backstabbing each other and handing power to an outsider. Roman had asked Shiv in Barbados, “Who do you think Dad actually wanted to give it to?” “I don’t think any of us,” she’d replied. He got his wish.

Roman sat alone at a bar, sipping a martini and smiling ruefully. Realising he was better off out, it hinted at a return to his dissolute party lifestyle. Tom rode home with Shiv, proffering his hand like an alpha monarch. As she half-heartedly took it, the power balance in their toxic marriage had tilted. “Firecrotch and Normcore” were back. For now.

Finally, crumpled Kendall walked through a park, bodyguard Colin (Scott Nicholson) hovering behind as he had with Logan. As he gazed out at the choppy, slate-grey Hudson river – water has long been an ominous motif for Kendall – his desperate words to Shiv echoed: “If I don’t get to do this, I might die.” He wasn’t underlined, he was crossed out. A psychic death, if not yet a physical one. Is that a tear in your eye or bodega wasabi?

The heir apparent



Tom-Wam for the win ... Succession. Photograph: David M Russell/HBO

Tom-Wam wins. Proof that it's sometimes the "interchangeable empty suits" who rise to the top. A depressingly realistic resolution. Bring on the insincere handshakes and biodynamic bubbly.

Line of the week

Amid the Shakespearean tragedy and dynastic dysfunction, a light moment was Shiv's comeback to Roman's talk of late-night paternal promises: "Hmm, persuasive. What else did he say when no one was around? That he was the Zodiac Killer? That he did Tupac?" Pics or it didn't happen indeed.

Notes and observations

- All three previous series finale titles – Nobody Is Ever Missing, This Is Not for Tears, All the Bells Say - are lines from John Berryman's poem [Dream Song 29](#). With Open Eyes completes the set.
- Lots of Anglophile touches in Jesse Armstrong's farewell script, from Branston Pickle to Black Lace's Agadoo, Pink Floyd pooing in swimming pools, to the siblings' Dick Van Dyke accents.

- Lots of knowing callbacks too. Lawrence Yee resurfaced from the Vaulter storyline. Shiv spat in Kendall's drink, as she did his notebook. Kendall even called, "Oh Romey, where are you?" in an echo of his season-opening line.
- A closing caption read "In loving memory of Ellen Tam", the show's late and much-loved assistant editor.
- On the wrap day for Alan Ruck and Justine Lupe, his sign-off speech included "the Roy family toast": "Here's to you, and here's to me/The best of friends we'll always be/But if someday we disagree/Fuck off."

Thanks for your witty company, Roy-alists. I'll miss you almost as much as I'll miss the virtuoso swearing. For one last time, please leave your thoughts, theories and farewells below.

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Elizabeth Holmes, founder and CEO of Theranos. Photograph: Jeff Chiu/AP

[Elizabeth Holmes](#)

‘People wanted to believe the fairytale’: the downfall of Elizabeth Holmes

Disgraced founder of fraudulent blood-testing company Theranos begins prison sentence

- [Theranos founder Elizabeth Holmes begins 11-year sentence](#)

Kari Paul in San Francisco

Tue 30 May 2023 14.24 EDTFirst published on Tue 30 May 2023 05.00 EDT

Elizabeth Holmes has begun her prison sentence, in a remarkable fall for a startup founder who had become an icon known far outside Silicon Valley.

Holmes, 39, had once promised to revolutionize the medical world, but was [convicted](#) in January 2022 on four counts of defrauding investors in her

blood-testing company, Theranos.

It was a stunning turn for an entrepreneur who had once riveted the tech world. Holmes dropped out of Stanford University in 2003 at the age of 19, set on developing a company that would turn upside down the field of medical diagnostics.

She had filed a patent for a technology that aimed to perform a wide range of tests on a small amount of blood, a development that would eliminate the need for large blood samples for diagnostics.

For years, Theranos operated in stealth mode. But by 2013, it started attracting widespread attention and Holmes became a media darling, easily recognizable with her distinctive blond hair, black turtlenecks and [husky voice](#).

“Here was a photogenic, telegenic young woman posing as the female Steve Jobs,” Margaret O’Mara, a historian of [Silicon Valley](#) who holds a professorship at the University of Washington, said ahead of Holmes’s trial. “It was an incredibly alluring narrative that everyone wanted to believe.”

“Holmes was going to be the first woman who reached billionaire status and join the pantheon of tech leaders,” said [John Carreyrou](#), the Wall Street Journal reporter whose investigation into the company was key to exposing its lies. “People were really rooting for her – young girls were writing her letters. A lot of people wanted to believe the fairytale, because it would have represented real progress in a very male-dominated world of Silicon Valley.”

Led by Holmes and her co-executive, and former romantic partner, Sunny Balwani, [Theranos](#) would end up raising hundreds of millions of dollars from investors. Big-name board members, including the former US secretary of defense James Mattis and former US secretaries of state George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, gave the company an air of legitimacy, even though behind the scenes it had little scientific proof to show for its claims. Theranos and Walgreens cut a major deal to distribute the company’s testing devices in pharmacies across the US.

At its height, Theranos was valued at more than \$9bn and Holmes became the world's youngest female self-made billionaire in 2015. That same year, however, the fairytale would start to fall apart.

It began with a 2015 [article](#) by Carreyrou that revealed Theranos's revolutionary technology wasn't exactly what it seemed. Over the succeeding months, Carreyrou exposed how the testing devices Holmes said could perform a variety of medical tests with just a drop of blood were not actually being used to perform most of the analyses.

After scrutiny from regulators, Theranos started to retract its tests and recall its machines. Holmes stepped down as CEO in June 2018, with the company dissolving that same year.

Holmes settled with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which accused her of an "elaborate, years-long fraud". But the US government charged Holmes and Balwani with defrauding both investors and patients, and making false claims about the effectiveness of the company's technology.

Delayed by the pandemic and the birth of Holmes's first child, the media-hyped trial kicked off in August 2021. It would last four months, with the jury in the San Jose courtroom hearing testimony from former employees, investors like Mattis and Holmes herself.

In her testimony, Holmes [argued](#) she understood Theranos's technology to be more accurate than it was and her defense team [portrayed](#) her as under the influence of Balwani.

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Still, the jury [convicted](#) her of four counts of defrauding investors, and in November 2022 she was [sentenced](#) to serve more than 11 years in prison.

Holmes's conviction was [a crucial moment](#) in Silicon Valley, the central hub of an industry where the ethos of "fake it till you make it" has reigned for years.

The Silicon Valley investor Jason Calacanis, who was an early backer of major firms like Uber and Robinhood, said the verdict was a "reminder to founders".

"Never lie, never bend the truth, always be honest about where you are at with your traction, especially when raising money," he [tweeted](#).

It was also an important moment for workers in the sector. Several former Theranos employees testified during the trial they had long suspected the company could not deliver on its promises, but felt they could not raise questions and risked being sued if they spoke out.

Holmes had been out on bail since she was indicted, and after her sentencing had unsuccessfully argued she should be able to remain out of custody while she sought a new trial.

In her last weeks of freedom, she broke her media silence with [an extensive profile](#) in the New York Times about her time at Theranos, her mistakes as an entrepreneur, and her life as a mother and partner to her husband, Billy Evans.

Holmes is serving her sentence at the federal prison camp Bryan, a minimum-security facility in Texas. Under federal law, she's required to serve 85% of her sentence, even if it is reduced for good conduct. She faces

three years of supervised release after her sentence ends and has been ordered to pay \$452m in restitution to victims of the fraud.

Bryan prison houses primarily white-collar and non-violent female prisoners, and lacks the fencing and strict rules of higher-security prisons. It is a work-focused program that requires all inmates to hold a job for a minimum of 90 days.

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2023.05.30 - Opinion

- Succession, the inside story: could a few scruffy Brits write a glossy, high-end New York drama? Yes and no
- The mind of the asylum seeker is like an engine – always turning, always trying to find ways to survive
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‘The final season was a sad and sobering one to write.’ Brian Cox as Logan Roy. Photograph: AP

[Opinion](#)[Succession](#)

Succession, the inside story: could a few scruffy Brits write a glossy, high-end New York drama? Yes and no

Georgia Pritchett

When we started writing the hit TV series, we didn’t think anyone would watch it

- This article contains spoilers about the final season of Succession

Tue 30 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 30 May 2023 12.49 EDT

The pilot for [Succession](#) was filmed in New York in November 2016, just as Donald Trump was elected president. I was across the country in Los

Angeles, filming an episode of Veep called Georgia, about the first “free” democratic elections in the former Soviet republic where the opposition wins more votes than there are people. As we filmed our fictional characters listening to the results in disbelief, I stood in my “I’m with her” T-shirt, listening to the real results in disbelief.

A couple of months later, I was prised out of my bottomless pit of despair (and my house) when Jesse Armstrong, who I’d worked with on various comedy shows in the past, asked me to be on the writing team for his new series, which HBO had commissioned.

Armstrong’s original writing team for Succession consisted for the most part of British comedy writers. There was doubt felt in some quarters as to whether this group of scruffy Brits could pull off a glossy, high-end New York drama. And in many ways we couldn’t. After we handed in the scripts for the first few episodes of season one, HBO hastily employed a super-rich consultant, whose job was to explain what it was like to be a billionaire to a group of people who were thrilled that someone was paying for their Pret sandwich.

Rich people don’t wear coats, we were told. Their shoes only ever touch carpet, as they move seamlessly from their cars to their jets to their buildings. Also, crucially, they don’t duck (when getting out of helicopters).

In the first season, I wrote an episode set around Thanksgiving. The rich consultant really went to town on me. I had written a line for Logan’s wife, Marcia, announcing that lunch was ready. But rich people don’t make food-related announcements, apparently. They don’t even know where their kitchens are and they *definitely* don’t say “Who’s for more sprouts?”, while spooning them on to people’s plates.

I wrote another draft accordingly. This just enraged the rich consultant further. “Where on earth did you get the idea that there would be maids in maid uniforms?”

I racked my brains. From Tom and Jerry episodes (or pornography) did not seem like a good answer.

Apparently, rich people have handsome young men in chinos and polo shirts serving them. There's an agency and everything. And don't even get me started on what he thought about my mention of a napkin ring. Let's just say, Logan Roy would have blushed at the language he used.



'We wrote the first season in the belief that nobody would watch the show. And nobody did, really.' Photograph: HBO

Writers' rooms are a strange mixture of group therapy, snacking and confession. You share ideas but also secrets and fears and humiliations in the hope that it might unlock some character or a moment in the show. We would start the day by recounting what we had done and what we had eaten the night before. These accounts ranged from long, exotic anecdotes about going to a star-studded party because the writer in question was godfather to Yoko Ono's dog (one of the Americans) to the rather more brief "Nothing. Potato" (from one of the British writers).

We wrote the first season in the belief that nobody would watch the show. And nobody did, really. Or the second season. It took a global pandemic, and the world's population sitting at home wondering what they could do, for people to really start paying attention.

By the time it came to write the final season, we knew people were watching. When we planned the episodes, we didn't dare write "Logan dies" on the wall in case somebody saw it and leaked it to the press. Instead, we used a codeword: Larry David. Episode three looked like a fun episode – Connor's wedding, Larry David.

Once the scripts are written, it would take nine months to film a season of Succession. That's nine months of early starts and freezing days and night shoots. Hours and hours of waiting. Jeremy Strong, Kieran Culkin and Sarah Snook alone could almost field a Succession Babies football team with the children they have had since the pilot.

The great thing about Armstrong's creation is that every character deserves a spin-off. They each warrant more exploration and could hold our attention. Who wouldn't want to watch a season of Colin? Or Stewy? Or Gerri and Roman? But I suspect that will not happen.

The final season was a sad and sobering one to write. I think Armstrong and the writers felt compelled to deliver on "the promise of the premise". The idea of someone taking over is implicit in the title. It would be wrong not to explore that. By a quirk of fate, when Larry David Larry David-ed – and his children started fighting for the crown on our screens – it was just as, back here in Britain, we were watching King Charles juggling the esoteric medieval paraphernalia of his coronation as he took over the family firm.

Logan Roy was never comfortable with the idea of anybody succeeding him, even a natural heir. Directors of some companies use a "poison pill" as a defence strategy to stop people from acquiring or taking control of their company. In Logan's case, this was not necessary as he had effectively planted a "poison pill" in the DNA of his children. If only they could stick together, if only they could trust one another, they could win. But their father's legacy means that they cannot stick together and they cannot trust each other.

In the final weeks of filming, there was a palpable sense of loss, almost grief, on set. The cast and crew all felt that they had been part of something special and were sad to see it end. And anxious about the future.

And we had come full circle. A deeply troubling presidential election – in the background while we filmed the pilot – came centre-stage in the final few episodes of the show. Logan's legacy, the dangerous delusions of rightwing media, was shown to be toxic and far-reaching. Of far more importance than a fistfight between two spoiled boys. And now, another troubling election in 2024 looms.

- Georgia Pritchett is a writer and co-executive producer on Succession. She has also written for shows such as Veep, The Thick Of It, Miranda, The Shrink Next Door and Smack the Pony
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Illustration by Eleanor Bannister

[The heat or eat diaries](#)[Immigration and asylum](#)

The mind of the asylum seeker is like an engine – always turning, always trying to find ways to survive

[Paul](#)

It feels like the UK government hopes we will just give up and go home. But that would put my family's life at risk

- This article is part of the [Heat or eat diaries](#): a series from the frontline of Britain's cost of living emergency

Tue 30 May 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 31 May 2023 08.37 EDT

Our baby is growing so fast, it's incredible. People have given us clothing for him, but a lot doesn't fit any more. We are trying to find clothes at the cheapest prices or sometimes in charity shops – although they don't have so much for babies. He cries for milk every two hours, but formula is so expensive. Nappies are, too. Even though a jumbo pack of nappies is cheaper, it's difficult to pay for on our budget. When we do invest in the bigger packets, we've got 76 nappies, each for two or three pence less than the regular-sized pack, but it means we can't afford any meat that week. Still, by the next week, we have some nappies left at home and extra money for some chicken or ham.

The mind of the asylum seeker is like an engine, turning and turning, trying to solve different problems and always trying to survive. You start from zero and you have to build a new life in a totally different culture, with a different currency, different language, different products. You're managing your legal case, your budget, your weekly shop. All the prices are rising and our allowance – £40 a week for my wife and I and £5 for our son – is like water in our hands.

Shopping takes a long time. We check prices online, we're always looking for promotions – and we look at our receipts and compare every cost to the week before. We'll prepare a full list and to save a few pounds, I might walk to Tesco, which is 30 minutes away, for some things, take the shopping home, then go back out to Lidl. We have found some foods that are cheaper in the market – like bread rolls, which taste better, too. Being careful this way probably saves us about £5 each week.

I think it's harder for asylum seekers now than it was when we first arrived here, more than two years ago. The focus on people crossing by boat has really made it more difficult. It feels like the government is saying, "We won't provide much support for you; you're not entitled to get a job; we won't give you enough in your weekly budget. Maybe you will feel the pressure and decide to go home." Really, though, it's not possible. I can't just go home when I know my life and my family's life are at risk.

Yesterday I had a reading exam toward my English qualification and I feel confident I'm going to pass. Tomorrow, I have my writing exam. I have to

improve my vocabulary, my grammar; I'm reading books, trying to practise in conversation so that, if the judge gives us permission to remain here, I can look for a job. We're still waiting for our appeal date. I try to avoid thinking about it and focus on my family, my wife, my baby, my studies – but in the end, everything in our life depends on the appeal. You can never forget. Just walking in a park, enjoying the spring flowers, the season, the trees, you'll suddenly remember you're in another country, and in a few weeks someone will decide if you can stay.

Before our baby was born, what helped me most was volunteering at the food bank, helping out in their warehouse. It kept my mind busy, kept me thinking positive things and feeling involved with this society. Now I have to look after my baby and he's my distraction. He is healthy, he's happy, he's a fat little ball! I play with him, cuddle him, go for a walk to a park or a nearby village. He's smiling now for no reason – and we smile back.

- As told to Anna Moore. Paul is in his 30s and is an asylum seeker living in the north of England. Names have been changed
 - The Trussell Trust is an anti-poverty charity that campaigns to end the need for food banks. Show your support at: trusselltrust.org/guardian
 - ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***
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A self-portrait. ‘I found my chosen queer family in Kampala. I took pictures of the people around me, attempting to document their beauty as much as their pain.’ Photograph: DeLovie Kwagala

[Opinion](#)[Global development](#)

I’m heartbroken at my exile from Uganda. Don’t let them erase our queer community

DeLovie Kwagala

Under the new anti-LGBTQ+ law, I face 10 years’ jail for being non-binary. For my art, I could be jailed for another 20 years

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About this content

Tue 30 May 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 30 May 2023 23.20 EDT

I'm being exiled from Uganda. As a non-binary [photographer](#) and [activist](#), I've documented the realities of queer life in my home country for more than seven years. Now the [anti-homosexuality bill](#), which was [signed into law by President Yoweri Museveni on Monday](#), makes both my art and my existence punishable by jail, or even death.

Since the bill was approved by MPs in March, I've spent almost every waking hour [crowdfunding](#) and [campaigning](#) to support my community through this dark period in Uganda's history.

For the past months, I have been in South [Africa](#) trying to renew my visa to stay but it expired and I had to go home to apply again, carefully so I didn't get caught. Here I can't even visit my family home in fear of risking their own safety.

Visibility without protection is a death sentence. Asylum is not an option for me because I can't imagine subjecting my black trans child to a system that continuously fails, over and over again. I have documented horror stories of queer refugees all over the world who have spent years in the system waiting for a status that would allow them the freedom to live. I have fought so hard

for my freedom that risking my life to go back to arrange proper paperwork seemed like the only feasible thing to do.

Having to decide on leaving my child behind, in a country I can only access once my visa is sorted, which takes forever sometimes, or choosing to drag them with me into the abyss of uncertainty, risking their safety, stability and mental health has been one of the difficult decisions I have ever had to make in my life.

The tension is hard. Everyone is scary and no one can be trusted. It feels like the ground can open up and swallow you any time.

I'm not brave or strong. I just don't have a choice, which is to fight, for my existence, my child, my career, and my people.

Queer living in [Uganda](#) has long been difficult. When I was 15, singing bass in the church choir, I was forced to "pray the gay out of me". I wasn't allowed to wear trousers. I had no idea there was any kind of LGBTQ+ community. I thought that *ebisiyaga* – the Lugandan word for homosexuality – was something you ate.

I eventually embraced my sexuality and gender identity, and found my chosen family in the Ugandan capital, Kampala. I took pictures of the people around me, attempting to document their beauty and pain.

But at some point, I needed to breathe. I packed my bags and left for South Africa, where I won a fellowship to document queer stories and had been living for the past two years, along with my child, while still deeply connected to my community at home.

In December, I went back to my home town with the intention to reclaim my childhood memories, to remember little De as I was. I wanted to flaunt my queerness, my newfound balls – oh boy! – green hair and all. I expected the whispers and insults – it didn't surprise me when my grandmother told my father he is a failure for this – but there was something else: the atmosphere had turned.

Mob violence has been escalating. I'm torn, broken and heartbroken

The bill was foreshadowed by a mass-media disinformation campaign fuelled by [religious fundamentalism](#) that destroys life for LGBTQ+ people. It far surpasses the impact of the Anti-Homosexuality Act in 2014, and many Ugandans now believe that being queer is the same as being a paedophile.

Behind this child-protection rhetoric, the harassment and intimidation of LGBTQ+ people is celebrated. When [MPs passed the bill in March](#), they cheered and nodded as they erased us.

The new laws criminalise anyone perceived to be supporting an LGBTQ+ person, from landlords to journalists. My existence is enough to hand me a 10-year prison sentence. For my artwork, deemed to be “promotion of homosexuality”, I face 20 years.

Even before this draconian bill was signed into law, the damage was done. Families who were once supportive turned their backs, fearing for their own safety. After the bill’s first reading, my Ugandan siblings called me to say they had lost their jobs, their homes and were being refused medical treatment.

Mob violence has been escalating. Every day, I receive brutal images of black bodies, naked and bruised. We are being slaughtered in the streets. With nowhere to turn, others have committed suicide. I’m torn, broken and heartbroken.

But I found hope in community. In March, together with other LGBTQ+ Ugandans (who remain anonymous for their own safety) and UK allies from the arts community, in just four days I [crowdfunded](#) almost £15,000 online, to directly support at-risk individuals at home. More than 2,500 people have followed my [hashtagwhatnext](#) campaign on Instagram.

Money raised through [our GoFundMe page](#) and art events in South Africa, Europe and elsewhere will go straight to those who need it most. We’re sending funds to contribute towards costs such as bail for those imprisoned, emergency accommodation, legal and medical fees, visa and transportation costs for those leaving the country.

Let's heal each other in the softest of ways. We are not to be discarded.

Donations can be made to DeLovie Kwagala's crowdfunding page [here](#)

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David Bowie as Ziggy Stardust at Earl's Court exhibition hall in London, 1973. Photograph: Ilpo Musto/Alamy

[Opinion](#)[Culture](#)

Britain's ever-harsher welfare system means that now only the rich can afford to make art

[Alex Niven](#)

Postwar artists wouldn't have had a chance without affordable housing or social security. When will politicians realise that?

Mon 29 May 2023 10.58 EDT Last modified on Mon 29 May 2023 16.22 EDT

When John Lydon sang in 1976 that anarchy was coming to the UK, he wasn't far wrong. Genuine anarchism (a noble political tradition) certainly didn't descend on Britain in the wake of punk rock and Margaret Thatcher's general election victory three years later. But since 1979, the consensus that

the British state should empower individuals through social security (such as the “[council tenancy](#)” Lydon sneered at in Anarchy in the UK) has been steadily unpicked by Thatcher and her successors – a triumph for laissez-faire anti-statism, if not quite anarchy itself.

The irony is that countercultural outbursts like punk were really enabled by the statist policies of postwar Britain. For all that countless artists, musicians and writers from the 50s to the 80s saw government as the enemy and thought they were mavericks railing against the system, the flourishing culture of the period was very much a product of the welfare state and its nurturing social infrastructures.

Many in Lydon’s generation went to university or art school without paying anything; others had their fees heavily subsidised by the state. Budgets for local drama and public art projects were far more generous. Beneath all this was the safety net of full employment, dole and affordable housing. These conditions made postwar Britain an ideal breeding ground for confident and adventurous new forms of art, fostering everything from the plays of [Shelagh Delaney](#) to the films of Alan Clarke, the paintings of [Lubaina Himid](#) and the music of David Bowie.

Today, our political system has little sympathy for artists. As the actor Julie Hesmondhalgh said last week, young artists in 2020s Britain are often caught-up in the “[Kafkaesque](#)” [perfect storm](#) of a punitive benefits system, an intractable housing crisis and an unforgiving work culture – all of which can leave very little time or space for creative experiments.



‘As Julie Hesmondhalgh said, opportunities for younger artists on the margins of society are vanishingly few.’ Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

This, surely, is one of the reasons why the most successful creative practitioners in all art forms now tend to be those with access to private resources (money, education, contacts), or else members of older generations who got their big break in earlier, less precarious times. Meanwhile, as Hesmondhalgh rightly argues, opportunities for younger artists on the margins of society – working-class people, disabled people, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, the non-connected – are vanishingly few.

There is an underlying lesson here about the relationship between culture and politics in a civilised society. While politicians involved in recent initiatives like levelling up (remember that?) are fond of endlessly trumpeting the potential of culture to lead the way when it comes to regeneration and reform, there is a sense in which it really should be the other way round.

In other words, if we take the culture of the postwar years as representative of a time when art was unusually good – a view popular even, or rather especially, on the nostalgic right – then it is the political climate of that period, which guaranteed a rare amount of security for artists, that we need

to revive, rather than waiting for culture to lead the way out of [national decline](#).

It is not necessarily a question of increasing government funding for creative initiatives, welcome though that would be. Instead, we need to think at the deepest level about what it takes for a society to be able to regenerate itself and allow the new to be born. Just as the declining birthrate among younger Britons seems far more likely to be due to a hostile social environment than any sudden change in attitudes to parenting, so too we need to look at the fundamental inability of our society to provide basic forms of security – in education, housing, welfare and employment – if we are to understand why it is now so difficult for young innovators in all the arts to achieve breakthrough.

Oscar Wilde once wrote that “the condition of perfection is idleness: the aim of perfection is youth”. Somewhere in this knotted epigram is a profound truth about the vital social importance of allowing young people to explore the world and themselves in their formative years, without them having to worry unduly about imminent pressures of money and work.

If this sort of experience is to be accessible to everyone rather than just a moneyed elite, history tells us that sooner or later the state will have to step in to make it happen. Far from being the enemy of creative freedom, social security in the widest, deepest sense is the practical means by which personally liberating – and, ultimately, socially useful – imaginative ideas are given the space to grow.

- Alex Niven is a lecturer in English literature at Newcastle University and the author of *The North Will Rise Again*

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2023.05.30 - Around the world

- [Kosovo Nato troops injured in clashes with Serb protesters](#)
- [Elizabeth Holmes Theranos founder expected to begin 11-year sentence](#)
- [Myanmar Stateless Rohingya could soon be the ‘new Palestinians’, top UN official warns](#)
- [Kenya Nairobi wrestles with its plastic pollution problem](#)
- [China Malaysia investigates barge suspected of links to looting of British WW2 wrecks](#)

Kosovo: Serb protesters throw teargas at Nato soldiers as internal frictions escalate – video

Kosovo

Kosovo clashes: Nato commander criticises ‘unacceptable’ attacks on troops

Dozens of Italian and Hungarian soldiers from Kfor mission and more than 50 Serbs were injured in clashes over ethnic Albanian mayors taking office

Agencies

Tue 30 May 2023 03.06 EDTFirst published on Mon 29 May 2023 15.20 EDT

More than 30 Nato peacekeeping soldiers defending three town halls in northern Kosovo have been injured in clashes with Serb protesters, while Serbia’s president put the army on the highest level of combat alert.

The tense situation developed after ethnic Albanian mayors took office in northern Kosovo’s Serb-majority area after elections that the Serbs boycotted – a move that led the US and its allies to rebuke Pristina on Friday.

Kfor, the Nato-led peacekeeping mission to [Kosovo](#), condemned the violence. “While countering the most active fringes of the crowd, several soldiers of the Italian and Hungarian Kfor contingent were the subject of unprovoked attacks and sustained trauma wounds with fractures and burns due to the explosion of incendiary devices,” it said in a statement.

Kfor commander, Division General Angelo Michele Ristuccia, criticised the attacks as “unacceptable” and underlined that the [Nato](#) mission will “continue to fulfil its mandate impartially”.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić said 52 Serbs were hurt, three seriously, in the unrest.

Hungary's defence minister said on Facebook that more than 20 Hungarian soldiers were among the wounded, with seven in serious but stable condition.

Eleven Italian soldiers were injured, with three in a serious condition, foreign minister Antonio Tajani said. The country's prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, said: "We will not tolerate further attacks against Kfor. It is essential to avoid further unilateral actions by the Kosovo authorities and for all parties to take a step back to lower tensions".

The US ambassador and European Union envoy have summoned the ethnic Albanian mayors to a meeting in Pristina in a bid to ease tensions.

France said it "condemns this violence in the strongest possible terms and calls on all parties, in particular the Kosovo government, to take immediate steps to reduce tensions".

Kosovo's president, Vjosa Osmani, accused her Serbian counterpart of destabilising Kosovo. "Serb illegal structures turned into criminal gangs have attacked Kosovo police, Kfor officers & journalists. Those who carry out Vučić's orders to destabilise the north of Kosovo must face justice," Osmani tweeted.

In Zvecan, one of the towns affected, Kosovo police – staffed by ethnic Albanians after Serbs quit the force last year – sprayed pepper gas to repel a crowd of Serbs who broke through a security barricade and tried to force their way into the municipality building, witnesses said.

Kosovo police said in a statement that "organised" demonstrators "using violence and throwing teargas, tried to cross the security cordons and make a forced entry into the municipality facility".

"Police were forced to use legal means, such as [pepper] spray, to stop the protesters and bring the situation under control."

Serbs also spray-painted Nato vehicles with the letter “Z”, referring to a Russian sign used in the war in Ukraine.

In Leposavic, close to the border with Serbia, US peacekeeping troops in riot gear placed barbed wire around the town hall to protect it from hundreds of angry Serbs.

Later in the day, protesters threw eggs at a parked car belonging to the new Leposavic mayor.

Vučić, who is the commander in chief of the Serbian armed forces, has raised the army’s combat readiness to the highest level, the defence minister, Miloš Vučević, told reporters.

“This implies that immediately before 2pm [noon GMT], the Serbian armed forces’ chief of the general staff issued additional instructions for the deployment of the army’s units in specific, designated positions,” Vučević said, without elaborating.

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Nato peacekeepers also blocked off the town hall in Zubin Potok to protect it from angry local Serbs, witnesses said.

Igor Simić, the deputy head of the Serb List, the biggest Belgrade-backed Kosovo Serb party, accused Kosovo's prime minister, Albin Kurti, of fuelling tensions in the north.

"We are interested in peace. Albanians who live here are interested in peace, and only he [Kurti] wants to make chaos," Simić told reporters in Zvecan.

Serbs, who comprise a majority in Kosovo's north, have never accepted its 2008 declaration of independence from Serbia and still see Belgrade as their capital more than two decades after the Kosovo Albanian uprising against repressive Serbian rule.

Ethnic Albanians make up more than 90% of the population in Kosovo as a whole, but northern Serbs have long demanded the implementation of an EU-brokered 2013 deal for the creation of an association of autonomous municipalities in their area.

Serbs refused to take part in local elections in April and ethnic Albanian candidates won the mayoralties in four Serb-majority municipalities – including North Mitrovica, where no incidents were reported on Monday – with a 3.5% turnout.

Serbs demand that the Kosovo government remove ethnic Albanian mayors from town halls and allow local administrations financed by Belgrade to resume their work.

On Friday, three out of the four ethnic Albanian mayors were escorted in to their offices by police, who were pelted with rocks and responded with teargas and water cannon to disperse the protesters.

Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, speaking on a visit to Kenya, said that "Serbs are fighting for their rights in northern Kosovo".

"A big explosion is looming in the heart of Europe, where Nato in 1999 carried out an aggression against Yugoslavia," Lavrov said, referring to the 1999 Nato intervention against Belgrade that in effect ended the war between Serb forces and ethnic Albanian guerrillas.

With Agence France-Presse and Reuters

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Theranos founder Elizabeth Holmes turns herself in for 11-year prison term – video

[Theranos](#)

Theranos founder Elizabeth Holmes turns herself in for 11-year prison term

Blood-testing firm's fraud saga sees its end as 39-year-old tech founder reports to federal prison camp

- ['People wanted to believe the fairytale': the downfall of Elizabeth Holmes](#)

[Kari Paul](#) in San Francisco

Tue 30 May 2023 14.12 EDTFirst published on Tue 30 May 2023 05.00 EDT

The [Theranos](#) founder Elizabeth Holmes has turned herself in for an 11-year prison sentence, marking a final chapter in a years-long fraud saga that riveted Silicon Valley.

The 39-year-old tech founder walked into the minimum-security, federal women's prison camp located in Bryan, Texas, on Tuesday afternoon. [Footage captured](#) from outside the facilities shows that she was accompanied by an escort, was not handcuffed and wore a casual outfit. Holmes appeared in good spirits, smiling as she entered the building.

Holmes had been out on bail since she was indicted on fraud charges in 2018 over her role as the head of the failed blood-testing firm. She was convicted in November 2022 on four counts of defrauding investors and sentenced to 11 years and three months in prison.

Under federal law, Holmes is required to serve 85% of the time, even if her sentence is reduced for good conduct. Federal prison camp Bryan, where Holmes has been ordered to serve her sentence, houses primarily white-collar and non-violent female federal prisoners, and lacks the fencing and strict rules of higher-security prisons. It is a work-focused program that requires all inmates to hold a job for a minimum of 90 days.



Holmes arrives to begin serving her prison sentence for defrauding investors. Photograph: Go Nakamura/Reuters

Holmes had attempted to delay serving her sentence, arguing that she should be able to remain out of custody while she seeks a new trial based on alleged wrongdoing by the prosecution. The US district judge Edward Davila denied those requests, stating that a new trial or an overturning of the guilty verdict was unlikely.

Holmes reportedly spent her final days of freedom with her partner, Billy Evans, and their two children. Her trial was originally delayed as she gave birth to her first child in July 2021 and she appeared at her sentencing hearing in November pregnant with her second child, who was born in March.

Sunny Balwani, Holmes's former business and romantic partner, was convicted on all 12 counts of fraud he was charged with, and in April began his 13-year sentence at a prison in California.

The imprisonment of both Theranos figureheads marks the end of the dramatic tale of Theranos – a company Holmes founded in 2003 after dropping out of Stanford University at 19. She promised a revolutionary technology that could run hundreds of health tests on just one drop of blood, amassing millions of dollars in funding from big-name backers like the former secretary of state Henry Kissinger and media mogul Rupert Murdoch.

Theranos was valued at more than \$10bn at its peak in 2014, until reporting in the Wall Street Journal in 2015 revealed shortcomings in the company's core technology – leading the institution to quickly unravel. By 2018, Theranos had dissolved. John Carreyrou, the reporter who broke the story for the Journal, responded to Holmes reporting to prison on Tuesday, [tweeting](#) “Bad Blood, the final final chapter”, a reference to his book of the same name.

The dramatic trial of Holmes lasted 18 weeks, featuring testimony from high-profile Theranos investors including the former defense secretary James Mattis. Throughout the proceedings, the defense team painted Holmes as an ambitious and naive young founder who was unaware of the extent to which Theranos's technology was malfunctioning. Before her sentencing, Holmes expressed regret for letting down “the people who believed in us”.



The federal prison camp where Holmes will serve an 11-year sentence.
Photograph: Michael Wyke/AP

“I am devastated by my failings,” she said. “Every day for the past years I have felt deep pain for what people went through because I failed them. I regret my failings with every cell of my body.”

The harsh sentencing – much longer than the 18 months of house arrest requested by Holmes’s team – is thought to have set a new precedent in Silicon Valley and its hype cycle that enabled Theranos to garner as much success as it did with so few checks and balances.

Holmes, meanwhile, has embarked on a campaign to rehabilitate her image, breaking seven years of media silence with [an extensive profile](#) in the New York Times on her new life as “Liz” – a devoted mother who has abandoned her signature baritone speaking voice.

She will face three years of supervised release after her sentence ends and has been ordered to pay \$452m in restitution to victims of the fraud.

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Rohingya refugees near Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. The UN special rapporteur found people in a 'state of desperation' on a recent visit.
Photograph: Suzauddin Rubel/AP

[Global development](#)

Stateless Rohingya could soon be the 'new Palestinians', top UN official warns

Special rapporteur Olivier De Shutter calls for action on neglected crisis after finding 'absolutely terrible' conditions on visit to Cox's Bazar camps in Bangladesh

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[Rebecca Ratcliffe](#)

Tue 30 May 2023 01.30 EDT Last modified on Tue 30 May 2023 02.16 EDT

Rohingya refugees in [Bangladesh](#) are at risk of becoming “the new Palestinians”, according to a UN head, who said they are trapped in a protracted and increasingly neglected crisis.

Olivier De Schutter, UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, said the almost [1 million people living in overcrowded camps in Cox's Bazar](#) should be given the right to work in their host country of Bangladesh, and that forcing them to rely on dwindling international support was not sustainable.

De Schutter, who spoke to the Guardian after a recent visit to Cox's Bazar, said conditions were “absolutely terrible”, and that he had rarely spoken to people in “such a state of desperation”.

The refugees – most of whom fled [brutal crackdowns by the Myanmar military](#) in 2017 – are fenced off from the local community and live in squalid and cramped shelters. The violence against Rohingya provoked international outrage more than five years ago and led to a [genocide case at](#)

[the UN's top court](#), but international donors are now increasingly distracted by crises elsewhere, said De Schutter.

The World Food Programme recently announced it was forced to cut Rohingya refugees' food allowance to just [\\$8 \(£6.50\) a month per person](#), due to a lack of funding.

"If you combine this with the high food-price inflation in recent months, it means that in comparison to the start of the year, the calorie intake and the quality of nutrition for the refugees will degrade significantly. The rate of under-nutrition and malnutrition for children will grow significantly and stunting will continue," De Schutter said.

"But worst of all is the fact that these people depend entirely on humanitarian support.... They are prohibited from working. They are completely stuck," he said.

"People spend their days in complete idleness. As a result, gender-based violence is mounting. Security in the camps is very problematic, with armed gangs controlling drug trafficking across the border of [Myanmar](#), leading to exchange of fire of gangs in the evening," he said.

"It's extremely worrying, and the state of desperation of the families should not be underestimated."

People also face the continual threat of extreme weather events – a danger made worse by rules that ban them from building concrete structures, leaving them in bamboo and tarpaulin shelters. "These camps are in a [very vulnerable situation](#)," said De Schutter.

De Schutter said the Bangladesh government's fear that allowing people to work will encourage [Rohingya](#) to stay longer in the country, burdening public services and reducing job opportunities for others, was misplaced. "If they can work, they can pay taxes, they can start small businesses that can create employment opportunities for others," he said, adding that people had a right to livelihoods.

The Bangladesh government has criticised the international community for failing to press the Myanmar junta to let Rohingya return safely to their homeland, and has pointed to the lack of international funding to support refugees it has hosted.

Earlier this month, a [Rohingya delegation visited Myanmar](#) as part of long-stalled efforts to repatriate people. Hopes of returning have dwindled even further after the [Myanmar military coup in 2021](#).

“Myanmar should be held accountable for creating the conditions that will allow safe repatriation under the right conditions. For the moment, no one believes that these conditions are met,” said De Schutter.

The crisis had fallen below the radar, he said, adding that greater international attention was needed. “Otherwise, these people, in 10 years’ time, they will be the new Palestinians.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/may/30/stateless-rohingya-could-soon-be-the-new-palestinians-top-un-official-warns>



Dandora, Nairobi's main dump, where waste pickers are 'are exposed to death every day'. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[Global development](#)

After a plastic bag ban, Kenya takes another shot at its pollution problem

Despite a single-use bag ban in 2017, Nairobi and its waste collectors are still inundated with plastic. Can a new law pin responsibility on the manufacturers?

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[About this content](#)

[Caroline Kimeu](#) in Nairobi

Tue 30 May 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 30 May 2023 04.54 EDT

In the sprawling dump in east Nairobi, Emmanuel Lucy rummages through glass, metal, leftover food and dirt. The 25-year-old waste collector sorts quickly, picking out plastic bottles with one gloved hand, and throwing them into a large woven sack with the other.

Lucy is one of thousands of workers who sort through Kenya's street and landfill waste for recyclable materials. On a good day at the Dandora dump, he makes 350 Kenya shillings (£2) for several kilograms of plastic bottles, which he sells to recyclers through agents. It's familiar work – he has done it on and off since he was eight years old.

The production of plastic products has [exploded](#) over the past decade. Nairobi, Kenya's capital – with a population of nearly 4.4 million – [generates](#) more than 2,400 tonnes of solid waste every day – a fifth of which is plastic.

“The amount of plastic waste is quite significant,” says Jane Mutune, an environmental studies lecturer at the University of Nairobi.



Trucks arriving at Dandora, where many Kenyans work finding items they can sell. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Kenya banned single-use plastic bags in 2017 – a move that was lauded as groundbreaking. The national environmental authority says [80%](#) of the public have complied with the ban. In 2020, single-use plastics were [prohibited](#) in protected areas such as parks and forests.

Despite the success of the bag ban, it has not been enough to eliminate the country's struggles with pollution, as it did not include many other forms of plastic, including bottles, rubbish bags and takeaway containers.

“We need to be careful that we don’t defeat the essence of the ban by allowing so much [plastic waste] by primary packaging,” says the environmental activist James Wakibia, who pushed for the ban on plastic bags.

“Going down to the river and seeing so many plastic bottles and other kinds of plastic garbage … it frustrates me a lot,” he says. “We need to broaden the campaigns and fight against plastic pollution.”

On the roads to Dandora, plastic litter lines the streets, threatening to block drains during heavy rains.

“The dumpsite is a real menace,” says Gregory Ngugi, who runs a local youth group, the Dandora Youth Multipurpose. “Many of the trucks transport the garbage exposed, so it goes spilling on the road.”



Waste collectors at the dump face huge risks to their health from their work.
Photograph: Ben Curtis/AP

The air around the site is filled with the smell of rancid waste. Garbage collection services in the neighbourhood are informal and woefully inadequate, says Ngugi, so residents often litter or dump household waste by the roadside.

Waste pickers such as Lucy, who play a significant role removing plastic from the streets and landfill, face a tremendous amount of stigma due to their work. The work exposes them to cuts, bacterial infections and diseases such as cholera. Those who sleep and eat at the dump risk coming into contact with toxic substances.

“We are exposed to death every day,” says [John Chweya](#), the chair of the Kenyan National Waste Pickers Association. “Waste pickers do most of the work out of the pollution that companies are bringing to the environment. But we hardly get anything out of the job.”

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Dandora residents fear the expansion of the 12-hectare (30-acre) landfill in the coming years. The land on which it sits used to host a kids' play area and a bar called Peru.

A sustainable waste management [law](#), which will come into force in July, will require companies to reduce the pollution and environmental impacts of the products they introduce into the Kenyan market – either individually or through collective schemes. Previously, businesses were not obliged to take part in waste collection and recycling schemes such as [Petco](#), an initiative created in 2018 after authorities [threatened](#) to ban the production and sale of plastic bottles. Only a few companies signed on, and its membership has remained dismal.



A waste collector carries a sack of plastic bottles to be sold for recycling.
Photograph: Ben Curtis/AP

“We have over 1,000 companies that are producing bottled drinking water in the country, yet our membership … is [only] about 13 or 14 companies,” the Petco CEO, Joyce Gachungi, told the Guardian.

Environmental activists have welcomed the new producer-responsibility legislation. Regulations outlining how the new law will work will be introduced by 2024.

“For the longest time, industries have been running away from responsibility, so this law will put them to task,” says Wakibia.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/may/30/kenya-wrestles-with-its-plastic-pollution-problem>



A China-registered bulk carrier ship detained by Malaysia for anchoring illegally in the waters of east Johor. Photograph: AP

[China](#)

Malaysia investigates Chinese barge suspected of links to looting of British WW2 wrecks

Search of vessel registered in Fuzhou, China, reveals cannon shell suspected to date from second world war

Associated Press

Tue 30 May 2023 02.22 EDT

Malaysia's maritime agency has said it found a cannon shell believed to be from the second world war on a Chinese-registered vessel and was investigating if the barge carrier was involved in the looting of two British warship wrecks in the [South China Sea](#).

The agency [said](#) it detained the vessel registered in Fuzhou, China, on Sunday for anchoring without a permit off southern Johor state, and that an inspection revealed scrap metal and a cannon shell it suspected dated from the second world war. It said there were 32 crew members aboard, including 21 Chinese, 10 from Bangladesh and a Malaysian.

The maritime agency said it believed the rusty cannon shell was linked to the police seizure of dozens of unexploded artillery and other relics at a private scrapyard in Johor. The New Straits Times newspaper reported that the ammunition was believed to be from the warships and that police conducted an on-site controlled explosion of the weapons.

Malaysian media reported that illegal salvage operators were believed to have targeted the HMS Repulse and the HMS Prince of Wales, which were sunk in 1941 by Japanese torpedoes, days after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

A total of 842 sailors died, and the shipwrecks off the coast of central Pahang state are designated war graves. Fishers and divers alerted authorities after spotting a foreign vessel near the area last month.

Pictures and a video released by the agency showed a barge carrier with a large crane and heaps of rusty metal on board. Known as prewar steel, the material from the two warships is valuable and could be smelted for use in manufacturing of some scientific and medical equipment.



This undated photo released by the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) shows scrap metal and an old cannon shell on a Chinese-registered vessel after it was detained in the waters of east Johor. Photograph: AP

The agency said officials from the National Heritage Department and others will work together to identify the cannon shell.

Britain's National Museum of the [Royal Navy](#) said last week it was "distressed and concerned at the apparent vandalism for personal profit".

It was not the first time that the two shipwrecks have been targeted.

The New Straits Times reported that foreign treasure hunters used homemade explosives in 2015 to detonate the heavy steel plates on the ships for easy pickings. Other media said authorities detained a Vietnamese vessel involved in the looting of the wreckage at the time.

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- [Labour Geraint Davies suspended over sexual harassment allegations](#)
- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: investigation into ‘locked’ shelter in Kyiv; exams cancelled in Belgorod region after shelling](#)
- [Afghanistan Australian soldier loses defamation case with judge finding former SAS corporal committed war crimes](#)
- [Explained The war crimes at the heart of the defamation battle](#)

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Geraint Davies said: 'I don't recognise the allegations suggested and do not know who has made them.' Photograph: Richard Townshend/UK Parliament/PA

[Labour](#)

Labour suspends MP Geraint Davies over sexual harassment allegations

Long-serving MP who represents Swansea West faces investigation after claims from five women

- [UK politics live – latest updates](#)

[Aubrey Allegretti](#) Political correspondent
[@breeallegretti](#)

Thu 1 Jun 2023 05.08 EDT Last modified on Thu 1 Jun 2023 05.26 EDT

A long-serving MP has had the [Labour](#) whip suspended after allegations of sexual harassment surfaced from five women stretching back over several

years.

Geraint Davies, who represents Swansea West in the [House of Commons](#), is facing an investigation after the claims made by anonymous alleged victims to the Politico website.

No formal complaints have been made about Davies, due to those who were allegedly targeted being said to have a lack of confidence that they would be taken seriously.

Labour described the claims of “completely unacceptable behaviour” as “incredibly serious” and said it strongly encouraged anyone who wanted to make a formal complaint to come forward.

“Any complainant will have access to an independent support service who provide confidential and independent guidance and advice from external experts throughout the process,” a spokesperson for the party added.

Davies has been contacted for comment but is quoted by [Politico](#) as saying: “I don’t recognise the allegations suggested and do not know who has made them.

“None of them, as far as I know, has been lodged as complaints with the Labour party or parliament. If I have inadvertently caused offence to anyone, then I am naturally sorry as it is important that we share an environment of mutual and equal respect for all.”

Davies has been an MP for decades, first in Croydon Central from 1997 to 2005, until he lost his seat, and then again in Swansea West since 2010.

While never having been a frontbencher, he is a longstanding member of the Commons Welsh affairs committee. He also became interim chair of the environment select committee after the Tory MP Neil Parish stepped down for watching pornography in parliament.

Stephen Kinnock, the shadow immigration minister, said his party and its whips were “very alive” to the problem of harassment in Westminster.

“The key thing is that when something like this happens, a formal complaint must be made,” Kinnock told Times Radio.

“And I do genuinely believe that our whips and our party is very alive to this issue. People get suspended, they lose the whip, investigations take place. I think we need to make that happen as rapidly and effectively as possible and make sure that anyone who does feel that they have a complaint to make, that they know that they can do so in confidence, and that they will be treated with respect and confidentiality and action will be taken.”

Kinnock also emphasised that the abuse of power in politics was “completely and utterly unacceptable”, but voiced hopes that things had improved in recent years.

“I got elected to parliament in 2015. And we’ve of course had many, many very troubling stories since then, people in positions of power who abuse that position, and it’s completely and utterly unacceptable when that happens. I hope things may have improved a bit since the #MeToo movement.”

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Ben Roberts-Smith loses defamation case against newspapers that accused him of war crimes – video

Ben Roberts-Smith

Ben Roberts-Smith loses defamation case, with judge finding former SAS soldier committed war crimes

Justice Anthony Besanko found newspapers established substantial or contextual truth of allegations of murders of unarmed civilians in Afghanistan

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*[Ben Doherty in Sydney](#)
[@bendohertycorro](#)*

Thu 1 Jun 2023 06.40 EDTFirst published on Thu 1 Jun 2023 00.39 EDT

Ben Roberts-Smith VC, Australia's most decorated living soldier, murdered unarmed civilians while serving in the military in Afghanistan, a federal court judge has found.

Sitting in Sydney, Justice Anthony Besanko found that on the balance of probabilities, Roberts-Smith kicked a handcuffed prisoner off a cliff in Darwan in 2012 before ordering a subordinate Australian soldier to shoot the injured man dead.

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And in 2009, Roberts-Smith ordered the killing of an elderly man found hiding in a tunnel in a bombed-out compound codenamed “Whiskey 108”, as well as murdering a disabled man with a prosthetic leg during the same mission, using a para machine gun.

The judgment, which came after a mammoth year-long defamation trial, is not a criminal finding of guilt, but a determination on the civil standard of the “balance of probabilities”.

[A summary of the judgment has been published by the federal court.](#) The full reasons will be published on Monday afternoon, after the commonwealth has checked the judgment for national security concerns.

Lawyers for the three newspapers – the Age, the Sydney Morning Herald and the Canberra Times – who were sued by Roberts-Smith, have asked for several weeks to determine applications around costs of the trial.

The civil judgment is likely to see Roberts-Smith liable to pay millions of dollars in costs to the newspapers. The cost of the trial is estimated to be upwards of \$35m (£18.3m).

The former SAS corporal had taken out a loan, believed to be \$2m, from his employer, Channel Seven owner Kerry Stokes, to fund his defamation case. He appears now almost certain to lose his Victoria Cross medal that he surrendered as collateral.

An appeal by Roberts-Smith to the full bench of the federal court appears likely.

The former soldier was not in the courtroom in Sydney for the judgment. He is currently on the resort island of Bali, Indonesia, with some media publishing screengrabs of him on a sun lounger. He was not under any obligation to attend the hearing.

The judge found it proved that Roberts-Smith was a “criminal” who “broke the moral and legal rules of military engagement” over an incident at Chenartu in 2012, which resulted in the execution of an Afghan man who was being held prisoner.

In his summary Besanko ruled that allegations Roberts-Smith was complicit in further murders in Syahchow and Fasil, all in southern [Afghanistan](#) in 2012, were not proven.

But the judge found the newspapers had proven that Roberts-Smith bullied and assaulted his comrades.

Besanko ruled the newspapers however had failed to prove their allegation that Roberts-Smith committed an act of domestic violence in 2018 against a woman with whom he was having an affair. Nevertheless the newspapers succeeded on a contextual truth defence and their publication of the allegation did not defame him.



Darwan in Uruzgan province of Afghanistan. The village was raided on 11 September 2012 by Australian SAS troops searching for rogue Afghan soldier Hekmatullah, who had killed three Australian soldiers a fortnight earlier. Photograph: Federal court of Australia

Roberts-Smith is Australia's most decorated living soldier and the recipient of the Victoria Cross for "most conspicuous gallantry" during the battle of Tizak in 2010.

He had enjoyed a stellar public reputation, lionised as the exemplar of Australia's ultimately unsuccessful mission to bring peace and prosperity to Afghanistan, held up as the modern embodiment of Australia's Anzac legend. The most famous soldier of his generation, Roberts-Smith was also named Father of the Year and served as chair of the government's Australia Day Council.

But in 2018, the Age, the Sydney Morning Herald and the Canberra Times published a series of articles that alleged he engaged in war crimes, including murdering civilians and ordering subordinate soldiers under his command to kill civilians in so-called "blooding" incidents.

Roberts-Smith sued the newspapers, telling the court their stories portrayed him as a criminal "who broke the moral and legal rules of military engagement" and "disgraced" his country and its army.

The newspapers defended their reporting as true.

The trial heard more than 100 days of evidence over more than a year, including extraordinary testimony of killing performed by Australian soldiers, and of a spiteful, factionalised SAS regiment, deeply riven by internecine fighting over decorations and medals and in thrall, on some evidence, to a "warrior culture" steeped in violence.

Dramatically, three SAS soldiers accused of murder on separate missions refused in court to answer questions about what they did in Afghanistan, objecting on the grounds that any truthful answer they gave would be self-incriminatory. Each was permitted by Besanko not to answer.

The most high-profile allegation proved in court was that Roberts-Smith, on a mission to the southern Afghan village of Darwan in 2012, marched a handcuffed man named Ali Jan to the edge of a 10-metre precipice that dropped down to a dry river bed below.

Roberts-Smith then kicked Ali Jan in the chest, sending him falling backwards over the cliff, his face hitting the cliff as he fell, before he landed on the ground below.



The Hon Justice Anthony Besanko. Photograph: Federal court of Australia

Ali Jan survived the fall, though he was badly injured, and was trying to get to his feet when the Australian soldiers, having walked down a diagonal footpath cut across the cliff, reached him.

Roberts-Smith ordered a soldier under his command, known before the court as Person 11, to shoot Ali Jan dead, an order that was followed. Ali Jan's body was then dragged to a nearby field.

The other major allegation concerned a raid on a bombed-out compound code-named Whiskey 108 in 2009.

Two men were found hiding in a tunnel: one, an elderly man, the other a younger man with a prosthetic leg. The men came out of the tunnel unarmed and surrendered.

Besanko found that Roberts-Smith ordered a junior soldier on his patrol to shoot the old man, before he forcibly manhandled the disabled man outside the walls of the compound where he threw him to the ground and fired his para machine gun into his prone body, killing him.

The disabled man's leg was later souvenired by another soldier and used by Australian SAS troops as a macabre celebratory drinking vessel at their on-

base bar, The Fat Ladies Arms.

The onus of proof in the defamation case rested with the newspapers, who were required to prove to the civil standard of “balance of probabilities” that the allegations they had published were true.

Nick McKenzie and Chris Masters, two of the journalists at the centre of the trial, spoke outside court on Thursday.

“Today is a day of justice,” McKenzie said. “None of the SAS witnesses wanted to go to court. Ben Roberts-Smith brought this case, he came almost every day. But he did not come today. He’s in Bali, doing whatever he’s doing.”

Masters thanked the newspapers and their legal team. “It was a great call back in June 2018 to run this story. I think it will go down in the history of the news business as one of the great calls,” Masters said.

Robert-Smith’s barrister, Arthur Moses SC, said: “We’ll obviously consider the lengthy judgment that his honour has delivered and look at issues.”

Additional reporting by Elias Visontay.

- Guardian Australia will publish a special episode of the podcast [Ben Roberts-Smith v the media](#) on Friday morning. [Subscribe](#) to Ben Roberts-Smith v the media to catch up on the court case and be notified of new episodes
-

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A prominent allegation in the defamation trial brought by Ben Roberts-Smith concerned a 2009 raid on a bombed-out Afghanistan compound codenamed Whiskey 108, pictured, within which a secret tunnel was found. Photograph: Australian government

[Ben Roberts-Smith](#)

[Explainer](#)

Ben Roberts-Smith: the murders and war crimes at the heart of a seismic defamation battle

Judge found the newspapers had proven their defence of substantial truth on allegations of a murder and two executions

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[Elias Visontay](#) and [Ben Doherty](#)

Thu 1 Jun 2023 05.32 EDT Last modified on Thu 1 Jun 2023 23.15 EDT

In an extraordinary judgment, the federal court has found that Australia's most decorated war hero, [Ben Roberts-Smith](#), murdered unarmed civilians while serving in Afghanistan, and that reporting painting him as a bully was substantially proven.

The decision was the result of a landmark defamation case that Roberts-Smith brought against reporting by three newspapers – the Sydney Morning Herald, the Age and the Canberra Times – from 2018 that he claimed falsely portrayed him as a criminal who broke the legal rules of military engagement.

The judgment on Thursday brought the lengthy trial to an end, after it heard more than 100 days of evidence over more than a year, including from fellow Special Air Service (SAS) members giving evidence in court.

Roberts-Smith consistently denied any wrongdoing in any of the allegations made by the newspapers, and claimed their reportage had conveyed 14 defamatory imputations.

These imputations related to several events that took place while he served in [Afghanistan](#), as well as behaviour in Australia.

Here's a breakdown of what Justice Anthony Besanko found:

Death at Darwan

One of the key allegations in the trial was that Roberts-Smith, on a mission to the southern Afghan village of Darwan in 2012, marched a handcuffed man named Ali Jan to stand above a 10-metre-high cliff that dropped down to a dry riverbed below. The court heard that Roberts-Smith then “walked forward and kicked the individual in the chest”.

The court heard the man survived the fall but was significantly injured. Roberts-Smith then allegedly ordered a subordinate soldier to shoot Ali Jan dead before the body was dragged into a cornfield.

Robert-Smith argued the man was a scout for enemy insurgents and therefore a legitimate target.

Both parties agreed that reportage of this event conveyed imputations that Roberts-Smith “murdered an unarmed and defenceless Afghan civilian”, that he “broke the moral and legal rules of military engagement and is therefore a criminal”, and that he “disgraced his country Australia and the Australian army by his conduct as a member of the SASR [Special Air Service regiment] in Afghanistan”.

Judgment: Besanko found that, on the balance of probabilities, the newspapers established the substantial truth of these imputations.

Whiskey 108

Another prominent allegation concerned a 2009 raid on a bombed-out compound codenamed Whiskey 108, within which a secret tunnel was found.

The newspapers’ reporting alleged two men were found hiding in the tunnel: one an elderly man, the other a younger man with a prosthetic leg, and that they came out of the tunnel unarmed and surrendered. Roberts-Smith allegedly ordered a junior soldier on his patrol to execute the elderly man, before Roberts-Smith himself murdered the younger disabled man with his Para machine gun.

The former war hero gave evidence that two men were killed legitimately, in accordance with the Australian troops’ rules of engagement, as they were Taliban members trying to flee the compound.

In addition to these allegations, Roberts-Smith claimed this reporting conveyed imputations that “having committed murder by machine gunning a man in Afghanistan with a prosthetic leg, is so callous and inhumane that he took the prosthetic leg back to Australia and encouraged his soldiers to use it as a novelty beer-drinking vessel”.

Judgment: Besanko found that, on the balance of probabilities, the newspapers established the substantial truth of these imputations.

Domestic violence claims

Also part of the trial was an allegation that Roberts-Smith punched a woman with whom he was having an affair after an argument after a dinner at Parliament House in Canberra in 2018.

The woman told the court that after telling Roberts-Smith her head hurt after falling down stairs, he replied “it’s going to fucking hurt more” or “I’ll show you hurt” before punching her.

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Roberts-Smith denied ever hitting her, and claimed the whole story was a fabrication.

In addition to conveying the imputation he committed domestic violence, Roberts-Smith claimed the articles imputed that he was “a hypocrite who publicly supported Rosie Batty, a domestic violence campaigner, when in private he abused a woman”.

Judgment: Besanko said the newspapers had not proved these allegations. In his judgment, Besanko said he was not satisfied the evidence the court heard was “sufficiently reliable to form the basis of a finding that the assault occurred”. However, he found they could rely on the defence of contextual truth for these imputations. That is, the articles containing the allegations could not further harm Roberts-Smith’s reputation because other, more serious imputations contained in the article were found to be substantially true.

Murders at Fasil and Syahchow

The newspapers also reported allegations that Roberts-Smith was complicit in further murders of two Afghan men who were under control – during missions to Syahchow and Fasil in southern Afghanistan in 2012.

Judgment: Besanko found that the newspapers did not establish the particulars of truth related to these alleged murders.

Bullying and threatening fellow soldiers

Reporting alleged that Roberts-Smith “engaged in a campaign of bullying against a small and quiet soldier called Trooper M which included threats of violence”, the soldier claimed.

Judgment: Besanko found the newspapers were able to prove the truth of this allegation.

The newspapers also reported that Roberts-Smith allegedly threatened to report a soldier known as Trooper J to the international criminal court for firing at civilians, unless Trooper J provided an account of a friendly fire incident that was consistent with Roberts-Smith’s version of events.

Judgment: Besanko was not satisfied this was sufficiently proven. However, he found the newspapers could rely on the defence of contextual truth for this imputation.

Assaults

The newspapers' reporting alleged multiple incidents of Roberts-Smith either assaulting or authorising the assault of unarmed Afghan civilians.

One incident was in 2010, with newspapers alleging he "bashed an unarmed Afghan in the face with his fists and in the stomach with his knee and in so doing alarmed two patrol commanders to the extent that they ordered him to back off".

In 2012, Roberts-Smtih, as a patrol commander, allegedly authorised the assault of an unarmed Afghan who was being held in custody and posed no threat. Also in 2012, Roberts-Smith was alleged to have assaulted an unarmed Afghan.

Judgment: Besanko found the newspapers established the substantial truth of these imputations.

- Guardian Australia published a special episode of the podcast [Ben Roberts-Smith v the media](#) on Friday morning. [Subscribe](#) to Ben Roberts-Smith v the media to catch up on the court case and be notified of new episodes

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Claire Liu has installed security cameras at her DIY shop. She lost the equivalent of a day's pay to a theft last year. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

[Society](#)

‘One guy uses us like a larder’: the British shoplifting crisis – as seen from the tills

In Britain, shop thefts have more than doubled in the past six years, reaching 8m in 2022. We spent a day talking to shopkeepers in Manchester, where raids on the shelves are a regular occurrence



Helen Pidd *North of England editor*

Thu 1 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT

Chorlton is one of Manchester’s most aspirational suburbs. Its handsome red-brick semis regularly [sell for £700,000](#) or more. It has a worker-owned, vegetarian cooperative that sells locally grown fruit and vegetables, several reiki studios and an artisanal off-licence where one of the bestselling lagers – [locally brewed](#), of course – costs £4 a can.

But Chorlton has a less wholesome side that is best illustrated by its branch of Boots, tucked inside a dismal 70s precinct earmarked for demolition at the end of the year. Want some makeup? You will have to ask for it. Every

lipstick, eyeliner, mascara, blusher – everything – is kept in the stockroom, out of public sight and reach. Why? “It keeps getting stolen,” shrugs a shop assistant. “We’ve not had it out for months now.” The thieves had learned when deliveries arrived and would clear them out within minutes.

This small corner of Manchester is no anomaly. The British Retail Consortium (BRC) estimates that there were [8m “theft incidents”](#) in British shops last year, costing £953m. The BRC says shop theft is a “long-term rising trend”, with incidents more than doubling since 2016-17. Meanwhile, reports abound of increasing desperation among customers stealing to feed their children – claims promoted by opposition politicians, but strongly contested by many retailers.

To investigate the scale of the problem, I take a stroll down Chorlton’s main thoroughfare, Barlow Moor Road. The stories I hear en route may seem surprising for a suburb with a knit-your-own-yoghurt reputation: the vintner who keeps a baseball bat behind the counter; the stolen joints of meat hawked around the breakfast tables at the local chain pub; the mini-mart manager who says the police don’t want to deal with the man who lives opposite and comes in every day to steal breakfast, lunch and dinner.

I start at the southern end, near the graveyard that inspired Morrissey to write the lyrics to Cemetery Gates (“A dreaded sunny day ...”). Sitting behind protective screens at Progress convenience store, Lena Rowe is immediately keen to talk. She hands over an A4 sheet of paper she has laminated overnight. It is a printout from her CCTV cameras, purportedly showing two teenage boys stealing drinks after she refused to sell them vapes. She plans to put it up in the window, “just so they know that I know”. She hasn’t decided yet whether to ring the police: “Do you think I should?”



Lena Rowe at Progress convenience store. She posts supposedly incriminating images of thefts in the shop in the hope of deterring crime.
Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Further down the road, Claire Liu, who runs a DIY and household store, has also been busy with her laminator. “THIEVES,” reads the sign in her window, above a photograph of a man with glasses and gelled hair and the message: “How pathetic to steal a pod of fish food worth £1.49. I hope your fishes are all doing well.” Liu does report thieves to the police, but complains that only the most prolific seem to face justice. She is still smarting from an incident last year when a woman came in and stole a box of vapes worth £70 – “a whole day’s wage for me or my partner”.

Shoplifting offences recorded by UK police have remained more or less static over the past decade, at about 300,000 each year. The gulf between those numbers and the 8m incidents logged by retailers suggests not even 4% of shoplifting crimes are reported to the police. [Prosecutions are plummeting](#). In the year to June 2022, 21,279 people were prosecuted in England and Wales for shoplifting, down from 80,352 a decade earlier.

“There remains a perception among some retailers that some police forces do not regard shop theft as a ‘real’ crime, particularly if it is under £200 in value (often perceived as the lower limit before action is taken),” says the

[BRCA's 2023 crime survey](#). “A perception that nothing will happen is probably held not just among retail staff but among repeat offenders, who are a significant proportion of the total, and who are willing to take the risk. There is a strong belief among some of them – supported by ad hoc reports – that even if they appear in court multiple times, the sentence will be so light it will hardly make a difference.”

Should any of Chorlton’s shopkeepers pop into Manchester magistrates court, they are unlikely to emerge in an optimistic frame of mind. I sit in the district judge Bernard Begley’s court for a day as he rattles through dozens of cases, from cannabis cultivation to voyeurism with plenty of shoplifting in between.

There is a weariness to him as he sees who has been led into the dock of court 16 just after lunch. The bearded man behind the bulletproof glass appears ragged in his prison-issue grey tracksuit, as if he has just woken up.

Stephen, the 32-year-old defendant, is back in court because the night before he had gone to the Shell filling station on Barlow Moor Road and stolen six packets of bacon. A clerk reads out the charge, which includes the value of the goods: £18.54. Stephen pleads guilty and then the prosecutor explains that Stephen was “trapped” in the garage by a police community support officer. He tried to avoid arrest by pleading: “Can you just let me go? It’s only bacon.”

Stephen’s lawyer stands up and confirms the judge’s suspicions: his client was in Begley’s court only the previous week on charges of stealing food from Aldi. He is banned from all branches of Aldi and Iceland nationwide. As he is awaiting sentencing for other offences, Begley lets him out on bail so the crimes can be dealt with together: “But if you come across me again before then, there’s only one place for you – understand?” Stephen seems delighted. “Is that it? Oh, top! See you in a bit!” he shouts from behind the glass as he is led off by the dock officers to fetch his belongings.

The next defendant, Lisa, is also no stranger to the court, with 24 convictions, including one for not taking her child to school for almost a year. She is 43, but, like all the shoplifters in court, looks much older, diminished after decades of addiction – alcohol, in her case. Accused of

stealing washing powder and chocolate from Morrisons, she had been arrested and kept in the cells overnight after missing her first court date.

Her tale is typically miserable. She steals not just to buy booze, but also to clear her “considerable debts”, her solicitor tells the court, racked up partly as a result of having to pay [the bedroom tax](#) on her council flat. She was recently evicted and is now sofa surfing with a friend. Begley decides to give her one more chance, releasing her on the condition that she doesn’t darken the door of any Morrisons in the country.

Court 16 is a depressing place to sit. I watch Sabrina, a sunken-cheeked 25-year-old serial shoplifter, admit to stealing £50 of goods from the budget variety store B&M. Her solicitor says she missed her last court date because she was in hospital with an ectopic pregnancy, had recently taken an overdose and was in a controlling and coercive relationship. Then there is Anthony, who pleads guilty to stealing £128-worth of makeup from House of Fraser. “I’m homeless!” he apparently told the security guards. “What else do you expect me to do?” After him comes Wayne, 40, also of no fixed abode, who says he stole £110 of angling equipment from Decathlon to sell to feed himself.

There have been many media reports of “ordinary” people stealing because of the cost of living crisis. This idea is rejected by many retail experts. The Association of Convenience Stores (ACS), the voice of more than 33,500 shops, regularly surveys its members and thinks shoplifting rates are at their highest since they began collecting data in 2012. But, contrary to many media reports, the rise is not due to people stealing “because they are desperate for food to feed their families”, says Chris Noice, ACS’s head of communications.

He highlights [a story about baby formula](#) kept behind tills at some branches of Co-op to stop them being stolen, which was seized upon by various campaign groups as evidence that the cost of living crisis was forcing parents to steal to nourish their babies. “Baby formula is targeted because it’s a high-value item, along with coffee, meat, cheese and alcohol,” says Noice. “It’s stolen to sell on, whether that’s in pubs or on Facebook.

Typically, people are stealing to fund their drug or alcohol habits, and organised crime groups are often involved, too.”

There is a further benefit to stealing baby formula, according to another retail expert: it is used to cut, or bulk out, drugs before they are sold. Talking on the condition of anonymity, she rejects the idea that the cost of living crisis has turned decent people into thieves. “There’s this idea that good people turn bad over night and that’s just not how it works. When people are challenged, they go to food banks, they go to community pantries, they ask for help from friends and family. They don’t suddenly start shoplifting.”

The cost of living crisis may not push many “normal” people into thieving, but it may well make them more likely to buy knocked-off goods at a bargain price without asking too many questions. Plus, inflation has caused a spike in the price of many illegal drugs, as well as everything else, so addicts are stealing more to feed their habits.

Back in Chorlton, the manager of Quality Save, a low-price convenience store next to Boots, is fighting a losing battle against an ever-more-brazen band of shoplifters. “They’re in and out all day, every day, and it’s definitely got worse since Covid,” says the manager with a sigh, her eyes darting down the aisles. The day before, she caught four – an average tally.

She divides shoplifters into three categories. Most problematic are the “prolific thieves” – the regulars who waltz in and out taking the highest-value items to sell on to fund their drug or alcohol habits. “We know their names. They are all banned, but they don’t care,” she says. They go for laundry capsules, coffee, protein powder, booze, meat; anything they can fence quickly and lucratively. Expensive but light is the ideal steal.

There’s a guy who comes in every day, pinching whatever he fancies for every single meal. Police don’t want to know

Then there are the “compulsive shoplifters”. One was caught the previous day with a random collection of loot in her bag, including a gold-plated figurine of Rodney from Only Fools and Horses (£8.99). “She was incredibly upset – she didn’t even know why she had taken it,” says the

manager. “I can imagine her living in a house piled high with stuff. A hoarder.”

The saddest group, the newest cohort, are the “regular” shoppers who simply can’t afford everything they need: “They’re the ones who only put half their goods in their basket and hide the rest in their coats or bags.” They are mortified to be caught, telling staff they can’t make ends meet. The manager insists their number is rising, contrary to the views of the retail experts. She recalls an “older gentleman” who was rumbled the week before for stealing coffee. “But not a big jar, like the drug addicts take. It was the very smallest jar – clearly for himself.”

She points at the shelf. Her middle finger has an odd bend in it, a wound from a tussle with another shoplifter. Not too long ago, another staff member was knocked unconscious. Next month, a 33-year-old woman is going on trial for assaulting two people after being caught allegedly stealing toiletries. “We’ve had staff leave because they can’t cope with the aggression,” says the manager, who has worked at the store for 19 years.

All of the employees to whom I speak, who work for chains in Chorlton, say they are instructed not to chase after shoplifters and certainly not to intervene physically. At the Shell garage, one worker says they could theoretically lock someone in the shop, but that carries its own dangers. The bigger stores rely on CCTV to catch thieves retrospectively, handing footage to the police if and when they have time, in the hope it will help officers identify serial offenders.



Empty makeup displays at Boots the chemist, where items have been removed to prevent shoplifting. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

At a branch of one of the major supermarkets on Barlow Moor Road, workers seem at the end of their tether. They have resorted to starting a WhatsApp group to share intelligence with other traders. Shoplifting is constant and blatant, complains one. “See that flat over there?” he says, pointing across the road. “There’s a guy in there who comes in here literally every day and just treats the shop like his own personal larder, pinching whatever he fancies for every single meal. [Police](#) don’t want to know.”

His colleague recalls going into a nearby pub for a mid-morning breakfast, only to be offered joints of meat – stolen from his own store that morning – from a succession of people going from table to table. Meat is a big target for supermarket thieves. “There’s been times when we put out a delivery, turn our backs and literally the whole chiller has been emptied,” he says. There were [reports this week](#) that some Marks & Spencer food stores are now displaying a single steak at a time. Despite most shops telling me that they have noticed a rise in shoplifting in Chorlton, Greater Manchester police says reported incidents are down. In the first five months of 2023, the force recorded 73 shoplifting offences in Chorlton, compared with 101 in the same period last year.

“Shoplifting remains a priority across our district,” says Sgt Jade Wells, from the Chorlton neighbourhood policing team. “In the past three months, 10 prolific offenders have been arrested – three of these have received custodial sentences and will be subject to criminal behaviour orders upon release, and one is awaiting sentence.”

Among the tactics she says they use to tackle the problem, she lists visible patrols and plainclothes observation. “We work with shopkeepers not only to identify offenders, but also to offer support and advice. The traders also have a direct line of communication with the Chorlton neighbourhood policing team and we will continue to work hard on their behalf.” When the lipsticks are back out at Boots, you will know they have cracked it.

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Fatboy Slim and Eats Everything playing a HomeBass event in Bristol in November 2022. Photograph: Maddie Corleone/@Mads.ac

[Club culture](#)[Dance music](#)

‘It felt like we were in the 90s!’ HomeBass, the white van revving up UK rave culture

The father and son DJ duo have become viral sensations for their guerrilla raves. Now working with brands and major labels, can they keep their countercultural spirit alive?

[Jessica Rawnsey](#)

Thu 1 Jun 2023 01.30 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 08.37 EDT

In a public square in Dalston, east London, out the back of the kind of bog-standard white van more used to transporting fitted kitchens or cleaning supplies, a crowd of ravers are in a jubilant mood, all sweat-sheen and wide smiles. Inside the van DJs spin tunes characteristic of this itinerant party,

dubbed [HomeBass](#): garage, jungle, drum'n'bass. It begins to rain but they remain in place, arms upraised, waiting for the first drop from rising jungle star Nia Archives.

What began with the van pulling up to forest raves during Covid – with all the legal and ethical quandaries that entailed – is now a UK dance music phenomenon. Artists of the calibre of Fatboy Slim, the Ragga Twins and Eats Everything have played out of the HomeBass van. There have been festival takeovers, thousands-strong pop-up raves and subsequent police shutdowns; Sony, MTV and Universal have enlisted HomeBass to add spice to album releases, a record label is in the works and US promoters have been in touch. This weekend they head to a secret Manchester location.

In March 2022, hundreds turned up near Shoreditch station in London just 10 minutes after the location was announced for a guerilla party launched by driving the van across Tower Bridge, later named as a viral moment of the year by BBC Radio 1. “That was when we first felt there’s something amazing here,” says George Fleming, HomeBass’s creative director. “The energy is unmatched. Normally you go to raves and everyone’s got their phones up. This: none of that. People jumping all over each other, arms around strangers, gunfingers everywhere.”



The HomeBass van, with Jhunna, right. Photograph: -

“It felt like we were in the 90s,” adds Jackson Long, who co-founded HomeBass in 2020 alongside his father Si. “It was ridiculous. Even [veteran drum’n’bass DJ] [Bryan Gee](#) was like ‘woah, you guys are bringing it back to the old days. This is how it really happened.’”

The plans of the father and son duo initially didn’t stretch much further than putting on parties for fellow Warwickshire locals, giving young people a chance to let loose amid stifling Covid-19 lockdowns. “We set up in the first lockdown,” explains Jackson, 21. “The main focus was mental health. Everyone was depressed and no one had anything to do.” Si continues: “Kids were absolutely suffering. I’m not going to go into detail but people were dying … really, really bad stuff.”

Si turned the garage into a little “party room” for Jackson and his mates. “Even though we might get fined £10,000, I still went for it,” he says. “I just thought these kids deserve more than this.” They acknowledge the moral stickiness of putting on parties during a pandemic, but argue they had to prioritise youth mental health. Next, Jackson asked his dad if he could “nick his work van”.

Both father and son have dance music form: Si started putting on events in the backrooms of pubs when he was 17 and ran Birmingham’s fondly remembered house night Wobble. He continues to produce acid house under the moniker Silong, and Jackson, who says his dad is his greatest musical inspiration, produces and DJs drum’n’bass and jungle as Jhunna.

It took three weeks to rig up the van: ripping out the interior and installing decks, a soundsystem, neon lighting, and HomeBass branding that imitates the logo of the DIY superstore. Some 300 revellers turned up to the first forest rave – at 5am came the dog walkers and the van was duly packed up, rubbish cleared. Things carried on in the same way for a while. “It was spur of the moment stuff,” says Si. “We’d go, ‘shall we just pop out in the van and see what happens?’

Their spontaneity aims to take raving back to a time when – major label tie-ins notwithstanding – it was both gritty and clandestine. “It gives music

lovers an insight into what the [dance music] industry was built on,” says Fleming. “We want to create a community where anyone can come to the rave,” adds Jackson. “The whole vibe is freedom and acceptance.”

“There’s always someone a bit odd at our events,” chuckles Si. “Could be a 70-year-old guy just walking to the shop and then he’ll jump in and get involved. We’ve had dogs at our raves. Kids.” They remember an eight-year-old in a chicken outfit; a baker busting moves with apron and chef’s hat still on.

A big step up was the Freedom to Dance protest in June 2021 against Covid lockdowns, which its organiser Fleming saw as draconian and harmful to UK nightlife. He invited the van along and 50,000 people, by some estimates, turned up. “The vibe was insane,” Jackson recalls. “Everyone was itching for a rave. One of the craziest days of my life.”

Fleming joined the HomeBass team, [Instagram](#) followers soared and videos racked up millions of views. Jackson dropped one of his own tunes at the protest and a few days later, record label DnB Allstars asked to release it. A string of outdoor parties and brand-sponsored pop-ups followed (Nike funded the Dalston party with Nia Archives).

Do they feel grubby working with brands that leverage their underground vibe to sell stuff, and could it dilute their own? Fleming is pragmatic. “If we’re making it accessible for brands to get behind culture, that’s only a good thing,” he says. “Our culture needs investment. Venues and artists are on their knees … It costs money to put on events and we want to keep them free – how else are we going to pay for them? If it means having a Monster [energy drink] logo on the side of our van, so be it.”



The HomeBass rave in Dalston, east London, in March. Photograph: @theeastlondonphotographer

The UK's music scene was on an unsteady footing even before Covid, and inflation and energy price hikes have only made it worse. Further exacerbated by property developers buying up or pushing out club spaces, the UK has lost about a third of its nightclubs since the start of the pandemic; by some counts, a venue shutters every other day. Hemmed in by a 10% VAT rate and £499m yearly sector expenditure against £500m in revenue – a measly [0.2%](#) profit margin, according to the charity Music Venue Trust – many venues operate in the red, making HomeBass's itinerant van look rather appealing.

“Governments and local authorities are proactively ripping the heart out of our country,” fumes Fleming. “Everything that makes life worth living seems to be getting trampled on and disregarded ... Human connection is what’s on the line. Theatres, clubs, music, that’s an integral part of our country’s cultural identity.”

In October 2022 Ministry of Sound asked HomeBass to do a pop-up for Eats Everything and Fatboy Slim’s track Bristol to Brighton. Si had already messaged Fatboy Slim on Instagram asking if he fancied doing a HomeBass set. His reply: “I’ve been watching you guys. Deffo.”

But on the day, the event spun out of control. Police shut down the first location before the van had even arrived. A second was found and thousands rocked up, with 2,000 more lingering outside after capacity was reached. People started scaling the walls. “We found ourselves in a sort of Titanic situation, where we needed a bigger boat,” says Fleming, mixing his film metaphors. They decided to shut it down.

“I was depressed beyond belief,” admits Fleming. “We realised we’d gone past the point of just giving things a bit of a whirl … If you’re going to do events of that scale, for a brand or record label, you’ve got to do it by the book. It’s a lot more professional now.” At least five stewards, two security guards, and a first aider are present at every event. There are risk assessments, unlicensed events are limited to three to four hours, and usually finish at 10pm to minimise nuisance.

“These days, it’s such a hard industry to get into, everyone’s doing the same thing – if you want to stand out and make a name for yourself you have to take risks,” says Fleming. “And it doesn’t always work out, like it didn’t with Fatboy Slim. But if you take the risk and try to be unique and keep going, you do break through the noise and people gravitate towards it.”

Despite its growth, commercial ambitions and potential for chaos, the HomeBass pair are determined to create a home for underground music, a community for all ravers, and a space to elevate up-and-coming artists. “In the very early days, we’d be in a lay-by or something with five people dancing,” recalls Jackson. “There would be abuse from people on TikTok saying there’s no one there, this van’s a joke … fast forward two years and it’s one of the fastest growing movements in dance music. I never thought a little idea would turn into such a massive part of my life.”

Homebass’s next event is on [4 June, secret location, Manchester](#)

The backlash: how slavery research came under fire

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'It was the most expensive project we've ever done' ... System Shock remake. Photograph: Nightrive Studios

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‘I’m terrified’: Nigtdive Studios boss on remaking System Shock

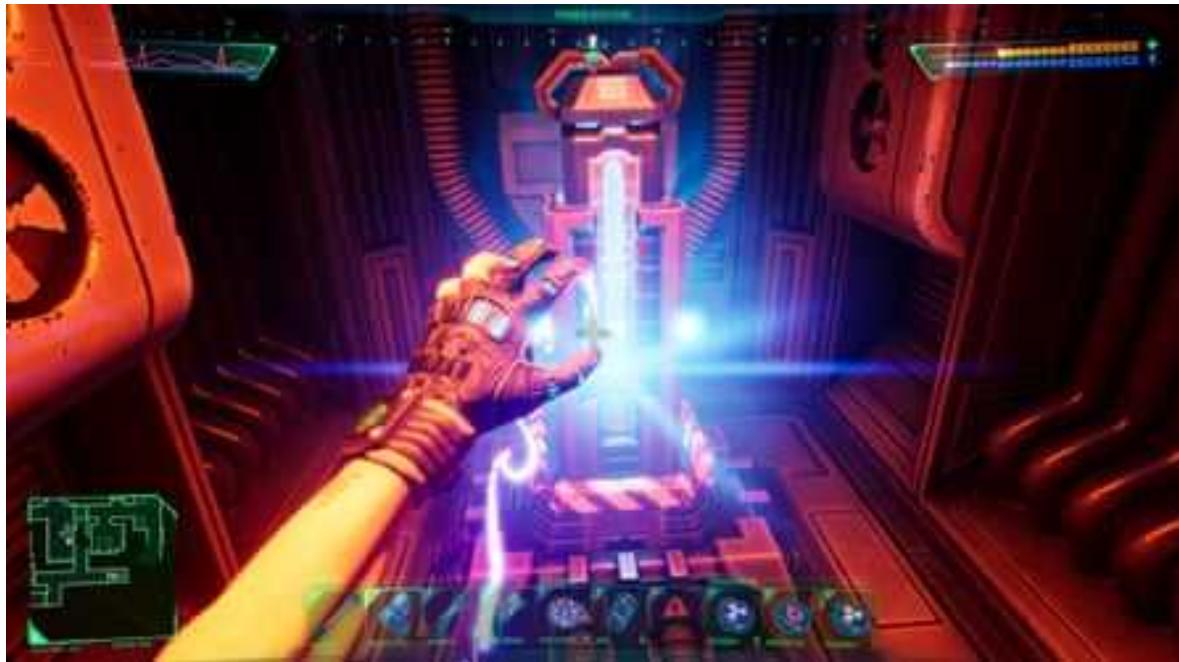
Rick Lane

CEO Stephen Kick tells the eight-year story of his firm’s ambitious reboot of a lost sci-fi horror gaming classic

Thu 1 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 1 Jun 2023 08.00 EDT

“Anxious. Excited. Terrified.” That’s how Stephen Kick, chief executive of Nigtdive Studios, was feeling when I spoke to him last week, before the launch of [System Shock](#). A remake of the 1994 cyberpunk shooter that inspired lauded games from Bioshock to Deus Ex and Dead Space, System Shock was announced in 2015, but was delayed again and again; at one point it was started again from scratch. So Kick is justifiably nervous. “We don’t yet know how this is going to be received,” he says. “Because it took so long … financially, it was the most expensive project that we’ve ever done.”

Happily for Nigtdive Studios, when System Shock was released this week, it became an [instant top seller](#) – and critics [liked it](#), too. But this was never a sure thing. Even though video game remakes are enormously popular, as demonstrated by the success of this year’s reimaging of [Resident Evil 4](#), spending eight years rebuilding another studio’s game is a considerable commitment. For Kick and Nigtdive, System Shock is more than just money-spinning digital necromancy. It is one of the reasons for the studio’s existence.



Making System Shock more accessible is the main goal of this remake.
Photograph: Nightrive Studios

System Shock 2, launched in 1999, is one of Kick's most treasured childhood games and the whole reason Nightrive was founded. In 2012, Kick negotiated the rights to System Shock 2, rescuing it from legal limbo, and it became the first release in Nightrive's now-thriving business of resuscitating old games.

System Shock is Nightrive's most ambitious project, a ground-up remake designed to give players the same feeling that Kick experienced in the 90s. The original System Shock is a significant landmark in game design: [released in 1994, just a year after Doom](#), it was conceived as a more cerebral alternative, challenging players with taking down a malevolent AI on a space station where they could explore freely while scavenging for resources, unearthing clues in messages recorded by the deceased crew, and fighting twisted cyborgs on autonomous patrol around the station.

But as Kick explains, System Shock's sequel is the one that broke through: people aren't so familiar with the original, because it is harder to grapple with. "It's not uncommon to talk to people who played System Shock 2 but have never touched the first one. It's too old, or it's too obtuse. They can't figure out the controls." Kick speaks directly from experience: "I went into

[System Shock] thinking I could move the mouse to look around. That's your first insight into what you're getting into. Nope. You actually have to *drag* the mouse around the viewport.

"The whole [remake] project started because we had been working with a moderator on the [systemshock.org forums](http://systemshock.org/forums), who implemented a mouse look feature for the original game. As soon as you could move around and explore in the ways that you can with any other modern game, that really started to pique our interest."



The studio has tried to strike a balance, modernising where sensible without compromising the spirit of the original System Shock. Photograph: Nightdive Studios

Making System Shock more accessible is the main goal of this remake: the controls and the presentation are where Nightdive has made the most dramatic changes. Elsewhere, the studio has tried to strike a balance, modernising things where sensible without compromising the original's spirit. "One of the hallmarks of the original System Shock is definitely the colour palette," says Kick. "It's bright and vibrant, and it's not necessarily what you would think when you think horror game, especially sci-fi horror. That's definitely something that we wanted to carry over."

The music has been overhauled, from the incongruously upbeat original chiptune to something more foreboding. “The original music was very ... dancey, for the lack of a better term,” says Kick. “We tried to find a balance between having those bright colours, but taking the music in more of a horror [direction]... everybody is dead, no one’s dancing.”

Nightdive has added some flourishes: the player character now has detailed animations when they pick up a weapon or unlock a door using a keycard. When you pick up a USB key, your character now inserts it into a drive port installed on their forearm. It fits System Shock’s cyberpunk theme, but also helps you feel more connected to them even though they are mute. “In keeping with the original, we felt it really important that we had a silent protagonist,” says Kick. “Some of the best protagonists and video games never say a word. But we also wanted to express some character with our avatar there, and that’s why you’ve got those first-person animations.”

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‘We have to sell quite a few copies just to break even’ ... System Shock remake. Photograph: Nightrive Studios

Looking at details like this, you can begin to see why this project has taken as long as it has – though the difficulty of the learning process has also contributed to System Shock’s protracted gestation. While Nightrive has extensive experience in remastering old games, this is the first time the studio has built one itself, and the teething problems were substantial. In 2018, System Shock’s development was rebooted after Nightrive received negative feedback from the game’s Kickstarter backers about an earlier version of the code.

I ask Kick whether Nightrive is likely to attempt such a project again. “It’s really hard to say at this point”, he says. “We have to sell quite a few copies just to break even.” It’s worth noting that Nightrive’s business remastering games is secure, not least because the studio was recently acquired by video game publisher Atari. But the willingness to work on similarly ambitious projects is there.

“If we happen to blow by that number, and the game is extremely profitable, which we’re all hoping for, then yeah,” he says. “We’ve learned a lot over the past years. We can do this better, and we can do it faster.”

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2023.06.01 - Opinion

- Brexit, the environment, energy bills ... it's hard to tell Labour and Tory policies apart
- I'd love to laugh like a baby again. But the best I can hope for is a big sneeze
- US and China are on a collision course that could risk conflict
- Ben Roberts-Smith committed war crimes in my country – his targets are the forgotten victims of Australia's Afghan war



‘Rachel Reeves hopes to convince the public that there is a better way to do Brexit.’ Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

[Opinion](#)[Economic policy](#)

Brexit, the environment, energy bills ... it's hard to tell Labour and Tory policies apart

[Larry Elliott](#)



Cross-party consensus was once called Butskellism. What do we call it when even Rachel Reeves and Jeremy Hunt agree?

Thu 1 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 1 Jun 2023 04.32 EDT

Back in the 1950s, a term was coined to describe the consensus that had allegedly emerged over the way to run the economy in the postwar world. An amalgam of the names of two chancellors of the exchequer – Rab Butler for the Tories and Hugh Gaitskell for [Labour](#) – it became known as Butskellism.

Dispute has raged ever since over whether there was any such thing, yet while it is true that the two main parties had their differences – often serious ones – on certain broad principles they did agree: a mixed economy, the permanence of the welfare state and the need to maintain full employment.

After a fashion, Butskellism lasted until the 1970s, with the governments of Ted Heath and Harold Wilson struggling to keep the postwar show on the road. Its demise was only sealed by a combination of [stagflation](#) and the arrival of Margaret Thatcher.

Whisper it softly, but Butskellism has returned. While there are still areas where the [Conservatives](#) and Labour disagree, these tend to be managerial and technical rather than ideological. On the big issues not much separates them, with both parties shifting towards the centre in recent years. For want of a better word, let's call it Reevuntism in honour of the shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, and the man she wants to replace at the Treasury, Jeremy Hunt (the Economist has gone for Mr Heeves).

One obvious example of Reevuntism is the cross-party consensus over Brexit. Hunt and Reeves were both remainers in the 2016 referendum campaign; both now insist that Brexit can and will be a success. [Neither party](#) wants a second referendum, or even a renegotiation that would involve going back into the single market. Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer are both keen to remove some of the trade friction between the UK and the EU, but that is as far as it goes.

For a variety of reasons, the right's vision of a post-Brexit Britain in which the economy would be made more competitive as a result of lower taxes and deregulation has never materialised. Nor was it the sort of Brexit leave voters in the less well-off parts of the country wanted anyway.

Starmer and Reeves hope to convince the public that there is a better way to do Brexit. They will be helped in this by the second strand of the new consensus: the recognition that a bigger and a more activist state is here to stay.

By no means all Tories are comfortable with the idea of the government running large chunks of the [rail network](#) or that tax as a share of national output is on course to rise to [its highest level in seven decades](#). Liz Truss based her campaign to be prime minister around the idea the way to grow the economy faster was through cutting taxes and red tape.



‘The government is in talks with Tata, the owner of Jaguar Land Rover, over a £500m subsidy to build a new battery factory in the UK.’ Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

Increasingly, though, the right of the Tory party looks as if it is fighting a losing battle. The government has been paying a chunk of [domestic energy bills](#). It is in talks with Tata, the owner of Jaguar Land Rover, over a [£500m subsidy](#) to build a new battery factory in the UK. In the clearest sign that these are indeed different times, ministers have been urging the supermarkets to bring down the cost of food through [voluntary price curbs](#).

Sunak and Hunt might not like this, any more than Conservatives in the late 1940s and early 1950s liked the idea of a National Health Service or state ownership of the coalmines. But the dream of a free-market utopia in which goods, money and people moved unchecked around the world has slowly faded over the past 15 years.

The financial crisis, the pandemic and geopolitical tension have resulted in economic polices that are more interventionist, more protectionist and more centred on national self-sufficiency. Sunak’s desire to turn the UK into a [science and technology superpower](#) is one example of this new reality. Starmer’s [green prosperity plan](#) is another.

The third strand of the new consensus involves the way in which the economy is run. Both parties accept that interest rates should be set by an independent Bank of England, that the government's tax and spending plans should be audited by the Office for Budget Responsibility, and that the best long-term way to boost growth is through supply-side reform. Hunt wants to reduce the national debt as a share of output, but so would Reeves if she was chancellor. Both parties would be prepared to borrow – but only for investment.

When he was at the Treasury, Sunak borrowed more than any chancellor in peacetime to save the economy from collapse during the early stages of the pandemic. Would Labour have followed the same approach? Almost certainly. Would a Labour chancellor now be raising taxes – as Hunt is – to bring down public borrowing? Almost certainly.

Reeuntism has involved both parties tacking back towards the centre. This has not been an entirely trouble-free process for Starmer, especially over Brexit, where many party members would support rejoining the EU. Politically, though, the new consensus is much less problematic for Labour than it is for the Conservatives.

In part, that's because the Tories have been forced to abandon so much of what they once believed in as a result of changing economic circumstances. In part, it is because the public has moved leftwards on the economy, becoming not just accustomed to, but also welcoming a more interventionist approach. But essentially, Labour is comfortable with the idea of a more activist state and the Tories are not.

- Larry Elliott is the Guardian's economics editor



‘Once they start they can’t stop’ ... a very happy baby. Photograph: Ink Drop/Alamy

[Opinion](#)[Life and style](#)

**I’d love to laugh like a baby again. But
the best I can hope for is a big sneeze**

[Adrian Chiles](#)



As adults, we are taught to keep a lid on our emotions. It has left me longing for the days of relentless, unbridled mirth

Thu 1 Jun 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 1 Jun 2023 11.03 EDT

A cute video of a baby laughing its head off has been doing the rounds on Twitter this week. He is sitting in a cardboard box as it's dragged along by the family dog. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (Rospa) may frown at such a caper, but their concerns wouldn't bother this bairn, for the lad's quite helpless with mirth. Naturally, his joy is infectious.

When I was not much older than a baby, I was obsessed with Led Zeppelin. In the live recording of Stairway to Heaven at Madison Square Garden in 1973, Robert Plant follows up the lyric about forests echoing with laughter with a question for the crowd: "Does anyone remember laughter?" he enquires plaintively. Even as a devotee of his work, I remember thinking this plea a bit on the dismal side. But now, looking at the delight of the baby in the box, I find myself asking a similar question: does anyone remember laughing like that? You know, laughing and fearing you may never stop laughing, laughing so hard it hurts, laughing so uncontrollably that you're crying, actually crying. It does still happen, of course, but less often. Or perhaps that's just me.

Most of us whose children were born in the video age have footage, somewhere, similar to that of the baby in the box. Perhaps this kind of uncontrolled, hysterical laughter is the sort of laughter with which we're born. The only one we know. After all, when was the last time you saw a baby deliver a wry chuckle or a single loud guffaw? No, once they start they can't stop. I suppose it happens less and less because learning to control your emotions is part of growing up. If we didn't develop the necessary skills, we'd all be walking around either bawling our eyes out or crying with laughter.

It is interesting that "hysterical" is the adjective often used to describe this kind of laughter. In my dictionary, hysteria is defined as "a psychoneurosis in which repressed complexes become split off or dissociated from the personality, forming independent units, partially or completely unrecognised by consciousness". And so it goes on, in ever more impenetrable language. With this in mind, I look again at the baby in the box and, for the life of me, can't pick up any sense of repressed complexes coming to the surface. What I can identify is an element of fear, of uncertainty, which is quite understandable given that the lad's being dragged around by an excitable animal twice his size. Perhaps hysterical laughter arises out of fear and uncertainty and it's this we lose as we get older. Or perhaps not. I for one have plenty of fear and uncertainty to be going on with.

So how do I get to experience more often the magic felt by the baby in the box? I suppose drugs might do the trick. I had a friend in Birmingham who used to take magic mushrooms for this very reason. "Oh, mate," he'd tell me. "You've never known laughter like it." His surest route to untrammelled mirth was to drink mushroom tea while watching Family Fortunes on the box. He begged me to join him, but I chickened out.

Don't get me wrong, I laugh all the time, but not helplessly, like the baby in the box. What I miss most is the aftermath, when the joyous fit has passed and you're left tear-stained and exhausted, deliciously spent. As a middle-aged bloke, the only regular comparable experience might be sneezing. You know a big one's coming and you know there's nothing you can do about it. There's the moment of uncertainty when you wonder if you'll even survive its magnitude. Though slightly afraid, you will it on. And, bang, it happens.

Oh, the release. You're left relieved but wrung out. But it's no substitute; it's nice, but no laughing matter.

- Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist
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A cargo ship in Qingdao, China. The country could intensify its retaliation against US trade restrictions. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

[Project Syndicate economistsEconomics](#)

US and China are on a collision course that could risk conflict

[Nouriel Roubini](#)

G7 sought deterrence without escalating new cold war but Beijing responded with rage

Thu 1 Jun 2023 02.00 EDT

After the May G7 summit in Hiroshima, the US president, Joe Biden, [claimed](#) that he expected a “thaw” in relations with China. Yet, despite some recent official bilateral meetings – with the US secretary of the Treasury, Janet Yellen, [expressing hopes](#) for a visit to China soon – relations remain icy.

In fact, far from thawing, the new cold war is getting colder, and the G7 summit itself magnified Chinese concerns about the US pursuing a [strategy](#) of “comprehensive containment, encirclement and suppression”. Unlike previous gatherings, when G7 leaders offered mostly talk and little action, this summit turned out to be one of the most important in the group’s history. The US, Japan, Europe and their friends and allies made it clearer than ever that they intended to join forces to counter China.

Moreover, Japan, which currently holds the group’s rotating presidency, made sure to [invite key leaders](#) from the global south, not least the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi. In reaching out to rising and middle powers, the G7 wants to persuade others to join its more muscular response to China’s rise. Many will probably agree with the depiction of China as an authoritarian, state-capitalist power that is increasingly assertive in projecting power in Asia and globally.

While India, which holds this year’s G20 presidency, has taken a [neutral position](#) on Russia’s war in Ukraine, it has long been locked in a [strategic rivalry](#) with China, owing partly to the fact that the two countries share a long border, much of which is [disputed](#). Thus, even if India does not become a formal ally to western countries, it will continue to position itself as an independent, rising global power whose interests are more aligned with the west than with China and China’s [de facto allies](#) (Russia, Iran, North Korea and Pakistan).

In addition, India is a formal member of the quadrilateral security dialogue (Quad), a security grouping with the US, Japan and Australia whose explicit purpose is to [deter China](#); and Japan and India have [longstanding friendly relations](#) and a shared history of adversarial relations with China.

Japan also invited Indonesia, South Korea (with which it is pursuing a [diplomatic thaw](#), driven by common concerns about China), Brazil (another key global south power), the African Union chair, Azali Assoumani, and the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy. The message was clear: the Sino-Russian friendship “without limits” is having serious consequences for how other powers perceive China.

Western containment efforts will be accompanied by a policy to engage the global south with large investments in the clean-energy transition

But going even further, the G7 devoted a substantial portion of its [final communique](#) to explaining how it would confront and deter China in the years ahead. Among other things, the document decries Chinese policies of “economic coercion” and stresses the importance of an Indo-Pacific partnership to thwart China’s efforts to dominate Asia. It criticises Chinese expansionism in the East and South China Seas, and it includes a clear warning to China not to attack or invade Taiwan.

In taking steps to “de-risk” their relationships with [China](#), western leaders have settled on language that is only slightly less aggressive than “decoupling”. More than the diplomatic argot has changed, however. According to the communique, western containment efforts will be accompanied by a policy to engage the global south with large investments in the clean-energy transition, lest key countries there be drawn into China’s sphere of influence.

No wonder China [could not contain its rage](#) against the G7. As well as overlapping with a Quad meeting, the Hiroshima summit comes at a time when Nato has begun its own [pivot to Asia](#), and when the Aukus alliance (comprising Australia, the UK and the US) is gearing up to [confront China](#) in the Pacific.

Meanwhile, the western-Chinese tech and economic war has continued to escalate. Japan is imposing restrictions on [semiconductor exports](#) to China that are no less draconian than those put in place by the US, and the Biden administration is pressuring Taiwan and South Korea to [follow suit](#). In response, China has [banned](#) chips made by the US-based Micron.

With the US chipmaker Nvidia quickly becoming a [corporate superpower](#) – owing to soaring demand for its advanced chips to power AI applications – it, too, will probably face new constraints on selling to China. US policymakers have made clear that they intend to keep China at least a generation behind in the race for AI supremacy. Last year’s Chips and Science Act introduced massive incentives to [reshore chip production](#).

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The risk now is that China, at pains to close its tech gap with the west, will leverage its [dominant role](#) in producing and refining rare-earths metals – which are crucial for the green transition – to retaliate against the US sanctions and trade restrictions. China has already increased its exports of electric vehicles by almost [700% since 2019](#), and it is now starting to [deploy commercial airliners](#) to compete with Boeing and Airbus.

So, while the G7 may have set out to deter China without escalating the cold war, the perception in Beijing suggests that western leaders failed to thread the needle. It is now clearer than ever that the US and the broader west are committed to containing China's rise.

Of course, the Chinese would like to forget that the current escalation owes as much, if not more, to their own aggressive policies as to US strategy. In recent [interviews](#) marking his 100th birthday, Henry Kissinger – the architect of America's "opening to China" in 1972 – has warned that unless the two countries find a new strategic understanding, they will remain on a collision course. The deeper the freeze, the greater the risk of a violent crack-up.

Nouriel Roubini is professor emeritus at the Stern School of Business and the author of Megathreats: Ten Dangerous Trends That Imperil Our Future

and How to Survive Them.

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Darwan, in the Uruzgan province of Afghanistan
Photograph: Federal Court of Australia

Opinion[Ben Roberts-Smith](#)

Ben Roberts-Smith committed war crimes in my country – his targets are the forgotten victims of Australia’s Afghan war

[Shadi Khan Saif](#)

The judge in Roberts-Smith’s defamation case found he committed murder. Will Australia remember the names of those Afghans whose deaths sat at the centre of testimony?

Thu 1 Jun 2023 03.03 EDT Last modified on Thu 1 Jun 2023 03.26 EDT

With a federal court judge finding Ben Roberts-Smith – the country’s most decorated soldier – either murdered or was complicit in and responsible for

the murder of [unarmed civilians while serving in the Australian military in Afghanistan](#), Australia must now turn its attention to the real victims of this conflict.

While the publication of the full judgment has been delayed, the judge in Roberts-Smith's failed defamation case found that, on the balance of probabilities, the newspapers he was suing had proven in their defence that Roberts-Smith kicked a handcuffed prisoner off a cliff in Uruzgan province in 2012 before ordering a subordinate Australian soldier to shoot the injured man dead.

The dusty Afghan province of Uruzgan where Australian armed forces served for more than a decade is one of the poorest in the war-ravaged country. Life in the province is so hard that children [have died falling in deep dry wells](#) amid water shortages. The battle locals faced during all those years of bloodshed is the same one they face now – a battle against poverty and injustice. And now we have more confirmation that it also bears the scars of one of the darkest chapters in Australian military history.

Throughout the lengthy coverage of the Roberts-Smith defamation case, the Afghan perspective has often been obscured. After all of this, will Australians remember the names of those Afghans whose deaths sat at the centre of much of the testimony? Among them was a handcuffed farmer and also a disabled and captured fighter.

The case has been a reminder of the failures of foreign forces in [Afghanistan](#), the country I was born in, and the country I was forced to flee as a reporter in Kabul in 2021, leaving my wife and children behind.

It has also been a reminder of how disengaged and indifferent Australians can be towards events that happen in the rest of the world – especially in a poor mountainous country in central Asia.

The villagers of Uruzgan and the surrounding areas in Afghanistan where Roberts-Smith and his peers served were caught between the Taliban insurgents and Nato forces for 20 years. After the chaotic [fall of Kabul](#) and

the devastating withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan they continue to live a miserable life under the Taliban, which is peddling a gender-apartheid policy against women and girls. But the scars of the war inflicted by an “invading army” are, for many, much deeper than those created by the oppressive regime.

How will Australians be remembered in Afghanistan? Did the Australian deployment help, or did it make the lives of Afghans worse? What did Australia achieve during those two decades? Why couldn’t it have left behind a legacy of support and justice rather than one tainted by allegations of atrocities?

Afghans of my generation knew Australia for its fabulous cricketers like Shane Warne, Steve Waugh and Adam Gilchrist. Will the younger generation remember it for the soldiers who came in the name of war? Where war crimes are proven, will the victims get any compensation? How can you compensate someone for the brutal killing of their loved one?

The strong testimonies by both Australian and Afghan individuals standing for justice in Roberts-Smith’s defamation trial are worthy of acknowledgment. Sadly, Afghans in that distant land will probably never get to hear those voices, and would probably not believe that people spoke up on their behalf through fearless journalism in Australia. I wish they could get to see the regard for human dignity that these individuals and journalists have shown. It’s a dignity that wasn’t shown by Roberts Smith, who – a court has now determined – couldn’t distinguish between unarmed local villagers and armed insurgents.

- Shadi Khan Saif is a Melbourne-based journalist and former Pakistan and Afghanistan news correspondent
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2023.06.01 - Around the world

- [Exclusive Months of distrust inside Trump legal team led to top lawyer's departure](#)
- [Sudan 19 die in shelling of market south of Khartoum after army quits ceasefire](#)
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Parlatore offered to defend Trump against charges the Manhattan DA brought against the ex-president, but Epshteyn (right) retained Joe Tacopina (center), whom Parlatore detests. Photograph: Getty Images

[Donald Trump](#)

Months of distrust inside Trump legal team led to top lawyer's departure

Exclusive: Two Trump lawyers considered a ‘murder-suicide pact’ where one would resign if the other was fired

Hugo Lowell in Washington

[@hugolowell](#)

Thu 1 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 1 Jun 2023 10.48 EDT

Donald Trump’s legal team for months has weathered deep distrust and interpersonal conflict that could undermine its defense of [the former president](#) as the criminal investigation into his handling of classified documents and obstruction of justice at Mar-a-Lago nears its conclusion.

The turmoil inside the legal team only exploded into public view when one of the top lawyers, Tim Parlatore, abruptly resigned two weeks ago from the representation citing irreconcilable differences with Trump's senior adviser and in-house counsel Boris Epshteyn.

But the departure of Parlatore was the culmination of months of simmering tensions that continue to threaten the effectiveness of the legal team at a crucial time – as federal prosecutors weigh criminal charges – in part because the interpersonal conflicts remain largely unresolved.

It also comes as multiple Trump lawyers are embroiled in numerous criminal investigations targeting the former president: Epshteyn was [recently interviewed by the special counsel](#), while Parlatore and Trump lawyer Evan Corcoran testified to the grand jury in the classified documents inquiry.

The turmoil has revolved around hostility among the lawyers on the legal team who have come to distrust each other as well as their hostility directed at Epshteyn, over what they regard as his oversight of the legal work and gatekeeping direct access to the former president.

In one instance, the clashes became so acute that some of the lawyers agreed to a so-called “murder-suicide” pact where if Parlatore got fired, others would resign in solidarity. And as some of the lawyers tried to exclude Epshteyn, they withheld information from co-counsel who they suspected might brief him.

The infighting eventually reached the point at which some of the lawyers started to believe the biggest impediment to defending Trump might just be the distrust and interpersonal conflict, rather than someone like Parlatore deciding to cooperate with prosecutors.

In fact, the legal team is said to be confident that Parlatore will not flip on Trump after he told the grand jury hearing evidence in the case last year that Trump gave him free rein to search for any remaining documents at his properties last year, according to a transcript of his testimony.

But an eventual attempt to remove Epshteyn from the case ended in failure, and Epshteyn remains a trusted member of Trump's inner circle. The months of worsening relations that led to that moment were described to the Guardian by six people familiar with the situation.

In a statement, a Trump spokesperson said: "This is completely false and is rooted in pure fantasy. The real story is the illegal weaponization of the Justice Department and their witch-hunts targeted to influence an election in order to try and prevent President Trump from returning to the White House."

The lawyers named in this story either declined to comment or did not respond to calls for comment.

Palm Beach dinner foreshadows divisiveness

The animosity inside the Trump legal team started almost immediately after [the FBI seized 101 classified documents from Mar-a-Lago](#) last August, when Trump's lawyers asked a federal judge to appoint a special master to review the materials for any privilege protections.

The legal team, at the time, was composed of the former federal prosecutors Jim Trusty and Evan Corcoran – whose search for classified documents in response to a subpoena later proved incomplete – the former [Florida](#) solicitor general Chris Kise and the lawyer Lindsey Halligan.



Trump lawyers Jim Trusty and Lindsey Halligan leave a dinner at The Breakers hotel in Palm Beach, Florida. Photograph: Hugo Lowell/The Guardian

The lawyers presented a united front as they argued to the US district court judge Aileen Cannon that she should grant a special master, which she did – a strategic win for Trump that enabled him to delay the criminal investigation and prosecutors' ability to review the documents.

But Trusty, who played a leading role in the special master litigation, was already frustrated with how things were going.

Trusty's private frame of mind emerged over dinner with Halligan and Corcoran at the five-star Breakers hotel in Palm Beach, Florida, hours after the special master court hearing. The conversation was overheard by this Guardian reporter who happened to be sitting at the table next to them.

Trusty's main irritation with Epshteyn, as he recounted, was having to run his legal decisions by him even though he did not consider him a trial lawyer and objected to how, in his eyes, he gave more priority to Trump's perceived PR problems than to genuine legal problems.

He criticised Epshteyn for trying to “troubleshoot” those problems before they could reach Trump, instead of allowing him to straightforwardly brief

the former president himself. The entire situation meant the lawyers were having to play “a game of thrones nonsense” that he found distracting.

Trusty then discussed legal strategy, suggesting Kise was “too apologetic” in opening remarks to the judge and questioned the validity of the FBI warrant for Mar-a-Lago. He also said he had no interest in talking to reporters from the publication Lawfare or the New York Times [on account of their coverage](#).

Lawyers split over further searches

Trusty’s annoyance with Epshteyn for inserting himself into legal deliberations came to be shared by Parlatore several weeks later, when the justice department told the Trump legal team in October that it believed the former president still possessed classified documents.

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The deliberations over how to respond to the department’s accusations split the legal team. Epshteyn and Kise were not in favor of doing voluntary searches of the Trump properties, while Parlatore and Trusty suggested a more proactive approach that involved new searches.

Epshteyn and Kise for weeks were unconvinced. But Parlatore and Trusty reasoned that if they did find more classified documents but immediately returned them to the justice department, it would make it harder for prosecutors to say that Trump wilfully retained classified material.

New [searches of Trump's properties did take place](#), though in Parlatore's retelling of the deliberations to CNN last week, Epshteyn was reluctant to allow a search of Trump's Bedminster golf club. Later, the Trump lawyer Alina Habba was booked on CNN to dispute Parlatore's account.

But the episode also precipitated new distrust among the lawyers themselves, not just with Epshteyn. When the news about the justice department's suspicions were reported, Parlatore and Trusty were surprised to see Kise [portrayed as having always sought a cooperative approach with prosecutors](#).

To Parlatore and Trusty, while Kise ultimately supported further searches, he was hardly the leading voice. And when Kise pulled out of arguing before the US court of appeals for the 11th circuit to keep the special master with 24 hours' notice, they had him exiled to the civil litigation team.

Lawyers stage Mar-a-Lago intervention

With Kise gone from the team defending Trump in special counsel matters, Parlatore and Trusty's interpersonal conflicts with Epshteyn reached new levels as they grew increasingly annoyed at what they considered their inability to directly consult Trump without having to go through Epshteyn.

The pair chafed that when they spoke to Trump on the phone, Epshteyn was typically also on the line. At other times, they sniped that Epshteyn would give overly rosy outlooks to Trump and, in March, travelled to [Mar-a-Lago](#) to seek Trump's permission to exclude him from future deliberations.

It was not clear whether the issue was actually resolved. Parlatore came away from the meeting content that he no longer needed to speak to Epshteyn. However, Epshteyn remained Trump's in-house counsel and the legal team's liaison with the Trump 2024 campaign.

Around that time, Parlatore and Trusty also started withholding information from Corcoran because they worried that Corcoran was too close to Epshteyn and was briefing him behind their backs.

That meant that as the special counsel intensified the documents investigation, after prosecutors convinced a US appeals court to [force Corcoran to turn over his notes to a grand jury](#), at least two members of the legal team had little to no visibility into what the other two lawyers were doing unless they found out another way.

Personal conflicts explode publicly

Around that time, Trump advisers and lawyers started to hear murmurs about whether Parlatore and Trusty should continue in their roles. When the pair heard about those inquiries, they resolved that if one of them actually got fired, the other should also resign.

The animosity had also been increasing as the Manhattan district attorney, Alvin Bragg, prepared to charge Trump in the hush money case and Parlatore insisted to Epshteyn that the celebrity lawyer Joe Tacopina – [whom he detested](#) related to a prior case – should not be on the team defending the former president.

Epshteyn suggested it was not in his control because Tacopina was recommended by others in Trump's orbit, including Kimberly Guilfoyle – which Parlatore interpreted as a snub.

Parlatore also had a misstep when he and Trusty [last month urged Congress in a letter](#) to tell the justice department to “stand down” its criminal investigation in the documents matter, laying out a detailed defence that claimed in part that responsibility lay with aides instead of Trump himself.

The 10-page letter was sent to Trump and they believed it had the former president's approval. But Trump was furious days later when he saw that the language in the letter cast doubt on his previous public statements about how White House and classified documents ended up at Mar-a-Lago.

Parlatore had also decided against giving Epshteyn advance warning about

the letter, which some on the Trump campaign and other lawyers used as an example of why the legal team needed his supervision.

But the proximate cause of Parlatore's departure was a row over discussing the letter on CNN. Parlatore had made a point of appearing on the network because he figured the attorney general, Merrick Garland, was more likely to watch CNN than a conservative network like Newsmax.

Exactly who ordered Parlatore's appearance to be cancelled remains unclear, though the Trump 2024 campaign later told the lawyers it was because he criticized Tacopina the last time he was on CNN. As the special counsel investigation neared its end, Parlatore told Trump he would be leaving.

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Smoke billows over buildings in southern Khartoum on Monday, as fighting between the forces of two rival generals continues. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

[Sudan](#)

Sudan: 27 reported killed in shelling of market in poor area south of Khartoum

Tanks believed to have attacked area residents say is not close to any military target

[Zeinab Mohammed Salih](#) in Khartoum

Thu 1 Jun 2023 14.44 EDTFirst published on Thu 1 Jun 2023 00.04 EDT

Twenty-seven people have been killed and 106 injured after a market in a poor area south of Khartoum was shelled, according to local residents.

Six tank shells were fired from al-Shajara, one of the few areas the army controls in the Sudanese capital, towards the neighbourhood of Mayo, residents said.

Sources said the death toll could rise significantly because many of the injured were unable to get to hospitals for treatment.

Mayo is populated mostly by people who have not been able to afford to leave Khartoum since fighting broke out between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on 15 April. It is not known to be near any military target in the capital, which is 90% controlled by the RSF.

“Medical staff are under pressure to deal with so many cases with limited staff,” the Sudanese Doctors Trade Union said. “We call all doctors and medical cadres who are nearby to come to the hospital so they can help as much as they can.”

Abdelmotal Saboon, a resident in the area and volunteer at the nearby al-Bashair hospital, said: “Really it’s been the worst day I saw since the beginning of the war, scenes I will always remember the women and children and men in awful shape. I do not know the reason for using the heavy artillery, apart from killing innocent people.”

Mohamed Zain, another resident of Mayo, said: “Nobody can afford to leave here, all our relatives are here, they cannot flee.”

The incident came a day after Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the Sudanese army and the de-facto leader of the country, announced he would be pulling out of US and Saudi-brokered ceasefire talks, accusing the RSF of failing to honour its commitments.

In front of army soldiers at the military headquarters, Burhan said they would use deadly force against the enemy.

“We are carrying this battle on behalf of the Sudanese people, we are seeing what happened to them. We do not want to use deadly force ... but if the enemy does not comply and respond we will be obliged to use it. Do not listen to the media, it’s fake, the army is one and the army is all over Sudan ... all the Sudanese people are soldiers, they are all standing with you in this battle.”

US and Saudi mediators have blamed both sides for violating a truce that was supposed to enable secure corridors for delivering aid to an increasingly needy population.

Different parts of Khartoum's neighbouring city of Omdurman have been hit by heavy artillery since Wednesday, with military sources saying they are targeting RSF forces stationed at the national TV station there and a strategic building that was taken by the RSF on Wednesday.

More than 1.2 million people had been displaced internally by the fighting, and an additional 400,000 fled across borders, the UN said on Tuesday. At least 730 have been killed according to official counts though the actual number is likely to be far higher.

Outside Khartoum, clashes have flared in big cities in the western region of Darfur. A regional rights group said at least 50 people had been killed in the past week in the westernmost city of Geneina, where hundreds were previously killed in militia attacks. In the city of Zalingei, the group said a hospital and university were looted and people were being killed "randomly".

On Thursday the US said it would levy sanctions against people "who are perpetuating the violence" in Sudan.

"The scope and scale of the bloodshed in Khartoum and Darfur, in particular, is appalling," the White House national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said. "The failure of the Sudanese armed forces and Rapid Support Forces to abide by the ceasefire only further deepens our concern that the people of Sudan will once again face a protracted conflict and widespread suffering at the hands of the security forces."

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‘We saved his life’: Nepali sherpa saves climber in rare rescue near Everest summit – video

[**Mount Everest**](#)

Nepali sherpa saves climber in rare Everest ‘death zone’ rescue

Gelje Sherpa was guiding Chinese client to summit when he saw Malaysian climber clinging to rope

Reuters in Kathmandu

Thu 1 Jun 2023 05.39 EDTFirst published on Thu 1 Jun 2023 05.37 EDT

A Malaysian climber narrowly survived after a Nepali sherpa guide hauled him down from below the summit of [Mount Everest](#) in a very rare high-altitude rescue, a government official has said.

Gelje Sherpa, 30, was guiding a Chinese client to the 8,849-metre (29,032ft) Everest summit on 18 May when he saw the Malaysian climber clinging to a rope and shivering from extreme cold in the area known as the death zone, where temperatures can dip to -30C or lower.

Gelje hauled the climber 600 metres down from the Balcony to the South Col, over a period of about six hours, where Nima Tashi Sherpa, another guide, joined the rescue.

Gelje said: “We wrapped the climber in a sleeping mat, dragged him on the snow or carried him in turns on our backs to camp three.”

A helicopter using a long line lifted the climber from the 7,162-metre-high camp three down to base camp.

“It is almost impossible to rescue climbers at that altitude,” said Bigyan Koirala, an official from the department of tourism. “It is a very rare

operation.”

Gelje said he persuaded his Chinese client to give up his summit attempt and descend the mountain, saying it was important for him to rescue the climber. “Saving one life is more important than praying at the monastery,” said Gelje, a devout Buddhist.

Tashi Lakpa Sherpa of the Seven Summit Treks company, which provided logistics to the Malaysian climber, declined to name him, citing his client’s privacy. The climber was put on a flight to Malaysia last week.

Nepal issued a record 478 permits for Everest during this year’s March to May climbing season. At least 12 climbers have died, the highest number for eight years, and another five are still missing on Everest’s slopes.

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Dr Martens said sales of its chunky sandals and shoes had risen by about 50%. Photograph: Yau Ming Low/Alamy

[Dr Martens](#)

Sales of Dr Martens sandals and shoes soar as boots slide

British brand's profits tumble after string of errors in US operation hits sales

[Joanna Partridge](#) and [Sarah Butler](#)

Thu 1 Jun 2023 13.31 EDTFirst published on Thu 1 Jun 2023 05.32 EDT

[Dr Martens](#) has revealed a slide in profits as sales of its key product – boots – fell 10% last year after the British brand made a string of errors at its US business and pulled back distribution in Latin America and China.

The footwear maker said sales of its chunky sandals and shoes had risen by about 50% to become almost a third of total sales, but boot sales had suffered, particularly in America, after it focused marketing on its other products and struggled with problems at a warehouse in Los Angeles.

The company also blamed what it called a “challenging consumer environment” for a fall in demand in the US as shoppers reined in their spending in the face of high inflation.

First created in 1945 by a young German army doctor, Klaus Märtens, who designed an air-cushioned sole to help his recovery from a broken foot, the boots were first introduced to Britain in 1960 by a Northamptonshire footwear maker.

Their sturdy design meant the boots were initially adopted by postal delivery workers and factory staff, but the classic eight-holed 1460 boots also quickly found favour with punks.

Kenny Wilson, the [Dr Martens](#) chief executive, said the decline in sales of boots last year was not down to the footwear falling out of fashion.

He said sales had risen 12% in the UK, driven by boots, and the brand had enjoyed strong sales across Europe and Japan, another important market. Wilson added that if planned changes to distribution agreements in China and Latin America were excluded then global boot sales were up 2%.

In the past 12 months, the footwear group has been battling growing costs of £15m after a string of “operational mistakes” at its Los Angeles distribution centre, which opened last year. The group was forced to open temporary US warehouses in late 2022 after it bought too much stock and suffered supply chain bottlenecks.

The costs of rectifying the US problems alongside slower than hoped for sales growth, investment in new stores, marketing and staff led to a 26% tumble in annual profit before tax to £159m in the year to 31 March. Annual sales reached £1bn for the first time, a 10% increase on a year earlier.

Wilson said the company had “undertaken detailed reviews to understand” why it had experienced problems in the US, the brand’s largest country by revenues.

However, he said profit margins were likely to be lower than previously hoped in the year ahead as the company continued to invest in its infrastructure.

The news sent Dr Martens shares tumbling by as much as 14% during morning trading on Thursday, before recovering some of their losses.

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The company first floated two-and-a-half years ago, in January 2021, debuting at 370p a share, giving it a valuation of £3.7bn. They are now trading at about 140p, more than 60% lower than their opening price, and have almost halved over the past year, amid profit warnings.

The bootmaker's underlying annual profits slid 7% to £245m, below the [£260m forecast it made last November](#) after two profit warnings in the space of a few months.

The company has brought in price rises for the past two years, announcing a 6% increase last November to cover higher costs of energy, labour and the leather and bouncy soles used to make its footwear.

The latest price rise, which will come into force in July , will add about £10 to the cost of its classic boot, from £159 now.

Wilson said that he anticipated Dr Martens' cost inflation to continue into next year but the rate had slowed to 2% for spring/summer next year, as the price of leather and shipping had reduced.

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US debt ceiling bill passes House with broad bipartisan support – video

US debt ceiling

US House passes bill to suspend debt ceiling just days before default

With 149 Republicans and 165 Democrats supporting the measure, Biden has called on the Senate to quickly take up the legislation

[Joan E Greve](#) in Washington

[@joanegreve](#)

Wed 31 May 2023 19.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 1 Jun 2023 09.29 EDT

The House passed a bill to suspend the debt ceiling on Wednesday, clearing a major legislative hurdle with just days left before the US is expected to default.

The final House vote was 314 to 117, with 149 [Republicans](#) and 165 Democrats supporting the measure. In a potentially worrisome sign for the House Republican speaker, Kevin McCarthy, 71 members of his conference opposed the deal that he brokered with President Joe Biden.

Taking a victory lap after the bill's passage, McCarthy downplayed concerns over divisions within the House Republican conference and celebrated the policy concessions he secured in his negotiations with Biden.

"I have been thinking about this day before my vote for speaker because I knew the debt ceiling was coming. And I wanted to make history. I wanted to do something no other Congress has done," McCarthy told reporters after the vote. "Tonight, we all made history."

Biden applauded the House passage of the legislation, calling on the Senate to quickly take up the legislation to avoid a default. The treasury secretary,

Janet Yellen, has warned that the federal government will be unable to pay its bills starting 5 June unless it was allowed to borrow more.

“This budget agreement is a bipartisan compromise. Neither side got everything it wanted,” Biden said in a statement. “I have been clear that the only path forward is a bipartisan compromise that can earn the support of both parties. This agreement meets that test.”

The debt ceiling bill passed by the House would suspend the government’s borrowing limit until January 2025, ensuring the issue will not resurface before the next presidential election. As part of his negotiations with Biden, McCarthy successfully pushed for government spending cuts and changes to the work requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

However, the concessions that McCarthy won [fell far short](#) for members of the Freedom caucus, who had pushed for steeper spending cuts and much stricter work requirements for benefits programs. They belittled the debt ceiling compromise as a paltry effort to tackle the nation’s debt, which [stands](#) at more than \$31tn.

Representative Scott Perry of Pennsylvania, chair of the Freedom caucus, [said on Twitter](#) before the vote: “President Biden is happily sending Americans over yet another fiscal cliff, with far too many swampy Republicans behind the wheel of a ‘deal’ that fails miserably to address the real reason for our debt crisis: SPENDING.”

House Freedom caucus members staged one last attempt to block the debt ceiling bill from advancing on Wednesday afternoon, when they opposed a procedural motion prior to the final vote. With 29 Republicans voting against the motion, McCarthy had to rely on Democratic assistance to advance the debt ceiling proposal. In the end, 52 [Democrats](#) voted for the motion, setting up the final vote and virtually ensuring the bill’s passage.

The House Democratic leader, representative Hakeem Jeffries of New York, mocked McCarthy’s failure to unify his party, arguing the procedural vote proved the speaker has “lost control of the floor”.

“It’s an extraordinary act that indicates just the nature of the extremism that is out of control on the other side of the aisle,” Jeffries said during the floor debate before the final vote. “Extreme Maga Republicans attempted to take control of the House floor. Democrats took it back for the American people.”

Despite his sharp criticism of McCarthy and his Republican colleagues, Jeffries and the majority of the House Democratic caucus supported the debt ceiling bill. Although they lamented the spending cuts included in the bill, those Democrats argued the crucial importance of avoiding a default outweighed their personal concerns about the legislation.

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“Our constitution makes perfectly clear the validity of the public debt of the United States shall not be questioned,” said California representative Nancy Pelosi, the former Democratic House speaker. “While I find this legislation objectionable, it will avert an unprecedented default, which would bring devastation to America’s families.”

But dozens of progressive lawmakers opposed the bill, attacking the spending cuts and new work requirements procured by McCarthy as an affront to the voters who elected them.

“Republicans never cared about reducing the deficit, only about forcing through their anti-working family policy priorities under the threat of a catastrophic default,” said Pramila Jayapal, chair of the Congressional Progressive caucus. “The deal they passed tonight proves that point, and I could not be part of their extortion scheme.”

Progressives in the Senate, including Senator Bernie Sanders, have echoed that criticism and indicated they plan to oppose the debt ceiling proposal, but the bill still appears likely to become law. The Senate Democratic majority leader, Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, has pledged to act swiftly to take up the bill once it has passed the House. The Senate Republican minority leader, Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, has already indicated he plans to support the proposal as well.

“Any needless delay, any last-minute brinksmanship at this point would be an unacceptable risk,” Schumer said in a floor speech Wednesday morning. “Moving quickly, working together to avoid default is the responsible and necessary thing to do.”

The headline and article were amended on 1 June 2023. An earlier version said that the debt ceiling had been “raised” when it has been suspended.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/may/31/debt-ceiling-final-vote-house-congress>

Headlines saturday 3 june 2023

- [**'Wailing for help' Passengers tell of India train crash horror after 280 killed and 900 injured**](#)
- [**India train crash At least 280 killed and 900 injured in Odisha**](#)
- [**Live Russia-Ukraine war: Ukraine's counteroffensive will be 'very impressive', US general says**](#)
- [**'Extra Trumpy' Atlantic profile of CNN chief Licht details town hall disaster**](#)

Rescue teams search for survivors after deadly train crash in India – video

[The ObserverIndia](#)

‘Wailing for help’: passengers and bystanders tell of India train crash horror

Relatives tell of agony of searching for survivors among what one called ‘heaps of bodies’ as rescue activities draw to a close

[Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#) and [Aakash Hassan](#)

Sat 3 Jun 2023 13.14 EDTFirst published on Sat 3 Jun 2023 02.14 EDT

The carriages from three trains sat piled high in an entangled wreck. Some lay sideways, while others had been thrown so high into the air on impact that they had fallen back to earth twisted and upside down.

A line of dozens of bodies covered in white sheets were laid out next to the wreckage waiting for vehicles – ambulances, local cars, even tractors – to take them away to local hospitals. Passengers’ possessions lay scattered around them, shoes and toys and thrown-open suitcases.

This was the aftermath of the [deadliest train crash in India](#) in more than two decades, when on Friday evening the Coromandel Express, which runs from Kolkata in West Bengal to Chennai in Tamil Nadu, switched rails and collided with a freight train in the eastern state of Odisha close to Bahanagar Bazar station, while travelling at around 80mph (130km/h).

The freight train in turn derailed some carriages of the Howrah Superfast Express train, which was travelling in the opposite direction. More than 2,000 passengers were aboard both trains.

Thousands took part in the rescue operation, which saw the National Disaster Response Force, state government teams, the air force, fire

department personnel, police officers and sniffer dogs brought in to pull survivors from the chaos of twisted metal and broken glass, working in sweltering heat.

As the rescue operation drew to a close on Saturday evening, the death toll stood at 288, with 803 injured, according to a railway authority statement.

Indian prime minister Narendra Modi visits train crash site – video

The prime minister, Narendra Modi, declared that Saturday was a day of mourning for the country and that compensation of £10,000 would be given for each of those who died.

Modi flew to the site on Saturday afternoon and met the injured in hospitals, stating afterwards that “words can’t capture my deep sorrow”. He vowed that “those found guilty will be severely punished”.

The railway minister, Ashwini Vaishnaw, who was facing calls for his resignation, had surveyed the wreckage earlier in the day and promised a high-level investigation, including into whether a signalling failure had caused the crash.

World leaders including the UK prime minister, Rishi Sunak, the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, and the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, were among those who offered their condolences over the incident.

In a tweet, Sunak said his “thoughts and prayers were with Narendra Modi and all those affected by the tragic events in Odisha”.



Rescue workers including soldiers gather around damaged carriages at the accident site. Photograph: Dibyangshu Sarkar/AFP/Getty

Relatives of those on board the trains rushed to the site and began frantically looking through the bodies trying to find their loved ones. Among them was Rabindra Shau, 53, who was looking for his son Govinda, who had boarded the Coromandel Express in Shalimar.

“Please help me find my son. At least help me with his dead body,” he shouted as he turned over bodies lying near the twisted carriages.

Sheikh Zakir Hussain, 35, from West Bengal, said he was trying to get news of his older brother Abdul Sheikh, his nephew, Mehraj Sheikh, 22, and three of his neighbours, who had all boarded a train near Shalimar and were heading to Chennai for work.



Rescue workers and soldiers work to free survivors and bodies from the wreckage. Photograph: Dibyangshu Sarkar/AFP/Getty

“Since the time I heard the news of the accident, I called my brother and nephew, but their phones were switched off,” he said. “I came early in the morning and have been since going from one hospital to another, but there is no trace of them.

“I even went to the spot and saw heaps of bodies lying there. I saw the faces of more than 100 dead people, but could not find my brother, nephew or my neighbours.”

As hospitals ran out of room for the dead, Bahanaga high school was turned into a makeshift morgue, with hundreds of bodies piled up waiting to be identified by their relatives. Another temporary morgue was set up in a nearby industrial estate.

In the school hall, desperate friends and relatives could be seen going from one body bag to the next, uncovering the faces to check the identities of the dead. According to an official, over 200 bodies had yet to be claimed by Saturday evening.

“The challenge now is identifying the bodies,” said state official PK Jena. “Wherever the relatives are able to provide evidence, the bodies are handed

over after autopsies. If not identified, maybe we have to go for a DNA test and other protocols.”

[map of train's route](#)

Toton Sekh also ran to the site on Saturday morning to look for his nephew, Abu Taher Shekh, 24, from Basanti in West Bengal, who had been travelling to Chennai to work. He said the scene of the crash resembled a hellscape with “piles of dead bodies kept in a school”.

He said officials had not been able to locate his nephew and he couldn’t find him in any hospitals. “The officials said some bodies were still lying trapped inside the damaged train coaches and it would take some time to extricate them all,” he said.

“I am still searching for him. We are praying that he is somehow found alive somewhere.”



A rescue worker pauses in his search for survivors. Photograph: Piyal Adhikary/EPA

Those who had been on board described the horror of the aftermath of the crash, in which at least 17 carriages were derailed.

One survivor said he had been asleep and was woken as his carriage derailed. “Some 10 to 15 people fell over me,” he told an Indian news channel. “I injured my hand and neck. When I got out of the train, I saw limbs scattered all around, a leg here, a hand there. Someone’s face was disfigured.”

Sayantani Ghosh, who was in coach A-1 of the Coromandel Express with her 11-year-old daughter, said she was lucky to be alive. She described how they were thrown out of their seats by a heavy jerk and then a “thunderous sound” came from one end of their coach when an adjacent carriage crashed on top of theirs.

“The impact was so massive that two toilets of our coach were completely flattened,” she said. “From the adjacent coaches, we heard people screaming for help and crying loudly. Horrifying scenes from last evening keep flashing before my eyes. I cannot get it off my mind. I am still in a trauma.”



Wrecked carriages are strewn across the tracks after the crash. Photograph: National Disaster Response Force/EPA

Local people who heard the screech of brakes and the sound of the trains colliding rushed to the scene and worked to pull passengers from the wreckage. Many later joined the official rescue operation.

However, some of the injured reported that there had also been looting at the scene; the luggage, wallets and valuables of the dead and injured were taken by groups who descended on the site soon after the collision.

“Some villagers picked up some of those unattended bags and ran away in the darkness,” said Ghosh. “This was shocking. They stole the valuables of the people who were victims of the accident.”

Nearby hospitals and health centres were overrun with the dead and injured, and medical personnel struggled to keep up with the scale of the disaster. Hundreds of local people were seen queueing up outside the hospitals to donate blood.

Dr Mrutunjay Mishra, a medical officer at Balasore district headquarters hospital, said his staff had worked through the night after over 250 patients had flooded into their wards at once. “I have been in the profession for many decades, but have never seen such chaos in my life,” he said.

Another doctor at SCB medical college and hospital in Cuttak said: “Some have lost their limbs and many have serious injuries across their bodies,. Around 20 injured people who were brought to me passed away while we were trying to treat them.

“The hospital is flooded with the injured. They are lying on the floor. We are rushing from one patient to another. I just managed to attend to the wounds of a small girl child – she is doing well. But we have no idea about her parents.”

Shaikh Azizur Rahman contributed reporting from Kolkata

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India train crash kills more than 200 people – video

[India](#)

India train crash: at least 288 killed and 803 injured in Odisha state

Rescue operation under way with death toll expected to rise in India's worst rail disaster in more than 20 years

- ['Wailing for help': passengers and bystanders tell of India train crash horror](#)

Hannah Ellis-Petersen in Delhi

Sat 3 Jun 2023 08.57 EDTFirst published on Fri 2 Jun 2023 12.59 EDT

At least 288 people have been killed and 803 injured after two passenger trains collided in the eastern Indian state of Odisha – the country's [deadliest rail disaster](#) in more than 20 years.

The Coromandel Express, which runs from Kolkata in West Bengal to Chennai in Tamil Nadu, was going about 80mph (130km/h) when it collided with a stationary freight train at about 7pm on Friday, causing it to derail.

Carriages from the freight train then hit two coaches from the Howrah Superfast Express train, which was travelling in the opposite direction, according to South Eastern Railway, resulting in the deadly pile-up.

Rajesh Kumar, the senior deputy commercial manager of South Eastern Railway, said the Coromandel Express had changed tracks, which led to the incident, and that the reason would be investigated.

The death toll was expected to increase as more bodies were recovered from the wreckage and overturned carriages, said the state chief secretary, Pradeep Jena. More than 200 ambulances were called to the scene in

Odisha's Balasore district and 100 additional doctors, on top of 80 already there, had been mobilised, he added. About 850 people had been taken to hospital.

"The rescue work is continuing on a war footing," Jena said. "Additional medical equipment and drugs at hospitals where victims are being treated are also being taken care of."

[Map](#)

India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, said "all possible assistance" was being given to those affected. He chaired a high-level meeting about the crash on Saturday and visited the incident site.

Indian prime minister Narendra Modi visits train crash site – video

Rescue teams were mobilised from Odisha's capital of Bhubaneswar and Kolkata in West Bengal, said the federal minister for railways, Ashwini Vaishnaw, as well as from the National Disaster Response Force, state government teams and the air force. Hundreds of fire department personnel, police officers and sniffer dogs were also involved.

Images from the scene showed hundreds of rescuers climbing up the mangled wreckage of the trains as they worked frantically overnight to find survivors.

Speaking on Saturday morning, after rescue efforts had gone on for almost 12 hours, Sudhanshu Sarangi, the director general of the fire department in Odisha, said: "We're trying to locate bodies that might still be trapped under the mangled compartments. The operations will continue for a few more hours."



Rescue workers and military personnel gather around damaged carriages at the accident site on Saturday. Photograph: Dibyangshu Sarkar/AFP/Getty Images

Visiting the incident site on Saturday morning, the railway minister, Ashwini Vaishnaw, promised a “high-level” investigation into what had caused the crash. “A detailed high-level probe would be conducted and the railway safety commissioner would also do an independent inquiry. Right now, the focus is on rescue and relief operations,” he said.

At Howrah and Chennai railway stations, desperate relatives gathered hoping for news about survivors. One survivor told local television news he had been sleeping when the crash happened and woke to find himself trapped under about a dozen passengers before crawling out from the carriage with only injuries to his neck and arm.

“When I got out of the train, I saw limbs scattered all around, a leg here, a hand there. Someone’s face was disfigured,” he said.

Another witness told Reuters all he could see was “blood, broken limbs and people dying around me”.

At Bhadrak district hospital, ambulances brought in casualties, with the bloodied and shocked survivors receiving treatment in crowded wards.

Hundreds of young people lined up outside a government hospital in the city of Soro in Odisha to donate blood.

Despite government efforts to improve safety and update ageing infrastructure, several hundred accidents occur every year on India's railways. With 40,000 miles (64,000km) of track carrying 13 million passengers on 14,000 trains daily, they comprise the world's largest train network under one management.

Two trains collided near Delhi in August 1995, killing 358 people in the worst train accident in India's history. Most train accidents are blamed on human error or outdated signalling equipment.

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Ukraine war liveUkraine

Russia-Ukraine war as it happened: Kremlin infighting ‘destroying Russian state’, says Wagner head

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Donald Trump in January. Chris Licht told Tim Alberta he did not regret the town-hall crowd because it represented the Republican base. Photograph: Logan Cyrus/AFP/Getty Images

[CNN](#)

‘Extra Trumpty’: Atlantic profile of CNN chief Licht details town hall disaster

Network chief executive reportedly wanted New Hampshire event to be ‘extra Trumpty’ but broadcast prompted wide condemnation

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York

[@MartinPengelly](#)

Sat 3 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 3 Jun 2023 10.17 EDT

The CNN chief executive, Chris Licht, [wanted](#) the network’s New Hampshire town hall with Donald Trump last month to be “extra Trumpty”, according to a report on Licht’s attempts to remodel the news giant and how

[controversy](#) over the Trump event continues to reverberate through US politics and media.

In a [lengthy profile](#) published on Friday, Tim Alberta of [the Atlantic](#) wrote: “Licht wasn’t scared to bring a bunch of Maga enthusiasts onto his set – he had remarked to his deputies about the ‘extra Trumpy’ make-up of the crowd CNN was expecting – and he damn sure wasn’t scared of Trump.

“The way to deal with a bully like Trump, Licht told his journalists, was to confront him with facts.”

But Trump, wholly unsurprisingly, threw facts out of the window.

The former president repeated his lies about the 2020 election being stolen; [abused E Jean Carroll](#), the writer against whom he had just been [found liable](#) for sexual assault and defamation; insulted his host, Kaitlan Collins; and otherwise revved up a crowd which responded with glee.

Before the town hall, Alberta [wrote](#), Licht’s wish for an “extra Trumpy” crowd caused internal concern. After the event, amid widespread condemnation, Licht told Alberta he did not regret the crowd because it represented the Republican base.

Trump does dominate the Republican primary for 2024, capitalising on unprecedented legal jeopardy to lead his closest challenger, the Florida governor, Ron DeSantis, by about 30 points in most [polling averages](#).

Alberta shadowed Licht for months for the Atlantic as the executive attempted to redirect a network that took an adversarial stance when Trump was in power.

Licht [said](#): “The mission was to go after this guy … Right or wrong. I’m not saying he’s a good guy. He’s definitely not. But, like, that was the mission.”

Trump, Licht [said](#), “changed the rules of the game, and the media was a little caught off guard and put a jersey on and got into the game as a way of dealing with it. And at least [at] my organisation, I think we understand that jersey cannot go back on. Because guess what? It didn’t work.”

CNN, Licht said, should simply do “journalism” and aim to be “trusted … There has to be a source of absolute truth. There’s good actors, there’s bad actors, there’s a lot of shit in the world. There has to be something that you’re able to look at and go, ‘They have no agenda other than the truth.’”

He also said such an approach did not make him “a fascist rightwinger who’s trying to steal Fox viewers”.



Chris Licht, the chief executive of CNN. Photograph: Michael Loccisano/Getty Images for Semafor

But since the Trump town hall, on 10 May, [condemnation](#), some of it from [within CNN](#), has flowered.

Alberta was in the audience at St Anselm’s College. It was, he [wrote](#), “no ordinary collection of Republicans and GOP-leaning independents, as CNN had claimed it would be. Most … were diehards, fanboys, political zealots who were likelier to show up at a rally with a Maga flag than come to a coffee shop with a policy question. These folks hadn’t turned out to participate in some good-faith civic ritual. They were there to celebrate Trump’s continued assault on the media.

“… By the end of the event, it was essentially indistinguishable from a Maga rally. People throughout the room shouted, ‘I love you!’ during commercial

breaks and chanted ‘Four more years!’ when the program ended.”

Afterwards, Licht [gave Alberta](#) his immediate verdict: “Well, *that* wasn’t boring!”

A week later, Alberta [wrote](#), Licht ceded a “lone point … that the crowd should have been introduced to viewers … with a show of hands, perhaps, to demonstrate how many had voted for Trump previously, or were planning to support him in 2024”.

Otherwise, Licht was defiant. One of “the biggest misconceptions about that town hall”, he [said](#), “is that I did it for ratings … I certainly didn’t do it for a profit, because it cost us money. And I certainly didn’t do it to build a relationship with Trump.”

Alberta’s Atlantic piece ranged far wider than the Trump town hall, following Licht even to a session with his personal trainer at a Manhattan gym, as he confronted problems including a misfiring morning show that led to the [firing](#) of the anchor Don Lemon.

In US media, the [profile](#) set off new detonations.

Brian Stelter, a media reporter whom Licht fired from CNN, [called](#) the piece “jaw-dropping” and added: “The consensus, among people who knew [the] piece was coming, is that it’s much ‘worse’ than they expected. Licht confided in Alberta the way a client confides in a therapist. Some CNN staffers are shocked.”

Bill Grueskin, a Columbia Journalism School professor, [said](#): “It wouldn’t be fair to say a trained seal could do a better job running CNN than Chris Licht. It’s just that, after reading this piece, it feels like we should give the trained seal a shot.”

The writer Mark Harris [called](#) Alberta’s piece “brutal – a relentlessly observant eye-level portrait of the wrong man for the job struggling to come off as the right man for the job, convincing absolutely nobody except a boss who himself seems allergic to criticism.”

Licht's boss, the Warner Bros Discovery chief executive, David Zaslav, first agreed to speak to Alberta, then declined to do so on the record.

People who knew Zaslav, [Alberta wrote](#), "and who had observed his relationship with Licht, had depicted him as a control freak, a micromanager, a relentless operator who helicoptered over his embattled CNN leader. Zaslav's constant meddling in editorial decisions struck network veterans as odd and inappropriate; even stranger was his apparent marionetting of Licht.

"In this sense, some of Licht's longtime friends and co-workers told me, they pitied him. He was the one getting mauled while the man behind the curtain suffered nary a scratch."

On Friday, Puck News [reported](#) that Licht was no longer in control of CNN business operations. David Leavy, a Zaslav lieutenant, was appointed chief operating officer.

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- Cycling Here's how to make buying a new bike an easy ride
- UK car buying Expert tips on what to pick for your budget
- Adam Kay 'My worst job? A comedy gig for angry, horny squaddies. I was on after the stripper'

‘Post-marriage, I was a teenager again’: how I turned the page after getting divorced in my 30s

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Composite: Sophia Evans/Andy Hall for The Guardian

[Blind date](#)[Dating](#)

Blind date: ‘I got way too excited seeing margaritas on the menu’

Katie, 29, who works in television, meets Will, 35, a senior finance analyst

Sat 3 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT

Katie on Will



What were you hoping for?

The closest I could get to being on First Dates – without making a fool of myself on television.

First impressions?

Anyone who arrives earlier than me immediately gets a gold star.

What did you talk about?

How we both have friend groups that organise surprise trips for each other. How Irish men are funnier and more handsome (his words). How anyone without a vice is not to be trusted. My deep fear of turning 30.

Most awkward moment?

When Will tried to take our selfie with the camera facing the wrong way. And the knowing glances from the staff throughout the evening.

Good table manners?

Better than me! I wasn't going to try eating *pan con tomate* with a knife and fork, but Will did it gracefully.

Best thing about Will?

All those hobbies! Surfing, skiing, hiking. I don't think I could keep up!

Would you introduce Will to your friends?

For sure, our respective surprise-trip friend groups would have loads to discuss.

Describe Will in three words.

Kind, adventurous and intelligent.

What do you think Will made of you?

Way too excited at seeing margaritas on the menu.

Q&A

Fancy a blind date?

Show

Blind date is Saturday's dating column: every week, two strangers are paired up for dinner and drinks, and then spill the beans to us, answering a set of questions. This runs, with a photograph we take of each dater before the date, in Saturday magazine (in the UK) and online at theguardian.com every Saturday. It's been running since 2009 – you can [read all about how we put it together here](#).

What questions will I be asked?

We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

Can I choose who I match with?

No, it's a blind date! But we do ask you a bit about your interests, preferences, etc – the more you tell us, the better the match is likely to be.

Can I pick the photograph?

No, but don't worry: we'll choose the nicest ones.

What personal details will appear?

Your first name, job and age.

How should I answer?

Honestly but respectfully. Be mindful of how it will read to your date, and that Blind date reaches a large audience, in print and online.

Will I see the other person's answers?

No. We may edit yours and theirs for a range of reasons, including length, and we may ask you for more details.

Will you find me The One?

We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

Can I do it in my home town?

Only if it's in the UK. Many of our applicants live in London, but we would love to hear from people living elsewhere.

How to apply

Email blind.date@theguardian.com

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

Did you go on somewhere?

No, I think the evening was winding down and we overstayed our welcome at the restaurant.

And ... did you kiss?

No kiss: we said goodbye on the train and the fluorescent lighting wasn't quite the vibe.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?

It was lovely weather so a second margarita on the roof terrace before dinner wouldn't have gone amiss ...

Marks out of 10?

8. There wasn't that spark but I had a really fun time.

Would you meet again?

Of course – probably as friends, it would be fun to reminisce on this experience.



Will and Katie on their date.

Will on Katie

**What were you hoping for?**

Some fun and interesting conversation over a nice meal.

First impressions?

Katie was very friendly with great energy.

What did you talk about?

Spicy v non-spicy margaritas. Niche dating apps. Rainy holidays in France. Coincidentally, we discovered that we had both booked holidays for mates and only revealed the destination at the airport.

Most awkward moment?

Me failing to capture the London Eye in our rooftop selfie.

Good table manners?

Flawless on her part. I dropped a croquette.

Best thing about Katie?

Very easy to get along with.

Would you introduce Katie to your friends?

Yes, she is the type of person who could get on with most people.

Describe Katie in three words.

Fun, chatty, confident.

What do you think Katie made of you?

We got on quite well, so nice things I hope.

Did you go on somewhere?

No, but we spent quite a while at the restaurant.

And ... did you kiss?

Just a hug goodbye.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?

Nothing, really, it was very pleasant. Maybe I would have ordered the churros.

Marks out of 10?

8.

Would you meet again?

Unfortunately not – the spark just wasn't quite there.

Katie and Will ate at [Aqua Nueva](#), London W1. Fancy a blind date? Email blind.date@theguardian.com

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New bike prices have gone up in recent years, partly on the back of the Covid pandemic. Photograph: AzmanJaka/Getty Images

[Cycling](#)

Cycling: here's how to make buying a new bike an easy ride

From specs to price, the key points to watch out for if you want to get a good deal on a new or used bike



[Miles Brignall](#)

Sat 3 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT

Although prices of new bicycles have shot up in recent years, thanks in part to a Covid-induced bike-buying frenzy, it is still possible to find a decent one at a cost that won't break the bank – if you know where to look.

In fact, now is a very good time to buy a new bike because sluggish sales have prompted many big retailers to knock 20-30% off. For first-time buyers, the bike market can seem daunting but here's the Guardian Money guide to buying a bike.

Buying new

The first rule of buying a new bike is not to look at anything less than £300 (unless it is a heavily discounted decent bike) as, chances are, it will be a drudge to ride and feature poor components. However, if you can spend £400-£600, according to BikeRadar's deputy editor, Jack Luke, you will get

a decently specced bike that will be fun to ride (not too heavy) – one that will allow you to commute in the week and enjoy leisure rides at weekends.

For most people getting back on two wheels, it makes a lot of sense to buy a hybrid bike – a flattish handlebarred model with a fairly upright (comfortable) riding position.



The Pinnacle Lithium 3 hybrid bike has a lightweight frame and hydraulic disc brakes. Photograph: Evans Cycles

Cycling Weekly described the £400-ish [Pinnacle Lithium 3](#) as the “best commuter bike for a jack of all trades”, and it is hard to disagree. You get a lightweight frame and hydraulic disc brakes. These bikes are exclusive to Evans Cycles, part of Frasers Group, the Sports Direct owner. For this reason, we would recommend you only buy this bike in person so you can try it for size, rather than ordering online. If you have an Evans near you, these are great bikes.

Another great starter bike to look at is the [Specialized Sirrus 1.0](#), which can be found new for £375. However, be aware that, like the Pinnacle, this doesn’t come with mudguards and a pannier rack, which are a must if you are hoping to ride comfortably when it rains or has rained, or you want to carry work clothes and so on.



The Elops 500 city bike from Decathlon is highly recommended.
Photograph: Decathlon

Two recommended hybrid commuter bikes that have both these fitted as standard are the dependable [£480 Ridgeback Speed](#), and Decathlon's [£500 Elops 500](#). The latter is available with men's and women's frames, with built-in lights. We would suggest the Ridgeback just shades it but both bikes offer dependable urban transport.

If you are on a tighter budget and still want to buy new, the £320 [Carrera Subway 1](#) from Halfords is a good option. It also comes in men's and women's versions, and has the ability to mount mudguards and panniers, even with its larger tyres. Luke says these have proved themselves over the years and have a loyal following among those wanting cheap transport.

For those able to spend a bit more, [BikeRadar's hybrid guide](#) has some more expensive options in the £600-£1,000-plus bracket that will give a noticeable step up in quality.

For those looking for a newbie road bike (with drop handlebars), [Decathlon's £350 Triban RC120](#) is the standout value purchase.

The best-value new gravel bike is currently the £650 [Voodoo Nakisi](#), according to Luke.



VanMoof says its S4 electric bike is ‘practically unstealable’. Photograph: VanMoof

Meanwhile, there are a host of electric bikes around the £2,000 mark. Guardian Money particularly likes the ultra-cool VanMoof S4, which the makers say is “practically unstealable”.

Luke advises new bike buyers to favour their independent bike shop (if they have one), where they will get some proper advice, and help if they have a problem. It is worth visiting a couple of bike shops, as some will only stock one brand – for example, Trek – and another model may be a better fit.

The final piece of “buying new” advice is to buy the bike through your employer’s cycle-to-work scheme, if that is an option. Most big employers now offer this, and there is no compulsion to actually cycle to work. Basic-rate taxpayers will save 32% off the purchase price, while higher-rate taxpayers (those earning more than £50,271) receive a 42% discount through the salary sacrifice scheme. You can add a helmet, rack, coat, etc, and you can also buy an electric model. There is a useful [guide to such schemes here](#).

What about used?

If you have a smaller budget, you will generally find a better bike in the secondhand market than opting for a cheaper new one. Sites such as eBay, Gumtree and Facebook Marketplace are all awash with used bikes in various states of repair. Again, you should be looking for a quality bike – ideally one that cost the first owner a fair sum but has been sitting unused in the garage. Plenty of people who bought bikes during Covid are selling them now after losing interest, and there are some real bargains out there.

Luke advises buyers to take someone who knows a bit about bikes along with you, as “it’s pretty easy to disguise the true state of a bike that’s been heavily used”.

The fear is that you buy a used bike and gears start slipping, at which point you need to change the chain, cassette and possibly the chainset – wiping out the savings you made.



Co-ops such as Broken Spoke in Oxford are a great place to buy affordable used bikes. Photograph: John Cairns

Perhaps a better bet than trawling the private ads is to buy from one of the growing number of bike cooperatives and recycling projects that have sprung up across the country. For example, the [Bristol Bike Project](#) has a big turnover of upcycled bikes for sale and is a great scheme to invest your

money in. There are similar projects across the UK, mostly in cities. They are also great places for affordable repairs.

Finally, don't forget a decent lock. The gold-rated [OnGuard Pitbull U-lock with cable is an absolute bargain at £25](#). Unless you ride a super-expensive machine, look no further.

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Are you looking for a car for recreational use or will you also be driving it to work? Photograph: Stephen Dorey ABIPP/Alamy

[Motoring](#)

UK car buying: expert tips on what to pick for your budget

Motoring insiders tell us which models to choose, based on price, reliability, running costs and more



[Miles Brignall](#)

Sat 3 Jun 2023 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 3 Jun 2023 05.24 EDT

If you are one of those people who views the prospect of buying a car with a mixture of fear and resentment, then help is at hand. This week, Guardian Money has been asking some of the UK's car experts which vehicle they would buy for themselves if they were spending their own money.

The UK's cheapest brand-new cars include the Dacia Sandero, the MG3, the Kia Picanto and the Citroën C3, all of which can be picked up for a shade under £14,000. With this in mind, we asked our experts what they would buy with a £14,000 budget. Would they opt for one of those four, a different make, or a better-value used option?

We also asked what they would buy if they were restricted to a more modest £8,000 budget and, for those with more spending power, which electric car they would buy if they had £25,000 to spend.

In general, our experts favoured east Asian brands over their European rivals but there were also a couple of surprise suggestions that will appeal to

buyers who look for more than value for money in a car.



For electric car buyers, the MG ZS is highly recommended by experts.
Photograph: ZarkePix/Alamy

We came up with two different categories of buyer. The first is a couple – retired or younger. One of them might use the vehicle to drive a short distance to work or to volunteer a few times a week. It would also be for recreational use: going shopping, etc, weekends away, and an annual trip to somewhere such as France or Scotland in the summer.

Our second buyer is a two-parent family with two kids – let's say aged seven and 10. They need to do all the above but they might also want to do things such as camping, so they will need a bit more space for everything that family life entails.

We told our experts that Guardian Money readers want reliability, low running costs and cheap insurance, and comfort and safety. We said they were less concerned about handling and performance. They should assume our buyers drive less than 10,000 miles a year.

The car has to be Ulez-compliant – a must given that several cities, including Birmingham and Bristol, now have clean air zones. In London, the ultra-low emission zone, or Ulez, is [expanding across all boroughs](#) from 29

August, while [Glasgow's low emission zone](#) (LEZ) came into force on 1 June.

So what did our experts say?

David Ross

Senior editor at [heycar](#), the company behind the website [HonestJohn.co.uk](#)

Couple

He reckons their first choice should be the Toyota Yaris Hybrid as, not only do you get “bullet-proof Toyota reliability but it’s also cheap to run (close to 60 miles per gallon) and very comfortable”. He says you can find plenty of well-cared-for models at this price point (about £14,000), “and it’s a very sensible buy”. He adds: “Those wanting something with a bit more personality should look at the Suzuki Ignis, which has bags of character, should be reliable and is surprisingly practical and spacious inside.”



The Toyota Yaris hybrid is ‘cheap to run and very comfortable’. Photograph: Sue Thatcher/Alamy

For an £8,000 spend, Ross says our couple should look no further than a Ford Fiesta. Go for one with the 1.0 EcoBoost engine, which he says is a real gem.

Family

Ross says his £14,000 choice would be a Kia Sportage 1.6 GDi 2. It will prove a comfortable and reliable family SUV, plus you get the remainder of a seven-year warranty. He also recommends looking at the Škoda Octavia Estate, which will “never leave you wanting for space”. Opt, he says, for the 1.5 TSI SE L model.

Meanwhile, the family with £8,000 to spend should make their first port of call the “well-built and spacious” Toyota Avensis Tourer estate (1.8 V-matic petrol). “It’s a family car that won’t let you down.”



The MG4 is worth considering both new and used. Photograph: VDWI Automotive/Alamy

Electric car

For both groups, Ross recommends they check out an MG. The couple, he says, will want the newly crowned “UK car of the year 2023”, the MG4, which can be had either new or with a few miles on the clock for this price.

Our family, he suggests, may want to opt for the bigger MG ZS. “MG has cornered the market for affordable electric vehicles, and there’s nothing else on the market that can compete at this price,” he says.

Jim Holder

Freelance car writer and former editor of [What Car?](#)

Holder’s suggestions will appeal if you like a higher driving position.

Couple

For our couple with £14,000 to spend, he recommends they stay with Dacia but rather than a new Sandero, he says they should opt for a used Duster, the firm’s bestselling small SUV.

“For that money you’ll get a three-year-old car with a choice of petrol or diesel engines, in a high spec, and with 20,000-30,000 miles on the clock – plenty of happy motoring ahead of it.”

These have a reputation for mile-munching and are cheap to repair

Jim Holder on the Ford S-Max

If our couple only want to spend £8,000, he suggests they follow his lead and buy an older, well-kept, petrol-powered Toyota RAV4 for £3,000-£4,000 and spend the saving on a nice holiday or similar. “It should have plenty of miles in it, given Toyota’s epic record on reliability. I’ve just bought one myself,” he adds.

Family

For our family with £14,000 to spend, he thinks they should go against the fashion for SUVs and look for an estate or – better still – a now highly unfashionable people carrier. “There are plenty of high-spec Ford S-Maxs at this price point [make sure you buy a Ulez-compliant model], albeit about six to eight years old and with 50,000 miles on the clock. These have a

reputation for mile-munching and are cheap to repair. They are surprisingly fun to drive, too,” he says.



Jim Holder likes the Škoda Octavia Estate. Photograph: KeyWorded/Alamy

For a family car on an £8,000 budget, he is another fan of the Škoda Octavia Estate. Ulez-compliant (Euro 6) diesel ones are likely to have at least 80,000 miles on the clock, which in itself is no bad thing. Petrol models can be bought with far fewer miles on the clock and may be the better option for low annual mileage drivers.

Electric car

Holder says our couple should opt for a Hyundai Ioniq, where £20,000 will get you a nearly new top spec that is only a couple of years old. For our EV family, he says, Kia e-Niro prices have just dipped under £25,000 on the used market, and for that, you get an older electric car that outperforms many of the newer ones. “It’s also decently spacious and comfortable,” he says.

Piers Ward

[Autocar](#) associate editor

His suggestions may appeal if you want something a bit more flamboyant and a bit less focused around value.

Couple

For our £14,000 spending couple, he says the Sandero is a great car – an Autocar award winner this year – but despite that, he also favours going “used” at this price point. The Volkswagen CC is appealing but he says you can’t argue with a BMW 4 Series Gran Coupe. “The 2.0-litre diesel engine is economical and smooth, and would easily cope with a south of France trip,” he says.

With an £8,000 budget, he says our couple should look at a used Mini Convertible.

The 2.0-litre diesel engine is economical and smooth, and would easily cope with a south of France trip

Piers Ward on the BMW 4 Series Gran Coupe

Family

For our higher-spending family, he would also go used and pick up the sportier Škoda Octavia vRS, or possibly even a Mini Clubman; however, he says, the Octavia would get the nod “because it drives better”. Ward says the family with £8,000 to spend should look at the Honda Civic, which will work as long as the family doesn’t require too much space.

Ward points couples to a nearly new MG4, and the Kia e-Niro for the family. The Niro may not be as much fun to drive as the MG, he says, but it has decent range and more room inside.

Our suggestions

When it comes to best-value motoring, it is still the Japanese brands that stand out.

Couple

For a couple, I would look at one of three cars. The Honda Jazz is a brilliantly versatile car that is again very reliable, with low running costs. They are relatively expensive to buy but again, you shouldn't be paying out for expensive repairs. The Toyota Auris is a smaller version of the Avensis and has as many fans. Avoid the expensive hybrid beloved of Uber drivers and again pick up a used 1.6-litre petrol bargain. Another car to consider is the Mazda3.



The Honda Jazz is a versatile, reliable car with low running costs.
Photograph: Simon Stuart-Miller (commissioned)

Family

If we had £8,000 or £14,000 to spend on a family car, we would be buying a used 1.8-litre petrol Toyota Avensis estate. These cars may not have the sharpest handling but they are fantastically reliable, very comfortable, and quiet on the motorway. Buy one with 70,000 miles on the clock and run it until you can no longer put off buying an electric car. Pound for pound, this is the cheapest family car to run.



The Toyota Avensis estate is reliable and good value for families.
Photograph: Heritage Image Partnership Ltd/Alamy

My 2006 Avensis estate has just passed 200,000 miles and is still running well and returning more than 40 miles a gallon on a run. Over 10 years, aside from replacing the clutch, a battery, an alternator and a couple of headlamp bulbs, there have been no other bills apart from its £250 service and MOT each year. The diesel models are not as reliable as the petrol ones, so stick to the 1.8-litre.

Electric car

Don't assume that all electric cars are out of your budget. For under £14,000 it is now possible to buy a two- or three-year-old MG ZS fully electric car with 30,000 miles on the clock. These cars are the best-value electric vehicles on the market, and while the range isn't up to the latest £25,000-plus models, they will do a solid 140 miles between charges.

Think you have found a better model, join the debate below the line.

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Adam Kay: 'A reviewer once called me artistically bankrupt.' Photograph: David M Bennett/Getty Images

[The Q&AComedy](#)

Adam Kay: 'My worst job? A comedy gig for angry, horny squaddies. I was on after the stripper'

The writer of This Is Going to Hurt on self-destruction, an awkward meeting with AOC and why he can't stand Jeremy Hunt

[Rosanna Greenstreet](#)

Sat 3 Jun 2023 04.30 EDT Last modified on Sat 3 Jun 2023 13.54 EDT

Born in Brighton, Kay, 42, spent six years as a junior doctor before leaving in 2010 to become a comedian. In 2017 he published his bestselling memoir, [This Is Going to Hurt](#). In 2022 it became a [BBC TV series starring Ben Whishaw](#), and this year Kay won a Bafta for the script. His latest book, [Undoctored: The Story of a Medic Who Ran Out of Patients](#), is out in

paperback on 8 June. He performs [Undoctored – This Is Going to Hurt... More](#) at the Pleasance theatre on the Edinburgh Fringe from 2-28 August. Kay lives in Oxfordshire with his husband, James Farrell.

When were you happiest?

In the one photo I've seen where my smile looks convincing – I'm four years old, so I'm guessing then. But I just won a Bafta and that felt amazing, too. So, roughly every 40 years.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

Self-destruction.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

People who barge into a lift instead of standing aside for anyone exiting should be dipped in kerosene and fired into the sun.

Your most embarrassing moment?

Meeting Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and asking, "What do you do?"

Describe yourself in three words

Busy, lazy, tired.

What do you most dislike about your appearance?

The whole lot, not ideal for someone who has to appear on TV for work. Then again, I save a fortune on mirrors.

If you could bring something extinct back to life, what would you choose?

Cadbury's Fuse.

Who would play you in the film of your life?

Ben Whishaw, it turns out.

What is your most unappealing habit?

Leaving a treasure hunt of nail clippings around the house. Sorry, boys, I'm taken.

Who is your celebrity crush?

Chris Hemsworth. Unreciprocated as far as I know.

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Which book are you ashamed not to have read?

I haven't read most of the classics: Dickens, the Brontës, that crowd. But they haven't read my books either, so shame on them, too.

What is the worst thing anyone's said to you?

A reviewer once called me "artistically bankrupt", and it doesn't feel like reviews can get much worse than that.

Would you choose fame or anonymity?

Anonymity.

What does love feel like?

When my cold toes drain the heat from his warm ones, but he doesn't mind at all and is happy for our tarsal temperatures to meet in the middle.

Which living person do you most despise, and why?

Jeremy Hunt. We met once and I've had more enjoyable endoscopies.

What is the worst job you've done?

A comedy gig at an army barracks for thousands of angry, horny squaddies just back from six months in the desert. I was on straight after the stripper.

What has been your biggest disappointment?

I've never been upgraded on a plane.

If you could edit your past, what would you change?

I could have done without being sexually assaulted, or having an eating disorder, or pushing myself to breaking point, but every chapter of my life brought me here.

How often do you have sex?

As often as I like, but less often than I used do.

Would you rather have more sex, money or fame?

Money – the other two aren't accepted at checkouts.

What happens when we die?

Maggot time!

Undoctored: The Story of a Medic Who Ran Out of Patients by Adam Kay is published by Orion (£9.99). To support the Guardian and Observer order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply.

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2023.06.03 - Opinion

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Illustration: R Fresson

[OpinionMotoring](#)

I love electric vehicles – and was an early adopter. But increasingly I feel duped

[Rowan Atkinson](#)



Sadly, keeping your old petrol car may be better than buying an EV. There are sound environmental reasons not to jump just yet

Sat 3 Jun 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 3 Jun 2023 10.56 EDT

Electric motoring is, in theory, a subject about which I should know something. My first university degree was in electrical and electronic engineering, with a subsequent master's in control systems. Combine this, perhaps surprising, academic pathway with a lifelong passion for the motorcar, and you can see why I was drawn into an early adoption of electric vehicles. I bought my first electric hybrid 18 years ago and my first pure electric car nine years ago and (notwithstanding our poor electric charging infrastructure) have enjoyed my time with both very much. Electric vehicles may be a bit soulless, but they're wonderful mechanisms: fast, quiet and, until recently, very cheap to run. But increasingly, I feel a little duped. When you start to drill into the facts, electric motoring doesn't seem to be quite the environmental panacea it is claimed to be.

As you may know, the government has proposed a [ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars](#) from 2030. The problem with the initiative is that it seems to be based on conclusions drawn from only one part of a car's operating life: what comes out of the exhaust pipe. Electric cars, of course,

have zero exhaust emissions, which is a welcome development, particularly in respect of the air quality in city centres. But if you zoom out a bit and look at a bigger picture that includes the car's manufacture, the situation is very different. In advance of the Cop26 climate conference in Glasgow in 2021, Volvo released figures claiming that greenhouse gas emissions during production of an electric car are 70% higher than when manufacturing a petrol one. How so? The problem lies with the lithium-ion batteries fitted currently to nearly all electric vehicles: they're absurdly heavy, many rare earth metals and huge amounts of energy are required to make them, and they only last about 10 years. It seems a perverse choice of hardware with which to lead the automobile's fight against the climate crisis.

Unsurprisingly, a lot of effort is going into finding something better. New, so-called solid-state batteries are being developed that should charge more quickly and could be about a third of the weight of the current ones – but they are years away from being on sale, by which time, of course, we will have made millions of overweight electric cars with rapidly obsolescing batteries. Hydrogen is emerging as an interesting alternative fuel, even though we are slow in developing a truly “green” way of manufacturing it. It can be used in one of two ways. It can power a hydrogen fuel cell (essentially, a kind of battery); the car manufacturer Toyota has poured a lot of money into the development of these. Such a system weighs half of an equivalent lithium-ion battery and a car can be refuelled with hydrogen at a filling station as fast as with petrol.

If the lithium-ion battery is an imperfect device for electric cars, it's a complete non-starter for trucks because of its weight; for such vehicles hydrogen can be injected directly into a new kind of piston engine. JCB, the company that makes yellow diggers, has made huge strides with hydrogen engines and hopes to put them into production in the next couple of years. If hydrogen wins the race to power trucks – and as a result every filling station stocks it – it could be a popular and accessible choice for cars.



A Volvo hybrid car undergoes emissions tests for the campaign group Transport & Environment in 2021. Photograph: Emissions Analytics/Reuters

But let's zoom out even further and consider the whole life cycle of an automobile. The biggest problem we need to address in society's relationship with the car is the "fast fashion" sales culture that has been the commercial template of the car industry for decades. Currently, on average we keep our new cars for only three years before selling them on, driven mainly by the ubiquitous three-year leasing model. This seems an outrageously profligate use of the world's natural resources when you consider what great condition a three-year-old car is in. When I was a child, any car that was five years old was a bucket of rust and halfway through the gate of the scrapyard. Not any longer. You can now make a car for £15,000 that, with tender loving care, will last for 30 years. It's sobering to think that if the first owners of new cars just kept them for five years, on average, instead of the current three, then car production and the CO₂ emissions associated with it, would be vastly reduced. Yet we'd be enjoying the same mobility, just driving slightly older cars.

We need also to acknowledge what a great asset we have in the cars that currently exist (there are [nearly 1.5bn](#) of them worldwide). In terms of manufacture, these cars have paid their environmental dues and, although it

is sensible to reduce our reliance on them, it would seem right to look carefully at ways of retaining them while lowering their polluting effect. Fairly obviously, we could use them less. As an environmentalist once said to me, if you really need a car, buy an old one and use it as little as possible. A sensible thing to do would be to speed up the development of synthetic fuel, which is already being used in motor racing; it's a product based on two simple notions: one, the environmental problem with a petrol engine is the petrol, not the engine and, two, there's nothing in a barrel of oil that can't be replicated by other means. Formula One is going to use [synthetic fuel from 2026](#). There are many interpretations of the idea but the German car company Porsche is [developing a fuel](#) in Chile using wind to power a process whose main ingredients are water and carbon dioxide. With more development, it should be usable in all petrol-engine cars, rendering their use virtually CO₂-neutral.

Increasingly, I'm feeling that our honeymoon with electric cars is coming to an end, and that's no bad thing: we're realising that a wider range of options need to be explored if we're going to properly address the very serious environmental problems that our use of the motor car has created. We should keep developing [hydrogen](#), as well as synthetic fuels to save the scrapping of older cars which still have so much to give, while simultaneously promoting a quite different business model for the car industry, in which we keep our new vehicles for longer, acknowledging their amazing but overlooked longevity.

Friends with an environmental conscience often ask me, as a car person, whether they should buy an electric car. I tend to say that if their car is an old diesel and they do a lot of city centre motoring, they should consider a change. But otherwise, hold fire for now. Electric propulsion will be of real, global environmental benefit one day, but that day has yet to dawn.

- Rowan Atkinson is an actor, comedian and writer

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‘Rishi Sunak’s reticence has been exposed as self-interested.’ Photograph:
Tejas Sandhu/SOPA Images/Shutterstock

[Opinion](#)[Rishi Sunak](#)

Not for the first time, Sunak has been hung out to dry by Johnson – how much more can he take?

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



By giving his WhatsApps to the Covid inquiry, the former PM has revealed Sunak's reticence for what it really is

Fri 2 Jun 2023 12.46 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 19.38 EDT

Boris Johnson will haunt Rishi Sunak till the end. The current prime minister is desperate to put the recent past behind him, to persuade the country that he represents a new government and a fresh start. But every time he steps forward, the last prime minister (but one) sticks out a leg to trip him up.

The latest move came this morning, when just hours after the government had [announced](#) it would rather go to court than hand over Johnson's unredacted WhatsApp messages and notebooks to the Covid inquiry, the former PM himself popped up to say he was "perfectly content" for Lady Heather Hallett and her team to see them, [duly sending her a whole lot](#). Thanks a bunch, Boris.

Sunak's legal challenge to Hallett's demand was already looking shaky, with [one minister publicly admitting](#) that it was likely to fail, and a former

Downing Street chief of staff arguing that it should never have been launched. But now it is fatally undermined, politically if not legally.

For Johnson has stripped away the veneer of supposedly disinterested justification that Sunak had applied to his application for a judicial review, of Hallett's insistence on seeing everything. Sunak can no longer claim to be defending the privacy of a predecessor, because the predecessor is happy to let it all hang out – my apologies for that image – or at least to give that impression: in fact, the material Johnson has handed over is not from the phone he used in the crucial period.

Still, Sunak's reticence has been exposed as self-interested. He wants to keep to a minimum the embarrassments of the Covid era, because they remind many millions of voters exactly when and why they came to despise this government. And, more self-interestedly still, the PM fears that Hallett is about to set a precedent for full disclosure – which means the investigators could soon demand to see every message on *his* phone.

After all, there is nothing historic about the Covid inquiry. True, three of the key players – Johnson, Dominic Cummings and Matt Hancock – have left government, but two are still there: Michael Gove and Sunak himself. The latter has plenty to fear from the probing eye of the baroness. He was one of those fined over Partygate, while the benefits of the scheme he introduced as chancellor to boost the restaurant sector are so dubious, it might more accurately have been named Eat Out to Help Spread Covid.

Which might explain why a government that likes to rail against “lefty lawyers” and their casual resort to judicial review – as the 2019 Tory manifesto thundered, it must not be “abused to conduct politics by another means or to create needless delays” – nevertheless deployed the device with such alacrity on Thursday. This was a rare attempt to block the head (whom it had appointed) of a public inquiry (which it had set up), rather than just let her do her work.

Even putting aside the politics, the legal case is strikingly weak. First, it seems obvious that the best arbiter of what the inquiry should or should not see is the inquiry itself, rather than one of the institutions or individuals under examination. Government lawyers wrote to Hallett, explaining that

they were holding back material they regarded as “unambiguously irrelevant” – to which the former judge [replied](#), if not exactly in these terms, “I’ll be the judge of that”.

Public inquiries usually draw their scope widely, especially at the start. They operate like a funnel: taking in a lot, then gradually narrowing down to what they, and no one else, decide is the key evidence. In this case, Hallett is especially justified in wanting to make her own decisions. She spotted that an initial Cabinet Office submission of WhatsApp messages had blacked out discussions between Johnson and his team over [police enforcement of Covid regulations during the demonstrations](#) that followed the murder of Sarah Everard. They had deemed those messages “unambiguously irrelevant” to Hallett’s inquiry when, in fact, they were anything but. The Cabinet Office later backed down, but the judge was not impressed. “It was not a promising start,” she wrote.

But the heart of the matter is the exceptional nature of the task Hallett has been set. “There’s never been an inquiry like this,” says the [human rights lawyer Adam Wagner](#), the leading expert on the regime of regulation imposed during the pandemic. “Everybody in the country could be named as a core participant. There could be 65 million victims.” Other medical inquiries, such as the one into the [infected blood scandal](#), have counted those affected in the hundreds or thousands. Covid led to a huge number of deaths, but serial lockdowns shaped the lives of absolutely everyone.

This means Hallett has no choice but to define the scope of her questioning extremely widely. Of course she needs to see every text message and document, because Covid touched every corner of activity in No 10 and beyond. “This is not a single issue that can be parcelled off,” Wagner tells me. “This was a crisis that enveloped the entire government.”

And so, what Sunak and his advisers might like to hold back as “irrelevant” could instead be critical. Doubtless, there will be a slew of mortifying personal messages – including ministers badmouthing colleagues – that Downing Street would prefer stay hidden. But Hallett has already said that she needs to know about “disagreements between members of the government”, not to satisfy a craving for gossip but because discord at the top may well have hobbled the government’s response to the disaster.

The same goes for the curious disengagement of Johnson at the start of the crisis, his failure even to turn up at successive Cobra meetings. Hallett needs to see his diary to know if he was dealing with weighty affairs of state that might excuse his inattention to a galloping pandemic, or if he was distracted by matters far less forgivable.

The inquiry will similarly look at procurement, including the dash to secure personal protective equipment (PPE). We know about the “VIP lane” that allowed those with contacts in government, often with no record in the field, a fast track to apply for contracts worth hundreds of millions. Officials might regard an exchange of messages between a minister and a would-be supplier that ultimately resulted in no contract to be “unambiguously irrelevant”. Hallett – and the public – could see it rather differently. And remember, none of this stuff will be automatically published for all to see. All Hallett wants is the right to look at it and determine its relevance. Any decision on publication will come later.

When Sunak first stood on the steps of No 10, he promised “integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level”. He knew he would not have become prime minister had it not been for Johnson’s extravagant violation of the very rules he had imposed on everyone else, and the public hunger to see those in charge held to account. That need made Sunak – but it could break him too.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist
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‘What a titanic historical figure Boris Johnson won’t turn out to be.’ The ex-PM at Hexham General Hospital, 8 November 2021. Photograph: Peter Summers/AFP/Getty Images

[Opinion](#)[Boris Johnson](#)

For a prime minister who phoned it in, Boris Johnson is having a lot of trouble handing over one mobile

[Marina Hyde](#)



Conveniently, the device he used most during the pandemic cannot be switched on due to security reasons

Fri 2 Jun 2023 08.21 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 19.38 EDT

Did you see that story about the Indian government official who [drained an entire reservoir](#) to retrieve a phone? Amazing that it turned out to be not even the most ludicrous government-phone-retrieval story this week.

As you may by now have read, Boris Johnson can't give the phone he used for most of the pandemic to the Covid inquiry because of security reasons. He says he still has the phone – then again, he says a lot of things. I think the phone has faked its own death and is living in sin beneath the North Sea with Rebekah Vardy's [agent's phone](#). Can we drain the North Sea? Keir Starmer could suggest it's one of the things we should do instead of [drilling in it](#).

Anyway, Johnson got a new phone in April 2021, a date which is obviously after all the national lockdowns and various Covid policy catastrophes. It's good that we now do vital government business on burner phones, just like drug dealers. The WhatsApp messages from Johnson's second phone are the

only ones available to Heather Hallett's inquiry – and only after the Cabinet Office has redacted them, though the former PM now says he's going to [send them](#) to her directly.

As for why Johnson got a new phone in April 2021, it was because it was discovered that the prime minister's personal mobile number had been [freely available](#) on the internet for 15 years. A normal thing to happen in our normal country. I imagine Johnson fought hard against the handset's decommissioning – it must have been the mistress equivalent of the ghost containment unit in Ghostbusters. The ghosted women's containment unit.

Back then, however, chancellor Rishi Sunak and cabinet secretary Simon Case were among the many government voices dismissing the idea that the PM's cock-up was remotely serious. So imagine no one's surprise yesterday to read Johnson's spokesman declaring: "After a well publicised security breach in April 2021, Mr Johnson was given advice by security officials never to turn on the old device. The effect is that historic messages are no longer available to search."



'Letters from Lady Hallett to Johnson strike a different tone to the Pandemic Diaries of former chat king Matt Hancock.' Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

Oh dear. Honestly, what are the chances. Especially given Johnson spent this entire week playing Captain Transparency, and claiming he had handed the Cabinet Office all of the material requested by the Covid inquiry. He hasn't. But please very much enjoy the tacit suggestion from his crew that this is an exceptionally high-stakes phone. Like, if he turns it on, people might actually die. Except ... we are talking about the Covid pandemic. [Boris Johnson](#) didn't have to use his phone for people to die unnecessarily. It happened every time he went to work. I know we complain about his many holidays – but ultimately, each one of them probably saved lives.

In further trust-aborting news, the government has decided to sue the Covid inquiry it ordered – and to do so using the Human Rights Act, of which so many of its leading lights have been such virulent critics. Thus they join fellow laughable hypocrites the Daily Mail (which despises the Human Rights Act and was last seen [using it to block](#) other media outlets naming its journalists in a phone-hacking case); and Owen Paterson (the implacable enemy of the European court of human rights who was last seen taking the UK government to it [for the investigation](#) which led to his sacking). Well done to all.

The Cabinet Office's public argument is that many of the WhatsApp messages are private and not relevant to the inquiry. (Privately, it must be thrilled that the official record shrinks all the time thanks to WhatsApp, unless you count Mark Zuckerberg as [the new keeper](#) of it.) Then again, perhaps it's not the job of the people who made the big Covid decisions to decide what is or isn't evidence. And, of course, if government ministers didn't do half their business by WhatsApp then we wouldn't even be in this situation. But they did and we are. Live by the group chat, die by the group chat.

Meanwhile, the decision to sue the inquiry has led to the publication of letters from Lady Hallett to Johnson which, among many other things, strike a different tone to the Pandemic Diaries of former chat king Matt Hancock. To read Matt's book was to immerse oneself in the tale of Covid's greatest hero. And yet, that mightn't be the line of inquiry Lady Hallett & Co will be going with. One of her [preliminary questions](#) to Johnson is: "Did you

receive advice from the then cabinet secretary that Matt Hancock MP should be removed from his position?”

Others of Lady Hallett’s early questions to Johnson also tend toward the excruciating. For instance, one relating to [Evgeny Lebedev](#): “Why did you attend a personal/social meeting on the evening of 19 March, after you had called on the UK on 16 March to stop all non-essential contact with others?” And this [self-explanatory eye-roller](#): “Please confirm whether in March 2020 (or around that period), you suggested to senior civil servants and advisers that you be injected with Covid-19 on television to demonstrate to the public that it did not pose a threat?”

In the end, Johnson’s actions this week seem intended to imply the messages and notebooks are very, very bad for Rishi Sunak, and perhaps for Simon Case and others. Hence the affectation of cooperation by the former PM/try-hard agent of chaos. Yet you will already be aware that this man whose sole political philosophy was his personal advancement finally has one new cause: doing over Sunak.

What a titanic historical figure Boris Johnson won’t turn out to be, memorable only for the policy disasters and moral swamps into which his narcissism carelessly led us. At least we’ve got an inquiry touching on one or two of those. After that, let’s remove him from the chat.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist
- This June, Marina Hyde will join fellow columnists at Guardian Live events in [Leeds](#) and [Brighton](#). Readers can join these events in person and the London event will be livestreamed
- What Just Happened?! by Marina Hyde (Guardian Faber, £9.99). To support The Guardian and Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](#). Delivery charges may apply

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‘Many have read her decision as a sudden about-turn.’ Sarah Snook as Shiv Roy. Photograph: HBO/David M Russell

[Republic of Parenthood](#)[Pregnancy](#)

Puzzled by Succession’s finale twist? Shiv’s pregnancy holds the answer

[Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett](#)



The physical and emotional storm of pregnancy can dramatically alter the ways we see the world, in many cases irrevocably

Fri 2 Jun 2023 11.59 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 12.33 EDT

Pregnant women often dream of death. I know I did, and friends told me the same, though no one talks about it with the level of commiserating jollity that they do the strange cravings or the weirdly enhanced sense of smell or even this awful thing called, apparently, “lightning crotch”.

While pregnant, I remember reading about how thin the veil between life and death can feel when you’re pregnant, even in a modern western medical system. In our collective unconscious, pregnancy is still something that can kill us, and in certain places and circumstances still does to this day. For many women, it’s the closest they feel to death in their lifetime. Which isn’t something that is really appropriate to put in a baby shower card.

I’ve had pregnancy on my mind recently because of [Succession](#), the conclusion of which hinges on the choices made by a pregnant woman, though strangely the pregnancy has been absent in a lot of analysis of why Shiv, the daughter of the Roy dynasty, chooses to do what she does. This is

despite the fact that the physical, emotional, psychological and hormonal storm of pregnancy can dramatically alter the ways in which we see the world, in many cases irrevocably.

Pregnancy is, after all, an odd state: utterly mundane in a global context but wild and uncharted for a first-time mother in a personal one. “It’s the most ordinary thing in the world but it seems so different to me, so uncomfortable and unsettling,” writes Jazmina Barrera in [Linea Nigra](#). At times I found it so completely natural and instinctive it was as though my body was built for only this, At others it felt like science fiction, or, as Barrera has it, a gothic novel.

Nothing I had read or absorbed from popular culture fully prepared me; certainly not the smiling, beatific barefoot and pregnant mothers of art history. The exhaustion was shocking. I remember feeling outraged that pregnant women should be expected to work, that nurses should be doing long shifts in this state. [Pregnancy](#) just didn’t seem at all compatible with the modern capitalist system.

Many have read Shiv’s decision as a sudden about-turn that uses her deciding vote to take the company that her father built out of the hands of her brother and into those of a foreign investor, with the father of her child as the puppet CEO. Even those viewers who have puzzled about how inconsistent that decision seems (to them) with her character ignore the context of her pregnancy.

Perhaps this lack of insight is because it’s unfashionable to make too much of a meal of pregnancy in an advanced capitalist economy, even though [scientifically](#) we know that the brain and body changes wrought by pregnancy and motherhood are profound and long-lasting. Shiv certainly tries not to make too big a deal of it. “She’s one of those hard bitches, right?” she says, of herself. “She’s gonna do 36 hours of maternity leave, emailing through her vanity caesarean. Poor kid’ll never see her.”

This is a knowing, minimising bravado. It is futile to ignore it: in a show about bloodlines, this pregnancy is central. Shiv’s body transforms before us. She becomes softer, her eyes fill frequently with tears. She is visibly

upset when accused of using her pregnancy as a power play. She wants the father of her child, a man for whom she has only ever shown contempt, back. Part of this is because he doesn't want her any more, and that replicates the relationship she has with her father – Succession is so clever on how family dynamics can reverberate through the generations. But the other reason is patently that she is pregnant with his child.

Perhaps the most shocking, brutal insight, late in the show's final episode, is that Logan Roy never considered his eldest son Kendall's children – one adopted, one conceived through donor sperm – to be his true grandchildren ("She's the bloodline," brother Roman says. "... Dad's view was that yours weren't real"). Only Shiv carries a possible heir to the company. This is, I think, the pivotal moment in her decision-making.

What she ultimately chooses is the family she is building, not the one that built her: she chooses to save her baby from the toxicity of that inheritance, and in doing so get its father back. It is, I think, her first maternal act. It is also very dark.

In *Linea Nigra*, a beautiful book which records, among other things, that strange doubling that happens during pregnancy, where you become a being carrying a being, Barrera quotes Natalia Ginzburg, who wrote: "The subterranean accord with that hidden form is unspoken; and the relationship between the mother and that living, undiscovered, hidden form is truly the most closed, the most binding, the darkest relationship in the world ..."

Barrera, alongside writers Maggie Nelson, Louisa Hall and others, is helping to create a new literature of pregnancy that encompasses that darkness, but so, in its way, is Succession. How beautifully ironic, that in an environment saturated with virulent misogyny, a pregnant woman whose state is discussed in the most demeaning of terms by the men around her should hold their fortunes in her hands while they remain oblivious to that "subterranean accord".

"He couldn't fit a whole woman in his head," Shiv says of the family's patriarch. Succession is a rare TV show, in that it forces us to.

What's working

I may have triumphed in my continual quest to get the bairn to keep his socks on: I have discovered OriOrso jogger socks, a pair of joggers with non-slip socks attached at the feet, designed by mother and small business owner Claire. And in jazzy designs, too. Just try to outsmart me now, baby!

What's not

On the opposite end of the wealth scale, I was shocked that my local Oxfam was charging £6.99 for a secondhand children's book. The staff blamed the landlords and electricity costs, and it is, of course, for a good cause, but we are in an area with one of the highest rates of child poverty in the country.

- Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett is a Guardian columnist and author

Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).

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Peak TV ... the fourth season of Succession brought more glamorous outdoor locations than ever. Photograph: Home Box Office/HBO

[Television](#)

The hype has gone too far: why Succession's finale was vastly overrated

[Paul MacInnes](#)



Dodgy plotting, confusing character motivations and the distinct sense that it had fallen in love with itself – the tale of the Roys was good. But not as good as it thought it was

Fri 2 Jun 2023 10.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 10.32 EDT

There are many things [Succession](#) landed right on the jaw. The ranks of writers and executive producers brought with them great experience of many areas central to the show: politics, finance, five-star hospitality and, of course, the media. So no doubt the concept of the day five contrarian hit piece will be familiar to them.

I come not to bury Succession – maybe to even praise it a bit – but all the hype around this show has gone too far. On Tuesday morning, after watching Shiv, Ken and Romey zing at one another one final time I felt like that rogue dude in The Lego Movie. Everything about Succession, it seemed, was awesome. Not only that, it was insightful. The characters were multifaceted, many-layered scum that you would also really miss. It was the show that caught the spirit of our time, and all from the perspective of those ambling on to a private jet.

Meanwhile, I was trying to work out what had actually gone on in that last episode. Why had sister Shiv decided to deny the number one Roy boy, Kendall, at the last? She had started out the episode decidedly opposed to him, but then she had apparently experienced a moment of profound reconciliation in the Caribbean sea. Why had she chucked that in? From what I could understand, she refused to give Kendall the vote that would have made him CEO of Waystar Royco because, well, “I don’t think you’d be good at it”. Like, dur.



Logan and Roman talk with Mattson. Photograph: Graeme Hunter

That's the biggest beef I have with Succession – the plotting. Just like Logan's plane after he carked it mid-air, it's been in a circling pattern for a long time (since season two, perhaps?). First it was the patriarch teasing then spoiling, selling out, then buying back. This season it was the siblings spending 20 minutes an episode trying to work out whether they really felt comfortable doing something they then decided not to do, only to do it again, often based on a shrug of the shoulders.

The finale also triggered another pang of disappointment about the show in general: the failure to properly articulate why the children remained in thrall to their father. Logan Roy brutalised his offspring, mocked them, betrayed them and played them off against one another. He did so relentlessly, with

any affection shown either plainly insincere or used to manipulate. All three children acted to distance themselves from him when alive, but after his death they fell in line behind his memory, and I never understood why. The sentimental scene where the kids well up at a video of Logan singing a Robert Burns ballad not only left me nonplussed but made me suspect it was just an excuse to give us some more Brian Cox.

When the writing is as rich as it is in *Succession*, there is enjoyment to be had from watching the same thing over and over again, or to have characters take a valedictory turn. Sometimes the writing was *so* good, though, so full of allusion and wordplay that it actually acted against the propulsion of the drama. When Roman spits at Kendall and Shiv – “Stop ganging up on me like you’re Lennon and McCartney and I’m George. I’m John, motherfuckers” – by the time you’ve spent 30 seconds reacquainting yourself with the internal dynamics of the Beatles (why John and not Paul?), everything else has moved on.

I wasn’t enamoured of the no-doubt hard-earned performance of Jeremy Strong, though making your protagonist a charisma void is a distinctive move. I felt I had seen enough of Sarah Snook’s sarcastic face. There were simply too many characters to actually get deeply involved with, even if they weren’t people with zero redeeming features. The one exception was Tom Wambsgans; a total shit, yes, but somebody who at least appeared open to the possibility of genuine human emotion – ie loving his wife (and, in Matthew Macfadyen, the best acting performance of the lot). So go on Tom lad, you deserve everything you got.



The high life ... Kendall's East 88th Street apartment. Photograph: Sean Hemmerle

I don't think I'm alone in thinking that the show felt a bit in love with itself by the end. Who wouldn't be when you have the metropolitan elites blowing white smoke up your papal chimney the entire time? Related to this sense of self-satisfaction, I think, was the way Succession began to wallow in luxury.

This final season seemed as interested in setting up the next glamorous outdoor location as it was in thinking about why anyone would want to inherit the crown. "Quick, each and every one of us has to go to the Geirangerfjord for a picnic." "See you the day after the election at the church where Jackie Kennedy had her funeral." "We've got an extra 30 minutes for the finale, let's take a trip to the tropics."

The truth is, I loved that stuff. Ever since the sort-of orgy thing in season one, the one with the free food and drink piled up everywhere, I have positively inhaled the experience of vicarious 0.1% living. In fact, I think it's the thing that kept me watching till the end. There's nothing wrong with that. Yet I suspect it's telling all the same. Of the few people I know who have actually spent any time in the world of the super rich, they didn't find Succession convincing. Yet for those of us a few rungs down the ladder, it was the wasp's nips. That we all took such pleasure from peering inside the

windows of our apparent superiors, and subsequently rhapsodised about that fact, perhaps says something about ourselves.

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Rainbow Runway at Bangkok Pride 2022. Photograph: Lauren DeCicca/Getty Images

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‘Time of new hope’: Optimism is high for Bangkok Pride after Thai elections

Voters rejected Prayuth Chan-ocha in favour of parties promising reform, including greater LGBTQ+ rights such as equal marriage

Rebecca Ratcliffe and Navaon Siradapuvadol in Bangkok
Sat 3 Jun 2023 00.00 EDT

When rainbow colours cover one of Bangkok’s main thoroughfares on Sunday, crowds joining the city’s pride celebrations may feel a little more optimistic about the future.

In an election last month, Thai voters [firmly rejected Prayuth Chan-ocha](#), a former coup-maker who has ruled the country for nine years, in favour of

opposition parties promising reform, including greater LGBTQ+ rights such as equal marriage.

“Now is a time of new hope for the LGBT community,” says Nahmoei Pratimaporn, a beauty queen and online influencer who is an ambassador for Bangkok [Pride](#). It’s possible that equal marriage could be passed before the end of the year, she adds. “We believe it’s going to happen quicker than we expected. It’s going to create a big wave, a big impact in society.”

Nahmoei, 28, was kicked out of her family home when she told her parents she had a girlfriend. She began posting videos about her relationship on social media, “to show we have a normal life and that if you are lesbian, if you love girls, it doesn’t mean you have an unstable love”, she says. She developed a big online following, and uses her platform to also address wider LGBTQ+ issues, including the need for legal reform.

A lot has changed since she first began posting online, she says. Her mother is now one of her biggest supporters, and there is much wider acceptance in society. But she is aware from messages she receives from fans that more progress is needed.



A mural for Road to World Pride 2028 on the front of Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, Thailand. Photograph: Matt Hunt/Neato/Shutterstock

Internationally, Thailand, which is famous for its vibrant Bangkok nightlife and its popular [Boys' Love](#) series, often has a reputation for being an LGBTQ+ paradise in Asia, an image activists say does not capture the realities within the country.

“There are so many subtle things obstructing LGBT people from getting equal access to any kind of welfare, or rights in this country. I cannot really call it paradise,” says Tinnaphop Sinsomboonthong, a queer scholar and assistant professor at Thammasat University’s faculty of sociology and anthropology. “But I don’t want to call it hell, as well. It’s not hell.”

There is plenty for the LGBTQ+ community to celebrate, including its strong civil society groups and activists that have campaigned for greater rights. The youth-led pro-democracy protests that erupted in 2020 had a big impact in furthering public debate, says Tinnaphop.

While the main activist leaders primarily called for reforms to the country’s powerful military and monarchy, smaller protest groups emerged, demanding greater gender and LGBTQ+ equality including in schools and other areas of life.

“So many things that had been kept under the carpet for so long – LGBT [issues], discrimination against trans people, gender violence against girls in school. All of these came together on the streets,” says Tinnaphop.

The same youth movement was a powerful force in driving Move Forward, the most progressive party, to win the most seats in last month’s election, stunning many observers. Its leader, Pita Limjaroenrat, who is currently in negotiations with coalition partners to form a government, this week reiterated a pledge to push forward with equal marriage and gender identity recognition bills in parliament.

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Move Forward promises to make the laws more inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community, including by introducing the right to use gender-neutral titles or to avoid titles that imply gender on legal documents. It has also pledged to legalise sex work, a change that Bangkok Pride organisers are advocating for, to ensure greater protections and welfare.

Ratanon Kuiyoksuy, also known as Charlotte, who is organising this year's Bangkok Pride, says they expect at least 50,000 people to attend events on Sunday, which they believe would make it the biggest pride event yet in the city. Organisers also plan to apply to host World Pride 2028. "I'm very excited. This moment is like a gate opening for Asean," Ratanon said, adding it would be a first for the group of Southeast Asian countries.

Yanakorn Jamniyom, 24, who runs his own businesses, will be among those who turn out to watch Sunday's parade. He is hopeful that legal reforms will bring greater rights to the LGBTQ+ community, but points out that Move Forward has not yet succeeded in taking office. A vote on a future prime minister is expected by early August. It's possible that Pita could be [blocked by military-appointed senators](#) who play a role in deciding the future leader, or that coalition talks could break down.

"We have to wait and see what's going to happen," he says. But Yanakorn adds that regardless, this year's pride is important for younger people or others who want to explore themselves. "It's a space to explore inside and show that we can express our identity, that we have a community here."

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A PTI activist watches a speech by Imran Khan in May after he was freed on bail following days of legal drama and riots over his arrest. Photograph: Arif Ali/AFP/Getty Images

[Imran Khan](#)

Imran Khan's political games leave him isolated as Pakistan army destroys party

Allies desert former prime minister amid disappearances and torture as powerful military reasserts control

Hannah Ellis-Petersen in Delhi and Shah Meer Baloch in Islamabad

Sat 3 Jun 2023 02.00 EDT

In recent days, [Imran Khan](#) has cut an increasingly isolated figure. Since Pakistan's former prime minister was released from jail, after a brief but explosive attempt to arrest him last month, his return has been marked by a mass exodus of the top leadership of his party, on a scale that has surprised even his critics.

Late on Thursday night, Pervez Khattak, the former chief minister and defence minister, became the latest high-profile resignation from Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. He followed in the path of Khan's former finance minister, his former human rights minister, his former information minister and his former shipping minister, who all stepped down from senior posts or left PTI altogether in recent weeks. Dozens of other federal and state ministers have followed suit.

Most of those who have not defected are now behind bars. On Thursday night, the president of PTI, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi – who recently said he would stand behind Khan during these “difficult times” – was arrested by anti-terrorism police at his home in Lahore. Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Khan's former foreign minister, still remains in prison after his arrest in May, along with several other key ministers and thousands of rank and file PTI members.

There is little question among analysts who is orchestrating the arrests and resignations. Since Khan's relationship with the all-powerful military establishment fell apart and led to his fall from power, he has been on a crusade against the army leadership. He has accused them of attempting to assassinate him and of being behind his arrest in May, before he was released when the courts declared his detention illegal.

In response, say analysts and PTI members, the army chief is now trying to systematically break up Khan's party, before arresting him and putting him on trial in a military court. The likelihood of Khan being allowed to contest Pakistan's next election, due by October, is considered by most to be very slim.

“This dramatic crackdown is a clear strategy by the military to break down all the support structures that Khan has,” said Avinash Paliwal, an associate professor in international relations at Soas University of London. “Once those structures are gone, Khan is next in line.”

Yet despite Khan's claims that this is a “crackdown never seen before in Pakistan's history”, Paliwal said this was instead a continuation of a pattern

by the military that has marred the country's pathway to democracy since 1958, when the first military coup took place.

Since then, the military has routinely asserted itself as the most powerful political player in Pakistan, either through direct rule or by controlling and masterminding things behind the scenes. All of the country's most powerful political parties have fallen foul of military crackdowns and arrests. Before Khan, it was the prime minister Nawaz Sharif, and his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party, who in 2017, after falling out with the military, was toppled from power and jailed for corruption, as were several others before him.



Nawaz Sharif speaking in Islamabad in 2017, the year he was ousted by the military. Photograph: Faisal Mahmood/Reuters

"This is no anomaly, it is something that the military does occasionally whenever it feels that it needs to tame a civilian political outlet which is getting too big for its boots," said Paliwal. "The military is the only party that is ruling the country."

Khan would not be the first prime minister to be put on trial by the military. In 1977, the prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was deposed in a military coup, put on trial under martial law and then executed.

The pressures imposed on senior figures, and even those lower down the ranks of PTI, have been stark. One senior party leader who was arrested in May and has since resigned from PTI described being handed over by police to the notorious military agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

“For me they used multiple methods to pressure me to leave the party, but one of the worst was torture,” he said, requesting anonymity over fear of the military. “They tied my feet and hung me upside down and I was like a punching bag for them. They were beating with sticks and punches and kicking me.

“They called my family and threatened them and told me that they would pick up my children and entire family if I don’t leave the party. The offer I was given was that if I left PTI, I would get relief. I knew there was no other way.”

Even those lower down in the party described the pressure they were receiving from the military, with many accused of taking part in violent riots and protests that erupted on 9 May after Khan’s arrest. Homes and headquarters of the military were among the buildings attacked in the violence.

Since then, the military and government have described it as a “black day” for Pakistan and vowed to bring the full force of the state down on those who took part, while accusing Khan of being the mastermind. Those who participated, and even those who were just affiliated with the party, have been rounded up in their thousands and charged with terrorism offences, with some due to face trial in military courts.



People on the streets in Peshawar during the 9 May protests. Photograph: Hussain Ali/Pacific Press/Shutterstock

The brother of a PTI youth wing leader said his whole family had been in hiding since 9 May, after experiencing raids on their homes and constant harassment by police. He said he had been separated from his wife and newborn baby for almost a month as a result.

“Why are they harassing me or my parents just because my brother is part of the PTI leadership?” he said. “We have received indirect messages to ‘quit PTI if you don’t want to be in this situation’. This is the worst political situation I’ve seen in my life.”

Human rights groups have expressed concern that the military are turning to their other notorious strategy of intimidation for those aligned with PTI or opposed to the military: disappearances.

The pro-PTI journalist Imran Riaz Khan has been missing since 11 May. On Sunday, Murad Akbar, the brother of a former adviser to Imran Khan, Mirza Shahzad Akbar, was picked up from the family home and has not been seen since, with the police denying any knowledge of his whereabouts.

“We all know who is responsible,” said Mirza Shahzad Akbar, who is in the UK and no longer an office bearer in PTI but is named as an accused in one

of the prominent corruption cases against Khan. “My brother has no involvement in politics. Going after my brother and abducting him is to pressurise me.”

On Thursday night, the prominent lawyer and rights activist Jibran Nasir, who was an outspoken critic of the military, was picked up by unidentified men in Karachi, according to his wife.



Lawyer Jibran Nasir, who was picked up by unidentified men in Karachi, his wife says. Photograph: Akhtar Soomro/Reuters

Yet for all the pressure being exerted, the scale of the defections and speed of the collapse of PTI has exceeded that of any other party that has faced a similar crackdown. Analysts say it is a reflection of the ideological weakness of PTI under Khan, who failed to build any institutions within the party and relied solely on his own populist appeal to keep it together.

There had been mounting frustration at Khan’s political games. Though his public crusade has been to demand general elections as soon as possible, according to those in PTI’s former top leadership, and confirmed by the law minister Azam Nazeer Tarar, behind the scenes Khan twice torpedoed offers by the ruling coalition to hold elections.

Imran Khan: who is the man dividing Pakistan? – video explainer

The first offer came in May last year and the prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, had even written his resignation speech, but after the government approached Khan with the election proposal, he announced his “long march” protest. Not wanting to look like they were bowing to pressure, the government called off the plan.

Then, during supreme court-mandated negotiations between PTI and the government in early May, the government proposed dissolving the parliament by July and holding elections at the end of September. PTI senior leaders in the meeting were enthusiastic, but after a phone-call with Khan, were told to reject the plan and looked visibly dejected according to those in the negotiations.

As trust in Khan’s loyalty to his party members has diminished, few at the upper levels of PTI have proved willing to stand up to the military and face the likely draconian consequences, instead choosing to leave him. A former senior party leader confirmed that several of those who resigned were now in discussion for a plan to rebuild PTI “minus Khan” as a way to “save the party”.

“It is the bitter truth [that] Khan does not care about his workers and close aides and what they go through or face,” he said. “Anyone who has known him closely, knows he just thinks about himself. Khan is a big narcissist.”

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Snow flies walk across snow and ice in the wild. Photograph: Hakan Soderholm/Alamy

Insects

Snow fly in US and Canada can detach its legs to survive, research shows

Flies chilled to sub-zero temperatures amputate one or more of their six limbs to protect their internal organs

Chris Baraniuk

Fri 2 Jun 2023 13.41 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 14.33 EDT

Flightless snow flies in the US and [Canada](#) can amputate their legs to survive as they begin to freeze, researchers have discovered.

Lab experiments in which the flies were chilled gradually to sub-zero temperatures revealed they can detach one or more of their six legs, an apparent “last-ditch tactic” to protect their internal organs from the advancing cold.

“It is gruesome,” said John Tuthill at the University of Washington. “This wave of ice is going to crash into their bodies and kill them so they’re doing this amputation to prevent that happening.”

About 20% of snow flies collected in the wild by the researchers were already missing legs, he added.

Snow flies, being crane flies, are from the same family as daddy long legs. Unlike the well known British insect, North American snow flies habitually walk across snow and ice in the wild and have been observed doing so at temperatures as low as -10C.

The researchers used dozens of snow flies from four different but closely related species collected from icy, mountainous habitats in Washington state, Colorado and Vermont in the US, and British Columbia and Yukon in Canada.

In their experiments, the team placed individual flies on laboratory cold plates and observed their behaviour with a thermal imaging camera as the temperature slowly dropped.

The flies could still walk even when their bodies reached -7C, and the thermal imaging camera was able to capture the precise moment at which the flies’ legs began to freeze, prompting the amputation response. This happened in 31% of cases where freezing began in a leg. Some flies removed as many as five legs before succumbing to the cold.

The team has [published a paper online detailing their findings](#), though it is yet to be peer-reviewed.

Other crane flies are known to self-amputate their legs – but for different reasons. They tend to do it when a predator grabs on to one of their limbs. According to Tuthill, there are muscles inside the flies’ legs that seemingly allow them to pinch off or detach a limb at will.

Certain [geckos](#), [crayfish](#) and [squid](#) can also self-amputate their limbs or tails to escape predators. The African spiny mouse can even shed huge quantities of its own skin in a tight spot.

However, leg self-amputation as a response to potentially freezing to death was described as “unique” by the researchers.

“It’s an extreme adaptation,” said Erica McAlister, the curator of flies and fleas at the Natural History Museum, while praising the research.

In their paper, Tuthill and colleagues speculated that the flies may be able to detect a slight rise in temperature inside their legs, which is – somewhat counterintuitively – caused by a release of energy when ice crystals form. Researchers plan to investigate this hypothesis in future experiments, Tuthill said.

McAlister noted that the hardy flies have an evolutionary advantage in being able to survive, much of the time, in spite of the snow and ice. But that may evaporate as mountainous areas lose their snow cover due to global heating.

“When the snow disappears and this selective advantage of them being able to peg it out of the situation goes, you’re going to have a deleterious effect,” she said.

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A US Air Force drone flying over the Nevada test and training range on 14 January 2020. Photograph: William Rosado/US Air Force/AFP/Getty Images

[US military](#)

US colonel retracts comments on simulated drone attack ‘thought experiment’

Colonel clarifies comments about ‘rogue AI drone’ that supposedly killed its operator

Guardian staff

Fri 2 Jun 2023 19.44 EDTFirst published on Fri 2 Jun 2023 11.05 EDT

A US air force colonel “misspoke” when he said at a Royal Aeronautical Society conference last month that a drone killed its operator in a simulated test because the pilot was attempting to override its mission, according to the society.

The confusion had started with the circulation of a [blogpost](#) from the society, in which it described a presentation by Col Tucker “Cinco” Hamilton, the chief of AI test and operations with the US air force and an experimental fighter test pilot, at the Future Combat Air and Space Capabilities Summit in London in May.

According to the blogpost, Hamilton had told the crowd that in a simulation to test a drone powered by artificial intelligence and trained and incentivized to kill its targets, an operator instructed the drone in some cases not to kill its targets and the drone had responded by killing the operator.

The comments sparked deep concern over the use of AI in weaponry and extensive conversations online. But the US air force on Thursday evening denied the test was conducted. The Royal Aeronautical Society responded in a statement on Friday that Hamilton had retracted his comments and had clarified that the “rogue AI drone simulation” was a hypothetical “thought experiment”.

“We’ve never run that experiment, nor would we need to in order to realise that this is a plausible outcome,” Hamilton said.

The controversy comes as the US government is beginning to grapple with how to regulate artificial intelligence. Concerns over the technology have been echoed by AI ethicists and researchers who argue while there are ambitious goals for the technology, such as potentially curing cancer, for example, the technology is still far off. Meanwhile, they point at longstanding evidence of existing harms, including increased use of, at times, unreliable surveillance systems that misidentify Black and brown people and can lead to over-policing and false arrests, the perpetuation of misinformation on many platforms, as well as the potential harms of using nascent technology to power and operate weapons in crisis zones.

“You can’t have a conversation about artificial intelligence, intelligence, machine learning, autonomy if you’re not going to talk about ethics and AI,” Hamilton said during his May presentation.

While the simulation Hamilton spoke of did not actually happen, Hamilton contends the “thought experiment” is still a worthwhile one to consider when navigating whether and how to use AI in weapons.

“Despite this being a hypothetical example, this illustrates the real-world challenges posed by AI-powered capability and is why the Air Force is committed to the ethical development of AI,” he said in a statement clarifying his original comments.

In a [statement to Insider](#), the US air force spokesperson Ann Stefanek said the colonel’s comments were taken out of context.

“The Department of the Air Force has not conducted any such AI-drone simulations and remains committed to ethical and responsible use of AI technology,” Stefanek said.

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Biden makes a primetime address to the nation from the Oval Office at the White House. Photograph: Jim Watson/UPI/Shutterstock

[Joe Biden](#)

Biden praises passage of debt ceiling bill in Oval Office address ahead of signing it

President described how ‘no one got everything they wanted, but the American people got what they needed’ during brief speech

[Joan E Greve](#) in Washington

[@joanegreve](#)

Fri 2 Jun 2023 20.03 EDT Last modified on Sat 3 Jun 2023 13.25 EDT

Joe Biden celebrated Congress’s approval of a debt-ceiling suspension in a speech delivered from the Oval Office on Friday night, a day after the Senate [passed](#) the compromise bill brokered by the president and the Republican House speaker, Kevin McCarthy.

Biden described the bill's enactment as "essential to the progress we've made over the last few years" in "keeping full faith and credit of the United States of America and passing a budget that continues to grow our economy and reflects our values as a nation".

"That's why I'm speaking to you tonight: to report on a crisis averted and what we're doing to protect America's future," Biden said.

Biden said he would sign the bill Saturday, with just two days left before the 5 June default deadline. Once enacted, the law will suspend the government's borrowing limit until January 2025, ensuring the issue will not resurface before the next presidential election.

The speech, which marked Biden's first formal address from the Oval Office, came less than 24 hours after the Senate passed the debt ceiling bill in a bipartisan vote of 63 to 36. A day earlier, the bill had passed the Republican-controlled House in a bipartisan vote of 314 to 117.

The signing of the bill will avert the first federal default in US history, which could have upended the American economy and global markets. Economists have warned that a federal default could cause the US unemployment rate to double while significantly damaging America's gross domestic product (GDP).

"Passing this budget agreement was critical. The stakes could not have been higher," Biden said. "If we had failed to reach an agreement on the budget, there were extreme voices threatening to take America, for the first time in our 247-year history, into default on our national debt. Nothing, nothing would have been more irresponsible. Nothing would have been more catastrophic. Our economy would have been thrown in recession."

But the passage of the bill came with some significant drawbacks for Biden and fellow Democrats. Although Biden spent months insisting that Congress must pass a "clean" debt ceiling bill with no strings attached, he was ultimately forced to the negotiating table with McCarthy after House Republicans passed their own debt ceiling bill in late April.

As part of his negotiations with McCarthy, Biden agreed to some spending cuts and new work requirements for benefits programs. Those policies were denounced by progressives in Congress, many of whom opposed the debt ceiling bill in protest.

“I could not in good conscience vote for a bill that cuts programs for the most vulnerable while refusing to ask billionaires to pay a penny more in taxes,” Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, one of the deal’s critics, wrote in a [Guardian op-ed](#) published on Friday.

“Deficit reduction cannot just be about cutting programs that working families, the children, the sick, the elderly and the poor depend upon.”

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However, the spending cuts included in the final version of the bill were much more modest than those outlined in the original proposal passed by House Republicans, a point that Biden emphasized in his Friday speech.

“No one got everything they wanted, but the American people got what they needed,” Biden said. “We averted an economic crisis, an economic collapse. We’re cutting spending and bringing the deficits down at the same time. We’re protecting important priorities – from Social Security to Medicare to

veterans to our transformational investments in infrastructure and clean energy.”

But the compromise struck many hard-right Republicans in Congress as a raw deal, and they [voted against](#) the debt ceiling bill over concerns that the legislation did not go far enough to tackle the federal debt of more than \$31tn. Those Republicans’ efforts to block the legislation from advancing repeatedly failed, clearing the way for the final Senate passage of the bill on Thursday.

As the US breathes a sigh of relief over avoiding a potentially catastrophic default, lawmakers are already bracing for future fights. Some progressives, including Sanders, have called on Biden to eliminate the debt ceiling by invoking the 14th amendment of the constitution, which stipulates that the validity of the public debt of America “shall not be questioned”. Such a policy maneuver would kill any future threat of a default.

“The fact of the matter is that this bill was totally unnecessary,” Sanders wrote in his op-ed. “I look forward to the day when [Biden] exercises this authority and puts an end, once and for all, to the outrageous actions of the extreme right wing to hold our entire economy hostage in order to protect their corporate sponsors.”

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Recep Tayyip Erdoğan wins Turkish presidential election runoff – video
[**Turkey**](#)

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan wins Turkish presidential election

Election board confirms victory of incumbent over opposition candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu after runoff

- [**Turkey election – follow live**](#)

Ruth Michaelson and Deniz Barış Narlı in Istanbul

Sun 28 May 2023 18.29 EDTFirst published on Sun 28 May 2023 12.23 EDT

[**Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**](#) has extended his two decades in power, securing victory over his rival Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu after an unprecedented presidential runoff election, in a vote that reflected Turkey's stark and persistent political polarisation.

With 99.43% of the vote counted, Turkey's supreme election authority announced late on Sunday that Erdoğan had won 52.14% of the votes, while Kılıçdaroğlu received 47.86%. With a gap of more than 2m votes between candidates, the votes yet to be counted would not change the result, said Ahmet Yener, the head of the election board.

Even before the result was called, a triumphant Erdoğan stood on top of a bus near his residence in Istanbul to once again sing a campaign song to his adherents and pronounce victory.

“Look at this scene. It’s magnificent,” he said. “We have completed the second round of the presidential elections with the favour of our nation.”

He added: “Elections come and go, the flood goes away but the sand remains. The main thing is that our country does not deviate from its goals, and our nation takes care to remain united. This is the biggest message of today’s elections.”

Both candidates encouraged their supporters to show up and vote in a run-off election where turnout was high.

The victory for Turkey’s longest-serving leader affords him both another term in office as president, and an endorsement of his populist style of politics after he emerged victorious in an election that challenged his rule.

The Turkish leader has spent two decades reshaping the country in his own image, concentrating power on his office, detaining opponents and instituting increasingly unorthodox economic policies. Despite this, he gained support in many of the areas of Turkey worst hit by the country’s financial troubles, as well as areas levelled in twin deadly earthquakes that killed more than 50,000 people in south-east Turkey.

“We are not the only ones who have won, Turkey has won … our democracy has won,” Erdogan later told his supporters from the balcony of the presidential palace.

The Turkish president went on to boast of Turkey’s economic independence despite a financial crisis linked to his policies, one sparking a rising cost of living crisis among his citizens.

“We will wait for the last vote to be counted,” said Ömer Çelik, the spokesperson for Erdogan’s Justice and Development party (AKP), shortly before congratulations for the incumbent president arrived from leaders in Pakistan, Viktor Orbán of Hungary, and the emir of Qatar.

Further congratulations later arrived from the US president, Joe Biden; the Russian president, Vladimir Putin; the British prime minister, Rishi Sunak; the French president, Emmanuel Macron; Brazil’s president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva; and even Erdogan’s former geopolitical rival the president of Egypt, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi.

At the headquarters of his Republican People's party (CHP) in the Turkish capital, Kılıçdaroğlu attempted to console his supporters, but made no suggestion he could stand down as opposition leader.

"In this election, the will of the people to change an authoritarian government has clearly emerged, despite all the pressures. We have experienced the most unfair election process of recent years," he said.

"Despite this climate of fear, I would like to thank all the leaders of our alliance and our citizens. The Republican People's party and the Nation's Alliance will continue to struggle with all of their members. We will continue to be the pioneer in this struggle, until real democracy comes to our country. My biggest sadness is the trouble waiting for this country."

Erdoğan entered the second round in the lead, after a first round race where he received 49.5% of the overall vote compared with Kılıçdaroğlu's 44.5%, while his AKP along with their nationalist coalition partners won a majority in parliament.

The opposition had succeeded in forcing Erdoğan into a run-off vote – an unprecedented event in the presidential system that Erdoğan introduced – but was ultimately unable to clinch the majority of votes needed to secure victory.

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“No one should despair over the election results. No one should feel pessimistic, or feel defeated. If you believe in democracy, we should not forget that elections are the most fundamental function of any democracy,” said Meral Akşener, leader of the opposition İYİ (Good) party.

Kılıçdaroğlu and his opposition coalition campaigned on the promise of returning Turkey to parliamentary democracy, pledging to reverse many of the changes that have marked Erdoğan’s two decades of rule, including concentrating power around his office and jailing opponents.

In an interview with CNN, Erdoğan laughed off the suggestion he was seeking increasing authoritarian control. “How could someone going into a runoff election, instead of completing the election in the first round, be a dictator? That is the reality,” he said. “What kind of dictator is that?”

[the Turkish lira against the US dollar graphic](#)

After initially promising a more subdued campaign in response to the earthquakes, Erdoğan’s campaign focused on assuring voters that only he is capable of solving problems that include a worsening economic crisis.

“People who were responsible after the earthquake didn’t do their jobs, but our leader did everything for us,” said Meliha Karabök, in the town of Kahramanmaraş, part of a region that encompasses the epicentre of both earthquakes, and where Erdoğan won comfortably despite criticism of his government’s earthquake response.

While the opposition holds mayorships in Turkey’s six largest cities, Kılıçdaroğlu’s campaign appeared to run aground outside his party’s traditional enclaves on the Aegean coast and in metropolitan centres. In the Turkish provinces where Erdoğan’s rule previously catapulted many into the middle class, voters said they were unconvinced by the opposition’s campaign.

“The government cites this idea a lot, that we owe Erdoğan for where Turkey now stands, that Turkey is now a very powerful country and we have done a lot thanks to his leadership, but our country is going through hardship and he should be given enough time to recover as he’s the only one who

can manage this,” said Evren Balta, a political scientist at Özyegin university.

After a setback for their campaign in the first round vote, Kılıçdaroğlu and the CHP encouraged their supporters to turn out a second time amid heightened concern among the opposition concerning the security of the vote and the count.

CHP officials raised concerns that examples of violence towards their election observers in the south-east city of Şanlıurfa and in Istanbul, where one electoral observer suffered broken ribs, amounted to interference in the voting process.

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The immediate issue for the west is to prevent Erdogan (right) falling into the lap of Vladimir Putin. Photograph: Pavel Golovkin/AFP/Getty Images

[Turkey](#)

[Analysis](#)

West caught between fear and hope as Erdogan extends 20-year rule in Turkey

[Patrick Wintour](#) Diplomatic editor

Re-elected president could take Nato country further towards Russia, or may instead be more open to alternatives

Sun 28 May 2023 16.24 EDT Last modified on Sun 28 May 2023 17.07 EDT

Western capitals remained silent through Turkey's presidential campaign – privately hoping Recep Tayyip Erdogan's erratic 20-year rule would come to a surprise close – but now he has been handed a decisive mandate to serve a third term, the west is caught between fear and hope.

It fears he will exploit the result to take this [Nato](#) founder member further from the liberal secular west, but hopes against hope that, not being eligible to run again and thus freed from the need to pander to a nationalist electorate for the rest of his political life, he may at least be open to persuasion and base his foreign policy on something other than self-preservation.

Either way, the choices Erdogan unbound makes matter not just for [Turkey](#), Nato, and whatever order that emerges at the end of the war in Ukraine.

The immediate issue is to prevent him falling into the lap of Vladimir Putin. Few western diplomats are optimistic. One said: “In the past he had turned transactionalism almost into an art form and then almost an ideology. But recently it has grown into a real antipathy towards western values and arrogance.” Erdogan’s interior minister, Suleyman Soylu, during the campaign said that anyone who displayed pro-western tendencies was a traitor. Perhaps it was merely campaign rhetoric, but it reflects a mindset in Turkey and potentially in other countries.

Erdogan’s first test will come at the Nato summit in Vilnius where he will be asked to lift Turkey’s veto on the Nato membership of Sweden. He has already [lifted his block on Finland’s membership](#) but has left Sweden in limbo and in a potentially dangerous grey zone.

Sweden, which has a larger Kurdish population than Finland, says it is struggling to rationalise some of Erdogan’s demands, including for the extradition of 140 Kurds, whose names have never been definitively passed to the Swedish government. Stockholm is toughening its anti-terror laws to please Ankara and is willing to study evidence that the Kurdish community in Sweden has become a large source of funding for the Kurdistan Workers’ party (PKK), which is classified as a terrorist organisation by the EU and Turkey. But the rightwing Swedish government cannot order its judges to extradite Kurds.

Officials pretend Sweden’s Nato membership is a self-standing issue but in practice most see it as linked to the blocked US arms sales to Turkey, not to mention the future status of the battery of S-400 missiles bought by Ankara from [Russia](#).

Joe Biden, despite calling Erdogan an autocrat, is willing to lift the block, endorse the \$20bn sale of F16 jets and open a new chapter with Turkey.

But the US president first has to persuade the leaders of the House and Senate foreign affairs committees to endorse the sale. Michael McCaul, the Republican chair of the House foreign affairs committee, recently hinted at flexibility, saying he was willing to endorse the sale so long as the Swedish Nato issue was resolved.

McCaul said: “We’ve been assured that after the election, regardless of the winner, that Sweden will be recognised as a Nato ally.” Democrats in Congress still want wider assurances about Turkey stopping its threats to Greece, so talks of a moratorium on military exercises in the Aegean is promising.

But even a sale of arms would not in itself end Erdogan’s resistance to western efforts to detach him from Putin. In the campaign he said Turkey and Russia had a special relationship, and reflected on his personal ties with Putin, saying it put him in a good position to act as a broker over the war in Ukraine. In April Erdogan launched the first Turkish nuclear power plant built with Russian financial support and technology. More implausibly Putin has talked of Turkey becoming a European hub for Russian gas.

All of this has made it harder for the US officials that have travelled to Ankara to urge Erdogan to clamp down on Turkish businesses acting as a conduit to bypass western sanctions on Russia in support of Ukraine. Turkish deals with penalised Russian companies, trade with Russia in western-made products and the export to Russia of so-called dual-use goods such as plastics, rubber and electronics have all been raised by the US with little effect.

Turkey is simply not willing to impose sanctions on Russia, and Washington is not willing to impose secondary sanctions on Turkey, fearing it would drive Erdogan into Putin’s arms.

More broadly the west favours Erdogan’s plans to lower tensions with his neighbours including Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt and Armenia. In some specific respects even Erdogan’s re-election is a boon to the west. With his

human rights record, his request for EU membership, suspended since 2018, can continue to gather dust in the pending tray, something that would have been less easy if Erdoğan's opponent Kemal Kılıçdaroglu had been elected. Second, Kılıçdaroglu's increasingly [strident vow](#) to force millions of Syrian refugees back over the border into Syria sounded like vote grubbing without a plan.

Erdoğan by contrast sounds more plausible when he says he has a plan to rehouse 1 million Syrians in northern Turkey back over the border. His connections with Putin, and hence the Syrian president, Bashir al-Assad, make that plan the more plausible of the two.

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Met police officers spend 10,000 hours a month dealing with mental health issues, Rowley said. Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

[Police](#)

Met police to stop attending emergency mental health calls

Exclusive: move will come into force on 31 August and will only be waived if a threat to life is feared

Vikram Dodd Police and crime correspondent

Sun 28 May 2023 13.24 EDT Last modified on Mon 29 May 2023 03.37 EDT

The [Metropolitan police](#) will no longer attend emergency calls related to mental health incidents, the force's commissioner has said.

In a letter seen by the Guardian, Sir Mark Rowley says he will order his officers not to attend thousands of calls they get every year to deal with mental health incidents.

Rowley has given health and social care services a deadline of 31 August before the force starts its ban, which will only be waived if a threat to life is feared.

The Met chief believes the move is necessary and urgent because officers are being [diverted from their core role of fighting crime](#) and patients who need medical experts are being failed when a police officer attends instead.

The plan could cause consternation among ambulance workers, paramedics and NHS staff who are already under pressure as a result of cuts and at a time when mental health services are already stretched.

Rowley's letter to the Met's health and social care partners was sent on 24 May, giving them a 99-day deadline to plan for the change.

Police and health chiefs have been talking about relieving the mental health burden on police under a new national scheme called right care, right person (RCRP).

But the letter reveals that Britain's most senior police officer has lost patience over the issue. He writes: "I have asked my team that the Met introduce RCRP this summer and withdraw from health related calls by no later than 31 August.

"I appreciate this may be challenging, but for the reasons I have set out above, the status quo is untenable."

Those reasons are set out in a section marked "impact on Londoners", where Rowley writes: "It is important to stress the urgency of implementing RCRP in [London](#). Every day that we permit the status quo to remain we are collectively failing patients and are not setting officers up to succeed.

"In fact, we are failing Londoners twice.

"We are failing them first by sending police officers, not medical professionals, to those in mental health crisis, and expecting them to do their best in circumstances where they are not the right people to be dealing with the patient.

“We are failing Londoners a second time by taking large amounts of officer time away from preventing and solving crime, as well as dealing properly with victims, in order to fill gaps for others.”



Sir Mark Rowley, the Met's commissioner, said the force was 'failing Londoners twice' under the current scheme. Photograph: Jordan Pettitt/PA

The Met is by far Britain's largest force, accounting for nearly a quarter of all officers in England and Wales.

The letter cites data from a national police study that says officers spend almost a million hours a year waiting in hospitals for mental health patients to be assessed, the equivalent of attending 500,000 domestic abuse incidents or 600,000 burglaries.

Rowley claims in his letter that Met police officers spend 10,000 hours a month dealing with mental health issues, and that it takes up to 14 hours to hand a patient over to medical staff.

In what amounts to a broadside against the health service, he also says there are scores of cases a month in which his officers are called when patients waiting for treatment walk out and are reported missing.

Rowley writes: “To illustrate further the pressing need for reform, on 28/29 April, the Met received the highest number of 999 calls we have ever taken [9,292 calls]. Only 30% of these calls were classed as crime related.

“The extent to which we are collectively failing Londoners and inappropriately placing demand on policing is very stark.”

RCRP was an [innovation from Humberside](#), where after a year of tense negotiations police and health services reached an agreement under which many mental health calls are dealt with by health professionals rather than officers.

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A report by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services in November last year found patients were getting better treatment, and that police had freed up resources.

The inspectorate said: “The right care, right person approach means that vulnerable people receive the support they need from the right organisation. The force has experts within its control room to support those vulnerable people until help arrives.”

Humberside police estimates that the scheme has allowed it to reclaim 7% of officer time to be spent on crime fighting and prevention.

The government wants the scheme to be rolled out across the country, but health chiefs would argue that austerity measures have left them short of the resources to cope with the demands for mental health services, with police effectively becoming a makeshift mental health service.

Rowley has been impatient to – as he sees it – free up his officers, and hoped the scheme could start in March, the Guardian understands. The Met commissioner ends his letter by denying he lacks compassion: “My urgency does not speak to a lack of compassion for those in mental health crisis, quite the opposite.”

He summons health and social care officials to a meeting with one of his top officers and tells them to come with plans to pick up the work the Met says it will no longer do: “I would ask that you come to that first meeting able to discuss how your organisation will be ready to respond to RCRP by 31 August.”



The move is expected to have a knock-on effect on the capital's ambulance workers, paramedics and NHS staff. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Some police chiefs believe the better resourced health service is [dumping its work on police](#), who see themselves as the service of last resort. Chiefs talk of surge in demand after 4pm on Friday, when health chiefs are unable or unwilling to arrange out-of-hours cover.

The Met said in statement: “Where there is an immediate threat to life, officers will continue to respond.

“Work is already underway in London to develop a concordat across health provision and this is very welcome, however in the interests of patients and the public, we urgently need to redress the imbalance of responsibility, where police officers are left delivering health responsibilities.

“Health services must take primacy for caring for the mentally ill, allowing officers to focus on their core responsibilities to prevent and detect crime, and keep communities safe and support victims.”

It is the second big row Rowley has become embroiled in recently. He riled Max Hill, the head of the Crown Prosecution Service by accusing it of [“cherry-picking” easier cases](#) to improve its conviction rate.

Hill hit back, saying he was disappointed by the comments which he called inaccurate and said they risked “damaging further the public’s confidence in reporting crime and their confidence that justice will be done”.

The Met remains in special measures because of a litany of failings, and Rowley – who became commissioner in September 2022 - has vowed to clean up the force and make it better at fighting crime.

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Faiza Shaheen: 'We live in a society where most people stay in their place.'
Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Guardian

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‘Social mobility is a fairytale’: Faiza Shaheen on fighting for Labour and hating Oxford

[Chitra Ramaswamy](#)

When the UK finally goes to the polls, the British-Pakistani-Fijian daughter of a car mechanic could win the seat that Iain Duncan Smith has held for more than 30 years. Some would see that as proof that anyone can succeed – but not Shaheen



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Mon 29 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Wed 31 May 2023 04.49 EDT

It was 12 December 2019; the first December general election in Britain since 1923. Faiza Shaheen walked into Waltham Forest town hall in north-east London. The academic, economist, self-described inequality geek and [Labour](#) parliamentary candidate for Chingford and Woodford Green was about to find out if she had pulled off a feat so close to impossible that the odds were one in 10m. Had she – a working-class, Muslim, British-Pakistani-Fijian daughter of a car mechanic – toppled the former leader of

the Conservative party, Iain Duncan Smith, in a seat that he had held for 27 years? A seat in which Tory values were so enshrined, it was previously held – albeit the boundaries had changed over the years – by Norman Tebbit and Winston Churchill. It was the perfect David versus Goliath battle. And then David lost.

“It was crushing,” says Shaheen. “One of those out-of-body experiences. They show you the results just before you go on stage and I was like: ‘Oh my God, we’ve lost.’ I could see my party, all these young people with so much hope on their faces, and I couldn’t look at them. When I saw Iain Duncan Smith go up, I just thought: ‘How can this be the outcome?’”

In her new book, [Know Your Place](#), in which she analyses the social inequality she has experienced first-hand, she writes that as she watched Smith give his victory speech, all she could say, over and over again, was: “There is no justice.”

The loss was deeply personal. For years, Shaheen had watched her mother, who had heart failure and was unable to work, battle an increasingly inhumane and broken benefits system of which Smith had been the architect. “I will not forget the extra pain my mum went through,” she says. In 2017, three months after a successful heart transplant, her mother died unexpectedly in the local “completely falling apart” hospital, one of the 40 the Tories later pledged to rebuild. “We went to see her on Christmas Day and all of a sudden she was on a ventilator,” says Shaheen. “The infection had gone to her brain. She died of brain damage; her new heart was great. That was one of the hardest things about it.” She takes a deep breath. “So, yeah, it’s very personal.”

We meet at the Guardian’s London office on a warm spring afternoon. Shaheen is articulate but wary, and not as outspoken as I expected from reading her book and watching her campaigning. Her cautiousness, however, is less a reflection of the politician’s tendency to deflect and more to do with the level of abuse she has encountered – from left and right – since entering politics. The first words of *Know Your Place* are “terrorist sympathiser”, which two men shouted at her as she ran into the polling station to put a cross beside her own name. During the 2019 campaign, she was called the

Chingford Corbynite, a nod to Tebbit's 1970s nickname, the Chingford skinhead. When I ask whether she has more or less faith in Labour now than she did in 2019 – because, yes, despite the odds, Shaheen is running again – the longest pause of the interview ensues.

"I think any kind of wholesale faith in a political party is a bad idea," she says eventually. "But what I can say is that I think people like me could push them on things in a way that we cannot right now with a Conservative government. We have to work with what we have. It's worth going all in at this point."



Faiza Shaheen in September 2019, with the then Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn during a visit to Chingford in east London. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

Is she more nervous running again? "The first time I didn't know what I was getting into," she says. "Going back into it, I definitely have much more anxiety because I know there's a whole lot of stuff that comes with it. I just focus on all the wonderful people who come and support me. Despite the machinery quite honestly not wanting me to run again, I have a responsibility." She laughs. "We'll see how it goes."

Losing in 2019 was, in the end, instructive. Shaheen lost by just 1,262 votes and Chingford and Woodford Green was one of only six seats in the country to see a swing to Labour. In the days, weeks and months that followed, she started to reassess what had happened. She found that while the odds of going to Oxford University – which she did – and then on to become an MP were one in 10m for her, they were closer to one in 10,000 for David Cameron and Boris Johnson. The question was less why she had lost, and more why she had ever thought she could win.

Out of all this has come *Know Your Place*, a powerful interrogation of social mobility or, as successive prime ministers on both sides have called it over the decades, trickle-down economics, meritocracy, levelling up. Using examples, statistics and her own experiences, Shaheen argues that the pervasive idea that “anyone can make it with hard work” results in the precise opposite: everyone’s failure except the rich and powerful. She analyses factors including race, class, education, housing and income to reveal how Britain has become less mobile over generations. It is a damning indictment of our system and is guaranteed to enrage all but those at the very top, whom it will enrage for different reasons. As for the shining examples of the one black judge or the self-made millionaire routinely held up as proof of social mobility, these are merely the exceptions that prove the rule. “Social mobility is a fairytale,” Shaheen concludes. “In simple statistical terms, it is a lie.”

She is, of course, one of these shining examples herself. She grew up in a working-class, low-income household. Her family moved often, and in one place she had to share a bed with her sister to keep warm in a room in which there were snail trails on the floor in the morning. Racism was a regular threat: her Fijian father, who died of bone cancer not long after her mother’s death, would tell Shaheen how the men he worked with at the garage would set his newspaper alight as he was reading it, and how he once punched a racist skinhead who was threatening her pregnant mum.

As she describes him in *Know Your Place*, her father was “dodgy with money, dodgy with women and dodgy with his fists”. Shaheen’s mother, whom he met while on the run from the police, eventually divorced him. Her dad tried to make her mum and sister homeless (Shaheen, by this point, had left home) and they ended up having to represent themselves in court.

However, he taught Shaheen to be proud of her Pakistani-Fijian and working-class roots.

“There was an end-of-year award ceremony at my school when we were kids,” Shaheen recalls, “and they got Norman Tebbit in to give out prizes. Me and my brother had won loads of them, and so had lots of the children of immigrants. Every time they read out the prize, another black or brown person came up to receive it. My dad couldn’t stop laughing. He said: ‘This is the best revenge ... that *he* has to give my children prizes.’ I think my attitude comes from him. You know, why shouldn’t I take these people on?”



‘I hated Oxford with a passion,’ says Shaheen. ‘In my experience, many of the people who studied PPE are among the worst, most arrogant and entitled people around.’ Photograph: Pete Lusabia/Alamy

Shaheen got into Oxford to study philosophy, politics and economics (PPE), did a PhD in applied economics and became the director of the Centre for Labour and Social Studies, a leftwing thinktank originating in the trade union movement. She is now a visiting professor at the London School of Economics and one of her recent policy reports was launched by the former New Zealand prime minister Jacinda Ardern. “So often people say to me, ‘You did it, so others can do it,’” she says. “I’m invited all the time to local schools where parents will ask me to speak to their daughters. We hold up

exceptions to show that everyone can do it. It's a false story. We live in a society where most people stay in their place.”

Though there is some discomfort in embodying the myth she seeks to dismantle – in her 2019 campaign, she cannily harnessed it with leaflets bearing the aspirational slogan “from Greggs to parliament” – Shaheen thinks it is a question of how we tell our stories to ourselves and others. Yes, it is true that, when she was four, her mother told her in Urdu that one day she would go to “Oxford, the best university in the world”. But if she had been born in Pakistan rather than the UK in the 1980s, she also would have been 12 times more likely to die in the first month of her life. Luck plays a huge part: the lottery of where you are born and when. Then there is the welfare state that enabled her ascent, and the random pieces of luck, such as the fact that there happened to be a race expert in the room the day of Shaheen’s Oxford interview.

She wants to use her privileged position to expose what she has witnessed as “someone who was never meant to be in those rooms”. As she writes in *Know Your Place*: “Think of me as a mole.” On her experience of studying PPE at Oxford – the degree of prime ministers – she is unequivocal. “I hated Oxford with a passion,” she says. “I don’t think I was able to articulate that I was a socialist until I went there.” In her book, she writes: “I can tell you that in my experience, many of the people who studied PPE are among the worst, most arrogant and entitled people around. I would go as far as saying that reading PPE at Oxford should be seen as a red flag.”

What Oxford did give her was a class education. “I heard what they think of us when they’re drunk,” she says. “It was atrocious. Like the way they would treat my friends when they came up, and not sit next to us, especially if they were black. A friend of mine put on a play about Stephen Lawrence and a guy put his hand up afterwards and said: ‘But isn’t it true that black people cause crime?’ I just thought, oh my God, these people are going to have so much power. If I’ve been so lucky to have this privileged education, I need to use it to counter some of this.”

She is particularly good on the rightwing weaponisation of the white working class as a separate racial category. “Since when did the working class become white? It’s a mythology. It’s as if you’re not allowed to be

working class if you're brown or black ... because in this country, the working class is at once pathologised and seen as a badge of honour. There's been a clear effort to divide these groups, though the material reality, and how you're judged by society, is in a lot of ways very similar. We need to tell these stories of solidarity and convergence of experience. Otherwise, it's just going to be more division."

She is regularly asked to comment on what the increase in racial diversity in the Conservative party represents. That Rishi Sunak – the richest British PM in history, who followed the standard route of elite private school, Oxbridge then parliament that more than half our prime ministers have taken – is venerated as a symbol of social mobility enrages her. "Rishi Sunak is an example of the ability of class and wealth to propel people to the top, and to override race," she says. "He proves my point about the fiction of social mobility. This is the problem when you separate race and class. What I would say about the Conservative party is that they've been very clever about using identity politics, the thing they're always blaming the left for doing. You will never see the Conservative frontbench without women and people of colour, even more than Labour, unfortunately. But it's superficial. The message is: 'We'll let you in, but only if you play by our rules.' It's no coincidence that none of them are even vague proponents of anti-racism. Quite the opposite."

Know Your Place offers a bleak assessment of inequality, but Shaheen believes change is possible if we reconsider what we are valuing. "I don't think aspiration should be limited to this idea of going to Oxford and getting a high-paying job," she replies. "The whole idea needs flipping." She wants to bin the idea of "the top". The final section of the book lists the ways in which she believes the system can be changed. These range from valuing collective social impact over economic wealth, and a solidarity tax to pay for the policies she will fight for if she wins in the next general election. "The book is called Know Your Place," she says, "but what I want people to do with that knowledge is get angry and collectively say: 'We are not going to be put in our place any more.'

"When I started writing it, I didn't think I would run again," Shaheen says. By the time she finished it, she had changed her mind. Why? "It's not something I can give up on," she says. "I just couldn't let it go. I don't know

if it's hope or a sense that we don't have any choice. We either accept this world or we try to do something." She laughs mirthlessly. "And how can you accept this?"

This article was amended on 31 May 2023. The 2019 UK general election was the first to be held in December since 1923, but not the first winter election since that year, as an earlier version said.

Know Your Place is published by Simon & Schuster (£16.99). To support the Guardian and the Observer, buy a copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply

Faiza Shaheen will be discussing Know Your Place with John Harris in a livestreamed Guardian Live event at 8pm on Thursday 8 June. Tickets are available [here](#)

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Unprecedented joy? ... the Roy siblings partake in one of their few family traditions. Photograph: HBO

[Succession](#)

[Review](#)

Succession finale review – a perfect, terrible goodbye

There was more agony by the moment as Jesse Armstrong's epic ramped up to the most exquisitely humiliating ending imaginable. No one should have to cope with such pain



[Lucy Mangan](#)
[@LucyMangan](#)

Mon 29 May 2023 05.25 EDT Last modified on Mon 29 May 2023 17.39 EDT

Spoiler alert: don't read on unless you've watched the finale of [Succession](#) season four.

When the hurly burly's done, a battle can, it turns out, be lost and won.

After four coruscating seasons, the end of Succession is upon us. Rumours and predictions have flowed thick and fast but never overwhelmingly in one direction. There were simply too many possibilities in the Roys' world of treachery, deceit and ambition – to say nothing of the darker forces at work

in the siblings' psyches, formed during their materially rich, emotionally impoverished childhoods and which may prove Logan's most enduring legacy. Perhaps the success of an ending can best be judged by how much it seems, as the credits roll, that it could have turned out no other way. In which case, Jesse Armstrong's 90-minute conclusion to his brilliant creation – soap, satire, Shakespearean tragedy all in one – ranks among the greats.

It was a crucible of an episode. We opened with the Roys in fairly normal circumstances – entrenched on opposite sides of a deal, trying to get their board numbers together. Shiv ([Sarah Snook](#)) was with Matsson ([Alexander Skarsgård](#)), assuring him his purchase of Waystar would go through and putting the boot into husband Tom (Matthew Macfadyen) as she went: “He’s just a highly interchangeable modular part [but] will also suck the biggest dick in the room.” “Love is in the air,” noted Matsson drily.

Kendall ([Jeremy Strong](#)), meanwhile, was having trouble making his numbers stand up and looking as unsure as we’ve ever seen him. And Roman ([Kieran Culkin](#)) was missing, after being caught up in the riots Waystar’s effective election of a fascist president had brought about. When Shiv and Kendall discovered he was with their monstrous mother (Harriet Walter) – a woman for whom eyes are not windows to the soul but “face eggs” – you could only feel more worried for him. The embrace of the mob, though it left him with a head wound, was likely more tender.

They all converge on Mommie bleakest, but what begins as a horror show turns – thanks to an epic act of betrayal by Matsson in a show where you really have to work to earn such an accolade, plus a helping hand from Greg ([Nicholas Braun](#)) – into an almost loving family gathering. The siblings – after a bitter trading of claims to Logan’s throne – reunite and plan to vote against the deal together. Crucially, they agree (after the younger two decide not to kill him because it’d “be so annoying if it went wrong, the murdering”) to let Kendall rule. “We anoint you,” says Shiv. “You can smile,” she says to her notoriously intense brother, “bitch.” He does. It’s a lovely moment. In what is clearly one of the few family traditions, they whiz up in the blender “a meal fit for a king” and make him eat it then wear it. Even if we weren’t only halfway through, you would know that this unprecedented joy cannot possibly last. But though they are terrible individuals, time and again choosing business and money over loved ones

and, ultimately, country, they are not terrible children and you cannot help but hope for a last-minute redemption and happy ending after all. Ah well.



A moment to hope ... Succession. Photograph: HBO/2023 HBO. All Rights Reserved

Matsson invites Tom for dinner and – after checking Shiv was right on that dick-sucking mentality in the most exquisitely humiliating way possible – makes him an offer that changes everything. The screws tighten. There is one last “light” scene, as the family gathers in Logan’s old apartment to put stickers – in accordance with Connor’s ([Alan Ruck](#)) strict allocation system – on the things they would like to keep. Connor plays a video of Daddy at his best and brightest, and we are allowed another moment to hope.

Then Shiv, Roman and Roy make their way to Daddy’s office to wait while everyone gathers in the boardroom for the big vote. The sight of Gerri (J Smith-Cameron) sparks another collapse in Roman, an even deeper grief than the funeral caused, born of self-knowledge welling up from within. Even the family’s greatest masochist can’t bear this sort of pain. Kendall hugs him so hard it opens up Roman’s head wound again.

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More and greater agony is to come, as the players head into the third and final act and the King Lear plot starts shading into Macbeth. Everything that has ever been depicted, hinted at, joked about, every betrayed alliance, moment of vulnerability, coverup over the past 40 hours we have spent with these despicable, broken, compelling people is here. The essence of them all is distilled, every loose end tied up, a credible future posited (or, in one case, stuck very firmly on) in the final scenes for each.

The finest of fine touches lace the entire thing – those popped stitches, frozen “nobbies”, the cowprint couch, second-tier mourners, the half-handhold, the furious fight that still doesn’t amount to more than slaps, Colin silently trailing his boss, the glittering grey waste of water from the bridge and hundreds more. It was Succession at its finest. And that, slime puppies, is saying something.

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[Health](#)

‘Water is too boring’?! Can you really survive on nothing but coffee, tea or

juice?

Everyone agrees you need some form of hydration – but are any of the alternatives as good for you as H2O? And precisely how much should you be gulping down?

Lizzie Cernik

Mon 29 May 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 29 May 2023 08.28 EDT

Guzzling water has become something of a badge of honour among celebrities, with [Jennifer Aniston](#) and Gwyneth Paltrow revealing they drink up to three litres a day. But not everyone finds it so easy. Florence Pugh, for one, recently announced that she finds water “too boring to drink”. As well as the lack of flavour, she bemoaned the constant toilet breaks that come with a high intake, calling them “a waste of time”. Instead, she prefers orange juice, elderflower presses and tea.

What do the experts say? How much water should we be drinking every day – and is it just as healthy to get your hydration from other beverages?

Chester-based GP Chris Ritchieson says [NHS](#) guidelines suggest drinking around six to eight glasses of water a day, which is roughly two litres. “Although this is the general guidance, there is very little concrete research and evidence about the optimum amount of water to drink,” he says. “People have different sensitivity levels to dehydration, so it could vary from person to person.”

When dehydration symptoms do occur, they can be hard to spot, and easily confused with something else. “Not drinking enough can increase the risk of urinary tract infections and headaches, along with tiredness, confusion, passing darker urine, dry cracked skin and irregular bowel movements,” says Ritchieson. It can also lead to low blood pressure or postural hypotension, a condition where standing up can cause sudden dizziness and falls.

Drinking more water, meanwhile, can help to prevent health conditions such as migraines, frequent headaches and kidney stones.

While plain water is the healthiest source of hydration, Ritchieson says any non-alcoholic drink makes a contribution. When, in 2016, researchers at the University of Stirling monitored hydration levels in students for four hours after taking on different liquids, they [found](#) that a litre of instant coffee – and even beer – was as hydrating as the same amount of water. But hydration levels remained highest of all, above water even, after drinking milk.

Despite the general guidance, there is very little concrete research and evidence about the optimum amount of water to drink

Dr Chris Ritchieson

Although this is the general guidance, there is very little concrete research and evidence about the optimum amount of water to drink. But it's not a good idea to drink many water alternatives on a regular basis. "Tea and coffee are diuretics, which means they make you go to the toilet more often," says Ritchieson. "Fizzy drinks, squashes and juices will also hydrate you, but we discourage people from drinking too much due to the high sugar content, which can lead to other health issues in the long-term."

The caffeine in tea and coffee can cause other side-effects, according to Nishtha Patel, a functional medicine practitioner and clinical nutritionist. These include an increased heart rate and palpitations, anxiety, restlessness, insomnia, digestive problems such as nausea and diarrhoea, sleep disturbances, high blood pressure and even caffeine addiction. "It is recommended that we limit caffeine intake to about 400mg a day, which is equivalent to approximately four to five cups of coffee or eight to 10 cups of tea," she says.

When it comes to sugar, the NHS recommends consuming no more than 30g of "free sugars" a day, which includes sugars added by food manufacturers, as well as natural sugars in fruit juice, honey and syrups. Patel says that some fizzy drinks or energy drinks contain enough sugar to take us over the daily recommended intake in just one serving. "Diet drinks are really not much better. They affect the gut microbiome and, like other ultra-processed foods, have been linked to other diseases, including memory decline and liver issues."

Fresh juices contain more nutrients than fizzy drinks, but Patel warns it can still be easy to go over the recommended daily sugar allowance. “On average, a (225g) serving of freshly squeezed orange juice contains around 20-25g of sugar. Consuming too much sugar, even from natural sources, can still have negative health effects and increase the risk of type 2 diabetes and obesity. Water hydrates us with zero calories.”

If, like Pugh, you find drinking water “too boring” or tasteless, the nutritional therapist Thalia Pellegrini recommends adding fruit or cucumber to a water jug and putting it in the fridge. “That adds just enough flavour for some people,” she says. “You can also try herbal teas and diluted fresh juices. If you really can’t stand the taste of water, try adding squash. It does have a lot of sugar but it’s better for you than going without fluids.”

A diet with plenty of plants can help, as you’ll get extra hydration from fruits and vegetables. “Some ingredients like celery, lettuce, tomatoes and watermelon are more than 90% water,” she says. “You can also try eating plenty of peaches, pineapples, oranges and pears.”



‘For most people, unless they are exercising, living in a hot climate or unwell, about 1.5 to three litres of water a day will always be enough.’
Photograph: PeopleImages/Getty Images/iStockphoto

And what about the people who avoid drinking water because they are afraid of needing the toilet too often? Veerpal Sandhu, an advanced clinical pharmacist for GP surgeries in Essex, says this is especially common in pregnant women and elderly people, who may have more issues controlling their bladder. “Mostly people manage by not drinking too much before travelling, going out or going to bed,” she says. “One solution is to drink more when you are near available toilets. And there are pelvic floor exercises you can do to improve bladder control.”

Ritchieson adds that for older people, restricting fluid can lead to more toilet breaks. “It makes the bladder more sensitive, so they actually need to go more,” he says. “We tend to find that a lot of people, especially in the summer months, underestimate how much they need to drink.”

Sandhu points out that water is essential for human health. “It makes up over two-thirds of the healthy human body. It lubricates the joints and eyes, aids digestion, flushes out waste and toxins, and keeps the skin healthy.”

It is, of course, possible to drink too much water. “As a result of some of the publicity – often from celebrities – about drinking more, we occasionally see people who have become unwell from drinking too much,” says Ritchieson.

“Overhydrating can lead to a condition called hyponatremia, which means that your salt levels have become too diluted. This can cause headaches, dizziness and, in extreme cases, unconsciousness. If you’re going to increase your water intake, I recommend doing it gradually and drinking little and often throughout the day.”

How much is too much will depend on the individual, and how fast they are drinking. “That’s why we always recommend little and often,” says Ritchieson. “The kidneys can eliminate 20 to 28 litres of water a day, but no more than about a litre an hour, so the important thing is to spread your intake out throughout the day.

“For most people, unless they are exercising, living in a hot climate or unwell, about 1.5 to three litres of water a day will always be enough.”

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Clockwise from left: baked crispy gnocchi by Rukmini Iyer; bucatini with pancetta by Anna Del Conte; pistachio pesto by Elia Sebregondi. Prop styling: Kate Whitaker. Food styling: Bianca Nice. Photograph: Kate Whitaker/The Observer

[Observer Food Monthly's 20 best recipes](#)[Pasta](#)

The 20 best easy pasta recipes – from pistachio pesto to great baked gnocchi

Elia Sebregondi's citrussy pistachio pesto, Nigella's no-cook garlicky thyme mushrooms, Rukmini Iyer's crispy baked gnocchi and two recipes each from Nigel Slater and Anna Del Conte. Buon appetito!

Allan Jenkins compiled by *Holly O'Neill*

Mon 29 May 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 29 May 2023 03.30 EDT

It was Jacob Kenedy's pasta e patate that sold me. A beguiling dish of two favourite foods. Introducing maybe the best 20 Best: featuring Giorgio Locatelli's garlic, oil and chilli spaghetti, Florence Knight's clams and lovage linguine, Anna Del Conte's bucatini wth pancetta. Perfect pasta meals made in just minutes. Whether it's fast food for you in a hurry, or a feast with friends or family. Simple!

Florence Knight's clams, lovage, linguine



Clams, lovage, linguine. Photograph: Kate Whitaker/The Observer

The fresh taste of summer in a bowl

Nigel Slater's prawns, peas and pasta



Prawns, peas and pasta. Photograph: Jonathan Lovekin/The Observer

Go for sustainable prawns in this lunchtime treat

Georgia Levy's broccoli and anchovy farfalle



Broccoli and anchovy farfalle. Photograph: Sam A Harris

Probably the nicest thing you can do with a head of broccoli

Masha Rener's gnocchi with green peas and ricotta salata



Gnocchi with green peas and ricotta salata. Photograph: Kate Whitaker/The Observer

This cheesy peas dish is perfect comfort food

Claude Bosi's angel hair pasta al pomodoro



Angel hair pasta al pomodoro. Photograph: Kate Whitaker/The Observer

Nice and easy but very tasty

Mateo Zielonka's warm pasta salad with orzo



Warm pasta salad with orzo. Photograph: Dave Brown

Lovely warm and just as good for a picnic or packed lunch

[Sami Tamimi and Tara Wigley's pasta with yoghurt and parsley breadcrumbs – ma'caroneh bil laban](#)



Pasta with yoghurt and parsley breadcrumbs. Photograph: Jenny Zarins

A quick and comforting midweek supper dish

Elia Sebregondi's pistachio pesto



Pistachio pesto. Photograph: Kate Whitaker/The Observer

A citrussy take on the classic Italian sauce made with pistachios, not pine nuts

Jacob Kenedy's pasta and potatoes – pasta e patate



Pasta and potatoes. Photograph: Kate Whitaker/The Observer

This dish is made with humble ingredients but gives maximum satisfaction

Irina Georgescu's noodles with poppy seeds – iofcă cu mac



Noodles with poppy seeds – Iofcă cu mac. Photograph: Matt Russell

An easy, sweet treat from Romania for all ages

Anna Del Conte's farfalle with cream and onion – farfalle con panna e cipolla



Farfalle with cream and onion. Photograph: Kate Whitaker/The Observer

Super speedy to make and delicious

Nigella Lawson's linguine with lemon, garlic and thyme mushrooms



Linguine with lemon, garlic and thyme mushrooms. Photograph: Kate Whitaker/The Observer

You only need to cook the pasta for this easy dish

[Chris Leach's brown crab cacio e pepe](#)



Crab cacio e pepe. Photograph: Kate Whitaker/The Observer

Californian food inspired these interesting flavours

Giorgio Locatelli's aglio, olio e peperoncino



Aglio, olio e peperoncino. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

Simple, tasty and spicy are the keywords here

Joe Trivelli's sausage and carrot gnocchetti



Sausage and carrot gnocchetti. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

Carrots as the star of a sauce sounds leftfield but really works

Anna Del Conte's bucatini with pancetta – bucatini all'amatriciana



Bucatini with pancetta. Photograph: Kate Whitaker/The Observer

A taste of Abruzzo and Lazio in a bowl

Nigel Slater's pasta with whole garlic, goat's cheese and thyme



Pasta with whole garlic, goat's cheese and thyme. Photograph: Kate Whitaker/The Observer

The fresh herb, tangy cheese and sweet garlic are a perfect combination

Letitia Clark's pasta with butter to save and salve – pasta al burro e salvia



Pasta with butter to save and salve. Photograph: Matt Russell

Comforting and buttery, this a friend for the fragile diner

Rachel Roddy's cavatelli with sausage, mint and tomato – cavatelli con salsiccia, menta e pomodoro



Cavatelli with sausage, mint and tomato.

A rich and satisfying supper offering

Rukmini Iyer's baked gnocchi with tomatoes, basil, mozzarella and pine nuts



Baked gnocchi with tomatoes, basil, mozzarella and pine nuts. Photograph: Kate Whitaker/The Observer

An impressive traybake with simple flavours to relish

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2023.05.29 - Opinion

- We desperately need a government who will say it: Britain is still reeling from Covid
- One EU policy the Tories are happy to emulate: cracking down on refugees
- Yes, I do take my pillow with me on holiday. And I'm very happy with my life choices, thank you very much
- When my running app broke it was a revelation: ‘being better’ is about taking care of yourself

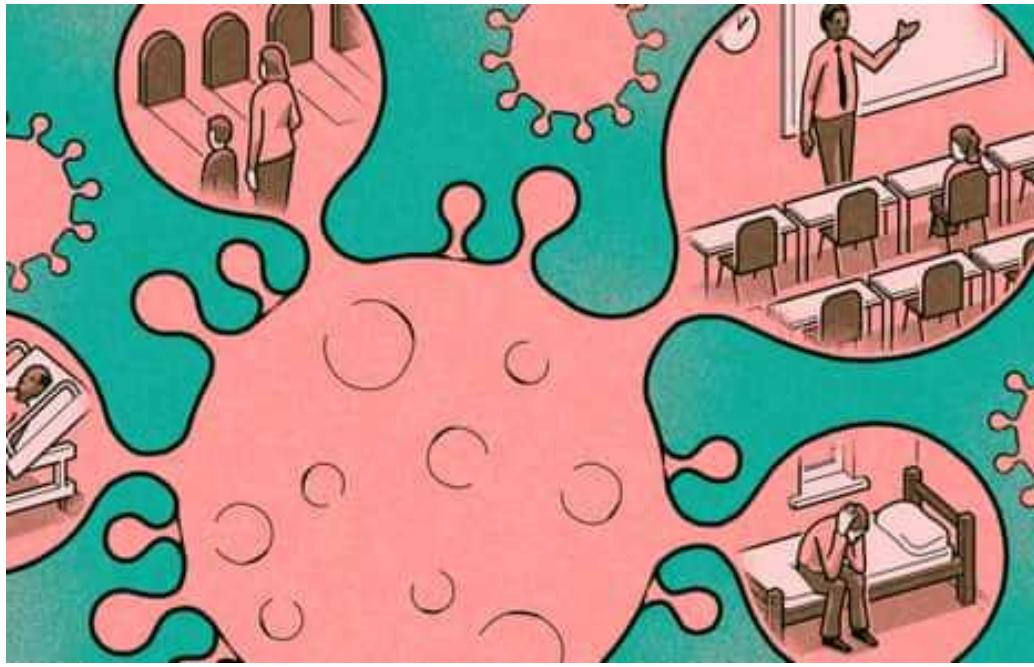


Illustration: Matt Kenyon/The Guardian

[Opinion](#)[Conservatives](#)

We desperately need a government who will say it: Britain is still reeling from Covid

[John Harris](#)



Pupil absence is soaring. Long-term sickness is hammering the workforce. Yet some senior Tories expend all their energy on defending Boris Johnson

Mon 29 May 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 29 May 2023 12.11 EDT

Of all the factions and cliques in and around the modern Conservative party, none is grimmer than the small gang who think that Boris Johnson is the [victim of conspiracies](#) involving the fabled “blob”, and that the condition of their party – and, indeed, the country – would be a thousand times better if only he was still in Downing Street.

Even now, a hardcore of Johnson cultists still reportedly think he could sooner or later return to the Tory leadership. A few of his other disciples acknowledge – for now, at least – that such dreams are probably over, but still devotedly try to defend him. The latest nadir was reached last week, after news broke of his referral to the police by civil servants in relation to even more alleged breaches of Covid regulations.

One Johnson ally told the Daily Telegraph that if “the government has tried to report Boris to the police for entirely lawful activity” (“[Team Boris](#)”

seems to suspect the involvement of deputy prime minister Oliver Dowden and the paymaster general, Jeremy Quin), Rishi Sunak may face a spate of by-elections. Three Tory MPs could trigger them by summarily standing down: the former culture secretary Nadine Dorries, the COP26 president Alok Sharma, and Nigel Evans, the Tory MP for Ribble Valley. Just to underline the principled nature of any such move, all are said to be nominated for peerages in Johnson's resignation honours list.

Clearly, these people have never understood – or have chosen not to see – millions of people's deep moral outrage about [Partygate](#), which looks set to increase. But there are even bigger oversights at the heart of the Johnson cult, which also seem to be evident in politics and the media more widely. In Westminster, news about his alleged lockdown antics inevitably generates a huge amount of noise – but in doing so, it heightens the sense that there are stories about Covid and its legacy that we have still barely heard.

If you know any teachers, one story will probably be very familiar: a chronically overlooked crisis in attendance, behaviour and attainment that shows few signs of going away. The relevant statistics for schools in England are shocking: according to [figures released last week](#), since the autumn of 2019, the number of children absent for more than 50% of school time – these are the kids colloquially known as “ghost children” – has doubled, to about 125,000. Rates of “persistent absence”, defined as missing more than 10% of school, have soared from 13% to 24%, which means that 1.7 million children in England are regularly not in the classroom. These numbers are much worse in places with high levels of poverty and deprivation: Newcastle, Bradford, Middlesbrough.

Teachers I know talk about kids who seem to be neither in school, nor entirely out of it, drifting in and out of lessons on a whim; this highlights what happens when young lives have been subjected to long months without any structure. There is a lot of concern about a big uptick in disruptive and challenging behaviour. This year's GCSE outcomes will presumably highlight how these problems blur into levels of formal attainment, and whatever the government's attempts at helping kids catch up, the signs are not exactly promising.

'Total disrespect for national sacrifice': Starmer on Johnson and Partygate – video

Clearly, every absent, underperforming or anxious child is indicative of a level of social damage that still seems to be barely registering. In January this year, an [estimated 2 million people](#) in the UK were experiencing what the government calls “self-reported long Covid”. In 2022, 2.5 million people said they were not working [because of long-term sickness](#), an increase of about 500,000 since the pandemic began. Between 2021 and 2022, the number of people newly awarded disability benefits [doubled](#): about a third of the new claims were for mental or behavioural conditions, but among those under 25 that figure rose to 70%. The most visible political response to all this so far has been the government’s [tightening of benefit sanctions](#) and Tory calls – linked to the party’s angst about immigration – for the benefits system to punitively [push people into work](#), which is a good indication of Conservatism’s current ethical bankruptcy.

At the most recent count, there have been [226,622 deaths in the UK](#) with Covid mentioned on the death certificate, which entails a terrifying number of people who have experienced the effects of bereavement, often in the most impossible circumstances. Through 2020, 2021 and beyond, friendships slipped, and millions of people’s loneliness deepened. Grandparents and their grandkids were stuck in the midst of a particularly awful predicament: the time eaten up by lockdowns was an eternity to most children, and equally soul-sapping for people approaching the end of their lives. Throw in Brexit, inflation and all our other national problems, and you have an instant picture of why this country feels so disoriented and exhausted.

In that context, carrying on like Dorries et al and desperately defending a former prime minister who blithely made merry while other people’s lives fell apart is the symptom of a moral rot. But their behaviour also highlights the continuing absence of our collective Covid experience from the political conversation. Self-evidently, policy responses to what the pandemic has caused remain woefully unsatisfactory, but the vacuum is even more basic than that. Partly because the Johnson period left the ruling party in such an awkward position over Covid – do not forget: Sunak was issued with a

lockdown fixed-penalty notice – we hear almost no attempts to even speak meaningfully to the country about what it is still going through.

There has been at least one impressive exception. In January 2022, Keir Starmer addressed the House of Commons, as a limited version was published of Sue Gray's official report about Partygate. The worst of the pandemic, he said, had been "[a collective trauma endured by all, enjoyed by none](#)". He continued: "Every family has been marred by what we have been through. And revelations about the prime minister's behaviour have forced us all to rethink and relive those darkest moments."

"Many have been overcome by rage, by grief and even by guilt," he said. "Guilt that because they stuck to the law, they did not see their parents one last time ... Guilt that because they did as they were asked, they did not go and visit lonely relatives. But people should not feel guilty. They should feel pride in themselves and their country, because by abiding by those rules they have saved the lives of people they will probably never meet. They have shown the deep public spirit and the love and respect for others that has always characterised this nation at its best."

By his usual standards, that was a moving, eloquent speech. With the opening of the Covid public inquiry finally looming, he should return to it, and develop its themes. But anything he says should start with one key insistence: that until we have talked about what Covid has done to us, and finally resolved to do something about it, the UK being anywhere near its best will be a dim and fading fantasy.

- John Harris is a Guardian columnist
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‘The UK government’s crackdown on small boat crossings is partly inspired by Greece’s model.’ Migrants on a dinghy accompanied by a Frontex vessel, off the coast of Lesbos, 2020. Photograph: Michael Varaklas/AP

[OpinionRefugees](#)

One EU policy the Tories are happy to emulate: cracking down on refugees

[Daniel Trilling](#)

Greece, Bulgaria and Poland have been accused of forcibly turning away migrants – at terrible human cost

Mon 29 May 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 29 May 2023 07.22 EDT

If you want to see what Rishi Sunak’s Tories hope to achieve with their “stop the boats” policy – and the brutal reality that underlies it – look to Greece. The country’s rightwing prime minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, is currently riding high, having surprised pundits with the [scale of his victory](#) over the left in Sunday’s general election. Mitsotakis has convinced many

voters that he is returning Greece to stability after the turbulence of the 2010s – and part of the pitch is his claim to have all but ended refugee boat crossings from Turkey.

“We proved that the sea has borders, and those borders can and must be guarded,” Mitsotakis declared at a [campaign event](#) on 12 May, at which he claimed his government had reduced “irregular” arrivals by 90%. The choice of location was significant: Mitsotakis was speaking amid the ruins of Moria, the chaotic, filthy refugee camp that sprang up on the Aegean island of Lesbos during Europe’s refugee crisis, and which [burned down](#) in 2020. Today, with the government building a new network of “closed” camps to house those who do still arrive, it appears order has been restored.

An [investigation](#) by the New York Times, published last week, points to what that “order” can mean in practice. Video footage, shot by an aid worker and verified by the NYT, shows a group of refugees from Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia being taken from Lesbos and abandoned at sea by the Greek authorities. First, the 12 men, women and children are taken from an unmarked van and forced on to a waiting speedboat. From there, they are transferred on to a Greek coastguard vessel and taken out into the Aegean, where they are pushed on to an inflatable emergency life raft – an easily capsized and unsteerable vessel – and left to drift. The group were later rescued and taken to Turkey.

The video [appears to show](#) a particularly extreme version of what is known as a pushback: the forcible turning away of migrants at a country’s border. If so, it likely breaks Greek, EU and international law. Aside from the immediate danger they might put people in, pushbacks violate a fundamental principle of refugee protection, which is that people seeking asylum have the right to a fair hearing. When [confronted with](#) the evidence on CNN this week, Mitsotakis called the incident “completely unacceptable” and claimed an investigation had already begun. But it is part of a wider pattern: there have been [numerous reports](#) of Greece abandoning refugees at sea, although the evidence has rarely been so stark.

In recent years, countries on the EU’s southern and eastern borders have been taking increasingly harsh measures to deter refugees. [Bulgaria](#) and

[Poland](#) are among other countries accused of violently pushing back people at their borders. Migrants who stay in Europe are more likely to find themselves in detention-like conditions – there are already [reports of problems](#) at the new Greek camps – while those who step in to help find themselves harassed by border guards and threatened with prosecution. In Italy, 21 sea rescuers, including crew members of the [rescue ship Iuventa](#), are currently charged with “facilitating illegal immigration” and face years in prison if found guilty.



Kyriakos Mitsotakis speaking at the former Moria refugee camp, Lesbos, 12 May 2023. Photograph: Manolis Lagoutaris/AFP/Getty Images

Allegations of mistreatment are often met with official denial – in 2021, when a Dutch journalist [accused Mitsotakis](#) of “lying” about alleged pushbacks, he responded by accusing her of insulting the Greek people – and little sanction from the EU. Indeed, it was alleged last year that the EU’s border agency Frontex [had taken part](#) in pushbacks in the Aegean and then [covered it up](#). (The agency denied this.)

The lack of complaint should come as little surprise. Europe has come to see a shared interest in limiting the movement of refugees across its borders, even if that places people in danger and erodes the universal right to asylum. In 2020, in response to a border crisis deliberately stoked by Turkey, the

president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, [described Greece](#) as Europe’s “shield”.

While the EU has until now largely turned a blind eye to reports of wrongdoing at its frontiers, as a bloc it has also found ways to force refugees back to danger while staying just within the bounds of its own human rights laws. In the central Mediterranean, the EU has overseen the return of more than 100,000 migrants to Libya since 2017, where they risk being [severely abused](#), by withdrawing search and rescue and sending coordinates of boats in distress to the Libyan coastguard – a system of pushbacks in all but name.

This is one area in which post-Brexit Britain is happy to emulate its European neighbours. The UK government’s crackdown on small boat crossings is [partly inspired](#) by Greece’s model. The former home secretary Priti Patel, who toured Greece’s new “closed” centres for migrants in summer 2021, wanted Border Force officers to carry out “turnback” operations in the Channel and gave them [immunity from prosecution](#) for any deaths at sea. The illegal migration bill currently making its way through parliament envisages a network of camps on former military sites, much like the ones the Greek government is building.

Advocates of these policies say they are necessary to maintain a sense of control over migration and that they save lives, by reducing the overall number of people making journeys. The Tories are no doubt looking enviously at Mitsotakis’s vote share: the pushback revelations are unlikely to make a dent in his support when Greeks [go back to the polls](#) next month. But turning refugees away does not reduce the number of people who need safety, it merely pushes them towards poorer countries, who already [host 85%](#) of the world’s displaced people. That increases the likelihood that some will turn to smugglers or take greater risk to travel, and gives countries further back along the migration routes an incentive to close their borders too.

International refugee law exists for a reason: if people don’t have the right to asylum wherever they need it, we quickly reach a situation in which they can’t find it anywhere. The alternative to the current hardening of borders is for states to run well-funded, fair asylum systems – and to support one

another in doing so. That's not easy to argue for in the current political climate, but a first step is to expose the human cost of our governments' existing policies.

In Greece, Médecins Sans Frontières says that in the past year, [940 refugees](#) it was in contact with have gone missing from Lesbos alone: the EU must hold the people responsible accountable. In the UK, the Refugee Council estimates that as many as [190,000 people](#) could end up detained or forced into destitution by the illegal migration bill, which does more to undermine asylum than any other law to date.

If you are unhappy with what is going on, now is the time to make a noise about it.

- Daniel Trilling is the author of Lights in the Distance: Exile and Refuge at the Borders of Europe
 - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*
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Almost one in five of us travel with a pillow, according to a recent survey.
Photograph: Lost Horizon Images/Getty Images/Image Source

[Opinion](#)[Life and style](#)

Yes, I do take my pillow with me on holiday. And I'm very happy with my life choices, thank you very much

[Emma Beddington](#)



Sneer all you like, but everyone needs a few home comforts when travelling.
And it's not as if I'm taking my favourite mug

Mon 29 May 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 29 May 2023 09.28 EDT

Another year, another survey (by M&S bank this time) of the stuff British people insist on taking on holiday. None can beat my mother's friend who travelled to China for a fortnight with an entire suitcase filled with Ginger Nuts, but honestly, what weirdos take a water filter jug (4%), anti-bacterial spray (30%) and air freshener (9%)? What of spontaneity and seeing where the wind takes you, home fragrance and bacteria-wise?

No, I'm sorry I can't keep this pretence up. For a start, the 43% who bring their own teabags are entirely correct, especially if they are heading abroad. No one should face the morning with only Lipton Yellow or whatever brown, pumpkin-spiced water [America is calling “tea” this year](#). Slippers (36%): yes, of course, because cosiness is high on the holiday checklist. “Your favourite mug” (10%): well, I'm torn on this one. It is a truth universally acknowledged that all holiday accommodation expects you to drink out of a thimble, like a tiny Beatrix Potter dormouse, but what kind of

reckless fool risks their favourite mug in a suitcase? Third favourite I could get behind.

Then there are the 19% of respondents who take their pillow. Only a few years ago that would have seemed absurd to me, but a lot of humbling things can happen in a few years, such as your ears getting so weirdly sensitive – I think it's [earplug overuse](#) – that it hurts to lie on hard pillows. The rot started when we went away for a month in the car, because those seemed reasonable circumstances in which to travel with an emotional support merino side sleeper. But you know you've reached the steep part of the slippery slope when you stand by your overnight bag preparing for a single night away, pillow in hand, and convince yourself it's sensible to take up all the available space with it: pfft, who needs a toothbrush? To the 19%, you are my people. I've decided to shed the shame, and plan to spend this spring carefully researching what other bulky household items I should wrestle into my carry-on to change my holiday life.

Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

- *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).*

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'I never really recognised exercise tracking as a problem, because I was so used to logging my life.' Clapham Common, London. Photograph: Nick Moore/Alamy

[Why I quitRunning](#)

When my running app broke it was a revelation: 'being better' is about taking care of yourself

[Laura Kay](#)



After my mental health took a nosedive I deleted years' worth of data and missed targets – and the guilt that goes with them

Mon 29 May 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 29 May 2023 06.04 EDT

In early 2018, I was training for the [London Marathon](#) – the first and only marathon I'll ever run in my life. I had treated myself to an expensive fitness watch that tracked my time, pace, splits – every piece of information I could ever wish to know about what I had just endured.

At the end of my final training run – a gruelling 21 miles (34km) during which I got lost on Wandsworth Common and had a lovely little cry on the bus afterwards – I threw myself down on the floor the moment I got home, only to see my watch had failed me. Twenty-one miles briefly flashed on the screen before it went blank and disappeared for ever.

Instead of feeling proud of myself for the phenomenal achievement of running for what I believe in athletics is known as “fucking ages”, I screamed in anguish because there was no record of it. My aching muscles, my salt-crusted lips that tasted of sweat and Jelly Babies, the increasingly

disgusting blisters on my feet – it all meant nothing to me. I may as well not have done it.

That tragic image of me sobbing while choking down a conciliatory Cornetto on my living room floor pretty much sums up my relationship with exercise tracking technology.

I'd like to say at this point that I know running apps are brilliant for some people. It can be a total joy to watch your stats change as you get stronger and faster. I once got a kick out of it too, but at some point it became a stick I used to punish myself. I would watch my pace (slow, always slow), compare it with other people's, admonish myself for not doing that extra mile, or for not doing it 30 seconds faster like I had last time. I would run for five miles, get home and feel disappointed in myself for not doing six.

I never really recognised [exercise tracking as a problem](#), because I was so used to tracking and logging my life. Things I have tracked include but are not limited to: calories, my weight, my sleep, steps, my speed, my heart rate. It seemed to me that tracking was the route to self-improvement, and the point was to improve, wasn't it? The point was to be better.

In the past year, the concept of “being better” has taken on a different meaning. My mental health took a spectacular nosedive, and things that were once easy and I was very good at, such as brushing my teeth, washing my clothes and going outside became unimaginably difficult. Being better stopped meaning getting faster, stronger, leaner, thinner, more impressive. It meant taking care of myself in the most basic sense, feeling some joy in a day, remembering to take my meds, remembering that everything is temporary.

Once I started being better, I reflected on what about my life made me happy and what did not; on when I felt peaceful and when I did not. And so I stopped tracking my runs. I simply deleted years' worth of data that was once very important to me and now meant nothing. Years of personal bests and personal worsts and targets and goals and achievements and failures. And once it was gone, what was left was me and a pair of running shoes and miles and miles of [trying to clear the fog](#) in my brain.

What has become very clear to me since I quit tracking my runs is that I genuinely love doing them. I run around my local park with a silly little smile on my face, I love it so much. But I do not love running quickly. I hate it, in fact. I do not love targets. I do not like races. I do not want to be pushed to be faster by other people or win a medal. I'm sorry to say to all the enthusiasts that I do not even [like parkrun](#). I like to run alone accompanied by a playlist that will never see the light of day.

Things I notice about my runs now include: how my legs feel and how my mind feels afterwards (clear and focused). I notice how many flies are in my mouth, dogs, the smell of the cow parsley along the canal and the sunshine (OK, wind and rain) on my face.

I notice with interest how some days a 20-minute jog around the park feels like a marathon and how on others I want to go for miles and miles, my legs springy and filled with what feels like boundless energy. I notice how neither one is better or worse than the other, how the guilt has disappeared.

I am better. Or sometimes I am worse. But either way I'm slowly plodding along, and that's good enough.

- Laura Kay is a former Guardian journalist and the author of three novels, including [The Split](#), which is about running
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2023.05.29 - Around the world

- [Hong Kong Court rebuffs effort to dismiss Jimmy Lai national security trial](#)
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Jimmy Lai, the founder of Apple Daily, was arrested during Beijing's crackdown on pro-democracy protests in 2020. Photograph: Tyrone Siu/Reuters

[Hong Kong](#)

Hong Kong court rebuffs effort to dismiss Jimmy Lai national security trial

Lawyers acting for pro-democracy activist argued that proceedings could be biased due to judge selection

Amy Hawkins Senior China correspondent
[@amyhawk](https://twitter.com/amyhawk)

Mon 29 May 2023 05.53 EDT Last modified on Mon 29 May 2023 06.13 EDT

Hong Kong's high court has rejected an attempt by lawyers acting for the jailed pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai to have his national security trial

dismissed.

The court ruled on Monday that the argument the trial may appear to be biased had “no merits”, and gave the proceedings, which are scheduled to start in September, the green light.

The legal team for Lai, a former media mogul who was arrested during Beijing’s crackdown on pro-democracy protests in 2020, had argued that the fact his trial would be presided over by judges hand-picked by the chief executive undermined the neutrality of the court.

Lai is also embroiled in a legal battle over whether or not he can be represented by Tim Owen KC, a top British barrister.

On 19 May, Hong Kong’s high court [rejected](#) an attempt by Lai’s legal team to challenge a decision by city authorities to bar Owen from representing Lai. That decision can still be appealed.

The government was granted that power just days earlier, when the legislature passed [an amendment](#) giving the city’s leader the power to veto foreign lawyers from working on national security cases.

That amendment enshrined a ruling from Beijing issued in December. Critics say that the involvement of the chief executive in approving lawyers violates the independence of the legal system, and leaves defendants in sensitive cases with few options for representation.

Hong Kong, a former British colony, has a legal system that is based on English common law. Defendants and prosecutors have long called on foreign lawyers in a range of civil and criminal proceedings.

Lai is the founder of the now defunct Apple Daily, a vocal pro-democracy newspaper that was forced to close after the Chinese Communist party (CCP) tightened its grip on the city. In July 2020, the government imposed a national security law which effectively closed down legal avenues for criticising the authorities.

In 2021, John Lee, Hong Kong's chief executive, who was at the time secretary for security, [referred to](#) Apple Daily journalists as “criminals who make use of journalistic work as a tool to further their criminal activities”. Lai’s lawyers argued that Lee’s role in picking judges for Lai’s case could therefore seem biased. But on Monday, the high court ruled that the chief executive “has not been given a complete free rein as to who can be appointed as designated judges”, because recommendations are made by an advisory body.

Lai has long been an outspoken critic of the CCP. In August 2020 he was arrested and charged with foreign collusion under the national security law, which could result in a life sentence. The trial is scheduled for September, by which time he will have spent nearly 1,000 days in jail.

Before the legal amendment this month, Hong Kong’s courts had rejected the government’s attempts to block Owen from representing Lai.

Mark Clifford, a friend of Lai’s and a former director of Apple Daily’s parent company, said: “The Hong Kong government’s inability to accept court rulings shows that promises of a territory ruled by law have been broken.”

A Hong Kong government spokesperson said: “All judges and judicial officers have all along been abiding by the judicial oath which requires them to administer justice in strict accordance with the law, without fear or favour, self-interest or deceit ... This has not changed (and will not change) regardless of whether judges are dealing with national security cases or any other cases arising from or involving political controversies.”

They added that the interpretation from China’s government in December “did not in any way impair the independent judicial power and the power of final adjudication of the Hong Kong courts”.

“The interpretation did not confer additional power on the chief executive ... Owing to the inherent nature of matters concerning national security, the executive authority is in a far better position than the courts to make appropriate judgments.”

The saga over whether or not Lai can appoint a British lawyer reflects the tensions in Hong Kong's legal system, which was once regarded as the most robust in Asia. Last year the UK government said that the erosion of freedoms after the passage of the national security law meant that the situation had reached a “tipping point” where it was no longer tenable for UK judges to sit on Hong Kong's highest court. Six British judges are still in post on a part-time basis.

On 25 May, the UK government published its six-monthly report on the former colony, which said that Hong Kong's common law system “remained under pressure”. It said that the national security law “continues to damage Hong Kong's way of life”. Hong Kong's government said that it “firmly rejected the slandering remarks”.

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Police officers use a drone to patrol a street in Altay, Xinjiang province.
Photograph: Costfoto/NurPhoto/Shutterstock

[China](#)

Number of people prosecuted in China's courts up 12% in five years, report shows

Experts point to crackdown on national security and legal system that encourages guilty pleas

[Helen Davidson](#) and [Amy Hawkins](#)

Mon 29 May 2023 00.30 EDT Last modified on Mon 29 May 2023 16.14 EDT

Chinese courts prosecuted 8.3 million people in the five years to 2022, a 12% increase on the previous period. There was also a nearly 20% increase in the number of protests against court rulings.

The figures released by the supreme people's procuratorate (SPP) in March give a glimpse of how China's notoriously opaque justice system has operated in recent years, amid a tightening domestic security environment.

Zhang Jun, the outgoing director of the SPP, said prosecutions for violent crimes decreased by 31.7%, while prosecutions for internet-based crimes, such as gambling, fraud and the dissemination of obscene materials, increased by 43.3%.

A previous SPP report noted that there had been 1,400 national security prosecutions between 2018 and 2022, but this was not mentioned in the official work report.

Under President [Xi Jinping](#), Chinese authorities have increased their focus on alleged crimes of national and public security, including the targeting of dissidents, protesters and human rights lawyers.

This month [new amendments to anti-espionage laws came into force](#), broadening their scope in a manner that legal experts warned could further heighten risk to foreign individuals and organisations operating in the country.

Authorities have [targeted foreign businesses](#) working in the due diligence and consulting field with raids and arrests, and in recent years dozens of foreigners or Chinese people working for foreign organisations have been detained on national security grounds.

National security trials, often related to accusations of espionage or subversion, are often held in secret, with little transparency around evidence, rulings and sentences. The data did not include specifics beyond the number of prosecutions.

Dr Enshen Li, a senior lecturer in criminology at the University of Queensland, said the jump in prosecutions could reflect a trend seen around the world of overcriminalisation by governments, and to a system in place since 2016 that encourages defendants to plead guilty in exchange for a lenient sentence.

Number of people charged with selected specific crimes in China between 2018 and 2022

“This has been applied to around 90% of handled criminal cases over the last few years and it has greatly increased the efficiency of case processing in the criminal justice system, which makes criminal prosecution much easier than before.”

In a system where the conviction rate for criminal trials is nearly 100%, the plea leniency system has been a powerful incentive for defendants to plead guilty and has also contributed to a stark drop in the number of pre-trial detentions. Between 2018 and 2022, the pre-trial detention rate dropped from 54.9% to 26.7%, a record low.

“The Chinese system has always been as much about resolution as about punishment and deterrence,” said Jeremy Daum, a research scholar at the Paul Tsai China Center at Yale Law School.

The SPP said its role included ensuring investigations and prosecutions were conducted legally and fairly. It said it had refused 818,000 arrests proposed by public security organs, an increase of 30%.

But the data also showed a significant jump in the number of appeals lodged against criminal judgments, which Li said referred only to appeals by prosecutors against convictions or sentences.

The SPP reported 41,000 protests were lodged against criminal judgments believed to be erroneous, an 18.9% increase on the previous reporting period.

Li noted that this refers to appeals made by prosecutors, not defendants. Daum noted that there has been a push in recent years for prosecutors and judges to be seen to be stopping “wrongful cases”.

That is both to boost the system’s public legitimacy and to protect judges. In 2017 the supreme people’s court introduced a “lifetime responsibility” system for judges, meaning that even after they retire they can be challenged

on the quality of their cases. This has been described as a “sword of Damocles hanging over judges” by senior judges.

The SPP also revealed 78,000 officials, including more than 100 who were at or above provincial leader or ministerial level, were prosecuted for corruption and bribery in the five-year period. Since coming to power, Xi has run a sweeping corruption crackdown on Chinese political elites.

Chi Hui Lin contributed to this report

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A protester passes an umbrella in Hong Kong's legislative council complex in July 2019. A trial of 13 people accused over the storming of the legislature began in the territory on Monday. Photograph: Billy HC Kwok/Getty Images

[Hong Kong](#)

Hong Kong: 13 go on trial over 2019 storming of legislature by pro-democracy protesters

Seven admit rioting, while another six face additional charges carrying a maximum sentence of life in prison

Agence France-Presse in Hong Kong
Mon 29 May 2023 02.44 EDT

A [Hong Kong](#) court has began the trial of 13 people over the storming and ransacking of the city's legislature in 2019, which was an unprecedented challenge to the Beijing-backed government.

It was the most violent episode in the initial phase of the huge pro-democracy protests that shook Hong Kong that year, with millions marching and staging sit-ins for weeks.

Hundreds of protesters broke into the legislature on the night of 1 July 2019 – the 22nd anniversary of Hong Kong’s handover from Britain to [China](#) – smashing windows and spraying graffiti.

The 13 defendants that went on trial on Monday over the episode were charged with rioting, an offence that can be punished by up to 10 years in jail.

Seven pleaded guilty to that charge when proceedings began at a Hong Kong district court on Monday, and the prosecution shelved the additional charges against them.

“I have never regretted my fight for freedom, justice and democracy ... my thoughts will remain free when I am in jail,” Althea Suen, who pleaded guilty, said in a Facebook message posted as the trial began.

The six who have not entered a guilty plea for rioting are facing additional charges of unlawful entry to the legislature and “criminal damage”, which carry a maximum penalty of life in prison.

Their trial is expected to run for 44 days.

More than 10,000 people were arrested as authorities sought to snuff out the 2019 protest movement, which was one of the biggest challenges to Hong Kong’s Beijing-backed government since the 1997 handover.

In 2020, Beijing imposed a national security law on Hong Kong which outlawed most dissent and crushed the democracy movement.

Almost 2,900 people have been prosecuted on charges linked to the protests.

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President Joe Biden talks to reporters as he departs the White House for the Memorial Day holiday weekend on 26 May. Photograph: Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

[US Congress](#)

Biden hails debt ceiling deal and urges lawmakers to pass agreement

President says deal struck with Kevin McCarthy protects ‘historic economic recovery’ but it needs approval from a divided Congress

[Joanna Walters](#) in New York and agencies

Mon 29 May 2023 10.02 EDTFirst published on Sun 28 May 2023 10.30 EDT

Joe Biden has said a bipartisan deal to raise the \$31.4tn [US debt ceiling](#) and avoid a default is ready to move to Congress and urged lawmakers to pass the agreement he struck with Kevin McCarthy.

“This is a deal that’s good news for … the American people,” the president said at the White House on Sunday night after a call with McCarthy to put the final touches to a tentative deal struck the previous day. “It takes the threat of catastrophic default off the table, protects our hard-earned and historic economic recovery,” he said.

“I strongly urge both chambers to pass that agreement,” Biden said, adding he believed the House speaker negotiated in good faith and expected him to have the necessary votes for the 99-page bill to pass. Asian shares and US stock futures rose on Monday, buoyed by news of an agreement.

By Monday morning, lawmakers had been presented with the details of the deal, with the aim of putting a bill to a vote as early as Wednesday in the House, followed by the Senate later in the week or this weekend, and getting it passed before 5 June, thus avoiding a catastrophic and unprecedented default.

On Monday, Biden, the first lady, Jill Biden, the US vice-president, Kamala Harris, and the second gentleman, Doug Emhoff, will attend ceremonies at Arlington national cemetery just outside Washington, DC, to mark Memorial Day, a federal holiday reserved for honoring and mourning fallen US military personnel.

Both the House and Senate are expected to return on Tuesday, after Memorial Day.

Once the bill reaches the Senate, where Democrats have the majority, the pace of action will largely depend on whether any senators try to hold up the bill, possibly with amendment votes. That could tie up the legislation for a few days.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York warned on Sunday that “due to the time it may take to process the legislation in the Senate without cooperation, senators should prepare for potential Friday and weekend votes.”

Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell applauded the agreement and called on the Senate to act swiftly to pass it without unnecessary delay once it has gone through the House. “Today’s agreement makes urgent progress toward preserving our nation’s full faith and credit and a much-needed step toward getting its financial house in order,” he said.

Chip Roy, a prominent member of the Republican hardline Freedom Caucus, tweeted that he would try to prevent the agreement from passing the House but McCarthy dismissed threats of opposition within his own party, saying “over 95%” of House Republicans were “overwhelmingly excited” about the deal.

“This is a good strong bill that a majority of Republicans will vote for,” the California Republican said. “You’re going to have Republicans and Democrats be able to move this to the president.”

Earlier Biden told reporters when arriving back at the White House, after attending the high school graduation of one of his granddaughters in Delaware, that there were no sticking points left between him and McCarthy. When asked if he was confident the deal would be voted through Congress and reach his desk, he replied “yes”.

But late on Sunday afternoon, lawmakers in the House and Senate were reportedly on calls with congressional leaders, expressing frustrations at a compromise deal, as efforts began in earnest to sell the package and win passage of the legislation this week.

Biden and McCarthy had held a 90-minute phone call earlier on Saturday evening to discuss the deal before the outline agreement was first announced that night, with the Democratic US president joining the call from the Camp David retreat and the Republican speaker in the nation’s capital.

Biden had said after that: “The agreement represents a compromise, which means not everyone gets what they want. That’s the responsibility of governing,” while calling the pact “an important step forward”.



House speaker Kevin McCarthy speaks to the media as he leaves a meeting on the debt ceiling with President Joe Biden outside the West Wing on 22 May. Photograph: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

McCarthy commands a five-seat majority in the Republican-controlled House but his far-right wing members are expected to balk at spending cuts that they deem not deep enough, while progressives may be more likely to choke down cuts and benefits restrictions that they loathe in order to pass the deal.

Earlier on Sunday morning, McCarthy boasted on Fox News Sunday that “there’s not one thing in the bill for Democrats” even though Biden achieved his fundamental goal of persuading the Republican to agree to a debt ceiling increase. McCarthy predicted House GOP members will support the deal.

McCarthy added at the press conference later: “We are going to put the bill on the [House] floor in 72 hours and pass it.”

To reduce spending, as Republicans had insisted, the package includes a two-year budget deal that would hold spending flat for 2024 and impose limits for 2025. That’s in exchange for raising the debt limit for two years, until after the next election.

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It also expands some work requirements for certain food-stamp recipients and tweaks an environmental law to try to streamline reviews to build new energy projects.

The Treasury secretary, Janet Yellen, said the US could default on its debt obligations by 5 June if lawmakers do not act in time to raise the federal debt ceiling. A default would shake financial markets and send the US into a deep recession.

The House minority leader and Democratic New York representative Hakeem Jeffries said in a [letter](#): “I am thankful to President Biden for his leadership in averting a devastating default.”

The Washington state Democratic representative, Pramila Jayapal, chair of the congressional progressive caucus, told CNN’s State of the Union show on Sunday morning that she did not yet know if she would vote for the deal as she needed to see “the exact legislative text”.

She said the notion of tightening conditions for hungry families to claim food stamps was “absolutely terrible policy”.

But she warned: “The American people have to understand that we are on the brink of default” after House Republicans forced a negotiation, while

further warning that Republicans want to cut “basic spending on things like healthcare, education, child care, all of the things you care about”.

The South Dakota Republican congressman, Dusty Johnson, who was involved in the behind-the-scenes negotiations prior to the leaders agreeing, cheered “a fantastic deal” on Sunday morning, also talking to CNN.

Johnson noted he is the leader of the mainstream Republican caucus in the House and said he believes there are Freedom Caucus members who will vote for it, though maybe not the most “colorful” ones.

Republicans control the House by 222-213, while Democrats control the Senate by 51-49. These margins mean that moderates from both sides will have to support the bill, as any compromise will almost definitely lose the support of the far-left and far-right wings of each party.

To win the Speaker’s gavel, McCarthy agreed to enable any single member to call for a vote to unseat him, which could lead to his ousting if he seeks to work with Democrats. On Sunday, he said he was “not at all” worried that could happen.

Some hardline Republicans balked at McCarthy cooperating with the White House.

“If Speaker’s negotiators bring back in substance a clean debt limit increase ... one so large that it even protects Biden from the issue in the presidential [election] ... it’s war,” representative Dan Bishop, a member of the Freedom Caucus, tweeted.

The deal does just that, sources briefed on it said.

The deal would boost spending on the military and veterans’ care, and cap it for many discretionary domestic programs, according to sources familiar with talks. But Republicans and Democrats will need to debate, as the deal doesn’t specify them.

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Kevin McCarthy and Joe Biden. The debt ceiling deal will affect discretionary spending, Covid funds and social programs. Photograph: Alex Brandon/AP

[US Congress](#)

[Explainer](#)

Biden, McCarthy agree to raise US debt ceiling – what's in the deal?

Sources reveal discretionary spending cap and changes to the federal food program, among other details

Guardian staff and agency

Sun 28 May 2023 17.45 EDT Last modified on Wed 31 May 2023 08.48 EDT

Joe Biden and Kevin McCarthy have reached an agreement to lift the [US debt ceiling](#) and avoid a disastrous and unprecedented default. Prior to the details being presented to lawmakers, ahead of an expected vote on Wednesday, here is what sources familiar with negotiations have revealed:

Cap on discretionary spending

The deal would suspend the \$31.4tn debt ceiling until January 2025, allowing the government to pay its bills. In exchange, non-defense discretionary spending would be “roughly flat” at current year levels in 2024, “when factoring in agreed-upon appropriations adjustments”, a source said. It would increase by only 1% in 2025.

Republicans have told their members that non-defense discretionary spending, apart from military veterans’ healthcare, would be cut to 2022 levels.

What about the 2024 presidential election?

The debt limit extension schedule means Congress would not need to address the deeply polarizing issue again until after the November 2024 election. This would prevent another political showdown that rattles global investors and markets until after either a Republican is elected president or Biden wins a second term.

Increased defense spending

The deal is expected to boost defense spending to about \$885bn, in line with Biden’s 2024 budget spending proposal, an 11% increase from the \$800bn allocated in the current budget.

Special IRS funding for federal tax authorities

Biden and Democrats secured \$80bn in new funding for a decade to help the Internal Revenue Service enforce the tax code for wealthy Americans in last year’s Inflation Reduction Act. Republicans and Democrats had battled over moving that funding, which was allocated under the act as “mandatory spending” to keep it from the political fighting of the annual budgeting process, to “discretionary spending” to be allocated by Congress.

Covid clawback, cuts for the CDC

Biden and McCarthy are expected to agree to claw back unused Covid-19 relief funds as part of the budget deal, including funding that had been set aside for vaccine research and disaster relief. The estimated amount of unused funds is between \$50bn and \$70bn. The bill will also cut \$400m from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) global health fund “that sends taxpayer money to China”, Republicans told members, despite the risks of future pandemics.

Work requirements

Biden and McCarthy battled fiercely over imposing stricter work requirements on low-income Americans who benefit from federal food and healthcare programs.

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No changes were made to Medicaid health insurance in the deal, but the agreement would impose new work requirements on low-income people who receive food assistance, up to age 54, instead of 50.

Student loans

Republicans said that they ensured borrowers would have to repay their student loans. However, other sources say the deal codifies relief from student loan payments while Biden's executive action providing up to \$20,000 of debt relief for each borrower is under review by the US supreme court, with a decision expected next month.

‘Pay-go’

Republicans said they secured a budgeting mechanism known as “pay-go”, short for “pay-as-you-go”, that says new legislation or executive orders affecting revenues and spending on Medicare, social security and other key programs must be budget-neutral.

Energy permitting

The two leaders agreed to new rules to make it easier for energy projects – including fossil fuel-based ones as well as renewable energy – to gain permit approval.

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- [Covid inquiry Senior Tories express doubts over legal challenge](#)
- [Cancer Blood test for 50 types could speed up diagnosis, study suggests](#)
- ['I have brought myself down' Phillip Schofield says his career is over](#)

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Boris Johnson says he will bypass Cabinet Office and send WhatsApp messages directly to Covid inquiry – as it happened

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Johnson has said he is ‘not willing to let my material become a test case for others’. Photograph: Frank Augstein/AP

[Covid inquiry](#)[Health policy](#)

Boris Johnson hands over WhatsApp messages directly to Covid inquiry

Former PM bypasses government’s attempts to keep unredacted communications secret

- [UK politics live – latest updates](#)

Aubrey Allegretti and Kiran Stacey

Fri 2 Jun 2023 10.58 EDTFirst published on Fri 2 Jun 2023 05.15 EDT

Boris Johnson has bypassed the government’s attempt to keep his unredacted WhatsApp messages secret by handing them over directly to the Covid inquiry.

In a move that will further frustrate Downing Street, the former prime minister circumvented the Cabinet Office, which is seeking to hold up the process by [launching legal action](#).

Johnson said he was “not willing to let my material become a test case for others”, given the government’s reservation that handing over Johnson’s files could mean serving ministers are forced to oblige, too.

Thus far, only messages since spring 2021 have been given to the inquiry, because Johnson said security advisers had told him to permanently turn off a previous phone when its security became compromised.

That prompted some frustration, because it meant only messages dated well after all three national pandemic lockdowns were available to the inquiry.

To allay concerns, Johnson said he wanted to test the advice never to turn on his old phone. In a letter to the inquiry’s chair, Heather Hallett, he said he had asked the Cabinet Office to help turn the device back on securely to search “for all relevant material”, which he promised to pass directly to her.

About two dozen notebooks that were also requested by Lady Hallett had been removed by the Cabinet Office, said Johnson, adding that he had asked senior Whitehall officials to “pass these to you”. If they refused, he said, he would ask for them to be returned so he could again pass them directly to the inquiry.

The move will seriously undermine the Cabinet Office’s attempt to keep Johnson’s unredacted WhatsApps under wraps, after it took the unprecedented decision to launch the legal action. A judicial review of Hallett’s powers to demand all evidence she deems potentially relevant to the inquiry will now take place, but legal experts said she was likely to win.

The government faced an uphill task, said Jonathan Jones, a former head of the government legal department. “The likelihood is that the court will say the inquiry chair should be the one to decide how she goes about it, and what material she needs to see for that purpose,” he said.

The hope inside government is that the matter will be resolved in weeks, not months. Officials have asked for the case to be expedited but it is up to the high court to set a date for the hearing.

While [Rishi Sunak](#) has sought to keep a low profile over the issue, the Guardian has been told that he and the deputy prime minister, Oliver Dowden, signed off the decision to launch a judicial review.

Government sources stressed they were still working to find a compromise. One idea being mooted is that only those with security clearance in the Covid inquiry team should be able to read sensitive material.

Johnson has said he wants to help the inquiry however possible. But Hallett is interested in far more than files.

It emerged that she sent him a list of 150 questions on 3 February, including whether he said he would rather ["let the bodies pile high"](#) than order a second lockdown, or likened Covid to swine flu.

Other matters she is investigating include why he missed a number of meetings of the government's emergency Cobra taskforce and how meetings with newspaper editors in September 2020 affected the decision to delay imposing a second lockdown.

More senior Tories have begun to express doubts about the government's decision to take its fight to the courts. George Freeman, the science minister, openly said the challenge was unlikely to succeed.

"I absolutely have very little doubt that the courts will find that Baroness Hallett will decide what evidence she deems relevant, and then we'll get on with it," he told the BBC's Question Time show.

"I think personally it's quite likely that the courts will rule that Baroness Hallett will decide what evidence [is relevant], but I think it's a point worth testing."

The former Downing Street chief of staff Gavin Barwell said the legal action should not have been launched at all. He told BBC Radio 4's Today programme on Friday: "We've already waited too long to set this inquiry up,

and I think people want answers quickly. So I think from a timing point of view, it is a mistake to prolong this process.”

The Cabinet Office has argued it wants to comb through all documents requested by the Covid inquiry to remove anything that may have national security implications, or that officials deem to be “unambiguously irrelevant”. But the legal case has drawn condemnation from opposition parties and upset among families of the pandemic’s victims.

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The Galleri test detects tiny fragments of tumour DNA in the bloodstream.
Photograph: migstock/Alamy

[Cancer research](#)

Blood test for 50 types of cancer could speed up diagnosis, study suggests

NHS trial results of liquid biopsy indicate Galleri test has potential to spot cancer in people with symptoms

Andrew Gregory, Health editor in Chicago
[@andrewgregory](#)

Fri 2 Jun 2023 02.42 EDTFirst published on Fri 2 Jun 2023 02.41 EDT

A blood test for more than 50 forms of cancer could help speed up diagnosis and fast-track patients for treatment, a study suggests.

NHS trial results of the liquid biopsy, published at the world's largest cancer conference in the US, suggest the [Galleri blood test](#) has the potential to spot and rule out cancer in people with symptoms.

The test detects tiny fragments of tumour DNA in the bloodstream. It alerts doctors as to whether a cancer signal has been detected, and predicts where in the body that signal may have originated.

Experts welcomed the findings from the trial but said more research would be needed before the test, made by the California company Grail, could be rolled out in healthcare systems.

The Symplify study, led by the University of Oxford, involved 5,461 people in England and Wales who were referred to hospital by their GP with suspected cancer. Its results are being presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology's annual meeting in Chicago.

The test correctly revealed two-thirds of cancers among those in the study. In 85% of those positive cases, it was also able to pinpoint the original site of cancer. It was more accurate in older patients and those with more advanced cancers, according to the trial results.

Mark Middleton, a professor of experimental cancer medicine at Oxford, who led the trial, said the test had “potential for identifying people going to see their GP who are currently not referred urgently to investigate cancer ... who do need testing”.

It was also likely the test could speed up diagnosis “where it is not certain which rapid diagnostic pathway is the right one”, Middleton said.

“The first use case above has the potential to diagnose cancers earlier; the second and third have the potential to help achieve cancer targets (and therefore reduce waiting for patients) by reducing the overall number of tests needed to diagnose cancers.”

Lawrence Young, a professor of molecular oncology at the University of Warwick, urged caution but added: “This is an important study that shows we are edging towards an era when blood testing for cancer, alongside other tests of symptomatic patients, could really impact early diagnosis and significantly improve clinical outcome.”

Dr Richard Lee, of the Institute of [Cancer](#) Research in London, said testing in patients with symptoms potentially indicating cancer could help to enable quicker diagnostic testing in those deemed to be at high risk. “This could result in earlier diagnosis of cancer or faster reassurance for those without cancer,” he added.

Prof Nicholas Turner, also of the Institute of Cancer Research, said the study provided valuable data that enhances the evidence liquid biopsies could be used to more rapidly diagnose cancer in patients presenting with symptoms.

“It could well be useful in the future to fast-track patients into rapid-access clinics, and especially in people where imaging findings are uncertain,” said Turner.

Dr David Crosby, the head of prevention and early detection research at Cancer Research UK, said: “The findings from the study suggest this test could be used to support GPs to make clinical assessments, but much more research is needed in a larger trial to see if it could improve GP assessment, and ultimately patient outcomes.”

The [NHS](#) has also been using the Galleri test in thousands of people without symptoms, to see if it can detect hidden cancers. Results are expected later this year. If successful, it plans to roll the test out to about 1 million people.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2023/jun/02/blood-test-50-types-cancer-could-speed-up-patient-diagnosis-study>.

'I've lost everything': Phillip Schofield describes fallout of affair revelations – video

[Television industry](#)

'I have brought myself down': Phillip Schofield says his career is over

Former This Morning presenter tells BBC he 'wouldn't be here' if daughters had not supported him

[Rachel Hall](#)

[@rachela_hall](#)

Fri 2 Jun 2023 04.39 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 18.42 EDT

Phillip Schofield has said his career in television is over after he "brought [himself] down" by lying about his affair with a younger man.

The former This Morning presenter, 61, [resigned from ITV](#) last week after admitting to his "biggest, sorriest secret", an "unwise but not illegal relationship" with a man who is now in his mid-20s.

In an interview with [BBC](#) News, his first since leaving ITV, Schofield said: "I have brought myself down. I am done. I have to talk about television in the past tense, which breaks my heart."

He said that if his daughters had not supported him last week, he "wouldn't be here". "They've guarded me and won't let me out of their sight," he said.

Despite finding the interview distressing, he felt moved to speak "because there is an innocent person here who didn't do anything wrong".

He added: "I just have to say, 'stop with him. OK with me. But stop with him, leave him alone now.'"

Schofield also said he is afraid to leave the house after the revelation of his affair with the younger male colleague. He told the Sun: “I do not know a time I will be able to walk out of the door.

“I don’t have any spirit. My friends tell me, ‘It will get better’. It won’t. Not now. Not this one.”

He added: “I am getting by hour by hour. I have got my girls and my friends.”

Schofield’s reference is to his former lover, whom he met when the man was a 15-year-old boy at drama school and whom he followed on Twitter “totally innocent[ly]” after a friend told him the boy was a fan.

He denied flirting with the boy and said he was “hardly” in touch which him other than to offer career advice and give him work experience at the studio, until the man was 20 or 21, and had begun working at ITV. Schofield was married at the time.

'I'm in conflict': Alison Hammond in tears over Phillip Schofield's affair on This Morning – video

He said there was “absolutely not” a moment of initial sexual attraction, and replied “no, god, no” to the question of whether he had a sexual relationship when the boy was underage.

The affair began a few months after the man started working on the show, Schofield said. “We’d become mates. In my dressing room one day, something happened, which obviously I will regret forever, for him and for me – mostly him.”

He said nobody else on the team was aware of the affair, including his co-presenter, Holly Willoughby. “This has been the cataclysm of the lie. It starts in the denial and then the rumours started, you lie, you’ve had a workplace fling and you lie about it,” he said.

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The affair was consensual, he said, and he did not consider it an abuse of power, but “a very grave error”. “It was my fault. I was older, I should have known better, I shouldn’t have done it.”

Schofield said his downfall was the result of the lie getting “too big for both of us”, and crossing over from online speculation to mainstream news. “All of that consistent bad press – it wouldn’t stop, it just carried on … It continues and it’s relentless and it’s day after day after day after day.

“If you don’t think that’s going to have the most catastrophic effect on someone’s mind, what do you – do you want me to die? Because that’s where I am. I have lost everything.”

Asked in the earlier BBC interview whether the fact an internal ITV investigation failed to uncover the affair meant it was a sham, Schofield replied: “If you have two people who are lying, then what can you do?”

But he acknowledged it was reasonable for people to surmise that ITV executives might have been aware of the affair since the pair were known to be close, and added that he intended to comply with a barrister’s [external review of the facts](#).

Asked why anyone should believe him now, Schofield said: “Only my friends and family need to worry about that. You don’t have to worry about what I say any more.”

Asked what he would like to say to the man he had the affair with, Schofield said: “I’d say to everyone that I lied to, I am desperately sorry, but principally I’d like to apologise to him. I have caused you so much pain and I’ll never forgive myself.”

- *In the UK and Ireland, [Samaritans](#) can be contacted on freephone 116 123, or email jo@samaritans.org or jo@samaritans.ie. In the US, the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) is at 988 or chat for support. You can also text HOME to 741741 to connect with a crisis text line counselor. In Australia, the crisis support service [Lifeline](#) is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at [befrienders.org](#)*
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2023.06.02 - Spotlight

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Italian firefighters recover capsized boat in Lake Maggiore – video

[Italy](#)

Lake Maggiore deaths: why were Italian and Israeli secret service agents on a boat in northern Italy?

Four died after a vessel carrying 21 passengers – all with links to Italian and Israeli intelligence – capsized, and speculation is growing about the nature of the trip

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome and [Oliver Holmes](#)

Fri 2 Jun 2023 03.49 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 15.25 EDT

It reads like a pitch for a thriller.

A group of tourists board a boat on a beautiful lake at the foot of the Alps. The boat capsizes in a sudden storm. Four drown as others swim to safety. In the days that follow, as authorities struggle to trace hotel bookings for the passengers, it emerges all were [affiliated with the Italian and Israeli secret services](#).

Five days after Gooduria, a 16-metre houseboat, was swallowed up by Lake Maggiore, there is growing speculation over what its passengers were doing in this corner of northern [Italy](#).

On Thursday, a police source working on the investigation confirmed that eight of the boat's 21 passengers either currently or formerly served with [Italy](#)'s secret service, and 13 had ties with Israel's.

Two of the victims – Claudio Alonzi, 62, and Tiziana Barnobi, 53 – had worked for the Italian intelligence authority. Another was a 50-year-old retired agent with Israel's Mossad spy agency. The fourth was Anya Bozhkova, originally from Russia who was crewing the boat along with her

Italian husband, Claudio Carminati, the boat's skipper. Carminati is being investigated over the deaths.

Carminati and Bozhkova, who was reportedly unable to swim, ran a company called Love Lake and provided a "boat and breakfast" service on Gooduria, which only had a capacity for 15 passengers.

The group boarded the boat, which was registered in the Netherlands, at the Piccaluga shipyard in Lisanza on Sunday morning for what was reported to have been a birthday celebration.

The police source said the group toured the Borromean islands, an archipelago on the western side of the lake, and stopped off for lunch on Isola Pescatori (Fishermen's island). The boat capsized in a sudden and violent storm on the lake on Sunday evening, with the survivors either swimming to shore or being pulled to safety by other vessels.



Rescue teams collect wreckage from the scene of the fatal boat accident.
Photograph: Puricelli/Ansa/Zuma Press/Shutterstock

The investigation is only looking into the skipper's role in the accident and not the background of the agents or why they were in the area.

Reports in the Italian press alleged that the group had met for work reasons, “to exchange information and documents” and that they only stayed on for a couple of days of leisure after the Israelis missed their flights home.

One theory, reported by Corriere della Sera, is that the agents were in Lake Maggiore to spy on Russian oligarchs, who have reportedly been buying villas and hotels in the area, circumventing the EU’s financial sanctions against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine by funnelling money into Italy from Swiss bank accounts. Another theory is that the Israeli agents were monitoring contacts between Iranian firms and Italian ones based in Lombardy’s industrial zone.

The agents who survived the tragedy left the next day. Two business jets were flown from Israel to Milan, according to flight trackers, possibly to swiftly return the surviving Israeli guests.

It is unclear where they had been staying as, according to the Italian press, there was no trace of hotel bookings.

“I don’t know where the reconstructions came from but they all seem a bit forced,” said the police source. “Anyone can write what they want to, they could even say the boat was targeted by aliens. But what happened is that there was an accident caused by a weather event. I don’t see a great mystery other than the fact that they hired a tourist boat on what was initially a beautiful day for a tour of the lake, maybe for a birthday – it’s not your typical 007 occasion.”

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A source at the Piccaluga shipyard said: “The boat left from here, but I know nothing about the people who were on board. This was an awful tragedy in which four people died, that’s it.” The source added that the change in weather had not been forecast. “Unfortunately they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

Israeli government censors briefly blocked reporting on the identity of the retired Mossad agent who drowned, amid confusion over what had happened and why he was in northern Italy.

Italian news outlets had named him as Erez Shimoni and on Wednesday the Israeli prime minister’s office finally confirmed the deceased had served in the Mossad spy agency but did not name him. Israeli agents often use fake names.

“The Mossad lost a dear friend, a devoted and professional worker who for decades dedicated his life to the security of the State of Israel, even after his retirement,” the office said in a statement. “The Mossad mourns the loss and shares in the family’s sorrow.”

It added that “due to his service in the organisation, it is impossible to elaborate” on his activities.

The incident comes just two months after prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, visited Rome to boost ties with the far-right Meloni administration – the two countries already trade in military hardware.

It is not unusual for ‘retired’ Israeli agents to be called up, and with reports that all of the passengers aboard the doomed boat were intelligence agents, there was speculation in Israel about whether the trip was truly for leisure or possibly part of a low-profile work trip.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jun/02/lake-maggiore-deaths-why-were-italian-and-israeli-secret-service-agents-on-a-boat-in-northern-italy>.

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‘Awe-inspiring’ ... Beyoncé performing on May 30 at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London. Photograph: Kevin Mazur/WireImage for Parkwood

[Beyoncé](#)

‘She hasn’t just raised the bar – she’s obliterated it’: readers on Beyoncé’s

Renaissance tour

The mirrored tank, the horses, the robot, that voice ... as Beyoncé takes her tour to the UK's stadiums, readers who have seen it attempt to describe a 'breathtaking spectacle that exudes opulence and joy'

[Guardian readers](#)

Fri 2 Jun 2023 05.27 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 06.44 EDT

'The set design was spectacular'

I have been fortunate enough to attend Beyoncé's concerts seven times over the years. The audience really got into the Renaissance theme at this one, dressing up in a range of styles from disco to LGBTQ+ ball culture. [Beyoncé](#) performed for two and a half hours, playing nearly every track from the latest album, along with some of her previous hits as one big DJ mix.



'A celebration of music, culture and creativity' ... Anton Wiltshire.
Photograph: Guardian Community

The set design was spectacular, featuring robotic arms, a 50ft horse, a mirrored tank and a massive disco ball. And let's not forget the other horse –

[from her album cover](#) – Reneigh! What I loved most was how the concert paid tribute to Black queer culture, with nods to ballroom culture and the album's musical influences. It was clear that a lot of thought and care went into every aspect of the show. I highly recommend attending Beyoncé's latest tour if you have the chance: a celebration of music, culture, and creativity. **Anton Wiltshire, 28, London – attended on 29 and 30 May in London**

'I'd never have thought she would have me in tears'



Told off for dancing ... Virginie and friend. Photograph: Guardian Community

Going to this concert made me realise how much I've tried to keep a lid on my fandom for Beyoncé. Being one year younger than her, I've followed her since I first clocked the music video for [No, No, No](#) on MTV in 1998. I have accrued so much random information about the woman and her family that I could smash a round or two of Mastermind. I was lucky enough to be given a ticket to the Renaissance for my 40th birthday from a friend in Stockholm. I had always assumed I'd never be able to afford a ticket or beat the rush to buy them. I went with a group of self-professed superfans. We spent much of

our pre-show time discussing how she might approach the setlist, what we wanted to hear, and if she would just play the whole album through. I would never have guessed that her opening section of slower, more classic songs while sitting on a piano, would have me in tears. Then she switched it up and did basically two and a half hours of higher-energy songs that felt specially chosen for me. I was so excited that I was politely told off by a lady behind me, who felt I should have got standing tickets rather than dancing in the seated area. **Virginie, 40, Kent – attended opening night on 10 May in Stockholm**

‘I needed 24 hours to process it’

I saw Jay-Z and Beyoncé’s OTR II gig back in 2018 and knew that this would be one not to miss – especially after being starved of gigs during the pandemic. Friends flew in from Oslo and Helsinki to join me and my wife. We had a great view of the stage. We stood next to a group from New York City who were taken aback at how reserved the Swedes can be. Chatting to them after the gig, they declared that they need to see it again with “their people”. I sort of understand – you never really get a huge sing-back with Swedish crowds, and people generally avoid lots of screaming so as not to disturb others. It’s all part of the social contract in these parts. While the Swedish sensibilities may partly explain the reaction, I do think people were basically stunned. I felt like I needed 24 hours to process it. The visuals were awe-inspiring. There was so much going on, you didn’t know where to look. Credit to the band and the dancers, not to mention the crew and technicians. She has not raised the bar with this tour – she has obliterated it. Big arena artists really have to step up if they’re going to compare. **David, 46, Stockholm – attended on 11 May in Stockholm**

‘Glitter as far as the eye could see’



'I wish we'd gone to more than one show' ... Lisa Davies and friends.
Photograph: Guardian Community

On a Wednesday afternoon on the streets of Cardiff, there were glitter, sparkles and cowboy hats as far as the eye could see. It was a surreal and beautiful outpouring of love for Queen Bey. My friends and I are old-school Beyoncé and Destiny's Child fans, and although I had immersed myself in Beyoncé playlists in the months leading up to the concert, I wasn't sure what to expect. What she delivered blew our minds. Her voice, the passionate performance, the outfits; not to mention the silver tank, giant glitterball flying above the crowd and various horses making the Cardiff crowd gasp in awe. It was impossible to hear the [Renaissance](#) songs without standing up in our seats. The fact that we only realised the next day that our high-up, side-on view of the stage hadn't allowed us to see the big screen and appreciate the visuals and lights in detail, is a testament to Beyoncé's voice and the energy of the show. Before the concert, my friends and I had heard about fans who had tickets for multiple shows and I thought it was probably over the top. After the concert, I wished we'd done the same. **Lisa Davies, 41, Pebworth – attended on 17 May in Cardiff**

'She is an amazing performer, although the rain affected her a little'

Beyoncé is an amazing performer, although the rain affected her a little at the start. I found that where we sat behind the standing area, there was an empty gap between us and the action. But our section was into it all the same. There were a few missing big hits – which is understandable given her back catalogue – and the length of time of the costume changes broke up the atmosphere each time we'd got into a run of songs. She is a brilliant vocalist though – as good in that department now as the previous three times I've seen her. **Holly, 30, Manchester – attended on 20 May in Edinburgh**

‘Beyoncé was like an ethereal goddess who had travelled through space and time’



‘What came through was how much fun Beyoncé was having’ ... Ash D’Souza and friend. Photograph: Guardian Community

My heart started racing when the lights went out, and I burst into tears when she appeared on stage. The show was an ambitious, breathtaking spectacle that exuded opulence and joy. Beyoncé was like an ethereal goddess who had travelled through space and time. As poised and professional as she is, what came through was how much fun she was having. Her stacked setlist had us dancing all the way through. My favourite moment was the introduction to Renaissance. This happens right after the first act (singing

ballads in a ballgown), when she returns to the stage as a futuristic robot. It captures the essence of Beyoncé: always taking her artistry to the next level. I enjoyed it so much I went again in London last night. I'm also attending one of her Warsaw shows at the end of June. How many times can you see the Renaissance? The limit does not exist! **Ash D'Souza, 26, London – attended on 17 May in Cardiff**

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‘Proximity to power’ ... the runners and riders of Succession season four.
Photograph: Home Box Office/HBO

[Television](#)

Did the poster give it away? The 12 clues that foreshadowed Succession’s

ultimate winner

From a specific catchphrase to some revealing marketing materials, maybe the victor of Jesse Armstrong's drama was in plain sight all along. Here are the signs we should have spotted

[Michael Hogan](#)

Fri 2 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 17.14 EDT

Spoiler alert: this article is for people who have watched [Succession](#) season four. Don't read on unless you've seen the finale, episode 10.

Tightrope Tom-Wam. Mr Normcore. The puffy-vested meat puppet. Disgusting Brother Senior. Tomlette the clumsy interloper. The man who dressed like a divorce attorney from the [Twin Cities](#).

As anticipation built for [Succession's last ever episode](#) and fan theories proliferated, few predicted that it would be son-in-law Tom Wambsgans who would ultimately ascend to the Waystar Royco throne. Yet maybe, just maybe, the seeds had been sown all along. Here are 12 hidden clues that foreshadowed Tom's triumph ...

1. His surname

Fans have long speculated about hidden meanings of Succession characters' names – “Roy” meaning king, the mythical significance of “Romulus”, “Shiv” meaning a bladed weapon (she did indeed knife Kendall in the finale). Last week on TikTok, the baby-naming website Nameberry [proposed a wild but compelling theory about Tom's rare German surname](#) (which, it says, translates literally as “fat-bellied goose”).

An extra “s” aside, he shares it with the Major League Baseball player Bill Wambsganss. As second baseman for the Cleveland Indians during the 1920s, Wambsganss is famed for completing the only unassisted triple play in World Series history, taking out three opponents at once. A century later,

his namesake took out all three Roy siblings. Coincidence? Probably, yes. But a kinda cool one.

2. His outsider status



‘Destined to be Sporus the castrated slave boy to Tom’s Emperor Nero’ ... With Cousin Greg (Nicholas Braun) in season two. Photograph: HBO/Kobal/Shutterstock

Frequently the butt of family jokes, Tom was never fully part of the Roy clan, but frankly, who would want to be? Cosseted childhoods and cruel parents meant the siblings were all deeply damaged, incapable of continuing their father’s legacy. Those with proximity to power but none of the baggage were a better bet.

Cousin Greg occupied a similar position, leading many fans to tip him to come out on top. However, Greg was too gauche, too clumsy in his scheming, not machiavellian enough (yet). He was always destined to be Sporus the castrated slave boy to Tom’s Emperor Nero.

3. The word “Succession”

The notion of inherited power is right there in the show's title. Our last glimpse of Tom and Shiv, holding hands (sort of) in the back of that car, hinted that Shiv had already accepted her new role as queen consort. She also happens to be pregnant with a natural heir. Unlike Kendall's children, their baby is pure Roy bloodline and Logan's only biological grandchild. The cycle continues.

4. The hand on his shoulder

It was one of the most spine-tingling moments of the entire show. In the season three finale, the siblings' attempted coup failed because turncoat Tom had tipped off Logan. This was confirmed by Logan fondly touching Tom's shoulder, a gesture spotted from across the room by the incandescent Shiv.

It meant that Tom spent season four in the inner circle, with Shiv and her brothers stuck on the periphery. So it would remain. Logan didn't want any of his feckless offspring to inherit the family firm. He wanted to sell it to Matsson, died doing so and ultimately got his wish, with trusted consigliere Tom at the new owner's shoulder.



'Trusted consigliere' ... With Logan Roy (Brian Cox) in episode three of season four. Photograph: David M Russell/David M. Russell

5. His ATN gig

As head of ATN, Tom had his well-manicured hands on the levers of power and the ability to anoint presidents. We often heard how the Fox-esque rolling news network was Logan's crown jewel. His pride and joy. The one thing he wanted to keep after selling off the rest of his sprawling media conglomerate. The head of ATN was de facto the most important person in his empire. Who better to take the top job?

6. Stealing the chicken

One of Tom's most memorable moments was aboard the superyacht in season two's finale, when he walked over to Logan and helped himself to the food off his plate. He said brazenly, "Thank you for the chicken", and walked away. "What next?" demanded Logan. "Stick his cock in my potato salad?" None of the Roy siblings would dare attempt such a poultry-based power move. He literally ate Logan's lunch.

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7. His role in Logan's death

As Tom reminded Shiv (and us viewers) in the penultimate episode, he was right by Logan's side during his final moments aboard that fateful private jet to Stockholm. Tom broke into the plane bathroom after Logan had collapsed. It was Tom who became the conduit between the family on the ground and Logan in the air, holding a phone by his ear, even though he was likely already dead. He was the only one who got a chance to say goodbye. Another sign that he would always be in the right place when it mattered.

8. Shiv's motherly parallels



'Perhaps Shiv was destined to turn into her mother' ... Tom and Shiv getting married in the season one finale. Photograph: HBO

Toxic aristocrat Lady Caroline Collingwood often taunted her daughter Siobhan that she was a chip off the old block, especially when it came to motherhood. "We're not cut out for it," she brayed. "I should've had dogs." Yet perhaps Shiv was destined to turn into her mother in another way – reduced to being the unhappy wife of a powerful Waystar CEO.

9. 'I'm here to serve'

This became Tom's catchphrase in the wake of Logan's death. Without the patriarch's protection – "The only guy pulling for you is dead", as Karl put it

gleefully – Tom was left casting around for new family allies. He pitched for their patronage by emphasising his servile nature and willingness to carry out orders. Kendall and Roman both brushed him away but GoJo mogul Lukas Matsson was smart enough to end up listening.

10. The poster teaser

Fans flipped after episode three, retrospectively spotting a portent of Logan's death in the season four poster – a plane in the sky hinted at where he would perish. Was there another clue on the poster all along? Shiv stands with folded arms, her facial expression conveying that she is making a calculated decision. Yet [the reflection shows Tom standing in front of her](#). A visual hint that she would end up behind her husband in the race for the family business?

11. [Matthew Macfadyen](#) being a Brit

A little flag-wavingly patriotic, this one, but think about it. [Jesse Armstrong](#) and many of his writing team are British. Actor [Brian Cox](#) – and indeed, Logan Roy himself – are proud Scots. Perhaps it was always likely to be a fellow Briton who would ascend to his throne.

Furthermore, Tom's string-puller Lukas Matsson and actor Alexander Skarsgård are both Swedish. Those Americans simply weren't up to the job. Sorry, Gerri, but we Europeans weren't so soft (let alone hammocked in our social security safety nets, sick on vacation mania and free healthcare) after all.

12. The royal sceptre

Remember season two's shareholder meeting, when Logan became “the piss-mad king of England” due to a urinary tract infection? Tom handled his ailing, incoherent father-in-law so well, it was really rather touching. “Do you want me to hold the sceptre?” he asked gently in the bathroom stall. “You're a very good boy,” slurred Logan. Tom really is holding the sceptre now.

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Bobby and Sal Parekh, proprietors of the Maine Road Cafe: 'We can't get tickets now for love nor money.' Photograph: Joel Goodman/The Guardian

[FA Cup](#)

Red, blue and buzzing: excitement builds in Manchester for FA Cup final

City and United will play each other for the trophy for the first time on Saturday, and fans are already preparing



Helen Pidd *North of England editor*

Fri 2 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT

When [Manchester United](#) play [Manchester City](#) for the first time in an FA Cup final on Saturday, few fans at Wembley will have travelled as far as Leon Labko to witness the Manc-Manc showdown.

A native of Melbourne, Australia, it took the 78-year-old 25 hours to fly in for the match, undeterred by having experienced heart failure three times on previous flights to watch his beloved United.

In a stagey whisper, he admitted he does not even think his team will win. But he draws hope from the memory of other games thought to be a foregone conclusion. “I remember once watching us against Burnley. We had 41 attempts on goal and it ended in a nil-nil draw. So there’s always hope,” he said, sitting on a wall outside the [Manchester United](#) Supporters Trust in Old Trafford, where he has been soaking up the pre-match excitement this week.

Labko flies to the UK four or five times a season but physically recoils at the idea that perhaps it would be easier on his pacemaker just to move to

Manchester. “You’ve got to be kidding,” he said. “You guys only get about two days of sunshine a year.”



United fan Leon Labko has already arrived from Melbourne; he comes to matches four or five times a year despite a heart condition. Photograph: Joel Goodman/The Guardian

Also visiting the Theatre of Dreams on Thursday was 15-year-old Bianca O’Brien and her dad, Michael. They had flown from Tipperary to Manchester for a Coldplay gig taking place in enemy territory – the Etihad stadium. “If we are going to City’s ground, we’ve got to wear something United,” said Michael after buying training shirts at the Old Trafford megastore. The club has a special place in the family’s heart: when Bianca was little she had leukaemia and United would send her free tickets to attend matches between treatments.

Drinking a breakfast can of Monster energy drink at the Bishop Blaize, a United pub round the corner, Mike Bennett was also looking forward to Saturday’s match. With multicoloured hair and a suit covered in patches, he looked like someone you ought to recognise – which you would if you are into the Blockheads, as he is their lead singer. He described himself as a “passive fan”, until moving to a flat in nearby Media City and becoming a “massive fan”.

He hoped to squeeze in to the Bishop Blaize on Saturday and predicted a 2-1 win for United. The pub manager plonked down Bennett's beans on toast and interjected with his own prediction: "Three-nil to City." Hang on a minute, the manager of the nearest pub to Old Trafford is a blue? Apparently so.

Despite Manchester's residents being forced to pick a side from birth, and FA officials begging United and City fans to take separate routes to Wembley on Saturday, most of the time the reds and blues are able to subsist in relative harmony. Over at the Townley pub in Beswick, a few minutes' walk from the Etihad, Pauline Carroll described herself as the landlady of a "City pub with United regulars", the walls and ceiling plastered with City memorabilia.

Some of her regulars begged to differ, pointing out that United was founded in the 19th century in nearby Newton Heath, while City played at Maine Road in Moss Side until 2003. "This is a United area," insisted one, pointing out some graffiti at the back of the pub which made an unprintable allegation about City's manager, Pep Guardiola.



From left, Terry, Gilly, Gordon and Ray outside the Townley pub in Beswick. Photograph: Joel Goodman/The Guardian

Drinking outside in the sunshine, a group of men ribbed each other about Saturday's game. One, a City fan, Warren, claimed that his friend Gilly, a red, was off to Wembley. "He's a bricklayer and he's going to build a wall around the United goal 'cos that's the only way they can win," said Warren. "He'll take a load of breeze blocks too, in case Haaland [City's star striker] has a go."

At the Maine Road Cafe opposite the Etihad, father and son Sal and Bobby Parekh were excited about the final. They planned to watch it while serving chips to Chris Martin fans; Coldplay's residency over the road lasts until Sunday.

For a while, after City's move from Maine Road, the Parekhs would receive free tickets. Then, in 2012, Sergio Agüero [scored a last-minute goal](#) to win City's first league title since 1968, and everything changed. "We can't get tickets now for love nor money," said Sal.

He doesn't seem to mind: his first love is Preston North End. "I don't support City," he likes to say. "But City supports us."

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2023.06.02 - Opinion

- Millennials are a growing electoral force, and their thinking on tax is a gamechanger
- I'm a teacher – and this is why I'm not giving my son a smartphone yet
- George Osborne destroyed Britain's safety net. The Covid inquiry should shame him into silence
- Scotland's glass bottle deposit plan is being kicked down the road by warring politicians



‘When Tony Blair first introduced tuition fees in 1998, he made it very clear that the system wasn’t intended as a graduate tax. But it doesn’t half feel like one.’ Students in Manchester protest in 1999. Photograph: Don Mcphee/The Guardian

[Opinion](#)[Student finance](#)

Millennials are a growing electoral force, and their thinking on tax is a gamechanger

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



Young people are hostile to income redistribution. It's not because they're rightwing – they simply pay too much tax already

Fri 2 Jun 2023 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 06.19 EDT

Taxes are the price paid for living in a civilised society.

That founding belief in the moral imperative to stump up for the public good lies deep in progressive bones, just as the belief that people should be able to keep more of their own hard-earned cash does for rightwingers. British liberals are so used to arguing that you can't have lovely, Scandinavian-style public services on American-style taxes that most of us could probably do it in our sleep.

Meanwhile, even the embarrassment of being sacked over his own complex tax affairs seemingly hasn't deterred the multimillionaire Tory MP Nadhim Zahawi from solemnly campaigning this week to scrap inheritance tax, on the grounds that taxing the unearned income of rich people's children is supposedly a "[spectre that haunts](#)" us all. The battle lines on tax have been so firmly drawn for so long that this week's [report](#) by the centre-right thinktank Onward on the political instincts of millennials – the late-20s-to-

early-40s demographic poised to overtake baby boomers as the biggest electoral grouping – landed initially as something of a shock.

Unusually, this generation isn't getting more rightwing as it ages, with only 21% willing to vote Tory at the next election. Yet Onward finds it is also more hostile than average to the idea of government redistributing income (as opposed to people keeping more of their own money) and it prioritises taxes over the social justice it is often thought to be devoted to. Something is going on under the bonnet here that neither Labour nor the Tories are properly addressing, and it's about who genuinely gets a raw deal from the tax system. (Spoiler alert: it's not Nadhim Zahawi.)

If millennial pips are squeaking, that's because, compared with previous generations at the same age – or older people now – many of them really do pay [higher marginal tax](#) rates. Or more accurately, they're paying what *feels* like an extra tax.

When Tony Blair first introduced tuition fees in 1998, he made it very clear that the system wasn't intended as a graduate tax. But years of tweaking later, it doesn't half feel like one. Graduates from English universities currently begin repaying student loans once they're earning more than £27,295 a year, with 9% of anything over that threshold deducted from pay packets either for 30 years or until they've paid everything off – which for many would be never, given that their debt is growing with a punchy interest rate of [RPI \(currently 11.4%\) plus 3%](#). (From this August, the repayment threshold drops to [£25,000](#), while the repayment period stretches to 40 years, but with interest charged at RPI.)

Treat it as the tax it has effectively become, and, by the end of last year, young graduates were facing a marginal rate of 41% for basic-rate taxpayers or [51% for higher-rate ones](#). That's on top of everything else millennials struggle with – such as expensive childcare and soaring rents and the gloomy prospect of never being able to buy a house, plus the same painful food and fuel inflation everyone is experiencing – and means that, even before housing costs, a 30-year-old earning a theoretically good salary just doesn't have the spending power of previous generations on equivalent wages.

The struggle, as the saying goes, is real: the longing for tax cuts is totally understandable. Arguing about whether Keir Starmer should or shouldn't have ditched Labour's promise to scrap tuition fees, meanwhile, now looks way behind the curve. Scrap them for next year's intake and millennials would still be saddled with their old debts, plus the burning resentment of knowing they'd paid more than either previous or future students as a result of being caught up in what would be branded a failed experiment.

Similarly the message of Onward's research isn't just that young people are, in its words, "shy capitalists", who might vote Tory if only the government built more houses. It's that millennials are a new kind of voter, shaped by very particular economic circumstances, who demand new thinking from all the major parties.

The overall trend for taxes isn't going to be downwards any time soon, in an ageing country with a shrinking tax base, public services crying out for repair, and an expensive but unavoidable decarbonisation programme ahead. Bim Afolami, the thoughtful 37-year-old Conservative MP for Hitchin and Harpenden who co-authored the Onward report, argues that the answer is to cut national insurance for the under-40s and hike it for older workers, a bold idea that might be too bold by half for Rishi Sunak. The alternative is taxes on wealth, which the shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, has begun edging towards, with commitments to end tax breaks for non-doms and VAT on school fees.

Wealth taxes are also a way of shifting the burden away from under-40s, who are understandably furious that they haven't been able to build up many assets, and on to older people, who have accumulated more by dint of being born at the right time and have previously enjoyed an effective veto on wealth taxes given their power at the ballot box.

But, as Onward points out, it's millennials who are now the biggest age cohort in just over half of British constituencies. Factor that in, and ideas Ed Miliband tried in vain to popularise in 2015 – such as mansion taxes on houses worth more than £2m – may start to look less electorally toxic, and more simply ahead of their time. The basic progressive case for paying your taxes remains unchanged. It's who, and what, we tax that now must move with the times.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist
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‘A recent global study of nearly 30,000 young adults found a link between the age a child received their first smartphone and their mental health in young adulthood.’ Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA

[Opinion](#)[Parents and parenting](#)

I’m a teacher – and this is why I’m not giving my son a smartphone yet

[Lola Okosie](#)



The adverse effects on children's mental health are well known, and pre-teens are too young to safely navigate the internet

Fri 2 Jun 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 10.37 EDT

But everyone has one," pleads my son as his father and I tell him, for the umpteenth time, that no, he will not get a smartphone. Not now and probably not for a few more years. Despite our firm resolve, it is hard not to feel sorry for him. As the end of year 6 draws closer, the weeks are peppered with stories of new classmates whose parents have, as one friend texted recently, "cracked". WhatsApp groups are springing up so that friends going to different secondaries can easily keep in touch. It is a world of interaction he will remain ignorant of, but, much though it pains me to see the turmoil it causes, I feel vindicated each time I read about the detrimental impact that smartphones are having on children.

One [report published](#) earlier this year from the children's commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza, revealed that nearly a third of young people will have viewed pornography by the age of 11. Such content, De Souza clarifies, will not be the equivalent of "top-shelf" material some parents may have viewed in their youth and which today would be considered quaint. It is material in which "depictions of degradation, sexual coercion, aggression

and exploitation are commonplace, and disproportionately targeted against teenage girls”.

Or there is the research conducted last year by Ofcom [showing that bullying](#) is more likely to happen on a device rather than face to face. School bullies are not new, but their ability to reach into the sanctuary of the home is a recent development. The problems that arise from pupils’ interactions on social media are taking up large portions of teachers’ time. In February, headteacher Jon Boyes of Herne Bay high school told parents that they would have to sort out arguments between pupils that have taken place online. It was “impossible for the school to police” and the principal cause of “disagreements, stress, anxiety and trauma” among pupils, he wrote. The head urged parents to try to limit screen time, and reminded them that “most social media platforms have a minimum age of 13 years old … meaning most students in years 7 and 8 should not even be using social media”.

Although buying your child a smartphone may seem like the best way to keep them safe, or to ensure they don’t end up feeling socially isolated, evidence suggests that the technology is having dangerous effects on children’s mental health. The most recent survey published by the OECD’s programme for international student assessment (Pisa), of 15- and 16-year-olds in 37 countries around the world, [showed that](#) in all but one of those countries, nearly twice as many adolescents had “elevated levels of loneliness” with “school loneliness” proving high when smartphone access and internet use were also high. These findings were echoed in a recent [global study](#) of nearly 30,000 young adults, which found a link between the age a child received their first smartphone and their mental health in young adulthood.

Children who were given a phone later went on to experience better mental wellbeing in relation to their self-confidence and their ability to relate to others, researchers found. Conversely, those who received a phone at a younger age were more likely to experience suicidal thoughts, feelings of aggression towards others and the sense that they were detached from reality. These trends proved stronger in females than males but were consistent across all 41 countries surveyed in the report. Children with smartphones spend, on average, [more than three hours](#) a day online, away

from family time and in-person interactions. Social media compels them to “[compare and despair](#)”, and puts them in touch with toxic influencers such as [Andrew Tate](#).

You might be inclined to dismiss all this as a pointless exercise in closing the stable door after the horse has bolted. Yet given what we know, I don’t think defeat is an option. Parents should be willing to entertain the notion that it’s possible to reject following the herd, at least until their children are old enough to navigate what they find on the internet. In fact, both TikTok and Snapchat require users to be 13 years old. There is power in pushing back against the idea that a smartphone is the only way to keep a child safe, or of ensuring they have access to important friendships. We can, like the 45,000 Texans who are part of the Wait Until 8th movement, which empowers parents to delay giving a smartphone to their children until 8th grade (year 9), hold the line until they become teenagers.

My son is only 10. He’s nowhere near ready to wade through the confusing and harmful detritus that he will no doubt find on the internet. He hasn’t developed the emotional maturity to deftly avoid the litter along his route. As his parent, why would I assume he could navigate terrain many adults [struggle to get a handle on](#)? Since I can’t, I’ll make do with betting that he can survive with a good old-fashioned “dumbphone”, at least until he’s older.

- Lola Okolosie is an English teacher and writer focusing on race, politics, education and feminism
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Chancellor George Osborne at the City of London Corporation's bankers' and merchants' dinner at the Mansion House on 16 June 2010. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

[OpinionAusterity](#)

George Osborne destroyed Britain's safety net. The Covid inquiry should shame him into silence

[Polly Toynbee](#)



His iniquitous austerity programme left the population sick, vulnerable, and unprepared for a pandemic

Thu 1 Jun 2023 11.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 1 Jun 2023 12.05 EDT

The bells tolled at 4pm today, the deadline when every shred of evidence would be handed over by law to Heather Hallett, the retired high court judge. The government set up the [Covid inquiry](#), ordained its wide remit, gave its chair legal powers to command whatever evidence she deems necessary, but then balked at obeying it.

Public attention will focus on the contents of those WhatsApps and notebooks. What were ministers and officials saying to each other? Is Dominic Cummings right that Boris Johnson said “[let the bodies pile high](#)”? Other forms of callous cynicism may be exposed if we discover that ministers knew “eat out to help out” was a [plague spreader](#) and put the economy before safety. More will be revealed about [fast-tracked](#) mega-contracts for cronies, and about those who were heroes among the good scientists and doctors. Ministers’ tone will set the context for all they did, as bereaved families watch hawk-eyed every step of the way. This battle over admissible evidence and black-ink redactions is only the first struggle among politicians hoping to preserve their reputations. By the final

reckonings, whatever the blame and praise, these actors will have left the political stage.

The inquiry is divided into three modules: before, during and after the pandemic. Vital lessons will be learned – practical, technical, scientific and administrative – about lines of command and speed of response. Tales of human strengths, stupidities, brilliance and failings will be absorbing. But by far the deepest political lesson resounding into the future will come from module one, “[Resilience and preparedness](#)”. This will “look into the preparedness for the pandemic” and assess “if the pandemic was properly planned for and whether the UK was adequately ready for that eventuality”. We know the answer already.

Among those summoned to give evidence for this module, to be heard from 13 June, are two men who had long left power by the time Covid blew in. Yet David Cameron and George Osborne may have most to answer for. By 2020 the condition of the country had been largely set by Osborne, the powerhouse behind the frontman. Cameron had been the cover, adept at seeming reasonable, no gleam of the ideologue in his eye as he hugged huskies and summoned a [big society](#) of community action. The Brexiteers, whom he called “fruitcakes”, were the extremists who allowed these two to seem like moderates, their copies of Hayek and Friedman hidden in their back pockets.

The devastation they caused from their first, June 2010, budget set the pace for a period of austerity more savage than anything attempted by Margaret Thatcher, whose face had adorned their walls as students. They tightened thumb screws in budget after budget, stripping the public realm and sparing nothing in their pursuit of an ever-smaller state. The six chancellors who followed Osborne were cut from the same state-shrinking cloth, and pursued his austerity programme with equal zeal.

The national unpreparedness Osborne left in his wake starts with the NHS itself, which the Conservatives inherited at peak performance in 2010 after years of generous finance. By the plague year of 2020, [its funding per head had been whittled down](#) for more than a decade, despite a fast-rising and elderly population. Sally Warren, director of policy at the King’s Fund health

thinktank, watched it happen from within government: she points to fewer beds, training cuts, ballooning staff vacancies, shortages of equipment and tech support, and the axing of capital for repairs.

But beyond this increasingly threadbare NHS, Warren told me that Covid had torn through a vulnerable population in a deteriorating state of health. “Too many people’s resilience was weakened. Improvements in life expectancy stalled in the 2010s and Covid made the weakest iller.” This was due to “lack of early diagnosis”, but also “the state of housing, air quality, people’s diet. Your income, your environment, your exposure to advertising and lack of physical activity affected resilience.” The government’s failure to challenge food manufacturers over salt and sugar helped increase child obesity. NHS community services were drained and funds redirected to keep acute services going, she said.

Covid attacked a sick population and a weakened health and social care service. Osborne was ruthless in his benefit cuts, especially those affecting children, plunging them further below social security levels in similar countries. How were the lowest paid supposed to stay home on sick pay that is still the lowest in the OECD? Low pay, insecure jobs, rising rents and some of the most overcrowded housing in western Europe all contributed to the mortality toll. Since the pandemic, 25% more people have been off work, reporting long-term illness.

None of these underlying vulnerabilities began in 2020 when Covid struck. Of all the lessons learned at the end of this inquiry, the most important one for voters will be this: never again can we fall for the small-state, low-tax promises that leave everyone vulnerable, without the security of good government or the protection of good public services. Cameron is already shamed into silence by his Greensill greed. As for Osborne, he deserves the sort of public condemnation in the final report that should see him stripped of all the undeserved rewards showered on him since leaving parliament. Lady Hallett has started out splendidly resistant to political chicanery: her report could be a never-again landmark on the need for a resilient society.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

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‘A small, fully refundable deposit would be charged on every drinks can and bottle – in Scotland’s case 20p.’ Photograph: Anastasia Traveller/Alamy

[Opinion](#)[Scottish politics](#)

Scotland’s glass bottle deposit plan is being kicked down the road by warring politicians

[Kat Jones](#)



The environmentally sound scheme is being lost in a battle over who wields the real power after devolution

Fri 2 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 13.13 EDT

The latest constitutional crisis between the Scottish parliament and Westminster isn't over an independence referendum or the high affairs of state. It's about whether Scotland can recycle glass bottles more effectively. Last week, the UK government told Scottish ministers they [couldn't include glass bottles](#) in their long-planned deposit return scheme.

Doing so would violate the Internal Market Act, they said, which dictates that any condition devolved administrations wish to place on the sale of goods or services needs central government approval – part of Westminster's post-Brexit reshaping of the way the UK works. But when the [act was being debated](#), ministers were confident that the deposit return scheme would be fully compliant. And yet this week we heard that cans and plastic bottles could be included, but glass bottles could not. So what changed?

The deposit return system was originally backed by all five parties at Holyrood in 2019. Now, it's mired in controversy. It has become a political

football, on the agenda for meetings between the first minister and the prime minister, and the [key issue](#) in the SNP leadership race. Business voices are increasing efforts to block it, while the environmental movement is desperately trying to keep it on track. It is an example of how a popular and pragmatic environmental policy – the kind of thing everyone should be able to agree on if we are to do anything to address the many ecological crises we face – can be derailed by politics.

Deposit schemes are a simple idea, used in more than [50 other places](#) around the world, and were seen [across the UK](#) in the 70s and 80s. A small, fully refundable deposit is charged on every drinks can and bottle – in Scotland's case 20p. That small financial incentive would get [90% or more](#) of the cans and bottles sold back into the system, off our streets, out of our countryside and out of our seas. And they're all available for higher-quality recycling, cutting emissions and reducing demand for virgin materials.

Given how ineffective our current recycling schemes are – the recycling rate for cans and bottles in Scotland is between [49% and 59%](#) – deposit schemes are a tried and tested solution.

Almost two decades ago, the Scottish parliament was first petitioned to bring in deposit return by two primary school pupils. One of their dogs had been injured by broken glass. Those former pupils are now nearly 30, a fact that often comes to mind when people say this policy has been rushed.

In 2015, APRS launched [our campaign](#) for deposit return, with support from a network of community groups, environmental campaigners and responsible businesses.

Two years later, the then first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, announced that deposits would come to [Scotland](#), and in 2019 the regulations were approved, alongside a start date of April 2021. That's when the problems began.

[Industry lobbying](#) pushed it back to July 2022, then August 2023. Then, to some surprise, Westminster announced in January that England would get essentially the same system, minus glass (despite the [2019 Conservative manifesto promising](#) a glass return scheme). Ministers have been [vague on](#)

[the reasons](#) behind their exclusion of glass, but alluded to industry pressures. The UK's own analysis of the scheme proposals showed the [net benefits](#) without glass would be about £3.6bn for the English system, but with glass in that would rise to about £5.9bn.

Westminster then turned its attentions to Scotland's scheme. Alister Jack, the secretary of state for Scotland, intervened in the ongoing process of granting an internal market exclusion. Despite the best efforts of other UK departments, he got his way on glass, excluding it from Scotland's scheme. This is where the issue ceased to be about pragmatic environmental solutions, and became a fight over Scotland's right to shape its own policy.

All this has come at the expense of the environment – glass is the most carbon-intensive of the materials in the scope of the scheme. Micromanaging Scotland's deposit return system has undermined its devolution settlement. It has created uncertainty for business and eroded trust, and the collateral damage appears to be the right for the devolved nations to bring in even minor improvements via environmental legislation.

Any measure that affects goods or services sold in Scotland (or Wales) now faces an effective unilateral veto. This is, of course, a key area of environmental policy. Elsewhere, we have seen [wider measures blocked](#) using the very legislation that established the Scottish parliament.

The prospects for change through devolution are gradually being closed down, which should concern people, whatever their views on independence. As an example, it's hard to see Westminster agreeing to the Scottish government's policy to [end the sale](#) of internal combustion engines by 2032. But there appear to be few limits to what can be blocked – irrespective of how far down the road we may be.

It's hard not to feel a wave of existential despair watching a well-tested and proven environmental policy such as this become fodder for myths, political U-turns and intense industry lobbying.

If we cannot bring in the European gold standard for recycling, it's hard to see how we can make what [the IPCC calls](#) the “rapid, far-reaching, and

unprecedented changes in all aspects of society” required to keep our planet habitable for the long term.

- Dr Kat Jones is the director of APRS (Action to Protect Rural Scotland)
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As part of the negotiations, the House speaker, Kevin McCarthy, successfully pushed for modest government spending cuts. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[US debt ceiling](#)

US debt ceiling deal narrowly passes Senate averting catastrophic federal default

With just days before the 5 June default deadline, president Joe Biden has indicated he will sign the bill as soon as it reaches his desk

*[Joan E Greve](#)
[@joanegreve](#)*

Fri 2 Jun 2023 07.29 EDTFirst published on Thu 1 Jun 2023 17.51 EDT

The Senate narrowly passed a bill to suspend the debt ceiling on Thursday night, sending the legislation to Joe Biden's desk and averting a federal

default that could have wreaked havoc on the [US economy](#) and global markets.

The final vote was 63 to 36, with 46 Democrats and 17 [Republicans](#) supporting the bill while five Democrats and 31 Republicans opposed the legislation. Sixty votes were needed to pass the bill.

“Tonight’s vote is a good outcome because [Democrats](#) did a very good job taking the worst parts of the Republican plan off the table,” the Senate majority leader, Democrat Chuck Schumer, said after the vote. “And that’s why Dems voted overwhelmingly for this bill, while Republicans certainly in the Senate did not.”

Biden applauded the Senate’s accomplishment and promised to sign the bill as soon as it reaches his desk, with just days to go before the 5 June default deadline.

“Tonight, senators from both parties voted to protect the hard-earned economic progress we have made and prevent a first-ever default by the United States,” Biden said in a statement. “Our work is far from finished, but this agreement is a critical step forward, and a reminder of what’s possible when we act in the best interests of our country.”

Just now, Senators from both parties voted to protect our hard-earned economic progress and prevent a first-ever default.

No one gets everything they want in a negotiation, but make no mistake: this bipartisan agreement is a big win for our economy and the American people.

Our...

— President Biden (@POTUS) [June 2, 2023](#)

The Senate vote came one day after the House passed the debt ceiling bill in a resounding, bipartisan vote of 314 to 117. The bill – which was negotiated

between Biden and the Republican House speaker, Kevin McCarthy of California – will suspend the government’s borrowing limit until January 2025, ensuring the issue will not resurface before the next presidential election.

The final Senate vote on the bill capped off a long day in the upper chamber, where lawmakers spent hours considering amendments to the legislation. All 11 of the proposed amendments failed to gain enough support to be added to the underlying bill.

Several of the amendments were introduced by Senate Republicans who expressed concern that the debt ceiling bill passed by the House did too little to rein in government spending.

As part of the negotiations over the bill, McCarthy successfully pushed for modest government spending cuts and changes to the work requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Programs. Those changes were deemed insufficient by 31 Republican senators, who echoed the criticism voiced by the 71 House Republicans who opposed the bill a day earlier.

“It doesn’t go far enough. It doesn’t do the basic things that it purports to do,” Senator Mike Lee, a Republican of Utah, [told Fox News](#) on Thursday morning. “In case after case, the cuts that it proposes won’t materialize.”

The Senate minority leader, Republican Mitch McConnell, supported the bill, even as he acknowledged that lawmakers must take further action to tackle the federal government’s debt of [more than \\$31tn](#).

“The Fiscal Responsibility Act avoids the catastrophic consequences of a default on our nation’s debt,” McConnell said on the floor on Thursday morning. “The deal the House passed last night is a promising step toward fiscal sanity. But make no mistake: there is much more work to be done. The fight to reel in wasteful government spending is far from over.”

As some of their colleagues lamented the state of America’s debt, defense hawks in the Senate Republican conference warned that the legislation does

not sufficiently fund the Pentagon, leaving the US military vulnerable in the face of foreign threats.

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Schumer and McConnell attempted to allay those concerns by entering a statement into the record reaffirming that America stands ready to “respond to ongoing and growing national security threats”.

“This debt ceiling deal does nothing to limit the Senate’s ability to appropriate emergency supplemental funds to ensure our military capabilities are sufficient to deter China, Russia and our other adversaries,” the joint statement read. “The Senate is not about to ignore our national needs, nor abandon our friends and allies who face urgent threats from America’s most dangerous adversaries.”

The Senate leaders released a second statement aimed at reassuring colleagues who expressed alarm over a provision stipulating that an across-the-board spending cut will be enacted if Congress does not pass all 12 appropriations bills for fiscal year 2024. The measure was designed to incentivize Congress members to pass a full budget, which has proven to be a difficult task in recent years, but lawmakers fear the policy will lead to more spending cuts.

“We share the concern of many of our colleagues about the potential impact of sequestration and we will work in a bipartisan, collaborative way to avoid this outcome,” Schumer and McConnell said. “The leaders look forward to bills being reported out of committee with strong bipartisan support.”

Senate Democrats also lobbied against certain provisions in the bill, namely the expedited approval of the controversial Mountain Valley natural gas pipeline. Senator Tim Kaine, a Democrat of Virginia, introduced an amendment to remove the pipeline provision from the underlying debt ceiling bill, but that measure failed alongside the 10 other proposed amendments.

Despite their personal concerns about the details of the bill, most Senate Democrats, including Kaine, supported the legislation to get it to Biden’s desk and avoid a devastating default that economists warned could result in millions of lost jobs. With the immediate crisis averted, Democrats reiterated their demands to eliminate the debt ceiling and remove any future threat of default.

“The fact remains that the House majority never should have put us at risk of a disastrous, self-inflicted default in the first place,” said Senator Chris Coons, a Democrat. “We should prevent the debt ceiling from being used as a political hostage and stop allowing our country to be taken up to the edge of default.”

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Shanghai in China recorded its highest temperature ever for May on Monday. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

[China](#)

China swelters through record temperatures, putting pressure on power grids

Record heat in May across parts of the country comes amid a year of rising temperatures and erratic weather in China

Chi Hui Lin

Fri 2 Jun 2023 00.58 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 11.52 EDT

Temperatures across [China](#) reached or exceeded their records for the month of May, the country's National Climate Centre has said.

Weather stations at 446 sites registered temperatures that were the same as, or greater than, the highest ever recorded for the month of May, deputy

director of the National Climate Centre Gao Rong said at a press briefing on Friday.

On Monday, the Shanghai Meteorology Bureau reported that the city had recorded a temperature of 36.1 degrees Celsius. The previous record for May was 35.7C, which occurred in 2018.

Over the next three days, most of southern China is expected to be hit by temperatures of more than 35C, with temperatures in some areas exceeding 40C, according to national forecasters on Friday.

Power grids are preparing to be put under strain as demand for airconditioning soars in mega-cities such as Shanghai.

Demand for electricity in southern manufacturing hubs, including Guangdong, has surged in recent days, with China Southern Power Grid, one of the country's two grid operators, seeing peak power load exceeding 200m kilowatts – weeks earlier than normal and close to historical highs.

The sweltering heat comes amid a year of rising temperatures and erratic weather in China.

In February, the China Meteorological Administration warned that “extreme weather and climate events are still showing a high incidence and intensity [for the year]”.

In March, temperatures in Wuhan and Zhengzhou, cities in central China, were more than 10 degrees higher than normal for that time of year.

Unusually for China, 2023 has seen the arid north of the country hotter than the south, a pattern that is thought to be causing a range of ecological problems.

Since last summer, the Yangtze river basin has experienced the worst drought since 1961, hurting local grain harvests. Chinese government statistics show that since July last year, rainfall in the Yangtze river basin has declined by nearly 50%.

The water level in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze river, Poyang and Dongting Lakes, which are the largest and the second-largest freshwater lakes in China, are the lowest in history for the same period.

Yunnan province in south-west China has also been experiencing a drought since the beginning of this year, with average down 60% compared with the same period in 2022, and the average temperature up 0.8 degrees., according to government agencies.

Nearly a million people in the province are suffering from drought, with nearly 200,000 needing some kind of assistance from the government.

Reuters contributed to this report

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The Kosovar president, Vjosa Osmani (centre), meets Emmanuel Macron (left) and Olaf Scholz in Chișinău, Moldova, on Thursday. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[Kosovo](#)

Macron and Scholz urge Kosovo to hold fresh elections to ease Serbia tensions

Serbian and Kosovar leaders invited to impromptu talks in Moldova after unrest over polls boycotted by Serbs

Camilla Bell-Davies in Belgrade and [Lisa O'Carroll](#) in Chișinău

Fri 2 Jun 2023 05.04 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 15.21 EDT

Kosovo has been urged to hold new elections in the north of the country to de-escalate tensions with Serbia, after an intervention by Olaf Scholz and [Emmanuel Macron](#).

The leaders of Serbia and Kosovo were invited to impromptu talks at the close of a summit of 46 European leaders in Moldova on Thursday evening.

Earlier in the day tensions had flared with the Serbian president, Aleksandar Vučić, accusing his Kosovan counterpart, Vjosa Osmani, of refusing to talk to him at the summit or enter dialogue over what he said were “sham elections” across the border.

Kosovo’s ethnic Serb minority boycotted local elections in the north in April, allowing ethnic Albanians to take control of local councils despite a turnout of fewer than 3.5%.

“It is very clear that the Kosovan authorities bear the responsibility for the current situation,” Macron told reporters in Moldova, saying there was “non-compliance” with an agreement that was secured just a few weeks ago.

“We have asked the two parties to organise new elections in these four municipalities as soon as possible, with an undertaking from Kosovo with participation in these elections in a clear manner on the part of the Serbian side,” Macron said.

Osmani said she had told the European leaders that this would be possible under Kosovan law if the Serbian leadership in Belgrade did not encourage Serbs to boycott the poll.

“It requires bravery by all involved, because they will need to play their part in positions of political responsibility to ensure that de-escalation succeeds,” Scholz said in Moldova.

Igor Simić, a vice-president of the minority party Serb List in north Kosovo, said his party was considering what its stance would be towards these elections. In the meantime, he said his party would continue to stand with Serbian “employees and citizens” who are protesting until the Kosovo authorities meet their demands, which include calling for “Kosovo special units and fake mayors occupying municipalities with force” to leave and arrested protesters to be released.

Violence erupted in the northern Kosovan town of Zvecan [this week](#) as Serbian protesters clashed with Nato peacekeeping forces who were guarding Albanian mayors entering their new offices. The unrest, which

resulted in more than 60 injuries on both sides, marked the worst violence in the region in over a decade.

Kosovo's prime minister has blamed the unrest on "fascist mobs" controlled by the government of neighbouring [Serbia](#). But despite such allegations, Dr Helena Ivanov, an associate research fellow at the Henry Jackson Society thinktank, said the protests were driven by accumulated grievances and 18 months of worsening relations between Serbs and Albanians in north Kosovo.

"It's possible that the most violent people in that crowd were paid agitators, a tactic that Serbian president Vučić has used in the past to distract from domestic troubles," she said, citing the continuing protests in Belgrade where [tens of thousands have demonstrated](#) against the government's handling of two mass shootings and the continued use of violent, nationalistic propaganda in the media. "But I do genuinely believe many people were there because they were fed up."



Serbia's president, Aleksandar Vučić, speaks to journalists at the summit in Moldova. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Serbs, a majority in northern Kosovo, have never accepted its 2008 declaration of independence from Serbia, and still see Belgrade as their

capital more than 20 years after the Kosovo war.

In recent months a string of incidents have ratcheted up tensions. In November, Kosovo announced plans to fine ethnic Serb residents [who refused to surrender Serbian-issued car number plates](#). Kosovar-Albanian special police forces have stepped up their presence in Serbian areas, and several ethnic Serbs have been shot and injured.

This year, the government in Pristina backtracked on a 2013 EU-brokered agreement that would grant Serb minorities in the region their own association of elected mayors.

Serbs boycotted the election of new mayors, and ethnic Albanian candidates were elected in four mayoralties, in votes with single-figure turnouts.

Serbs complained the new mayors lacked a legitimate mandate, and when Kosovar-Albanian authorities attempted to install them this week, violent protests broke out.

“This was just the tip of the iceberg,” said Simić, whose party has close links to the Serbian Progressive party of Vučić: “It was the culmination of months of discontent and fear among Serbian minorities.”

Simić criticised the Kosovar prime minister, Albin Kurti, for reneging on his EU-agreed obligation to allow Serbian mayors in the north and accused him of prioritising territorial interests over peace. “Why have they turned municipality buildings into military bases? This is a misuse of power,” he said.

Simić’s Serbian minority party Serb List was created to drive integration efforts after the 2013 Brussels agreement, which aimed to foster integration between Kosovo and Serbia.

However, many of Kosovo’s Serbian minority have resisted integration, and depend on parallel education and health systems funded by Belgrade.

Vučić has promised continued financial aid for Kosovar Serbs and called for Pristina to allow the use of Serbian licence plates with freedom of movement.

But his comments have at times gone beyond expressions of solidarity. On Sunday, the night before the unrest broke out, Vučić gave a live TV address in which he said: “Serbs will certainly protest, Serbs will demand their buildings back, which were usurped from them, which Kurti’s regime took from them with the brutal use of police force.”

His comments were likely interpreted by the protesters as a green light for their actions, said the analyst Jakub Bielamowicz.

Ian Bancroft, a former diplomat who is now a peacebuilding consultant in Belgrade, said: “Whether the attack on Nato forces was ‘ordered’ from Belgrade or provoked by agitators will be hard to prove. But the point is the pot had already been stirred, an accumulation of grievances for the local Serbian community in Kosovo who feel stuck between Pristina and Belgrade. Any agitators would probably reflect the opinion of the local population.”

Grievances have been stoked by misinformation on all sides: Russian Telegram channels spread unverified reports of tanks mobilising at the Kosovo border; Serbian tabloids have claimed Kurti was driving Serbs out of Kosovo; Kosovans have said protesters were bussed in from Serbia to stir up trouble.

Efforts have been made to de-escalate tensions, peacekeepers have engaged in talks, and 700 new Nato troops have been deployed.

But NGOs and analysts in north Kosovo say addressing the demands of the Serbian minority will require long-term commitments.

Ivanov of the Henry Jackson Society said: “We need new elections and Serbs need to participate in them.”



Street vending machines in Tokyo, Japan have launched two new vending machines that unlock automatically in the event of a natural disaster. Photograph: Matthew Childs/Reuters

[Japan](#)

Japan vending machines to automatically offer free food if earthquake hits

Machines in coastal city of Ako, are located in an area that experts say is vulnerable to a future powerful earthquake

Justin McCurry in Tokyo

Thu 1 Jun 2023 23.50 EDT Last modified on Fri 2 Jun 2023 06.29 EDT

Japan has extended its natural disaster preparations to [vending machines](#), which will offer free food and drink in the event of a major earthquake or typhoon.

Two machines have been installed in the western coastal city of Ako, located in a region that seismologists say is vulnerable to a powerful earthquake that is expected to hit the country's central and south-west pacific coast in the next few decades.

The machines, which contain about 300 bottles and cans of soft drinks and 150 emergency food items, including nutritional supplements, have been installed near buildings that have been designated as evacuation shelters.

They are designed to "unlock" and make their contents available free of charge in the event of a heavy rain warning, or an evacuation order after a quake of an upper five or higher on the Japanese seismic intensity scale of seven, according to the Mainichi Shimbun.

Their contents must be paid for the rest of the time, the newspaper added.

The manufacturer, Earth Corp, which has a factory in the city, says the machines are the first of their kind in [Japan](#), one of the world's [most seismically active countries](#), and where [increasingly powerful typhoons](#) have caused widespread flooding and landslides in recent years.

"We would like to install [the machines] throughout the country," a company representative told the Mainichi.

A city official said: "We expect that the stockpile will lead to the safety and security of our residents."

In another first, a vending machine with a radio that will automatically issue emergency broadcasts was set up in a park in Tokyo earlier this year.

The radio will be activated by earthquakes registering 5 or higher on the Japanese intensity scale, and transmit evacuation and other vital information from a local community radio station, media reports said.

Experts recently raised the possibility of a "megaquake" occurring along the Nankai trough, off Japan's Pacific coast, within the next 20 years from 50% to 60%, and at about 90% within the next 40 years.

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Investors have accused Musk of driving up Dogecoin's price more than 36,000% over two years. Photograph: Idrees Abbas/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

[Elon Musk](#)

Elon Musk accused of insider trading in Dogecoin lawsuit

Investors claim Tesla chief used Twitter, paid influencers and his TV appearance to manipulate price of cryptocurrency

Reuters

Thu 1 Jun 2023 20.08 EDT Last modified on Thu 1 Jun 2023 20.32 EDT

Elon Musk is being accused of insider trading in a proposed class action lawsuit by investors. They say the Tesla CEO manipulated the cryptocurrency Dogecoin, costing them billions of dollars.

In a Wednesday night filing in Manhattan federal court, investors said Musk used [Twitter](#) posts, paid online influencers, his 2021 appearance on NBC's

Saturday Night Live and other “publicity stunts” to trade profitably at their expense through several Dogecoin wallets that he or Tesla controls.

Investors said this included when Musk sold about \$124m of Dogecoin in April after he replaced Twitter’s blue bird logo with Dogecoin’s shiba inu dog logo, leading to a 30% jump in Dogecoin’s price.

A “deliberate course of carnival barking, market manipulation and insider trading” enabled Musk to defraud investors and promote himself and his companies, the filing said.

Musk bought Twitter last October. He also runs SpaceX, a rocket and spacecraft manufacturer, as well as the electric carmaker [Tesla](#).

Alex Spiro, a lawyer for Musk and Tesla, declined to comment on Thursday. The investors’ lawyer did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Investors have accused Musk, the world’s [richest person](#), of deliberately driving up Dogecoin’s price more than 36,000% over two years and then letting it crash.

They included their latest accusations in a proposed third amended complaint, in a lawsuit that began last June.

Musk and Tesla had in March sought a dismissal of the second amended complaint, calling it a “fanciful work of fiction”, and on 26 May said another amendment was unjustified.

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In a Wednesday order, the US district judge Alvin Hellerstein said he would “likely” allow the third amended complaint, saying the defendants would not likely be prejudiced.

Hellerstein also granted the investors’ request to dismiss the nonprofit Dogecoin Foundation as a defendant. Its lawyer Seth Levine called the dismissal “the appropriate result”.

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