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2022.08.01 - 2022.08.07

- [Headlines](#)
- [2022.08.01 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.08.01 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.08.01 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines thursday 4 august 2022](#)
- [2022.08.04 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.08.04 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.08.04 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines tuesday 2 august 2022](#)
- [2022.08.02 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.08.02 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.08.02 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines friday 5 august 2022](#)
- [2022.08.05 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.08.05 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.08.05 - Around the world](#)
- [Headlines saturday 6 august 2022](#)
- [2022.08.06 - Spotlight](#)
- [2022.08.06 - Opinion](#)
- [2022.08.06 - Around the world](#)

Headlines

- [Tory leadership race Rishi Sunak rejects claim he has ‘doomster’ attitude to economy](#)
- [Live Conservative party members begin to receive ballots for final leadership vote](#)
- [Cost of living One in eight households fear they have no way of making more cuts](#)
- [Live Russia-Ukraine war: First grain shipment leaves Odesa; Moscow moving troops towards Kherson, Zelenskiy says](#)

Rishi Sunak

Rishi Sunak rejects claim he has ‘doomster’ attitude to economy

Former chancellor says he finds his successor’s accusation ‘amusing’ as he vows to cut income tax by 20%



Rishi Sunak is under pressure to make inroads into the lead opinion polls suggest Liz Truss has over him. Photograph: Getty Images

[Geneva Abdul](#)

[@GenevaAbdul](#)

Mon 1 Aug 2022 04.59 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 Aug 2022 05.18 EDT

The Tory leadership candidate Rishi Sunak has rejected accusations from his successor as chancellor of being a “doomster” on the economy, as he pushed his plan to cut income tax by [20% by the end of the decade](#).

“As chancellor I was very keen to make sure that I started cutting taxes,” Sunak told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme. “What I’ve announced today

builds on that, and that's because I believe in rewarding work and the best way for the government to signal that is to cut people's income tax."

The current chancellor, Nadhim Zahawi, announcing his support for Sunak's rival, Liz Truss, in the [Daily Telegraph](#) on Monday, said: "Liz understands that the status quo isn't an option in times of crisis.

"To quote the excellent economist Sam Bowman, we need a 'booster' attitude to the economy, not a 'doomster' one, in order to address cost of living woes and the challenges on the world stage. Liz will overturn the stale economic orthodoxy and run our economy in a Conservative way."

When asked to respond to Zahawi's remarks, Sunak laughed and said: "As you can tell, I find it rather amusing." He pointed to his pro-Brexit credentials and economic assistance package during the Covid pandemic, adding: "It's my opponent in this contest who wants to stick with the failed orthodoxy of having these ultra-low corporation tax rates and, you know what, they don't work in increasing business investment in this country – we've tried it for a decade.

"It's entirely different to doing things right now that would make the situation far worse and endanger people's mortgages," Sunak said, in an attack on Truss's ambitions to cut taxes immediately.

Sunak is under pressure to make inroads into the lead opinion polls suggest Truss enjoys among the Tory members who will decide the next prime minister, as postal ballots begin dropping on Conservative doormats. In the latest YouGov poll, Truss holds the lead among Tory members, while the [broader public favour](#) Sunak at 28% to Truss's 25%, with 47% undecided.

Sunak's proposed plan to cut income tax to 16p by the end of the next parliament would cost about £6bn a year. As prime minister he said he wanted to cut income tax in a way that was "responsible" by making sure it could be paid for, and is done so alongside economic growth.

"I don't think embarking on a spree of excessive borrowing at a time when inflation and interest rates are already on a rise would be wise," he added.

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It is the latest policy pledge called “another U-turn” by a Truss campaign source, after Sunak recently promised to cut VAT on energy bills, a policy he rejected in office. And the UK is projected to experience the lowest growth in the G20 – apart from Russia – and have the worst growth in the G7 at about 0.5%.

“The public and Conservative party members can see through these flip-flops and U-turns,” said the source.

When asked to name another country that had raised taxes amid a cost of living squeeze, Sunak said “every country is going to be slightly different in how they deal with it”, while emphasising the UK’s publicly funded healthcare system through tax, and its growing backlogs.

“What she’s suggesting is entirely sticking with the failed orthodoxy of the last 10 years,” Sunak said of Truss’s policy, adding that people were looking at the last months of Boris Johnson’s leadership through rose-tinted spectacles.

Addressing Johnson’s behaviour and citing his resignation along with 60 MPs, Sunak said the government found itself on the “wrong side of an ethical issue”.

In an attempt to regain public momentum, Sunak said: “Today what you saw from me is an exciting, radical but realistic vision to cut taxes over the coming years.”

He pledged to address NHS backlogs, [confront “woke culture”](#), tackle illegal migration and take advantage of Brexit.

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[Skip to key events](#)

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Liz Truss gains Penny Mordaunt's backing as she and Rishi Sunak face Tory leadership hustings in Exeter – as it happened

Eliminated leadership candidate endorses foreign secretary as final two answer questions from members

Updated 5d ago

[Jane Clinton](#) and [Léonie Chao-Fong](#)

Mon 1 Aug 2022 16.26 EDTFirst published on Mon 1 Aug 2022 05.06 EDT

Key events

- [6d ago](#)
[Penny Mordaunt publicly backs Liz Truss for leader of the Conservative party](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Penny Mordaunt backs Liz Truss, reports say](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss to face Tory members in latest hustings in Exeter](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Russia announces sanctions against Starmer and Cameron](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Sacked shadow minister praises Lisa Nandy for joining strikers on picket line](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Truss pledges to ‘unleash British farming’ through deregulation](#)

- [6d ago](#)
[Sunak vows to take 4p off income tax within seven years](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Nadhim Zahawi formally backs Liz Truss](#)

'The hope candidate': Penny Mordaunt backs Liz Truss for the Conservative leadership – video

[Jane Clinton](#) and [Léonie Chao-Fong](#)

Mon 1 Aug 2022 16.26 EDTFirst published on Mon 1 Aug 2022 05.06 EDT

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From 6d ago

[14.15](#)

Penny Mordaunt publicly backs Liz Truss for leader of the Conservative party

Penny Mordaunt takes to the podium and has come out to back Liz Truss.

"I've seen enough to know who the person I'm going to put my faith in is. And that is Liz Truss."

She adds: "She, for me, is the hope candidate."

"I could have remained undeclared. I could be off sipping piña coladas right now. But I'm not. I'm here with you, because this is too important. And I'm not going to leave this to chance."

She added: "I came third in this contest. I owe it to all of you to be a signpost, not a weathervane. So, I've made my choice. And I know it's difficult, because I like both candidates."

“They are both good [Conservatives](#) who love their country. And they’ve both done what they thought was right for the right reasons.”

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Updated at 14.52 EDT

Key events

- [6d ago](#)
[Penny Mordaunt publicly backs Liz Truss for leader of the Conservative party](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Penny Mordaunt backs Liz Truss, reports say](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss to face Tory members in latest hustings in Exeter](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Russia announces sanctions against Starmer and Cameron](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Sacked shadow minister praises Lisa Nandy for joining strikers on picket line](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Truss pledges to ‘unleash British farming’ through deregulation](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Sunak vows to take 4p off income tax within seven years](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Nadhim Zahawi formally backs Liz Truss](#)

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[5d ago](#)[16.24](#)

Here is a summary of today’s events.

- Penny Mordaunt has publicly declared she is backing Liz Truss to become the next leader of the Conservative party. She made the announcement in a speech during hustings in Exeter tonight. Truss said of Mordaunt: “She’s a great person, she’s a great politician, she’s a great patriot and I’m proud to call her my friend.”
- During the hustings Liz Truss hit out at Nicola Sturgeon saying she is an “attention seeker” and should be “ignored”.
- Rishi Sunak says he was loyal to Boris Johnson, but their differences on economic policy and the government being on the “wrong side” of an ethical issue meant he had to resign.
- Earlier today, Truss said she would stop taxes that discourage people from eating unhealthy foods and scrap the ban on ‘buy one, get one free’ offers on junk food.
- Truss has pledged to “unleash British farming” through deregulation.
- Britain’s House of Commons foreign affairs committee is planning a visit to [Taiwan](#) later this year.
- Russia’s foreign ministry has announced new sanctions against 39 officials, businesspeople and journalists from the UK, including Keir Starmer and David Cameron.
- Boris Johnson has ruled out an extra bank holiday to celebrate the Lionesses’ victory in the Women’s Euro.
- Sam Tarry, the shadow transport minister sacked by Keir Starmer for comments made on a rail picket line, said it was “great to see” Lisa Nandy visiting striking communications workers today.
- Liz Truss has insisted she is running a “positive” leadership bid as allies tried to distance her campaign from the decision by culture secretary, Nadine Dorries, to share a tweet showing Rishi Sunak wielding a knife at Boris Johnson.
- A new Ipsos poll shows Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer tied amongst the public in terms of who would make the most capable prime minister. Liz Truss trails Starmer by six points on the same measure. Meanwhile, Labour has increased its lead over the Conservative party among the public.
- David Trimble’s funeral took place today in Lisburn. Boris Johnson, and other political representatives from London, Dublin and Belfast attended the service to bid farewell to Northern Ireland’s inaugural first minister.

- York and North Yorkshire are to elect a mayor and receive £540m of government investment over 30 years in a landmark devolution deal.

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Updated at 16.26 EDT

[5d ago](#)[15.53](#)

That is the end of tonight's leadership hustings in Exeter. The next hustings will be on Wednesday 3 August in Cardiff.

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[5d ago](#)[15.51](#)

One questioner asks about loyalty saying “you weren’t loyal to Boris Johnson”.

Sunak says: “I respectfully disagree. I was loyal to Boris Johnson over the two and a half years.”

He says in the end not only were they “not on the same page” with regard to economic policy, but the government was on the “wrong side” of an ethical situation.

He says: “It wasn’t just me”, adding that “60 others resigned”.

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Updated at 15.54 EDT

[5d ago](#)[15.45](#)

A question on migration.

Sunak says: “Our country is unbelievably special and has compassionately welcomed people like my family. But alongside that it is also absolutely right that we have control over our borders.

“All of you are forking out £5m a day on hotels for people who are coming here illegally and that has to stop.”

He says he believes in the Rwanda policy but adds there are some legal changes that need to be made.

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Updated at 15.55 EDT

[5d ago](#)**15.41**

A question on the elderly population and social care from an audience member. The woman asking the question went back to work during the pandemic working in elderly care. She asks: “Are you listening to the state that elderly care is in? We need help now?”

Sunak says social care provision needs to be improved and workers need to feel “valued and fulfilled”.

He says we cannot have the NHS “gobbling up” all the money and social care being the poor cousin.

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Updated at 15.56 EDT

[5d ago](#)**15.35**

In the quickfire round of questions from Sebastian Payne, Sunak is asked what one public perception about him is wrong.

He responds that it is the perception that he is not in favour of change.

“I want to radically change things,” he adds. He cites his “ripping up the rule book” during the pandemic as evidence of this.

In another life, he said if he could run Southampton FC he would be “a very happy man”.

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Updated at 15.38 EDT

[5d ago](#)[15.35](#)

Sunaks says: “I want to improve the conduct of government. That is the change that I want to bring as prime minister.”

Asked why he stuck by Boris Johnson for so long, Sunak said he wanted “to make it work” and give Boris Johnson “the benefit of the doubt”.

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[6d ago](#)[15.22](#)

Sunak says we need to unlock brownfield sites and build new homes. He also advocates more flat-pack housing because it is “faster and cheaper”.

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Updated at 15.24 EDT

[6d ago](#)[15.20](#)

Sunak says he is the “change” candidate. He adds: “At the crunch moments, where was I? I supported change and I supported Brexit. I believed in my

principles then and I believe in my principles now.”

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[6d ago 15.18](#)

Rishi Sunak is now taking questions from Sebastian Payne and the audience.

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[6d ago 15.18](#)

Truss is asked about Scotland and whether there should be another independence referendum. She says: “No, no, no.”

Truss adds: “The best thing to do with Nicola Sturgeon is to ignore her. She is an attention seeker. That is what she is.”

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Updated at 15.24 EDT

[6d ago 15.18](#)

One questioner asks about the Online Safety Bill and that it is not fit for purpose and is a danger to free speech. Would she scrap it?

“We do need to protect the under-18s from some of the content online,” Truss says.

She adds: “When people are grown adults they should be able to speak freely. I would be making sure that we protect free speech.”

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6d ago15.17

Asked if she would order another lockdown, Truss says she wouldn't. On the government's Covid strategy, she said she wasn't part of the "key Covid committee" and "wasn't a key part" of the Covid decision-making process.

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6d ago15.07

Truss adds: "My vision is bold, it is different, but it is needed."

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6d ago15.03

Truss is asked whether the Treasury should be broken up.

"I wouldn't want to give them advance warning," Truss says.

She adds it needs to change and it has been a "block" on getting things done.
"I'm prepared to break eggs to make an omelette."

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Updated at 15.10 EDT

6d ago15.01

Sebastian Payne asks Truss which opposition leader she most respects?

She replied: “Rosie Duffield ... because she stood up ... and said “women are women”.

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Updated at 15.11 EDT

[6d ago](#) [14.58](#)

Truss says things will take ‘less time under my government’. She adds: “We need spades in the ground before the next election.”

She also says she will “move faster with nuclear” and introduce a moratorium on the green levy, which she says will help people struggling with fuel bills.

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Updated at 15.12 EDT

[6d ago](#) [14.49](#)

Truss says she would have Sunak on her team.

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[Newest](#) [Newest](#)

[Previous](#)

1

of

5

[Next](#)

[Oldest](#) [Oldest](#)

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

UK cost of living crisis

More than one in eight UK households fear they have no way of making more cuts

As energy bills soar, survey shows almost half of homes are worried about paying rent or mortgage



The rising prices of energy, food, clothing and more are piling pressure on UK households. Photograph: True Images/Alamy

[Sarah Butler](#)

[@whatbutlersaw](#)

Sun 31 Jul 2022 19.01 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 Aug 2022 00.12 EDT

More than one in eight UK households fear they have no further way to make cuts to afford a sharp increase in annual energy bills this autumn.

More than a quarter of households earning less than £20,000 worry they will be unable to cope with higher bills, with families in Yorkshire, the south-west and Northern Ireland the least confident about covering their costs, according to the latest rebuilding Britain index of 20,000 people by Legal & General.

Almost half of UK households are concerned about being able to keep up with rent or mortgage payments over the next 12 months as the majority realise they will have to make cuts elsewhere.

The latest evidence of pressure on households emerges amid the looming prospect of [inflation hitting 12% this autumn](#) after dearer fuel and food pushed the official measure of the cost of living to a [40-year high of 9.4% in June](#).

A one-month jump in petrol prices not seen since at least the late 1980s, coupled with across-the-board increases in food staples such as eggs, milk, cheese and vegetables, sent Britain's annual inflation rate soaring.

Households in Great Britain are bracing for annual energy bills of [up to £3,850 next January](#), three times what they were paying at the start of 2022, after Russia further squeezed Europe's gas supplies.

It recently emerged that a fifth of UK households now have [an average shortfall of £60 a week](#) between what they earn and what they need to cover essentials such as energy bills, rent, transport and food, as the rising cost of living leaves people with the lowest amount of spare cash in almost five years, according to data from the Asda income tracker collated by the Centre for Business and Economic Research.

The amount that UK consumers borrowed rose by the [fastest rate in three years](#) last month, as households struggled to cope with the [rising cost of living](#). People borrowed an additional £1.8bn in [consumer credit](#) last month, up from a £900m increase in May, according to the latest Bank of England data.

Pressure on households is expected to ramp up this autumn as the price of essentials – from clothing to food – continues to rise alongside higher energy bills.

Shoppers are [switching to discount stores](#), dropping brands in favour of supermarkets' own label goods and trimming back spending on luxuries such as subscription services and gambling as they try to make their budget stretch.

Nigel Wilson, the chief executive of Legal & General, said: “Many households across the UK are currently facing very tough financial choices. For some, those choices seem impossible.

“However, what is most concerning is that the impact of the cost of living crisis is being felt more severely in some parts of the UK than in others. This threatens to widen the existing demographic and geographic inequalities that the levelling up agenda was designed to address.”

Almost two-thirds of those asked said that long-term solutions, such as investment in energy-efficient homes and offices, were one of the most attractive answers to tackling the cost of living crisis.

However, it has emerged that the government has dropped plans to add another £1bn to the existing £1bn of funding for home insulation and other measures to help the poorest households reduce energy use under the Energy Company Obligation, as first [reported by Bloomberg](#).

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Efforts to tackle reducing bills for those on low incomes have also been stymied by holdups related to Brexit and Covid, which have left about £30m of other funds – including the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund – partly unspent. Cuts on central government investment since 2012 have resulted in the pace of insulating homes slumping in the past decade, making the energy crisis more acute.

Meanwhile, the UK's petrol prices are the second highest in Europe, according to new data from the RAC breakdown recovery service. UK drivers pay an average pump price of 186p, as much as 20p more per litre of petrol than drivers in Spain and France, according to the research. The UK is, meanwhile, ranked 12th in terms of temporary tax cuts on petrol, well behind Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.

Simon Williams at the RAC said: "This analysis lays bare an uncomfortable truth for the UK government – that compared with other European countries, it's pretty much done the least to support drivers through the current period of record high fuel prices. The result is the UK being one of the most expensive places to fill up and putting it above other countries that have historically charged more for fuel than UK retailers do, including France and the Netherlands."

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[Skip to key events](#)
[Ukraine war liveRussia](#)

Attack on Mykolaiv hospital described as ‘cynical terrorism’; Moscow bans 39 Britons including Keir Starmer – as it happened

[City’s mayor condemns attack on medical facilities](#); former UK PM [David Cameron also among those now blacklisted](#)

- [What we know on day 159 of the invasion](#)

Updated 6d ago

[Nicola Slawson](#), [Martin Belam](#) and [Samantha Lock](#)

Mon 1 Aug 2022 13.59 EDTFirst published on Mon 1 Aug 2022 00.14 EDT

Key events

- [6d ago](#)
[End of day summary](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Full story: Keir Starmer and Piers Morgan among new list of Britons banned from Russia](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Full story: Grain ship leaves Ukraine port for first time since Russia blockade](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Russia bans 39 more Britons including Labour leader Keir Starmer](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Attack on hospital in Mykolaiv described as 'cynical terrorism' by mayor](#)

- [6d ago](#)
[Summary of the day so far ...](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Grain ship leaves Ukraine port for first time since Russia blockade](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Zelenskiy urges civilians to flee eastern Donetsk](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Russia re-allocating forces from Donbas to southern Ukraine: UK MoD](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Mykolaiv attack one of the ‘most brutal’ on region in war so far](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[First grain-exporting ship to leave Ukraine port today, Turkey says](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[UK property register cracks down on oligarchs](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Russia bolsters troops in Ukraine's south](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Summary and welcome](#)

Firefighters battle blaze at Mykolaiv hospital hit by Russian missile strike – video

[Nicola Slawson](#), [Martin Belam](#) and [Samantha Lock](#)

Mon 1 Aug 2022 13.59 EDTFirst published on Mon 1 Aug 2022 00.14 EDT

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From 6d ago

[09.39](#)

Attack on hospital in Mykolaiv described as 'cynical terrorism' by mayor

The mayor of Mykolaiv has said an attack on medical facilities in the city today is “nothing more than cynical terrorism by Russian troops”.

Oleksandr Syenkevych described the damage on Telegram, informing residents:

For some time, our emergency hospital will not be able to accept patients.

There it is necessary to dismantle the rubble of the destroyed trauma centre and remove dangerous structures from the surviving part, dismantle the frames of damaged windows and remove all the garbage.

Part of the hospital’s main building was also destroyed. There, too, it is necessary to put everything in order. In those departments that survived, we will remove all the debris, block the windows and check the equipment.

He added: “This is an ordinary hospital, which every day received residents of the city, including victims of Russian shelling. Therefore, today’s attack on this medical facility is nothing more than cynical terrorism by Russian troops.”

Images have emerged of firefighters tackling a blaze at the hospital, and of a crater left by the attack.



A firefighter extinguishes a burning hospital building hit by a Russian missile strike in Mykolaiv. Photograph: Reuters



A shell crater is seen in front of a hospital building in Mykolaiv. Photograph: Reuters

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Updated at 09.42 EDT

Key events

- [6d ago](#)
[End of day summary](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Full story: Keir Starmer and Piers Morgan among new list of Britons banned from Russia](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Full story: Grain ship leaves Ukraine port for first time since Russia blockade](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Russia bans 39 more Britons including Labour leader Keir Starmer](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Attack on hospital in Mykolaiv described as 'cynical terrorism' by mayor](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Summary of the day so far ...](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Grain ship leaves Ukraine port for first time since Russia blockade](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Zelenskiy urges civilians to flee eastern Donetsk](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Russia re-allocating forces from Donbas to southern Ukraine: UK MoD](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Mykolaiv attack one of the 'most brutal' on region in war so far](#)
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- [6d ago](#)
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- [6d ago](#)
[Russia bolsters troops in Ukraine's south](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Summary and welcome](#)

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[6d ago](#) [13.59](#)

End of day summary

- The Sierra Leone-flagged ship Razoni, carrying 26,000 tons of corn, has left the port of Odesa, destined for Lebanon. It is the first such departure since the start of the Russian invasion, according to Ukraine's infrastructure ministry. "Ukraine together with our partners has taken another step today in preventing world hunger," Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine's infrastructure minister, said in a statement on Monday. Kubrakov stressed that [Ukraine](#) had done "everything" to restore the ports and said the lifting of the blockade would give Ukraine's economy \$1bn in foreign exchange revenue.
- Russia agreed to allow grain ships to leave Ukraine and to not attack them, in a deal signed on 22 July in Istanbul. But less than 24 hours later, the veracity of the deal was cast into doubt when Russian forces struck Odesa port. When questioned by Turkey's defence minister, [Russia](#) at first denied it was involved in the attack. But the next day it issued a statement saying it had struck a Ukrainian vessel carrying western weapons that was in the port. Ukraine's authorities rejected Russia's explanation.
- Russia is [moving large numbers of troops to Ukraine's south](#) in preparation for a Ukrainian counteroffensive, according to Ukraine's deputy head of military intelligence. "They are increasing their troop numbers, preparing for our counteroffensive [in Ukraine's south] and perhaps preparing to launch an offensive of their own," Vadym Skibitsky said. The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said Russia was relocating some of its troops from their positions in the

east to the south in order to push towards Kherson's regional capital as well as the Zaporizhzhia region.

- **Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been urged to evacuate the frontline eastern Donetsk region**, the scene of fierce clashes with the Russian military. More than 50,000 children are still in the region, according to local officials. “They need to be evacuated, you cannot put them in mortal danger in the winter without heating, light, without the ability to keep them warm,” Kyiv’s ministry of reintegration of temporarily occupied territories said in a statement.
- **Russia claims five people were injured after a Ukrainian drone strike on its Black Sea fleet headquarters**, prompting officials to cancel festivities planned for Navy Day. “Early this morning, [Ukraine] decided to spoil our Navy Day,” said Mikhail Razvozhayev, the head of the local Russian administration in Sevastopol in Crimea. “An unidentified object flew into the yard of the fleet headquarters. According to preliminary data, it was a drone. Five people were injured.”
- **Russian strikes hit the southern Ukrainian port city of Mykolaiv** early on Sunday, wounding three people and damaging homes and schools, according to the city’s mayor, Oleksandr Senkevych. Zelenskiy described the strikes as “probably the most brutal” on the city and region of the entire war.
- **Russian shelling on Mykolaiv reportedly killed one of Ukraine’s wealthiest men, Oleksiy Vadatursky, and his wife, Raisa.** Vadatursky headed the grain production and export business Nibulon, which included a fleet of ships for sending grain abroad. A presidential adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, said Vadatursky was specifically targeted

and his death was “not an accident, but a well thought out and organised premeditated murder”.

- **The European Union has sent Ukraine €1bn (£837m) in financial aid to support its budget and help it tackle the financial consequences of the Russian invasion, the Ukrainian prime minister said on Monday.** Denys Shmyhal wrote on the Telegram messaging app: “The €1bn is a part of a large package of support for Ukraine ... totalling €9bn. The funds will help finance priority budgetary needs.”
- **Ukrainian forces have recaptured more than 40 settlements in the key southern region of Kherson, as Kyiv looks to drive back Russian troops in a counteroffensive, the local governor said Monday.** Moscow seized almost all the territory of the economically and strategically important region bordering the annexed Crimea peninsula during the first days of its invasion, Reuters reports. But in recent weeks the Ukrainian army, bolstered by deliveries of western-supplied long-range artillery, has sought to stage a counteroffensive in the area.
- **The mayor of Mykolaiv has said an attack on medical facilities in the city today is “nothing more than cynical terrorism by Russian troops”.** Oleksandr Syenkevych described the damage on Telegram, informing residents: “This is an ordinary hospital, which every day received residents of the city, including victims of Russian shelling. Therefore, today’s attack on this medical facility is nothing more than cynical terrorism by Russian troops.”
- **Russia has banned 39 senior British politicians, businesspeople and journalists from entering the country, including the Labour party**

leader, Keir Starmer, the former prime minister David Cameron and the presenter Piers Morgan. The journalists banned include the Guardian's defence and security editor, Dan Sabbagh, as well as British journalists working for the BBC, the Sunday Times, the Economist, the Daily Telegraph and Sky News.

We are closing this liveblog now. Thanks so much for joining us.

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[6d ago](#)[13.29](#)

Joe Middleton

The daily gas production of Russia's [Gazprom](#) dropped in July to its lowest level since 2008, figures suggest, amid continued fears that Moscow could cause an energy crisis in Europe by shutting off the supply.

The state-owned energy firm pumped 774 million cubic metres a day last month – 14% less than in June – according to analysis by Bloomberg of data released on Monday.

It found the Russian gas export monopoly's overall total output for the year was 262.4 billion cubic metres, a 12% fall compared with the same period last year.

The slowdown in production follows the deterioration in relations between Russia and the European Union since Vladimir Putin ordered troops to invade [Ukraine](#) in late February.

The Kremlin-controlled business [cut gas supplies to the continent's main pipeline to Europe – Nord Stream 1](#) – last week to just 20% of capacity.

Gazprom has claimed this is due to maintenance issues with its turbines, but the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, said there was “no justifiable technical reason” for the reduction.

Read more here:

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6d ago **12.37**

Full story: Keir Starmer and Piers Morgan among new list of Britons banned from Russia



Pjotr Sauer

Russia has banned 39 senior British politicians, businesspeople and journalists from entering the country, including the Labour party leader, Keir Starmer, the former prime minister David Cameron and the presenter Piers Morgan.

The Russian foreign ministry said in a statement published on its website on Monday:

It was decided to include on the Russian ‘stop list’ a number of British politicians, businessmen and journalists who contribute to London’s hostile course aimed at the demonising of our country and contributing to its international isolation.

Given London’s destructive drive to spin the sanctions flywheel on far-fetched and absurd prettexts, work on expanding the Russian stop list will continue.

The shadow foreign secretary, David Lammy, and the shadow levelling up secretary, Lisa Nandy, are also on the list.

The journalists banned include the Guardian's defence and security editor, Dan Sabbagh, as well as British journalists working for the BBC, the Sunday Times, the Economist, the Daily Telegraph and Sky News.

Moscow banned dozens of British journalists, media figures and defence figures from entering the country in June in what the foreign ministry said was a response to western sanctions and the "spreading of false information about Russia". In total, more than 200 Britons, including most of the country's leading politicians, are banned from entering the country.

Russia has launched an unprecedented [crackdown](#) on Russian and foreign independent news outlets since its 24 February invasion of Ukraine, as well as on foreign social media networks. Legislation was introduced soon after the war began to [criminalise media outlets](#) that disseminate "false information" about the Russian army. Russia has already barred dozens of US and Canadian officials and journalists from entering.

Read more here:

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[6d ago](#)[12.28](#)

Vladimir Putin said on Monday there could be no winners in a nuclear war and no such war should ever be started.

The Russian president made the comment in a letter to participants of a conference on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT), more than five months into his war on [Ukraine](#), Reuters reports.

Putin said:

We proceed from the fact that there can be no winners in a nuclear war and it should never be unleashed, and we stand for equal and indivisible security for all members of the world community.

His words to the NPT forum appeared aimed at striking a reassuring note and portraying [Russia](#) as a responsible nuclear power.

They contrasted with earlier statements by Putin and other Russian politicians that have been interpreted in the west as implicit nuclear threats.

In a speech on 24 February as he launched the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Putin pointedly referred to Russia's nuclear arsenal and warned outside powers that any attempt to interfere would "lead you to such consequences that you have never encountered in your history".

Days later, he ordered Russia's nuclear forces to be put on high alert.

Earlier on Monday, a Russian foreign ministry source questioned the seriousness of comments by the US president, Joe Biden, calling for talks on a nuclear arms control framework to replace a treaty expiring in 2026.

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Updated at 12.31 EDT

[6d ago 11.22](#)

Russian lawmakers on Monday tabled a bill that would ban the adoption of Russian children by citizens of "unfriendly" countries as tensions soar over Moscow's military intervention in [Ukraine](#).

If passed, the bill would expand a 2012 law that prohibited US families from adopting Russian children, AFP reports.

At the time the ban provoked an outcry, with Kremlin critics saying it made Russian orphans – many with physical or mental difficulties – the victims of a standoff between Washington and Moscow.

The new bill published on the website of parliament's lower house, the State Duma, proposes extending the ban to citizens of countries "that commit unfriendly actions" against Russia.

After the West piled unprecedented sanctions on Moscow following President Vladimir Putin's decision to send troops to pro-Western Ukraine on February 24, Russia expanded the list of what it calls "unfriendly" countries.

They now include the US, Australia, Canada, Britain, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, and all EU member states.

The bill has to be approved by both chambers of the Russian parliament and signed into law by Putin.

In 2012, Moscow banned the adoption of Russian children by American families to punish Washington over its passing of a law sanctioning Russian officials implicated in the death in jail of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky in 2009.

Since the law was introduced, the number of Russian children adopted by foreign families has dropped drastically.

State news agency TASS said 240 Russian children were adopted abroad in 2019, compared with 2,604 in 2012.

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Updated at 11.33 EDT

[6d ago 11.10](#)



Ukrainian servicemen rest at a position on a front line, as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues, in Kharkiv region, Ukraine. Photograph: Ukrainian Armed Forces/Reuters

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Updated at 11.14 EDT

[6d ago](#)[10.59](#)

Full story: Grain ship leaves Ukraine port for first time since Russia blockade

Isobel Koshiw

A ship carrying Ukrainian grain has left the port of Odesa for the first time since the start of the Russian invasion under an internationally brokered deal to unblock Ukraine's agricultural exports and ease a growing global food crisis.

The Sierra Leone-flagged ship Razoni, carrying 26,000 tonnes of corn, finally set sail for Lebanon on Monday morning, according to Ukraine's

infrastructure ministry, after [weeks of negotiations](#) between Ukraine and Russia, led by Turkey and the United Nations.

The Russian blockade of Ukraine's ports since the start of the war in February has stoked a worldwide grain shortage that has caused the UN to warn of a [looming hunger catastrophe](#).

“Ukraine, together with our partners, has taken another step today in preventing world hunger,” said Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine’s infrastructure minister. He said Ukraine had done “everything” to restore the ports and said the lifting of the blockade would give Ukraine’s economy \$1bn (£820m) in foreign exchange revenue.

The Kremlin said the news of the departure was “very positive”, and Turkey’s defence ministry said more ships would follow. Kubrakov said 16 loaded vessels had been stuck in Ukraine’s ports since the Russian invasion began, and officials planned for the ports to regain full transport capacity in the coming weeks.

[Shipment route – graphic](#)

Meanwhile, [fighting continued](#) across Ukraine’s frontlines, according to Ukraine’s general staff, as four additional US-supplied [Himars long-range rocket](#) systems as well as a third German Mars II, another long-range rocket system, arrived in Ukraine.

Read more here:

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Updated at 11.04 EDT

[6d ago](#)[10.52](#)

Russia bans 39 more Britons including Labour leader Keir Starmer

Moscow has blacklisted another 39 Britons including the Labour party leader, Keir Starmer, and the former prime minister David Cameron.

Russia's foreign ministry said the citizens listed, including journalists, "contribute to the hostile course of London aimed at the demonisation of our country and its international isolation".

Russia has banned 39 more British journalists and politicians from entering the country, including Starmer, Cameron and Piers Morgan
pic.twitter.com/BaCcpSydCx

— Pjotr Sauer (@PjotrSauer) [August 1, 2022](#)

The ministry added:

The choice in favour of confrontation is the conscious decision of the British political establishment, which bears all responsibility for the consequences.

Russia has banned several dozen British citizens – mostly politicians and journalists – from entering Russia since the start of its military campaign in [Ukraine](#).

The new additions include several Labour MPs, Scottish politicians and members of the House of Lords.

Among the media names is the head of the BBC newsgathering, Jonathan Munro, the TV presenter Piers Morgan, ITV News' political editor Robert Peston, The Sunday Times' political editor Caroline Wheeler and the BBC News presenter Huw Edwards.

The list also features shadow communities secretary Lisa Nandy, shadow international trade secretary Nick Thomas-Symonds and Conservative former cabinet minister Liam Fox.

Reacting to the news on Twitter, Morgan said:

It wasn't on my immediate vacation to-do list.

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Updated at 11.13 EDT

[6d ago](#)[09.39](#)

Attack on hospital in Mykolaiv described as 'cynical terrorism' by mayor

The mayor of Mykolaiv has said an attack on medical facilities in the city today is “nothing more than cynical terrorism by Russian troops”.

Oleksandr Syenkevych described the damage on Telegram, informing residents:

For some time, our emergency hospital will not be able to accept patients.

There it is necessary to dismantle the rubble of the destroyed trauma centre and remove dangerous structures from the surviving part, dismantle the frames of damaged windows and remove all the garbage.

Part of the hospital’s main building was also destroyed. There, too, it is necessary to put everything in order. In those departments that survived, we will remove all the debris, block the windows and check the equipment.

He added: “This is an ordinary hospital, which every day received residents of the city, including victims of Russian shelling. Therefore, today’s attack on this medical facility is nothing more than cynical terrorism by Russian troops.”

Images have emerged of firefighters tackling a blaze at the hospital, and of a crater left by the attack.



A firefighter extinguishes a burning hospital building hit by a Russian missile strike in Mykolaiv. Photograph: Reuters



A shell crater is seen in front of a hospital building in Mykolaiv. Photograph: Reuters

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Updated at 09.42 EDT

6d ago[09.21](#)

A crew member onboard the Razoni, which left Odesa this morning, has said the news that the ship would depart was the “best feeling” of the year. Abdullah Jendi, a junior engineer from Syria, had been stuck in Odesa for some time, and said that because of his work at sea he had not seen his family for more than a year.

“It was a great feeling,” he said about the news they could leave. “Everyone on the ship was very happy. I can say that it was the best feeling we have had in 2022.”

He admitted some concern, however. He told Reuters: “To be honest, I am scared from the fact that there are naval mines. This is the only thing that I fear during this trip. As for the other things, we are used to them as sailors.”

Jendi said alarms would go off in Odesa every day and the crew had feared they would never get to go home. “We did not know when we would be released, so we lived every day on the hope of being released,” he said. “In the beginning there was a lack of food and water supplies reaching the ship, as there was a lockdown when the war started. When the restrictions were eased, we were able to go to the city and buy what we needed and clear our minds from the stress.”

The journey to Lebanon will take about a week.

“The feeling is indescribable. It is so important to live in security, because I spent a while experiencing the feeling of danger, the great fear knowing that at any moment something could happen to us because of the air strikes,” Jendi said.

“We couldn’t even turn on the lights at night. We couldn’t be outside at night for our safety. The port would be completely dark for security reasons.”

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Updated at 09.32 EDT

6d ago[08.59](#)

Ukrainian forces have recaptured more than 40 settlements in the key southern region of Kherson, as Kyiv looks to drive back Russian troops in a counteroffensive, the local governor said Monday.

Moscow seized almost all the territory of the economically and strategically important region bordering the annexed Crimea peninsula during the first days of its invasion, Reuters reports.

But in recent weeks the Ukrainian army, bolstered by deliveries of western-supplied long-range artillery, has sought to stage a counteroffensive in the area.

Kyiv's forces have been carrying out strikes on Russian military warehouses and positions behind the frontline and hit bridges acting as crucial supply routes for Moscow's troops in the city of Kherson.

“Today, 46 settlements have already been de-occupied in the Kherson region,” Dmytro Butriy, the head of the Ukrainian regional administration, told national TV.

Butriy added that the majority of the regained villages lie in the northern part of the region, while some others are located in its southern part, close to the Black Sea and the heavily bombarded Mykolaiv region.

The governor said some of the recaptured villages “have been 90% destroyed and today are still under constant fire”.

Butriy said the humanitarian situation in the region was “critical” and he reiterated authorities’ call to those who remain in the area “to evacuate to safer regions”.

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Updated at 09.03 EDT

6d ago08.30

Ukraine has received a batch of four more US-made high mobility artillery rocket systems (Himars), Ukraine's defence minister said on Monday.

Oleksii Reznikov wrote on Twitter that he was grateful for the help strengthening the Ukraine army.

4 additional HIMARS have arrived in 🇺🇦. I'm grateful to [@POTUS](#) [@SecDef](#) Lloyd Austin III and 🇺🇦 people for strengthening of [#UAarmy](#).

We have proven to be smart operators of this weapon. The sound of the [#HIMARS](#) volley has become a top hit 🎵 of this summer at the front lines!

👉👉👉 pic.twitter.com/iOBoxfjV7e

— Oleksii Reznikov (@oleksiireznikov) [August 1, 2022](#)

Himars have a longer range and are more precise than Ukraine's Soviet-era artillery, allowing Ukrainian forces to hit Russian targets that were previously unreachable, Reuters reports.

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Updated at 08.39 EDT

6d ago08.17



A glass factory in Merefa, Kharkiv, destroyed by a Russian missile strike on Monday. Photograph: Reuters

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Updated at 08.22 EDT

[6d ago](#)[08.10](#)



Shaun Walker

My colleague Shaun Walker has looked into Dmitry Medvedev's journey from liberal to anti-western hawk. Critics say the former Russian leader's furious tirades are a desperate attempt to retain political relevance.

Joe Biden is a “strange grandfather with dementia”. The EU leadership are “lunatics”. Russia will ensure that [Ukraine](#) “disappears from the map” in the near future.

Welcome to another week as seen through the eyes of Dmitry Medvedev, [Russia's former president and prime minister](#), and the deputy head of the country's security council.

Medvedev has been on quite a political journey in recent years. Back in 2008, when he became Russia's president, he promised modernisation and liberalisation, and frequently spoke of his love for blogging and gadgets. He even visited Silicon Valley and received a new iPhone 4 from Steve Jobs.

Now, he is an enthusiastic participant in the macho posturing and genocidal rhetoric that have become the main currency of political discourse in wartime Moscow.

“I'm often asked why my Telegram posts are so harsh,” wrote Medvedev recently. “Well, I'll answer: I hate them. They are bastards and degenerates. They want us, Russia, to die. And while I'm still alive, I will do everything to make them disappear.” He did not specify whether the “they” in question referred to Ukrainians, western politicians, or both.

Medvedev's physical transformation is as extraordinary as his ideological shift: a decade ago he was boyish, nerdy and seemed almost charmingly awkward wearing a suit and conducting the business of state. Now he looks jaded and puffy-faced, his eyes glazed over as he launches tirades against the west.

Medvedev's rebooted persona is an apparent attempt to retain political relevance in a climate that has darkened significantly in the decade since he

left the presidency.

“He’s trying to save himself from political oblivion by out-Heroding Herod, and consequently posturing as a candidate in a Kremlin Apprentice show,” said Ekaterina Schulmann, a Russian political scientist at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.

Maria Pevchikh, an associate of the imprisoned Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny, interpreted Medvedev’s shift in more personal terms: “When you feel you are a pointless and pathetic person, like [Dmitry Medvedev](#), you try to reinvent yourself from time to time. He could have shaved his head, or gone to the gym … but instead he decided to reinvent himself as a hawk,” she said, in a video discussion devoted to Medvedev’s strange behaviour in May.

Read more here:

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Updated at 08.16 EDT

[6d ago](#) [07.53](#)

The EU and Nato on Monday welcomed the departure of the grain shipment from [Ukraine](#) as a “first step” towards easing the food crisis caused by the Russian invasion.

But an EU spokesperson, Peter Stano, said Brussels still expected the “implementation of the whole deal and resumption of Ukrainian exports to the customers around the world”, Agence France-Press reports.

Separately, the Nato secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, said western allies “strongly support the full implementation of the deal to ease the global food crisis caused by Russia’s war in Ukraine”.

Earlier the Razoni, a Sierra Leone-registered cargo ship, had left the Ukrainian port of Odesa bound for Lebanon with a vital shipment of 26,000

tonnes of grain.

It was the first vessel to leave a Ukrainian port since Moscow and Kyiv signed an agreement brokered by Turkey and the UN to permit food shipments despite the conflict.

Speaking to the EU foreign service, Stano accused the Kremlin of blocking the shipments for months and noted that Russia had fired missiles at the port of Odesa a day after the deal was signed.

He blamed the food shortages affecting parts of the Middle East and Africa on “the unprovoked Russian aggression on February 24 and the blocking of Ukrainian ports and grain exports”.

Russian forces invaded Ukraine in February and have seized or bombarded several ports, some of which Ukrainian defenders have since mined to protect them.

Under the deal signed in Istanbul on 22 July, Ukraine is to remove the mines and Russia to lift its blockade, but shipments have been slow to restart and fighting on land continues.

In addition, according to Stano, Russia is “destroying the fields in Ukraine, destroying the silos in Ukraine, burning the grain or looting and trying to sell it on behalf of Russia”.

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Updated at 07.59 EDT

[6d ago](#)[07.10](#)

The European Union has sent [Ukraine](#) €1bn (£837m) in financial aid to support its budget and help it tackle the financial consequences of the Russian invasion, the Ukrainian prime minister said on Monday.

Denys Shmyhal wrote on the Telegram messaging app:

The €1bn is a part of a large package of support for Ukraine ... totalling €9bn. The funds will help finance priority budgetary needs.

He said the first tranche, amounting to €500m, was already in the account of the Ukrainian central bank, while the remainder is expected to be there on 2 August.

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Updated at 07.20 EDT

[6d ago](#)[06.32](#)



Children watch the Razoni cargo ship depart from Odesa port. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

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Updated at 07.21 EDT

[6d ago](#)[06.18](#)



Adam Gabbatt

Twitter accounts that have promoted QAnon and anti-vaccine conspiracy theories are switching focus and increasingly spreading disinformation about the global food crisis caused by Russia's invasion of [Ukraine](#), according to a new study.

The research by the [Network Contagion Research Institute](#) (NCRI) found that conspiracy theorist social media accounts have started pushing the idea that western countries are responsible for the interruption of wheat, barley and maize exports from Ukraine.

The Russian government has made the same claims in recent weeks, [blaming western sanctions](#) for a slowdown in grain exports. Russia has blocked Ukraine's shipping ports, which has prevented the export of tens of millions of tonnes of grain. The UN [has suggested](#) 49 million people could be pushed into famine or famine-like conditions because of Russia's actions.

The NCRI, which tracks misinformation and manipulation on social media, found that conspiracy communities and influencers linked to QAnon, the extremist conspiracy movement whose followers believe Donald Trump is waging war against the "deep state", are shifting from conspiracy theories around Covid-19 to food crisis disinformation.

According to NCRI, the accounts frequently link rising food insecurity to a “cabal of shadowy, and often Jewish elites, for bringing about the ‘New World Order’”, rather than to Russia’s invasion of [Ukraine](#).

In one example [GhostEzra](#), an antisemitic QAnon social media influencer who has declared Covid “[fake](#)”, wrote on [Telegram](#): “Never believe for one moment there’s a shortage of anything. Food. Water. Oil. They create and manufacture these shortages. These aren’t naturally occurring whatsoever.”

The “they”, the NCRI said, referred to Jewish people.

“There is a significant overlap between QAnon and other anti-vax and online conspiracy communities,” said Alex Goldenberg, the lead intelligence analyst at the NCRI and a research fellow at the Rutgers Miller Center for Community Protection and Resilience.

“Some of the more colourful food-mandate conspiracies intermingle with anti-vaccine conspiracy theories.”

Read more here:

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Updated at 07.22 EDT

[6d ago](#)[06.07](#)

Summary of the day so far ...

- **The Sierra Leone-flagged ship Razoni, carrying 26,000 tons of corn, has left the port of Odesa, destined for Lebanon. It is the first such departure since the start of the Russian invasion, according to Ukraine’s infrastructure ministry.** “Ukraine together with our partners has taken another step today in preventing world hunger,”

Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine's infrastructure minister, said in a statement on Monday. Kubrakov stressed that [Ukraine](#) had done "everything" to restore the ports and said the lifting of the blockade would give Ukraine's economy \$1bn in foreign exchange revenue.

- Russia agreed to allow grain ships to leave Ukraine and to not attack them, in a deal signed on 22 July in Istanbul. But less than 24 hours later, the veracity of the deal was cast into doubt when Russian forces struck Odesa port. When questioned by Turkey's defence minister, [Russia](#) at first denied it was involved in the attack. But the next day it issued a statement saying it had struck a Ukrainian vessel carrying western weapons that was in the port. Ukraine's authorities rejected Russia's explanation.
- Russia is [moving large numbers of troops to Ukraine's south](#) in preparation for a Ukrainian counteroffensive, according to Ukraine's deputy head of military intelligence. "They are increasing their troop numbers, preparing for our counteroffensive [in Ukraine's south] and perhaps preparing to launch an offensive of their own," Vadym Skibitsky said. The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said Russia was relocating some of its troops from their positions in the east to the south in order to push towards Kherson's regional capital as well as the Zaporizhzhia region.
- Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been urged to [evacuate the frontline eastern Donetsk region](#), the scene of fierce clashes with the Russian military. More than 50,000 children are still in the region, according to local officials. "They need to be evacuated, you cannot put them in mortal danger in the winter without heating, light, without the ability to keep them warm," Kyiv's ministry of reintegration of temporarily occupied territories said in a statement.

- Russia claims five people were injured after a [Ukrainian drone strike on its Black Sea fleet headquarters](#), prompting officials to cancel festivities planned for Navy Day. “Early this morning, [Ukraine] decided to spoil our Navy Day,” said Mikhail Razvozhayev, the head of the local Russian administration in Sevastopol in Crimea. “An unidentified object flew into the yard of the fleet headquarters. According to preliminary data, it was a drone. Five people were injured.”
- Russian strikes hit the southern Ukrainian port city of Mykolaiv early on Sunday, wounding three people and damaging homes and schools, according to the city’s mayor, Oleksandr Senkevych. Zelenskiy described the strikes as “probably the most brutal” on the city and region of the entire war.
- Russian shelling on Mykolaiv reportedly killed one of Ukraine’s wealthiest men, Oleksiy Vadatursky, and his wife, Raisa. Vadatursky headed the grain production and export business Nibulon, which included a fleet of ships for sending grain abroad. A presidential adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, said Vadatursky was specifically targeted and his death was “not an accident, but a well thought out and organised premeditated murder”.

That is it from me, Martin Belam for now. I will be back later on. Nicola Slawson will be with you for the next few hours.

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Updated at 06.15 EDT

[Newest](#)[Newest](#)

[Previous](#)

of
3

[Next](#)
[Oldest](#)[Oldest](#)

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2022.08.01 - Spotlight

- A new start after 60 At 70 I went camping for the first time – and stopped cocooning myself from life
- 'The establishment didn't know what to do with me'
Sanjeev Bhaskar on marriage, success and stereotypes
- 'At best it is brain-rotting' Love Island will be banned in 50 years
- Righter than right Tories' hardline drift may lose the public

[A new start after 60Life and style](#)

A new start after 60: At 70 I went camping for the first time – and stopped cocooning myself from life

His tent has blown down, midges have forced him to sleep in a van, but after decades of planning and preparation, Erik Wilkinson is embracing the unexpected



‘The tent opened me to strange rustles of animals and the gentle hues of the sky’ ... Erik Wilkinson. Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

[Paula Cocozza](#)

[@CocozzaPaula](#)

Mon 1 Aug 2022 02.00 EDT

Erik Wilkinson’s 70th birthday hit him with great force. He celebrated, but cannot remember the occasion. However, a phrase entered his head.

“Pregnancy of death,” he says. “The words sprang into me. I thought: ‘I don’t know how long I’ve got.’ And this phrase kept coming to mind.”

It began to dominate his thoughts. “Like any pregnancy, you need certain inputs. Because you are going through a transition,” he says.

This is how, at 70, Wilkinson decided it was time for his first experience of camping. A thinker and a planner – he says he is often described as a thoughtful tactician – he took preparation seriously. He and his wife, Norah, put up a tent in the garden. During lockdown, they slept out for the first time.

“Our tent opened Norah and me to strange rustles of animals, the flutter of moths and the gentle hues of the sky ... and the tent stayed up!”

Did Wilkinson want to camp as a child? “Not at all!” he says. “The thought was awful. It was too challenging.” In cubs and scouts, he declined all invitations. “I wonder why,” he muses.

Maybe he liked to know how things would pan out in advance? “Probably. Yes.”

I’m trying to make the journey from ‘This is awful’ to ‘This is an adventure’

Wilkinson spent most of his working life, from his late 20s to 55, in the National Careers Service, which is ironic, given that he didn’t really know what to do. He was looking for security after two years travelling – itself an attempt “to break the whole thing about lower-middle-class kid goes to university, comes out and goes into a bank”. He set up a self-funding assessment centre in Wiltshire, which used psychometric testing to provide careers advice. In a sense, at 72, he is now advising himself on his own best way forward.

After the night in the garden, Wilkinson continued his camping apprenticeship with Norah in Stroud, then in Carmarthenshire. He saw other

campers' fires, and bought a fold-up brazier. He adapted his Citroën Berlingo to take a camp bed.

Then, in June, after they had visited family in Scotland, Norah caught the train home to Gloucestershire and Wilkinson set off on his first big solo adventure – “10 days on my own around the north of Scotland”.

He slept out in the van by the sea on his first night, after midges drove him from the campsite. But that was great, he says. “It’s the things that go wrong, the problem-solving, the people you meet, that take you out of your comfort zone. It’s not cocooning you from life.”

Another night, a gale blew down his tent in Durness – and that was fine, too. “That’s there as a memory. It’s shifting it from ‘This is awful’ to ‘This is an adventure’. That’s the journey I’m trying to do.” Maybe he is trying to effect the same shift on hitting his 70s.

Camping, or adventure, is only one aspect of Wilkinson’s “pregnancy” preparations. The phrase being so suggestive, I wonder if he and Norah have children, but Wilkinson says they chose not to and “it’s not been a big deal”. He lists other “pillars” of this gestation as practical (getting a will in order, accepting death, developing intergenerational relationships), but say there is a spiritual element, too.

Wilkinson says that all his life he has worked too hard. Even volunteering for local climate groups in retirement came to feel like a job. As he talks about his “pillars”, this “pregnancy” that may extend to decades sounds as if it has activated his work ethic, albeit in a liberating way. “I’m very in my head,” he says. “That’s why the camping is so good.”

It chimes with his experience after university. “What I wanted to do was to travel,” he says. He went to India and Israel. “And that was the best thing I ever did.” Not least because he met Norah on a kibbutz.

There are times, especially while having breakfast at his campfire, or sitting there in the evening, between eight and 10 as the light fades, enjoying “that meditative aspect” of the flames, that he really appreciates camping – “for

giving me a way to be as healthy and positive as I possibly can be for the people I love”.

Tell us: has your life taken a new direction after the age of 60?

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/aug/01/a-new-start-after-60-at-70-i-went-camping-for-the-first-time-and-stopped-cocooning-myself-from-life>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

‘The establishment didn’t know what to do with me’: Sanjeev Bhaskar on marriage, success and stereotypes

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2022/aug/01/sanjeev-bhaskar-marriage-success-stereotypes>

Love Island

‘At best it is brain-rotting’: Love Island will be banned in 50 years

As another toxic series of Love Island draws to a close, we ask: is it as lethal for our health as smoking?



We still can't kick the habit ... Jacques and Paige say goodbye Love Island.
Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

Iona David

Mon 1 Aug 2022 05.24 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 Aug 2022 05.31 EDT

After refusing to take part in summer, instead opting to stay indoors to binge Mad Men by day and [Love Island](#) by night, I’ve observed a surprisingly striking parallel between the two shows: they both illustrate the way society reacts to the things that are very bad for it.

[Mad Men](#) reminds how, in the 1950s and 60s, cigarettes were advertised relentlessly. The manufacturers said to the consumers, without reprimand or

regulation: “These things are great. Consume them.” Today – after many decades of fashionably lighting up – the evils of cigarettes are finally accepted and frowned upon, with new bans put into place. Love Island is on that very same, long trajectory.

The (leftwing) media is peppered with hot takes surrounding the moral disgrace that is [Love Island](#). With each new season, the public concern gets slightly louder – but despite hearing the echoes, we can’t quite kick this nightly habit. We have a feeling, deep down, that it’s bad – but we “love to hate it”; we are “just so addicted”.

We talk ourselves in circles that lead us nowhere – feeling guilty for consuming it, then watching again and adoring every second, then realising something this hypnotically addictive can’t be good for us – but it’s on every night, and there’s no real reason to stop, is there?

How many people, back in the 50s, behaved similarly whenever they craved a cigarette? How many had a sneaky feeling it was wrong, but then looked up and saw a massive cigarette advert – “More Doctors Smoke Camels than any other cigarette!” – plastered to one of those rickety Routemaster buses? Just today, I saw a lit-from-behind ITV advert in the train station, next to the ones for the banks and the phone companies, which said: “WE OWN LOVE.”



Smoking gun ... Christina Hendricks in Mad Men. Photograph: Everett Collection/Rex

Then there's the added factor of social media; closing in on the people we think have acted wrongly, like flies swarming around a bin. It makes sense. The ability to call out behaviour we see as unacceptable, even triggering a wider conversation about it in the process, is one of the few plus points of Twitter and [Instagram](#). We are holding one another accountable for our actions, and why not? Why not desperately wrangle this reality TV show into the reluctant position of "exemplary moral compass"? "Be kind," we say, but also, "Jacques should rot for ever in hell for the way he's treated Paige". We send the tweet, ignoring the most sinister fact that some people who have been on the show went on to end their own lives.

The obsession lingers all day. We hit the mid-afternoon procrastination slump, open a new tab, and read a piece about how the show's organised misogyny is increasing at an exponential and societally harmful rate. There are clear signs of group female-targeted bullying in the villa this year, says the internet, and the producers really should rectify it. We lean back in our ergonomic chairs, gaze into the jungle-esque vista of houseplants we have created for ourselves and think, "You know, that's actually so true."

That night, though, we obviously watch it again. You're telling me Davide and Ekin-Su are still arguing? This is huge. I must fold myself on to the sofa like a shrimp this instant, and watch the dispute unfold in its entirety. When we're watching Love Island, its myriad issues fade into the background for the hour. It soothes us; it itches a part of our brain we didn't know needed scratching.

Knowing that it's bad for humanity isn't enough to make us stop – because we do know that it's bad. At best, it is brain-rotting; at a medium, it can negatively affect the societal code of acceptable behaviour; and at worst, it is lethal. We've seen this before, though, an infinite number of times – cigarettes, opium, freak shows, whole swathes of human vices we U-turned on – and we know that time is the only solution.

Right now, an act of human will, even a collective one, is not enough to compete with the powers making money from reality TV. It's just too good, and not properly bad enough, for any significant group of people to stop consuming it. We must, it seems, push these things to their most harmful limit, stretching as much profit out of them as we possibly can, before as a society we backtrack on ourselves, stub it out and go, "Wait, actually ... no. Enough."

*Iona David's book, *Is This Love or Dopamine?* (Harper Collins, £14.99) is out now. To support the Guardian and Observer order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply*

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Conservatives

Righter than right: Tories' hardline drift may lose the public

Polls suggest leadership race may be going further than even Conservatives might want on immigration, economy and climate



Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss during a BBC televised debate last week.
Photograph: BBC/Reuters

[Peter Walker](#) Political correspondent

[@peterwalker99](#)

Mon 1 Aug 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 Aug 2022 04.27 EDT

It is a thread running through the Conservative leadership campaign, as shown through the apparent desire to be toughest on asylum seekers, the biggest advocate of tax cuts, sceptical about net zero measures: this is a party that feels like it has shifted decisively to the right.

Some argue the arms race of populist policies from Liz Truss and [Rishi Sunak](#) exemplifies a new Conservatism, one fundamentally altered by Brexit and Boris Johnson, which has gradually absorbed the priorities of those who used to support Ukip.

Others, however, say robust talk on immigration is nothing new for a party that pioneered the hostile environment and was already trying to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, while talk of tax cuts is almost mandatory when the Tories pick a new leader.

But could all this be missing the point? Some experts query whether the avalanche of hard-right policy ideas, particularly on immigration and asylum, simply show a party out of touch with a public now notably more worried by issues like the cost of living.

One change does seem obvious. While the [Conservatives](#) have always had a strain of authoritarian rightwing opinion, this was balanced by a more liberal wing – one which, since Johnson became leader, has almost disappeared.

Anna Soubry, the former Conservative minister who quit the party for the ill-fated Change UK, argues that people with views like her, Kenneth Clarke, David Gauke and Dominic Grieve were once “pretty much the mainstream”.

[Graph showing that among Conservative voters, immigration remains more of a concern than health, Brexit or the environment](#)

“We weren’t the radicals, we were the norm, and now everything has changed,” she said. “Almost none of us are in parliament any more, and the ones who are left are now the fringe. And the mad people are running the government.”

As to whether the leadership contest shows a further rightward drift from Johnsonism, there was some evidence of this in early skirmishes which featured bullish, US-style talk about identity politics and a drastically reduced state from the [likes of Kemi Badenoch](#) and Suella Braverman.

With the cast now shrunk to Truss and Sunak, the focus has often been on immigration and asylum, with both [promising to further toughen](#) the

Rwanda policy.

Nick Lowles, the chief executive of Hope Not Hate, which monitors populist right and far-right sentiment, points to polling carried out for the group that shows what he calls a “notable shift” among Tory members on immigration and connected issues from 2018 to 2020.

“The centre of gravity in the Tory party has shifted to the right quite considerably,” he said. “It’s no surprise that whether candidates privately support the Rwanda policy or not, they take a hardline public position.”

Similarly, the leadership contest has seen a mass of pledges to cut taxes, with even the once fiscally sceptical Sunak [performing a U-turn](#) to say he would suspend VAT on energy bills.

[Graph showing that among UK adults, concern around immigration has halved since the Brexit referendum](#)

Neither has explicitly embraced the state-shrinking ethos of the likes of Badenoch, but the repeated talk of efficiencies and leaner organisations does imply a reduced role for public services.

Both the final two have also been notably cautious over the climate emergency, with Truss committed to suspending green levies on energy bills, while Sunak has all-but [ruled out any role](#) for new onshore wind projects in England.

The decision on which of the pair succeeds Johnson is made by Conservative members, which to a great extent explains the ideological tilt. There are, however, some signs the candidates might have misread even their own audience.

New polling for the Onward thinktank has shown that Conservative voters are notably keen on the target of net zero emissions by 2050, with almost a quarter saying they would no longer back the party if the commitment was ditched.

Rob Ford, professor of politics at the University of Manchester, argues that on immigration and taxation the party also risks becoming “increasingly out

of line with where the public, and even the Conservative-voting public, are”.

Graphic showing that Conservative MPs sit to the right of party members, councillors and voters on economic values

He points to [research led by Tim Bale](#), professor of politics at Queen Mary, University of London, showing that while Conservative members are, as you might expect, notably more rightwing on economic issues, Tory MPs are even more right-leaning.

“This tax-cutting, Singapore-on-Thames Thatcherism has always been a kind of elite hobby,” Ford said. “There has never been a mass electorate for that stuff. But the people who like it, like it so intensely that they kind of project this idea on to their membership.”

On immigration, [long-term YouGov tracking](#) of the three issues voters view as most important has seen the percentage picking immigration more than halve since before the Brexit referendum in 2016, while the proportion citing the economy has shot up.

“For a very long time, and not without reason, the Conservative party has regarded being authoritarian on immigration and asylum as essentially a no-lose position,” Ford said. “And I don’t know if that’s true any more.

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“Attitudes towards immigration are more positive now than they have been at any point for which we have polling in modern politics. It’s a strange context in which to be launching very hardline immigration policies.

“It’s also not a pressing issue with voters in general, or Conservative voters, or even with socially conservative Conservative voters. This is an answer to a question no one is asking anymore.

“People care about paying their gas bills. The bit of the Home Office they’re concerned about is getting a passport in time to go on holiday. It all risks looking out of touch, which wasn’t true in the past.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/aug/01/righter-than-right-tory-conservative-hardline-drift-public-opinion>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2022.08.01 - Opinion

- Only a country as complacent as the UK could give up its border privilege so easily
- The climate crisis is so boring – but I also hate the idea of burning to death
- The Lionesses have done it. This Euros win will change women's football for ever
- When Beyoncé dropped the same ableist slur as Lizzo on her new album, my heart sank

OpinionTravel

Only a country as complacent as the UK could give up its border privilege so easily

[Nesrine Malik](#)

Take it from someone who grew up with a ‘low-ranking’ passport – Brexit has made international travel inherently more chaotic and stressful



‘Travel to and within Europe is becoming unpredictable, costly and generally with more of the hurdles others are used to.’ Queues at Dover, 28 July 2022. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

Mon 1 Aug 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 Aug 2022 05.32 EDT

Whenever I’m flying with someone who is a relaxed traveller – someone who arrives just before check-in closes, then has a full sit-down breakfast while I approach meltdown – I tease them about something I call “border

privilege”. Chances are that relaxed traveller was born with access to a passport that has a high “power ranking”.

If you don’t know what that is, lucky you, for you are probably a holder of a passport that is high on the Henley passport index – a global ranking of countries in terms of the travel freedom their passports enjoy. The higher your passport ranks, the more “border privilege” you have – that is, the ability to cross national boundaries with, at best, a sense of excitement and, at worst, mild annoyance at the inconveniences of travel.

As the reality of Brexit bites and [international travel increases](#) post-lockdown, Britons are about to find out a few things about border privilege – namely, what happens when you lose it. Only a nation that viewed freedom of travel as an entitlement could have thrown it away so breezily. Those who did not grow up with border privilege can tell you that without it travel is an obstacle course; something you gird your loins for, prepare dossiers of documents for, say several hail Marys and inshallahs for.

The passports at the top of the Henley index allow the holder to visit almost 200 countries without securing a visa in advance. Those lower down, like the Sudanese one I was born with, must pass through the eye of a needle before being permitted to enter the majority of countries. Applicants face almost unscalable walls of bureaucracy and suspicion, comical demands for paperwork and, often, humiliation and refusal.

For a long time I was so terrified of travel falling through at the 11th hour that I would not make any plans until I was firmly on the other side of the border. I only booked tickets at the very last minute, at exorbitant cost, when I was certain that it was too late for anything to go wrong. I have had visa applications languish for weeks and months beyond the date I had intended to travel, missed the bedsides of ill relatives, the celebrations of friends and family, and too many work and training opportunities than I can bear to estimate.

Having a low-ranking passport means its holder is under constant threat of plummeting down trapdoors in the middle of a journey. A visa detail overlooked by a border official meant I was summoned, having just landed

in Riyadh, into a room of angry Saudi border officials who scolded me for this oversight, and sent me back on the next flight. I wasn't allowed to leave the airport until I had paid the price of the return flight, which took all the cash I had. Another time I was yanked into secondary processing in the US with no explanation and no recourse, where I was left for so long without information or update it probably amounted to some sort of illegal detention.

Since 2016, the British passport has fallen from joint first place on the index [to sixth](#). With that comes a new reality, which is already being ominously described as the "[new normal](#)". Travel to and within Europe is becoming unpredictable, costly and generally with more of the series of hurdles that others are used to. The introduction of a single stamp to enter the EU sounds like a small enough thing, but it triggers hours of queues, and then the domino effect starts – missed connections, missing baggage, refund mazes.

In this new reality, consistency is gone. What you will need to enter France is different from what you will need to enter Spain, the latter recently confirming that British visitors may need [proof of sufficient funds](#) to cover your stay, a return ticket and evidence of accommodation. Whatever the requirements, the adequacy of your evidence is to be assessed by a single guard within whose person lies the entire border. You will come to understand that all travel permits, both those that require only a stamp and those that require an involved visa process, are subject to different versions of the same brief sentence, usually appended to entry permits and disclaimers on travel information packs: "This is not a final entry visa, a border official can still refuse entry."

Someone with a low-ranking passport will tell you that in all interactions with this border official you absolutely must keep your counsel, in the knowledge that this guard who has your passport in their hands is, for the next few minutes, the most powerful person in your life. They are a sovereign, they can make or unmake laws there on the spot, and possibly plunge you into financial ruin. Even if things are bad, you must always remember that they can get much worse.

In all situations you must soothe yourself by repeating an incantation that reminds you that you are lucky: lucky to have got this far; lucky to have the

paperwork and means to travel at all; lucky that you have the skill and physical ability to negotiate an unexpected obstacle; and lucky that the worst you are likely to face is a smarting ego and wallet, rather than detention or deportation.

I recount these experiences with no rancour. I once sat, flinching, next to a trembling elderly south Asian woman in a wheelchair while she was being yelled at in secondary processing at a US airport for not being able to speak sufficient English to answer questions about who she was visiting. Whatever work her family had put into securing her entry to the country had been wiped out by a single new arbitrary requirement.

The most important lesson you will learn is that border officials may not know the law and yet are infinitely empowered. They can be poorly informed, under-resourced, or unable to keep up with border policy changes; and yet they are part of such a large and messy border policing machine that your poor treatment and their mistakes will be swallowed up in its churn.

For British travellers, however, there will be an extra kick. Your grievances will then be trivialised by [Brexit](#) evangelists. You will be told that these are small sacrifices to make, the gripes of a privileged few in the middle of a cost of living crisis in a country trying to take back control of its own borders and economic fate, that being unable to afford or navigate holidays to our nearest most cheaply accessible neighbours is a “first world” problem.

But eventually, what will become clear, as with all Brexit fallout, is that the benefits we have lost can be clawed back by those who have the most – the fast tracks, the travel insurance, the funds and the time. For the rest of us, I recommend compiling a paper dossier of supporting documents, a very early arrival at the airport and, if you are overcome by frustration or panic, remembering it could always be worse.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Opinion[Sofie Hagen](#)

The climate crisis is so boring – but I also hate the idea of burning to death

[Sofie Hagen](#)

I recycle, have cut my meat intake and don't have kids. And now I have to care about the environment more than ever



‘When I see the images of little polar bears on melting ice, I feel nothing.’
Photograph: Paul Souders/Getty Images

Mon 1 Aug 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 Aug 2022 07.44 EDT

I find the environment and the climate emergency the most boring topic on the (burning) planet. When people talk about it, it makes me wish that the planet would succumb sooner rather than later, so I didn't have to hear one more word about plastic straws and recycling. I flunked my geology exam on purpose, because studying for it was hell. When I see the images of little [polar bears on melting ice](#), I feel nothing.

Once, I posted a clip on Instagram from a documentary I made where I threw a set of scales into a lake to make a point about diet culture. The entire internet was enraged until I posted another video of the producer diving into the lake to pick it up again.

It's so dull: nature, plastic, CO₂, whatever. Fortunately, I don't have to find something fascinating in order to do it. I don't feel particularly excited about my laundry, but I do it because I have to. In the same way, I recycle because it's better to recycle than not to. I have cut my meat intake. I have decided to never have kids (which has nothing to do with the climate, though I'll happily pretend it does) and I vote with the environment in mind.

My attitude is my way of dealing with being utterly petrified by the overwhelming truth of the climate emergency – my brain dismisses it as “boring”. I still do (some of) the work, but I complain about having to do it.

So I really hate that, right now, I have to care about it more than ever. But I also hate burning to death, which will happen next summer, when it will be 65C, so I'd better buy one of those tiny brushes to clean my bamboo straws.

- Sofie Hagen is a writer and comedian
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OpinionWomen's football

The Lionesses have done it. This Euros win will change women's football for ever

[Carrie Dunn](#)

Even before Chloe Kelly's late winner, Sarina Wiegman's team captured the country's imagination. They will inspire a generation of girls and boys alike



England's Chloe Kelly (second right) celebrates scoring the winning goal against Germany in the Women's Euros final. Photograph: Jonathan Brady/PA

Sun 31 Jul 2022 14.48 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 Aug 2022 00.24 EDT

Sarina Wiegman's team have done just what Gareth Southgate's men did last summer – they've captured the imagination of the entire country with their determination, happiness and outrageous skill. Not only that, they went one

better – although they went to extra time, Chloe Kelly scored to make England the champions of Europe.

This has been the most-watched Women's Euros in history. It broke the previous record for Women's Euros in-person attendance way back in the group stages, when a cumulative total of 248,075 fans had already been through the turnstiles after just a few games. To top it off, the 87,192 fans at Wembley on Sunday meant that England v Germany had the highest attendance of any European Championship final – men's or women's.

Throughout the tournament, the team has been electrifying. That thunderbolt from Georgia Stanway cracking into the net against Spain as the clock ticked down towards the end of extra-time; Alessia Russo's backheeled nutmeg goal, a stunning piece of cheek against Sweden (and the third of four goals that England scored against the top-ranked side in Europe); the calmness and confidence of Leah Williamson, captaining her country in a senior tournament for the first time. The Lionesses have truly been roaring.

The Volkswagen advertising hoardings around the pitch note that this tournament is #NotWomensFootball, it's just football – and that's certainly the way it's been treated. For the first time, plenty of this summer's coverage has been about technique and tactics, not just the players and their personal lives. Both male and female pundits have been analysing the games, and the mainstream media have been chatting about the results – which is also what's happened in workplaces around the country. It's everyday watercooler talk, the same as you'd expect from any major men's tournament.

The sponsors have been flocking and it looks as if they'll stick around too, encouraged by the interest and engagement. We already knew that Barclays would have their name on the Women's Super League for years to come, but there have been lots of other new and surprising commercial partners signing up to associate their names with women's football.



The England team led by Leah Williamson lift the Women's Euro 2022 trophy. Photograph: Lisi Niesner/Reuters

The Lionesses' success is the culmination of years of work to create a top-class professional international team. In 1984, England reached the final of the first Women's European Championships. With amateur players and little to no funding, a squad couldn't just go into camp for a month to train, eat and socialise every day. Instead, the semi-finals and the final had home and away legs, so once the first match was over, each player could head back to her day job for a couple of weeks before playing the deciding fixture. England's captain, Carol Thomas, led the team out against Sweden at Kenilworth Road in Luton for the second leg on 27 May 1984. The weather conditions were vile; the few photographs and [limited video footage](#) of the day attest to that. Today the match might have been rearranged, but back then such flexibility in the calendar was impossible.

When the FA set up the WSL in 2011, one of their aims was to support a successful England side. After reaching the semi-finals at the Women's World Cup in 2015 and 2019, and at the last Euros in 2017, the Lionesses were aiming to go top that this year. It paid off: England's women have finally landed their first major senior trophy.

Although there is clearly brilliant talent already in the game – Williamson’s and Wiegman’s Lionesses are proof of that – this tournament must be the starting point of even greater progress. There has already been plenty of discussion about the need to [draw from a more diverse talent pool](#), with question-marks around whether the setup over the past decade has marginalised some groups who haven’t been able to access the limited training facilities for reasons of time, travel or money. The FA has announced the launch of 60 emerging talent centres across England, which should go some way to addressing that.

The [FA’s aims](#) – for 75% of schools to provide access to girls’ football and 75% of grassroots clubs to have at least one girls’ team – are also important steps. The Lionesses have been inspirational role models for the next generation – of both girls and boys, just as Southgate’s side were in 2021 – and the path needs to be clear for the superstars of tomorrow to progress and shine. The momentum from this exciting, exceptional group of players and their achievements this summer will go some way to doing that – and with that legacy, they will ensure that this tournament goes down in history in more ways than one.

- Carrie Dunn is a journalist and lecturer. She is the author of *Unsuitable for Females: The Rise of the Lionesses and Women’s Football in England*

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OpinionDisability

When Beyoncé dropped the same ableist slur as Lizzo on her new album, my heart sank

Hannah Diviney

Just weeks after Lizzo responded to my viral tweet by changing her lyrics, Queen Bey has made the same mistake on Renaissance



Beyoncé's struggles and nuanced lived experience of being a black woman 'doesn't excuse her use of ableist language', writes Hannah Diviney about the singer's new song, Heated, off her album Renaissance. Photograph: Carlijn Jacobs Silver

Mon 1 Aug 2022 02.01 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 Aug 2022 23.29 EDT

It's not very often that I don't know what to say, rendered speechless by ignorance, sadness and a simmering anger born of bone-deep exhaustion. But that's how I feel right now.

Six weeks ago I called out American singer, [Lizzo](#), on Twitter for her use of an ableist slur (“spaz”) in a new song. That tweet of mine – which explained how the slur was connected to my disability, cerebral palsy – took me less than five minutes to write and it went viral, landing on the front page of global news outlets including the BBC, New York Times and the Washington Post.

Lizzo herself even took notice, [changing the lyric](#) and giving us all a masterclass in how to be a true and effective ally.

♥ pic.twitter.com/QH6WufEjGh

— FOLLOW @YITYY (@lizzo) [June 13, 2022](#)

I thought we’d changed the music industry and started a global conversation about why ableist language – intentional or not – has no place in music. But I guess I was wrong, because now Beyoncé has gone and done exactly the same thing. In fact, she’s used the word “spaz” twice in a new song Heated, a co-write with Canadian rapper Drake off [her new album, Renaissance](#), which dropped on Friday.

I found out by way of a snarky mention on Twitter asking if I planned to tell Queen Bey to “do better” like I had with Lizzo. My heart sank. Here we were again, but this time the stakes feel higher. Calling this one out is a whole other level.

Whenever [Beyoncé](#) so much as breathes it becomes a cultural moment. She’s often the blueprint for the music industry – with artists and entertainers following her lead. That’s the status she has earned after decades of a career at the top, never making the same move twice, seeming to play in an entirely different league to the majority of the music industry.

Beyoncé’s commitment to storytelling musically and visually is unparalleled, as is her power to have the world paying attention to the narratives, struggles and nuanced lived experience of being a black woman –

a world I can only ever understand as an ally, and have no desire to overshadow.

But that doesn't excuse her use of ableist language – language that gets used and ignored all too often. Language you can be sure I will never ignore, no matter who it comes from or what the circumstances are. It doesn't excuse the fact that the teams of people involved in making this album somehow missed all the noise the disabled community made only six weeks ago when Lizzo did the same thing.

It doesn't explain how millions of people have already heard this album and yet aren't raising the issue, except to make fun of or degrade the disabled community.

I'm so tired. Disabled people deserve better. I don't want to have this conversation again.

- Hannah Diviney is a writer and disability advocate from Sydney. [This article was first published in Hireup](#) and is republished with permission

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2022.08.01 - Around the world

- [Taliban Policies risk de facto university ban for Afghan women, say officials](#)
- [Prisoner deal US's proposed swap for Griner and Whelan met with skepticism and fury](#)
- [Live Business: Eurozone factory activity contracts as recession fears rise; China's home sales slump](#)
- [Taiwan Rainbow Village defaced after operators told to move out](#)
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Rights and freedom**Women's rights and gender equality**

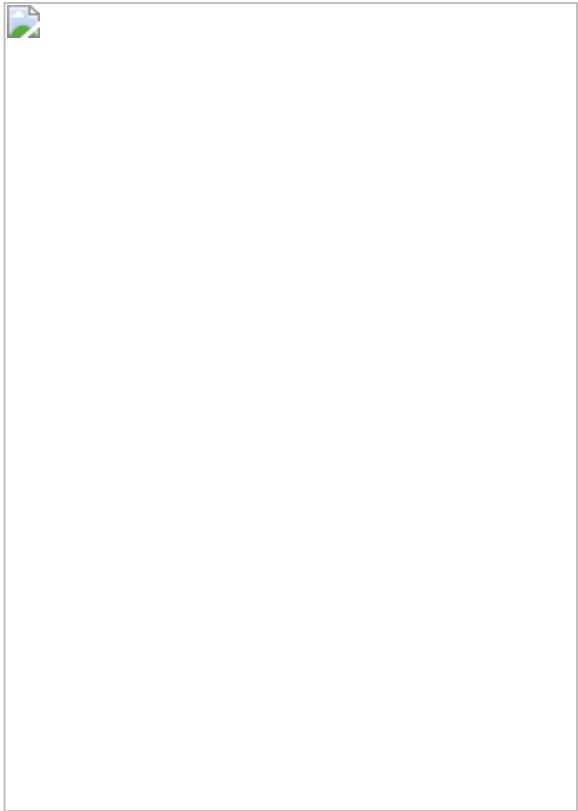
Taliban policies risk de facto university ban for Afghan women, say officials

Secret schools formed as girls banned from classes languish with no accredited route to university



The Taliban is said to be considering limiting female higher education to degrees in healthcare and education. Photograph: EPA

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About this content

[Emma Graham-Harrison](#) in Kabul

Mon 1 Aug 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 Aug 2022 06.59 EDT

The Taliban's ban on girls studying at high schools will become a de facto ban on university degrees for women if it stays in place, a Taliban spokesperson and university officials have said.

Girls will not have the documents needed to enrol in higher education, or the academic capacity to start university courses after nearly a year out of school.

“Automatically if we do not have high school graduates, we won’t have new female university students any more,” said Maulawi Ahmed Taqi, a spokesperson for the Taliban’s ministry of higher education.

“But I am hopeful that the ministry of education will come up with a policy and soon reopen the schools. Because we have realised that it is important, and the ban on girls’ education is temporary.”

Even if practical barriers to women entering higher education are removed in the coming months, authorities are also considering limiting them to degrees in healthcare and education, said a source with Taliban leadership ties.

Without a high school graduation certificate, Afghan students cannot take the *kankor* national university entrance exam, which is required to enrol even at private colleges.

Last year, the Taliban automatically “graduated” female twelfth grade students, making them eligible for the exam, should they want to attempt it when the new government holds one.

But Afghanistan’s new rulers have not yet scheduled a session of the *kankor* since they took control of the country.

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In the growing pool of would-be university students, women are already at a disadvantage competing against men who have been allowed to finish school. In the final weeks of 2022, when the Afghan school year ends, another class of boys will take their final 12th-grade exams.

It is not clear whether the Taliban will once again issue otherwise meaningless “high school graduation certificates” to girls who should be finishing with them. Afghan law bars them from taking the entrance exam without one.

Even if they are allowed to take part, university officials who handle admissions say they are worried how far girls will be falling behind, after

nearly a year barred from education.

Extra classes can help make up for a few missed months, but girls who did not even finish 11th grade cannot be expected to move on to university classes, said Dr Azizullah Amir, president and founder of the all-female Moraa university.

He set up the university to educate female medics, after his own mother died from septic shock having refused to see a male doctor about an infection on her thigh. “A beautiful life was ruined by the loss of my mum to a highly preventable infection,” he said. “How could I sit quiet when I could prevent other children becoming orphaned early for a silly reason.”

Students, teachers, administrative staff and even gardeners are all women, helping draw in students from Afghanistan’s most conservative regions. It offers a stricter segregation than the Taliban has required of government universities, Amir points out, yet it is now at risk of being unable to enrol new students.

“Even now we have time, if they restart classes, in the remaining months of the year we can graduate students, with more effort and support including intensive classes,” he said. “But if it continues, then next year you won’t have students in the university, apart from those who graduated in previous years, which will be small numbers.”

Online classes and illegal underground schools have allowed some girls to keep studying, including in parts of the Taliban’s deeply conservative southern heartland, but these efforts only reach a tiny minority.

Because secret schools are private initiatives, most have to charge fees to at least cover their costs, and the economic catastrophe that engulfed Afghanistan means few families can afford them.

Streaming or downloading classes requires at least a smartphone and a generous data package, again out of reach for many of the girls who were the first in their family to reach high school.

Afghanistan's new leaders have repeatedly claimed that they support women's education, as long as it complies with their definition of Islamic regulations.

This includes near total separation of the sexes, although male professors still teach some women's classes due to a shortage of specialists.

Taqi pointed to the ministry's efforts to shift schedules and reallocate buildings, so that women can attend single-sex classes, as a concrete demonstration of that support.

Some universities, including the leading Kabul University, now teach men and women on alternate days. Others have morning and afternoon shifts.

"Our ministry is committed, we have plans, policies, procedures and as you see education in university is going on for both girls and boys," he said.

But without a pathway to enrol new students, or should the Taliban bring in plans to limit what women can study, those changes will be little more than a temporary accommodation for the last classes of female students in many subjects.

"They want to restructure the universities, to streamline girls' education to specific faculties," said the source with Taliban links. "They [ask]: 'Why should girls study engineering?'

"They will be restricted to specific faculties, medicine, education, sharia. I don't even believe they are going to be that progressive to allow them to be doctors."

Lutfullah Qasimyar contributed reporting

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/aug/01/taliban-policies-risk-de-facto-university-ban-for-afghan-women-say-officials>

US foreign policy

US's proposed swap for Griner and Whelan met with skepticism and fury

While some have praised the Biden administration for the deal, others are upset over the prospect of releasing Viktor Bout, nicknamed the 'Merchant of Death'



Viktor Bout, Brittney Griner and Paul Whelan. Photograph: Nicolas Asfouri/AFP/Getty Images

[Maya Yang](#)

Mon 1 Aug 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 Aug 2022 12.05 EDT

A proposal by the [Biden administration](#) to exchange notorious Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout for WNBA star Brittney Griner and former marine Paul Whelan, two high-profile Americans currently detained in Russia, has been met with praise, confusion and fury.

While some have praised the Biden administration and state department for doing whatever it takes to bring back Griner and Whelan, others have cast skepticism on the deal, especially when it comes to releasing Bout, who has a notorious international reputation.

Many have wondered: is it worth exchanging two wrongfully detained Americans for an arms dealer nicknamed the “Merchant of Death”? Others ask if the deal should include Marc Fogel, the “other American” imprisoned in Russia after trying to enter the country last year with half an ounce of medical marijuana. Still more wonder if any exchange might encourage further hostage-taking. What about the several hundred thousand Americans who continue to be arrested domestically on marijuana-related charges?

In February, Griner was arrested at a Moscow airport after authorities found vape canisters containing cannabis oil – for which she had a doctor’s recommendation – in her bags. The arrest of the Phoenix Mercury star quickly made headlines as it came amid heightened US-Russia tensions ahead of Moscow sending its forces into Ukraine a week later.

Griner has since been detained in Russia and faces a maximum of 10 years in prison if convicted of transporting drugs.



Brittney Griner speaks to her lawyers standing in a cage at a courtroom prior to a hearing in Khimki, Russia on 26 July. Photograph: Alexander Zemlianichenko/AP

In December 2018, former US marine and corporate security executive Paul Whelan was arrested in Russia on espionage charges and was sentenced to 16 years in prison. [According to Russian officials](#), he was caught with a flash drive that contained classified information. Whelan, who also holds passports from Canada, the UK and Ireland, has repeatedly denied the charges and claims that he was set up.

The US government has denounced Whelan's charges as false and declared both Whelan and Griner were being "wrongfully detained".

On Wednesday, the secretary of state, Antony Blinken, announced that the US has made a "substantial proposal" to Russia to release Whelan and Griner. Although Blinken refused to say what the US was offering in return, a source familiar with the matter [confirmed](#) a CNN report that Washington was willing to swap Bout, who is serving a 25-year prison sentence in the US, as part of the exchange.

Prisoner swaps have been a long part of the history between the two former cold war adversaries. The first major exchange between the US and the Soviet Union occurred in February 1962 when Americans gave up Rudolf Abel, a convicted KGB spy, in exchange for American pilot Gary Powers, whose U2 spy plane was shot down over the Soviet Union two years earlier. The exchange, which took place on the fog-covered Glienicke Bridge on a cold, cloudy Berlin morning, was [adapted](#) into a Steven Spielberg thriller more than 50 years later.

The Powers-Abel exchange paved the way for further prisoner swaps. A little over 20 years later, the US conducted what one American official called the "[biggest spy swap](#)" in history. The US released four eastern European spies in exchange for 25 people detained in East Germany and Poland. In more recent memory, 10 Russian agents detained by the US were exchanged in 2010 for four Russian officials that the Kremlin had jailed over their illegal contacts with the west.



Paul Whelan holds a sign as he stands inside a defendants' cage during his verdict hearing in Moscow on 15 June 2020. Photograph: Maxim Shemetov/Reuters

In April, former US marine Trevor Reed was released back to the US after being detained in Russia since 2019. Russian authorities had accused Reed of attacking a Moscow police officer and sentenced him to nine years in jail. In exchange for Reed, the US released jailed pilot Konstantin Yaroshenko, who was sentenced in 2011 to 20 years in prison for conspiring to import more than \$100m worth of cocaine into the US.

Despite these exchanges, none have quite involved the notoriety of a figure like Bout. Born in 1967 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, to a bookkeeper and a car mechanic, Bout went on to [train](#) as an interpreter at Moscow's Soviet Military Institute of Foreign Languages.

Rumoured to speak six languages, Bout developed a decades-long career by acquiring Soviet military transport planes and filling them with various weapons that were left behind after the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. Since then, Bout has [supplied](#) weapons to conflicts around the world including Afghanistan, Angola, Congo, Lebanon, Somalia and Yemen.

For decades, governments and rebels fought each other with weapons that Bout sold to either side.

In 2008, Bout was arrested in Bangkok after he was caught on camera trying to sell weapons for use against Americans by undercover US Drug Enforcement Administration agents. He was convicted in a New York court in 2011 and was sentenced to 25 years at a federal prison in Marion, Illinois.

Reports of Bout's potential release have since been met with an array of emotions.

Kathi Austin, founder of the Conflict Awareness Project, a non-profit that investigates major arms traffickers, expressed concerns over the possibility of Bout's release.

"I spent nearly 15 years chasing Bout around the globe to stop his trade in death ... My life and that of other colleagues and UN peacekeepers were put on the line to bring him to justice," she told the Guardian.

"You cannot imagine how much I have emotionally struggled with the idea of Bout's release ... Putin knew very well what he was doing by making Brittney Griner a bargaining chip ... In a post-release situation ... Putin is certain to weaponize Bout in areas of the world where the Merchant of Death has a proven track record," she said.



Viktor Bout waits in a holding cell in Bangkok on 9 March 2009.
Photograph: Sukree Sukplang/REUTERS

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the nonpartisan membership organization Arms Control Association, echoed Austin's concerns.

In a statement to the Guardian, Kimball said: "Releasing [Viktor Bout](#) ... could certainly lead to adverse consequences ... If he is part of a prisoner swap with Russia, it could damage future efforts to hold accountable those who illegally facilitate dangerous weapons transfers to warlords, conflict zones and undemocratic regimes."

Jodi Vittori, a former air force lieutenant colonel who is now a professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, said: "Given that Mr Bout has been incarcerated since then, it is unlikely that his arms trade networks remain significantly intact."

Nevertheless, Vittori expressed concern over the irony of such a proposal, saying: "Trading American hostages for a notorious Russian arms trafficker with the ominous moniker of the Merchant of Death sends the world mixed messages at a time when the United States is striving to arm Ukraine as it fights for its life and democracy against Russia."

Jordan Cohen, a defense policy and arms sale analyst at the Cato Institute, cast doubt on Bout's ability to cause harm in the short term if he is released. "US and western intelligence will likely track him and his network to make sure no sudden arms trafficking deals are happening. Beyond that, his years in prison and solitary confinement also likely diminished his ability to quickly mobilize his network," Cohen told the Guardian.

Others have praised the Biden administration for its proposal. Michael McFaul, former US ambassador to Russia during the Obama administration, tweeted: "I applaud @SecBlinken & @StateDept efforts to bring Britney Griner and Paul Whelan home even if it means handing over Viktor Bout."

However, he urged the state department to also include Marc Fogel in the deal. Fogel, a former history teacher at the Anglo-American School in Moscow, was arrested last August after trying to enter Russia with medical marijuana that his doctor prescribed him to treat "[severe spinal pain](#)". Russian authorities sentenced him to 14 years of hard labor, accusing him of committing "large-scale drugs smuggling".

"The tragic situations of Brittney Griner and Marc Fogel seem very similar. So I would hope Fogel could be included in a package deal. Getting three innocent Americans back, not just two, for one real criminal, seems like a good trade to me," McFaul, whose sons Fogel taught at the Anglo-American School, told the Guardian.

In an interview with the Washington Post, Jane Fogel said that her hopes of securing her husband's release have been fading, saying: "There's a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach that Marc will be left behind."

While Griner's wife received a call from Joe Biden, Fogel's family has been stalled at the state department's "[mid-functionary level](#)". In a [letter](#) Marc Fogel recently addressed to his family regarding the prisoner swap reports that the Washington Post reviewed, he wrote: "That hurt ... Teachers are at least as important as bballers."

Meanwhile, others have criticized the irony of the state department's proposal as hundreds of thousands of Americans remain incarcerated over marijuana charges.

The Libertarian party of New Hampshire responded to the news of the prisoner swap by [writing](#) about action on drug offenses in the US, saying: “America is mad at Russia for doing to Brittney Griner what it does to 374,000 people per year.”

Another user [tweeted](#): “I often wonder how Americans who have family members still in American prisons over weed, feels watching this entire #BrittneyGriner thing unfolds?”

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UK factory growth hits two year-low; oil drops; German retail sales in record fall – as it happened

British manufacturers suffer first drop in output in over two years in July, while retail sales in Germany slumped over 8% as inflation hit consumers

Updated 6d ago

[*Graeme Wearden*](#)

Mon 1 Aug 2022 10.44 EDTFirst published on Mon 1 Aug 2022 02.55 EDT

Key events

- [6d ago](#)
[Closing post](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[US factory PMI hits two year low as output and new orders fall](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Bank of England scraps mortgage affordability test](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Grain ship leaves Ukraine port for first time since Russia blockade](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Hinkley Point B closes, despite strains on Britain's power supplies](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Tougher rules to tackle misleading high-risk investment adverts](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[HSBC staff get £1,500 cost of living payment](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[UK factory output and orders shrink](#)
- [6d ago](#)

[Eurozone manufacturing downturn worsens in July as recession risks intensify](#)

- [6d ago](#)
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- [6d ago](#)
[South Korea's manufacturing deteriorates for first time since September 2020](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Introduction: China home sales slump; factories under pressures](#)



Workers on the production line at Nissan's factory in Sunderland.
Photograph: Owen Humphreys/PA

[Graeme Wearden](#)

Mon 1 Aug 2022 10.44 EDTFirst published on Mon 1 Aug 2022 02.55 EDT

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[04.57](#)

UK factory output and orders shrink

UK factories also had a troubling start to the summer, matching the gloomy picture across Europe and in Asia.

British manufacturers suffered their first drop in output in over two years in July, as new orders and fresh export business both continued to decline.

Companies were hit by weaker market demand, difficulties in sourcing components and transportation delays, as well as a drop in new business.

This pulled the manufacturing PMI to a 25-month low, as activity growth slowed.

July data for the UK manufacturing sector revealed a slowdown in growth with the [#PMI](#) at a 25-month low of 52.1. Output fell for the first time since May 2020 amid reduced intakes of new work and weaker market demand. Read more: <https://t.co/XeZpw900Eo> pic.twitter.com/JExsJahl16

— S&P Global PMI™ (@SPGlobalPMI) [August 1, 2022](#)

Firms blamed a drop in new orders on the cost of living crisis, weak domestic demand, client uncertainty, warmer-than-usual weather and lower intakes of new export business.

Foreign demand fell for the sixth month in a row, amid reports of weaker inflows from mainland Europe (partly due to post-Brexit issues), the USA and China.

Rob Dobson, director at **S&P Global Market Intelligence**, said:

“The UK manufacturing sector shifted into reverse gear at the start of the third quarter. Output contracted for the first time since May 2020, as new order intakes suffered the first back-to-back monthly decreases for two years. Rising market uncertainty, the cost of living crisis, war in

Ukraine, ongoing supply issues and inflationary pressures are all hitting demand for goods at the same time, while lingering post-Brexit issues and the darkening global economic backdrop are hampering exports.

“With the Bank of England implementing further interest rate hikes to combat inflation, the outlook is beset with downside risks. With this in mind, the continued low degree of optimism among manufacturers is of little surprise.

There was one bright note - job creation accelerated as companies addressed staff shortages.

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Key events

- [6d ago](#)
[Closing post](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[US factory PMI hits two year low as output and new orders fall](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Bank of England scraps mortgage affordability test](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Grain ship leaves Ukraine port for first time since Russia blockade](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Hinkley Point B closes, despite strains on Britain's power supplies](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[Tougher rules to tackle misleading high-risk investment adverts](#)
- [6d ago](#)
[HSBC staff get £1,500 cost of living payment](#)
- [6d ago](#)
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- [6d ago](#)
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[6d ago](#)[10.44](#)

Closing post

Time to recap.

Global factory growth has weakened as the slowing global economy, and high commodity and energy prices, hits manufacturers.

Purchasing managers from across Europe, Asia and the US have given the same message -- new business came under pressure in July, while material shortages continued to hinder growth.

[In the UK, British manufacturers suffered their first drop in output in over two years in July](#), as new orders and fresh export business both continued to

decline.

Factory bosses pointed the finger at several culprits -- from the cost of living crisis and weak domestic demand, to client uncertain and even warmer-than-usual weather.

China's factory sector posted a surprise contraction, while [**South Korea**](#) and [**Taiwan**](#) both saw the first fall in factory output since 2020.

[In the eurozone, most countries were hit by the factory slowdown,](#) increasing the risk of recession later this year.

The US manufacturing sector also softened last month, with two PMI surveys showing growth at a two-year low.

Germany also suffered a slump in consumer spending, with [retail sales dropping at the fastest rate since at least 1994.](#)

Elsewhere, [a grain shipment has left the port of Odesa for the first time in months,](#) testing the deal between Ukraine and Russia to unlock food supplies.

The IoD has reported that UK firms are cutting investment plans as soaring prices, [**Brexit**](#) trading difficulties and political uncertainty all leave bosses pessimistic about the economic outlook.

The cost of living crisis means more than one in eight UK households fear they have no further way to make cuts to afford a sharp increase in annual energy bills this autumn.

Waitrose is removing best-before dates from nearly 500 fresh food products in an effort to reduce food waste.

The Bank of England has scrapped a mortgage affordability test, meaning it will be easier for potential homebuyers to get onto the housing ladder (despite worries that rising interest rates could hit borrowers).

The UK's long-awaited register of overseas entities, designed to crack down on oligarchs and criminals laundering money through UK property has come into effect -- prompting lawyers, tax experts, MPs, accountants and transparency campaigners to warn it is "riddled with flaws and loopholes".

Here's the rest of today's stories:

We'll be back in the morning, to discover how much oil giant BP made last quarter....

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[6d ago](#) [10.27](#)

A second survey of US factories, from the Institute of Supply Management, as also found that growth hit a two-year low last month.

The ISM found that new orders and employment both contracted in July, while production and backlogs both grew.

But... exports and imports continued to growth, while prices increased at a slower rate -- which may show that inflationary pressures are easing off.
[More here.](#)

[\\$SPY](#) July ISM Manufacturing PMI lower at 52.8 ...
pic.twitter.com/WuigOcDssO

— David H (@JIMROInvest) [August 1, 2022](#)

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[6d ago 10.14](#)

Gazprom daily gas production plummeted in July to the lowest since at least 2008 as its exports to key markets fell for a fourth consecutive month, Bloomberg reports.

Russia's gas giant pumped an average of 774 million cubic meters a day last month, down 14% from June, according to Bloomberg calculations based on data published Monday.

Gazprom's output so far this year is 262.4 billion cubic meters, a decline of 12% from the same period a year ago. The company planned to produce 494.4 billion cubic meters in 2022, down 4% from last year.

The drop in production follows a significant decline in Gazprom's deliveries to the European Union, historically its single biggest market, amid the deterioration of Russia's relations with the West over the war in Ukraine.

Flows through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline were temporarily halted for maintenance work last month, and were cut to just 20% of full capacity last week. Last weekend Russia stopped deliveries to Latvia.

But while deliveries to Europe have fallen, [Gazprom claims to have increased gas exports to China through the Power of Siberia pipeline by 60.9%](#) in the first seven months of 2022.

[Here's the story.](#)

.@GazpromEN ☰ Jan-July 2022:

- extraction is down 12% yoy to 262bcm
- exports to “far abroad” down by 34.7% (by 40bcm)

- EU ~~gas~~ consumption down by 31bcm (storage up by 43bcm, need additional 30bcm to reach 2019/20 levels)
- exports to China ~~gas~~ up 61% via “Power of Siberia”.
 - Elina Ribakova ~~gas~~ (@elinaribakova) [August 1, 2022](#)

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Updated at 10.26 EDT

[6d ago](#) [10.05](#)

US factory PMI hits two year low as output and new orders fall

US factories have reported their first drop in output in two years, as weaker demand leads to a drop in new orders.

The US manufacturing PMI, released by S&P Global, has hit a two-year low of 52.2 in July, down from 52.7 in June. That shows muted growth.

The report says:

Contributing to subdued conditions was the first drop in output since June 2020 which reflected weaker demand conditions, as new orders fell at the fastest pace for over two years

Nonetheless, backlogs of work continued to increase as labor and material shortages hampered efforts to process incoming new work.

US S&P MANUFACTURING PMI FINAL JULY 2022 PEŁNY RAPORT

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pic.twitter.com/82179GF0OT

— Polska ekonomia, kontra reszta świata (@PolskaEkonomia) [August 1, 2022](#)

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[6d ago](#)[09.51](#)

Bank of England scraps mortgage affordability test



Rupert Jones

Thousands of potential homebuyers may find it easier to get on to the property ladder after a key mortgage affordability test was scrapped by the [Bank of England](#).

The central bank [has said the change](#) – taking effect today – should not be viewed as “a relaxation of the rules”. However, some commentators said that while the move would be welcomed by many, there was a risk that some people would take out mortgages they were unable to afford.

The Bank has removed a requirement that forced borrowers to be able to afford a three-percentage-point rise in interest rates before they could be approved for a home loan.

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[6d ago](#)[09.51](#)

The Baltic index, which tracks shipping costs, has extended its recent slide today as demand from China slows.

The Baltic Exchange's main sea freight index hit its lowest since February, weighed down by slowing orders for iron ore and coal shipments to feed Chinese factories, where growth slowed last month.

Yiannis Parganas, research analyst for **Intermodal**, explained (via Reuters):

There is decreasing demand for mineral, both iron ore and coal cargoes especially from South America, Brazil and Indonesia.

And of course, due to the slowdown in the European economy, we've seen a decline in steel demand there as well."

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[6d ago](#)[09.18](#)

Grain ship leaves Ukraine port for first time since Russia blockade

Isobel Koshiw

A ship carrying Ukrainian grain has left the port of Odesa for the first time since the start of the Russian invasion, testing the crucial deal agreed between the two countries last month.

The Sierra Leone-flagged ship Razoni, carrying 26,000 tonnes of corn, finally set sail for Lebanon on Monday morning after [weeks of negotiations](#) between Ukraine and Russia, led by Turkey and the United Nations.

Russia has been blockading Ukraine's ports since the start of the war, stoking a worldwide grain shortage that has caused the UN to warn of a [looming hunger catastrophe](#).

Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine's infrastructure minister, said:

“Ukraine, together with our partners, has taken another step today in preventing world hunger.”

Here's the full story, from our correspondent in Kyiv, **Isobel Koshiw**:

Around 20 million tons of grain are trapped in Ukraine, so unlocking these stores could ease the risk of worldwide grain shortage and global hunger.

But, Ukraine's president **Volodymyr Zelenskiy** warned yesterday that the country's harvest this year could be half its usual amount because of the Russian invasion, adding to concerns of shortages.

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Updated at 09.19 EDT

[6d ago](#)[08.57](#)

Hinkley Point B closes, despite strains on Britain's power supplies



Nuclear reactors A (left) and B are seen at Hinkley Point nuclear power station near Cannington in southwest England. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

The UK's Hinkley Point B nuclear power station has been switched off today, despite the country facing the risk of energy shortages this winter.

The closure of the plant will remove nearly a gigawatt of power generation capacity from the UK's system – enough to supply 1.5m homes – before a winter in which the war in Ukraine is expected to weigh heavily on electricity supplies.

Hinkley Point B in Somerset has been producing power since 1976; without it, the UK will need to produce more electricity from other sources such as gas.

The reactor had reached the end of its working life, having already seen its retirement extended by seven years.

There had been suggestions earlier this year that Hinkley Point B could be kept running for longer, but the government did not make any formal request to its owner, EDF, to keep the reactors open.

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[6d ago](#)[08.45](#)

Russia's central bank has extended restrictions on foreign currency cash withdrawals for another six months, as its financial sector continues to be hit by sanctions.

Citizens with foreign currency accounts have been barred from withdrawing more than \$10,000 since March, after Russia's financial sector was frozen out of the international systems following the Ukraine war.

Those restrictions were due to run until September 9th, but will now run until 9th March 2023.

The Bank of Russia explains:

The Bank of Russia has to preserve the said and other foreign cash restrictions due to the sanctions enacted against Russia that prohibit Russian financial institutions from purchasing western countries' cash.

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[6d ago](#)[08.09](#)

Oil prices are under pressures because weakening prospects for global demand may outweigh increasing supplies of crude, says **Daniel Kostecki**, a senior financial analyst at trading platform [Conotoxia](#).

Official data released over the weekend showed that the July production activity of China, the world's largest oil importer, unexpectedly declined.

Global prospects for lower demand and the outbreak of COVID-19 may have contributed to this. In turn, lower demand could put pressure on oil prices. The downtrend may be exacerbated as the Chinese and US economies are showing signs of weakness. Last week's data showed the US economy contracting for the second consecutive quarter.

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[6d ago](#)[08.07](#)

Oil is extending its losses...

Energy update:

Oil - WTI (undated) 94.44 -3.55%

Oil - Brent (undated) 100.83 -2.82%

Natural Gas 7.958 -3.42%

Heating Oil 3.4744 -2.03%

Gasoline 3.008 -2.98%

London Gas Oil 1050 -2.6%

Carbon Emissions 7978 +1.56%[#Oil](#) [#Brent](#) [#WTI](#) [#OOTT](#)

— IGSquawk (@IGSquawk) [August 1, 2022](#)

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[6d ago](#)[07.57](#)

Hong Kong's economy was sluggish last quarter, as the Covid-19 pandemic continued to disrupt activity and exports and investments remained subdued.

Hong Kong's GDP rose by 0.9% in April-June, much weaker than the 3% expected, and shrank by 1.4% on a year-on-year basis.

The decline of GDP was mainly due to weak external trade during the quarter, with exports down 8.6% in real terms from a year ago.

HONG KONG GDP QOQ ADVANCE ACTUAL 0.9% (FORECAST 3%, PREVIOUS -3.0%) [\\$MACRO](#)

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pic.twitter.com/oS2DtHanN5

— Polska ekonomia, kontra reszta świata (@PolskaEkonomia) [August 1, 2022](#)

Hong Kong's borders have been largely closed since early 2020, as the city largely follows the zero-Covid policy of mainland China.

A Government spokesman said that the Hong Kong economy improved in the second quarter, but the extent of improvement was smaller than expected.

As the local epidemic situation generally improved and the social distancing measures were relaxed in tandem, and aided by the Government's various support measures, there was some revival in domestic activities, but the recent increase in the number of COVID-19 cases and tightened financial conditions have constrained the momentum in the latter part of the quarter.

Externally, weakened global demand and continued disruptions to cross-boundary land cargo flows between the Mainland and Hong Kong weighed heavily on Hong Kong's exports.

[#HONGKONG](#) 2Q GDP -1.4% Y/Y; EST. -0.2% - BBG

— Marco Da Costa (@TraderMarcoCost) [August 1, 2022](#)

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6d ago **07.40**

Tougher rules to tackle misleading high-risk investment adverts

The UK's financial regulator has brought in new rules to tackle misleading adverts encouraging high-risk investments.

The tougher curbs ban investment companies from offering certain incentives to invest, such as “refer a friend bonuses”.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) brought in the clampdown following concerns that many people investing in high-risk products do not understand the risks - namely that they could lose money.

We're strengthening our rules for firms communicating and approving financial promotions for high risk investments
<https://t.co/rGwpTSysKK>

— Financial Conduct Authority (@TheFCA) [August 1, 2022](#)

The new rules don't cover cryptoassets -- despite this being a particularly high-risk area, and one [notorious for misleading advertising](#) -- because the government is drawing up legislation to determine how crypto marketing will be brought into the FCA's remit.

The FCA expects that its final rules on the promotion of qualifying cryptoassets will be similar as for other high-risk products, adding:

Crypto remains high risk so people need to be prepared to lose all their money if they choose to invest in cryptoassets.

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6d ago 07.21

The oil price has dipped today as the slowdown in factory activity, particularly in China, has indicated that demand could weaken.

Brent crude is down 1.3%, or over a dollar a barrel, to \$102.57,

Raffi Boyadjian, lead investment analyst at XM, explains:

Weaker manufacturing PMIs in China, Japan and South Korea have raised fresh question marks about the growth outlook, especially as Chinese policymakers do not appear too enthusiastic about splashing out more money to shore up the economy.

#SINGAPORE -Oil prices dropped on Monday, as weak manufacturing data from **#China** & **#Japan** for July weighed on outlook for demand, **#Brent** crude futures were down \$1.19, or 1.1%, at \$102.78 a barrel. U.S. WTI **#crude** was at \$97.19 a barrel, down \$1.43, or 1.5%.
pic.twitter.com/DkXUBHPcw9

— Fiscal Autonomy (@AutonomyFiscal) [August 1, 2022](#)

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6d ago 06.53



Sarah Butler

Waitrose has become the latest UK supermarket to remove ‘best before’ dates on hundreds of food items, leaving its customers to judge whether they’re good to eat.

From September, the staff-owned supermarket chain will scrap the dates on nearly 500 packaged fruit and vegetable products, including lettuce, cucumber and peppers.

They hope to encourage consumers to use their own judgment about when food has gone off, cutting food waste. [More here.](#)

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[Newest](#)
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[Oldest](#)[Oldest](#)

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Taiwan](#)

Taiwan's Rainbow Village defaced after operators told to move out

Employees of contractor questioned over alleged vandalism after colourful murals painted over



The Rainbow Village in the Taiwanese city of Taichung. Photograph: Helen Davidson/The Guardian

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Mon 1 Aug 2022 04.42 EDT Last modified on Mon 1 Aug 2022 05.18 EDT

A popular cultural attraction and one of Taiwan's most "Instagrammable" sites has allegedly been defaced by the operators contracted to run it, after they were told to move out for six months while restoration work was conducted.

It was discovered on Friday that many of the walls of the Rainbow Village had been covered with paint overnight. Police detained 14 employees of the Rainbow Creative Co for questioning over the alleged vandalism, including the company's head, Wei Pi-Jen, who defended their actions as a protest rather than "malicious destruction". They were released on Sunday.

Central Taiwan Rainbow Village defaced, artist condemns perpetrator as 'villain' <https://t.co/X0Et1RTGYA> pic.twitter.com/SDxh241LXU

— Taiwan News (@TaiwanNews886) [July 31, 2022](#)

The Rainbow Village is a former military housing estate in the city of Taichung, on Taiwan's central western coast. Many similar villages, once common across Taiwan as housing for the dependents of veterans, have been demolished. In 2008 as Taichung's city centre grew towards its outskirts, the site was earmarked for development and residents were offered compensation to move.

The last remaining resident was a former soldier, Huang Yung-Fu, who had lived in the village for more than 30 years. Not wanting to leave, Huang began painting dozens of neighbouring houses, and his work caught the eye of local university students who campaigned to save the site.

It now reportedly welcomes 1 million visitors annually, attracted to the bright and colourful murals covering the small and quirky homes. Under contract with the Taichung city government, the Rainbow Creative Co has maintained and operated the village as a tourism venture for almost 10 years, while Huang has continued to live on site.

In a handwritten note obtained by local media, Huang, 99, said he was very sad to learn of the murals' destruction. "My lifetime's work was destroyed by him," Huang said, referring to Wei.

Across social media and Google reviews for the attraction, Taiwanese people expressed anger at the Rainbow Creative Co, with many calling for prosecution.

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“There are many ways to deal with things, and you use the method that everyone thinks is the least ideal,” said one commenter in reply to the company’s post. Another said: “Whoever provokes you, you should go to that person. Why involve Grandpa Rainbow? You have ruined most of Grandpa’s hard work like this, won’t your conscience be uneasy?”

Rainbow Creative Co defended the actions, saying Wei had copyright over the murals, and accused the city government of “administrative violence” by forcing it out with just five days’ notice. “Why not give us an early notice or announcement so that we can prepare in advance, instead of completely ignoring the livelihood of our 22 employees?” it said.

Wei said the act was the “only way to protect my rights and interests”, and that none of the work covered up by his team had been painted by Huang. The two parties are involved in a legal dispute over profit-sharing and copyright.

Neither party could be reached for further comment.

Additional reporting by Xiaoqian Zhu

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/01/taiwan-rainbow-village-defaced-after-operators-told-to-move-out>

HSBC

HSBC boss hits back at calls for breakup of business from investor

Noel Quinn says such a move would come with ‘material costs’ and ‘high risk of failure’



HSBC has reported flat pre-tax profits of \$5bn (£4.1bn) for the second quarter. Photograph: Tim Ireland/PA

[Kalyeena Makortoff](#) Banking correspondent

[@kalyeena](#)

Mon 1 Aug 2022 08.50 EDT First published on Mon 1 Aug 2022 04.28 EDT

HSBC’s chief executive has hit back at calls for a breakup from the top shareholder Ping An, saying splitting the business would come with “material costs” and a “high risk of failure” that could harm investors long-term.

It came as the bank reported flat pre-tax profits of \$5bn (£4.1bn) for the second quarter, as income from mortgages and loans was offset by the amount it had to put aside for potential defaults linked to weaker economic forecasts.

That resulted in a lower bonus pool for bankers, which will be paid out next spring, with \$400m raised for performance-related payouts in the first half of the year versus \$900m a year earlier.

However, that is 12 times more than the roughly £27m it pledged for 18,000 of its lowest-paid UK staff, who will receive a one-off payment of £1,500 this month to help with the cost of living crisis. HSBC [paid 451 of its bankers €1m \(£837,000\)](#) or more last year, a 40% increase on the number of staff with such payouts in 2020.

Meanwhile, shareholders are in line for an interim cash dividend of nine cents a share, although HSBC pledged to boost payouts and start paying dividends on a quarterly basis again from the start of 2023.

The move, which pushed its stock up more than 7% on Monday, appears to be an attempt to appease investors after its [largest shareholder](#) – the Chinese insurer Ping An – revived calls to separate the bank's profitable Asian business from the rest of the lender's operations in April.

Ping An is among those who have been disappointed at their returns on their investment, after HSBC cancelled the dividend during the first UK coronavirus lockdown and later reinstated it at only half the level paid out before the pandemic.

However, the lender's chief executive, Noel Quinn, used Monday's earnings announcement to hit back at demands for a breakup, defending the bank's strategy and stressing its success was dependent on maintaining its global network.

Quinn told reporters that the bank had hired external lawyers and consultants to consider the costs and benefits of a split but ultimately determined:

“Alternative structural options will not deliver increased value for shareholders.”

He said: “Rather, they would have a material negative impact on value, and our current strategy is the fastest and safest way to get to the higher returns and dividends we all want to see ... The primary factor is about disruption to, and potential loss of, the international synergies.”

He said HSBC’s analysis showed that carving out a relatively small European bank in a single market could cost more than \$2bn, “and even then, has a high risk of failure. So you can understand the risks of standing up separate entities for a franchise of our size ... the cost and execution risks over a three-to-five-year period are material.”

Quinn also rebuffed [calls by the Hong Kong politician Christine Fong](#) for Ping An to take a seat on HSBC’s board. Quinn claimed any such move could pose a conflict of interest “given the overlapping business models and given the overlaps in geography”.

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Ping An is the latest in a line of critics putting pressure on HSBC, which has been pushed to consider its loyalties amid political tensions between the east and west after [controversially accepting](#) China’s authoritarian crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong in 2020.

However, Quinn denied that calls for a split were politically motivated. “The conversations between ourselves and Ping An have been purely around commercial issues. We do not see this as an issue of politics,” he said.

“We believe also that the strategy that we’re pursuing as an international bank, alongside many of our peers and global competitors, is a strategy has stood in good stead over the past 157 years and will continue to serve us well.”

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Headlines thursday 4 august 2022

- [Live Taiwan confirms multiple Chinese missile launches into waters of Taiwan strait during military drills](#)
- [China drills Taiwan ‘preparing for war without seeking war’](#)
- [China-Taiwan How worried should we be?](#)
- [South Korea President accused of avoiding Pelosi to placate China](#)

[Skip to key events](#)

[Taiwan](#)

US watching Chinese operations ‘very closely’ – as it happened

This blog is now closed. Read our [latest live news coverage of China’s military drills around Taiwan here](#)

Updated 2d ago

[Samantha Lock \(now\)](#); [Maya Yang](#) and [Martin Belam](#) (earlier)

Thu 4 Aug 2022 21.39 EDTFirst published on Wed 3 Aug 2022 18.53 EDT

Key events

- [2d ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Chinese missiles posed no threat: Taiwan MoD](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[China's top diplomat walks out of foreign ministers dinner - reports](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Biden postpones routine missile test launch, reports say](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[US watching China military drills 'very closely'](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Summary of the day so far ...](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Nato's Stoltenberg: Pelosi visit 'no reason for China to overreact'](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Tokyo protests to China after it says five missiles fell into Japan's exclusive economic zone](#)

- [3d ago](#)
[Taiwan representative to US: China's 'irresponsible and dangerous behaviour has jeopardised regional peace'](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Kremlin calls Pelosi's visit to Taiwan 'an unnecessary provocation'](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Blinken: US opposes unilateral efforts to change Taiwan status quo](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Taiwan says China 'imitated' North Korea with missile launches into the sea](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Taiwan's defence ministry confirms Chinese missiles fired near Matsu](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Summary of what we know so far ...](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[China's military drills begin – reports](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Asean warns of consequences of volatility](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[China's French ambassador says Taiwanese people would be 'reeducated'](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[China FM calls Pelosi visit 'complete farce', vows to punish those who offend China](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Taiwan expects increased 'psychological warfare'](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[South Korea's President to speak by phone with Pelosi - reports](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Taiwan defence ministry claims cyber-attacks](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[US commitment to Taiwan democracy 'remains ironclad'](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Taiwan fires flares to drive away drones near Kinmen islands](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[G7 calls on China to resolve Taiwan dispute](#)

- [3d ago](#)
[South Korean President won't be meeting Pelosi in Seoul, on holiday](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[China claiming Taiwan's territory a 'historical inevitability', former ambassador to UK says](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Summary and welcome](#)

China launches missiles into Taiwan strait after Pelosi visit – video

[Samantha Lock \(now\)](#); [Maya Yang](#) and [Martin Belam \(earlier\)](#)

Thu 4 Aug 2022 21.39 EDTFirst published on Wed 3 Aug 2022 18.53 EDT

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Live feed

From 3d ago

[12.05](#)

US watching China military drills 'very closely'

The US has been watching the Chinese military exercises near Japan "very very closely," said John Kirby, the US's National Security Council coordinator for strategic communications.

In an interview with MSNBC on Thursday, Kirby said: "We've been watching this very, very closely. It's concerning. It's not just concerning to us, but it's concerning, of course, to the people of [Taiwan](#). It's concerning to our allies in the region, especially Japan."

In recent days, China has been conducting its largest-ever military drills near Taiwan following a controversial visit from US House Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) to the self-ruled territory.

When asked whether Pelosi's trip triggered China's military drills, Kirby said, "The provocateur here is Beijing. They didn't have to react this way to what is completely normal travel by congressional members to Taiwan...The Chinese are the ones who are escalating this."

He also warned the risk of calculation of the drills, saying, "One of the things that's troublesome about exercises like this or missile launches like this is the risk of calculation, the risk of a mistake that could actually lead to some sort of conflict."



John Kirby in the Brady room on Tuesday. Photograph: Al Drago/EPA

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Updated at 14.02 EDT

Key events

- [2d ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Chinese missiles posed no threat: Taiwan MoD](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[China's top diplomat walks out of foreign ministers dinner - reports](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Biden postpones routine missile test launch, reports say](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[US watching China military drills 'very closely'](#)
- [3d ago](#)

Summary of the day so far ...

- 3d ago
Nato's Stoltenberg: Pelosi visit 'no reason for China to overreact'
- 3d ago
Tokyo protests to China after it says five missiles fell into Japan's exclusive economic zone
- 3d ago
Taiwan representative to US: China's 'irresponsible and dangerous behaviour has jeopardised regional peace'
- 3d ago
Kremlin calls Pelosi's visit to Taiwan 'an unnecessary provocation'
- 3d ago
Blinken: US opposes unilateral efforts to change Taiwan status quo
- 3d ago
Taiwan says China 'imitated' North Korea with missile launches into the sea
- 3d ago
Taiwan's defence ministry confirms Chinese missiles fired near Matsu
- 3d ago
Summary of what we know so far ...
- 3d ago
China's military drills begin – reports
- 3d ago
Asean warns of consequences of volatility
- 3d ago
China's French ambassador says Taiwanese people would be 'reeducated'
- 3d ago
China FM calls Pelosi visit 'complete farce', vows to punish those who offend China
- 3d ago
Taiwan expects increased 'psychological warfare'
- 3d ago
South Korea's President to speak by phone with Pelosi - reports
- 3d ago
Taiwan defence ministry claims cyber-attacks

- [3d ago](#)
[US commitment to Taiwan democracy 'remains ironclad'](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Taiwan fires flares to drive away drones near Kinmen islands](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[G7 calls on China to resolve Taiwan dispute](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[South Korean President won't be meeting Pelosi in Seoul, on holiday](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[China claiming Taiwan's territory a 'historical inevitability', former ambassador to UK says](#)
- [3d ago](#)
[Summary and welcome](#)

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[2d ago](#)[21.41](#)

For all the [latest coverage](#) of the Taiwan crisis please read our [most recent live blog](#) in the link below.

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Updated at 21.42 EDT

[2d ago](#)[20.58](#)

Summary

Thank you for joining us for today's live coverage.

We will be launching a new blog shortly. In the meantime, you can read our comprehensive summary of the day's events below.

- **China is to begin its second day of unprecedented live-fire drills** after launching huge military exercises in the air and seas around Taiwan on Thursday, including firing ballistic missiles close to the island some of which landed in Japanese waters.
- The exercises, which included **rockets, attack helicopters and gunships**, were arranged in reaction to a defiant visit to the island by the US House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, on Wednesday.
- **The US condemned the missile launches.** “China has chosen to overreact and use the speaker’s visit as a pretext to increase provocative military activity in and around the Taiwan Strait,” White House spokesman John Kirby said.
- **Kirby also warned of the risk of a mistake** and calculation of the drills, saying, “One of the things that’s troublesome about exercises like this or missile launches like this is the risk of calculation, the risk of a mistake that could actually lead to some sort of conflict.”
- US secretary of state **Antony Blinken said he “hopes very much that Beijing will not manufacture a crisis** or seek a pretence to increase its aggressive military action”.
- Foreign ministers from the **10-member Asean bloc**, meeting in Cambodia this week, **called for “maximum restraint”**, without mentioning the US or [China](#) by name. In a statement it said the situation could lead to “serious confrontation, open conflicts and unpredictable consequences among major powers”.
- **Japan said at least five of the 11 Dongfeng ballistic missiles fell into its exclusive economic zone**, which extends 200 nautical miles (370km) from Japan’s coast.
- Japan also speculated that **four missiles flew over Taipei**, Taiwan’s capital city, according to a statement issued by its US embassy.
- **Taiwan’s defence ministry said the missiles flew high into the atmosphere and constituted no threat** to the island.
- **Taiwan’s leader, Tsai Ing-wen, urged Beijing to “act with reason and exercise restraint”** while maintaining Taiwan would not escalate conflict but would “resolutely defend our sovereignty, our security & our democracy”.
- Foreign governments and multilateral groups **including the G7 and the Association of South-east Asian Nations (Asean)** condemned the hostilities and called for calm.

- The drills were in **unprecedented proximity to Taiwan**, and included PLA warplane and navy vessel incursions over the median line of the Taiwan strait – an unofficial border between **China** and Taiwan.
 - Notices of the exercises identified **six areas encircling Taiwan**, with warnings for all ships and aircraft to “not enter the relevant sea areas and airspace”. On Thursday, local media reported the **last-minute announcement of a seventh**. Some of the zones overlap with Taiwan’s territorial waters, and are near key shipping ports.
 - **Several cyber-attacks also struck Taiwan**, targeting websites of the defence ministry, the foreign ministry and the presidential office.
 - **Beijing’s Taiwan affairs office said the dispute was an internal affair**. “Our punishment of pro-Taiwan independence diehards, external forces, is reasonable, lawful,” it said.
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Updated at 20.58 EDT

[2d ago](#)[20.08](#)

Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen has called on Beijing to “act with reason and exercise restraint”.

With China initiating military exercises in areas around Taiwan today, we call on Beijing to act with reason and exercise restraint.

Taiwan will not escalate conflict, but we will resolutely defend our sovereignty, our security & our democracy.”

With China initiating military exercises in areas around Taiwan today, we call on Beijing to act with reason & exercise restraint. Taiwan will not escalate conflict, but we will resolutely defend our sovereignty, our security & our democracy.<https://t.co/CXNli5bTWG>

— 蔡英文 Tsai Ing-wen (@iingwen) [August 4, 2022](#)

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2d ago 19.18

Chinese missiles posed no threat: Taiwan MoD

Taiwan's defence ministry said missiles fired by China on Thursday flew high into the atmosphere and constituted no threat to it, responding to public concern about whether they passed over the main island of [Taiwan](#).

The ministry said in a statement it would not disclose the Chinese missile flight path due to intelligence concerns.

Earlier, it said 11 Chinese Dongfeng ballistic missiles had been fired in waters around the island.

Taiwan also scrambled jets on Thursday to warn away 22 Chinese aircraft in its air defence zone, the Taiwanese defence ministry said.

All 22 Chinese aircraft crossed the Taiwan Strait median line, a ministry statement said.

The last time [China](#) fired missiles into waters around Taiwan was in 1996.

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Updated at 19.21 EDT

[2d ago](#) [18.53](#)

China's top diplomat walks out of foreign ministers dinner - reports

The Chinese government's top diplomat Wang Yi walked out before the start of a gala dinner of foreign ministers at a meeting in Cambodia on Thursday and was seen leaving the venue in a vehicle, witnesses said.

Wang Yi waved to media as he entered a holding room for the dinner then walked out of the venue, without giving a reason, according to Reuters journalists.

Two witnesses working at the venue told Reuters Wang Yi was seen leaving in a vehicle.

The dinner was attended by more than a dozen foreign ministers including US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Japan's Yoshimasa Hayashi, and senior diplomats of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

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[2d ago 18.52](#)

Japan's foreign minister Yoshimasa Hayashi has also called for an "immediate stop" to China's military exercises.

"China's actions this time have a serious impact on the peace and stability of the region and the international community. I once again demand the immediate stop of these military exercises," Hayashi told reporters.

His comments came after the Japanese defence minister said five Chinese ballistic missiles fired during the exercises were "believed to have landed within Japan's (exclusive economic zone)".

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[2d ago 18.48](#)

Australian foreign minister Penny Wong has called for de-escalation in the [Taiwan](#) Strait and warned against the risk of miscalculation.

"All parties should consider how they can contribute to de-escalating current tensions," Wong told Agence France Presse.

“One of the risks the region is concerned about is the risk of miscalculation.”

Wong will join the Asean Regional Forum (ARF) on Friday, a 27-member body set up to discuss security issues.

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[2d ago](#)[18.05](#)

Summary

It's just past 6am in Taipei. Here's where things stand:

- **The US said on Thursday that China's launch of ballistic missiles around Taiwan was an overreaction to the visit of US House speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) to the island.** “China has chosen to overreact and use the speaker’s visit as a pretext to increase provocative military activity in and around the [Taiwan](#) Strait,” White House spokesperson John Kirby told reporters.
- **China has called the US “the biggest saboteur of peace”, as its foreign ministry spokesperson slammed the US and US House speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) for her recent visit to Taiwan.** “Pelosi’s stunt is another bankruptcy of US politics, diplomacy and credibility. It proves the US to be the biggest saboteur of peace and the biggest troublemaker to regional stability,” Hua Chunying said.
- **South Korea has temporarily cancelled its flights to [Taiwan](#) as a result of the ongoing military drills conducted by China.** According to local Korean media, Korean Air cancelled flights between Incheon and Taiwan on Friday and Saturday. The airline also delayed the schedule of Sunday’s flights by an hour. Similarly, Asiana shifted Thursday’s flight up by three hours and cancelled Friday’s flight to Taiwan.
- **US secretary of state Antony Blinken said Thursday he “hopes very much that Beijing will not manufacture a crisis or seek a pretense**

to increase its aggressive military action." Addressing the Asean-US summit, Blinken said "many countries around the world believe that escalation serves no one and could have unintended consequences that serve no one's interests, including Asean members and including China."

- **The Biden administration postponed a routine test launch of an air force Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile to avoid escalating tensions with Beijing amid China's show of force near Taiwan, the Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday.** US officials did not say how long the delay might last, but one said it might last 10 days, the report added.
- **The US has been watching the Chinese military exercises near Japan "very very closely,"** said John Kirby, the US's national security council coordinator for strategic communications. In an interview with MSNBC on Thursday, Kirby said: "We've been watching this very, very closely. It's concerning. It's not just concerning to us, but it's concerning, of course, to the people of Taiwan. It's concerning to our allies in the region, especially Japan."
- **Taiwan's defence ministry said its troops fired flares late on Thursday to deter four drones that flew above the area of its Kinmen islands, which are just off the southeastern coast of China,** Reuters reports.
- **China has sent 22 fighter jets across the "median line" running down the Taiwan Strait on Thursday, according to Taipei's defence ministry.** The Ministry of National Defense said "air defense missile systems" were deployed to track the jets and radio warnings were broadcast, according to an update on its website.
- **US House of Representatives speaker Nancy Pelosi and South Korea's national assembly speaker Kim Jin-pyo vowed on Thursday to support deterrence against North Korea and achieve its denuclearisation.** "Both sides expressed concerns about the dire situation of North Korea's growing threat," they said in a joint statement after meeting in Seoul.

That's it from me, Maya Yang, as I hand the blog over to my colleagues in Australia who will bring you the latest developments. Thank you.

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Updated at 18.12 EDT

2d ago **17.31**

The US said on Thursday that China's launch of ballistic missiles around Taiwan was an overreaction to the visit of US House speaker Nancy Pelosi to the island.

“China has chosen to overreact and use the speaker’s visit as a pretext to increase provocative military activity in and around the Taiwan Strait,” **White House spokesperson John Kirby** told reporters, Reuters reports.

Kirby called China’s actions part of a “manufactured crisis” and added that Beijing was attempting to alter the regional power balance.

“It’s also a pretext to try to up the ante ... and to actually try to set a new status quo, to get to a new normal where they think they can keep things at,” Kirby said.

“And my point coming out here today was making clear that we’re not going to accept a new status quo.

“The temperature’s pretty high,” Kirby said.

Tensions “can come down very easily by just having the Chinese stop these very aggressive military drills and flying missiles in and around the Taiwan Strait”, he said.

Kirby confirmed earlier reports that the Pentagon had delayed a scheduled test launch of a nuclear-capable ballistic missile to avoid stoking tensions.

“We do not believe it is in our interests, Taiwan’s interests, the region’s interests, to allow tensions to escalate further,” Kirby said.

“As China engages in destabilizing military exercises around Taiwan, the United States is demonstrating instead the behavior of a responsible nuclear power by reducing the risks of miscalculation.”

But he said the US navy's USS Ronald Reagan carrier taskforce would remain in the area. According to a Chinese military-backed research group, South China Sea Probing Initiative, the Reagan was about 600 miles (1,000km) due east of Taiwan on Wednesday.

Kirby said the carrier group has been ordered by the Pentagon to "remain on station in the general area to monitor the situation."

"We will not be deterred from operating in the seas and the skies of the Western Pacific consistent with international law, as we have for decades, supporting Taiwan and defending a free and open Indo-Pacific," he added.

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Updated at 17.35 EDT

[2d ago](#)[16.32](#)

China has called the US "the biggest saboteur of peace", as its foreign ministry spokesperson slammed the US and US House speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) for her recent visit to Taiwan.

On Thursday, **Hua Chunying** fired off a series of tweets condemning the US and warning of Chinese retaliation.

"Pelosi's stunt is another bankruptcy of US politics, diplomacy and credibility. It proves the US to be the biggest saboteur of peace and the biggest troublemaker to regional stability," she said.

#Pelosi's stunt is another bankruptcy of US politics, diplomacy and credibility. It proves the US to be the biggest saboteur of peace and the biggest troublemaker to regional stability.

— Hua Chunying 华春莹 (@SpokespersonCHN) [August 4, 2022](#)

“This incident is single-handedly orchestrated and provoked by the US and the cause, consequences and merits of the incident are crystal clear. China has done everything that is diplomatically possible to prevent this crisis which has been imposed on China,” she added.

Chunying warned that China will not “tolerate any act that harms our core interests” and that it will not “sit by and watch the US play the ‘Taiwan card’ to serve the US’s domestic politics and selfish interests of some politicians”.

Describing the recent flurry of military drills [China](#) has conducted in recent days, Chunying said that they were “necessary countermeasures that are defensive in nature which have gone through serious consideration and careful assessment”.

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Updated at 16.38 EDT

[2d ago](#)[15.23](#)

South Korea has temporarily cancelled its flights to [Taiwan](#) as a result of the ongoing military drills conducted by China.

According to local Korean media, Korean Air cancelled flights between Incheon and Taiwan on Friday and Saturday. The airline also delayed the schedule of Sunday’s flights by an hour.

Similarly, Asiana shifted Thursday’s flight up by three hours and cancelled Friday’s flight to Taiwan.

Singaporean carriers have also been avoiding areas that are impacted by China’s military drills and live firing exercises, [according](#) to the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore on Thursday.

CAAS said that [China](#) released a notice to airmen on Tuesday that banned aircraft from flying into certain areas that are affected by the live firing

exercises between Thursday and Sunday.

“Singapore carriers have taken note of the (notice) as part of their standard operating procedures and are avoiding the affected areas,” CAAS said.

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[3d ago](#)[14.22](#)

US secretary of state Antony Blinken said Thursday he “hopes very much that Beijing will not manufacture a crisis or seek a pretense to increase its aggressive military action.”

Addressing the ASEAN-US summit, Blinken said “many countries around the world believe that escalation serves no one and could have unintended consequences that serve no one’s interests, including ASEAN members and including China.”

“We’ve reached out to engage our PRC counterparts in recent days at every level of government to convey this message ... Maintaining cross-stability is the interest all countries in the region, including all of our colleagues within ASEAN,” he said.

He added: “The US continues to have an abiding interest in peace and stability across the Taiwan strait. We oppose any unilateral efforts to change the status quo, especially by force.”



Antony Blinken in Phnom Penh on Thursday. Photograph: Andrew Harnik/AP

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Updated at 18.06 EDT

[3d ago 13.32](#)

Biden postpones routine missile test launch, reports say

The Biden administration postponed a routine test launch of an air force Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile to avoid escalating tensions with Beijing amid China's show of force near Taiwan, the Wall Street Journal [reported](#) on Thursday.

US officials did not say how long the delay might last, but one said it might last 10 days, the report added.

The air force had planned on conducting the test launch from the Vandenberg base in California.

The test is usually conducted a few times a year to test the ICBM's reliability.

"This is a long-planned test but it is being postponed to remove any misunderstandings given the PRC's [People's Republic of China] actions around Taiwan," a defense official told Wall Street Journal.

In March, the Pentagon cancelled a flight test of a Minuteman III missile to avoid heightening tensions with Russia after Moscow invaded Ukraine.

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Updated at 13.51 EDT

[3d ago](#)[12.41](#)

[China has begun a series of live-fire military drills in waters surrounding Taiwan, as shown in the map above.](#)

-
-

[Newest](#)[Newest](#)

[Previous](#)

1
of
7

[Next](#)

[Oldest](#)[Oldest](#)

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Taiwan](#)

Asia on edge as China launches air and sea military drills around Taiwan

Taipei accuses Beijing of imitating North Korea after firing missiles across part of island and disrupting flights and shipping

- [China begins military drills: live updates](#)



A Chinese military helicopter flies past Pingtan Island, one of the mainland's closest points to Taiwan, before live-fire exercises. Photograph: Héctor Retamal/AFP/Getty Images

Helen Davidson in Taipei and *Vincent Ni* China affairs correspondent
Thu 4 Aug 2022 10.26 EDTFirst published on Thu 4 Aug 2022 01.31 EDT

China raised tensions across Asia on Thursday after launching huge military exercises in the air and seas around [Taiwan](#), including firing ballistic missiles close to the island some of which landed in Japanese waters. The

brazen show of force disrupted one of the world's busiest shipping lanes and diverted hundreds of flights.

The exercises, which included rockets, attack helicopters and gunships, were arranged in reaction to a defiant visit to the island by the US House speaker, [Nancy Pelosi](#). Beijing claims Taiwan as its own and has threatened to take it by force.

Thursday's drills were in unprecedented proximity to Taiwan, and included PLA warplane and navy vessel incursions over the median line of the Taiwan strait – an unofficial border between [China](#) and Taiwan.

Japan's defence ministry said at least five of the 11 Dongfeng ballistic missiles launched by China during the drills had fallen into its exclusive economic zone, which extends 200 nautical miles (370km) from Japan's coast. Tokyo has protested against the drills to Beijing, according to the [Japan Times](#).

Japan also speculated that four missiles flew over Taipei, Taiwan's capital city, according to a statement its US embassy posted on Twitter.

Amid growing international concerns, Taiwan's defence ministry tried to play down the Chinese missile launches, saying they flew high into the atmosphere and constituted no threat to the island. Earlier, in a televised speech, Taiwan's leader, Tsai Ing-wen, urged Beijing to exercise restraint and warned residents to be extra vigilant about information coming from the mainland.

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Foreign governments and multilateral groups including the G7 and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) condemned the hostilities and called for calm.

Taipei earlier accused Beijing of imitating North Korea, a global pariah.

The exercises, which are due to run until Sunday, began at midday local time on Thursday, with the Chinese state broadcaster CCTV announcing the beginning of an “important military training exercise”.

The People’s Liberation Army’s eastern theatre command said it had conducted “long-range live-fire shooting training” in the Taiwan strait, including “precision strikes on specific areas in the eastern part”. It said “expected results had been achieved” but did not clarify what that meant.

At about the same time, an AFP reporter based in Pingtan, on China’s coast, witnessed the Chinese army launching several small projectiles into the water, “from the proximity of nearby military installations flying into the sky followed by plumes of white smoke and loud booming sounds around”.

VIDEO: Chinese military helicopters fly past Pingtan island, one of mainland China's closest points to Taiwan, in Fujian province on Thursday.

China has begun massive military drills off Taiwan following US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the self-ruled island
pic.twitter.com/7czzPNQbNp

— AFP News Agency (@AFP) [August 4, 2022](#)

Notices of the exercises identified six areas encircling Taiwan, with warnings for all ships and aircraft to “not enter the relevant sea areas and airspace”. On Thursday, local media reported the last-minute announcement of a seventh. Some of the zones overlap with Taiwan’s territorial waters, and are near key shipping ports.

Taiwan’s defence ministry has accused China of in effect mounting a blockade by their actions. Flights and ships were still able to arrive in Taiwan, but had reportedly been advised to find alternative routes. About 900 flights are estimated to be affected by the avoidance notices over the drill period.

Pelosi arrived in Taipei on Tuesday night under intense global scrutiny. She [met Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen](#), as well as other political and business leaders and dissidents. She said US solidarity with Taiwan was “crucial” in facing an increasingly authoritarian China.

“Our delegation came to Taiwan to make unequivocally clear we will not abandon Taiwan, and we are proud of our enduring friendship,” she said.

China has reacted with fury since the plan for the visit was leaked some weeks ago. It had threatened countermeasures – an oft-heard response to foreign acts of support for Taiwan, but which drew higher than usual levels of concern from China-watchers. Analysts suggested Beijing had backed itself into a corner with its heightened rhetoric, and would have to demonstrate a much larger show of force than usual if it did not want to lose credibility.

Several cyber-attacks also struck Taiwan, targeting websites of the defence ministry, the foreign ministry and the presidential office.

The threats were not limited to the exercises. China’s ambassador to France said the [Taiwanese people would be “re-educated”](#) after any successful annexation by China, in a fiery interview on French television.

The ambassador, Lu Shaye, accused Taiwan’s governing Democratic Progressive party of conducting “extremist” propaganda and turning the Taiwanese people against “reunification” with [China](#).

Online, many observers noted the term “re-education” was also used to describe [Chinese authorities’ treatment of Uyghurs](#) and other Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang.

Beijing claims Taiwan is a Chinese province and reserves the right to take it by force. Its Taiwan affairs office said the dispute was an internal affair. “Our punishment of pro-Taiwan independence diehards, external forces, is reasonable, lawful,” it said.

The US condemned the missile launches.

“China has chosen to overreact and use the speaker’s visit as a pretext to increase provocative military activity in and around the Taiwan Strait,” White House spokesman John Kirby told reporters.

“The temperature’s pretty high,” but tensions “can come down very easily by just having the Chinese stop these very aggressive military drills,” he added.

Foreign ministers from the 10-member Asean, meeting in Cambodia this week, called for “maximum restraint”, without mentioning the US or China by name. In a statement it said the situation could lead to “serious confrontation, open conflicts and unpredictable consequences among major powers”.

At the Asean meeting, China’s foreign minister, Wang Yi, claimed Beijing had made the “greatest diplomatic efforts” but would “never allow its core interests to be hurt”.

'Outright farce': Chinese foreign minister on Pelosi's Taiwan visit – video

The G7 countries also urged calm, accusing China of “increasing tensions and destabilising the region”.

“There is no justification to use a visit as pretext for aggressive military activity in the Taiwan strait,” it said. “We call on the PRC [People’s Republic of China] not to unilaterally change the status quo by force in the region, and to resolve cross-strait differences by peaceful means.”

In response, China’s UK embassy accused the G7 of being “led astray by the US” and told its members to “stop making wrong remarks relating to Taiwan, stop interfering in China’s internal affairs, and stop sending wrong signals in any form to secessionist forces seeking ‘Taiwan independence’”.

Additional reporting by Chi Hui Lin, Rebecca Ratcliffe and Reuters

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Taiwan](#)

China-Taiwan tensions: how worried should we be about military conflict?

China plans to escalate its military exercises near Taiwan, prompting fears of a fresh crisis in the region

- [China live-fire drills near Taiwan: follow live updates](#)



Taiwan navy personnel look on during a drill in January. China has escalated its military exercises near the island, raising tensions and prompting fears of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. Photograph: Ritchie B Tong/EPA

[Jordyn Beazley](#)

Wed 3 Aug 2022 22.04 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 00.28 EDT

In the wake of US House speaker Nancy Pelosi's [visit to Taiwan](#), China has revealed plans for unprecedented military exercises near the island, prompting fears of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait.

Pelosi visited the self-governing island this week in defiance of a series of threats from Beijing, which views [Taiwan](#) as a breakaway province, and warned it would consider the visit a major provocation.

As [tensions in the Taiwan Strait simmer](#), what's at stake for China and how worried should we be?

How has China responded to Pelosi's visit to Taiwan?

China's military announced joint air and sea drills near Taiwan and test launches of conventional missiles in the sea east of Taiwan. According to Chinese state media, three of the six live-fire drills will overlap with sea areas Taiwan claims as its territory. Ahead of the exercises, which are due to begin on Thursday, Taiwan said 27 Chinese warplanes had entered its air defence zone.

Taiwan has never been part of the People's Republic of China and says it is already a sovereign nation with no need to declare independence. It wishes to maintain the safety of the status quo and does not want a conflict, but has said it will defend itself.

Taiwan's defence ministry called China's planned exercises an aerial and maritime blockade of Taiwan.

"This is a big deal given a blockade is a legal act of war," said Indo-Pacific defence policy expert Blake Herzinger. "I think it needs to be signalled to Taiwan that this is not the time to inflame things further."

This week, Taiwan has also been hit by a series of cyber-attacks though it is not yet clear who was responsible. China, Taiwan's largest trading partner, also suspended a number of imports from the island.

Pelosi's Taiwan visit sparks furious reaction from China – video report

How worrying are China's military drills?

Live-fire exercises are a test of a military's ability to perform missions under conditions most resembling actual warfare. In this case, they are designed to show the level of force China could unleash against Taiwan if Beijing decided to seize control of the island.

Experts agree that neither the US nor China have the appetite for the tension to escalate to war. According to Justin Bassi, executive director for the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, China's military exercises will probably be calibrated to avoid escalation from the US.

Herzinger said the US has been very careful to not express support for Taiwan's independence given that is China's "red line".

"In the US engagement with Taiwan, they're always careful to ensure they find the right balance between supporting Taiwan, but without emboldening Taiwan to do something that would cause a larger conflict," he said.

Amanda Hsiao, a senior analyst for China at the Crisis Group, said while China's military escalation is concerning, it is not an unexpected response.

"Beijing is clearly trying to express its resolute objections to Pelosi's visit," she said "And that means that the military response that it chooses right now has to visibly escalate above military activities that it has previously engaged in around Taiwan, and that baseline is pretty high."

"I think the intention of the military drills is more likely to posture and demonstrate military strength," she said.

China's Global Times newspaper said on Wednesday the drills were aimed at showing that China's military is "capable of blockading the entire island".

Has the situation been this tense before?

There have been several crises in the Taiwan Strait, most recently in 1995. That incident was known as the Third Strait of Taiwan Crisis and followed the island's announcement that it would hold its first democratic presidential elections. China flexed its military muscle with months of military drills, including firing missiles 35 miles from Taiwan's ports.

While there is a history of military displays in the Taiwan strait, Hsiao said it appears missile tests planned by China in response to Pelosi's visit will be closer to the island this time.

China's military exercises around Taiwan in August 2022 and March 1996 (Third Taiwan Strait crisis). This time, some exercise areas overlap with Taiwan's territorial waters, an apparent escalation.
pic.twitter.com/egw4hyu5U5

— Duan Dang (@duandang) [August 2, 2022](#)

What is at stake for Chinese leader Xi Jinping?

Since Xi came to power in 2012 he has made it clear that reunification with Taiwan is high on his agenda. Yet some experts say Xi's response to Pelosi's visit is likely to be as much about domestic issues in China as it is about asserting power. Mainland China is [plagued by an unfolding property crisis](#) that has provoked protests, and economic slowdown resulting from its strict zero-Covid policy and continued lockdowns.

“When it comes to Pelosi’s visit it may perhaps be an opportunity for Xi Jinping to sort of turn the lens away from domestic issues and focus outward as a method of distraction,” said Jennifer Hsu, a research fellow at Australia’s Lowy Institute.

According to Jade Guan, an expert in China’s foreign policy at Deakin University, Xi’s actions to look strong on Taiwan and against the US are also likely influenced by the upcoming 20th National Congress, a meeting that occurs every five years to announce major leadership changes.

“[Xi] projects himself as the protector of China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, of which Taiwan is a central part,” Guan said.

“So Xi’s administration cannot afford to look weak before [National Congress].”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

South Korea

South Korean president accused of avoiding Nancy Pelosi in bid to placate China

Yoon will not meet US House speaker in move critics say aims to avoid antagonising China as tensions in the Taiwan strait simmer

- [China military exercises near Taiwan – latest updates](#)



Anti-war activists protest outside the presidential office in Seoul as US House speaker Nancy Pelosi visits South Korea. President Yoon Suk-yeol will not meet Pelosi in person during her visit, which comes a day after a controversial stop in Taiwan. Photograph: Kim Hong-Ji/Reuters

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Thu 4 Aug 2022 00.59 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 00.28 EDT

South Korea's president, [Yoon Suk-yeol](#), has been accused of trying to placate China by avoiding [Nancy Pelosi](#), a day after she became the most senior US official to visit Taiwan for a quarter of a century and sparked a furious response from Beijing.

Yoon, a conservative who took office in May, will reportedly speak to Pelosi on the phone but will not meet her in person during her visit to Seoul on Thursday, South Korean media said.

Yoon had reportedly planned a summer holiday well in advance of the US House speaker's decision to visit the region, which included a [controversial stop in Taiwan](#) on Wednesday that drew threats of retaliation from China. The South Korean leader is reportedly in Seoul.

Beijing, which considers [Taiwan](#) part of Chinese territory, on Thursday began four days of "unprecedented" live-fire drills in six locations encircling the island, in a show of force designed to communicate its anger with Washington and Taipei.

It also summoned the US ambassador in Beijing and banned thousands of food imports from [Taiwan](#).

Critics have accused Yoon of avoiding Pelosi to avoid antagonising [China](#), South Korea's biggest trading partner. The South Korean broadcaster TBS quoted an official at the presidential Blue House as denying that China had been a factor in Yoon's decision not to meet Pelosi, as his itinerary had been finalised before her visit was announced.

When Pelosi last visited [South Korea](#), in 2015, she met the then president, Park Geun-hye, and the then foreign minister, Yun Byung-se.

Kim Heung-kyu, director of the US-China Policy Institute at Ajou University, told the Korea Times. "Pelosi is the number three politician in the US, and if this were in the past, the president or the foreign minister would have tried to hold talks with her, but I think that this time the government seems to have decided not to excessively politicise the issue and unnecessarily antagonise China."

Pelosi met the Taiwanese president, Tsai Ing-wen, and is expected to hold talks with the Japanese prime minister, Fumio Kishida in Tokyo on Friday. Pelosi said on Wednesday that her visit to Taiwan made it “unequivocally clear” that the US would “not abandon” its democratic ally.

In Seoul, she was due to meet her South Korean counterpart, national assembly speaker Kim Jin-pyo and members of the ruling and main opposition parties.

Reports said Pelosi and Kim would issue a joint statement and summarise their discussions on North Korea and regional security, but would not take questions from journalists.

Pelosi is also planning to visit the truce village of Panmunjom, located along the heavily armed border between South and North Korea.

A possible meeting with the South Korean foreign minister, Park Jin, was ruled out after he left for Cambodia early on Wednesday to attend an Asean meeting.

In Tokyo, Pelosi and Kishida are expected to repeat their commitment to US-Japan cooperation in ensuring a “free and open Indo-Pacific” region amid increasing Chinese military activity in the South and East China seas.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/04/south-korean-leader-accused-of-avoiding-nancy-pelosi-in-bid-to-placate-china>

2022.08.04 - Spotlight

- '['Hey, that's my house' US aid worker realises Zawahiri villa is his old home](#)
- '['Don't take it out on our staff!' How did Britain become so angry?](#)
- '[Gary Numan 'I thought my comeback would take four years – not 41!'](#)
- '[Scorched Britain The July heatwave in pictures](#)

Afghanistan

Hey, that's my house: US aid worker realises Zawahiri villa is his old home

The Kabul property hit by a US drone was familiar. It turned out Dan Smock had something in common with al-Qaida's leader



The view from Zawahiri's balcony. Photograph: Dan Smock



[Emma Graham-Harrison](#) in Kabul

Thu 4 Aug 2022 04.51 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 00.25 EDT

The balcony in Kabul where the head of al-Qaida was killed was a spot Dan Smock knew well. It used to be his – when he worked in [Afghanistan](#) on a US government aid project – and the views were spectacular.

Smock enjoyed starting the day looking out at the Afghan capital, as did the world's most wanted terrorist, from the villa they both called home, several years apart.

“Reports said the CIA had intelligence that he liked to stand on the balcony, and I thought, ‘Of course he would, it was a nice balcony,’” Smock said in a phone interview.

“When the Kabul smog lifts you can see the mountains in the morning, and it’s next to an open field,” he said. He put up bamboo matting as a privacy screen, which was still there when [a US drone struck Ayman al-Zawahiri down](#), so the terrace was not overlooked.

“It felt like you could hang out there without anyone noticing who it is, unless someone was really paying attention. And clearly (this year) someone was.”

The cream house, with sandy-orange detailing and green-mirrored balcony walls was in a neighbourhood famous for land grabs by the warlords and technocrat elite of the Afghan republic, which collapsed last summer.

As the war escalated, many of the villas they crammed into small plots of land were rented by the NGOs and contractors, such as Smock's employer.

Smock's old home had a distinctive external lattice feature between the floors that he first noticed in photographs posted on social media at the weekend when it was hit by a suspected US drone strike. He was a little surprised and disconcerted to see the windows smashed.

"When I saw it I thought 'that's my old house'," he said. "These villas are garish as all hell but unique and this one especially, it was built on such a narrow footprint."

Then, on Monday evening, the US president, Joe Biden, told Americans that the al-Qaida leader, [Zawahiri, had been the target](#).

And Smock, a US military veteran of the war in Iraq, who also spent years working as a civilian in Afghanistan, realised he had lived in the same space as one of the men who plotted the 9/11 attacks.

"It's an incredibly surreal thing. Things change, and things change quickly, but at that level? That's a little intense. You've got public enemy number one, with a \$25m bounty on his head, literally living in the same space you lived in previously," he said.

"I keep running through the reality of him being in the same rooms I was in."

The CIA created a detailed model of the house, US media reported, to help understand how a strike might affect the structure, and whether Zawahiri could be killed without harming others.

The reason the area appealed to US government contractors is probably the same reason it was seen as a good place to host the al-Qaida leader. It is essentially a quiet, closed-off neighbourhood near the seat of power.

“Down by the [Ghazanfar] bank and Spinneys [supermarket], there are two entrances on either side. If you control those you control the whole neighbourhood,” said Smock.

He described a tall, relatively narrow house, set back from the security wall behind a paved garden area lined with shrubs. The main doors opened on to a staircase that ran up through the centre of the house, with strange acoustics.

“If you said anything on the ground floor it echoed up all the floors. It was like living in a speaker box, even if you were not speaking loudly.” Smock moved in with about half a dozen colleagues – for security reasons foreigners took jobs without families and were regularly put up in shared houses.

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At the time there was a kitchen on the ground floor, three bedrooms on the higher floors and on the top a small apartment space, with a living room and en suite bathroom. Opposite it was the door on to the balcony where Zawahiri was killed.

Biden hailed the drone strike as a counter-terrorism triumph, but to Smock the fact that Zawahiri had been there at all underlined how terribly Washington and its allies had failed in Afghanistan.

After billions of dollars spent, and years of promises to improve the lives of Afghans while making the US safe, Afghan girls are barred from high school, the economy is collapsing and al-Qaida’s head ran his operation from the heart of the capital.

“[The western mission] failed so spectacularly that the people who took over in Kabul could do an Airbnb for the al-Qaida CEO in a house that had been run by USAid contracting dollars for a decade plus,” Smock said.

“It made me very sad. The news brought me the full weight of understanding. After all those efforts, the rock has fully rolled down the

hill.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/04/he-y-thats-my-house-us-aid-worker-realises-zawahiri-villa-is-his-old-home>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

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‘Don’t take it out on our staff!’: How did Britain become so angry?



Illustration: Sam Peet/The Guardian

Shopworkers, GP surgeries and call centres have all reported an alarming rise in abusive behaviour directed toward them. How can we calm this national rage?



[Amy Fleming](#)

Thu 4 Aug 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 Aug 2022 03.24 EDT

In November 2019, a customer made a complaint to the insurance firm Ageas. Repairs had been carried out on his car after it was damaged in an accident, but he felt necessary work had been missed. Ageas sent out an engineer to inspect the vehicle, but it was decided that no further action was required. That's when the abuse began, says Rachel Undy, operations leader at the company. "It was mostly sexist abuse – very angry – shouting, disgusting language and quite personal insults." Over the months that followed, the customer contacted Ageas 98 times, in an increasingly threatening, and often grotesque, manner.

"Eventually, we refused to speak to him, but then his emails carried on with the same language," says Undy. At one point, she recalls, he made viciously crude remarks to her, before eventually directing his ire at the male engineer, too – "even threatening to come to the office and deal with him face to face".

Undy has seen an increase in the number of aggressive customers over the past couple of years, and staff at call centres are far from alone. You may have noticed the proliferation of "Don't take it out on our staff" signs on

pallid surgery walls, at train stations and family restaurants, or sometimes felt a palpable tension in the public spaces we all inhabit. From shop workers to waiters to surgery receptionists, public-facing staff say they have experienced a surge in abusive treatment since the Covid pandemic began. The number of shop workers who faced abusive customers has risen 25% since February this year according to the latest Institute of Customer Service (ICS) data, while the British Medical Association [revealed in May](#) that criminal violence in GP surgeries had almost doubled in five years.

When the good times roll and there are plenty of jobs and homes for everyone, it's easy to be nice

In October 2021, [a survey](#) conducted for the ICS found that half of those dealing regularly with the public had experienced abuse in the past six months – a 6% rise – and 27% had been physically assaulted. The result has been a flurry of new policies, including [legislation](#) allowing stronger penalties for abusers being introduced in an attempt to protect staff who serve the public. Last month, [Lincolnshire](#) council announced a plan to restrict access to some services for “vexatious” customers, in response to a significant rise in “verbally abusive and aggressive” behaviour directed at staff over the pandemic.

The change in how some people behave means frontline workers must deal with an added layer of emotional legwork just to get the job done. “It’s really hard hearing someone say they hope my children will die,” Bradley, an ambulance call assessor, said recently, in support of the NHS ambulance staff [Work Without Fear](#) initiative. At Ageas, Undy describes the months of abuse unleashed on her and the other staff as “draining, frustrating and insulting”. The abuse only ended when the customer’s insurance policy was cancelled and he was asked to sign a community resolution form by the police, which he did voluntarily.

“By many, many metrics, violence has been on the decline for a very long time,” says Michael Muthukrishna, associate professor of economic psychology at the London School of Economics. “It looks much better than it has ever looked in the long run of history.” Yet in recent years, loneliness and mental health problems have been eroding confidence and resilience and

here we are, crawling out of a world-shaking pandemic, only to face recession and climate change. We all experienced the Armageddon vibe of empty supermarket shelves during the pandemic, along with medical shortages and petrol pumps running dry. Too many people have been tipped into poverty by the cost of living crisis. I could go on.

There is no excuse for abusive behaviour, but, Muthukrishna says: “Anything that increases stress is going to increase your anger and frustration, and your likelihood to lash out at someone. And maybe that’s sufficient to explain what was happening specifically during the pandemic.”



Illustration: Sam Peet/The Guardian

Behavioural science also points to a broader economic explanation. When the good times roll and there are plenty of jobs and homes for everyone, it's easy to be nice. Muthukrishna has a neat car park analogy: “There are things that piss you off; like you might get annoyed when somebody slips into that space. If there are plenty of spaces, you’re like, ‘Oh, what an asshole,’ then you just find another space. Those fractures that always exist in a society are tolerated when there are enough spaces to go around. We describe this as a ‘positive-sum environment’ – where other people’s success doesn’t harm your ability to do well,” he says.

The flipside comes when economic growth slows, creating a dreaded “zero-sum environment”: Now, he says, “other people’s success is predictive of your failure. This creates a completely different dynamic. If you’ve been driving around for 30 minutes and you finally see a parking space and someone behaves like that, you’re going to see some road rage.” This could explain why abuse continues to rise even as we attempt to return to normal. “People are kind of on edge. It’s been hard for a lot of people. But now we’re going through these more systemic shifts, where it looks like the pandemic has triggered some more longstanding, zero-sum psychological environments, where the competition moves from being productive to destructive.”

This dark behavioural trend was already in motion pre-pandemic, as reflected in the World Economic Forum’s global risks [report 2019](#). Co-produced by the insurance company Zurich, one of the headline risks to global businesses reads: “Decline in human empathy creates global risks in the ‘age of anger’.” The report identified a new global phenomenon of people feeling “disconnected and isolated”, with technology and urbanisation cauterising social bonds. “Profound social instability” comes sixth in the [top 30 chart](#) of risks in the report.



A Transport for London ‘Don’t take it out on our staff’ poster at a bus stop.
Photograph: LDNPix/Alamy

Perhaps, too, the dehumanising effects of communing online, which makes dishing out bile to strangers as easy as a “frictionless” online payment to a lot of people, has now spilled out on to the IRL streets, along with the extreme, polarising and reductive effects of social media. “The internet allows us to form new tribes along the lines of whatever we happen to be interested in or believe, and those new tribes are reshaping our societies in ways that we are still coming to terms with,” says Muthukrishna. “Any very small minority can find one another and begin to advocate for their common interests. It’s true of LGBT groups. It’s true of Arab spring groups, but it’s also true of QAnon, and white supremacist groups or whatever weird, perverted, crazy, obscure thing you happen to be interested in. It might be a good thing in the long term, but it is fundamentally destabilising.”

Muthukrishna’s guess is that we’re “in for a tough few years”. But we are not powerless as individuals to mitigate the rise of rage. The more prepared we are for change, the smoother the ride will be. “If you create situations where people’s expectations are not met, you trigger zero-sum psychology,” he says. A great human strength is that we can adapt to different levels of comfort, but it’s the change, he says, “that triggers people”. Being prepared for the circumstances ahead, he suggests, “might go some way towards creating some solidarity, making people realise that we’re all in this together now. Where that’s not true, because of things like inequality, then you have to address those underlying things.”



‘The impact of verbal abuse on individuals is not insignificant.’ Photograph: vm/Getty Images

Then there’s the Instagram effect. “It’s the Fomo [fear of missing out]: why is that person vacationing in Mauritius and I’m sitting here trying to pay my bills? And 10,000 people, or even 10 million people are seeing that person in Mauritius, feeling very dissatisfied,” says Muthukrishna. There is even research, he says, “showing that if your commute takes you through neighbourhoods that are wealthier than your own, you are more dissatisfied than if your commute takes you through neighbourhoods that are like – or worse than – yours.” Knowing this, and that many of the so-called best lives being lived online are false, there is no harm in reducing our exposure to such deeply deflating stimuli.

The word should also be spread that being nasty to people who are trying to do their jobs only worsens the service we receive. Jo Causon, CEO of the Institute of Customer Service, points out that lack of staff is one of the key causes of poor service and customer frustration right now, and if we abuse staff, who are already working under increased pressure, they might quit, too. While being attacked and spat at is less common than verbal abuse, she says, the effects of the latter, particularly on those working from home, take a toll. “Some of these people have been on their own dealing with this. If you’re taking contact centre calls all day and several of those start to get

pretty aggressive, the impact on individuals is not insignificant. It builds. We have seen a rise in people saying that they are not sure that they will stay on, and certainly a rise in sickness, too.”

If people feel socially anxious, that could turn into frustration and anger

Gillian Sandstrom, University of Sussex

In early July, Edinburgh airport had to temporarily close its customer service line, because it was deluged with irate customers trying to retrieve their luggage – even though baggage isn’t handled by the airport, but the short-staffed airlines. “In order to allow our teams to work through a backlog of airport queries,” [said a spokesman](#), “and to protect them from verbal abuse, we have taken the decision to temporarily suspend the phone lines.”

Even if staff don’t resign, while they are unhappy they will be less able to provide a good service or defuse heated situations effectively. “There’s a link between employee engagement and customer satisfaction, and most people in customer-facing roles care and want to do the right thing,” says Coulson. “They are very motivated and like to have a conversation with someone in the local shop, or to make sure that person is doing OK.”

Recognising how cheering and trust-building these random daily exchanges with strangers can be is yet another tool in the battle against abusive behaviour. Gillian Sandstrom, director of the Centre for Research on Kindness at the University of Sussex, spends most of her time either talking to strangers, or researching what happens when we do. During the first lockdown in 2020, she conducted a study in which she found that after participants talked to a stranger online, they reported feeling a greater sense of trust in other people. “So it can really change how you think about other people, to individualise them and maybe give people the benefit of the doubt.”



A ‘Respect goes both ways’ sign in a Nationwide building society window in Windsor. Photograph: Maureen McLean/Alamy

This could work both ways – by initiating a pleasant interaction with a stranger (who may or may not be providing you with a service) you might just jump-start their trust in their fellow humans, sending a beautiful cascade of goodwill trickling through the community.

It doesn’t take long to build a habit, Sandstrom points out. “So the more often you train yourself to think about the other person, it should help you get into that conscious mode of remembering that they are human too.” If it feels like a big effort at first, that is because it is. “We’re naturally egoistic, and we all have to exert conscious effort to take someone else’s perspective into account. If we don’t make an effort to do that, [a tense exchange] is the kind of thing that’s going to happen.”

These precious friendly encounters that people once took for granted, were one of the things we lost during the lockdowns, and it doesn’t take a leap of the imagination to see how that could have fed into those rising abusive situations. “A lot of times when we lash out,” she says, “it’s coming from fear, and if people feel socially anxious, that could turn into frustration and anger.”

There are other fun ways to awaken lapsed empathy. Sandstrom mentions research showing that reading fiction can do this, and “going to the theatre, similarly, can help people feel more empathy”. And making ourselves come across as more individual could help to avoid being dehumanised by others who are disconnected. “Wear something that expresses your individuality,” she suggests.

The great added bonus of talking to strangers, she says, is that it “puts people in a better mood, it makes people feel more connected. I think that’s because you are showing someone that you are seeing them as an individual. We live in an individualistic culture, with more and more things that make us feel like it’s us against the world, rather than being on the same team. And so anything that helps us to feel we are not alone, we are connected to other people and other people are generally OK, is important.”

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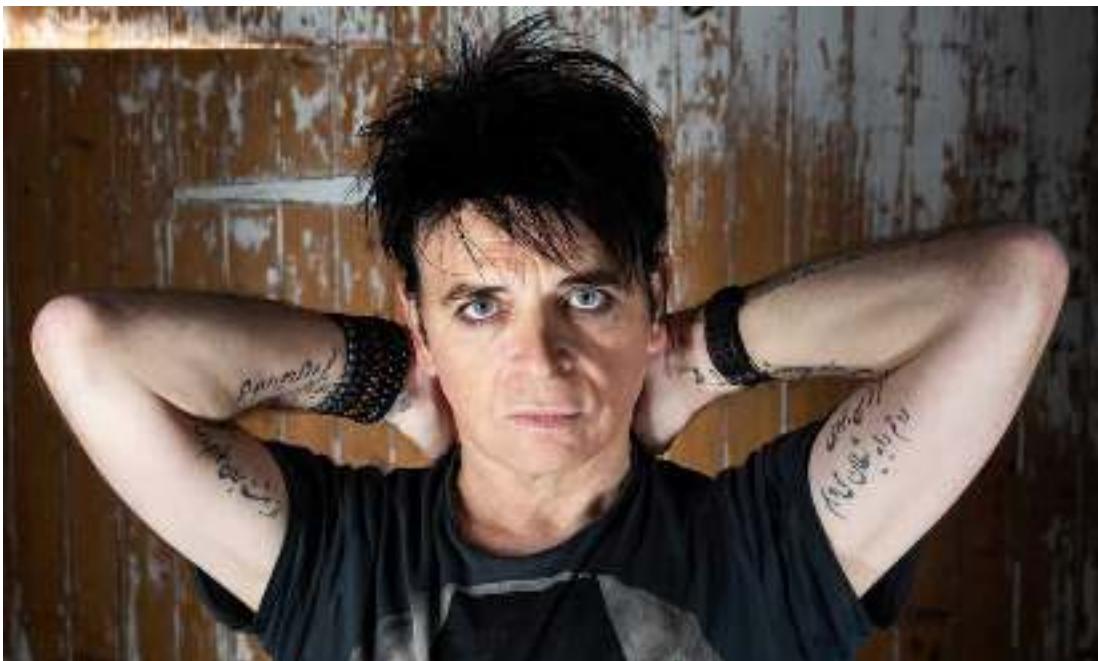
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Interview

Gary Numan: ‘I thought my comeback would take four years – not 41!’

[Dave Simpson](#)



‘I felt like I was being pushed towards the edge of a cliff’ ... Numan today at his home in Stirling. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

Four decades after walking away from fame, synthpop's pioneering superstar is filling stadiums once again. The ex-Tubeway Army frontman talks about overcoming death threats, panic attacks and losing 997,000 fans

Thu 4 Aug 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 Aug 2022 08.19 EDT

By the end of 1980, Gary Numan had a level of superstardom that, for working-class kids like him, had seemed as unachievable "as landing on the moon". The singles [Are "Friends" Electric?](#) (with his band Tubeway Army) and [Cars](#) had both rocketed to No 1, as had the albums Replicas, The Pleasure Principle and Telekon. But he was unprepared for fame.

"There's a glossy front-cover version where everything looks very glamorous," he says, "but the reality can be damaging and destructive. Making music stops being this thing you love and starts to become about units and strategies. The stress and pressure of it all was unbelievably difficult, particularly for someone like me."

I should've just quietly stopped touring. No one would have noticed. Instead, I upset everybody and destroyed my career

[Numan has since "learned how to be a famous person"](#), but at 23, with longstanding issues over social interactions, the constant interview requests, intrusion outside his house and snarky music press coverage ("with an unnecessary level of animosity") were unbearable. Then he received death threats. "I felt like I was being pushed towards the edge of a cliff," he says, flailing his arms as if to illustrate the feeling of losing balance. "And I didn't want to fall off."

So Numan walked away, announcing a "farewell" concert at Wembley Arena in 1981 (which was expanded to three nights owing to huge public demand) and retiring from live performance (for less than two years). "I wanted to get back to making music and to who I was before it all started," he says. "The mistake was going public. I should have just quietly stopped touring and no one would have noticed. Instead, I upset everybody and destroyed my career."



‘I think the audience was even more emotional than I was’ ... back at Wembley Arena in May. Photograph: Matt Frost/Sky UK

Today, the 64-year-old star is speaking by video from a house near Stirling in Scotland, which he bought as an investment after the pandemic exposed his reliance on live touring. The much-sampled electronic pop pioneer, who is politely spoken, friendly, open and occasionally endearingly self-deprecating, is in good form – and with reason. After years plugging away, his last two albums each entered at No 2 in the UK charts, and in May he even returned to Wembley, which had become a “symbolic target” for his recovery. “I thought it might take four years,” he laughs, “not 41.”

A new documentary, [Gary Numan](#) Resurrection, tells the story of his rejuvenation with unusual candour, even showing the singer having a panic attack as the Wembley stage beckoned once again. “There was an earlier one which wasn’t filmed,” he reveals, “but about an hour before going on I was properly losing it. My dad was there, doing that typical bloke thing: ‘Come on, you’ll be all right.’ It was almost word for word what he told me when I was 18, playing in some little pub.”

But the moment Numan faced the audience, his anxiety melted away. “It was brilliant, actually,” he smiles. “The power of all those people making all that

noise. Some of them had been at the first Wembley concerts, or stuck with me from the beginning. I think they were even more emotional than I was.”

Numan was born Gary Webb to a British Airways bus driver father and dressmaker mother and lived in Wraysbury in Berkshire, beneath the Heathrow flight path. His first ambition was to fly planes before a careers talk at Ashford grammar school in Surrey changed his mind. “The man said: ‘Only one in a thousand people get to be a pilot,’” he remembers. “Which is actually bullshit, terrible advice! But there were about 800 people in the school. I thought ‘There’s no way that’s going to be me.’ So I just said, ‘Right, I’ll be a pop star.’ It was childish thinking, but from that moment school became a pointless obstacle.” On top of becoming a pop star, he [got his pilot’s license in 1980](#) and founded the charter flight company Numanair.



‘You accept you are inherently unlikable’ … Numan struggled with anxiety.
Photograph: Matt Frost/Sky UK

The documentary reveals a letter from Numan’s headteacher branding him “the most disruptive pupil I’ve had in 21 years of teaching”. The singer was expelled twice – first from Ashford, then from Brooklands college in Weybridge. When he was 15, a child psychologist referred to Asperger syndrome, a then less well-known autism spectrum disorder. “She didn’t actually diagnose it, but she mentioned it,” he says. “It would have been

viewed as a stigma then. My mum certainly took it that way and was quite upset about it.” Numan was put on anti-anxiety drugs Nardil and Valium for a year but it was never followed up and he continued having difficulties making or keeping friends.

In his first band, at school, he turned up at rehearsals one day to discover somebody else singing. “Then every single person in or around the band stopped talking to me or walked away,” he remembers. “I’d always tried to be friendly so I couldn’t understand it. Finally, one of their girlfriends said: ‘No one wants to know you any more.’ It was traumatic, but you accept that there’s something wrong with you, that you try to be friendly but are inherently unlikable, and so you become reclusive. Then you write songs about that.”

Adapting a name from one he found in the Yellow Pages (Neumann Kitchen Appliances) and very convincingly hiding his stage fright behind an image and persona, he poured his alienation and love of sci-fi into futuristic songs such as Cars (where “I feel safest of all. I can lock all my doors. It’s the only way to live”) and Me, I Disconnect from You. The singer had always been more fascinated by technology and noises than by conventional music, preferring the electric guitar bought by his steadfastly supportive parents to the acoustic “because it had dials and switches”. Numan was fronting Tubeway Army, with whom he made his first two albums, when he came across a Minimoog synthesiser: “A eureka moment. I thought, ‘That noise sounds brilliant. How can I get that into song?’”

He set about converting all his band’s guitar-based punk songs into electropop. Soon afterwards, the memorable synth hook for Are “Friends” Electric?, written on an old out-of-tune pub piano his parents bought, came about through “my bad playing. I hit a wrong note and it sounded better.” Just over a year after he signed to Beggars Banquet, the 1979 single sold a million copies.

By the 90s, though, his albums were being badly reviewed or not reviewed at all. “Which was even worse! In 1995, I did a single called Absolution which sold just 3,000 copies,” he reveals. “Less than my debut single when I was a complete unknown. That means 997,000 people had fucked off!”

Then, in the 00s, he was being [mashed up by Sugababes](#) and increasingly recognised as a key figure in electronic pop.

Numan's resurrection started after he met Gemma O'Neill, a fan who connected with the singer after her mother died from cancer. They have now been together for 30 years and married for 25, and he credits her with helping him to view himself more positively and be more at ease in conversations. "Little nudges under the table, or long conversations after we'd been out somewhere," he says. "'Why did you say that? That's why that person left.' Socialising will always be stressful for me but I'm quite happy to hide in her shadow when we're out. She has given me a confidence I never had before."



'She has given me a confidence' ... Numan with wife Gemma O'Neill.
Photograph: Sky UK/Gary Numan Resurrection

His wife also helped him recognise where his music had gone wrong. "I'd come to think of myself as the weak link in my albums," he explains. "I was bringing in guitar players and other people to do the vocals. She said, 'You may not be the best keyboard player or guitarist in the world, but you have a sound that people love.' She was right."

The couple have been through “very traumatic” IVF and lost a baby (they now have three teenage daughters), but their only serious period of turbulence was when both experienced depression. “She was coming out of hers just as I was going into mine,” he says. “I was thinking of … not getting divorced, but getting away for a while because everything felt negative.”

Instead, Numan wrote [Lost](#), a beautiful song on Splinter (Songs from a Broken Mind), the 2013 album that returned him to the Top 20. “I fully intended to vent about how shitty she was and how right I was,” he grins, “but all that came out was how brilliant she was. This might be dramatic, but I think it saved us.”

Numan admits that when 2017’s Savage (Songs from a Broken World) went in at No 2 in the UK album chart, followed by 2021’s Intruder, he “cried like a baby, because it meant so much”. His next “little hurdle” is another No 1, but some anxieties remain. He worries about global heating and the environment, and after the family relocated to Los Angeles in 2012, he worried about the rise of Donald Trump. Now, his biggest fear is that one day he won’t be here for his children, so he’s writing about “being dead, or coming back as a ghost and trying to communicate”.

“I don’t write happy songs,” he grins. “I write about what bothers me. I’d rather not be worried, but it’s all good. If I had stopped worrying I’d have only done one album.”

Gary Numan Resurrection is on Sky Arts and NOW on 13 August

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Scorched Britain: the July heatwave in pictures

18 July People turn out to watch the sunrise at Cullercoats Bay, North Tyneside, on a day that temperatures soared Photograph: Owen Humphreys/PA

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2022.08.04 - Opinion

- [Energy companies are bleeding British families dry. Here's how to fix it](#)
- [Sunak, Truss and the Bank of England are lying to you – the UK economy is weak and rigged](#)
- [The phrase ‘white working class’ is a fiction – so why are the Tories obsessed with it?](#)
- [In Taiwan, as in Ukraine, the west is flirting with disaster](#)

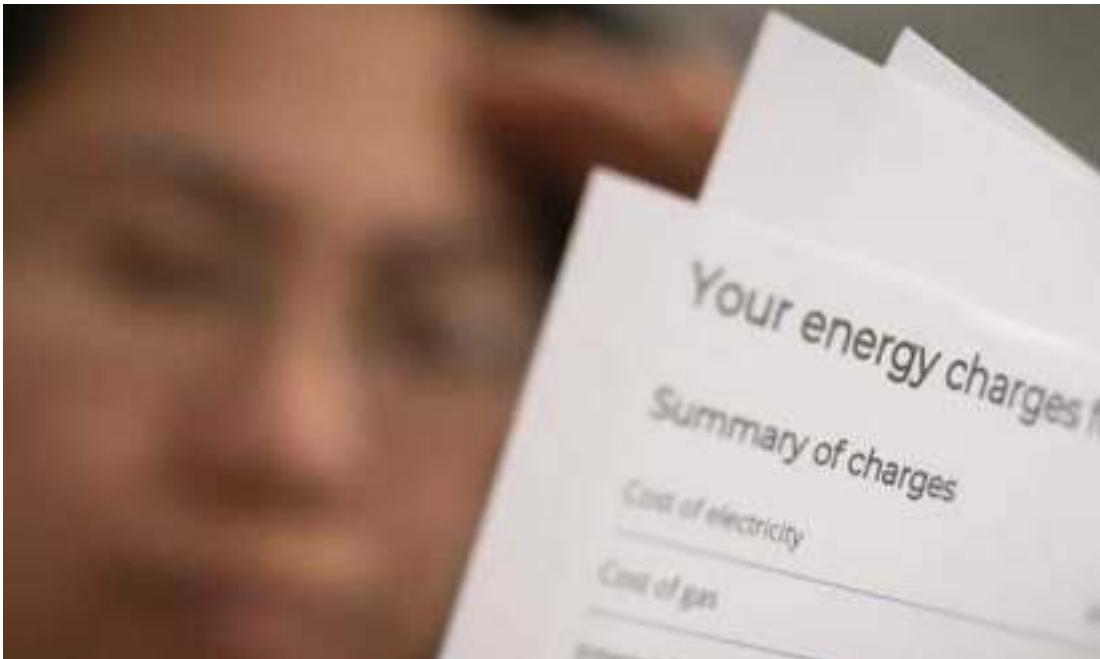
[Opinion](#)[Energy industry](#)

Energy companies are bleeding British families dry. Here's how to fix it

[Owen Jones](#)



Taking back governmental control would be a long-term solution to a broken system. Look at what France is doing



'Britain's energy industry should never have been reduced to a cash cow for profiteers.' Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

Thu 4 Aug 2022 05.07 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 Aug 2022 09.52 EDT

Britain's households have been reduced to cash machines for the shareholders of energy giants. For any future historian seeking to understand just how broken was the British economic model of the 2020s, the dichotomy of these two statistics requires no further explanation: [£6.9bn of profits](#) for BP – the second highest ever – while the average household energy bill is expected to reach [more than £3,600](#) a year by winter.

This is self-evidently unaffordable for millions of British families, all too many of whom already skip hot meals to ensure their children are fed, while the only hardship shareholders can expect are hangovers from one too many champagne dinners.

That the Tories were shamed into [imposing a windfall tax](#) in May is no adequate answer for a looming human catastrophe. The extra 25% they will pay on profits only applies from three weeks ago, meaning the vast fortunes made before then will be untouched. In part, they are profiteering from war: the horrors of Ukraine and sanctions against Russia have sent prices for oil and gas surging. The killing fields of armed conflict have often proven to be

lucrative business opportunities. That history often repeats this sordid enterprise makes it no less grotesque.

The energy companies know the case for a far more ambitious tax is inarguable, and so they resort to desperate spin. Higher rates will mean confiscating money desperately needed for green investment, they cry, imperilling the transition to the clean energy required to preserve human civilisation from the existential threat of the climate emergency. Don't believe them.

For a start, despite their attempts to “greenwash” their reputations as climate fighters, the world’s biggest oil and gas companies spend more than £150m a year lobbying politicians to halt, water down or destroy policies required to [tackle the climate crisis](#). That big energy has thrown [£1m at the Tories](#) since the last election is not the whimsical splashing around of money: it’s because they trust the Conservatives most to forestall demands for tougher action to be taken against them. This was hardly naive: witness the [90% tax breaks](#) – for investing in fossil fuel extraction – which Rishi Sunak handed them, allowing them to dramatically slash their tax bills.

In any case, the killer fact is that 60% of their profits go directly to shareholders: none of that is funding investment in anything, let alone clean energy. Since 2010, they’ve handed out nearly [£200bn to shareholders](#): imagine how this money could instead have been used to promote clean energy, as well as reducing household bills. “They’re not using cash to invest – and when they do invest, it’s still fossil fuel heavy,” says Mathew Lawrence, director of the Common Wealth thinktank. “It’s better to see them not as energy companies but as institutions whose main goal is managing cashflows to reward investors.”

But not all years yield such bumper profits, say the energy companies: what of the lean periods? Even then, if you average out the years, big energy is awash with cash. Their apologists’ opposition to a sweeping tax becomes ever more desperate: such as claiming it will hammer pensioners, a point comprehensively rebutted by Common Wealth’s research which highlights that the main pension funds own less than 0.2% of [BP and Shell’s shares](#). And would anyone consider Norway – which enjoys one of the highest

standards of living on Earth – to be financially reckless. Yet its permanent windfall tax – [worth 56%](#) on top of corporation tax – means that for every £100 they collect from barrels of oil in the North Sea, [Britain collects just £8](#).

While being coerced by popular pressure into imposing a more drastic tax on the energy companies is the most we can expect under Tory rule, that does not mean it should be the limit of Labour's ambitions. When Keir Starmer was asked on national television during the 2020 Labour leadership race if he supported renationalising energy, he stuck his hand up, only later [to renege](#) on this promise, along with so many of his other campaign commitments. But taxes only offer temporary redress, rather than dealing with a structurally broken industry which should never have been surrendered by the government to profiteers. How can it be that Britain is one of only two European nations to have entirely flogged off its [transmission grid](#), for example, with National Grid frittering away £1.4bn in dividends to shareholders in 2021 alone, instead of using it for investment?

French president Emmanuel Macron can hardly be construed as a leftwing firebrand, and yet his government is [taking full control](#) of the already mostly nationalised EDF energy firm. Because it's publicly owned, the government could simply order the company to take a £7bn hit to protect families from a cost-of-living crisis by limiting bill hikes to just 4% this year. As pro-public ownership organisation We Own It highlights, academic research points to energy prices that are [up to 30% lower](#) under public ownership – here is an obviously viable long-term solution.

A social order which robs struggling households to shove astronomical dividends into the bank accounts of well-to-do shareholders is irretrievably broken. Conservative leadership frontrunner Liz Truss's position is to denounce failed economic orthodoxies that have prevailed for years, concluding that the problem is that taxes are too high on big business – rather than, say, energy companies bleeding British families dry. Her blind refusal to acknowledge the reality speaks to a political party inhabiting a parallel universe. Britain's energy industry should never have been reduced to a cash cow for profiteers. At the very least, our frontline politicians should be shamed into raiding these super-profits to offer their citizens a life raft. As it is, they've been left to drown.

- Owen Jones is a Guardian columnist
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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

OpinionEconomics

Sunak, Truss and the Bank of England are lying to you – the UK economy is weak and rigged

[Aditya Chakrabortty](#)



Westminster is perpetrating the same scam as the rate-setters – bluffing that they can get the old economic machinery working like before



Illustration by Eleanor Shakespeare

Thu 4 Aug 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 Aug 2022 09.52 EDT

Perhaps you have been hoping that the age of lies is over. After all, Boris Johnson will soon be swept out of No 10 and whoever replaces him cannot be half as mendacious – can they? Liz Truss may [love her pork markets](#) but she can't be as keen on telling pork pies. Well, I bring bad news. If lying is [making a statement one knows to be false](#), then Britain is wading waist-deep into an era of systemic deceit.

I don't just mean the permanently malfunctioning Truss, who this week [complained](#) she was “wilfully misrepresented” by, um, her very own press release. No, the fabrications come from across the political establishment and they concern the future of our economy. And the ultimate fruit of these lies may well be another Johnson or Nigel Farage.

Let's start at the Bank of England which, this lunchtime, will almost certainly jack up borrowing costs, with possibly the [biggest rate hike](#) in more than 25 years. The signs are that the UK is sliding into recession, but no matter: for the Bank's governor, Andrew Bailey, this is about bringing inflation to heel – “no ifs, no buts”, [as he says](#), with all the pretend command of a flailing supply teacher. Yet the same Andrew Bailey [admitted](#) to MPs

just this May that he was “helpless” to stop inflation. As his colleagues testified, what is driving up prices in the UK is the global shortage of key commodities, from oil to food to semiconductor chips. What’s not to blame is wage rises, not when – according to economists at [UBS wealth management](#) – 99% of British workers are getting poorer.

When inflation falls back, it will not be Threadneedle Street’s doing. Much more likely is a scenario akin to 2008, when the price of basics shot up so high economies tanked. By raising rates, Bailey wants to show he means business. What he is more likely to do is put firms out of business and sink households into a debt crisis.

Then there is growth, something all the contenders to be prime minister pretend they can summon up. Rishi Sunak [vows](#) to make the UK “the most prosperous place in the world”, while Truss issues promises about “unleashing”, “unshackling” and “unchaining” Brexit Britain, as if it were mouldering in some continental jail. Meanwhile, Keir Starmer swears only he can “reboot our economy”. Is your entire unitary state on the blink? Then the leader of the opposition will be right round to turn it off and on again!

The politicians are perpetrating the same scam as the rate-setters, bluffing they can get the old economic machinery working like before just by pulling this or that lever. Yet whether in Westminster or the City, both sides are flogging false optimism – and they know it.

Over the past 50 years, almost every government has overseen lower economic growth than its predecessor – even as it has promised the opposite. That’s according to figures produced for this column by Kevin Albertson, a professor of economics at Manchester Metropolitan University. He analysed national income per person, adjusted for inflation, and then calculated a yearly rate of GDP growth for each prime minister. The end results are the sort of ugly truth Britain badly needs.

Even in this Tory leadership contest, Margaret Thatcher has been ordained as the prime minister who saved Britain’s economy. The reality is that economic growth during her reign was lower than under Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan. Then came Tony Blair, who by 2005 was still [promising](#)

“New Labour, New Prosperity”, even while his government underperformed Thatcher’s. Blair also claimed “our economy is stronger and more stable than for generations”, which sounded laughably hollow two years later when Northern Rock fell over and the credit crisis began. Still, David Cameron did little better and Theresa May’s administration was truly abysmal.

This is half a century of an economy becoming ever more stagnant, even as its leaders point excitedly to any passing ripple. And those ripples have normally meant more debt: Albertson’s analysis shows that every extra £1 of real GDP growth between Thatcher and the great banking crash came with nearly £2 of borrowing by households and government.

This is the country described by political economists such as [Brett Christophers](#), [Colin Crouch](#) and the [Centre for Research on Socio-cultural Change](#): an economy in which those at the top don’t go in for investment in research or technology but speculation and asset-stripping, and where governments dare not enquire too closely where private money is coming from and on what terms. This is an economic model that prizes its past – elderly people and asset owners – more than its future. Westminster’s usual fantasy fixes about big data or building on the green belt look risibly small against this backdrop. As Woody Allen nearly said, if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans – but to give Him a really good giggle, say your plans were drawn up by the [Taxpayers’ Alliance](#).

We hear lies all the time, of course, about Brexit or pandemic preparedness. But the thing about economic lies is that we can easily rumble them – by checking our own pockets to see if we’re better off. Government after government has promised that if we work hard, we’ll get on – and they’ve not held their end of the bargain. The Resolution Foundation’s latest report, [Stagnation Nation](#) (a telling title, that one), makes the remarkable observation that every worker aged 31 and under “has never worked in an economy with sustained average wage rises”. That is eight million people, or about a quarter of the labour force, who have never seen work provide a rising standard of living.

Posing [in front of posters with babies](#), Cameron pretended his spending cuts were to relieve the young of the worry of debt. What he actually did, as

some of us [warned at the time](#), was plunge an entire generation into permanent precarity.

The answer to this isn't declinism, but realism. The UK is a very rich country. We can afford for kids not to go hungry during school holidays and for our grandparents not to freeze in winter. But rather than the usual delusions about Britain winning "the global race" or the economic pie getting exponentially bigger, it is time to focus on making the slices fairer, taking more away from those at the very top and sharing it out. If politicians keep peddling falsehoods about their strong and stable governments delivering a boom, then they can't blame voters if they call them liars – and opt to listen to rather more entertaining fibbers with more spectacular stories to tell. The kind of yarn-spinners with whom they wouldn't mind having a pint. That, you may recall, is partly how we ended up with Farage and Johnson in the first place. And it is a sure way of bringing on their successors.

- Aditya Chakrabortty is a Guardian columnist
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OpinionClass issues

The phrase ‘white working class’ is a fiction – so why are the Tories obsessed with it?

[Zoe Williams](#)



Working class people are more diverse than any other social group. So why is the right so obsessed with peddling the fake narrative that it's white people who have been left behind?



‘What does unify the working class is its work ethic and its precariousness.’

Photograph: Westend61/Getty Images

Thu 4 Aug 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 Aug 2022 05.25 EDT

The “white working class” is such a peculiar phrase, so widely deployed and so misleading. Of course there are white people who are working class, but the class as a whole is the most diverse of any group. This is a point made by [a report from Class](#), the union-funded thinktank, on new attitudes to race and class in Britain. You cannot predefine the beliefs and values of a class, it says, and then filter for people whose views correspond to them. Instead, the researchers built their sample on a points system, taking into consideration class identity, housing tenure, education level, occupation, household income, and if and how one might pay a £500 emergency bill. Perhaps that sounds obvious, but it is also quite a novel approach.

Certain things stand out immediately: the “uberisation” of certain sectors such as academia, coupled with general pay stagnation and a public sector pay freeze, have combined to mean that old blue collar/white collar distinctions are no longer meaningful. You can have what used to be called a “middle-class job” and still struggle to meet your basic needs.

What hasn't changed is that the working class is diverse. Indeed, this is a core definition; monoculturalism is a phenomenon mainly of upper-class groups. The values and attitudes associated with the "white working class" or its sibling phrase, so-called "red wall" voters – patriotism, xenophobia, racism, nativism, traditionalism, nostalgia – are simply not discernible themes in any prolonged discussion with working-class people. They are unlikely (29%) to think that people of colour who cannot get ahead have problems of their own making, while 54% think that talking about race and racism is necessary to move towards an equal society.

What does unify this group is its work ethic and its precariousness – and allied to this, a belief that the system is rigged against people who have to work to live. Whoever is buying the line that the wealthy accrued their fortunes with graft, it is not the working-class people in this study, who overwhelmingly (70%) think that the rich have simply been handed better opportunities.

The [Conservatives](#) and their supportive media are pitching to a sub-set of a sub-set, their own members, and their talking points are extremely niche: anti-green, anti-trans, anti-human-rights, pro-grammar schools, a fierce if loosely gathered crusade against the present and the future. But their broader pitch over the past six years has been to this fabled "white working class", the one true voter: prioritised because they were authentic, their authenticity proven by their anger, which was justified because they'd been left behind. They hated the EU, immigration, London and elites; they loved the NHS, the Queen and their country.

The conception was unfalsifiable. All counter-evidence – other working-class people who were socially liberal, or valued immigration, or wanted to stay in the EU, or disapproved of the monarchy – was dismissed as coming from a false working class, either brainwashed by the elite, or a member of the elite in disguise. It was a completely deliberate mischaracterisation of the working class, and we could ruminiate forever on who resisted it least effectively. Yet the cornerstone of its success was the insistence on whiteness as a distinct category.

If the working class had been characterised as it is – the most diverse of all social classes – most of the other narratives wouldn't have stood up.

This frame – “while the elites have been chattering about multiculturalism, there’s been a hidden victimisation of the left-behind white Briton” – was originally a feature of education studies in the early 00s, where it was a legitimate inquiry based on the pupil attainment data with which the Labour government was obsessed. The educational failure of white working-class children, particularly boys, was seized on immediately as material for the “whither multiculturalism?” debate, which previously found its problem with racial equality hard to express.

The slippage from the specific and demonstrable (the educational failure of white working-class children) to the general and atmospheric (society’s broad failure of the entire white working class) has been incremental. There was just enough truth in it to make it stick. It kept a sharp focus on areas that had been “left behind”, and those were everywhere, particularly post-austerity as communities were deliberately hollowed out by cuts. The sense of democratic decline, what Class calls a “lack of power and voice” in working-class communities, was likewise rooted in fact – but the “red wall” narrative warped the roots, insisting that the working class went unheard by the liberal elite because their views were unpalatable to liberalism (being, in the main, too racist).

Since the category itself – a non-diverse working class – was a fiction, it could never be meaningfully studied, and its views were instead ventriloquised by newspaper hunches and what politicians “heard on the doorstep”. It’s all been a giant confidence trick, to which the rebuttal is quite simple. If you want to talk about the working class, you need to say what it means, figure out who’s in it, and then ask them.

- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
 - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*
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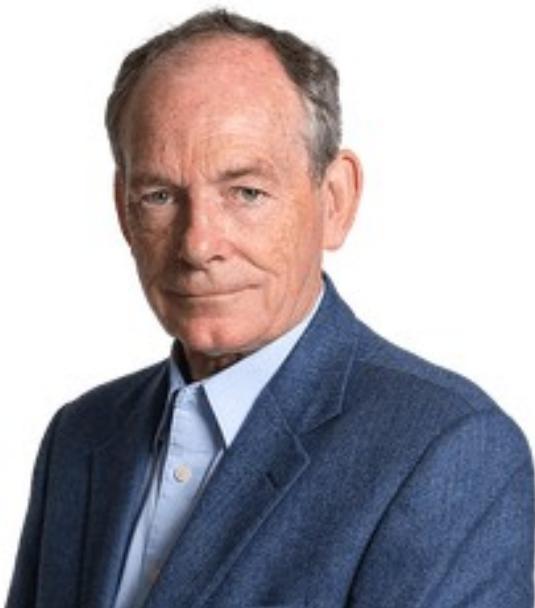
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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[OpinionTaiwan](#)

In Taiwan, as in Ukraine, the west is flirting with disaster

[Simon Jenkins](#)



It's one thing to declare yourself 'rather dead than red', quite another to inflict that decision on the rest of us



‘The visit to Taiwan of the US congressional speaker, Nancy Pelosi, has been so blatantly provocative it seems little more than a midterm election stunt.’ Photograph: Chiang Ying-ying/AP

Wed 3 Aug 2022 11.33 EDT Last modified on Wed 3 Aug 2022 14.20 EDT

Arguments in the foothills of war are always the same. Those for war shout loudest and beat their chests, eager for tanks to rumble and jets to roar. Those against are dismissed as wimps, appeasers and defeatists. When the trumpets sound and the drums beat, reason runs for cover.

The [visit to Taiwan](#) of the US congressional speaker, Nancy Pelosi, has been so blatantly provocative it seems little more than a midterm election stunt. She [declares](#) it “essential that America and her allies make clear that we never give in to autocrats”. China’s gross overreaction is a classic example of precipitate escalation. Yet when [Joe Biden asserted](#) that the US would defend Taiwan militarily, the president’s office instantly backtracked, reasserting a policy of “strategic ambiguity”. It remains the case that no one quite believes the US will go to war over Taiwan – so far.

A similar ambiguity infuses the west’s attitude towards Russia over Ukraine. The US and Britain reiterate that Russia “[must fail and be seen to fail](#)”. But can Russia really be relied on to tolerate ever greater destruction of its

armaments without escalation? The west seems set on holding Ukraine to a drawn game, hoping to postpone some horrific penalty shootout. All Russia can do is perpetrate ever more atrocities to keep its team in play. Suppose it escalates something else?

These are the same uncertainties that overwhelmed European diplomacy in 1914. Rulers dithered while generals strutted and rattled sabres. Flags flew and newspapers filled with tallies of weaponry. Negotiations slithered into ultimatums. As the frontline pleaded for help, woe betide anyone who preached compromise.

During the two east-west nuclear crises of the cold war, in 1962 over Cuba and 1983 over a false missile alarm, disaster was averted by informal lines of communication between Washington and Moscow. They worked. Those lines reportedly do not exist today. The eastern bloc is led by two autocrats, internally secure but paranoid about their borders.

The west is blighted by weakened and failing leaders, striving to boost their ratings by promoting conflicts abroad. What is new is the conversion of the old western imperialism into a new order of western “[interests and values](#)”, ready to be prayed in aid of any intervention.

Such an order has become arbitrary and knows no boundaries. Despite Pelosi’s claim, the west “gives in” at its own convenience, intervening or failing to do so. Hence wayward policies towards Iran, Syria, Libya, Rwanda, Myanmar, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and others. Britain abandoned Hong Kong to China and donated Afghanistan to the Taliban, the futility of the latter intervention shown last week in the drone killing of [al-Qaida’s leader in Kabul](#).

Pelosi's Taiwan visit sparks furious reaction from China – video report

Never in my lifetime has the Ministry of Defence had to defend my country against a remotely plausible overseas threat, least of all from [Russia](#) or China. Instead, in the cause of “interests and values” it has killed untold thousands of foreigners in my name and to virtually no gain.

Now, with the looming threat of a serious east-west confrontation, the least we should expect of Britain's probable next prime minister, [Liz Truss](#), is that she drops her cliches and articulates clearly what she sees as Britain's objectives, if any, in Ukraine and Taiwan.

Neither country is a formal ally of Britain or critical to its defence. Horror at Russian aggression justified military aid to Kyiv, but that was a humanitarian rather than strategic response. Probably the greatest aid we can be to [Ukraine](#) is to assist in the eventual return of its exiled labour force and help in rebuilding its shattered cities. Taiwan likewise merits sympathy in its historic struggle with China, but its status poses no military threat to Britain. Its population has long been content with an ambiguous relationship with China as it knows it is at its long-term mercy.

Boris Johnson's [dispatch](#) of the aircraft carrier Queen Elizabeth to the South China Sea last year was a senseless act of vanity.

Russia and [China](#) are both experiencing border disputes of the sort that occur in most corners of the world. Outsiders rarely assist their resolution. The days when western powers could ordain the spheres of interest of states such as China and Russia are rightly over, as was acknowledged during the cold war. Since that conflict ended, the west's global interventions have become parodies of imperial outreach, notably across the Muslim world. With few exceptions, neither China nor Russia has shown a comparable desire to possess the world. They have merely desired, however callously, to repossess ancestral neighbours.

The fates of Ukraine and [Taiwan](#) merit every diplomatic support but they cannot be allowed to lurch downhill towards global war or nuclear catastrophe. This may reduce the effect – always overstated – of nuclear deterrence, and make them vulnerable to blackmail. But it is one thing to declare yourself “rather dead than red”, quite another to inflict that decision on others.

It may be that one day a global war, like global heating, delivers the world a catastrophe it may have to confront. For the time being liberal democracy surely owes it to humanity to avert rather than provoke that risk. Both sides

are now flirting with disaster. The west should be ready to back off – and not call it defeat.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist
 - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*
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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2022.08.04 - Around the world

- [Yemen Warring parties agree to extend ceasefire by a further two months](#)
- [Medicine Pain-relief shortage in poorer countries ‘due to stigma of US opioids crisis’](#)
- [Exclusive Saudi sisters found dead in Sydney flat said queer women ‘live in fear’ in their homeland](#)
- [Kansas Abortion referendum drives record number of voters to polls](#)
- [Indiana US congresswoman Jackie Walorski dies in car crash – report](#)

Global development

Yemen's warring parties agree to extend ceasefire by a further two months

The truce will bring some relief to a country exhausted by war and famine, but critics say the Houthis will use the peace to regroup



A Yemeni boy sits next to his family's allocation of emergency food aid. Almost 80% of the population need humanitarian aid. Photograph: Yahya Arhab/EPA

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Melanie Swan in Mukallah

Thu 4 Aug 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 00.26 EDT

The UN has announced that the warring sides in [Yemen](#) have agreed to extend the current ceasefire for a further two months.

Late on Tuesday the government and the Houthi rebels committed to intensify efforts on negotiations, said Hans Grundberg, special envoy for the country.

The news will bring some relief for citizens who had been bracing for war to return after what has already been an uneasy four-month truce.

The UN-sponsored break in fighting and the extension agreed this week has been the longest respite Yemen has seen in the seven-year conflict, which pitted the internationally recognised government, backed by a Saudi-led military coalition, against Iran-aligned Houthi rebels, who control most of Yemen's north.

But the Arab region's poorest country remains broken by a bitter war, with [some regions facing famine](#) in what the UN has called the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

More than 24 million people, almost 80% of the country's population, need humanitarian aid, including 13 million children. [Unicef has claimed that](#) the war has seen the numbers of women dying in childbirth rise to an average of 12 a day, and that six newborns die every two hours in the country's devastated health system.

"We are battling a war on many fronts," said Yemeni aid worker Ali al Jafri. "Where it is not poverty and starvation, it is extremism or government corruption. We are under immense pressure," said Jafri, from the Emirates Red Crescent (ERC).

Since 2010, the beginning of Yemen's instability, the price of flour has risen by about 3,000%, while earlier this year, [faced with funding shortfalls, the World Food Programme cut support](#) to 5 million of the country's poorest people.



Yemenis gather at a camp for internally displaced persons near Sana'a, 30 July 2022. By March 2022, an estimated 4.3 million Yemenis had been displaced by fighting. Photograph: Yahya Arhab/EPA

The UN predicts famine this year. "Ordinary Yemenis are choosing between the vital costs of living such as rent or food," Jafri said, in a country where many of the population live on less than £1.60 a day.

The cost of bread has risen sixfold, prices manipulated by the government which raises costs when the aid is in short supply and reduces when there have been deliveries from charities. The ERC recently worked with the country's Office of Trade and Commerce on a trial with 15 bakeries to see the impact of aid on price reduction.

"When we donate to the bakeries, the price of bread goes down, so this is why these donations are critical in countering inflation and the problems of the currency collapse, especially as the country is now looking for alternative sources of grain in the wake of the Ukraine war," Jafri said.

During the trial in April, the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the charity donated free flour to 15 bakeries for one month and managed to get retailers to reduce the price from 70 Yemeni riyals (23p) to 30 (10p) for a loaf, but the bakers refused to keep prices low, suffering as they were from inflation and rent hikes.

Suhair Saeed Omer, a family medicine specialist at the Al Mahwar clinic in Mukallah, one of multiple hospitals built or renovated by Emirates Red Crescent, said Yemen cannot manage without international support. "Without foreign aid, this clinic couldn't do the important work it is doing," she said. "We simply cannot cope without it. We are lucky to have this support, but many other Yemenis are not."

More than 3 million people have been displaced from their homes since 2015; 150,000 people, fighters and civilians, have been killed.

The war has also forced a generation of boys into a life of violence. At 16, Basem* became the de facto head of his family after his father was killed in a roadside ambush, shot by an al-Qaida gunman near the family home in Shahar, Hadramut province.

Basem had to leave school and now earns £85 a month as a painter, to support his mother and five younger siblings. "It has been very tough," he said. "Nobody told me what to do, so I just had to work things out as I went along." His father left behind debts which made matters worse. "The debt collectors kept coming just days after my father's death. There are no words to explain how frightened I was."

Shahar, liberated from al-Qaida by UAE forces which, backed by the government, now temporarily control the area, is vastly changed, he said. “Back then we couldn’t even leave home but even at home, we didn’t feel safe. We couldn’t even leave things outside as they’d be stolen. Today, thank God, life is very different.”



Children chant slogans blaming the US and Israel for the war during a ceremony marking the conclusion of summer religious and training camps, Sana'a, 27 June 2022. Photograph: Yahya Arhab/EPA

Houthi rebels are using the ceasefire to increase enforced recruitment of child soldiers, according to local rights investigators. The Houthis control vast areas and as that expands, so does its army. In Hodeida province, where Houthis control 24 of 26 towns, there are a record 19,500 children enrolled in its summer camp – out of a school-age population of 56,000 – up from 8,500 last year; of whom 3,000 never left.

Abuse is rife, with more than 60 cases of rape reported since Hodeida camps started in April while at least 10 people have died, either during training or in accidents with weapons.

“Intimidation tactics have increased as has the area of land being controlled by the Houthis,” the source, who requested anonymity for security reasons,

said. “It is impossible for families to say no when their child is called.” Houthi “cultural envoys” are in schools, managing enrolment through the year, but summer is the peak time. With poor parents in the country looking for ways to feed their children, the camps offer a way out and Al Qaeda uses bribes of food and cash.

Unicef said more than 10,200 children have been killed or maimed in the conflict and thousands more have been recruited into the fighting. An estimated 2 million children are displaced and 2 million out of school, leaving them even more vulnerable.

“Instead of peace, this ceasefire is the time the Houthis are bolstering their weaponry and on a heavy recruitment drive,” said the investigating team lead: “There are increasing numbers of weapons shipments coming in from Iran to Hodeidah port. The world can’t look away now just because there is a ceasefire.”

Thomas Juneau, assistant professor at the University of Ottawa and fellow at the Sana'a Centre for Strategic Studies in Yemen, said the deep divisions between tribal factions and extremist groups weakens any ability to find unity amid the growing influence of the Houthis, who remain dominant militarily and politically.

With a new presidential council in power after the resignation of President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, finding common ground remains a concern. “The marginalisation of former president Hadi and the creation of the new presidential council are positive steps to try to create a stronger front to counter them [the Houthis], but it is far from sufficient,” Juneau said. The council needing to unite the many rival factions opposed to the Houthis.

“There is no doubt in my mind that the Houthis have been using, and will continue to use, the ceasefire to regroup. That’s what they did in the past, and there is every reason to believe that they will continue.”

* Name has been changed

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

A common conditionGlobal development

Pain-relief shortage in poorer countries ‘due to stigma of US opioids crisis’

Palliative doctors call for relaxation of laws to redress huge unmet need for drugs among majority of world’s population



Poppy plants, from which morphine is extracted. Only 17% of the drug produced worldwide for medical purposes in 2020 was used in low- and middle-income countries. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

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[Kaamil Ahmed](#)

Thu 4 Aug 2022 05.25 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 Aug 2022 05.27 EDT

Patients suffering chronic pain are being denied treatment in low-income countries because of restrictive laws and concerns about opioid addiction, which have been fuelled by [the crisis engulfing the US](#).

Palliative doctors, who say there is a huge unmet need for pain-relief drugs in poorer countries, have called for laws to be relaxed and for the stigma around opioids to be addressed.

Only 17% of the morphine produced worldwide in 2020 for medical purposes was consumed in low- and middle-income countries, despite them being home to close to 83% of the global population, according to the latest figures from the [International Narcotics Control Board](#), which monitors drug use. It said the imbalance in usage has barely changed in 20 years.

A 2017 [Lancet commission](#) study found that Haiti received an annual average of just 5mg of morphine-equivalent opioids for each patient requiring palliative care – 0.8% of what is needed – compared with the US,

which received 55,000mg for each patient, more than 3,000% of the required amount.

“What I witness myself every day are people who have been on disease-specific treatment going through pain and suffering through weeks, months or years,” said Dr MR Rajagopal, the chairman of Pallium India, a palliative care charity based in Kerala. “At least 96% of them in my country eventually are denied pain relief. I have seen several people with scars around the neck from attempting to kill themselves by hanging.”

Rajagopal said very few patients reached palliative care clinics where they could finally access pain-relief drugs suitable for their conditions and that doctors were often scared to prescribe them.



Biochemist Denys Rukarata tests locally produced oral liquid morphine for purity at the Pharmaceutical Laboratory of Rwanda. Photograph: Ben Curtis/AP

He said draconian laws grew out of a 1961 international treaty that emphasised the control of opioids in order to stop drug abuse. The resulting [global “war on drugs”](#), which effectively criminalised production and supply even in medical contexts, led hospitals and pharmacies to stop stocking

opioids. The result, he said, was that India's use of opioids dropped from 600kg a year in 1985 to 17kg in 1997.

Quick Guide

A common condition

Show

The human toll of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is huge and rising. These illnesses end the lives of approximately 41 million of the 56 million people who die every year – and three quarters of them are in the developing world.

NCDs are simply that; unlike, say, a virus, you can't catch them. Instead, they are caused by a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioural factors. The main types are cancers, chronic respiratory illnesses, diabetes and cardiovascular disease – heart attacks and stroke. Approximately 80% are preventable, and all are on the rise, spreading inexorably around the world as ageing populations and lifestyles pushed by economic growth and urbanisation make being unhealthy a global phenomenon.

NCDs, once seen as illnesses of the wealthy, now have a grip on the poor. Disease, disability and death are perfectly designed to create and widen inequality – and being poor makes it less likely you will be diagnosed accurately or treated.

Investment in tackling these common and chronic conditions that kill 71% of us is incredibly low, while the cost to families, economies and communities is staggeringly high.

In low-income countries NCDs – typically slow and debilitating illnesses – are seeing a fraction of the money needed being invested or donated. Attention remains focused on the threats from communicable diseases, yet cancer death rates have long sped past the death toll from malaria, TB and HIV/Aids combined.

'A common condition' is a new Guardian series reporting on NCDs in the developing world: their prevalence, the solutions, the causes and consequences, telling the stories of people living with these illnesses.

Tracy McVeigh, editor

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He said advocacy efforts had helped relax regulations in Kerala and other parts of India, but that still only 350kg of opioids a year were being consumed, whereas he estimated that 30,000kg were now needed.

Gary Rodin, who is the director of the Toronto-based Global Institute of Psychosocial, Palliative and End-of-Life Care and has carried out [research into habits of prescribing opioids](#), said the increase in rates of diseases such as cancer and diabetes in low- and middle-income countries demanded greater emphasis on relieving pain and psychological distress.

“Maybe 100 years ago that would have been a large part of medicine. As medicine has gotten more specialised and technologised, people have paid more attention to Cat scans and MRIs and blood tests than they have to the suffering of the patient. They haven’t asked enough about the suffering,” he said.

That has resulted in more aggressive chemotherapy treatment, Rodin said, even at stages when it is unlikely to work and when the body struggles to handle it.

“Suicide rates are very high in advanced disease. Psychological distress is very common; family distress is very common. There are lots of approaches which we have evidence will help, but we don’t do nearly enough to support that.”



OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma has had to settle [thousands of lawsuits](#) over its role in the US opioid crisis. Photograph: Toby Talbot/AP

Palliative care can be a cheaper way to ease the suffering of terminally ill patients and could be made more available by relaxing laws and training healthcare workers to administer painkillers and ease psychological distress, Rodin said.

Julia Downing, the chief executive of the International Children's Palliative Care Network, said neglecting a patient's pain can have a significant impact on their quality of life.

"The implications are quite broad ... If they're unable to work, the family will become poorer and poorer, and then they can't pay for school fees, so the children can't go to school. The impact of having people whose pain is not controlled goes far beyond just that individual themselves," she said.

Rajagopal said the [US opioid crisis](#) has affected how opioids are viewed globally, fuelling fears among doctors that patients who are prescribed them will become addicted. However, he said, addiction in the US was specific to that context, where pharmaceutical companies aggressively marketed opioids.



In the US, the CDC estimates that 75,673 deaths were caused by opioid overdose in the 12-month period ending in April 2021. Photograph: Spencer Platt/Getty Images

“Pain is not visible. It happens in hospital beds or patients’ rooms and is not visible to the world. Addiction, on the other hand, is very visible in headlines which quote the US epidemic and overdose deaths. No one talks about the western European success over decades; all the news is about the opioid crisis in the USA. This means that when we try to have discussions, our work becomes harder because many minds are primed against opioids,” said Rajagopal.

Downing said progress has been made in Uganda, India and Kenya but more needed to be done not just on legislation but also on training medical staff.

Zipporah Ali, a Kenyan palliative care doctor, said some progress has been made in her country to relax opioid laws.

“There was a time a patient came to me in so much pain with a neck tumour that was so swollen, he just wanted to die. But I started him on treatment with high doses of pain management and steroids. The next week in the hospital he came and grabbed me to say: ‘Thank you. I don’t want to die any

more.”” said Ali. “We are not curing the disease, but it can make you comfortable.”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Sydney

Saudi sisters found dead in Sydney told acquaintance queer women ‘live in fear’ in their homeland

Exclusive: Guardian understands sisters attended girls-only queer event and police are investigating if one or both feared being persecuted for their sexuality

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Sisters Asra Abdullah Alsehli (left) and Amaal Abdullah Alsehli who were found dead in their Sydney home in June had claimed asylum in Australia. Composite: NSW police

[Joshua McDonald](#), [Mostafa Rachwani](#) and [Ben Doherty](#)

Wed 3 Aug 2022 21.59 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 00.26 EDT

Two Saudi sisters found dead in their beds in Sydney attended a girls-only queer event in January where they told acquaintances gay women “live in fear” in [Saudi Arabia](#).

The Guardian understands [New South Wales](#) police are investigating whether one or both of the sisters may have feared being persecuted for their sexuality in their homeland, which they fled together in 2017 for Australia, where they made claims for asylum.

The bodies of Asra Abdullah Alsehli, 24, and Amaal Abdullah Alsehli, 23, were found in their beds in their apartment in Canterbury on 7 June. The women had been dead for more than a month when they were found, police say.

There were no signs of injury to the women’s bodies or forced entry to the apartment, and police have conceded they have not been able to determine the cause of their deaths.

The sisters reportedly led reclusive lives, having few friends and contacts in Australia, but a woman has come forward to say she met them at a girls-only queer event earlier this year.

The woman, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told the Guardian the sisters were “keeping to themselves” at the party and told her queer people faced oppression in Saudi Arabia.

“I noticed them keeping to themselves in a corner, looking shy and so I went over and started talking to them,” she said.

“They mentioned that they were from Saudi Arabia, and we talked about what it is like to be queer there. They said women live in fear of their safety and that they were grateful to be living in Australia, where they could more freely express themselves.”

The women – who had active claims for protection with the Department of Home Affairs in Australia – spoke openly about women’s rights, including women having greater independence in Australia.

But the sisters were reluctant to talk in detail about their home country.

“I asked about their lives in Saudi Arabia and whether they had returned home recently to visit family but they seemed reluctant to go into detail and gave short answers,” the woman said.

“I got the impression that they very rarely go out and hadn’t explored much of Sydney.

“What’s terribly sad is they told me they were excited to be out at an event like this and that they were ready to start exploring more of Sydney. They should have been safe in Australia,” she added.

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The woman said she contacted police as soon as she saw a photo of the sisters in the media.

“The police were very keen to speak to me as it appears the sisters lived a very reclusive lifestyle, especially recently, and so police don’t know much about them,” she said.

She said NSW police were certain one of the sisters identified as queer.

“They did confirm to me that they knew one of the sisters was queer, but they weren’t sure about the other,” the woman said.

The woman said it was “obviously difficult” raising the issue publicly, but when she saw the news about the sisters’ deaths she felt compelled to come forward.

“We spoke about how unsafe it is for Saudi women to be openly gay and that that would put a target on their back, so I wanted to make sure that the police were aware that at least one of the sisters were openly exploring their queer sexuality.

“This information could help find out what has happened to them.”

The Guardian asked NSW police about its lines of inquiry regarding the women’s deaths. A spokesperson said: “As the investigation is ongoing, police continue to appeal for information in relation to the death of the two women.

Police refused to confirm media reports that the women had died of suicide, and that “bottles of chemicals” were found near their bodies.

A spokesperson for NSW Police said “no further information is available at this stage” when asked if this was a line of inquiry, adding that the investigation was ongoing.

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Photograph: Tim Robberts/Stone RF

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Police have previously confirmed they have been in contact with the sisters' family in Saudi Arabia, and that they were cooperating and were not considered suspects.

The two sisters were asylum seekers in Australia: each had engaged with settlement services providers in Sydney.

The nature of their claim for asylum is not known.

Guardian Australia has spoken with an advocate who has worked with Saudi asylum seekers in Australia who said it was not a surprise the sisters felt they needed to flee Saudi Arabia because of their sexuality.

"A significant number of people in the Saudi asylum community here fled because of their sexual orientation and because of the persecution they suffered or knew they would suffer if they disclosed their sexual preference," they said.

About 75 Saudi women have been granted permanent protection visas in Australia in the past five years.

A previous landlord told the Guardian that the women's mother had visited them sometime between 2017 and 2019.

The landlord said the sisters "kept to themselves", had very few friends apart from a boyfriend for one of the sisters, and that they would "only leave for Tafe, shopping or work". Both sisters worked in traffic control for a construction company.

The older sister, Asra, had also applied for an apprehended violence order in January 2019 against a man, although that application was withdrawn.

The [Human Rights Watch World Report for 2022](#) said while Saudi Arabia had no written laws concerning sexual orientation or gender identity, “judges use principles of uncodified Islamic law to sanction people suspected of committing sexual relations outside marriage, including ... same-sex relations”.

“If individuals are engaging in such relationships online, judges and prosecutors utilise vague provisions of the country’s anti-cybercrime law that criminalise online activity impinging on “public order, religious values, public morals, and privacy”.

The two-bedroom apartment where the sisters’ bodies were found on 7 June has been placed back on the rental market for \$520 a week. The advertisement for the property carries the disclaimer: “This property has found two deceased person on 07/06/2022, crime scene has been established and it is still under police investigation. According to the police, this is not a random crime and will not be a potential risk for the community.”

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[Kansas](#)

Kansas abortion referendum drives record number of voters to polls

Nearly half of state's registered voters turned out in first electoral test of US abortion rights



A long line of voters in Wichita, Kansas on Monday. Photograph: Travis Heying/AP

[Alvin Chang](#)

[@alv9n](#)

Wed 3 Aug 2022 15.51 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 Aug 2022 10.16 EDT

Most primary elections turn out only a small portion of the electorate – but this year's [Kansas](#) primary was unlike any other in the state.

This year's primary ballot included a question to decide whether to stop the state's constitution from protecting abortion rights, which could have paved the way for the state legislature to completely ban abortion.

On Tuesday, Kansans resoundingly voted against the anti-abortion measure – and turned out in record numbers to do so.

With 95% of precincts reporting, more than 900,000 voters turned out for the primary election, which accounts for nearly half of registered voters. It's the kind of turnout the state usually sees in general elections.

After the US supreme court overturned federal protections for abortion in June, the Kansas primary was the first electoral test of abortion rights in the country.

[Bar chart showing turnout for primary and general elections, showing 2022 had record turnout comparable to general elections](#)

Not only was turnout high, but before the election Kansans were also registering to vote in record numbers. As of July 2022, weeks after the supreme court overturned Roe v Wade, about 1.9 million people registered to vote – comparable only to the 2020 general election, when Donald Trump was vying for a second term.

A typical primary election draws only the most engaged citizens because they're only choosing which candidate will represent each political party in the general election. Turnout in primaries is usually between 20% and 30% of registered voters.

More than 47% of registered voters participated on Tuesday, with tens of thousands of votes still to be counted.

This comes after a concerted Republican effort to sway the vote and clear the path for abortion restrictions.

Last year, the Republican state legislature put this measure on the primary ballot, rather than the November general election ballot, probably because they knew primary voters tend to be more conservative than the overall electorate. In addition, the language Republicans put on the ballot was confusing and misleading. For example, the ballot language says the amendment would stop state funding for abortion, even though the state already bans public funding for abortion.

A [poll](#) in late 2021 found that more than 60% of Kansans oppose making abortion completely illegal – 44% of the state's voters are registered Republicans and 26% are registered Democrats. With nearly all the votes counted on Wednesday, about 59% of voters said they did not want to remove the state constitution's protection for abortion rights.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/03/kansas-voter-turn-out-abortion-rights-election>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Indiana](#)

Indiana congresswoman Jackie Walorski dies in car crash

Republican, 58, elected to Congress in 2012, killed along with two members of her staff in head-on collision in Indiana, police say



Jackie Walorski speaks on Capitol Hill in 2018. Photograph: Mark Wilson/Getty Images

Agencies

Wed 3 Aug 2022 16.36 EDTFirst published on Wed 3 Aug 2022 16.08 EDT

The US congresswoman Jackie Walorski and two members of her staff were killed in a head-on vehicle collision in [Indiana](#) on Wednesday, her office and local police said.

Walorski, a Republican who represented Indiana's second congressional district in the US [House of Representatives](#), was traveling in a vehicle with

the two others when another car veered into their lane, the Elkhart county sheriff's office said.

Walorski, 58, died as a result of her injuries, the sheriff's office said. Walorski's communications director, Emma Thomson, 27, and Zachery Potts, 28, a district director for the lawmaker, were also killed, it added.

The driver of the other vehicle, 56-year-old Edith Schmucker, was pronounced dead at the scene, it said.

Confirming her death in a statement shared on Twitter by the House Republican leader, Kevin McCarthy, Walorski's office said: "Dean Swihart, Jackie's husband, was just informed by the Elkhart county sheriff's office that Jackie was killed in a car accident this afternoon."

It added: "Please keep her family in your thoughts and prayers. We will have no further comment at this time."

"She has returned home to be with her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Please keep her family in your thoughts and prayers," Walorski's chief of staff, Tim Cummings, said in a statement.

Cummings confirmed that Potts and Thomson were members of Walorski's congressional staff.

Walorski was a lifelong resident of Indiana, according to her official biography. She served on the House ways and means committee and as the top Republican on the subcommittee on worker and family support.

Walorski was seeking reelection this year to a sixth term in the solidly Republican district. She was active on agriculture and food policy in Congress, often working across the aisle on those issues. A co-chair of the House Hunger Caucus, she introduced legislation with Democrats to bring back a Nixon-era White House event on food insecurity.

Joe Biden pointed to that work in a statement crediting Walorski for years of public service.

“We may have represented different parties and disagreed on many issues, but she was respected by members of both parties for her work,” Biden said. “My team and I appreciated her partnership as we plan for a historic White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health this fall that will be marked by her deep care for the needs of rural America.”

Indiana Republican and US senator Todd Young said he was devastated by Walorski’s death.

“Jackie loved Hoosiers and devoted her life to fighting for them,” Young said in a statement. “I’ll never forget her spirit, her positive attitude and most importantly her friendship. All of Indiana mourns her passing, along with the tragic deaths of her staff Emma Thomson and Zach Potts.”

The House Republican minority leader Kevin McCarthy called Walorski a “no-nonsense, straight shooter”.

The House speaker Nancy Pelosi said Walorski “lived a life of service”.

“She passionately brought the voices of her north Indiana constituents to the Congress and she was admired by colleagues on both sides of the aisle for her personal kindness,” Pelosi said in a statement.

Pelosi ordered the flags at the US Capitol to be flown at half-staff in Walorski’s honor.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/03/jackie-walorski-dead-indiana-congress-report>

Headlines tuesday 2 august 2022

- [Afghanistan US drone strike in Afghanistan kills al-Qaida leader, Joe Biden says](#)
- [Live Ayman al-Zawahiri death: Biden says ‘justice delivered’ after drone strike kills al-Qaida chief](#)
- [Who was Ayman al-Zawahiri? The al-Qaida leader who helped plot their deadliest attacks](#)
- [Analysis Zawahiri’s killing unlikely to weaken al-Qaida significantly](#)

[Ayman al-Zawahiri](#)

Ayman al-Zawahiri: al-Qaida leader killed in US drone strike in Afghanistan, Joe Biden says

President ordered strike on Kabul safe house last month during a high-level meeting, administration says

Smoke rises above Kabul after US strike that killed al-Qaida's Ayman al-Zawahiri – video report

[David Smith](#) in Washington, [Joanna Walters](#) in New York, and [Jason Burke](#)
Tue 2 Aug 2022 07.07 EDTFirst published on Mon 1 Aug 2022 18.00 EDT

A US drone strike in Afghanistan has killed the top al-Qaida leader [Ayman al-Zawahiri](#), Joe Biden announced on Monday.

The US president described the death of Zawahiri, who was Osama bin Laden's deputy and successor, as a major blow to the terrorist network behind the [September 11 2001](#) attacks.

“Justice has been delivered and this terrorist leader is no more,” Biden said in a live televised address from the White House. “People around the world no longer need to fear the vicious and determined killer.”

The CIA strike will be seen as a proof of the US's ability to conduct “[over-the-horizon](#)” operations despite last year's [military withdrawal](#) from Afghanistan. But it also raised questions over al-Qaida's continued presence in the country since the Taliban regained power.

One of the world's most wanted men, Zawahiri and his family had moved into a safe house in downtown Kabul, the capital, according to White House officials. He was spotted on a balcony on numerous occasions over several

months and continued to produce al-Qaida propaganda videos, some of which may yet appear posthumously.

Zawahiri moved to a “very safe place” in Kabul a few months after the Taliban took control of [Afghanistan](#) in August last year, a senior leader of the Islamist movement told Reuters on Tuesday on condition of anonymity.

[Map](#)

The 71-year-old died moments after stepping out on to the balcony on Sunday morning, US officials said.

Biden was personally involved in meetings to plan a potential strike against Zawahiri during May, June and July, a senior administration official said on a conference call with reporters.



Ayman al-Zawahiri, left, pictured with Osama bin Laden in Khost, Afghanistan, in 1998. Photograph: Mazhar Ali Khan/AP

The president “asked detailed questions about what we knew and how we knew it. Importantly, he examined closely the model of al-Zawahiri’s house that the intelligence community had built and brought into the White House situation room for briefings on this issue”, the official said.

Biden sought explanations of lighting, weather, construction material and other factors that could influence the operation and reduce the risk of civilian casualties, the official added. “He was particularly focused on ensuring that every step had been taken to ensure the operation would minimise that risk and he wanted to understand the basis on which we had confidence in our assessment.”

The president eventually ordered a strike on the safe house at a meeting of key cabinet members and national security officials on 25 July. It was carried out at 9.48pm ET on Saturday by an unmanned aerial vehicle.

“Two Hellfire missiles were fired at Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was killed. We are confident through our intelligence sources and methods, including multiple streams of intelligence, that we killed al-Zawahiri and no other individual,” the official said.

They added that Zawahiri’s family members were present in other parts of the safe house at the time of the strike, were not targeted and were unharmed. “We have no indications that civilians were harmed in the strike. We took every possible precaution to avoid civilian harm.”

The official said they were able to watch members of the Taliban try after the strike to conceal Zawahiri’s former presence at the location, swiftly removing his wife, daughter and her children to another location.

“We have identified a concerted effort to restrict access to the safe house in the surrounding area for hours after the strike. The safe house used by al-Zawahiri is now empty.”

Unverified pictures on social media of what was described as the target of the attack showed shattered windows of a pink building, its fences topped with rolls of barbed wire. The house in the relatively prosperous Sherpur neighbourhood appeared two to three storeys tall and ringed by trees.

A senior Taliban leader said Zawahiri spent most of his time in the mountains of Helmand province’s Musa Qala district after the Taliban government was overthrown in 2001 in a US-led invasion. He said Zawahiri

kept a low profile there but went in and out of Pakistan's border regions several times.

Pakistan's foreign office did not respond to questions about Zawahiri's reported movements in and out of the country.



Joe Biden speaking from the White House as he announces that a US airstrike has killed al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Afghanistan.
Photograph: Jim Watson/AP

The description of Biden's decisive action may be viewed by historians in contrast to multiple accounts suggesting that, as vice-president, he was hesitant or sceptical about going ahead with the special forces raid that killed Bin Laden in 2011.

Barack Obama said on Monday night the successful attack was a tribute to Biden's leadership, and to intelligence operatives "who have been working for decades for this moment".

He added: "Tonight's news is also proof that it's possible to root out terrorism without being at war in Afghanistan. And I hope it provides a small measure of peace to the 9/11 families and everyone else who has suffered at the hands of al-Qaida."

That Bin Laden operation gave Obama a statesmanlike made-for-TV moment at the White House and, 11 years later, it was Biden's turn, albeit on a balcony because of his coronavirus "rebound" infection.

Noting that Zawahiri had been "deeply involved" in 9/11, the president said: "The United States continues to demonstrate our resolve and our capacity to defend the American people against those who seek to do us harm.

"We make it clear again tonight that no matter how long it takes, no matter where you hide, if you are a threat to our people, the United States will find you and take you out. We will never forget. We continue to mourn every innocent life that was stolen on 9/11 and honour their memories."

Concerns about al-Qaida in Afghanistan

Zawahiri's death marks the biggest blow to the fundamentalist Islamist organisation since the death of Bin Laden.

In a statement, a Taliban spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, confirmed that a strike took place and strongly condemned it, calling it a violation of "international principles".

Zawahiri, an Egyptian surgeon, helped coordinate the 9/11 attacks in which four civilian aircraft were hijacked and crashed into the World Trade Center's twin towers in New York, the Pentagon near Washington and a Pennsylvania field, killing nearly 3,000 people. He had a \$25m (£20.5m) bounty on his head.

His death raises questions about the relationship between al-Qaida and the Taliban following the latter's [takeover of Kabul](#) in August 2021.

The drone attack is the first known US strike inside Afghanistan since US troops and diplomats left the country in August 2021.

The United Nations [reported last month](#) that al-Qaida had a haven in Afghanistan under the Taliban and "increased freedom of action" with the potential of launching new long-distance attacks in coming years, according

to [a report](#) from the international body, based on intelligence supplied by member states.

The assessment, by the UN committee charged with enforcing sanctions on the Taliban and others that may threaten the security of Afghanistan, raised concerns that the country could once again become a [base for international terrorist attacks](#) after the [rapid and chaotic](#) withdrawal of US and Nato troops last year.

“Al-Qaida senior leadership enjoyed a more settled period in early 2022. Aiman Muhammed Rabi al-Zawahiri issued regular video messages that provided almost current proof of life. Member states note that al-Zawahiri’s apparent increased comfort and ability to communicate has coincided with the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan and the consolidation of power of key al-Qaida allies within their de facto administration,” the UN committee said.

The building where Zawahiri and his family were staying is reportedly owned by an aide to a senior Taliban official with longstanding links to extremist organisations including al-Qaida.

“Al-Qaida is not viewed as posing an immediate international threat from its safe haven in Afghanistan because it lacks an external operational capability and does not currently wish to cause the Taliban international difficulty or embarrassment,” the UN report said.

Though al-Qaida has been overshadowed by the violence of Islamic State in recent years, it remains a potential threat with a presence in parts of south Asia, the Middle East [and the Sahel](#). Several dozen al-Qaida senior leaders are based in Afghanistan, as well as affiliated groups such as al-Qaida in the Indian subcontinent.

The Taliban have repeatedly said they are adhering to an agreement signed with the US in 2020, before taking power, in which they promised to fight terrorists, and they have said Afghanistan will not be used as a launching pad for attacks against other countries.



Taliban security guard stands at a checkpoint in Kabul, Afghanistan.
Photograph: EPA

The report credits the Taliban with making efforts to restrain al-Qaida, but raises concerns that these may not last.

An undisclosed number of al-Qaida members are reported to be living in Kabul's former diplomatic quarter, where they may have access to meetings at the foreign affairs ministry, the report's authors say, although they say this information is not confirmed.

The report also said a sudden spate of statements and communications from [Zawahiri](#) had suggested at the time that "he may be able to lead more effectively than was possible before the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan".

Republicans welcomed the killing of Zawahiri but questioned how he had come to be living with impunity in Kabul. Kevin McCarthy, the minority leader in the House of Representatives, said: "This news also sheds light on the possible re-emergence of al-Qaida in Afghanistan following President Biden's disastrous withdrawal a year ago."

"The Biden administration must provide Congress with a classified briefing as soon as possible to discuss the resurgence of al-Qaida in the region over the past year, the current foreign terrorist threat to America and the steps we

must take to keep our country safe and prevent terrorists from entering the United States.”

Agencies contributed reporting

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/01/us-strike-afghanistan-kills-al-qaida-leader-ayman-al-zawahiri>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Skip to key events](#)

[US politics](#)

Nancy Pelosi tells President Tsai US will not abandon Taiwan – as it happened

This blog is now closed

- [Full report: Nancy Pelosi pledges US solidarity with Taiwan](#)

Updated 4d ago

Virginia Harrison, Vivian Ho, Chris Stein, Martin Belam and Oliver Holmes
Wed 3 Aug 2022 02.12 EDTFirst published on Tue 2 Aug 2022 05.06 EDT

Key events

- [4d ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[Pelosi and Tsai hold a press conference](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[Taiwan will 'firmly defend national security': defence ministry](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[Pelosi and Tsai speak in Taiwan](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[Pelosi arrives at Taiwan president's office](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[Pelosi speaks to Taiwan parliament](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[China summons US ambassador](#)
- [4d ago](#)

[Republican senators back Pelosi visit](#)

- [4d ago](#)
[Afternoon summary](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Schumer: Vote on burn pits legislation expected to pass today](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Justice Department files challenging lawsuit Idaho's abortion law](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[The day so far](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Visiting Taiwan 'more important today than ever': Pelosi](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Pelosi lands in Taiwan: AP](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Foreign cyber attack takes out Taiwan government website](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[White House issues image of Biden being briefed ahead of strike on Zawahiri](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Israel's prime minister says 'world a safer place' after al-Zawahiri death](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Analysis: Zawahiri's killing unlikely to weaken al-Qaida significantly](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[US kills al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in drone strike](#)



US House speaker Nancy Pelosi bows to Taiwan president Tsai Ing-wen after receiving a celebratory sash at the presidential office in Taipei.
Photograph: Taiwan Presidential Palace Handout/EPA

[Virginia Harrison](#), [Vivian Ho](#), [Chris Stein](#), [Martin Belam](#) and [Oliver Holmes](#)
Wed 3 Aug 2022 02.12 EDTFirst published on Tue 2 Aug 2022 05.06 EDT

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Live feed

From 4d ago

[00.48](#)

A recap of Pelosi and Tsai's press conference held a short time ago in Taipei:

The [Taiwan](#) president told the US House speaker "*we are grateful for the delegation's visit under such challenging circumstances as demonstration of US unwavering support.*"

Tsai said "*military exercises are an unnecessary reaction*" and Taiwan is "*committed to maintaining status quo across the Taiwan Strait*".

Pelosi said "*while respecting our one-China policy, our solidarity with Taiwan is more important than ever*". She said "*we want Taiwan to always have freedom with security, we are not backing away from that*".

"We are supporters of the status quo, we don't want anything to happen to Taiwan by force," Pelosi said. When asked about the economic consequences Taiwan has to face as a result of her visit, she said the US Chips Act opens the door for better economic exchanges. She added Taiwan's strengths "*have been in its technological advancement and democratic development*".



Pelosi and Tsai speak at the presidential office in Taipei. Photograph: Taiwan Presidential Office/Reuters

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Updated at 01.34 EDT

Key events

- [4d ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[Pelosi and Tsai hold a press conference](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[Taiwan will 'firmly defend national security': defence ministry](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[Pelosi and Tsai speak in Taiwan](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[Pelosi arrives at Taiwan president's office](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[Pelosi speaks to Taiwan parliament](#)

- [4d ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[China summons US ambassador](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[Republican senators back Pelosi visit](#)
- [4d ago](#)
[Afternoon summary](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Schumer: Vote on burn pits legislation expected to pass today](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Justice Department files challenging lawsuit Idaho's abortion law](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[The day so far](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Visiting Taiwan 'more important today than ever': Pelosi](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Pelosi lands in Taiwan: AP](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Foreign cyber attack takes out Taiwan government website](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[White House issues image of Biden being briefed ahead of strike on Zawahiri](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Israel's prime minister says 'world a safer place' after al-Zawahiri death](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[Analysis: Zawahiri's killing unlikely to weaken al-Qaida significantly](#)
- [5d ago](#)
[US kills al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in drone strike](#)

Show key events only

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[4d ago](#)[02.12](#)

We are pausing our live coverage of Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan now.
Our full report of the day's events in Taipei is here:

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4d ago 02.00



Jordyn Beazley

China’s military escalation in response to Pelosi’s visit may be influenced by Xi Jinping’s want to distract his country from plunging property prices, as well as a want to “project himself as a protector” ahead of the CCP’s 20th National Congress, according to Jade Guan, an expert in China’s foreign policy at Deakin University.

At the same time, Guan said the National Congress may reduce the likelihood of any major conflict as Jinping will want a “smooth holding of the conference”.

According to Guan, China’s current military escalation in response to Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan is not unprecedented, but how far it escalates will depend on the outcome of the meetings.

“We need to wait and watch the readouts from the Taiwanese government and Pelosi’s office which will be important for China to then judge what the

level of this meeting is,” she said.

Guan said China’s announcement they will conduct live-fire military exercises in response to the perceived threat from the US is not the first. During the 1995-1996 Strait of Taiwan Crisis, China fired missiles into the waters around Taiwan after then Taiwanese president Lee Teng-hui travelled to the US.

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[4d ago](#)[01.53](#)

Summary

It's nearly 2pm in **Taipei** after a busy morning of diplomacy in the Taiwan capital following US House speaker Nancy Pelosi's controversial visit to the island. Pelosi's visit has angered China which considers the island part of its territory. Here's where things stand now:

- **Pelosi met with Taiwan president Tsai Ing-wen and spoke to Taiwan parliament on Wednesday.** Pelosi said the US wants Taiwan to always have freedom with security and will not back away from that. “While respecting the “One China” policy, our solidarity with Taiwan is more important than ever,” Pelosi said during a joint news conference Tsai. “The US supports the status quo and does not want anything to happen to Taiwan by force”, Pelosi said.
- **Tsai struck a defiant tone as she hosted the US House speaker.** “Facing deliberately heightened military threats, Taiwan will not back down. We will ... continue to hold the line of defence for democracy,” she said. She also thanked Pelosi for “taking concrete actions to show your staunch support for Taiwan at this critical moment”.
- **Taiwan’s cabinet on Wednesday said the military has increased its alertness level** and authorities will make plans to ensure safety and stability around the island.

- **China said it will conduct military drills** in areas near Taiwan from Thursday to Sunday, state media said.
- **Japan's government expressed concern over planned Chinese military activity around Taiwan** in response to Pelosi's visit to the self-governed island. Japan's top spokesman, Hirokazu Matsuno, said Tokyo had conveyed its concerns to Beijing over the drills, which are due to start on Thursday.
- **China summoned the US ambassador in Beijing on Tuesday to rebuke him over Pelosi's "egregious" trip to Taiwan**, state media reported. Vice foreign minister Xie Feng voiced "strong protests" over Pelosi's visit to Taiwan during his talk with ambassador **Nicholas Burns**.
- **China rolled out curbs on the import of fruit and fish from Taiwan while halting shipments of sand** to the island in the wake of Pelosi's visit
- **In her speech to Taiwan parliament, Pelosi said she wants to increase parliamentary exchanges between the US and Taiwan.** She called Taiwan "one of the freest societies in the world"
- **Pelosi was awarded the Order of Propitious Cloud with Special Grand Cordon.** Tsai draped a sash over the US House speaker as she bestowed the award and Tsai the honour "represented their gratitude to Pelosi and the wish to continue progressing US-Taiwan relations through more cooperation."
- **In 7-11 stores across Taiwan on Wednesday the words "War Warmonger Pelosi Get Out of Taiwan" flashed across in-store TV screens.** According to local reports some customers thought the message was a news chyron, or a forthright expression of the franchise-owner's views. But Uni-president, the parent company, told local media it suspected it had been hacked.

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Updated at 02.04 EDT

4d ago 01.03

Some images of Pelosi's visit to [Taiwan](#). She is expected to leave the island later on Wednesday.



Pelosi receives the Order of Propitious Clouds with Special Grand Cordon Tsai on Wednesday. Photograph: Taiwan Presidential Office/AFP/Getty Images



The US House speaker and other officials wave to journalists at Taiwan's parliament on Wednesday. Photograph: CNA/AFP/Getty Images



Pelosi speaks at the presidential office in Taipei. Photograph: Taiwan Presidential Office/Reuters



A protester (C in yellow) was stopped by Taiwanese security personnel outside the presidential office as a meeting between Pelosi and Tsai took place. Photograph: Ritchie B Tong/EPA

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4d ago00.52

South Korea called for dialogue to maintain regional peace and stability as tensions between the US and China rose over Pelosi's visit to [Taiwan](#). Pelosi is expected to arrive in Seoul late Wednesday, the next stop in her Asian tour.

"Our government's stance is to maintain close communication with relevant parties... on the basis that peace and stability in the region through dialogue and cooperation are important," an official from the presidential office told reporters.

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4d ago00.48

A recap of Pelosi and Tsai's press conference held a short time ago in Taipei:

The [Taiwan](#) president told the US House speaker "*we are grateful for the delegation's visit under such challenging circumstances as demonstration of US unwavering support.*"

Tsai said "*military exercises are an unnecessary reaction*" and Taiwan is "*committed to maintaining status quo across the Taiwan Strait*".

Pelosi said "*while respecting our one-China policy, our solidarity with Taiwan is more important than ever*". She said "*we want Taiwan to always have freedom with security, we are not backing away from that*".

"We are supporters of the status quo, we don't want anything to happen to Taiwan by force," Pelosi said. When asked about the economic consequences Taiwan has to face as a result of her visit, she said the US Chips Act opens the door for better economic exchanges. She added Taiwan's strengths "*have been in its technological advancement and democratic development*".



Pelosi and Tsai speak at the presidential office in Taipei. Photograph: Taiwan Presidential Office/Reuters

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Updated at 01.34 EDT

[4d ago](#)[00.31](#)



Helen Davidson

In 7-11 stores across [Taiwan](#) today the words “War Warmonger Pelosi Get Out of Taiwan” flashed across in-store TV screens. According to local reports some customers thought the message was a news chyron, or a forthright expression of the franchise-owner’s views. But Uni-president, the parent company, told local media it suspected it had been hacked.

“The manufacturer was interrupted by an unknown source to broadcast the message, and the manufacturer was immediately asked to repair it,” a spokesperson said. The convenience stores are ubiquitous across Taiwan, stationed every few hundred metres in some city areas, and central to residents’ everyday lives. More than just snacks, you can also pay bills, accept deliveries and conduct other bits of life admin at the stores.

Uni-President, which operates 7/11, has stated that its monitor display system was hacked this morning, causing "Warmonger Pelosi, get out of Taiwan" to appear on displays in all of its 7/11s across Taiwan<https://t.co/C9GX8IS7Cm>

— Brian Hioe 丘琦欣 (@brianhioe) [August 3, 2022](#)

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[4d ago](#)[00.27](#)

Pelosi also praised the “*brainpower*” of **Taiwan** and the success of the tech industry when asked a question from another reporter about the [Chips and Science Act](#), and says “*we want to increase our relationship.*”

“*It’s pretty exciting*”.

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4d ago00.24

Pelosi continues: “*We’re not here to talk about mainland China we’re here to talk about [Taiwan](#).*”



Pelosi and Tsai walk at the presidential office in Taipei on Wednesday.
Photograph: Taiwan Presidential Office/Reuters

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Updated at 00.29 EDT

4d ago00.24

A reporter from **Japan** asks about democracy and China:

“*Your question comes amid a struggle between democracy and autocracy. We have to show the world.. to show the world the success of the people of [Taiwan](#). Their courage to become more democratic... a model in this region in those respects... [it] offers a very strong contrast to what’s happening in mainland China.*”

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4d ago00.19

“Whatever China will do they will do in their own good time,” Pelosi said.

“It’s really important for the message to be clear .. [the US] is committed to the security of [Taiwan](#)... but it’s about our shared values of democracy and freedom and how Taiwan has been an example to the world.

“Whether there are insecurities of the president of China relating to his own political situation I don’t know.”

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4d ago00.15

One reporter from [Taiwan](#) asks if more US high-level visits to Taiwan will take place. He also asks how Pelosi foresees China responding.

She replies saying that she hopes that her visit will lead to other visits and notes five senators visited Taiwan earlier this year. “Not too much of a fuss was made,” she said.

“I hope it’s really clear that while China has stood in the way of Taiwan participating in going to certain meetings, they won’t stand in the way of people coming to Taiwan as a show of friendship and support.

“They made a big fuss because I’m speaker. I don’t know if that’s a reason or an excuse.”

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Updated at 00.20 EDT

4d ago 00.13

Pelosi and Tsai hold a press conference

Pelosi and Tsai are now taking part in a press conference. Pelosi says she came here to send an unequivocal message that **America stands with Taiwan**. They will now answer questions.

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Updated at 00.16 EDT

[4d ago](#)[00.11](#)



Helen Davidson

More details from the [Taiwan](#) ministry of defence's press conference: the ministry has accused China of planning to breach Taiwan's air and sea space, in violation of international law, with its plans for military operations in the seas surrounding Taiwan. China's government has reacted to Pelosi's visit with outrage. After her arrival its military announced joint air and sea drills near Taiwan, beginning on Tuesday night and including test launches of conventional missiles in the sea east of Taiwan.

A short time ago a spokesperson for the ministry said Taiwan's military "has the ability to protect our land and against any activity that violates national sovereignty". The ministry of foreign affairs said the "deliberate escalation" of military actions against Taiwan would impact international economic and trade exchanges, and undermine peace and stability in the region.

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[4d ago](#)[23.58](#)



Justin McCurry

Japan's government has expressed concern over planned Chinese military activity around Taiwan in response to Pelosi's visit to the self-governed island. Japan's top spokesman, Hirokazu Matsuno, said Tokyo had conveyed its concerns to Beijing over the military drills, which are due to start on Thursday. Matsuno said the area hosting the exercises overlaps with Japan's exclusive economic zone. Japan has not, however, commented on Pelosi's visit and reiterated its stance that tensions in the [Taiwan](#) Strait should be resolved through dialogue.

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[4d ago](#)[23.55](#)

Taiwan will 'firmly defend national security': defence ministry

Taiwan's defence ministry is giving a press conference, and says China "continues to launch psychological warfare on [Taiwan](#) and citizens". It said Taiwan will "firmly defend national security" and "Chinese drills invaded Taiwan's territorial space" and also that drills "have violated UN rules."

The ministry said Chinese drills "amount to a blockade of Taiwan's air and sea space" and "seriously violated" the island's sovereignty.

It said Taiwan will enhance its alertness level "with the principle of not asking for a war".

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Updated at 00.01 EDT

[4d ago](#)[23.38](#)

Taiwan's cabinet on Wednesday said the military has increased its alertness level and authorities will make plans to ensure safety and stability around the island, after China announced a series of military exercises in response Pelosi's visit.

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[Ayman al-Zawahiri](#)

Who was Ayman al-Zawahiri? The al-Qaida leader who helped plot its deadliest attacks

A lifelong jihadist who became Osama bin Laden's successor, Zawahiri waged a long war of terror against the US and its allies

- [Report: Ayman al-Zawahiri: al-Qaida leader killed in US drone strike](#)



Ayman al-Zawahiri in a 2022 video, his first in nearly 15 years. Photograph: Balkis Press/Abaca/Rex/Shutterstock

[Martin Chulov](#) Middle East correspondent

Tue 2 Aug 2022 07.36 EDTFirst published on Mon 1 Aug 2022 22.30 EDT

Sallow-skinned and clad in white in front of a green backdrop, [Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) looked a shadow of the man who had terrorised the world for more than a quarter of a century. The first – and last – image of the al-Qaida

leader taken in close to 15 years was a far cry from the dour militant on a mountain ridge depicted in earlier shots. Instead it evoked an image of a man who was nearing his time.

And so it was when a US drone finally caught up with Zawahiri, sitting on a balcony in the heart of Kabul, a long way from Afghanistan's valleys and plateaus, from where he had helped lead a generation of global jihadists and plot a series of terror attacks that had defined modern history.



Osama bin Laden (left) with Ayman al-Zawahiri during an interview published in 2001. Photograph: Visual News/Getty Images

Zawahiri's journey from firebrand revolutionary to the most hunted man in the world had loosely tracked the rise and fall of his predecessor, [Osama bin Laden](#). Galvanised by anger over the treatment of Muslims in Israel/Palestine, and in Afghanistan, the men had formed a formidable partnership from the mid-1990s, luring jihadists from around the globe to build a potent and lasting threat to the western order.

At every turn in al-Qaida's fortunes, Zawahiri had been central. He was the logistics man on 9/11 planning meetings, had even deeper involvements in the Tanzania bombings in 1998, the attack on the warship the USS Cole two years later, and the Madrid train bombings of 2004. Until US troops killed

Osama bin Laden in a villa in central Pakistan in 2011, Zawahiri was perhaps the most significant operational figure in the terror organisation – but as al-Qaida subsequently struggled for relevance without its charismatic founder amid the broader jihadist cause, Zawahiri mattered less.

His ties to Islamic radicalism had run deeper than his boss. Zawahiri's worldview was honed in late-70s Cairo, where as the son of a doctor and scholar he had embraced the Palestinian cause and had helped form the Islamic Jihad organisation, which assassinated Egypt's president Anwar Sadat.



An undated picture of a younger Zawahiri, released after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Photograph: EPA

His first exposure to the world was from a cage in a Cairo courtroom, where he proclaimed his hardline beliefs with a hectoring finger that would become familiar decades later. Zawahiri had studied the Muslim Brotherhood and read the incendiary teachings of Sayyid Qutb, whose books created an ideological framework for what was later to become global jihad.

The jihadi in waiting was at odds with his family of Egyptian intellectuals; one of his grandfathers was the Grand Imam of al-Azhar – the highest institution in Sunni Islam, and his grandfather's uncle was a founding

secretary of the Arab League. Under other circumstances, Zawahiri could have wound up in government.

But he had no reservations in eschewing his background and falling in behind a Saudi from a very different life. Though Bin Laden came from money, his upbringing in Jeddah had been relatively liberal, and Zawahiri had held more status and influence.

Nonetheless, the Egyptian apprentice followed the Saudi master from the Arab world to the Afghanistan/Pakistan region without compunction. He married a Pashtun woman and blended in easily. He befriended his hosts and established an authority within al-Qaida from its earliest months until his dying day. Bin Laden's death, however, did have an impact. Taking out a figure of such prominence and charisma created a gap that the stern figure in the background could never fill.

While he remained committed to spreading the group's tentacles around the world, other obstacles emerged. The Arab Spring was first among them – a phenomenon that proved that popular revolts, not just militant Islamic jihad, could overthrow the very Arab regimes that Zawahiri despised. Then came Islamic State, a rival in the global jihad space, that denied al-Qaida oxygen.



Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri together in 2001. Photograph: AP

Zawahiri returned to the background, unable to replicate the attacks that had enshrined al-Qaida's name in infamy and seemingly content to bide his time. From his mid-60s onwards, Zawahiri's health declined. Beset by kidney problems, the trained surgeon was several times reported to have died.

He was instead attempting to revitalise al-Qaida from the chaos of the past 10 years and finally assert his presence as leader. Though that moment never came, counterterrorism specialists spent more time poring over his communiques and plans than they did of any other jihadist in recent years.

The Taliban's takeover of Kabul could have been just the break he needed. Back in the bosom of the group that had hosted him since the mid-1990s, Zawahiri felt safe enough to move his family into the villa of a senior Taliban leader. He spent time looking at the night skies from his balcony amid a city that he had long coveted to control.

It was a long way from the mountains and caves that had been his home while the world searched for him. But, in the end, Ayman al-Zawahir had few places left to run.

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[Ayman al-Zawahiri](#)

Zawahiri's killing unlikely to weaken al-Qaida significantly

Analysis: The terrorist leader had been ill and key tasks are likely to have been handled by others for several years



Ayman al-Zawahiri appears to have managed relations well with the Taliban.
Photograph: Site Intelligence Group/AFP/Getty Images

[Jason Burke](#)

Tue 2 Aug 2022 04.20 EDT Last modified on Wed 3 Aug 2022 00.11 EDT

Ayman al-Zawahiri was a low-key but effective leader of al-Qaida [whose death](#) will cause the terrorist organisation some short-term turbulence but is unlikely to cause any major long-term problems.

A decade ago, killing Zawahiri would have made a major difference. Now, though the nature of his death demonstrates the US's continuing ability to strike individual enemies even in hostile environments and raises questions

about the Taliban's relationship with extremist groups, it is unlikely to weaken al-Qaida significantly.

Zawahiri, 71, was seriously ill and many key tasks are likely to have been handled by others for several years. One of these younger men will now take on the leadership role. Despite significant attrition in recent years of potential successors, there are several capable candidates.

The favourite to take over is Mohammed Salah al-Din Zaidan, [better known as Saif al Adel](#), a 60-year-old Egyptian-born veteran of Islamic extremism who has long been considered a capable organiser by western security services. He is in Iran, however, with [no ability to travel and his communications monitored](#).

Others touted as possible successors include Abd al-Rahman al-Maghrebi, the director of al-Qaida's media campaigns, Abu al-Walid al-Falastini, a senior Syria-based ideologue, and several leaders of local affiliated organisations, such as Yazid Mebrak of [Al-Qaida](#) in the Islamic Maghreb and Ahmed Diriye of Al-Qaida in East Africa.

Whoever takes over, his strategic decisions will be important. Though al-Qaida was known for its innovative empowerment of local cells, the man at the top of the hierarchy has real authority. An oath of loyalty is sworn not to the group, but to the individual.

This is one reason Osama bin Laden, al-Qaida's founder and leader, was able to overrule senior aides who objected to his chosen strategy of striking the "Far Enemy", the west. If he had not, the 9/11 attacks of September 2001 in which nearly 3,000 people died could not have taken place.

When Zawahiri became leader after [Bin Laden's death in a US special forces raid in Pakistan in 2011](#), he turned al-Qaida away from spectacular long-range attacks, believing they were counter-productive. In his last days, Bin Laden had directed meticulously planned [ambitious strikes against oil tankers](#), believing these would cripple the US economy. Zawahiri cancelled the plot. Instead, links with groups around the world were reinforced and

efforts made to expand through gradually winning support from communities on the ground.

This did not always bring success, and al-Qaida suffered significant setbacks in Iraq and Syria during the 11 years Zawahiri was in charge. The rise of a rival in Islamic State, which swept through these two countries and set up a new “caliphate”, led to a loss of profile and influence in a key region as well as competition elsewhere. The limited achievements of its affiliate in Yemen, once seen as a major potential threat to the region and the west, must have been a disappointment.

But in the long run, Zawahiri’s tortoise looks set to beat the IS hare, and al-Qaida has managed to maintain or increase its presence through sub-Saharan Africa, in parts of south Asia and in other parts of the Middle East. Zawahiri’s personal decision to strengthen ties with al-Shabaab, the extremist movement in Somalia, has paid dividends with the group so secure that it now contributes millions of dollars to al-Qaida’s central treasury, according to recent intelligence reports. Zawahiri also appears to have managed relations with the various factions of the Taliban well. He died standing on the balcony of a house in the Afghan capital belonging to an aide of a hardline Taliban leader.

But what will be the strategy of the new leader? Whoever takes over has multiple options – but no easy ones. He has to stay alive, communicate despite considerable logistic challenges, deal with regimes like the Taliban and formulate a clear idea of what his subordinates should be doing.

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Attempts to launch long-range attacks on the west should be practically possible, even if they might be thwarted by much improved defences. Al-Qaida may not have mounted a significant strike on such a target for a decade but analysts believe that the organisation could build the networks and skills necessary to mount such an operation without great difficulty.

A [United Nations report](#), based on intelligence from member states, pointed out last that al-Qaida thrives because of instability and violence in the sort of

places that appear remote from London, Paris or Washington. Unless such conflicts are brought to a successful resolution, “one or more” such places “will incubate an external operational capability for IS, al-Qaida or a related terrorist group”, it warned.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2022.08.02 - Spotlight

- [From Die Hard to The Raid Guardian writers on their favourite action movies](#)
- [Lionesses The women who paved the way for England's historic win](#)
- [Women's Euro 2022 Our writers select their tournament highs and lows](#)
- [Perils of disabled travel 'I have to plan for if I am stranded, if I am dropped, if my chair is damaged'](#)

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[Action and adventure films](#)

From Die Hard to The Raid: Guardian writers on their favourite action movies



From clockwise: The Matrix, The Spook Who Sar by the Door, Terminator 2: Judgment Day, The Raid and Die Hard Composite: Sony/United Artists/Alamy

As Brad Pitt's new thriller Bullet Train arrives in cinemas, Guardian writers have picked their most exciting action films of all time

[Scott Tobias](#), [Charles Bramesco](#), [Jesse Hassenger](#), [Adrian Horton](#), [Veronica Esposito](#), [Andrew Pulver](#), [Benjamin Lee](#), [Radheyen Simonpillai](#), [Lisa Wong Macabasco](#), [AA Dowd](#) and [Andrew Lawrence](#)

Tue 2 Aug 2022 02.07 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 Aug 2022 13.52 EDT

Hard Boiled

When John Woo's 1989 breakthrough *The Killer* started slipping into repertory houses and cult video stores, it was the beginning of a revolution, like an adrenalized marriage between the cool of Jean-Pierre Melville's *Le Samouraï* and the operatic bloodletting of Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*. But *The Killer* turned out to be a mere throat-clearing for Woo's follow-up, *Hard Boiled*, which kicks off with a shootout in a teahouse filled with birdcages (bullets and feathers go flying) and builds to 40 minutes of pyrotechnics at a hospital that swings unforgettably through the nursery.

Exploring the dualities that frequently pop up in his work, Woo teams his favorite star, Chow Yun-Fat, with another emerging Hong Kong legend, Tony Leung, as a police detective and an undercover agent who's deep (perhaps *too* deep) in triad business. Their relationship raises the stakes of a gangland battle royale that Woo stages with elegant, slow-motion panache, a style that Hollywood would imitate shamelessly in the 90s and beyond, but rarely come close to replicating. *Scott Tobias*

The Five Deadly Venoms

After dozens upon dozens of the martial arts bonanzas cranked out by Hong Kong mega-studio Shaw Brothers (or their rivals at Golden Harvest) have fought to the death for my personal top-slot honors, only Chang Cheh's opera of body blows and flying spin kicks will stand tall. Rightly endorsed by kung fu connoisseur and de facto Wu-Tang head honcho the RZA as the greatest of all time, Cheh's canon classic breaks away from the pack on merit of its singularly brilliant gimmick, which convenes a gang of

specialists with colorful signature styles against our vengeful hero. The wriggling Caterpillar, the precision-striking Snake, the pincer-footed Scorpion, the gravity-defying Lizard, and the indestructibly squat Toad supply the genre with a handful of immortal set pieces, each explicitly predicated on the same creativity required to pull off a great fight sequence. Our man Yang thinks along the same inventive lines as Cheh, searching for weak points instead of hiding them, constantly innovating a way to top his last feat of ass-annihilating prowess. *Charles Bramesco*

Once Upon a Time in Mexico

There are plenty of better action movie directors than Robert Rodriguez. Hell, in 2003 Rodriguez's good friend Quentin Tarantino released Kill Bill Vol 1, which is almost definitely a better action movie than Rodriguez's Once Upon a Time in Mexico, which came out almost exactly a month earlier. But Once Upon a Time in Mexico is also my choice for favorite action movie, in the sense that – unlike Kill Bill, or Raiders of the Lost Ark, or any of number of other movies that could easily compete for the title – I probably like it more than anyone else does.

Rodriguez's finale to the makeshift trilogy that began with his El Mariachi and continued with Desperado sends the gun-and-guitar-toting Mariachi (Antonio Banderas) on a convoluted adventure, crossing paths with a nutty CIA operative (Johnny Depp) and a drug lord with face-altering surgery (Willem Dafoe), among others. More than ever, Rodriguez expresses character through his set pieces, whether hurtling the Mariachi and his wife (Salma Hayek) out of a hotel window as an act of doomed romanticism, or showing a CIA man's desperation (and rat-like survival instincts) through a blind shootout. Throughout, the outlandishness ties the trilogy together thematically. Early on, when one character narrates a characteristically over-the-top action scene, he mentions the “embellishments” that come with such stories, underlining how Rodriguez keeps heightening the Mariachi's story as the movies progress. In other words, Once Upon a Time in Mexico is an action movie about the escalating ridiculousness of action movies – and the value of that constant ante-upping. *Jesse Hassenger*

National Treasure

As a child fascinated by, of all things, the American Revolution, the 2004 film National Treasure seemed like a dream – a movie in which old documents are a literal secret puzzle, solved by a man whose knowledge of basic American history trivia allows him to outsmart the FBI. Nicolas Cage's punchline-as-mission-statement – “[I'm going to steal the Declaration of Independence](#)” – really hit as an 11-year-old; it has continued to hit, in a sillier way, as a [meme](#) and during each of the 15-ish times I've watched it.

There are many good reasons to dismiss National Treasure: its deeply unearned patriotism, its belief in a secret treasure-guarding cabal that has aged poorly in the QAnon era, its nonsensical plot. A very incomplete list of ridiculous elements: when they actually steal the Declaration of Independence; the fact that using lemon juice and a hair dryer on it doesn't ruin it; Diane Kruger's patchy American accent; the massive ancient treasure trove buried stories beneath downtown Manhattan that no one in the history of subway construction ever discovered. I simply have to take the generous view: National Treasure's sincere delivery of the truly and utterly ludicrous is never not fun to watch. *Adrian Horton*

The Matrix

There are at least two reasons why [The Matrix](#) must be in the running for greatest action movie of all time: it set a new standard for the genre by redefining how action movies looked and felt, and it helped moviegoers around the world articulate why modern life felt so false, finding fans everywhere from the Christian church to the queer community. Incredibly, it did this via a slightly crazy, Baudrillardian thesis that real life was in fact a simulation created by machines that had enslaved humanity, offering a powerful revamping of the hero's journey myth via a hacker-turned-messiah named Neo. But wait, there's even more: the cherry on top is that this visionary movie was made by two transgender women (still closeted at the time) who conceived it as an allegory for what it feels like to be trans in a cis-dominated world. More than just an action movie, it was actually a

subversive piece of queer art that is still relevant and necessary nearly 25 years after it was first released. *Veronica Esposito*

The Fifth Element

Action has never been my favorite film genre: there's something fundamentally off, I find, about the participation in frantic onscreen activity while you are sitting completely still in a chair. Plus the sense that, as CGI has become ever more ubiquitous, that you are witnessing some risk-free, super-artificial maelstrom that represents no jeopardy whatsoever. That's why, for me, the best action films are the most absurd and surreal, like Luc Besson's space fable about love from the mid-90s. You get [Bruce Willis](#) in his mid-career pomp, but also mad Gaultier costuming, Milla Jovovich squawking a made-up language and a Stargate-style alien-pyramids subplot. Always worth a watch. *Andrew Pulver*

The Raid

Call it an embarrassing sign of my age or a bleak comment on the sorry state of the industry or perhaps most likely a combination of the two but I find the majority of contemporary action sequences maddeningly hard to follow. The size of the spectacle might be increasing by the month (and the Marvel phase) but my involvement is steadily reducing, lack of interest bred by confusion. I often have a blackout reaction to massive, poorly stitched together set pieces, usually in the last act, where too much is happening and too little care for coherence and choreography is employed. My brain chooses nothing over everything.

But back in 2012, an unlikely action thriller (made in Indonesia by the Welsh director Gareth Evans), was crafted with such careful precision that I found it impossible to turn away, let alone black out. The barebones video game setup (a squad of commandos must make it through a high-rise building filled with low-level henchmen in order to take down the local crime lord) was so generic that even another film that year – Dredd – boasted an almost identical plot. But the across the board A-game

craftsmanship meant that the journey was like nothing we'd ever really seen, an immersive seat-edge series of thrillingly performed and edited fight scenes, the kind of hyper-competent action that makes you instinctively move your body along with every punch, kick and stab. It's all deceptively simple but contains far more complexity than the majority of action films since. *Benjamin Lee*

Die Hard

Alan Rickman's wicked cool villain, Hans Gruber, speaks our language when leaning over a scale model of a bridge, purring about its "exactness" and "attention to every conceivable detail". He could very well be describing Die Hard, a thrilling show of craftsmanship where every small bit of info pays out dividends.

The first thing we learn about Bruce Willis's off-duty NYPD cop John McClane is his anxiety about flying. That's what gets him to try a socks-off relaxation therapy, which is interrupted by hostage takers and leaves him scurrying for the rest of the movie barefoot, going a few rounds with broken glass. Two hours after that initial introduction, McClane is flying off a skyscraper – damn the anxiety – now with bloodied feet.

Die Hard became a blueprint for the modern action movie because its architecture is so perfect. But the irritable and vulnerable hero scaling its "40 stories of sheer adventure" (as the poster puts it) remains uncommon. There simply aren't that many movies led by a cop who chooses to patiently hang back and run his mouth, instead of running in guns blazing. *Radheyen Simonpillai*

The Spook Who Sat by the Door

Based on the incendiary 1969 book by former foreign-service officer Sam Greenlee, Ivan Dixon's deliciously subversive 1973 blowback fantasy of using white people's own discrimination and misguidedness against them still shimmers with controlled rage – and unfortunate persistent relevance.

It's the fictional story of the first Black CIA officer (Lawrence Cook), a token affirmative-action hire in the late 1960s, who takes his spy training back to the streets of Chicago to spark a countrywide revolution, emphasizing community and education as the keys to overthrowing white supremacy. Stacked with characters who refuse to comply with Black Hollywood stereotypes of the era, the film also features a funky Herbie Hancock score that drops out during an extended sequence putting viewers in the middle of a riot following a police shooting of a Black man. Nearly 50 years after its release, it remains a sign of its febrile moment and "one of the most terrifying movies ever made", according to one critic at the time; no surprise that the FBI allegedly quietly pulled it from theaters after its release.

Lisa Wong Macabasco

Terminator 2: Judgment Day

The first Terminator is a leaner, meaner thing, which is why plenty of action buffs prefer it. But sometimes bigger *is* better, and more *is* more. In administering a shot of steroids to every element of his gritty sci-fi classic (the budget, the narrative, Linda Hamilton's arms), James Cameron emerged with the platonic ideal of the summer blockbuster, delivering the goods more consistently and sensationally than nearly any Hollywood tentpole released before or since.

There's a "can you top this?" quality to T2 that's just irresistible. What makes the movie a pinnacle of popcorn spectacle, beyond Arnold Schwarzenegger's demigod star power as the most literal of killing machines, is the blend of practical and state-of-the-art digital effects used to bring its set pieces to life. Most big-budget action movies would kill for just one burst of pure rollercoaster excitement on the level of what Cameron keeps offering, minute by minute, in T2. He gets all the possible bang from his astronomically inflated buck. *AA Dowd*

Deja Vu

I spend entirely too much time asking entirely too many questions about Deja Vu: How did the ATF get budget for a time machine after 9/11? Why wasn't Special Agent Carlin (Denzel Washington) taken off investigating the murder of Claire Kuchever (Paula Patton) when he was clearly in love with this dead woman? What happened to Jim Caviezel's career? I appreciate that any attempts to ground this aughties classic in reality might come off as pedantic. But that doesn't stop me from firing it up on HBO Max and suspending disbelief anew. So what if Deja Vu is a by-the-numbers, Save the Cat action flick. The damned thing just works. It's paced by Tony Scott's whipsawing direction, elevated by loaded performances from Washington, Caviezel, Val Kilmer and the delightfully manic Adam Goldberg. And it has all the concussive energy you'd expect from a Jerry Bruckheimer-produced flick. (That poor, poor ferry boat ...) Overthink it. Don't overthink it. Either way, Deja Vu is a romp worth reliving time and again. *Andrew Lawrence*

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Women's football

‘People say, “You started it all!”’: The Lionesses who paved the way for England’s historic win

Some played through the FA’s ban on women’s football, others cleaned their own kits and held down jobs, so how do former players feel about the team’s victory in the Euros?

'They're such good role models': thousands welcome Lionesses in Trafalgar Square – video

Interviews by [Zoe Beaty](#), [Leah Harper](#) and [Emine Saner](#)

Mon 1 Aug 2022 14.50 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 Aug 2022 08.16 EDT

The current squad of Lionesses are national heroes and front-page news, but it was a different story for the players who paved the way for them. Six former England players look back on the spectacular victory at Euro 2022 and contrast the international game today with what it was like to play for their country in the early days.

‘I nearly fell off the couch when the first goal went in!’

Sheila Parker, first England women’s captain. Defender, 1972-1983

Watching the final on Sunday made me so proud. We played brilliantly and if Leah Williamson was nervous, she didn’t show it. All those years ago I felt the same pride to be captain of our England side. It was very different, of course. I was 24, not long married and had a young son. He would sit on the sidelines when I was playing, quite happily watching the matches. It’s surprising what you can do when you have to.



Sheila Parker ... 'We had to fight tooth and nail because there wasn't so much interest. I was over the moon on Sunday.' Photograph: Tom Martin/The Observer

In my day, we played for the love of the sport. Playing for your country was phenomenal, but it couldn't be a career. I was working on the reception desk at Leyland Motors at the time; I had to save up all my annual leave to be able to play.

My most treasured memory from that time is travelling to Japan to play. We had to save up for our flights and hotel – relatives were really helpful in lending us money so we could go – but it was so worth it. There was a huge fanbase for us out there; the fans would go wild. Looking back I suppose I felt like a star that week, but you don't realise it at the time – you're just enjoying it all. It felt like we had made it. To go abroad to play football was amazing.

We had to fight tooth and nail because there wasn't so much interest in what we were doing. Now, I think a lot more people are going to be watching. That's going to make such a difference.

I was over the moon watching Sunday's match at home with my friend from that time, Vanessa McLeod, one of the first women's referees. I nearly fell

off the couch when that first goal went in. It was an incredible game, they have achieved so much – I felt a lot of pride watching them. We celebrated afterwards with a cup of tea and a biscuit.

‘We were changing people’s minds’

Carol Thomas, second England women’s captain. Defender, 1974-1985

In the 60s, it was frowned on for women and girls to play football, but my whole family encouraged me. I was lucky in Hull – I joined a women’s team, even though the ban on women playing was still on at that time, but I didn’t realise.

We weren’t allowed to play on grounds that were affiliated to the Football Association so we played on park pitches, which usually meant we got some silly comments from men about swapping shirts, or that women shouldn’t be playing football. You usually found within two or three weeks, they would come back to watch, so even in those days we were changing people’s minds.



Carol Thomas ... ‘It was thought women couldn’t manage 90 minutes so we played 35 minutes each way.’ Photograph: James Speakman/PA

We just wanted to be recognised in our own right – we didn’t want to be compared with the men. It would have been nice to have a bit more funding, to make it easier for us. It cost us quite a bit of money to represent our country. We had to pay to get to the airport, or if we were playing in England, we’d have to pay petrol money and train fares to get to the grounds. The kit was used over and over again. For some reason, it was thought women couldn’t manage 90 minutes so we played 35 minutes each way and with a size-four ball.

We all had jobs. I worked in the offices of Northern Dairies. They were good to me, and gave me time off without losing money, and I didn’t have to use holidays. Before games, we’d meet up on the Friday, have a training session on the Saturday and then play on the Sunday. Then we’d all disappear back home ready for our jobs on Monday morning.

When I first started, I hadn’t thought about representing England because there wasn’t an England women’s team. The first international game wasn’t played until 1972. Just getting selected to play for your country is a proud thing. To follow a great captain like Sheila Parker was a great honour.

A few people have asked if I wish I’d been born later. It’s nice to see the success they have got, but I’m also proud of what we did back in the 70s and 80s. I wouldn’t change it.

‘It’s another world!’

Wendy Owen, England centre back, 1972-1977

I’m euphoric. I was still singing “Football’s coming home!” in the shower this morning. I watched the game at home and we were on tenterhooks – I didn’t think we were going to do it. But when we won, my phone started going mad – friends, family and some people I hadn’t heard from in years were all congratulating me. I said: “What are you congratulating me for?” They said: “You were there at the start, you started it all with your team!”

I played with the first England team in 1972, and for our first match in Scotland I think we had about 3,000 spectators – so to see the crowd at Wembley last night felt groundbreaking for women’s sport, and for women

in general. So many of the young girls who watched that are going to think: "I want to play football!" I'm hoping more schools will make it part of the PE curriculum.



Training for the first match against Scotland in Greenock, 1972. Front, from left: Jeannie Allot, Janet Bagguley, Sue Buckett, Pat Davies, Eileen Foreman, Sylvia Gore, Sandra Graham. Back, from left: Lynda Hale, Morag Kirkland, Julia Manning, Paddy McGroarty, Wendy Owen, Jean Wilson, Susan Whyatt, Sheila Parker (captain) and Eric Worthington, England team manager. Photograph: Monty Fresco/Daily Mail/Shutterstock

When we played, the women's FA were in charge and they were on a shoestring budget. So it's fantastic, now, to see the girls getting recognised, getting the coverage, getting the funding. It's another world, really.

At the beginning of the tournament, I thought: if we can win at Wembley, in front of a capacity crowd, with the game being shown on BBC One, it will take women's football into the stratosphere ... And today, it's all over the newspaper front pages – as well the middle pages, as well as the back pages. When we played, we did get some coverage in the press, but it would always be focused on how we looked and we would always be asked: "What does your boyfriend think of you playing football?"

In a cafe last week, I overheard three blokes on the table next to me talking about the England women's team: they were chatting about the tactics and techniques, just like they would if they were talking about the men's teams. That really brought it home for me how far women's football has come.

'We know what it's like to put on that shirt'

Angela Taylor-Banks, England forward, 1999-2002

I'm buzzing – I've got goosebumps. I was nervous all day and I said to my wife: "I don't get it, I'm not even playing, but I feel like I am!" When you're a former player and someone who loves the game, you relive it. You know what it's like to put on that shirt and sing the national anthem. To get that far, you just want that last final step over the line. When Chloe Kelly scored, we were all jumping around.

Women's football has grown wonderfully and this tournament is propelling it even further. It was always there in the background but people would say: "Ah you know, it's girls playing football." Now, people are saying: "Wow, girls are *really* playing *really great* football."



Angela Taylor-Banks, right, in 2001 ... 'I look at the game today and think: "I dreamed of that as a little girl." Photograph: Michael Steele/Getty Images

I played 18 games for England and, for me, a standout memory was the Euros in 2001. The very first game, we went out and I scored a goal against Russia – I was actually the only English player to score in that tournament. We didn't go any further than the group stage but that was probably the height of my England career, so I can't imagine how today's England team must feel.

I wasn't pro when I played; I still had a full-time job and we only trained twice a week – so the fact that these girls can play professionally is a big difference. It's not just that you get 10 years playing and then you're done; it can set these players up for a career for life.

I look at the game today and I think: "I dreamed of that as a little girl." I never got to play at Wembley and I can never do it now but it must be amazing for young girls today to look at these players and think: "I could be that."

'It was a match I'll remember for ever'

Kerry Davis, England forward, 1982-1998

In 1984, I played the Euros semi-final against Denmark. They were the hot favourites, and we were the underdogs – many people thought we wouldn't be able to beat them. We did: 2-1 in the first leg, at Crewe, then 1-0 in the second, on their own patch. It became a match that I'd remember for ever. (I scored in the first leg, which helped.)



Kerry Davis ... 'We were lucky if we got one man and his dog watching. But it was still representing your country. That never changes.' Photograph: PA Images/Alamy

Is this the lift the women's game needs? I really, really hope so. I think grassroots football for girls needs to go forward. The Women's Super League is strong but we still need a bigger fanbase for women's football at club level. I'd also like to see a lot more female coaches trained up – it's so important for progression.

There's a different vibe at women's games; I think it's more jolly, for want of a better word. You can just enjoy the match instead of shouting abuse at each other. The crowd at Wembley was a real mix of men, women, boys and girls – how it should be – but the atmosphere was brilliant. The fans really got behind the team. My mate Jane was dancing on a chair and fell off at one point.

You cannot compare how playing for England was for me, compared to how it is now. There's a massive, massive divide. We were lucky if we got one man and his dog watching. But for us it was still playing football. It was still representing your country. That never changes.

There's a long way to go to make football more equal across the men's and women's game. Issues like racism and homophobia. If you don't call it out and highlight it, then it's not going to improve. You have to have the courage to stand up to it. All sports should be inclusive, it's as simple as that.

'If I was a bloke, I would have been earning millions!'

Pauline Cope-Boanas, England goalkeeper, 1995-2004

It was very emotional walking to Wembley and seeing all those fans, seeing ex-players that laid the foundations. I never dreamed it would ever progress that much – that you've got 87,000 people going to a women's game. It was just overwhelming. I'm not going to lie, I did cry. I don't think there's one female England footballer that isn't waking up feeling just as proud and emotional as I am this morning.

It was a slightly bittersweet moment – I've wished I was still playing ever since the women's game went pro. I'd love to have played for Sarina Wiegman, I'd love to have played with this group of players. For me, Mary Earps was the best goalkeeper of the tournament. She's commanding, she's got a little bit of flashy arrogance about her, but that's her right because she can make the saves.

I know she has chats with David de Gea, the Manchester United goalkeeper, and I know the confidence that gives you because when I was playing for Charlton Athletic, I was lucky to train with Dean Kiely, who was in the Premier League with Charlton. He'd say that if I was a bloke, I would have been earning millions.



Pauline Cope-Boanas ... 'It was very emotional walking to Wembley, all those fans – I never dreamed women's football would progress so much.'

Photograph: REUTERS/Alamy

We went to the World Cup in 1995 in Sweden. There was, like, three men and a dog watching. We had to carry our own kit, rinse it out after games. We just had Ted Copeland, the manager, a physio, doctor and masseur.

I was working as a receptionist at a bank and I had to take annual leave to go away to play for England. I think towards the end, you got £300 or £400 per trip or something, but that was just an added bonus. I would have played for England for nothing. It's an honour to play for your country.

On Sunday evening, people were slowly leaving but we stayed because I needed to soak everything in. I was thinking: "Wow, what have they just done? What have we done?" I just kept looking around going: "We ain't going nowhere, we're here to stay."

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Euro 2022: our writers select their highs and lows from the tournament



From left; Germany v France, Alexandra Popp, Beth Mead, Aitana Bonmatí and Sarina Wiegman. Composite: Getty Images

From Georgia Stanway's rocket to Alexandra Popp's heartbreak via some electric matches in front of record-breaking crowds

Match of the tournament

The semi-final between Germany and France was not an occasion of the highest finesse but felt like a proper heavyweight clash: two fine teams rattling up against each other, a throbbing tempo and a fitting matchwinner in a tie that remained tense until the very end.

Nick Ames



Germany v France: ‘Taut and technical and gripping from first whistle to last’. Photograph: Adrian Dennis/AFP/Getty Images

The England v Spain quarter-final for sure. An incredible game between two amazing teams with very different styles that went to extra time, left everyone with a “wow” feeling and would have been a worthy, highly credible final. It was so exciting too.

Anita Asante

What more can you want than a packed Wembley watching the two best teams in the tournament playing out a great final? It was just a fantastic occasion: England won and it did not go to penalties! Perfect.

Karen Carney

England's quarter-final win against Spain is the one that really stands out. The atmosphere in the Amex Stadium, the pure drama of the spectacle, the Lionesses' display of resilience. That victory in extra time is when I truly started realising England could go all the way.

Sophie Downey

Germany v France. Taut and technical and gripping from first whistle to last. The stage and the stakes, the skills and shithousery, the strategy and tactics: taken together, this was an exhibition of what women's football has become in 2022.

Jonathan Liew

It's hard not to go for England scoring eight but Norway were no match for them, as it turns out. The four against Sweden were very special and that was a match. Sweden were impressive until the first goal. But in terms of the quality, tension, excitement, and the occasion too: England v Spain.

Sid Lowe

England v Spain. Talk about tense. This long night at Brighton showed England fans their previously all-dominant team could cope with adversity and find a way to win. All credit to Sarina Wiegman for some inspired substitutions and the late switch to a back three that enabled Millie Bright to advance and provoke equaliser-precipitating penalty area chaos. But hats off, too, to a fine Spain side.

Louise Taylor

It has to be England's 8-0 defeat of Norway. The atmosphere and energy were electric. The swashbuckling, dominant display and the nullifying of a star-studded Norway attack had everyone turning to each other, exclaiming they couldn't quite believe what they were seeing. That included the families of the players sitting to the left of the press box.

Suzanne Wrack

Player of the tournament

Alexandra Popp neither started nor finished the tournament in Germany's starting lineup and her late withdrawal from the final earned her the status of tragic hero. But she was more than that: for a 31-year-old returning from career-threatening injury she showed staggering energy and strength along with her trademark explosive finishing. The Wembley showpiece was a wonderful occasion but would have been even better had she not pulled up.

NA



Alexandra Popp had a brilliant tournament but missed the final because of an injury. Photograph: Robbie Jay Barratt/AMA/Getty Images

England's Keira Walsh. After spending part of my career as a central midfielder she is a player to whom I can relate. Some of the things she does are not always appreciated but she is so important in linking everything up for the team. And the pass for Ella Toone's goal in the final was emblematic of her quality. So, sorry Beth Mead, Alessia Russo and Popp, it's got to be Walsh. AA

England have a fantastic spine to their team. Bright at centre-back and Walsh in central midfield were outstanding from start to finish. Bright did not put a foot wrong and Walsh's pass for Toone's goal in the final was perfect. KC

It is hard to pick one but Mead is a worthy winner of this award. Her Golden Boot-winning performances with six goals and five assists set England alight. And all the time, she just appeared to be having the time of her life. **SD**



Golden Boot winner Beth Mead. Photograph: Catherine Ivill/Uefa/Getty Images

Mary Earps. Under the highest pressure, in the most maligned position on the pitch, Earps made virtually no errors and dug England out of trouble time and again. **JL**

Forgive my Spanish bias but I don't think I saw anyone play quite like Aitana Bonmatí and she was gone too soon. Lena Oberdorf, maybe. Walsh, perhaps. Mead probably. And Jill Scott, just because – for everything. Can it be Popp when she misses the final? Yes, it can and is. **SL**

Popp. Without the indefatigable forward and her goals it is doubtful if Germany would have got past Austria and France in the knockout rounds. The only shame was that, after six goals in five outstanding games, Popp injured herself in the pre-final warm-up. **LT**

Walsh, the anchor of England's midfield, has turned heads but her performances have been overshadowed somewhat by the goalscorers and

creators in front of her. After struggling at the World Cup in 2019 she has found her rhythm in the national team and was critical to England's triumph. **SW**

Goal of the tournament

It is hard to pick between three England goals: the backheel from Russo, the ice-cool scooped finish by Toone in the final and Georgia Stanway's rocket that defeated Spain. Perhaps Toone takes it: in a game of few clear chances for England, she took hers with an aplomb that defied belief. **NA**



Ella Toone scores a goal to grace any final. Photograph: Julian Finney/The FA/Getty Images

Toone in the final against Germany at Wembley. I know Stanway scored a pivotal, and spectacular, winner against Spain and Russo's semi-final backheel against Sweden was very special but to pull off that lob in front of 87,000 was an immense achievement. Toone was so composed in the face of all that pressure and expectation. It was a phenomenal moment. **AA**

Russo's goal against Sweden was great but it has to be Toone's chip, considering it was the final. The audacity and composure shown to score were incredible. I love that moment. **KC**

Without question, Russo's backheel wonder-strike against Sweden. To have the audacity to attempt that in the semi-final of a major tournament is just outrageous. It showed everything about the sort of striker Russo is. **SD**



Alessia Russo scores a wonderful backheel against Sweden. Photograph: Carl Recine/Reuters

Stanway for England against Spain. Given the magnitude of the moment, the flawless technique required and the beautiful dip and curve of the shot, Stanway's long-range quarter-final winner takes the honours. **JL**

The finish in the final was sublime from Toone, the ball pretty much waving at Wembley as it went in. But it's down to this: an outrageous turn against Northern Ireland or the ludicrous backheel. Either way it's Russo. **SL**

Stanway against Spain. The goalkeeper, Sandra Paños, was reduced to a state of helplessness as Stanway's 22-yard, extra-time rocket of a shot scorched its way beyond her fingertips. Defenders should be super-wary about standing off Bayern Munich's new signing. **LT**

It's Russo's backheel. There's really no other contender. Yes, it was magical, but more significantly it spoke to the impact of the environment created by Wiegman, one where players feel confident, comfortable and calm enough to take risks and play with a freedom that is exhilarating. **SW**

Breakthrough player of the tournament

Oberdorf has been around the Germany scene for some time but, at 20, would not have been a familiar name to most watchers. Her performances blended youthful energy with the intuition of a veteran; the Wolfsburg midfielder should spend the next decade among the world's best. **NA**



Lena Oberdorf had an excellent tournament in midfield for Germany.
Photograph: Maddie Meyer/Uefa/Getty Images

It's got to be Russo. No one was talking about the Manchester United striker before Euro 2022 but everyone is now. That says it all. Russo's goals, and talent, have lit up the tournament. She has proved herself a major asset. **AA**

Oberdorf. I have known about her for a while but the German was outstanding throughout and rightly earned the young player of the tournament award. **KC**

Oberdorf made that Germany midfield spot her own. She was the centre through which all of the play flowed. With multiple eye-catching performances, she is definitely a huge talent to keep an eye on. **SD**

Russo's talent has never been in doubt, but the question was whether she would get the minutes to prove it. Despite not starting a game, she made herself indispensable with two of the best goals of the tournament. **JL**



Alessia Russo has been England's go-to substitute and did not disappoint.
Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

Oberdorf can't be that young, can she? But in terms of a breakthrough star, a sense of excitement, an idol emerging, it has to be Russo. The fans' response to her simply warming up spoke volumes. **SL**

Oberdorf. Is she really only 20? Germany's holding midfielder represents a very big reason why her country are so good in transition. An expert at breaking up play, ball recovery, slowing games down and controlling the tempo, Oberdorf knows precisely when to concede fouls. She ensured England's Fran Kirby did not exert quite the influence she would have wanted in the final. **LT**

When Wiegman started in September, Stanway said she was out of favour. It wasn't until the opening game of the Euros she knew a spot in the midfield would be hers to lose. All eyes were on Lauren Hemp, who has performed well, but it has been the physical and battling Stanway who stepped up a gear. **SW**

Personal highlight

The atmosphere inside Wembley at the final: noisy, partisan, edgy, ultimately delirious, but none of the menace we have seen at other events. Being able to sneak into Iceland v Belgium, a game I was not covering, straight after an Erling Haaland press conference across the Etihad Bridge was a pleasant bonus. **NA**



A delirious Wembley crowd during the final. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

Meeting the BBC commentator Jonathan Pearce and sitting alongside him in the hot-seat doing co-commentary at the final. Jonathan has followed women's football for such a long time, since the days when it was unfashionable and he is really invested in the game. He told me he was close to tears after Phil Neville had recalled me to the England team for the SheBelieves Cup in the US in 2018 and I ruptured my ACL against France. That meant a lot. Having played in the 2009 final, doing co-comms felt like I'd come full circle. **AA**

England winning. We have waited many years – players and fans – for a moment such as this and it was incredible to celebrate England winning a

major tournament on home soil in front 87,000 and millions watching at home. **KC**

Having travelled home and abroad covering the Lionesses for the past decade, the whole tournament was a thoroughly emotional and rewarding experience. The fact they won it just does not compute. Getting to write about their success has been a huge personal honour. **SD**



A sellout crowd at Old Trafford watch the opening game. Photograph: Charlotte Wilson/Offside/Getty Images

The massive crowd at Old Trafford for England's opening game against Austria. Terrible weather and not a great game, but the enthusiasm and passion was a warning something special was brewing. **JL**

The [Euro 2022 cakes](#) at Wembley. The 11-year-old boy beaming with Mead at Bramall Lane. And Brighton: brilliant. **SL**

Seeing some truly excellent female coaches in technical areas. Step forward not just Wiegman and Martina Voss-Tecklenburg but France's Corinne Diacre and Austria's Irene Fuhrmann. Albeit in a different context, those managers have been just as inspiring as the players. **LT**



Irene Fuhrmann, head coach of Austria, has a bright future in the game.
Photograph: Christopher Lee/Uefa/Getty Images

I feel like I've been on a journey with this England team. As they've got better and as the game has grown, the opportunities for women's football journalists have opened up. To see these players reach a final, something that will elevate our industry as well as themselves and women's football, has been special. That, and interacting regularly with the incredibly likable Wiegman. **SW**

Biggest disappointment

A generally well-run tournament was rewarded with in-depth coverage but it could have been even better: for some of the knockout games Uefa appeared to have underestimated the sheer volume of media attention and it meant some pieces had to be written from sofa rather than stadium. More could have been accommodated without denying fans space; perhaps it can be used as a pleasant lesson that interest is sky high. **NA**

The serious knee injuries that deprived Spain of Alexia Putellas and Jennifer Hermoso before the tournament and France of Marie-Antoinette Katoto during the group game against Belgium. I was also disappointed for Popp

that her injury in the warm-up meant she missed the final. That quartet would have offered the tournament – and the final – real added stardust. **AA**



Injury robbed the tournament of Europe's best player in Alexia Putellas.
Photograph: Jose Breton/NurPhoto/Shutterstock

The tournament surpassed all of my expectations. It was outstanding. **KC**

I came into this tournament with a lot of interest around Italy. Their performances at the World Cup in 2019 and the growth of the domestic league seemed to illustrate that things were heading in the right direction. To not emerge from the group stage was a massive disappointment. **SD**

The injury that ruled out Putellas days before the start. The entire tournament could have looked different with her presence. **JL**

Popp: there in the team picture, no longer there at kick-off. Just so cruel. **SL**

The lack of ambition over some of the grounds used and the absence of any venues north of the M62 corridor. Brighton's Amex Stadium and Sheffield United's Bramall Lane were too small for England's quarter- and semi-finals respectively and the north-east was overlooked. The organisers missed a trick in not using Newcastle's St James' Park and Sunderland's Stadium of Light. **LT**



Venues such as Manchester City's Academy Stadium were, in hindsight, much too small. Photograph: Robbie Jay Barratt/AMA/Getty Images

I have a few “what ifs”. England could have sold out Wembley six times over. I’m not saying they necessarily should have played all their games there, but grounds of 30,000-35,000 denied so many the chance to experience, as my dad put it after the Northern Ireland game, “one of the best football match atmospheres I’ve ever experienced”. **SW**

What now for women’s football in England?

As usual, the word legacy will be worn out over the coming weeks and it is vital the game, and pathway within it, become easily accessible to the millions of youngsters who will have watched recent weeks in awe. The strength of the domestic product beneath the top teams, who play to a thrilling level, needs to improve too. Mobility between the divisions is not what it should be and means some of the more progressive setups hit a brick wall before they can have a crack at the top two tiers. **NA**

It’s all about turning words into actions. The men’s parent clubs of WSL sides, and their media teams especially, need to do more to drive the women’s game forward and make people aware of when and where matches

are happening. A new collective mindset is needed to make the game more inclusive and diverse. It's an opportunity that can't be wasted. **AA**



Increased interest and stadium capacity should help the WSL next season.
Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

The momentum can not stop. We need Lionesses games to be sold out every time, we need WSL attendances to increase and equal opportunities for girls to play at school. **KC**

We all have a responsibility to make sure we capitalise on this historic moment. That means girls and women having access to play football at all levels. But also as the media, we need to continue our coverage, putting the sport in front of people's eyes. We can't let our foot off the gas now. **SD**

Cautious optimism. The interest is there; the real question is whether infrastructure and grassroots investment can keep pace. **JL**

Fingers crossed that more girls will be able to play in school; WSL crowds will increase as more games are played at established Premier League grounds and, particularly with the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand beckoning, media coverage will be amplified and expanded. **LT**

Thirty years of hurt, presumably. More seriously: at this level, Wiegman's side has only just got started so the World Cup could be fun; beyond that, Leah Williamson's post-final call to arms says it well. **SL**

Please, please let this energy and enthusiasm not dissipate. Chelsea and Liverpool are the latest teams to have announced games at their main grounds come the new WSL season. Arsenal have committed to six games at the Emirates in the season. There is a chance for people to take their passion for this tournament and the journey of the players into the domestic game. But fans should also go even more local. There are some fantastic Championship and national league sides that provide affordable football and great atmospheres. **SW**

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[Disability](#)

'I have to plan for if I am stranded, if I am dropped, if my chair is damaged': the perils of travelling while disabled



Mel Kennedy tries – but often fails – to let the train take the strain.
Photograph: Joel Goodman/The Guardian

Using trains or planes can be fraught with difficulty and danger for disabled people, from being forgotten about at stations to being unable to use the toilet on long flights

[Lucy Webster](#)

Tue 2 Aug 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 Aug 2022 04.35 EDT

Sophie Morgan is fed up. The TV presenter, best known for her appearances on *Loose Women* and presenting the Paralympics, travels all the time for work – she films all over the world – and she knows what she is doing. But, because she is a wheelchair user, “every single flight is a risk”, she says.

For disabled people such as Morgan and me, air travel is perhaps uniquely stressful. There are so many things that can go wrong, alongside a shocking lack of dignity. Will they allow our wheelchair through security, or will we be forced on to airport chairs that we can’t use independently? Will the wheelchair be left behind at the gate, leaving us stranded? Will it be broken en route, ruining a work trip or a holiday? Will assistance come before boarding closes? Will we be hurt as we are manhandled on to the plane?

None of these worries, however, come close to the big one: are we going to be left behind? Once all the passengers are off, this question rumbles around our heads as we crane to see whether assistance is coming. If it doesn’t come, we are stranded. Despite there having been years of campaigning for wheelchairs to be stored in the cabin, most airlines insist on sending them down to the hold. This means there is often a delay in bringing the chair back up to the cabin door at the end of the flight. And, of course, planes are still designed with aisles too narrow for standard wheelchairs, meaning anyone who can’t walk off the plane must wait for staff to help them with a specially made aisle chair (which is not designed to be used independently).

This problem finally came to public attention in June when a disabled passenger [died at Gatwick airport](#) after falling from an escalator. He had chosen not to wait for assistance. While Gatwick and Wilson James, the company responsible for assistance at the airport, said there wasn’t a shortage of staff at the time, all disabled people know that adequate staffing is no guarantee we won’t be left behind. If you are in desperate need of the

loo, because you haven't been able to go on the plane (it is 2022, but airlines still don't provide disabled toilets), sometimes the only option is to take matters into your own hands.



Sophie Morgan is regularly stranded while taking flights. Photograph: Alex Rumford

It happens all the time, says Morgan. In April, she was stranded when she returned from a filming trip in Helsinki. She hadn't been warned in advance that the plane didn't carry an aisle chair, so she spent the entire flight stressed about being unable to go to the toilet. She was desperate to get off the plane to be reunited with her wheelchair and her autonomy, but no assistant arrived.

She asked the cabin crew how long the wait would be. "They just shrugged. No one offered any reassurance," she says. "Meanwhile, I'm terrified I'm not going to get to the loo in time." Her travelling companion could see her wheelchair on the bridge, but she had no way to reach it. Forty minutes after landing, an assistant appeared – but they couldn't help Morgan use the aisle chair. They hadn't been trained and were obliged to wait for another member of staff. There was no apology.

Eventually, Morgan's companion did what many are forced to do: he grabbed the aisle chair and got her off the plane himself. "Definitely against insurance policy," Morgan says, half laughing, half groaning. Even once she was in her own wheelchair, no one helped – or apologised.

This is just one of Morgan's many stories of being denied the assistance she needs and to which she is entitled. I ask how she maintains the confidence to travel so often. "I travel a lot, but never without fear," she says. "It sounds awful, but I just expect the worst, then I plan what I'll do if the worst happens – if I wet myself, if I'm stranded, if I'm dropped, if my chair is damaged. I'm always kind of in a state of distress."

The distress is heightened because, in order to avoid needing the loo too soon, she restricts her food and drink intake the day before she flies. (On long-haul flights, there is usually an aisle chair, but if you need a carer or can't stand at all, you just have to wait.) It is a degrading choice to make, but "in the end, travelling is so worth it. I think of it like an extreme sport – I know there's every chance it's going to end in tears, but if I want to do it, I've got to risk it."



Sophie Morgan receives assistance to board a plane.

Most disabled people know the gnawing stress of air travel, but everyday journeys can be just as anxiety-inducing. Many will be familiar with the almost mundane experience of being left stranded on a train. Shona Louise, a theatre photographer, often travels around the UK for work, particularly in and out of London, from her home in St Albans. “Ninety per cent of the time, especially on routes I know, everything is fine,” she says, emphasising that she doesn’t want to put other disabled people off travelling alone. “The problem is that when things *do* go wrong, they go really badly wrong.”

As a powerchair user, she is reliant on someone turning up with a ramp. The most common problem is when the member of staff who puts Louise on the train forgets to call ahead to the station where she is getting off. “They can’t help me if they don’t know I’m coming,” she says. Sometimes the destination station staff are aware that she needs help, but are waiting on the wrong platform, or at the wrong time. “That stings the most,” she says, because she is being let down by the system, not just human error. “There should be a way for disabled people to get themselves help, rather than relying on people to remember.”

After too many experiences of being forgotten and missing her stop – and therefore heading towards a station where no one is aware she needs help – Louise has learned to block the train doors with her chair. This, she acknowledges, is dangerous, but sometimes it is the only way to get the onboard guard’s attention. It is her only choice – missing her stop “can change or ruin your whole day”.

Louise often travels late at night, after shows have finished, adding to the stakes. If she misses her stop and has to get out at another station, she won’t have any way of getting home. “It’s scary and disorientating,” she says. In these situations, her only options are to block the doors or press the emergency button. This can annoy staff and fellow passengers, because it causes delays, but Louise insists disabled people have every right to keep themselves safe when the system doesn’t. “I’m a confident traveller and I won’t be put off because I have to get to work, but when I’m stuck and can’t get home, it is horrendous. It’s really emotionally taxing.”

Transport for All, a pressure group working to make public transport more accessible, emphasises that it is not just people with mobility impairments

who are left stranded. Blind and visually impaired passengers may also need help to navigate busy airports and stations, as may some neurodivergent people. “It is vital that disabled people can trust that staff will be on hand, but unfortunately this is not happening,” says Katie Pennick, the group’s campaigns manager. Official data shows that only 75% of booked assistance is received (no data exists for assistance arranged at stations). “The impact of this cannot be overstated … it can put people off and be a real barrier to travelling.” She emphasises that this doesn’t only affect people travelling for leisure, but can make commuting to work or appointments, as Louise and Morgan do, extremely difficult.



Shona Louise: ‘When things go wrong, they go really wrong’ Photograph: Liza Heinrichs

Both women say that bad attitudes compound the structural issues. Being forced to wait for assistance, as if we are a glorified piece of luggage, is dehumanising in itself – and then we are treated as an inconvenience. Staff act as if we are the ones making their lives difficult.

Morgan happened to be travelling from Gatwick the day after the disabled man died on the escalator, when details of the incident were still unknown. As she was taken through the airport, she asked the man assisting her whether there was any more information about what had happened. “All he

did was talk about the impact it had had on Wilson James staff,” she says. “I was so incensed. I thought: ‘How can you be looking at me, a wheelchair user, and saying that was the hardest thing?’ It just tells you everything you need to know about the company.”

After the incident, Wilson James said in a statement: “The agent was at the gate within one minute of the aircraft parking on its stand, and the incident itself only happened 10 minutes after the aircraft landed. The agent who handled the passenger is very experienced, has been working in this service for a number of years and has a background working with people with complex disabilities and needs in the care sector.”

This is not the only example of airport staff blaming disabled people that Morgan has seen this year. As she was waiting to board another flight, an announcement was made, explaining that boarding had been delayed because a disabled passenger from the previous flight was still on the plane. “It didn’t mention that assistance hadn’t turned up. And then they had to get off in front of all these annoyed people,” Morgan says. It can’t be right that going on holiday as a disabled person so often involves public humiliation.

Mel Kennedy uses a walking frame, which she says means train staff don’t always take her need for the ramp seriously. She, too, has been blamed for service failure. On the way home from a trip to meet a friend, the guard hadn’t come past her during the journey and so didn’t know she was onboard. No one had radioed to tell him, either. At her stop, she pressed the call button, but no one came. Luckily, other passengers pressed their buttons, too, and eventually the guard arrived – just in time.

As the guard was putting the ramp down, he made a remark to another passenger: “Well, to be honest, she should have told the station staff.” But, of course, she had told the staff where she set off, and there was no one to tell at her destination – it is an unmanned station. Kennedy worries that things will only get worse as more stations lose their staff, a concern shared by Transport for All. Kennedy says that the stress of some of her recent journeys has made her pull out of trips with friends unless they are going somewhere familiar.

Pennick says that a solution comes in three parts: “Money, resources, and prioritisation. There needs to be a culture change in government and in the transport sector – accessibility must be seen as a core, fundamental and non-negotiable part of a functioning public transport network, in the same way as safety and sustainability.” She adds: “Sadly, too often, accessibility is seen as a nice-to-have, or a luxury that can be scrapped when money gets tight.”

Ultimately, the disabled people I spoke to want transport systems to be designed so that we don’t even need assistance – for all trains to have level boarding and for mobility aids to be welcomed on flights. But this is going to take time. In the meantime, Pennick says, “decision-makers must listen to disabled people – especially when changes to services are being considered. There is a slogan in the disability rights movement: ‘Nothing about us without us,’ and at Transport for All we firmly believe that it’s only when the lived experience of disabled people is applied to the design, planning, running and evaluation of services that they will truly offer access for all.”

Change is desperately needed. Morgan, Louise, Kennedy and thousands like them are tired of being left behind.

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2022.08.02 - Opinion

- When the Lionesses won, every overlooked and patronised woman triumphed too
- Keir Starmer is right – for Labour to win power, it can't wade in on every strike going
- My mum struggles online – it's not the technology, but the faff and risk of fraud
- Not radical enough? Starmer's caution may yet carry Labour to power

OpinionWomen's Euro 2022

When the Lionesses won, every overlooked and patronised woman triumphed too

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



So many women who couldn't care less about football were in tears, because they understood what it meant



England footballers Alex Greenwood and Ellie Roebuck at Trafalgar Square to celebrate their Euro 2022 victory. Photograph: Lynne Cameron/The FA/Getty Images

Tue 2 Aug 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 3 Aug 2022 05.13 EDT

If you want a job doing, ask a woman.

So the former sports minister (and girls' football coach) Tracey Crouch [tweeted](#), tongue firmly in cheek, as the whistle blew at Wembley on Sunday. All those years of waiting, wanting and arguing over why football wasn't coming home, and it turns out the nation was looking in the wrong place all the time. It wasn't England men's squad who would end the years of hurt, but the women's, beating Germany in a tense and thrilling final watched by a record-breaking crowd at Wembley and millions more at home. The nail-biting finish was the [most-watched](#) five minutes of television this year, and left barely a dry eye in the house. Never again can broadcasters deny women's sport airtime with the feeble excuse that nobody wants to watch it.

The exuberant, joyful and ferociously determined Lionesses have busted through every barrier facing them, and in the process they did so much more than bring a trophy home. The message that football is for everyone, boy or girl, will resonate wherever jumpers are put down for goalposts. So too will

the idea that women can be powerful, strong and fiercely competitive without being branded bitches; that wanting to be an alpha female at the top of your game is something to be celebrated, not crushed out of girls at the earliest opportunity.

What's more, they did it without the ugliness that has sometimes marred the men's game. No crowd violence, abuse screamed from the stands or booing of Germany's anthem. Parents taking their thrilled small daughters to the match didn't have to pick their way past anyone trying to insert a lit firework into any part of their anatomy. And even more miraculously, somehow the Lionesses managed not to exclude the boys. My son and his friends have followed this contest as keenly as any other: having grown up with girls playing on their village teams, to this generation football is finally just football, and winning is winning. Besides, what's not to love about a squad gleefully interrupting their manager's post-match press conference, singing and dancing on the table? There is a glorious unselfconsciousness to the Lionesses, which is perhaps the only good thing to come of not labouring under the same crippling weight of national expectations as Gareth Southgate's lot.

Yet watching them, you could weep for all the female players lost to the game at every stage from the playground upwards, during the long years of being denied a level playing field with the men. It's not just the waste of talent, but the sheer joy denied; the lives that could have been lived, and weren't. And that's a story that resonates far beyond sport.

Why were so many women who normally couldn't care less about football in tears watching the Lionesses triumph? Because we understood, or thought we did, what it must have meant to them at a gut level. Because a lot of us know how it feels to have been underestimated and overlooked, patronised and pushed out or made to feel unwanted; because some of us know too the bittersweet pleasure of succeeding in fields where older women were prevented from doing so. Because we've heard the feeble excuses about why our bosses would love to pay us what our male colleagues are getting, but for some incomprehensible structural reason can't. Because we've all seen mediocre men failing upwards, while competent but less noisily self-promoting women don't get the same chances. The sight of England's women quietly nailing what the men have been trying and failing to do for

so long, on a fraction of the money and with virtually none of the drama, evokes a rare and very specific kind of satisfaction.

So it was a smart piece of image-making for Liz Truss – who, after years of being mocked and memed and not taken seriously, now threatens to leapfrog all her rivals into No 10 – to join the crowds at Wembley. Victory for Truss would be – how to put this politely? – a rather more divisive prospect for the nation than victory for Leah Williamson and her squad.

Truss was not the strongest candidate in the field. But she has been the quickest to analyse and learn from her weaknesses over the past few weeks, the most fleet-footed player of internal party politics, and above all the one who clearly wants it most. Having made Sunak look complacent by comparison, she is now visibly enjoying the last laugh over those who underestimated her. Don't be surprised if the Lionesses' triumph finds its way into her campaign speeches.

Yet beware attempts, however uplifting or well-meaning, to paint this victory as a can-do signal that young girls can be anything if they work hard enough. For the more complex message of the Lionesses' success is that individual hard work by itself isn't always enough; that progress requires dismantling the structural barriers holding women back.

What happened on Sunday reflects not just individual brilliance on the field, but years of hard slog behind the scenes by sports administrators, coaches, players and champions of women's football from the grassroots to the top, doing the unglamorous work of building a talent pipeline, an audience and a secure funding base for women's football.

The Lionesses themselves know full well that they stand on the shoulders of those who went before them, including former England players forced to fit training around their day jobs because they couldn't afford to go professional.

When Chloe Kelly celebrated her winning goal on Sunday by whipping off her shirt and racing gleefully around the field in her sports bra, it was a thrillingly unfettered moment of glee; a rare instance of a woman's body evoking athletic skill and power, not pliant, pouting sexiness. But it was also

a conscious homage to the [American player Brandi Chastain](#), who was criticised for doing the same thing in the 1999 World Cup. (Fifa promptly banned shirtless goal celebrations for both male and female players.) Asked for her advice to the victorious Lionesses, Chastain [said](#) it was to keep on doing what they were doing, and “show the world of football that you can play too”. After Sunday, that much at least should no longer be in doubt.

However, for all the progress made in the past few years, the future of women’s football is not yet secure in Britain, and it could yet stall without sustained support from whoever ends up occupying the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport this autumn. Whoever that may be, let’s hope they remember how good it felt to win, just for once.

Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

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OpinionLabour

Keir Starmer is right – for Labour to win power, it can't wade in on every strike going

[John McTernan](#)

The party must focus on being elected, so the whole country can flourish. Picking a side in industrial disputes is a distraction

- John McTernan was director of political operations under Tony Blair



Sam Tarry with former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn at a CWU strike picket in London, 29 July 2022. Photograph: Vuk Valcic/Zuma Press Wire Service/Rex/Shutterstock

Tue 2 Aug 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 Aug 2022 11.39 EDT

There are few more ridiculous political ideas than the proposition that the [Labour](#) party should break its link with the trade unions. The union bond grounds the party and has saved Labour governments from the failed delusion of socialist economics. However, there is one idea that is far worse, and it is now gripping a small but noisy Labour faction: the idea that Labour should support every strike held in the UK.

Whatever the cause, whatever the case, some on the left of the party believe that “your struggle is my struggle” – hence the picket-line posturing and attention-seeking social media posts of some Labour MPs this summer. This is damaging for the party. At its heart, this returning to the 1970s sends one message loud and clear: that those MPs want Labour to be a [party of protest](#) rather than a party that is ever in power. That’s why Keir Starmer was right to ban frontbenchers from joining picket lines and absolutely correct to sack the junior shadow transport minister [Sam Tarry](#) after he freelanced on pay policy from an RMT picket line last week.

Since its foundation, Labour has been a party that aspires to govern – and when it governs it does so for all of the country, not just part of it. Labour governs for young and for old, for cities and villages, for north and south, for businesses and for workers – see Lisa Nandy, who, in contrast to Tarry, carefully made her [encounter with CWU strikers](#) on Monday a chance to meet her Wigan constituents, rather than a media round.

Strikes are disputes between workers and management, and they are resolved between them. Labour in government doesn’t pick sides in industrial disputes. Indeed, where a Labour government is the employer it has pay review machinery to make decisions independently of ministers. And where necessary – as with the [firefighters’ strike](#) during the Blair government – a Labour government has to face down the unions until a deal is struck.

This should not be a controversial position – after all, the name is the Labour party not the Strike party. But it is one of the few remaining hangovers of the Corbyn era that supporting strikes is seen by a faction in the party as a shibboleth. The problem with this emotional Trotskyism is not merely that it is behaviour suited to an avowedly far-left party. More importantly, it is

simply so out of touch with the modern world of work, where fewer than one in four workers are in a union, far fewer have been on strike and virtually none have ever been on a picket line.

There is a huge confusion about the historical relationship between Labour and the trade unions. When the party was founded, it was as an avowedly parliamentary party to deliver the movement's broader aims – it was created to legislate, not to cheerlead from the sidelines of industrial dispute. Equal pay and the national minimum wage were both legislative achievements of Labour governments, not Labour oppositions. And this is the heart of the matter: there is always the moment in the life of a Labour administration where the business of governing seems too difficult – so many hard choices, so many competing demands – that being out of office again begins to appeal.

But the truth, as great unions and their leaders have always known, is that a deal always has to be done, and that will always involve compromise. Take the rail dispute. Technological changes on the railways mean that driver-only-operation (DOO) trains safely increase capacity, and the role of booking office staff continues to change. How should these questions be resolved? That is for rail companies and workers to agree. Getting it right means the best future for the industry, its workers and its passengers. What value does an MP or minister add to this judgment? None at all. The best people to make decisions about businesses are the people who work in them – managers and workers – not politicians.

The tragedy is that this ongoing posturing is obscuring the massive and important debates around work and life that progressives should be shaping. Working from home. The “great resignation”. The cost of childcare. Productivity. So many critical policy debates about work: none of which have anything to do with strikes and picket lines, all of which should be shaped and guided by the Labour party and the labour movement.

But it is in these policy discussions that the distance between politicians and the real world is most vividly seen. Almost all political thinking about employment is conducted by MPs, Labour and Tory alike, as if the public

sector is the norm. Yet [five times more of us](#) work in the private sector. If businesses don't prosper, then workers lose out.

Of course, there is a huge prize for all workers, whether in a union or not, if there is a Labour government. The vast extension of workers' rights under [Tony Blair](#) shows that: from guaranteed paid bank holidays and the minimum wage to maternity, paternity and adoption rights, New Labour re-regulated the labour market. But that requires Labour recovering from the worst election defeat since the 1930s in a single electoral cycle.

Starmer has done in two years what took Neil Kinnock eight: he has made the Labour party electorally competitive again. Now Starmer needs to stick to his guns on strikes. To be an alternative government in waiting you must show you will govern for the nation, not the faction.

John McTernan is a political strategist and former director of political operations under Tony Blair

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OpinionTechnology

My mum struggles online – it's not the technology, but the faff and risk of fraud

[Zoe Williams](#)



She asked me to remove her banking app – even though I only installed it last week. But I can't blame older people for not wanting to deal with the dense thicket of security



‘Just filling in a form to verify a minicab account is enough to destroy someone’s fragile peace.’ Photograph: Photographer, Basak Gurbuz Derman/Getty Images (Posed by a model.)

Tue 2 Aug 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 Aug 2022 15.02 EDT

I was round at my mother’s house to remove the banking app from her phone, which I had only installed four days before, so, while it would be putting it strongly to say I was opposed to deleting it, I was definitely after a bit of clarification as to why. I tried to express this in the gentlest and most patient way possible, by shouting, “What’s the point, though? What’s wrong with having some basic banking capability in your house, considering you never leave it?”

“What if someone steals my phone?”

“So they’ve stolen your phone.”

“Then they can drain my bank account.”

“Not without your pin. Nobody knows it except you.” (This is not exactly true: nobody knows it except *me*, and I have four more times I can repeat it before it vanishes out of my head).

“But my phone knows, otherwise what would be the point of having a pin?”

“Your phone can’t tell a thief your pin! That’s not how phones work.”

She took a deep breath and said imperiously: “This is why it’s so unpleasant to be taught anything at my age; everyone takes this tone.” This would have been even more justified if she had been able to see my many gestures and facial expressions, but, luckily, I was standing behind her.

Sure, we can blame failing eyesight – I have my own complaints to make about that – but I think it’s the tide of irrelevant nonsense, combined with the ever-present spectre of fraud, that defeats the over-80s. There are so many passwords and verifications that don’t matter – a dense thicket of security to go through just to get into Google Docs, or to fill in a form to verify a minicab account. You could forget them after it happened with no meaningful damage to your online security, except that if you can distinctly remember inputting card details, and you read somewhere once that clever thieves can steal those from anywhere, you have just destroyed your fragile peace.

There’s a special place in hell for fraudsters that go after old-timers, but if I said that to a fraudster, they would probably say: “You know who might not end up in heaven? People who can’t keep a civil tongue in their head while they are deleting a banking app.”

Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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[OpinionLabour](#)

Not radical enough? Starmer's caution may yet carry Labour to power

[Polly Toynbee](#)



Some of the party faithful are impatient for more, but they must keep their eyes fixed firmly on the prize



‘Keir Starmer’s Labour is far less cautious than in 1997 when Tony Blair and Gordon Brown welded themselves to a crippling two-year fall in spending.’ Photograph: Andy Bailey/UK Parliament/AFP/Getty Images

Tue 2 Aug 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 Aug 2022 05.55 EDT

The official opposition is within touching distance of victory. As minor skirmishes break out within the party, [Labour](#) people should keep their eyes firmly fixed on that prize. All the disasters must belong to the Tories.

By the end of this year, Keir Starmer may be in No 10, with the shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, next door, and with a cabinet table filled with serious new ministers hitting the ground running, after Liz Truss (let’s assume it’s her) has “hit the ground”, as [she mis-tweeted](#) recently. The Tory cabinet will fade as if a bad dream: surely Nadine Dorries, Jacob Rees-Mogg, Suella Braverman, Grant Shapps and the rest never happened?

But right now, expect Prime Minister Truss to get a poll bounce, which is why she may grab her only election chance sooner rather than later. Even if she waits for 2023’s boundary changes to come into effect, those extra five to 10 seats won’t be able to outweigh the electoral damage of an escalating [cost of living calamity](#).

Nothing but trouble awaits her, shackled to those impossible pledges. Her low-tax bidding war leaves no money. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has exploded the fantasy that tax cuts bring growth. If so, [the IFS says](#), why have countries with higher tax than ours, such as France and Germany, achieved higher growth? The Conservatives' plans only allow for unacceptable 2-3% increases in public-sector pay. Meanwhile, services are already collapsing, with backlogs of 6.6 million people waiting for NHS England operations, 60,000 court cases pending in England and Wales, and 90% of English schools waiting for urgent repairs. So where will her "smaller state" cuts come from?

The damage from Brexit will harden if Truss breaks the Northern Ireland protocol, triggering an EU trade war. If she veers an inch from a rock-hard Brexit then the European Research Group will make her life hell. Her vociferous climate refusers will keep her to abolishing green levies and "not letting net zero affect business", while long-neglected infrastructure is exposed in energy and water shortages. Boris Johnson sitting behind her, yearning to return, will relish every failure.

Whenever the general election comes, Labour looks likely to win: governments fall when voters suffer unmanageable drops in income. A wave of social democratic wins in Australia, Germany, US, Portugal, Norway, Finland, Denmark and others augurs well. [Recent polling](#) from Savanta ComRes, Survation, Ipsos and more put the Labour lead in double digits. Starmer [beats either contender](#) as best prime minister when "red wall" voters are asked, according to fresh polling from Redfield & Wilton Strategies.

When the new Tory leader gets a poll bounce, expect impatient Labour people to panic at Starmer's caution. He only says what he's against, they complain. Yes, to stop the Tories gleefully turning the election into another Brexit rout, it was essential (though painful) to [take a stand against](#) rejoining the single market or customs union: the word "rejoin" ignites old fires. But there's no doubt the party would make EU peace and trade deals, join the Horizon and [Erasmus programmes](#), and agree equal food and goods standards, easy visas for artists, agree EU professional qualifications and more. I back rejoin movements – but I don't think Labour should.

It's the same with strikes. All of Labour backs the fight to prevent massive cuts for those whose pay fell or stagnated for a decade. Strikers stand for everyone, the un-unionised are pulled up by union rates. But Starmer is not wrong to think that a convincing government-in-waiting shouldn't be seen as protesters: parliament is their forum. Labour shadow ministers gnashed their teeth over the picket line grandstanding of Sam Tarry, who reacted to the prospect of being deselected in Ilford South by claiming, "I am on the side of ordinary British workers", as if the rest weren't. [Mick Lynch](#) is a great advocate, but the shadow cabinet has a more complex task than he does.

The party's position, as a senior Labour official tells me, is "100% behind the right to strike" and "to make sure workers get the pay they deserve". The commitment to ending "the scourge of low pay" means Labour would introduce fair pay agreements across every sector: no zero-hour contracts, no fire-and-rehire, flexible working and the right for unions to recruit in every workplace. The £28bn Green New Deal will create good jobs setting up [electric car battery factories](#) and insulating 19m homes.

Last week's howl at Starmer and Reeves' betrayal was over [renationalising utilities](#). But is it wise for Labour to spend billions buying these back, before spending on them or anything else? As Reeves's team pointed out, rail is effectively state-owned already. Pragmatism means super-tough regulation can do more without wasting a penny. Southern Water is imposing hose pipe bans while reportedly leaking 21m gallons a day. Who wants to pay its owner, the investment bank Macquarie, who loaded it with another £1bn debt while its CEO earns £14.8m? England's water regulator, Ofwat, [warns](#) that rising interest rates will see some water companies go bust – that needs state takeovers.

As for Labour's taxes, Reeves says she will target the £174bn lost in tax relief loopholes, so "the broadest shoulders" pay most. She would take another £5bn windfall from energy profits. Making private equity managers pay income tax on earnings that they pretend are "carried interest" could raise £440m annually from 2,000 people, according to the BBC: taxing earned and unearned income the same yields a lot. Charging VAT on private school fees would bring £1.7bn for state schools, where, as promised in last year's conference speech, Starmer guarantees every child the experience of arts, sports and expeditions. The shadow education secretary, Bridget

Phillipson, promises universal breakfast and after-school clubs and mental health hubs. Sure Start, I'm told, will be back. There's a great deal more to come.

Labour people want more radicalism now. For us, nothing can be enough. But Starmer's Labour is far less cautious than in 1997 when Tony Blair and Gordon Brown welded themselves to a crippling two-year fall in spending. The quintessence of life on the left is Labour losing over and over again. But all the auguries say not this time.

Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2022.08.02 - Around the world

- [Nancy Pelosi Taiwan and China step up military rhetoric as expected visit looms](#)
- [Analysis Pelosi's expected visit risks upsetting Beijing to no advantage](#)
- [South Africa Over 80 men accused of raping eight women appear in court](#)
- [Afghanistan Fears over building works at Buddhas of Bamiyan site](#)

[Taiwan](#)

Taiwan and China step up military rhetoric as expected Pelosi visit looms

US House speaker expected to arrive in Taiwan on Tuesday in visit likely to increase tensions between Beijing and Washington

China warns its military will 'not sit idly by' if Nancy Pelosi visits Taiwan – video

*Helen Davidson in Taipei
@heldavidson*

Tue 2 Aug 2022 06.20 EDTFirst published on Tue 2 Aug 2022 01.17 EDT

Taiwan's defence ministry has warned it would dispatch forces appropriately in reaction to "enemy threats", as China stepped up its military rhetoric on the day of a highly controversial expected visit to Taipei by the US speaker, Nancy Pelosi.

In a statement on Tuesday, the defence ministry said it had a full grasp of military activity near Taiwan and the "determination, ability and confidence" to ensure Taiwan's national security. It added that it had made various unspecified plans for an emergency.

The Guardian and other outlets have confirmed via multiple sources that Pelosi is expected to land in Taipei on Tuesday night, and meet president Tsai Ing-wen the following morning.

Neither the US or Taiwan governments have confirmed the trip. When asked about it on Tuesday, Taiwan's premier, Su Tseng-chang, reiterated that Taiwan "warmly welcomes" foreign guests, and "would make the most appropriate arrangements" for such guests and respect their plans.

China has strongly objected to Pelosi's visit, with a foreign ministry spokesperson warning on Tuesday afternoon that the US would be "held liable and pay the price for hurting China's sovereignty and security interests".

"Faced with reckless US disregard of China's repeated and serious representations, any countermeasures taken by the Chinese side will be justified and necessary," said Hua Chunying.

Earlier on Tuesday, Reuters reported several Chinese warships and planes had travelled near the median line – an unofficial border between China and Taiwan in the Taiwan strait. Citing unnamed sources, the report said the vessels had been in the area since Monday, while the latest flights occurred on Tuesday morning, prompting Taiwan's air force to scramble its aircraft in response.

Taiwan's defence ministry has earlier reportedly adjusted and strengthened its military's combat readiness in response to the threat of China. According to the public broadcaster CNA, it had not formally changed the readiness level, which relates to two stages: the current regular staging, and wartime.

On Chinese social media on Tuesday there were multiple photos of dozens of tanks and other military vehicles on the streets in Xiamen, a Chinese city five kilometres across the water from the [Taiwan island of Kinmen](#). The Guardian has not verified the images.

China has also announced several days of live-fire exercises in the region, though these could relate to events marking Monday's anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

The PLA also posted a propaganda video that did not mention Taiwan but depicted live-fire exercises and said it would "bury incoming enemies".

On Tuesday, several Chinese officials issued further warnings. The ambassador to the US, Qin Gang, shared the PLA video, saying the military "will not sit idly by when it comes to safeguarding national sovereignty & territorial integrity".

The former ambassador to the UK Liu Xiaoming largely echoed other government statements. “A visit to [Taiwan](#) by her [Pelosi] would constitute a gross interference in [China](#)’s internal affairs, seriously undermine China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, wantonly trample on the one-China principle,” he said.

Overnight, Chinese authorities announced a sudden ban on imports from more than 100 Taiwanese food companies, local media reported, which was interpreted as an act of retribution over the expected visit, a trade tool China has often used in bilateral disputes.

Multiple media reports have said [Pelosi will land in Taipei on Tuesday](#) night and meet Taiwan’s president on Wednesday, as an unofficial stop during her Asia tour. Pelosi, a [longtime China hawk](#), will be the most senior member of the US government to visit Taiwan in decades, and Beijing has repeatedly threatened undefined “countermeasures” in response.

Pelosi has refused to confirm her trip to Taiwan – a rescheduled visit after plans in April were postponed when she contracted Covid-19 – but the lack of denials and multiple leaks to media have driven an angry response from China amid [fears the situation could escalate](#).

Taiwan is a self-governing democracy and has never been ruled by China’s ruling Communist party (CCP), but Beijing claims it as a province it intends to “reunify”, by force if necessary. The CCP strongly objects to foreign shows of support for what it says is a “separatist” government in Taiwan, especially from the US.

Taiwan, whose government has refused to comment on the visit, often welcomes foreign delegations as it seeks to grow its international relationships. Few countries recognise Taiwan as a country, including the US, but Washington has legislated requirements to give Taiwan self-defence support, and has been strengthening unofficial ties.

Sources in Taiwan have told the Guardian there is a general concern that if Pelosi did not visit it would suggest the US can be cowed by verbal threats, and would damage Taiwan’s trust in their support.

On Tuesday, Kolas Yotaka, a former Taiwan presidential spokeswoman and now a county government candidate, said she supported the visit.

“No one has the right to say whether speaker Pelosi ‘should’ come to Taiwan or not,” she [said](#). “Only she can decide, and she should not feel threatened. I am looking forward to her visit. It makes us feel less isolated, and believe there are still people who maintain their beliefs and ideals.”

The Chinese reaction to reports of Pelosi’s visits has been heightened, [albeit without specifics](#). In a lengthy phone call last week, China’s president, Xi Jinping, warned the US president, Joe Biden, against “playing with fire” over Taiwan, while officials have repeatedly said the PLA would not “stand idly by” over the visit. Analysts in Taiwan and overseas have expressed concern that Beijing’s rhetoric has reached a level that would force it to take action to avoid losing face.

On Monday, the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said Pelosi’s decision to visit was hers entirely, as leader of the co-equal Congress branch of government. He noted visits by previous speakers and other members of Congress to Taiwan, and [urged calm from China](#).

“We are looking for them, in the event she decides to visit, to act responsibly and not to engage in any escalation going forward.”

Additional reporting by Chi Hui Lin and agencies

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/02/taiwan-and-china-step-up-military-rhetoric-as-expected-pelosi-visit-looms>

[Taiwan](#)

Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan risks upsetting Beijing to no advantage

Analysis: House speaker's arrival is likely to inflame relations between the US and China without making Taiwan safer

Nancy Pelosi begins controversial visit to Taiwan amid tensions with China – video

[Vincent Ni](#) China affairs correspondent

Tue 2 Aug 2022 13.57 EDTFirst published on Mon 1 Aug 2022 15.03 EDT

In the era of US-China geopolitical competition, Joe Biden has been keen to ensure great power politics do not lead to uncontrollable escalation. Yet the trip to Taiwan by [Nancy Pelosi](#), the speaker of the House of Representatives, is threatening to break what administration officials call “guardrails”. She is the highest-ranking member of Congress to visit the island since 1997.

The move, which is a welcome and a bold assertion of democratic principle to Pelosi's supporters, has certainly rattled Beijing in a politically sensitive year for China's ruling Communist party. Xi Jinping is expected to be anointed for an extraordinary third term in the party's five-yearly congress in the next few months. It also comes as the People's Liberation Army is celebrating the 95th anniversary of its founding.

The visit of one of Pelosi's predecessors, Newt Gingrich, a quarter of a century ago also triggered complaints, but that time Beijing eventually swallowed its irritation. Not long before Gingrich's visit, the [Taiwan](#) strait crisis lasted for a few months into 1996. Undoubtedly, China today has more tools in its toolbox, and its military capabilities far exceed those of 26 years ago – although are still far behind that of the US.

China's defence budget in 2020 was less than a third of US military spending

Beijing sees the unification with Taiwan as a part of Xi's project national rejuvenation. The Chinese president has on several occasions expressed his preference for peaceful unification but, as has been the case with previous Chinese leaders, he has also vowed not to rule out a military option as a last resort. As relations between China and the west deteriorate, talk of a potential move on Taiwan has been on the increase, particularly following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February. Unfortunately, Beijing's own rhetoric and action do not help dispel such concerns, either.

“We cannot stand by as the CCP proceeds to threaten Taiwan – and democracy itself,” [Pelosi](#) wrote in her opinion piece for the Washington Post.

But at a time of strategic suspicion and escalating tensions, her visit does not seem to contribute to the stabilisation of an increasingly fraught US-China relationship, or advance American interests, or increase the security of the people of Taiwan, said Robert Daly, director of the Kissinger Institute on China and the United States at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington.

“Washington’s thinking on the trip is now driven by a second order concern, namely fear that, following Beijing’s promises to escalate its coercion of Taiwan if Speaker Pelosi lands there, not making the visit would make the US look weak and increase Beijing’s leverage over Taiwan,” Daly noted.

In Beijing’s perspective, Pelosi’s visit is a “provocation” that will lead to further distrust of Washington in the long term. In the last few days, Biden’s officials have been keen to highlight the differences between the White House and Congress. But Chinese commentators seemed to conflate the position of the House speaker with that of the White House itself, even though the two have separate constitutional roles.

On Monday, China’s spokesperson warned its military would “not sit idly by” if the visit happened. A few hours later, China’s Maritime Safety Administration announced yet another series of exercises in the South China

Sea from 2 August to 6 August. On Tuesday, the PLA announced military drills from Thursday – shortly after her departure.

Comparing China's 1995/1996 live fire exercises during the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis (left) and with those just announced for August 2022 (right).

Sources: <https://t.co/OnzkB6TNPl> and <https://t.co/p1h6p1dpVzpic.twitter.com/gH8NsZEhq4>

— M. Taylor Fravel (@fravel) [August 2, 2022](#)

The US was catching up, too. On Tuesday, Reuters reported four US warships, including a carrier strike group led by the USS Ronald Reagan, were positioned in waters east of the island on “routine” deployments.

Analysts say that even if Pelosi's visit does not trigger a full-on military standoff, the trip will further play into the hawks' narrative that the US and its allies are, in effect, helping the Tsai Ing-wen administration to eventually seek independence. Beijing has long suspected of Biden's and Tsai's intention. The suspicion will be deepened by Monday's report that a high-profile delegation of [British MPs is also planning](#) on a visit to Taipei later this year.

Bonnie Glaser, director of the Asia program at the German Marshall Fund in Washington, said the probability of war or a serious incident is low. “But the probability that the PRC will take a series of military, economic, and diplomatic actions to show strength and resolve is not insignificant. Likely it will seek to punish Taiwan in myriad ways,” she [wrote on Twitter](#).

The punishment has begun and there is no end in sight. Overnight, Chinese authorities announced a sudden ban on imports from more than 100 Taiwanese food companies, according to local media. It is no doubt an act of retribution over Pelosi's visit, given China is the island's largest trading partner.

It is unclear how Taipei and Washington are to respond to Beijing's reactions. "My major worry is that Beijing will take measures that Washington, in turn, will see itself forced to respond to in order to avoid appearing irresolute or passive, thus potentially triggering a spiral of escalation," said Prof Todd Hall, who directs the University of Oxford China Centre.

Daly agreed. "Whatever they do to escalate, will then become a new status quo ... that is to make this relationship even more dangerous," he said. "Beijing and Washington would be better served if they put their energy into strategic stability talks rather than escalation games."

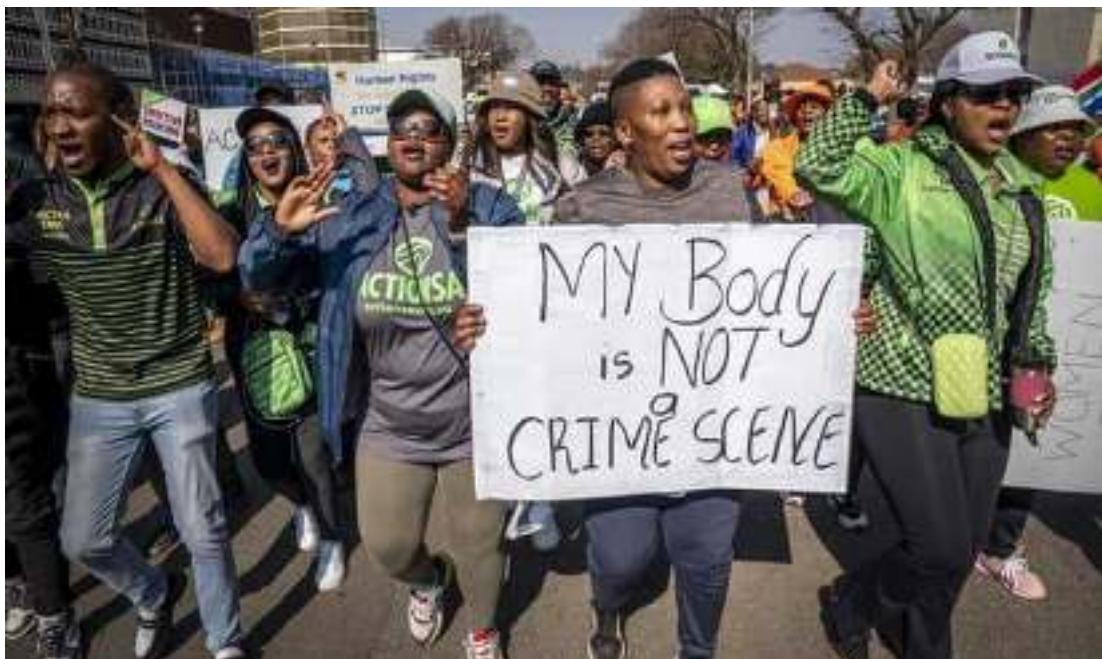
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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

South Africa

Over 80 men accused of raping eight women appear in South African court

Crew filming music video at abandoned mine in Krugersdorp was attacked by armed men, police say



People protest outside Krugersdorp magistrates court on Monday amid anger over the rapes. Photograph: Shiraaz Mohamed/AP

Associated Press

Tue 2 Aug 2022 05.36 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 Aug 2022 15.54 EDT

More than 80 men suspected of the gang rapes of eight women and the armed robbery of a video production crew in the South African town of Krugersdorp, west of Johannesburg, have appeared in court.

The men were arrested at an abandoned mining site following the rapes and robbery near the disused mine.

The suspects are allegedly illegal miners known as *zama-zamas* who dig for gold in the Johannesburg area's many closed mine shafts. Many of the miners are foreigners, according to local reports. The zama-zama gangs of illegal miners are also blamed for widespread crime in the area, according to local people.

The gang rapes occurred when a crew filming a music video at one of the abandoned mines was attacked by armed men on Thursday last week, according to police.

"The crew of 22 people – 12 women and 10 men – were busy filming a music video when they were allegedly attacked by a group of armed men clad in blankets," the police commissioner for Gauteng province, Lt Gen Elias Mawela, said in a statement.

"The suspects ordered everyone to lay down and proceeded to rape eight of the women and robbed everyone of their belongings before fleeing the scene," he said. All the crew's video equipment was stolen. Police were investigating 32 counts of rape, he said.

Laboratory studies of DNA samples from the raped women would be used to identify perpetrators, the national minister of police, Bheki Cele, said on Monday.

Others arrested are expected to face additional charges of illegal immigration and illegal mining.

More than 300 people protested outside Krugersdorp magistrates court on Monday to express fury over the rapes. News of the gang rapes and robbery has angered community and women's organisations in the area, who have complained that such incidents are rife around Krugersdorp.

"We are going to demand that the police station should be placed under administration because the community has reported many crimes committed by the zama-zamas but nothing has been done," said Zandile Dabula, the secretary general of Operation Dudula, an organisation that protests against illegal immigrants in South Africa and joined the protest outside the courthouse.

“It is clear that they are failing to deal with crime in this area so they should be placed under administration,” said Dabula.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/02/over-80-men-accused-raping-eight-women-appear-south-africa-court>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Afghanistan](#)

Fears over building works at Afghan Buddhas of Bamiyan site

Unesco says it has not been consulted on project and local experts are alarmed at Taliban plans



Two boys observe a Taliban conference in front of the ancient and Unesco-protected site of the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan. Photograph: Nanna Muus Steffensen/The Guardian

[Emma Graham-Harrison](#) in Bamiyan

Tue 2 Aug 2022 00.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 2 Aug 2022 08.01 EDT

The [Taliban](#) have launched construction work on a tourism complex just metres from the cliff that held the Bamiyan Buddha statues, which archeologists and experts warn could cause permanent damage to the sensitive world heritage site.

The project aims to “rebuild” a historic bazaar, which was destroyed in the civil war of the 1990s. Under the Taliban blueprint, the area will become a tourism centre with restaurants, guesthouses, parking, public toilets and handicraft and grocery shops.

But the ruined bazaar is itself a historic site that may sit on top of older ruins, and it is also close to the fragile cliff of Buddhist monastery caves that is one of Afghanistan’s greatest treasures.

“This old bazaar is in the archaeological buffer zone of the world heritage site and Unesco [the UN agency that manages the listings] has never been in favour of reusing this place,” said a diplomat with expertise in heritage issues in Afghanistan, who asked to remain anonymous.

“On the contrary, these buildings are located in the middle of an archaeological zone, and the buildings themselves are in some way part of the late 19th- and early 20th-century heritage and therefore their reconstruction is sensitive.”

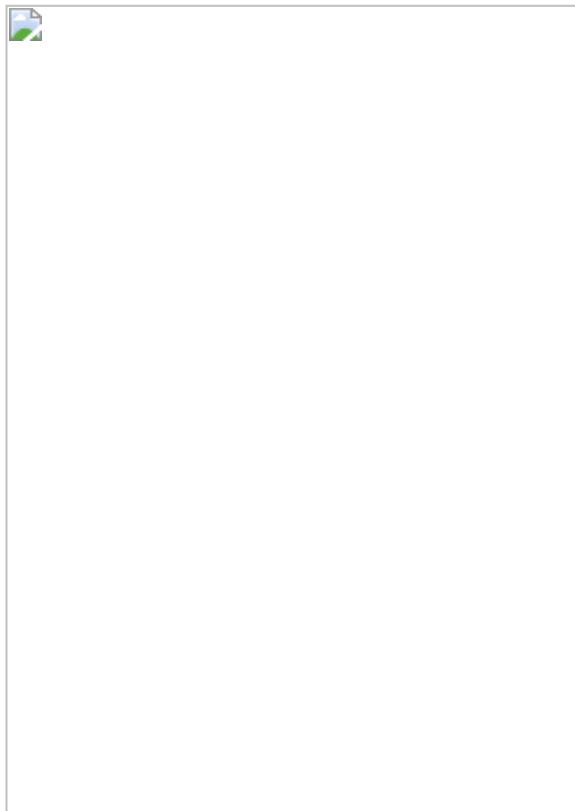
In 2001, the Taliban destroyed two giant statues that had towered over the valley for more than a millennium, but the niches where they stood, and surviving cave frescos and other remains still make the site one of global importance.

The main road through Bamiyan was re-routed years ago to limit vibrations and fumes from traffic. This new plan would bring a heavy influx of people and vehicles back into a fragile area, officially designated a protected zone.

“The caravanserai should be used as guesthouses, for people [tourists] to stay overnight, and as exhibition places for local handicrafts, for provision of public toilets and parking,” said Mawlawi Saifurrahman Mohammadi, the provincial director for information and culture.

“The shops will be handicraft shops that can only sell local products, grocery shops, tailoring and embroidery shops, traditional restaurants and tea shops.”

He was speaking at an inauguration event where top Taliban officials including Bamiyan governor Abdullah Sarhadi gave speeches, cut a ribbon and placed symbolic red-wrapped foundation stones for new buildings in a recently dug trench.



The Taliban-appointed governor of Bamiyan, Abdullah Sarhadi, places the first stone, wrapped in red paper, at the construction site at the historic bazaar of Bamiyan in Bamiyan province, Afghanistan. Photograph: Nanna Muus Steffensen/The Guardian

Mohammadi said over 20 strict building controls had been fixed to respect the sensitive nature of the site. They include limiting buildings to a single

storey, restricting the use of concrete for drains and pavements, and controlling the type of stones and plaster used.

He said the project had been signed off by Unesco, the United Nations educational, scientific and cultural agency. “[The central government] negotiated with Unesco and they sent us back a guideline on how to do it.”

But Unesco, which monitors world heritage sites and has been working at Bamiyan for decades, said it had not been consulted on the project, and had not given its approval to rebuilding the bazaar. It warned in a statement that the building could affect conservation work.

“Unesco has neither requested nor been associated with this project, which is located in the heart of the archaeological zone and could be problematic for the proper conservation of the world heritage site,” it said in a statement.

Heritage experts from Bamiyan also said they were alarmed at the destructive potential of the plan.

“This is a very restricted area, nobody is allowed to do any construction here, but the Taliban have decided to rebuild,” said one official who asked not to be named criticising the government. “I worked here in the past and I know the value of the site.

Sarhadi said he decided to launch the reconstruction after the owners of the shops came to petition him. They said they had effectively been robbed of their land when it was marked a heritage area and rebuilding banned.

“We should not let people have their land taken away here,” he said. “People could not get their [rightful] property, now it’s time they get it back.”

In tacit recognition of the area’s potential archeological value however, Mohammadi said the government would reserve the right to reclaim the bazaar area for archeological excavation in future.

Lutfullah Qasimyar contributed reporting

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/02/fears-over-building-works-at-afghan-buddhas-of-bamiyan-site>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Headlines friday 5 august 2022

- [Live Business: Bank of England governor warns high pay and price rises will fuel inflation](#)
- [Live PM and chancellor ‘completely on top’ of economy despite being on holiday, says Kwasi Kwarteng](#)
- [Kwasi Kwarteng Business secretary attacks bank with inflation predicted to hit 13%](#)
- [Cost of living Sunak scorns Truss’s claims that tax cuts can avert recession](#)

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Cost of living squeeze deepens as recession looms; Felixstowe port strike dates set – as it happened

Strike action will begin on 21st August after talks failed to produce a reasonable pay offer, says Unite union

Updated 2d ago

[*Graeme Wearden*](#)

Fri 5 Aug 2022 12.00 EDTFirst published on Fri 5 Aug 2022 02.30 EDT

Key events

- [2d ago](#)
[Closing summary](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Felixstowe port workers to strike for eight days from August 21](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[CBI fears vacuum until next UK PM starts](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[US jobs market recovers to pre-pandemic levels](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Deprived households cut back the most](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Full story: Workers asking for pay rises risk embedding inflation, says Bank boss](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Millions cut back on energy, food and essentials](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[World food prices fall, helped by Ukraine wheat deal](#)

- [2d ago](#)
[BoE governor warns against high pay rises and price increases](#)
- [2d ago](#)
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- [2d ago](#)
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- [2d ago](#)
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- [2d ago](#)
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- [2d ago](#)
[Introduction: UK faces 'deepening economic crisis' as recession looms](#)



The Port of Felixstowe in Suffolk, Britain's biggest and busiest container port. Photograph: Joe Giddens/PA

[Graeme Wearden](#)

Fri 5 Aug 2022 12.00 EDTFirst published on Fri 5 Aug 2022 02.30 EDT

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[09.38](#)

Felixstowe port workers to strike for eight days from August 21

Dockers at the UK's largest container port, in Felixstowe, are to hold an eight-day strike from 21st August, in a pay dispute.

The Unite union has announced the dates for the strike action, saying the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company had failed to make an acceptable pay offer.

Over 1,900 workers who are members of Unite will take part in the strike action, from 21st to 29th August, the union says.



The Port of Felixstowe in Suffolk Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

The move is the latest blow to efforts by ministers to contain a wave of industrial unrest sparked by the cost of living crisis.

#Breaking Workers at the port of Felixstowe are to strike for eight days from August 21 in a dispute over pay, Unite announced
pic.twitter.com/5tJHvJt48w

— PA Media (@PA) [August 5, 2022](#)

Workers at the port of Felixstowe in Suffolk balloted 92% in favour of a strike last month after they were offered a below-inflation pay rise by the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company.

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Updated at 11.32 EDT

Key events

- [2d ago](#)
[Closing summary](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Felixstowe port workers to strike for eight days from August 21](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[CBI fears vacuum until next UK PM starts](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[US jobs market recovers to pre-pandemic levels](#)
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[Deprived households cut back the most](#)
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- [2d ago](#)
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[2d ago](#)[11.59](#)

Closing summary

Time to wrap up:

Dockers at Felixstowe are planning eight days of [strike action over pay](#) that could cause serious disruption to the UK's largest container port.

Nearly 1,900 workers plan to stop work for more than a week at the Hong Kong-owned port, starting on Sunday 21 August and ending on Monday 29 August, according to the union [Unite](#). The workers voted 92% in favour of strike action last week.

The union said the latest round of talks with the company at Acas, the conciliation service, had failed to yield a “reasonable offer”, but further talks are planned for Monday.

Prolonged strikes would almost certainly disrupt traffic through the port, adding to the problems facing the UK economy as it [braces for a deep, year-long recession](#).

In another dispute, managers employed by Network Rail have voted to accept a 4% pay offer.

Economists have warned that the UK faces a ‘deepening economic crisis’, after the Bank of England forecast the country will fall into its longest recession in 30 years.

Bank of England governor **Andrew Bailey** has defended the Bank’s actions, following sharp criticism from some politicians. He denied that the MPC had been too slow to raise interest rates, and insisted he wouldn’t leave his eight-year post early.

Bailey also called on businesses and workers to resist fuelling inflation by hiking prices, or pushing for large wage increases -- arguing that society shoud recognise that the poorest (who suffer most from inflation) are least able to protect themselves.

A day after predicting that inflation would hit 13.3%, the highest in over 40 years, Bailey told the Today programme:

If everybody tries to beat inflation – and that is in both price-setting and wage-setting – it doesn’t come down, it gets worse.”

Millions of families are now cutting back on energy, food and other essential purchases, data from the Office for National Statistics shows.

Poor households are more likely to be making cuts, as the cost of staple goods and services jumps.

These are truly desperate times, and millions of people have been forced to take desperate measures,” said Sarah Coles senior personal finance analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown

“While all of us are facing the pain of rising prices, it’s those on lower incomes, renters, people with disabilities and those in the most deprived areas that are facing impossible challenges.”

Struggling families need help fast, before energy bills jump over £3,000 per year in the autumn. But any new package will have to wait until the Conservative leadership race is over.

Rising borrowing costs may now be cooling the UK housing market, with prices dropping last month for the first time in over a year.

But the US jobs market is hotter than thought, with American firms adding more than half a million new jobs in July.

That takes the US labor market - finally - back to its pre-pandemic level, a milestone in the economic recovery.

But Europe's economy faces yet another problem - the Rhine, a key waterways, is just days away from being closed to commercial traffic because of very low levels caused by drought.

And Sir Christopher Gent, the former chief executive of Vodafone and ex-chair of GlaxoSmithKline, has been fined £80,000 by the [UK financial watchdog](#) for disclosing inside information to shareholders while chair of the medical-devices maker ConvaTec.

We'll be back on Monday. GW

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[2d ago](#)[11.59](#)



Photograph: Steven Paston/PA

Some late news: Over 1,600 London bus drivers are set to strike later this month.

The Unite union has announced two days of strike action involving bus workers employed by **London United**, which runs services in west and south-west Greater London, after their employer failed to make a reasonable pay offer.

It will affect workers based at **London United** bus depots in Fulwell, Hounslow, Hounslow Heath, Park Royal, Shepherd's Bush, Stamford Brook, and Tolworth.

The initial strike action will take place on **Friday 19 August** and **Saturday 20 August**. The first day of industrial action coincides with strikes planned for the London Underground and Overground.

Unite says workers were offered a pay increase of 3.6% in 2022 and 4.2% next year, well below inflation.

Unite regional officer Michelle Braveboy said:

“Strike action will cause considerable disruption to passengers across London.

This dispute is of the company’s own making, it can make a fair pay offer to its workers but has chosen not to, so it now faces the prospects of a highly disruptive strike action.”

There are [around 25,000](#) London bus drivers altogether.

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[2d ago](#)[11.12](#)



Gwyn Topham

Another industrial dispute has been resolved, with managers employed by Network Rail have voting to accept a 4% pay offer.

The Transport Salaried Staffs’ Association (TSSA) confirmed its management-grade members had accepted the deal, which should ensure a skeleton service will continue to run during planned strikes in August.

The government has hailed the move as a breakthrough in the wider rail strikes dispute.

The decision was announced the day after 2,500 other TSSA members at Network Rail confirmed they would take action alongside 40,000 Rail, Maritime and Transport workers' union (RMT) members, including signallers and train operating staff, on Thursday 18 and Saturday 20 August.

The transport secretary, Grant Shapps, said it was “fantastic news”, adding:

“This acceptance by these TSSA members will mean that we have a strong, reliable contingency staff for any future strikes and will be able to run services for passengers and minimise disruption to lives of everyday people.

More here:

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2d ago10.49

The owners of Felixstowe port say they've not given up on reaching a deal with workers.

Hutchison Ports says they improved their pay offer from 5% to 7%, and are disappointed by Unite's announcement of an eight-day strike.

A company spokesperson says:

The company continues to actively seek a solution that works for all parties and that avoids industrial action. We understand our employees' concerns at the rising cost of living and are determined to do all we can to help whilst continuing to invest in the port's success. Discussions are on-going and the company's latest position in negotiations is an enhanced pay increase of 7%.

We are meeting again on Monday 8th August with Acas and the union.

“The port has not had a strike since 1989 and we are disappointed that the union has served notice of industrial action while talks are ongoing.

The port provides secure and well-paid employment and there will be no winners from industrial action.”

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[2d ago](#)[10.44](#)

Deal news: Amazon is buying the makers of the Roomba, the robot vacuum cleaner, in a \$1.7bn all cash deal.

The acquisition of iRobot will expand Amazon’s range of smart home devices.

Roomba’s aren’t cheap -- [iRobot’s j7+](#) costs around £899, but have proved popular with families as they pootle around sucking up dirt and dust while dodging obstacles.

The company also makes a robot mop, the **Braava** - although again, [a £699 price tag](#) means many households (*ours, certainly*) will stick with the traditional methods....

Braava

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[2d ago](#)[10.33](#)

Russia has banned investors from so-called ‘unfriendly countries’ from selling shares in certain strategic enterprises until the end of the year.

A presidential decree signed by President Vladimir Putin prohibits the sale of shares in key assets, from energy projects and banks to production sharing agreements and producers of coal and nickel.

Reuters says the ban covers almost all big financial and energy projects where foreign investors still have stakes.

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2d ago10.02

Further talks are scheduled to take place at Acas next Monday, Unite adds, so there's still a chance that the Felixstowe strike action is averted.

Unite national office for docks Bobby Morton says:

“Strike action will cause huge disruption and will generate massive shockwaves throughout the UK’s supply chain, but this dispute is entirely of the company’s own making. It has had every opportunity make our members a fair offer but has chosen not to do so.

“Felixstowe needs to stop prevaricating and make a pay offer which meets our members’ expectations.”

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2d ago10.01

The Unite members who work at Felixstowe undertake a wide range of roles, including crane drivers, machine operators and [stevedores](#).

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2d ago09.51

An eight-day strike at the port of Felixstowe could cause significant disruption to UK supply chains.

Felixstowe handles about 40% of containers entering and leaving the UK, so delays unloading goods could cause a ripple effect through the economy.

My colleague Joanna Partridge [explained last month:](#)

Felixstowe handles about 45,000 containers each week, with freight including clothing, consumer goods and manufacturing components.

The Unite strike is timed to coincide with an increase in traffic: the number of containers begins to rise from August, as retailers bring over more goods, particularly from the far east, to start filling their warehouses before Christmas.

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2d ago09.46

Unite says that talks at Acas “failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion” yesterday, after the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company didn’t improve on an offer of a 7% pay increase.

That is significantly below the RPI inflation rate of 11.8%, Unite points out.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said:

“Both Felixstowe docks and its parent company CK Hutchison Holding Ltd are both massively profitable and incredibly wealthy. They are fully able to pay the workforce a fair day’s pay.

“The company has prioritised delivering multi-million pound dividends rather than paying its workers a decent wage.

“Unite is entirely focused on enhancing its members’ jobs, pay and conditions and it will be giving the workers at Felixstowe its complete support until this dispute is resolved and a decent pay increase is secured.”

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[2d ago](#)[09.38](#)

Felixstowe port workers to strike for eight days from August 21

Dockers at the UK's largest container port, in Felixstowe, are to hold an eight-day strike from 21st August, in a pay dispute.

The Unite union has announced the dates for the strike action, saying the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company had failed to make an acceptable pay offer.

Over 1,900 workers who are members of Unite will take part in the strike action, from 21st to 29th August, the union says.



The Port of Felixstowe in Suffolk Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

The move is the latest blow to efforts by ministers to contain a wave of industrial unrest sparked by the cost of living crisis.

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Updated at 11.32 EDT

[2d ago](#)[09.31](#)

The US dollar has strengthened sharply after today's stronger-than-forecast jobs report.

It's knocked the pound down by a cent, to \$1.2020, the lowest in over a week.

□□Le dollar se renforce après les données optimistes du NFP
Plus de détails > <https://t.co/He1J8ugE2u>
<pic.twitter.com/CPFYXqcwME>

— XTB France (@xtbf) [August 5, 2022](#)

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[2d ago](#)[09.17](#)

CBI chief Tony Danker also put his finger on one problem pushing up inflation -- shortages of workers.

Danker said "labour shortages is probably the number one issue facing businesses today", as it holds back growth and also leads to wage pressures.

“I think we need to start, as a country, getting serious about how we solve labour shortages.”

Vacancies at UK firms have soared to record highs in recent months, with firms across the economy struggling to hire staff.

Several factors are to blame - some older workers have left the workforce altogether; long Covid has driven up sickness rates, and Brexit has hit [the pool of EU workers which some firms, such as easyJet, relied on.](#)

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[2d ago](#)[09.01](#)

CBI fears vacuum until next UK PM starts

Back in the UK, CBI director general Tony Danker said he fears a vacuum until the next prime minister is chosen.

Danker, whose organisation represents UK businesses, says “we cannot wait until September 5 for action” to tackle the economic crisis, as Kwasi Kwarteng says will happen.

PA Media have the details:

Danker was speaking on BBC Radio 4’s World at One programme and was asked about the Prime Minister and Chancellor being on holiday while the economic crisis looms.

Mr Danker said:

“I have no problem with people having short holidays. My fear is much more profound, which is that there will be a vacuum from now until September 5.

“We need the current Prime Minister and the current Chancellor to fill that vacuum. We need them to make decisions. We need them to make plans. We need them to reassure firms, markets and households that we are gripping this.

“We cannot wait until September 5 for action. We cannot wait until September 5 for plans and we cannot wait until September 5 for reassurance.”

He added that ministers need to prepare interventions for when [Ofgem announce the energy price cap rise later this month](#):

“They need to be signalling that the Government has a response and an answer. And they need to be setting out growth plans and growth intentions now.”

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[2d ago 08.54](#)

US jobs market recovers to pre-pandemic levels

Well, this is A Moment, and a welcome one too amid the economic gloom.

Both US nonfarm employment and the US unemployment rate have returned to their February 2020 pre-pandemic levels, today's jobs report shows.

It only took 27 months for US economy to recoup its pre-pandemic level of employment & unemployment rate. A historic feat in the wake of one of the most brutal shocks on record

“Total nonfarm employment & the unemployment rate have returned to their Feb 2020 pre-pandemic levels”

— Gregory Daco (@GregDaco) [August 5, 2022](#)

Jobs rate 3.5%, at pre-pandemic levels. pic.twitter.com/FR5VEfVbLn

— Grega Horvat (@GregaHorvatFX) [August 5, 2022](#)

We're back! pic.twitter.com/t0h6We0BnS

— Bill McBride (@calculatedrisk) [August 5, 2022](#)

Our US business editor Dominic Rushe reports:

The US added 528,000 jobs in July as the unemployment rate edged down to 3.5%, in a stronger than expected report.

Economists had been expecting jobs growth to slow in July and the latest figures from the labor department were far stronger than the average 388,000 jobs gained over the last four months.

Job growth was widespread, led by gains in leisure and hospitality, professional and business services, and healthcare.

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1
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4

[Next](#)

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No emergency cost of living help for at least a month, says minister

2d ago



Kwasi Kwarteng: the low-tax Tory frontrunner for next chancellor

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Amazon staff protests spread to multiple UK depots over pay dispute

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Majority of Britons cutting back on gas and electricity amid cost of living crisis

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Rishi Sunak admits taking money from deprived areas

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[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)[Politics](#)

Sunak defends taking money from deprived urban areas as he faces latest hustings with Liz Truss – as it happened

Candidates face Tory members in Eastbourne; former chancellor, who was filmed saying he tried to divert funds from ‘deprived urban areas’, says it was sensible

Updated 1d ago

[Nadeem Badshah](#), [Léonie Chao-Fong](#) and [Miranda Bryant](#)

Fri 5 Aug 2022 16.06 EDTFirst published on Fri 5 Aug 2022 04.47 EDT

Key events

- [1d ago](#)
[A summary of today's developments](#)
- [1d ago](#)
[Truss interrupted again by protester](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Truss interrupted by environmental activists](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Former government minister Nusrat Ghani backs Liz Truss](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Truss and Sunak to go head-to-head again at hustings at 7pm](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Rishi Sunak defends saying he took funds away from deprived urban areas](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[No emergency cost of living help for at least a month, says minister](#)
- [2d ago](#)

[CBI warns economic crisis 'cannot wait' until the Tory leadership contest's conclusion for action](#)

- [2d ago](#)
[Lisa Nandy writes to Tunbridge Wells MP over Sunak's 'scandalous' funding claims](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Sunak comment one of the dumbest things I've ever heard from a politician, says Tory minister](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Rishi Sunak boasts of taking money from 'deprived urban areas' in video](#)
- [2d ago](#)
['Stop in momentum' for Truss after debate, Tory pollster says](#)
- [2d ago](#)
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Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss take part in Tory leadership hustings in Eastbourne – watch live

[Nadeem Badshah, Léonie Chao-Fong and Miranda Bryant](#)

Fri 5 Aug 2022 16.06 EDTFirst published on Fri 5 Aug 2022 04.47 EDT

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[13.18](#)

Rishi Sunak defends saying he took funds away from deprived urban areas

Rishi Sunak has defended his comments after a video, shared with The New Statesman magazine, shows him telling grassroots Tories in Kent that he had

been working to divert funding from “deprived urban areas” towards prosperous towns.

The former chancellor said today that it is not solely “big urban areas that require that extra investment”. He told Sky News: “It’s right that those funding formulas are accurate, that they actually look at the need in different areas, measure that properly and reflect how things have changed from the past.

“And I think that’s an entirely sensible thing to be doing, because it’s not just big urban areas that require that extra investment.

“It’s also people in rural communities, it’s also people in towns and that’s what we’ve done, both as a Government in the past, what I want to do as prime minister in the future.

“Level up across the country so that no matter where people live, they feel incredible opportunities and pride in the place that they call home.”

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Updated at 13.32 EDT

Key events

- [1d ago](#)
[A summary of today's developments](#)
- [1d ago](#)
[Truss interrupted again by protester](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Truss interrupted by environmental activists](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Former government minister Nusrat Ghani backs Liz Truss](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Truss and Sunak to go head-to-head again at hustings at 7pm](#)
- [2d ago](#)

[Rishi Sunak defends saying he took funds away from deprived urban areas](#)

- [2d ago](#)
[No emergency cost of living help for at least a month, says minister](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[CBI warns economic crisis 'cannot wait' until the Tory leadership contest's conclusion for action](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Lisa Nandy writes to Tunbridge Wells MP over Sunak's 'scandalous' funding claims](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Sunak comment one of the dumbest things I've ever heard from a politician, says Tory minister](#)
- [2d ago](#)
[Rishi Sunak boasts of taking money from 'deprived urban areas' in video](#)
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[1d ago](#)[16.06](#)

A summary of today's developments

- During the latest Conservative hustings in Eastbourne, [Liz Truss](#) was interrupted on two occasions by protesters highlighting climate change and the cost of living crisis. Truss told the audience: “I take it as a compliment that I’m so popular with Extinction Rebellion.” The activists from the Green New Deal Rising group were escorted out of the venue by security staff.

- Nusrat Ghani announced she is supporting Liz Truss at the hustings. The MP for Wealden praised Truss's "bold and conservative" plan, insisting she will "defend the unity of our nation and protect the peace in Northern Ireland".
- Rishi Sunak defended his comments after a video, shared with The New Statesman magazine, shows him telling grassroots Tories in Kent that he had been working to divert funding from "deprived urban areas" towards prosperous towns. Foreign Office minister Zac Goldsmith said the video was "one of the weirdest - and dumbest - things I've ever heard from a politician". The former chancellor said today that it is not solely "big urban areas that require that extra investment". He told Sky News: "It's right that those funding formulas are accurate, that they actually look at the need in different areas, measure that properly and reflect how things have changed from the past. "And I think that's an entirely sensible thing to be doing, because it's not just big urban areas that require that extra investment."
- Lisa Nandy, the shadow secretary of state for levelling up, has written to Greg Clark, the levelling up secretary and Tunbridge Wells MP, about Rishi Sunak's "scandalous" admission that he "funnelled public money away from deprived areas and gave it to affluent Tory shires".
- The UK business secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, admitted it will be more than a month before ministers can introduce any measures to tackle the rising cost of living.
- Tony Danker, the CBI director general, said he fears a power vacuum amid the Tory leadership contest, warning that the economic crisis

“cannot wait until 5 September for action”.

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1d ago[15.53](#)

And that brings tonight’s hustings in Eastbourne to a close.

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1d ago[15.52](#)

Sunak calls for the net zero environmental target to be met in a “measured way” and not in the context of a race against another country.

“The way we’re going to solve the problem is not about making people give up the things they love or putting up all their bills, it’s about innovation”.

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1d ago[15.49](#)

Sunak is then asked whether the UK should leave the European Court of Human Rights.

He replies: “We may have to, and no option should be off the table.”

Sunak added the UK needs to move away from the ECHR “definition of asylum” and use a definition that is “narrower and tighter”.

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1d ago 15.46

Sunak is asked what legislation he will put in place to ensure councils and local housing associations have the best quality of social housing possible.

The former chancellor says he does not have an immediate answer and thought we were already in the process of implementing the decent homes standard.

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1d ago 15.44

Sunak insists there “shouldn’t be top-down targets imposed” on places like Wealden in Sussex with areas of natural beauty.

He added: “And the planning inspector needs to be told that that needs to be taken into account. Under my leadership and the plans I want to put in place it will be protected. “Because I want to protect your green spaces and trust you with getting on with the job of delivering houses for your community in the way you think best.” He says developers are currently “sitting on the land” where planning permission has been approved: “Those are the plans I have outlined today, and they’re going to help you.”

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1d ago 15.36

Sunak says Britons today are “much more interested in changing jobs much more frequently and that’s something we should encourage and support”.

He says if he was aged 22 in 2022, he would want to “do something different” and become involved with new technology and ways of doing things.

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[1d ago](#)[15.29](#)

Sunak says productivity will be key to growing the economy “and focussing on corporation tax hasn’t achieved that ... because it’s not the right tax to focus on”.

He said instead, business taxes must be cut “on the things that make a difference”.

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Updated at 15.45 EDT

[1d ago](#)[15.23](#)

Sunak is now facing questions. Asked how he will win a fifth term for the Tories, he said the “first thing” is to “have got through this inflation problem by then”.

The former chancellor added: “That’s why I’m particularly worried about policies that risk making it get worse and last longer. “This is a problem that isn’t just for this winter, it’s for next winter as well – and beyond.”

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Updated at 15.40 EDT

[1d ago](#)[15.19](#)

On demonstrations, Truss says she is “fine with peaceful protest” but people camping out in Parliament Square for weeks on end is “not the same” and it must hinge on not “harming others”.

“There is deliberately disruptive activity which isn’t just about peaceful protest, it’s about trying to disrupt democracy, it’s about trying to disrupt

everyday life.

“One person’s freedom should not mean other people suffer misery.”

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[1d ago](#)[15.16](#)

Truss pledges to help children deal with mental health issues resulting from Covid “when they should have been with their friends, they should have been at schools”.

She calls for more mental health support in schools to help teachers and says she would support them to offer more wraparound care for children to benefit working parents. Truss added: “One of the big problems parents face is social media and kids contacting each other and winding each other up on WhatsApp ... I’m not sure teenage girls are as bad as Tory MPs [on WhatsApp].”

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Updated at 15.39 EDT

[1d ago](#)[15.07](#)

This is the moment Truss was interrupted by the protesters at the start of the hustings.

‘Shame on you’: Liz Truss speech at Eastbourne hustings interrupted by climate activists – video

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[1d ago](#)[15.05](#)

Truss interrupted again by protester

Truss has been interrupted again by “somebody who shouldn’t have a microphone” the audience is told.

It is unclear whether this was a member of the same protest group as earlier.

She said: “I take it as a compliment that I’m so popular with Extinction Rebellion.”

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1
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Truss ‘irresponsible’ for threatening to review Bank of England remit

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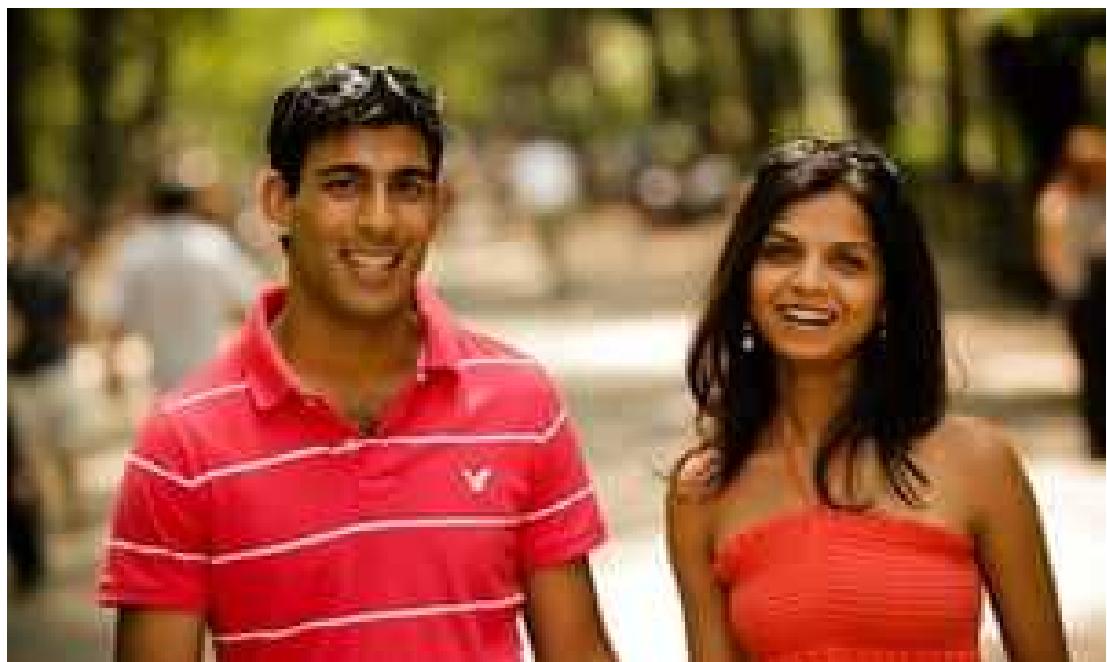
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Sunak scorns Truss's claims that tax cuts can avert recession

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Kwasi Kwarteng

No emergency cost of living help for at least a month, says minister

Business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng says support will not be introduced until ministers return to work

'Something's gone wrong': Kwasi Kwarteng criticises Bank of England – video

[Emily Dugan](#)

@emilydugan

Fri 5 Aug 2022 08.13 EDTFirst published on Fri 5 Aug 2022 04.27 EDT

The UK business secretary, [Kwasi Kwarteng](#), has admitted it will be more than a month before ministers can introduce any measures to tackle the rising cost of living.

Kwarteng, who is backing the foreign secretary, [Liz Truss](#), to become the next leader of the Conservative party, said he was expecting a new prime minister to introduce a “support package” in an emergency budget but it could not happen until after they start work next month.

The delay comes as both Boris Johnson and the chancellor, Nadhim Zahawi, are on holiday as the Bank of England warned the economy will enter the longest recession since the 2008 financial crisis. The UK is forecast to suffer an economic [downturn lasting more than a year](#).

Kwarteng said: “I don’t know where Boris is,” but claimed the public would not begrudge the outgoing prime minister taking a honeymoon. He went on to say he was in “regular contact” with Johnson.

Either Truss or [Rishi Sunak](#) will take over as prime minister on 5 September, when the results of the Tory party leadership elections are announced. The

new administration would then have until 22 September to introduce changes before recess for party conference.

The director general of the CBI business organisation, Tony Danker, said: “We cannot wait until 5 September for action.”

He told BBC’s Radio 4’s World at One programme: “I have no problem with people having short holidays. My fear is much more profound, which is that there will be a vacuum from now until 5 September.

“We need the current prime minister and the current chancellor to fill that vacuum. We need them to make decisions. We need them to make plans. We need them to reassure firms, markets and households that we are gripping this.

“We cannot wait until 5 September for action. We cannot wait until 5 September for plans and we cannot wait until 5 September for reassurance.”

Earlier, Kwarteng criticised the Bank of England’s control of inflation, saying “something had clearly gone wrong” at the institution as prices are predicted to rise by 13%.

As a key supporter of Truss, the frontrunner to be the next Tory leader and prime minister, Kwarteng’s comments suggest the Bank’s independent mandate to keep inflation at 2% may be re-examined if she takes over at No 10.

Kwarteng told Sky News: “The job of the Bank was to deal with inflation. They’ve got a 2% inflation target, that’s actually their mandate. And now inflation is getting double digits. So clearly, something’s gone wrong.”

He added: “I think there is an issue about how the Bank is operating because clearly if I say to you 2% is your target, and you say to me, ‘Well, actually it’s going to hit 13%’, I would quite rightly say something’s gone wrong. We’ve got to look at how you’re performing.”

Kwarteng also said the Bank should have acted quicker to increase interest rates in an effort to control inflation. He said: “I think there is an argument to suggest the rate should have probably gone up slightly sooner.”

When asked if the Bank would keep its independence, he said “absolutely” but also described potential interventions.

“We need to look again at what the mandate is and how best they can actually fulfil that mandate,” he said, adding: “You’ve got to look at how the Bank is organised and what the targets are.”

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However, the Bank’s governor, Andrew Bailey, defended its performance, saying it had not acted too slowly to raise interest rates because it was important to defend the economy after Covid.

He told Radio 4’s Today programme: “If you go back two years … given the situation we were facing at that point in the context of Covid, in the context of the labour market, the idea that at that point we would have tightened monetary policy, you know I don’t remember there were many people saying that.”

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Conservative leadership

Sunak scorns Truss's claims that tax cuts can avert recession

Tory leadership rivals disagree on how to turn economy around and avoid predicted downturn in Sky news debate

- [Latest politics news – live](#)

Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss battle it out in Sky News leadership debate – video highlights

Heather Stewart Political editor

Thu 4 Aug 2022 18.25 EDTFirst published on Thu 4 Aug 2022 17.12 EDT

Liz Truss has claimed her tax cut plans could avert the looming recession, after the Bank of England forecast [13% inflation and a downturn lasting more than a year](#).

In a televised leadership interview, the foreign secretary was challenged about gloomy projections made by the Bank on Thursday, as it increased interest rates by 0.5 percentage points.

“What the Bank of England has said today is, of course, extremely worrying. But it is not inevitable,” she said. “We can change the outcome, and we can make it more likely that the economy grows.”

Truss and her [Conservative leadership](#) rival, Rishi Sunak, were each grilled by a studio audience made up of Conservative members, and Sky News presenter Kay Burley.

Sunak, who appeared after Truss, stepped up his criticisms of her £30bn plan for [unfunded tax cuts](#), claiming it would lead to “misery for millions”.

“The lights on the economy are flashing red, and the root cause is inflation. I’m worried that Liz Truss’s plans will make the situation worse,” he said.

“If we just put fuel on the fire of this inflation spiral, all of us, all of you, are going to just end up with higher mortgage rates, savings and pensions that are eaten away, and misery for millions.”

But Truss insisted that “now is the time to be bold, because if we don’t act now, we are headed for very, very difficult times”, reiterating her policies of reversing the recent increase in national insurance contributions and halting planned increases in corporation tax.

Asked what more she would do to deal with rocketing energy prices, Truss cited her existing policy of temporarily halting green levies that add about £150 to household bills.



Liz Truss and Kay Burley during the Sky news debate in Cardiff. The leadership favourite says recession is ‘not inevitable’. Photograph: Chris Lobina/Sky News/PA

Truss rejected the idea of a windfall tax on the bumper profits of energy companies. “Shareholders are not all men in suits sitting in offices. There is no such thing as free money, and I just think we’ve got to be very careful if the UK gets a reputation for arbitrarily taking money in tax.”

Sunak also said he would do more as prime minister to help hard-pressed consumers through the winter ahead. He recently announced a pledge to cut VAT on energy bills – a policy he had previously rejected. When asked about the recession, he said: “It’s not the tax burden that is causing the recession. That’s simply wrong. What’s causing the recession is inflation. That’s the root of the problems, not just here, but in America and elsewhere.”

Truss was challenged robustly by two audience members – over the public finances, and her [botched announcement of pay cuts for public sector workers](#).

Jill of Tunbridge Wells accused Truss of failing to take seriously enough the need to balance the books. “The one thing Margaret Thatcher believed in was sound money,” she said. “Fifteen percent interest rates, I remember those days. I had to pay a mortgage of 15%, are we going back to that level again?”

Truss replied “no”, and went on to stress the risks of high taxes for economic growth.

Another audience member, Tom from Gateshead, pressed Truss on the plan for regional pay boards which she withdrew earlier this week. “Why should we trust your judgment?” Pointing out that it would have meant lower pay for public sector workers in his local area of Newcastle, he added: “Will you apologise because it was actually quite offensive?”

Truss replied: “I don’t think there is anything to be ashamed of, of saying publicly that this is not working as I wanted it to work, and therefore, I have changed the position on it.”

Sunak was accused by an audience member, Steven, of plotting to overthrow Johnson, and resigning last month in a cynical bid to win the leadership.

Citing the scandal of former Conservative whip Chris Pincher, who was promoted by Johnson despite multiple allegations of sexual misconduct, Sunak insisted “that was a serious ethical question that the government was on the wrong side of, again, and I couldn’t defend it”.



Rishi Sunak argued his rival's tax plans will lead to 'misery for millions'.
Photograph: Chris Lobina/Sky News/PA

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By contrast, Truss gave a staunch defence of [Boris Johnson](#). When Burley said she had "stood shoulder to shoulder with a man who has betrayed the office of prime minister", Truss insisted: "Yes he made mistakes, that's absolutely true; he said sorry for the mistakes he made – but I think it's completely wrong to characterise him in that way."

Challenged about Truss's broad backing among cabinet members and former leadership contenders, including his former boss Sajid Javid, Sunak stressed the Conservative grandees who have supported him, including former leaders William Hague and Michael Howard.

In a show of hands after the show, Sunak was the clear winner among the audience of Conservative members.

After the debate, Sunak announced a new housing policy, saying he would introduce a build out levy, which would charge developers a fee if they are given planning permission and fail to build the promised homes.

He said the policy would help to promote homeownership – though he has also promised to tighten planning restrictions on green belt land.

“I will do whatever it takes to build housing that is affordable and plentiful, while protecting the green belt – spreading the joy and fulfilment of homeownership, building the next generation of Conservative voters and keeping Labour out of power,” he said.

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2022.08.05 - Spotlight

- Muse's Matt Bellamy I've got to an age where I'm not so titillated by disaster
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Interview

Muse's Matt Bellamy: 'I've got to an age where I'm not so titillated by disaster'

[Dorian Lynskey](#)



‘We’re not really a pop group’ ... Bellamy (right) with Muse bandmates Dominic Howard (left) and Chris Wolstenholme. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

As Muse prepare to release their ninth album, frontman Bellamy talks about the return of his dystopian preoccupations, being a reformed conspiracy theorist and looking for hope while living on the edge in LA



Fri 5 Aug 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 13.44 EDT

Four years ago, Matt Bellamy appeared to be abdicating his throne as the world’s most dystopian rock star. In interviews to promote Muse’s neon-bright album [Simulation Theory](#), the singer praised the joys of turning off the news and escaping into VR gaming. Now, though, comes a crisis-minded ninth album called *Will of the People*, which climaxes with the bluntly titled *We Are Fucking Fucked*. What happened?

Bellamy laughs loudly. The short answer is that the news came to him. He had already scheduled a low-key 2020 because his wife, Texas-born model Elle Evans, was due to give birth in June and he wanted to be at home for his daughter’s first months. Then you-know-what happened and he had no choice. During the first phase of the pandemic, Muse’s regular producer Rich Costey fled to Vermont, handing Bellamy the keys to his studio in

downtown Santa Monica. “Rich was like, I want to get out of LA, and I was like, I think I want to be right here. I love being right in the middle of it.”

Through the studio window, Bellamy observed the seasons of discontent. One month, the streets were empty; the next, they were patrolled by military vehicles during the Black Lives Matter protests. “If you’d asked me six months before, I would have been trying to get away from the old dystopian thing but then it unfolded in front of me,” he says in a twitchy, accelerated voice that sounds like a podcast playing at 1½ speed. “There’s a massive wildfire, there’s a pandemic, there’s riots on the streets, and my wife’s going into labour. Three of those things happened at exactly the same time. When you see all that going on, you think: ‘Hang on a minute, we’re all fucked.’”

Bellamy says all this while sipping lemon tea in the cool, dark corner of a favourite pub near his house in Primrose Hill. He lives in Los Angeles during term-time to be close to his son with the actor Kate Hudson, but spends the holidays in London and hopes to move back permanently one day. “Coming back here, you realise that there aren’t really any major natural disasters,” he says. “And whatever people say about the national health system, at least we have one. There are certain things you take for granted. There was a moment [in the US] when it felt like Mad Max 2. It seemed like it was one step away from complete chaos.”

He has twice had to evacuate from his home due to wildfires, one of which burned down his back yard and every house on the other side of the street. “LA is an edgy place to be. It’s literally on the edge of what could be a really big earthquake. The flipside of that is you get risk-takers and dreamers coming up with the craziest concepts. That heightened sense of risk is a double-edged sword.”

The 44-year-old seems mysteriously unchanged by his 12 years in LA, and by the passing of time in general. He still has waywardly spiky hair, a stubbly rough draft of a goatee and a wry, misfit sense of humour. His presence in the pub goes unnoticed (he says he gets recognised once a day, if that), which is strange for the frontman of a rock band that has released six No 1 albums, headlined Glastonbury three times and filled stadiums from

Moscow to Buenos Aires. He is very happy about that. “Obviously, with my ex I was in a different type of fame,” he says. “Not mine, hers. That is a bit more invasive and aggressive. It changes the way you plan your day.” He exhales. “Fishbowl weirdness.”



Matt Bellamy, front, with Dominic Howard, right, and Christopher Wolstenholme, left, in 1999. Photograph: Jim Dyson/Getty Images

Bellamy is an introvert in an extrovert’s job. He formed Muse in Teignmouth, Devon in 1994, with drummer Dom Howard and bass-player Chris Wolstenholme. Even when they were drawing smaller crowds than the local cover bands, they dreamed of being the biggest band in the world. But he had to grow into the role. “I was way more shoe-gazey and standoffish,” he says. “No physical movements, no eye contact.” After a few years, he realised that the more theatrical he was, the more people liked it. And the bigger the shows got, the grander their music became.

Will of the People’s title has a double meaning: it is also about giving the people what they want. When the record label requested a greatest hits album, Muse retorted with the story of their career – prog-metal, glam-rock, electro-pop, ballads – but told with new songs. “It seems a bit like the end when you do a greatest hits,” Bellamy says. “And I just don’t know if we’ve

got enough hits. We're not really a pop group." In typical Muse fashion, one format will be [the first ever chart-eligible NFT](#).

My brain's been so manipulated by Stranger Things and 80s nostalgia that I can't remember what's real and what isn't

Bellamy is currently plotting the shape of Muse's next mega-tour. In the stage-design arms race, Muse are a superpower, known for deploying robots, acrobats, LED pyramids, aerial drones and all manner of cutting-edge tech. Although he has talked for years about making a smaller, quieter album, maybe acoustic, maybe electronic, one has yet to materialise. The reason, it seems, is that it would be a drag to tour. "Our live show is so much fun, I can't even tell you," he says with a giant grin. "Massive lights, huge crowds, everybody singing along. It's a little bit moreish. It's akin to being in a football team and scoring the winning goal every day." One day, he predicts, they will tire of world tours and look beyond "big-scale music" – but not yet.

Bellamy's album concepts are usually political: populism, climate crisis, drone warfare. With almost half a billion Spotify streams, 2009's rabble-rousing [Uprising](#) could be the most popular rock protest song of the 21st century. Yet Muse are often overlooked in discussions of political music, perhaps because Bellamy's ideas are expressed in the colourful language of movies, video games and comic books. Not that he minds. When he starts talking about politics, he says, there are usually two reactions: "One – who the hell is this person? Just go and play the guitar. And two – people don't want to hear that anyway."

Growing up in Devon, Bellamy doesn't remember worrying about the state of the world, or indeed much at all until his parents divorced and his dad declared bankruptcy in the early 1990s. "I think my brain's been manipulated by Stranger Things and that's what I think all our childhoods were actually like," he says, laughing. "I've seen so much 80s nostalgia that I can't remember what's real and what isn't."

His political education was self-directed and he is humble about his missteps. "I'm not an intellectually trained thinker," he says. "I made the

usual mistakes that people from my background make, which is conspiracy theories and all that kind of stuff.” At one point, he became prone to talking about UFOs, David Icke and how 9/11 was an inside job.



Matt Bellamy at the San Siro Stadium, Milan, in 2019. Photograph: Sergione Infuso/Corbis/Getty Images

In the late 2000s, however, Bellamy began to think more seriously about how the world works. “I’ve clawed my way out of my own ignorance and tried to understand as best I can what’s going on,” he says. “I started to get away from, let’s say, quackery.” In an age of QAnon, Stop the Steal and Covid denial, conspiracy theories no longer seem harmlessly entertaining. The pandemic exposed and intensified the outlandish paranoia of artists from [Ian Brown](#) to [Van Morrison](#). As a reformed conspiracy theorist, can Bellamy explain the allure?

“Yeah,” he says, leaning in. “First of all, it’s distraction from the really pressing issues. It makes people feel engaged with topics that really are going nowhere. In terms of human psychology, there’s a comfort that maybe human beings somewhere, even if they’re evil, are in control, when in fact the truth is far more frightening – there are no humans in control and it’s all a bunch of chaos.”

Occasionally, Muse records such as The Resistance (think Nineteen Eighty-Four, directed by James Cameron) have been drastically misread. A decade ago, Bellamy felt moved to distance himself from the fandom of Fox News host Glenn Beck, [who responded](#): “As uncomfortable as it might be for you, I will still play your songs loudly … I thank you for singing words that resonate with man in his struggle to be free.”

There’s a comfort that human beings, even if they’re evil, are in control, when the truth is far more frightening

Today, Bellamy looks a bit glum when I suggest that cranks will seize on his reference, in Ghosts (How Can I Move On), to the Great Reset, a World Economic Forum initiative that has [inspired conspiracy theories](#) about a one-world government. The song is actually about people who lost partners during the pandemic. What, I wonder, does he worry about most?

“Massive wealth inequality, huge political division and ridiculously unserviceable debt – all these are signifiers of the end of an empire,” he says without hesitation. “I think in the west a lot of people feel that there is a real need for systemic change of some kind. What preoccupies me is, that’s not going to happen. The worst-case scenario is that some kind of extremist emerges and a revolution takes place that ends in George Orwell’s worst nightmare.”

But wait, it gets worse. One alternative is “absolute chaos and civil war, and players like China start to take advantage of that. Every empire eventually comes to an end. The sum of all fears, obviously, is world war. Working out how to avoid that is becoming harder for me to imagine than it actually happening.”



‘I love being right in the middle of it’ ... Muse at Air Studios in Hampstead.
Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

As the title of Muse’s 2004 track *Apocalypse Please* indicates, Bellamy used to relish catastrophe. Now that the world feels genuinely catastrophic, he’s more interested in solutions. He spends a lot of time in Silicon Valley, investing in start-ups, mostly related to clean energy. Young, idealistic entrepreneurs, it turns out, are his kind of people. “That has given me optimism,” he says. “When you hear their ideas and their vision for the future, it does give you genuine hope that a lot of the biggest issues we’re facing could be solved.”

Does he think Elon Musk is a kind of Matt Bellamy in reverse: a tech guy who wishes he was a pop star? “That’s funny,” he says neutrally, pausing to choose his words lest he rile the Musketeers. “I’m not sure if the solution is to find another planet to live on. I think finding ways to sustain this one should be number one. But that should include things like asteroid defence. I’m in the middle.”

Bellamy usually calls himself a left-leaning libertarian but he has been toying with a new concept he calls meta-centrism. “I think I made it up,” he says bashfully. “I’m sure there are people way more qualified than me who

can describe what I'm trying to say." The gist is to combine ideas from different political traditions. The policies he endorses are radical but not unfeasible – abolition of the monarchy and House of Lords, decentralised government, decarbonisation, a land-value tax, capping the size of corporations – and not easily channelled into cathartic stadium-rock anthems. "Is there something in this oscillation between two extremes? We're stuck in this one-dimensional mindset about what politics is and which side you're on."

Muse, Bellamy says, started out as "an emotional expression of unknown anxieties: I don't really know why I'm feeling this way. I'm saying things and doing things and some of it's confusing, some of it's weird, some of it's stupid. But I'm trying as time goes on to understand what those underlying emotions are about and what I can do about it." Outside the music, the civilian version of Matt Bellamy is looking for reasons to believe that we are not, in fact, fucking fucked. "I've got to an age where I'm not so titillated by disaster."

- Will of the People is out on 26 August
-

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Experience**Life and style**

Experience: I was driving across a bridge when it collapsed

The car nosedived 45 metres. It was four hours before firefighters found us



Nataliya Yelina: 'We were crushed inside the wreckage under colossal slabs of concrete.' Photograph: Rocco Rorandelli/TerraProject

Nataliya Yelina

Fri 5 Aug 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 07.16 EDT

In summer 2018, life was so good. My fiance, Eugeniu, and I had bought a house near Naples. We decided to go on holiday to Provence, where he had proposed six years earlier, and try for a baby.

We had planned to go by plane, but we changed our minds and took the car. My teenage son from a previous marriage was supposed to come, but he ended up staying at home to study.

About 700km into the journey we came through Genoa. The weather was beautiful – then it suddenly switched. I'd never seen the sky go so dark; the rain was torrential. We went through a tunnel and came out on to the Morandi bridge. I had never been on it before, but I now know the motorway bridge opened in 1967 and was more than 1,000 metres long. The visibility was bad and we could hardly see a metre in front of us.

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Out of nowhere, we felt the odd sensation that the car was lifting at the front. The next second, we were falling into nothing. We nosedived 45 metres in our tin box of a car. On the way down, we were battered by rubble and I felt my heart jump up into my throat. After that, there was total silence.

Our car ended up landing on a road below the bridge; we were crushed inside the wreckage under colossal slabs of concrete. We never lost consciousness, but I was in shock. I hadn't processed what was happening and was still thinking about my holiday. I had no idea the bridge had collapsed – I thought it might have been an earthquake.

We beeped the horn in the hope someone would hear us. At first we shouted, but then stopped because we didn't want to lose strength and pass out. We tried calling an ambulance, but there was no signal under the rubble.

I knew I was hurt – my leg was bleeding and I couldn't move it – but because of the adrenaline I didn't feel pain. I later found out a disc in my spine had exploded and my leg was broken. Eugeniu had broken his neck.

Rescue workers eventually found us while saving a man whose van was dangling from another section of the bridge above us. We'd been under the rubble for four hours by the time we were pulled out, and the firefighter covered my face with his jacket so I couldn't see the devastation. It was only afterwards, when I saw it on television, that I realised the scale of the tragedy – 43 people had died. The back of our car was squashed by falling concrete. If my son had been with us he would not have survived.

In the hospital, we decided to get married as soon as possible – the tragedy made us realise we never wanted to be without each other. The doctors were worried I wouldn't walk again but I can, just not so well. I was a beautician and Eugeniu was a hairdresser – we still have our salon, but because of our injuries I can't work there any more.

I've had to accept that I'm not the same as before. As we fell, the sound around us was terrible. Now, I can't bear sudden noises. I dream of things falling. I've seen a psychologist, but there's nothing to find out; we know what happened and where this trauma comes from. I just hope that with time my mind will put it aside.

It was a painful decision, but we didn't try for a baby after the tragedy. I wouldn't be able to pick them up and give them a cuddle. I gave Eugeniu the option to leave, I said, "You're a young, good-looking man, you don't want a disabled, older wife. You can find someone else." He said, "Well, in that case, you haven't understood anything about what I feel for you."

The best thing to have come out of the tragedy is that I appreciate life much more. Before, we had focused on earning money. When we went on this holiday, I had lovely clothes and shoes in my suitcase, and they were all buried under the rubble. Maybe that was a sign that these things don't really matter. What matters is family.

The trial to find out who was responsible will [continue in September](#). I will be there to talk about my experience and get justice for the families of the victims, whom we now know quite well. Even if it won't bring back their son or daughter, it might give them the satisfaction that some justice has been done. We don't want this tragedy to be forgotten.

As told to Ellie Purcell

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The Sandman review – Neil Gaiman has created 2022's single greatest hour of TV drama



‘This is the era of megabudget fantasy television’ ... Jenna Coleman and Tom Sturridge in The Sandman. Photograph: Liam Daniel/NETFLIX

This dark, engrossing comic book adaptation is utterly lavish, and features an emotional depth that's almost unheard of in fantasy epics. It should delight fans and newcomers alike



[Rebecca Nicholson](#)

Fri 5 Aug 2022 01.00 EDT

It has taken 30 years for an adaptation of *The Sandman* (Netflix), [Neil Gaiman](#)'s celebrated comic-book series, to make it to the screen, and little wonder. It is a big, bold story of gods and demons, so deep and rich that the idea of cramming its wonders into 10 episodes seems borderline ludicrous. Yet this is the era of megabudget fantasy television, with the imminent arrival of a small-screen Lord of the Rings and the return of the Game of Thrones universe in *House of the Dragon*. With its debut season, *The Sandman* can stand proudly among them, albeit as their moody goth older brother.

The first couple of episodes exist firmly in the realm of fantasy. The notes I took when watching include “Patton Oswalt is crow?”. It’s that kind of show, and it immerses you in its world immediately, setting the Sandman off on his journey of discovery. It begins in 1916, when Lord Morpheus, or Dream, or the Sandman, or Lord Morpheus, Dream of the Endless, to give

him his pedigree name (a sinewy Robert Smith type, played with breathy sulkiness by Tom Sturridge), is mistakenly captured by [Charles Dance](#)'s sinister – and Dance is very good at sinister – magus.



Sinister ... Charles Dance as Roderick Burgess in episode one. Photograph: Ed Miller/Netflix

The magus wants to harness Death's power to indulge in a spot of necromancy and revive his favourite son, who was killed in wartime. Instead, he ends up with Dream, and traps him naked in a glass sphere in his basement. For a while, the period setting feels a bit dark Downton Abbey, but it soon becomes clear that this is far too expansive to stick to one era or genre. Throughout the series, time flies, and slows, and we leap through different periods and cities and realms. It all feels like rather a lot, but it works well.

Partly, that is because the pace is meditative, not frantic. Once the scene-setting and world-building has been done, it has the confidence to take its time over the big stuff. I am sure plenty of viewers will love its more fantastical elements, from a battle of imaginations with Lucifer (Gwendoline Christie) to a cute mythical creature called Gregory, but I found its finest moments in the more human, conversational, emotional strands. Jenna Coleman is strong as the messy, tough Johanna Constantine, a contraction of

John and Johanna into one character (or two), whose nightmares are matched only by her exorcist duties.



Nothing unnatural ... Sanjeev Bhaskar as Cain in episode two of *The Sandman*. Photograph: Netflix

The big cast is largely excellent, with an impressive ability to deliver lines that could have sounded overly literary or convoluted, or both, in ways that sound neither woolly nor unnatural. Vivienne Acheampong as Dream's right-hand man Lucienne, Boyd Holbrook as the gruesome walking nightmare Corinthian, and Kirby Howell-Baptiste as an empathic, big-hearted Death, are all fantastic. I spent some time mildly irritated at the idea that Joely Richardson, 57, could be cast as the mother of [David Thewlis](#), 59, until I was reminded that in this world where teeth can replace eyeballs and getting sand in your eyes is far more troublesome than your typical trip to the beach, something as trivial as age is bound to be explained eventually. It is, and my outrage retreated.

Thewlis is brilliant as John Dee, naive and cruel and earnest and cynical, and he gets to lead the best episode of the lot. After an eerie car journey that plays out like a film of its own, Dee spends a day and night in a diner, experimenting on its staff and patrons by nudging them towards a policy of

being honest. Each person's feelings are teased to the surface, and it is horrible and mesmerising and thrilling, with an uncanny, *Twin Peaks*-ish feel. This is surely a contender for best episode of the year, of any TV drama, and the point at which The Sandman really finds its feet.

Yet it is engrossing from the start. It is transportive, playful at times, and certainly grand. But above all, it is dark. Bodies explode, limbs are severed, and demons crawl out of the mouths of professional footballers, fist-first. Nestled in among its more grotesque spectacles, though, is an emotional depth that elevates this far beyond the usual "let's see what we can blow the CGI budget on" fantasy fodder. Given the source material, that's no wonder. For fans, it may well turn out to have been worth the long wait, but for newcomers to the Sandman's world, there is plenty to discover.

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You be the judge: Should my wife switch to brushing her teeth after breakfast?



Illustration: Ilse Weisfelt/The Guardian

He thinks cleaning your teeth after food is more hygienic; she says brushing first thing is the best way to start the day. You decide whose method leaves a

bad taste

- [Find out how to get a disagreement settled or become a You be the judge juror](#)

*Interviews by [Georgina Lawton](#)
[@georginalawton](#)*

Fri 5 Aug 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 21.02 EDT

The prosecution: Alex

Brushing after breakfast makes sense – why start your day with crumbs stuck in your teeth?

My wife, Wanda, believes you should brush your teeth before breakfast. But I think you should eat first, then brush it all away after breakfast. After you wake up, there's a lot of bacteria between your teeth. I have told Wanda this over the years (diplomatically of course) that she's in the wrong, but she won't change.

You are leaving food particles between your teeth for hours. I don't think her method makes a whole lot of sense

Usually the question about who's right doesn't come up. But recently I read an article saying that her method of brushing before breakfast is better for good dental hygiene. The article said brushing before breakfast coats your teeth in toothpaste and offers protection against food and sugar for the rest of the day.

But I feel that this benefit is far outweighed by the fact that food would be sitting in your mouth all day. You are leaving food particles between your teeth for hours, after all. I don't think her method makes sense.

I have said to her: "I don't know how you cope with the food between your teeth all day. Aren't you worried?" And she will say no – it's just how she

was raised.

For Wanda it's a cultural thing. If you're brought up to do a certain thing, whatever culture you're in, you're immune to reason. It's now part of her morning ritual. I don't think culture is necessarily open to scientific fact or better ideas. It creates habits that are hard to break.

When I've had that experience of not brushing my teeth after breakfast, it's a physically uncomfortable feeling. A few times I've woken up late, eaten something quickly and then forgotten to brush my teeth because I'm doing something else, and I hate the way my mouth feels. My teeth seem to have a film on them. And there's always this chunk of food stuck in my molar and my tongue is vigorously trying to get that thing out for hours and hours. I'm not sure how Wanda copes.

Fortunately, Wanda and I live in a house with two bathrooms, so I don't have to put up with the sight of her brushing her teeth before breakfast. When you live with someone, you make certain compromises.

The defence: Wanda

I was taught that you wake up, have a wash and clean your teeth – the issue is a cultural one

When I was young, my parents always said that when you wake up, you should brush your teeth, wash your face and freshen up. It gives you that instant energy after being asleep. So that's why I always brush my teeth before breakfast.

It's a habit I've had for many years. I was taught that when you wake up and wash immediately, you become a different person – you get rid of the night. It's what I'm used to. I'm of a Chinese background and my husband's American. We've just been taught by our parents to do different things.

If I brush my teeth after breakfast I'll taste toothpaste on the way to work. That leaves a horrible flavour for hours

Brushing my teeth before breakfast also saves time. I tried Alex's method before, but because I have to leave for work straight after I finish my breakfast, I don't want to go back upstairs to brush. It takes up too much time. So I quit that habit very quickly. Now after breakfast I'm quickly out of the door to start the commute.

If I brush my teeth after breakfast I also find it annoying because I'll taste toothpaste on the way to work and that leaves a horrible flavour in my mouth for hours. I really don't like it.

Alex and I both have very good teeth – people tell us this regularly. We should both carry on doing what we are doing.

It's interesting because in China some things are typically taken very seriously, such as your skin, but there is not so much emphasis on your teeth. Compared with the US, it's a lot less common to see a dentist regularly and spend money on braces.

A lot of my friends say, "Wow your teeth are so good." But I had braces and I take very good care of my teeth. I brush them twice a day like most people, and I also floss.

Obviously my methods are working and I'm happy about that. I haven't read the article Alex was talking about, but I don't need to. Everyone has their own choice and I like mine. If he thinks that it's healthy to brush his teeth after eating, he can do it. I will continue to brush my teeth in this way, and that's fine.

The jury of Guardian readers

Should Wanda brush her teeth after breakfast rather than before?

Wanda is not guilty. Alex may not know how she copes, but she clearly does! There are absolutely things you compromise on in a relationship – if she weren't brushing her teeth at all I could understand. But she does – just not the exact way Alex wants her to.

Alphonse, 29

Alex's argument isn't rational. He says there is research that endorses Wanda's method, but still insists she's "wrong". It's down to what the individual prefers, particularly as neither has bad dental hygiene. He isn't required to wonder how Wanda "manages"; he should stop trying to be right and accept that they are different.

Angela, 64

It feels like Alex is quite controlling – surely his wife's dental routine is none of his business, and given that they both have good teeth why does it matter? To hear language like, "I don't have to put up with the sight ..." makes me question whether this is just about teeth.

Simon, 46

I'm with Wanda. As Alex says, any food from her breakfast is in her teeth, not his. The way Wanda brushes has no impact on him. Surely he has more important things to worry about – like why he's so consumed by his wife's habits.

Lesley, 57

Wanda and Alex both have great teeth and are happy with their own morning routines. What's the problem? Nothing needs to change. As for getting the taste of food out of your mouth - that's what mints are for.

Rebecca, 28

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You be the judge

So now you can be the judge. In our online poll below, tell us: should Wanda agree to start brushing her teeth after breakfast?

We'll share the results on next week's You be the judge.

Last week's result

We asked if Bea needs to cut down her habit of buying [milk alternatives](#), as having five in the fridge annoys her sister, Lara.

42% of you said no – Bea is innocent

58% of you said yes – Bea is guilty

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2022.08.05 - Opinion

- [Boris Johnson isn't finished. His next move in politics may be even more alarming](#)
- [Putin is banking on a failure of political will in the west before Russia runs out of firepower](#)
- [The threat of economic crisis could yet turn the tide in Rishi Sunak's favour](#)
- [Cartoon Martin Rowson on the world's ride to a cliff edge](#)

[**Opinion**](#)[**Boris Johnson**](#)

Boris Johnson isn't finished. His next move in politics may be even more alarming

[Martin Kettle](#)



Once out of office, the former PM could emulate US media shock-makers, wielding influence without accountability



‘The pain of lost power is something that all leaders feel, even the wisest.’
Photograph: Tayfun Salci/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Fri 5 Aug 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 15.28 EDT

As this summer has shown, no prime minister gives up power enthusiastically. Almost without exception, Britain’s leaders leave office in a foul mood somewhere between fury and fatalism. Herbert Asquith and Edward Heath stand out among former inhabitants of 10 Downing Street as two who could never come to terms with their falls. Both went to the same Oxford college as [Boris Johnson](#).

Most prime ministers at least try to go with a show of acceptance, albeit through gritted teeth. A few – Arthur Balfour, Neville Chamberlain and Alec Douglas-Home among them – even served later in other prime ministers’ cabinets. The palm for good grace, though, goes to Stanley Baldwin, who reportedly told the police on the Downing Street door on his last exit in 1937 that he was departing with a spring in his step.

This will emphatically not happen when Johnson finally leaves in a month’s time. Some of the reasons for that are peculiar to Johnson, a reminder that he is a different kind of person and politician, and we shall return to them in a moment. Other reasons, however, are not.

Power is a drug. Politicians take it liberally. Having to give up power is painful and humiliating. In an extreme case, such as Donald Trump, the pain can cause delusions, although the US system has devised useful rituals of transition to soften the blow, which Britain lacks. But the pain of lost power is something that all leaders feel, even the wisest. Fighting against the removal of power is a natural reflex.

We know this from political history. But we also know it from mythology. At this moment I know it with particular vividness because Richard Wagner says it is so. I am writing this from Bavaria, while attending Wagner's four-part Ring cycle of operas at Bayreuth this week. Yet even while Wagner's music is unfolding, the echoes for Tory party politics are hard to escape.

That's because the central theme of Wagner's epic is the attempt by Wotan, lord of the gods, to hold on to world power by whatever means he can. Eventually, and crucially, Wotan accepts that his battle is lost and – this is Wagner's lasting message – that something entirely new must replace the old order. Yet even Wotan remains believably petulant at the moment of actual loss, and thereafter he is a broken force.

Johnson is not the lord of the gods, although he once famously said he aspires to be world king. But, like Wotan and all people of power, he struggles to accept that he can no longer command the stage. In Johnson's case, the struggle with this reality is an unequal one since it must contend with his narcissistic personality, his need for risk and the spotlight, and with the successes he has achieved by ignoring rules and conventions.

All of which provides the context for the bubbling belief among Johnson's supporters and opponents that he is likely to attempt a comeback. It is a campaign for which he himself sowed the seeds with the narrative of "herd" betrayal in his Downing Street speech, his "hasta la vista" Commons signoff, and his recent remark that his ousting was the biggest stitch-up since the Bayeux tapestry.

It is also a belief that he does nothing to restrain, not merely among useful idiots who tell the Daily Express that a return is likely next year. Nadine Dorries and Michael Fabricant may seem D-list cheerleaders for a serious campaign. But this week's [YouGov poll](#), showing 53% of Tory members

think Johnson's ousting was wrong and putting him well ahead of Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak as their preferred leader, will do nothing to dampen the talk about Johnson's second coming.

If this is to happen, however, it is important to apply some of the realism which Johnson's cheerleaders mostly avoid. Under current rules, Johnson must remain an MP in order to be a candidate in any Tory leadership return. This raises three issues.

First, Johnson must avoid being suspended after the Commons privileges committee reports on whether he misled parliament over Partygate, because this could trigger a byelection he might lose. Second, he must hold his Uxbridge and South Ruislip constituency in the general election, which may not be easy, and has provoked malicious speculation that he may take over Dorries's much safer Mid-Bedfordshire seat. Finally, he must decide what role he will play in the Commons from September.

This is the crux. It is as much a question of temperament as strategy. Temperamentally, Johnson seeks not only the spotlight but also revenge. He is naturally vindictive and disloyal, as his axing of a whole generation of one nation Tory talent before the 2019 election showed. Unlike, say, Margaret Thatcher, who talked the talk about getting her own back for her 1990 ousting but then failed to walk the walk, the incontinent part of Johnson that wants revenge will not be easily quieted.

Johnson's real problem, though, is strategy. The avenging Johnson who is being built up by the Daily Express is a Johnson who would lead the Tory right from the backbenches and then challenge for the leadership. That may be plausible if Sunak wins in a month's time, but not if Truss does. Truss is the right's new leader now, and she is on course to lead the party. If Johnson wants a comeback, he can only wait for Truss to fail or try to engineer her failure. Neither is guaranteed. Both are messy.

It is possible that Johnson is about to launch a leadership revenge saga on the Tory party that would end by putting Hamlet to shame. On balance, it is unlikely. Johnson's ego, though, will need an outlet. That is more likely to be through the media than parliament. He is a born performer. The

broadcasters and press barons, including in the US, are likely to offer him the serious cash that he craves along with the chance to make waves.

Maybe we should think less about Johnson as the looming Trump of British rightwing politics, and think more about him as something almost as alarming. He could become a new kind of disrupter on the British scene, a rightwing media shock-maker, a role that Nigel Farage has dallied with but does not take seriously. Johnson would do so. He could become the British version of American populist broadcasters such as Rush Limbaugh and Tucker Carlson, setting the agenda from outside the political system. He could make himself the man without whom nothing in politics can happen but who does not have to deal with the consequences. That kind of power and money without accountability would surely suit Johnson just fine.

- Martin Kettle is a Guardian associate editor and columnist
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OpinionUkraine

Putin is banking on a failure of political will in the west before Russia runs out of firepower

[Timothy Garton Ash](#)



Democratic leaders need to prepare their citizens for a long struggle over Ukraine – and a hard winter



Ukrainian soldiers unpack US Javelin anti-tank missiles in Kyiv: ‘The US has reportedly already sent one-third of its entire stock.’ Photograph: Efrem Lukatsky/AP

Fri 5 Aug 2022 01.00 EDT

The Russo-Ukrainian war is coming down to a race between the weakening political will of western democracies and the deteriorating military means of Vladimir Putin’s dictatorship. But this race will be a marathon, not a sprint. Sustaining that political will requires the kind of farsighted leadership which most democracies are missing. It calls for a recognition that our own countries are also, in some important sense, at war – and a corresponding politics of the long haul.

Is this what you hear when you turn on your television in the United States (where I am now), Germany, Italy, Britain or France? Is this a leading topic in the Conservative party contest to decide Britain’s next prime minister, or the run-up to the Italian election on 25 September, or the campaign for the US midterm elections on 8 November? No, no and no. “We are at war,” I heard someone say recently on the radio; but he was an energy analyst, not a politician.

The fact that Ukrainian forces are preparing for a [big counter-offensive](#) to recapture the strategically vital city of Kherson shows what a combination of western arms and Ukrainian courage could achieve. US-supplied High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (Himars) – [long-range multiple-launch rocket systems](#) – have enabled the Ukrainians to hit artillery depots, bridges and command posts far behind Russian lines. Russian forces have been redeployed from Donbas to defend against the expected offensive, thus further slowing the Russian advance in the east. Richard Moore, the head of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), observed recently that Russia might be “[about to run out of steam](#)” in Ukraine because of shortages of material and adequately trained troops. So Ukraine has a good chance of winning an important battle this autumn; but it's still a long way from winning the war.

In his campaign to defeat not only [Ukraine](#) but also the west, Putin is counting on Russia's two traditional wartime allies: Field Marshal Time and General Winter. The Russian leader is weaponising energy, reducing gas flows through the Nordstream 1 pipeline so Germany can't fully replenish its gas storage before the weather turns cold. Then he will have the option of turning off the gas entirely, plunging Germany and other dependent European countries into a desperate winter. High energy prices as a result of the war continue to turbocharge inflation in the west while keeping Putin's own war chest filled with the billions of euros Germany and others are still paying for Russian gas and oil. Although a few grain ships are now leaving Odesa, his blockade of Ukrainian ports has caused a food price crisis across parts of the Middle East and Africa, resulting in much human misery and potentially in refugee flows and political chaos. Those, too, are Putin's friends. Better still: the global south seems to blame this at least as much on the west as on Russia.

Putin's cultural and political analysis of the west leads him to believe that time is on his side. In his view, the west is decadent, weakened by multiculturalism, immigration, the post-nationalism of the EU, LGBTQ+ rights, atheism, pacifism and democracy. No match, therefore, for carnivorous, martial great powers which still cleave to the old trinity of God, family and nation.

There are people in the west who agree with him, subverting western and European unity from within. Just read Viktor Orbán's [scandalous recent speech](#) to an ethnic Hungarian audience in Romania, with its insistence that Hungarians should not become "mixed race", its sweeping critique of the west's policy on Ukraine and its conclusion that "Hungary needs to make a new agreement with the Russians".

Although the party likely to emerge victorious from next month's Italian elections, the Fratelli d'Italia, is the indirect successor of a neo-fascist party founded in 1946, it does at least support the western position on the war in Ukraine. But the leaders of the Fratelli's probable coalition partners, the Lega's Matteo Salvini and Forza Italia's Silvio Berlusconi have a pro-Putin past and cannot be relied on to stand firm on Ukraine, as the current Italian prime minister, Mario Draghi, has done. In Germany, a plurality of those asked in a recent opinion poll (47%) said [Ukraine should give up](#) its eastern territories in return for "peace". European voices calling on Ukraine to "settle" along those lines will only get louder as the war grinds on. (Former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn recently [joined them](#), although his intervention won't affect the strong cross-party consensus in Britain on support for Ukraine.)

Most important are the midterm elections in the US. If Donald Trump announces his presidential candidacy off the back of midterm election successes for his partisans, this could spell big trouble for what has so far been rare bipartisan consensus in the US on large-scale economic and military support for Ukraine. Notoriously reluctant to criticise Putin, [Trump has told](#) his supporters that "the Democrats are sending another \$40bn to Ukraine, yet America's parents are struggling to even feed their children".

What would it take to prove the Russian leader wrong about the intrinsic weakness of western democracies? Rather a lot. The [two largest armies](#) in Europe are going to be slogging it out in Ukraine for months and quite probably years to come. Neither side is giving up; neither has a clear path to victory. All the current peace scenarios are unrealistic. When you can't begin to see how something is going to end, it's unlikely to end soon.

To sustain Ukraine's resistance and enable its army to recover lost territory requires weapon supplies on a scale that is large even for America's

military-industrial complex. For example, the US has reportedly already sent [one-third of its entire stock](#) of Javelin anti-tank missiles. According to a former deputy governor of the National Bank of Ukraine, [the country needs](#) a further \$5bn a month in macroeconomic support just to ensure that its economy does not collapse – close to double what it is currently getting. That's before you even get to the challenge of [postwar reconstruction](#), which may cost as much as \$1tn.

If we stay the course, at scale, then Field Marshal Time will be on Ukraine's side. Putin's stocks of his most modern weapons and best trained troops have already been depleted. Keep up the pressure and – military experts tell us – he will be reaching back to 40-year-old tanks, and raw recruits. Western sanctions are hitting the hi-tech parts of his economy, needed for resupply. Could he compensate for the loss of skilled troops by a general mobilisation? Will China come to his aid with modern weapons supplies? Can he escalate? These questions have to be asked, of course, but the pressure would be back on him.

In democracies, leaders must justify and explain to voters this kind of large-scale, strategic commitment, otherwise they will not support it in the long run. Putin would then be proved right in his diagnosis of the weakness of democracy. Estonia's Kaja Kallas is giving an [example of such leadership](#), but then her people know all too much about Russia already. At the moment I don't see any leader of a major western democracy doing the same, except perhaps for Mario Draghi – and he's leaving.

- Timothy Garton Ash is a historian, political writer and Guardian columnist
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[**Opinion**](#)[**Conservative leadership**](#)

The threat of economic crisis could yet turn the tide in Rishi Sunak's favour

[**Gaby Hinsliff**](#)



When times are hard, people become risk-averse. Is that why the Sky News audience of Tory members chose the former chancellor over Liz Truss?



‘Never underestimate Kay Burley’: the Sky News hustings saw Burley (centre) grill the pair of prime ministerial hopefuls. Photograph: Chris Lobina/Sky News/PA

Thu 4 Aug 2022 18.41 EDT Last modified on Thu 4 Aug 2022 19.43 EDT

It’s often said that Westminster exists in a bubble, deaf to life outside the M25. But if that was ever true, SW1 now looks positively on the money compared to the massed ranks of Conservative party members. The Bank of England’s [doomsday forecast](#) on Thursday – inflation rising to 13%, a long grim recession, rising interest rates and plummeting living standards – only confirmed what everyone involved in politics had been afraid was coming for months. But what were Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak asked as they roamed the country? Whether they’ll bring back grammar schools. How they’ll fight a “war on woke”. Whether Boris Johnson was shabbily treated. Meanwhile, neither candidate has demonstrated the sense of urgency you’d expect from someone applying to lead Britain through a full-blown national emergency. The gravity of the moment has somehow passed the whole contest by.

Sunak has come closest to acknowledging reality by arguing that cutting taxes now – the answer the Tory faithful always reach for, whatever the question – is unaffordable. Truss has sunnily told them what they want to hear, even suggesting at [Thursday night’s Sky News hustings](#) that this kind of recession isn’t inevitable, whatever the Bank says. As a result Sunak has

become the “actually it’s a bit more complicated than that” candidate, struggling to explain without sounding patronising that if something sounds too good to be true, it usually is.

Anyone who remembers how that ended for remainers in 2016, or Hillary Clinton up against Donald Trump, will have some insight into why Truss has been wiping the floor with him. But she’s also a better player of Conservative internal politics. Sunak did the right thing for his country and his party by moving against Johnson, but alienated a significant number of Tories who have subsequently convinced themselves Johnson could have somehow staggered on. Truss has merrily attacked Johnson’s government over everything from lockdowns to tax policy but because she stood by him in those final days, still isn’t seen as disloyal. But if Sunak was ever to have his moment, a chance to stop her runaway bandwagon, this is it.

At the height of the banking crash in 2008, with not just the Tories but Labour rivals nipping at his heels, Gordon Brown bought time by growling that this was “no time for a novice” in No 10. In a crisis, people become risk-averse. They seek leaders who know what they’re doing. Sunak is an ex-chancellor who has already navigated one once-in-a-lifetime crisis; Truss is a far less battle-hardened former chief secretary to the Treasury. She is the bolder but riskier choice for many Tories and while so far she has emphasised the boldness, this week the risks bubbled to the surface. Thursday’s interest rate rise significantly raises the cost of borrowing, on which her economic plans depend. She was forced [to scrap](#) her own regional pay policy after being accused of inflicting a pay cut on the north.

At the Sky hustings, she insisted that disowning her own policy was somehow an example of her honesty and straightforwardness. But a gimlet-eyed Kay Burley (never underestimate Kay Burley) gleefully listed all the things Truss once said she believed in – remaining in the EU, mass housebuilding, Britons going to fight in Ukraine – and has since renounced. Arguably the toughest question Truss faced was from the audience member who snapped: “We’re having this election because of poor judgment and trust. Why should we trust your judgment?”

The first question to Sunak, however, was whether he should just throw in the towel given how badly it's going. Things have reached the stage where merely dragging himself out of the dressing room for another mauling must take some doing. But his answers were punchier, more confident than usual; asked why he turned on Johnson, he reminded the audience of the Chris Pincher scandal and effectively challenged them to defend it. He not only said Truss's plans would worsen the crisis but accused her of making a mistake "which I am just going to correct" by suggesting that taxes, not inflation, were the cause of Britain's ills. Will her supporters call that mansplaining? Maybe, but if so we need a new word for what happens when men are actually right. Interestingly the studio audience, at the end of the night, voted for Sunak.

The Conservative party of 2010 or even 2015 would have picked him over Truss. But the members who would have been most drawn to him then are also those most likely to have quit the party now, driven away by the Brexit Sunak himself backed and the post-truth politics it spawned. Are there enough of them left? We'll have to wait until September to find out. What this country can't wait another day for, however, is someone to get a grip on the economic horrors to come. Right now, that seems terrifyingly elusive.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist
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[**Guardian Opinion cartoon**](#)

[**World news**](#)

Martin Rowson on the world's ride to a cliff edge – cartoon

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2022.08.05 - Around the world

- [Sri Lanka Government accused of draconian treatment of protesters](#)
- [New Zealand Researchers attach body cameras to children to study poverty](#)
- [Ayman al-Zawahiri Al-Qaida chief's killing comes as group gains ground in African conflict zones](#)
- [DRC Death toll reaches 36 in east as protesters turn on UN peacekeepers](#)
- [Julian Assange Family barred from taking book about WikiLeaks founder into Australia's parliament](#)

Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan government accused of draconian treatment of protesters

New president Ranil Wickremesinghe is attempting to crush mass protests that forced out predecessor



Demonstrators in Colombo shout slogans after police announced vacate orders at their protest site near the presidential secretariat. Photograph: Chamila Karunaratne/EPA

Aanya Wipulasena in Colombo and [Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#) in Delhi

Fri 5 Aug 2022 04.28 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 11.36 EDT

The Sri Lankan government has been accused of a draconian crackdown on protesters who were involved in toppling Gotabaya Rajapaksa as president, with activists facing intimidation, surveillance and arbitrary arrest.

Dozens of protesters have been detained by the police in recent days as the government, led by the newly appointed president, Ranil Wickremesinghe,

tried to crush the mass protest movement that forced Rajapaksa to [flee the country](#) and resign in early July.

After the fall of Rajapaksa, the protest movement, known as [the Aragalaya](#), has turned its focus to Wickremesinghe, calling for him to step down. He is accused of lacking legitimacy and public support and of protecting the powerful Rajapaksa family, who are accused of bankrupting the country.

Wickremesinghe pledged his backing for the protest movement, but since taking office as president, has described the protesters as “fascists” and begun to use the full force of state machinery against activists he alleged had broken the law.

One of his firsts act of office was to declare a state of emergency, granting the police sweeping powers to detain people. In the early hours of 22 July, he authorised the military to clear part of a protest camp and take back the presidential secretariat building which had been occupied; more than 50 people, including lawyers and journalists, were injured.

Since then, activists and human rights organisations described a systematic targeting of figures who are prominent in the protest movement. More than 100 people, including a Buddhist monk, have been arrested, the courts have issued travel bans, police have raided protesters’ family homes and security agencies have taken activists off the streets and questioned them for hours.

“The government’s strategy seem to be to instil fear to make the protesters withdraw,” said Ruki Fernando, a prominent rights activist.

Among those targeted has been Jeewantha Peiris, a Catholic priest who is a well-known figure in the protest movement and has been outspoken against the government. Police were given orders to arrest him on site and two churches, one in his home town and one in Colombo, were raided by officers looking for him.

Peiris has filed a petition in the courts seeking protection from arrest, but he told the Guardian he had gone underground in the meantime, as police continued to visit his parents’ house asking for his whereabouts.

“I have personally felt the intimidation and repression of protesters,” said Peiris. “We always remained peaceful and non-violent. They are now targeting all the protest coordinators and accusing us of committing terrorist acts which is false. This president is undemocratic.”

Protests erupted in Colombo this week following the arrest of Joseph Stalin, leader of Ceylon Teachers Service Union and Sri Lanka’s most well known trade unionist, who was detained on Wednesday for taking part in a march in May.

“The right to protest is a democratic right. What crime have I committed? Have I stolen public money or murdered people? What crime did I commit?” asked Stalin as he was taken from his offices and forced into a police vehicle.

Among those who condemned his arrest was Mary Lawlor, UN special rapporteur on human rights defenders, who called his arrest “disturbing” and said his work “must be supported, not punished”.

Sri Lanka’s opposition leader, Sajith Premadasa, questioned why members of the Rajapaksa family still in the country, who are accused of corruption and economic mismanagement and had “launched this cycle of violence”, remained free while figures such as Stalin were now behind bars.



A protest on Thursday against the arrest of activists in Colombo.
Photograph: Chamila Karunaratne/EPA

Police gave an ultimatum to protesters to clear the protest camp in the central Colombo area of Galle Face, known as GotaGoGama, which has been the heart of the Aragalaya movement, by Friday evening or face legal action. But a case was filed in the courts opposing the action and hours before the clearance was due to happen the Attorney General declared that the camp would not be removed until 10 August.

Angelo Kulasuriya, 38, who has been living at GotaGoGama, was among the protesters who said they would stay put. “We are not here to protest according to what the police say,” he said. “We have been here fighting for our rights, talking about the issues of the country, because that is the right that was given to us by the constitution of Sri Lanka.”

Wickremesinghe has denied any crackdown on the protesters. He said he was taking action only against those who engaged in “violent or terrorist acts” and claimed that protests had delayed essential international financial assistance, including a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

“Some groups are trying to spread a huge propaganda through social media that I am hunting down the protesters. But it is not true,” Wickremesinghe told parliament on Wednesday. “I will not allow any kind of prejudice to the peaceful activists. I will establish an office to protect the peaceful protesters and support them.”

But many groups, including the Inter University Students’ Federation (IUSF), who have been very active throughout the protests, say they are being harassed and arbitrarily detained. In the past two weeks, IUSF leaders have received travel bans, been pulled off planes and buses by plainclothes officers and arrested. One was forcibly picked from the streets in an alleged “white van abduction”, questioned for several hours by officers about the location of the IUSF convener Wasantha Mudalige, and then let go three hours later.

Other less prominent figures have also been arrested, including a protester who took a beer mug from the president's house and another who sat in his chair when thousands of protesters had taken over the property. Fathima Banu, 37, described how her husband, Moulavi Ismath, who had spent months staying at the GotaGoGama camp, was summoned to the police station last week and then arrested.

"I was only able to meet him once since his arrest," she said. "We couldn't talk much, and no one officially informed me what his crime was."

She said, like so many, that Ismail had taken part in the protests because of the terrible impact the economic crisis was having on his family, with shortages of fuel and food and cooking gas, meaning they had to cook meals on firewood. "He went for the sake of the country," she said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/05/sri-lanka-police-draconian-protesters-wickremesinghe>

[New Zealand](#)

Researchers attach body cameras to children to study New Zealand poverty

Images from world-first project show ‘shameful’ differences between conditions faced by children in most- and least-advantaged households



The study examined images captured by cameras worn by more than 150 children in Wellington. Photograph: Victoria Clark/Alamy

[Eva Corlett](#) in Wellington

[@evacorlett](#)

Fri 5 Aug 2022 02.10 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 02.56 EDT

Body cameras attached to more than 150 children have captured the “shameful” extent of child poverty in [New Zealand](#) through a child’s eye in a world-first study.

The University of Otago-led study, published in the [New Zealand Medical Journal](#), involved 168 randomly selected 11- to 13-year-olds from across 16

Wellington schools wearing automatic cameras for four days. The cameras took a photo every seven seconds of the child's day outside school hours and during the weekend.

"[The children] are wearing them all the time, so they just got on with their lives," said Louise Signal, a senior author of the study and professor in public health. "They played ball, you could see what they're eating, where they are going."

The photos also captured the state of the child's housing, what was in their fridge and cupboards, how likely they were to have private space and whether they were exposed to harms such as gambling, drinking or mouldy rooms.

It is the first study using cameras attached to children "to really show the lived reality of poverty from a child's perspective", Signal said. Spin-off studies have also come from the camera data, including a look into the exposure children have to junk food and branding.

Researchers compared images captured by children living in the lowest to highest levels of deprivation.

They found that children from more deprived households had less healthy food available to them, fewer educational resources, lacked access to technology or quiet spaces to do homework, often lived in mouldy and overcrowded houses, had fewer opportunities to engage in structured physical activity and were more likely to be exposed to harms such as alcohol.

"It's heartbreaking and it's shameful," Signal said. "There's no excuse for a country of our wealth."

"We've always said we're a great country to grow up in, but only for some children."

The study was conducted in 2014, with the results compiled and released this week.

Reducing child poverty is one of the signature issues of the prime minister, Jacinda Ardern. In her [newly created role as minister for child poverty reduction](#), she introduced legislation in 2018 that set out to create political accountability for reduction targets.

The measures of child poverty are beginning to trend downwards, according to Stats NZ, but roughly 150,400 children live in severe income poverty, while another nearly 600,000 are either living in after-housing costs poverty or income poverty. Stark disparities for Māori and Pasifika children remain – one in five Māori children live in material hardship and one in four Pasifika.

Since the study's data was collected, the government has made some improvements to housing, benefit levels and a cost-of-living payment to low-income earners, Signal said. “Yet the issue of child poverty remains in Aotearoa, damaging the health and wellbeing of our children.

“We’re hoping that by sharing the children’s lives … that it maybe could motivate adults to really bite the bullet and deal with it. We’re not going to get a flourishing society if we don’t care for our children.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/05/researchers-attach-body-cameras-to-children-to-study-new-zealand-poverty>.

[Al-Qaida](#)

Al-Qaida chief's killing comes as group gains ground in African conflict zones

UN says terror organisation, whose affiliate recently attacked Mali's most important military base, 'is once again the leader of global jihad'



Fighters from the extremist al-Shabaab movement in Somalia, with which the late al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri forged an alliance. Photograph: Farah Abdi Warsameh/AP

[Jason Burke](#)

Fri 5 Aug 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 11.36 EDT

It was one of Ayman al-Zawahiri's last victories. Just over a week before the al-Qaida leader was killed in Kabul by missiles fired from a US drone, militants from the organisation's biggest affiliate in sub-Saharan [Africa](#) attacked the most important military base in Mali.

The tactics of the attack were familiar – suicide bombers blowing a gap in defences to allow gunmen to reach stunned defenders – but the operation marked a major escalation.

In more than a decade of insurgent warfare in [Mali](#), al-Qaida had never struck any target of such significance nor so close to the capital, Bamako.

The attack on the base in Kati underlined the tenacity of the organisation in Africa and elsewhere despite decades of intense pressure from a US-led counter terrorist campaign and fierce rivalry from a breakaway faction that became the [Islamic State](#) in Iraq and Syria (Isis or IS).

“The international context is favourable to al-Qaida, which intends to be recognised again as the leader of global jihad,” a UN report compiled from intelligence supplied by members states said in July.

The attack in Mali last month was a vindication of Zawahiri’s 2011 decision to abandon the strategy of spectacular strikes against the west that had been favoured by his predecessor, Osama bin Laden. Instead, he directed al-Qaida’s regional commanders to seek gains locally, without being distracted by attempts to attack international aviation or bomb European cities.

The recent UN report warned that any territory carved out by al-Qaida or IS might be used as launchpads for such operations in the near future.

“The threat from IS and al-Qaida remains relatively low in non-conflict zones, but is much higher in areas directly affected by conflict or neighbouring it. Unless some of these conflicts are brought to a successful resolution ... one or more of them will incubate an external operational capability for Isil [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant], al-Qaida or a related terrorist group,” it said.

Progress made in Mali vindicated another part of Zawahiri’s strategy: to build grassroots support. The grievances of marginalised communities could be exploited, particularly where government was weak or predatory, he told leaders of affiliates after taking control of al-Qaida in 2011. Strong ties could be built with local actors through collaboration and even inter-

marriage. If they used violence, affiliates needed to seek targets that would be seen as legitimate.

The strategy predated the rise of IS from 2014, but the success of the rival group added impetus. Where IS relied on fear and coercion to cow local populations, al-Qaida sought to appear as moderate in comparison.

Al-Qaida has suffered major setbacks – almost eliminated in Syria and Iraq and unable to compete with IS in some theatres, such as Nigeria and Egypt's Sinai desert.

But in Africa particularly Zawahiri's strategy has paid off. The late leader personally concluded an alliance with al-Shabaab, the extremist movement which controls much of Somalia's rural areas and can field a force of thousands. In July 500 al-Shabaab fighters [took on Ethiopian troops](#) in an unprecedented cross-border incursion. The Somali affiliate is also wealthy enough to send millions of dollars to the al-Qaida central leadership, intelligence suggests.

Deep problems caused by competition for resources due to climate change, political instability, massive displacement of population and the recent withdrawal of French troops from Mali offer al-Qaida opportunities for further expansion, analysts say.

Al -Qaida's affiliate in Mali, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), has been quick to exploit the presence of the Wagner Group, a Russian private military company with links to the Kremlin hired to support the country's embattled military.

Wagner has been repeatedly accused of systematic human rights abuses, including massacres of civilians, which turn local communities against the government and build support for extremists.

The attack on the Kati base outside Bamako was a response to governmental collaboration with the Wagner Group, JNIM said.

“We say to the Bamako government: if you have the right to hire mercenaries to kill the defenceless innocent people, then we have the right to

destroy you and target you,” the group explained in a statement translated by the SITE Intelligence Group.

Gen Stephen J Townsend, commander of the US Africa Command, [told reporters last week](#) that JNIM were “on the march towards the south”.

“They are now nearly investing ... Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso’s capital, and they are starting operations now in the ... border regions of the coastal states. So this is of great concern, I think, for the world that’s watching,” he said.

In north Africa, al-Qaida still has a presence but has been largely squeezed out of Libya and Tunisia as the chaos seen earlier in the decade has calmed.

Its affiliate in Yemen, though also weaker than before, still exists and has long been considered by western security experts a potential threat. Outside Africa, the biggest gains have been made in [Afghanistan](#).

“The Taliban victory has very predictably strengthened al-Qaida’s hand ... That is simply a fact,” said Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, CEO of the US-based threat analysis firm Valens Global.

Al-Qaida has built deep relationships with key factions and senior members of the Taliban who, though divided, appear prepared to offer the group a safe haven on certain conditions. The house Zawahiri was living in with his family when he was killed was owned by an aide of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the Afghan interior minister.

Other prominent al-Qaida veterans [are in Iran](#), where they fled in 2002 but are still active, despite restrictions on their movements and communications, reports suggest.

A challenge for the group is that many obvious [heirs to al-Zawahiri have been killed](#), said Katherine Zimmerman, fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington.

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These include younger leadership candidates such as [Hamza bin Laden](#), the founder's son, who died in a drone strike in Pakistan between 2017 and 2019. Al-Qaida's No 2 was killed in what is believed to be an operation by the Mossad [in Tehran in 2020](#).

An important factor that may help al-Qaida is that the US and its allies are now focused elsewhere.

“We are not devoting that much attention … and the question at least here in DC is what would cause us to pivot away from Asia again?” said Zimmerman. “What would be the strategic distraction from our new China focus? Everyone says a major terror attack, but I’m not convinced actually that it would do it.”

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Global development

Death toll reaches 36 in eastern DRC as protesters turn on UN peacekeepers

With elections due next year, analysts fear political motives could be driving the rising violence and tensions in the region



Protesters target the UN peacekeeping mission in Goma in July. The perception is that Monusco is failing to stop attacks by armed groups.
Photograph: Michel Lunanga/AFP/Getty Images

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[About this content](#)

[Jason Burke](#) Africa correspondent

Fri 5 Aug 2022 04.27 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 06.04 EDT

Fears of a new wave of violence in the restive east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are growing after weeks of [deadly protests](#) against UN peacekeepers and rising regional tensions.

Thirty-six people, including four UN peacekeepers, have died in the past two weeks as hundreds of protesters vandalised and set fire to UN buildings in several cities in eastern frontier provinces.

Though there have been similar waves of protests before, few have caused so many casualties. With elections due next year, analysts say political actors are fuelling unrest.

Last week, the DRC effectively expelled a spokesperson for Monusco, the UN's peacekeeping force in the country, after allegedly making "indelicate and inappropriate" statements that authorities said contributed to the tensions with the local population. Authorities said this week they wanted to reassess the peacekeeping mission's withdrawal plan.

Civilians in eastern DRC have accused Monusco, which has been active for more than a decade, of failing to protect them from the militia violence that has long plagued the region but which has intensified in recent months. The protesters called for the immediate withdrawal of the force.



Protesters in the city of Goma, in North Kivu province, demanding the withdrawal of UN peacekeeping troops last month. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Nelleke van de Walle, project director for the Great Lakes region at the International Crisis Group, said Monusco was easy to blame.

“People are actually angry at a failed state, a failed government, an incapable army, but Monusco has a very visible presence with its patrols and bases and so becomes a focus of popular frustrations,” she told the Guardian.

In a poll published on Thursday by the [Congo Research Group](#) at New York University and the Kinshasa-based institute [Ebuteli](#), 44% of those asked said Monusco should leave DRC immediately – about the same number as those who wanted the mission to stay in 2016.

Monusco is due to hand most of its duties over to local forces by 2024, according to a timetable drawn up last year, but the government now aims to

speed up its departure, said the foreign affairs minister, Christophe Lutundula.

The force, which took over from an earlier UN operation in 2010, has been scaling down for years, and its current mandate ends in December. A renewal for a further year by the UN security council was expected to be a formality and is still seen as very likely by analysts.

The peacekeepers have been accused of retaliating with force and, in some cases, live ammunition, as hundreds of protesters threw rocks and petrol bombs, vandalising and setting fire to UN buildings.



A UN soldier and demonstrators with a poster protesting against the Monusco peacekeeping mission in Goma in July. Photograph: Michel Lunanga/AFP/Getty Images

A government commission sent to assess the aftermath found that 13 people died in clashes in the city of Goma; another 13, including four peacekeepers, in Butembo; and three in Kanyabayonga, the DRC's presidency said.

Four protesters were killed in the city of Uvira when they were hit by an electric cable that had been damaged as troops fired shots at it.

Three civilians died in a separate incident, reported on Sunday, during which soldiers returning from leave to a UN intervention brigade opened fire at a border post.

About 170 people were wounded, the commission added, noting strong anti-UN sentiment among civil society representatives.

At least some of the protests were organised and encouraged by political actors seeking to mobilise popular opinion against the peacekeepers.

“We are basically in a pre-election period now with polls scheduled for next year. So politicians are using and feeding grievances for their own benefit,” Van de Walle said.

Before some of the protests, the Goma youth branch of the ruling UDPS party released a statement demanding Monusco “withdraw from Congolese soil without conditions because it has already proved its incapacity to provide us with protection”.

The president of the DRC senate, Modeste Bahati, told supporters in Goma on 15 July that Monusco should “pack its bags”.

Delphin Rukumbuzi Ntanyoma, an analyst at the Erasmus University Rotterdam, said that in the context, such remarks could be dangerous.

“The UN mission ... has long been blamed for what should be the DRC government’s responsibility: de-escalating violence in the country’s eastern region and finding long-term solutions to peace,” he wrote [on the Conversation website](#) last week.



A funeral is held for peacekeepers who died in protests demanding the departure of the UN mission in Goma, 1 August 2022. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

The violence in eastern DRC is driven by competition for rich mineral and other resources. Rival regional powers Rwanda and Uganda have long sought to extend their influence in the region, sometimes through armed proxies. Instability has been aggravated by an offensive launched by an Islamist extremist group, the ADF, and the new campaign by [a resurgent faction known as M23](#), which many Congolese believe is supported by Rwanda.

After lying mostly dormant for years, the group resumed fighting in November and made significant advances, capturing the North Kivu town of Bunagana on the Ugandan border.

On Thursday, a UN group of experts said it had [“solid evidence”](#) that Rwandan troops had conducted military operations in eastern DRC since late last year and that Kigali has supported the M23 rebel group’s advance there.

The faction’s re-emergence is a significant factor in the anger directed at UN peacekeepers, whose commanders have admitted they lack the resources to take on the rebels.

“They said they don’t have the strength to fight the M23. Now what are they still doing here?” said Shadrac Kambale, a motorbike-taxi driver in Goma.

Sankara Bin, another protester, said: “We don’t want to see Monusco walking in the streets of Goma, we don’t even want to see their planes flying over.”

The UN first deployed an observer mission to eastern Congo in 1999. It became the peacekeeping mission Monusco – the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#) – in 2010, with a mandate to conduct offensive operations.

It has a current strength of about 16,300 uniformed personnel, the world’s largest UN mission, and has sustained 230 fatalities.

A spokesperson for the peacekeeping force said last week the mission would redouble its efforts to work alongside the people and authorities of DRC to fulfil its mandate from the UN security council.



Protesters in July demanding the withdrawal of UN peacekeeping troops in Goma. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Analysts say it is unlikely that the peacekeepers will be forced into a sudden departure. They will be needed to provide logistical support for elections in 2023, while many politicians recognise their contribution to stability.

“It would not be in the interests of [President Felix] Tshisekedi and many others to see Monusco leave,” said Van de Walle.

The new poll found that security was the biggest concern in DRC, with 26% of respondents putting it first, ahead of infrastructure and jobs.

International powers are now paying more attention to the country. In an effort to counter the efforts of strategic competitors on the continent, such as Russia and China, the US secretary of state will travel next month to South Africa, DRC and Rwanda, the state department announced last week.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/aug/05/death-toll-reaches-36-in-eastern-drc-as-protesters-turn-on-un-peacekeepers>

Julian Assange

Assange family barred from taking book about WikiLeaks founder into Australia's parliament

Family planned to distribute book, deemed ‘protest material’ by security, to MPs and media as they urged government to intervene in proposed extradition

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Julian Assange's father, John Shipton (left), and brother Gabriel were told by Parliament House security they could not take in a book on the WikiLeaks founder's case. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian

*[Christopher Knaus](#)
[@knausc](#)*

Fri 5 Aug 2022 04.39 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 04.41 EDT

Security staff at Parliament House in Canberra seized copies of a book about [Julian Assange](#) from his family members as they entered the building to

meet MPs on Thursday, deeming it “protest material”.

Assange’s family and supporters [visited parliament on Thursday](#) to urge the Albanese government to intervene in the proposed extradition of the WikiLeaks founder from the UK to the United States.

They were carrying copies of a book on Assange’s case by Nils Melzer, the former United Nations special rapporteur on torture, which they intended to give to MPs and media.

But Assange’s brother, Gabriel Shipton, said parliament security refused to let the family take the book into the building, because they deemed it to be “protest material”.

“I was saying ‘this is ridiculous. They’re books’,” Gabriel Shipton said. “I offered to call [Andrew Wilkie](#), who was the MP who co-chaired the Parliamentary Friends of the Bring Julian Assange Home Group. He said ‘yes, go ahead, call him, but you can’t take the books in’.”

The family was able to distribute books to MPs and media from a box already stored in Wilkie’s office, and a staffer from Wilkie’s office was able to later retrieve the seized books.

But Louise Bennet, a campaigner with the Bring Assange Home Campaign, said the actions of security were “ridiculous”.

“They were incredibly adamant that it was protest material and that it was not allowed into the building,” Bennet said.

“It just blows my mind. This is the sort of thing that we see in Trump’s America, that we criticise in China. What is our parliament afraid of that we can’t bring a book in?”

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The Department of Parliamentary Services said it could not comment on “specific operational security matters”.

Gabriel Shipton attended parliament with Assange’s father, John Shipton, and other campaigners.

During their visit, they raised concerns about the lack of progress since the May election. The family urged Anthony Albanese to make the issue “non-negotiable” with the US.

Gabriel Shipton said on Friday that he was disappointed in the rhetoric from the new government, which he said had undergone a “significant change” since it won office.

He said Labor had been much more forthright in its criticism of the treatment of Assange before the election.

“They were elected on that platform, [it was] one of their promises essentially, and it’s one of the first ones that they’ve gone back on,” he said.

Albanese has said that he intends to pursue the matter diplomatically and that “not all foreign affairs is best done with the loudhailer”.

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Headlines saturday 6 august 2022

- [Archie Battersbee Mother says she has done all she can after family told life support to end](#)
- [Rishi Sunak Labour calls for openness about finances after silence over loan source](#)
- [Private school and big dreams Sunak's rise to PM contender](#)
- [Live China aircraft and ships ‘carried out attack drills’; senior Taiwan military researcher found dead in hotel](#)
- [Taiwan China staging mock invasion and breaching demarcation line](#)

[UK news](#)

Archie Battersbee: mother says she has done all she can after family told life support to end

Family were told treatment to be withdrawn after attempt to have 12-year-old moved to a hospice fails



The hospital trust said Archie's condition was too unstable for a transfer to a different setting. Photograph: PA

[Haroon Siddique](#) and [Matthew Weaver](#)

Sat 6 Aug 2022 04.12 EDTFirst published on Fri 5 Aug 2022 06.35 EDT

The mother of Archie Battersbee has said she has done everything she promised her son she would do as the family prepares for his life support to be withdrawn on Saturday.

Archie's parents, Hollie Dance and Paul Battersbee, made an unsuccessful last-ditch plea to the European court of human rights on Friday night to intervene after their attempt to appeal against a high court ruling that he must remain at the Royal London hospital was rejected by the court of appeal.

His family were told his treatment would be withdrawn at 10am on Saturday. A spokesperson for the Christian Legal Centre, which backed the family's legal effort, told PA Media: "All legal routes have been exhausted. The family are devastated and are spending precious time with Archie."

In an interview with Sky News, recorded on Friday, Dance, of Southend-on-Sea in Essex, said she was "pretty broken".

She said: "The last however many weeks since 7th April, I don't think there's been a day that hasn't been awful really. It's been really hard. Despite the hard strong face and appearance obviously in front of the cameras up until now, I've been pretty broken."

Asked if there was anything more she could do, she said: "No. I've done everything that I promised my little boy I'd do."



Hollie Dance, mother of 12-year-old Archie Battersbee Photograph: James Manning/PA

The European court said the complaints “fell outside the scope” of the rule the appeal was made under and so it would not intervene.

Mrs Justice Theis, sitting at the high court, said she had taken her decision in the light of evidence from a doctor treating Archie that the risks of moving him were “major and unpredictable” and that he was becoming more fragile.

“I am satisfied that when looking at the balancing exercise again, his best interests remain … that he should remain at the hospital when treatment is withdrawn,” [Theis said in her judgment](#).

“The circumstances outlined by Dr F of the physical arrangements at the hospital, and the arrangements that can be made, will ensure that Archie’s best interest will remain the focus of the final arrangements to enable him peacefully and privately to die in the embrace of the family he loved.”

Archie’s parents attempted to appeal partly on the basis that Theis did not allow an application for expert evidence from “Dr R”, a consultant in paediatric respiratory medicine, which they made just before Thursday’s hearing.

Outlining her decision not to grant the application for expert assessment, Theis said the court had heard evidence from Dr F, “the treating specialist who has detailed knowledge of Archie’s current position”, and that Dr R had not worked in a paediatric intensive care unit since 2008.

She added: “Dr R takes little issue with what Dr F set out, other than the assessment of risks involved in transfer in which he recognises he has no detailed information about Archie’s clinical position or background.”

The three court of appeal judges, led by Sir Andrew McFarlane, said Theis’s reasoning for not instructing Dr R were sound. “We have reached the clear conclusion that each of her decisions was right for the reasons she gave. It follows that the proposed appeal has no prospect of success and there is no other compelling reason for the court of appeal to hear an appeal,” they said.

Archie has been in a coma since 7 April when he suffered a catastrophic brain injury. His mother believes he choked while taking part in a viral social media challenge. On Wednesday, the Strasbourg court refused to intervene in the case, which was his parents' last hope of preventing his life support being removed.

During Thursday's hearing, the court heard from Ms C, Archie's brother's fiancee. She said the family believed Archie would not die with peace and dignity if his treatment was withdrawn at the hospital, partly due to a breakdown in trust. By contrast, she said the hospice would offer a more peaceful setting, had better facilities to accommodate the family, and Archie would be able to stay there for longer after his death than at the hospital.

But Dr F outlined a series of risks, including Archie's blood pressure dropping, human error dislodging medication tubes when he was moved, or equipment failure.

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"Archie has what she described as a bespoke care regime to meet his particular needs," Theis said in her judgment. "Once he leaves the hospital Archie would be with people who would be unfamiliar with his particular care needs and would be caring for Archie in very different circumstances, in the confines of a vehicle and a reduced care team."

Concluding her judgment, Theis said she recognised "the enormity of what lies ahead for Archie's parents and the family. Their unconditional love and dedication to Archie is a golden thread that runs through this case. I hope now Archie can be afforded the opportunity for him to die in peaceful circumstances, with the family who meant so much to him as he clearly does to them."

Rishi Sunak

Calls for Rishi Sunak to be more open about finances after silence over loan source

Labour's request is latest PM contender has faced with regards to management of family's fortune



Rishi Sunak attends a Tory members event in Bexhill, Sussex, before leadership hustings in Eastbourne later on Friday. Photograph: Peter Nicholls/PA

[Simon Goodley](#)

Sat 6 Aug 2022 01.00 EDT

Labour is calling on [Rishi Sunak](#) to be more transparent about his finances after the prime ministerial candidate declined to answer questions about the

source of hundreds of thousands of pounds he loaned to a company that he jointly owned with his wife.

The move is the latest request for the former chancellor to explain details about how he has managed his family's fortune, which is said to total £730m and has led to him being routinely referred to as the UK's richest MP.

The vast majority of the Conservative leadership candidate's wealth is derived from his marriage to Akshata Murty, a member of the family that founded the Indian technology group Infosys, in which she owns a stake worth about £690m.

However, Sunak also worked in the hedge fund industry between 2006 and 2013, raising questions about whether the loans that he personally made to his UK business came from profits generated in international tax havens.

James Murray, the shadow financial secretary to the Treasury, said: "Rishi Sunak wants to be our next prime minister, but again it seems he is unable to give a straight answer to questions over his relationship with tax havens. It is hard to avoid the impression he has something to hide."

Between 2013 and 2014, Sunak loaned £652,449 to Catamaran Ventures UK, a company he jointly owned with Murty at the time, according to documents filed at Companies House.

The loans were made shortly after Sunak had worked in America between 2010 and 2013 for the US branch of the hedge fund Theleme Partners, where he managed three entities based in the US tax haven of Delaware.

Sunak was entitled to a share of the profits made by one of the Delaware entities, US filings suggest, while industry sources said he was also likely to have invested his own money into the hedge fund.

"Rishi has never used or benefited from a tax haven," Sunak's spokesperson said, adding that all of Theleme's US profits were subject to "full US tax", and that "all profits within the Theleme management company group are taxed either in the UK or in the US as applicable".

However, the spokesperson declined invitations to say whether Sunak had made the loans to the UK company from an overseas bank account – or if the loans had been made from an overseas corporate account, which might potentially have saved Sunak taxes on bringing the money into the UK.

Days before becoming an MP in 2015, Sunak transferred his share of the UK company and the loan to his wife, a transaction that would have been largely tax free.

There is no suggestion that Sunak has broken any tax laws and he has insisted that he has “[always been a completely normal UK taxpayer](#)”.

However, the former chancellor has occasionally been embarrassed by his ties to people with less conventional tax arrangements.

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In April, [Sunak and his family were criticised](#) for potentially [avoiding £20m in taxes via Murty's "non-dom" status](#). After days of negative coverage, she [agreed to pay UK tax on her worldwide earnings](#) in future and for the last tax year, but she continues to be a non-domiciled citizen.

Murty has also been revealed to be a [shareholder in a restaurants business that funnelled investments through a company in the tax haven of Mauritius](#) – a structure that could allow its backers to avoid taxes in India. The largest individual shareholder in that business – [International Market Management](#) (IMM) – is Hugh Sloane, the co-founder of the hedge fund Sloane Robinson, which was [found to have operated a tax avoidance scheme](#) by a tribunal in 2012.

Sunak's boss at Theleme, Patrick Degorce, was [forced in 2013 to pay millions of pounds in tax](#) after a ruling concerning a personal investment in a complex film financing scheme, which sought to shelter earnings of almost £19m.

Meanwhile, a joint-venture between Sunak's billionaire in-laws and Amazon was revealed last year to be in a [multimillion-pound dispute with the Indian](#)

tax authorities.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Rishi Sunak

Private school polish and big dreams: how Rishi Sunak became a contender for PM

Tory leadership candidate is praised as an earnest workaholic, but critics say politically he has a glass jaw and is naive



Rishi Sunak speaks during a Conservative hustings event in Exeter earlier this month. Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

[Heather Stewart](#), [Josh Halliday](#) and [Simon Goodley](#)
Sat 6 Aug 2022 02.00 EDT

“Let me tell you a story,” [Rishi Sunak](#) says in his soft-voiced campaign launch video, highlighting his status as the grandson of hard-grafting Indian immigrants.

If he wins the race for No 10, the 42-year-old would be the first person of colour to be the UK prime minister, and the first practising Hindu, in a historic break with the past. Yet, in other ways, his story is as establishment as it comes: private school, PPE at Oxford, the City, the Tory party.

He was born in Southampton, where he and his family still provide a meal once a year to local worshippers at the Hindu temple co-founded by Sunak's grandfather, Ramdas Sunak, in 1971 – shortly after he emigrated from India with his wife and their son, Sunak's father, Yash.

During this year's visit, in July, the then chancellor was being introduced to a group of young children, aged four to nine, when one asked: "Are you the prime minister?"

"We all burst out laughing," said Sanjay Chandarana, the president of the Vedic Society temple. "I don't remember what [Sunak] said particularly but obviously there was a smile on his face."

It was an apposite question. [Sunak resigned as chancellor](#) 48 hours later, helping to start a dramatic chain of events that forced Boris Johnson from Downing Street.

There was "no hint at all" that Sunak was considering quitting, said Chandarana, who spent almost five hours with him. Sunak led prayers with his wife, Akshata Murty, their daughters, Krishna and Anoushka, and his parents.

"He just came as a normal person – no one realised he was there – he just went and sat on the floor in the middle of everyone when the prayers were happening. The next thing he went in the kitchen and made chapattis," said Chandarana, adding that they were "perfectly round" and "we were throwing jokes around that he must cook at home".



Sunak is joined by his wife, Akshata Murty, and his daughters during his Tory leadership campaign last month. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

Sunak's roots may lie here in the local temple but his self-confidence and polish, which have propelled him into the final two in the hard-fought [Conservative leadership](#) race, are exactly what his parents hoped they were buying when they saved up to send him to Winchester – one of England's top private schools.

“You can see the success of it. You get an education, you get a good job, you have respect, you go up in your status, and things become easier,” his mother, Usha, a pharmacist, told a BBC documentary in 2001.

With his easy manners and willingness to work hard, Sunak became head boy and won himself a place at Lincoln College, Oxford. He told the same documentary – filmed in his final year at university – “it does put me in an elite of achievement definitely in society, but I’ll always consider myself professional middle class.”

One of his economics tutors at Oxford, who preferred not to be named, praised the young Sunak as “a very mature undergraduate”.

They said: “He was a really excellent student. He was really interested, he really wanted to understand, he cared about things, and he worked hard. He

couldn't have been a better student really. He listened, he absorbed things, he asked good questions."

His former tutor professes to have been "very surprised" when Sunak popped up years later on Newsnight – and "rather shocked" that he was there to speak for Boris Johnson, having shown few political leanings in his student days.

While he may not have set his sights on No 10, Sunak does appear to have been determined to make plenty of money. He joined an investment club at the University of Oxford, which hosted talks by City high-flyers – and scored himself a graduate job at Goldman Sachs.

Sunak never rose to be much more than a junior member of financial firms he joined and, [when he became chancellor in 2020](#), the Guardian struggled to find many people in the City who had come across him. This is perhaps unsurprising, as Sunak had quit finance by the time he reached his early 30s.

He left Goldman Sachs to do an MBA at Stanford in the US between 2004 and 2006, where he met his wife, Murty, the daughter of NR Narayana Murthy (Akshata dropped the "h"), the billionaire founder of the global IT firm Infosys. She owns a near 1% stake in the company.

As well as finding a fabulously wealthy spouse, Sunak picked up key aspects of his political philosophy during his time in California.

As he told the US venture capital journalist Harry Stebbings, of his time at Stanford: "Other than an appreciation of the weather, it's also a home of entrepreneurship, creativity, innovation, and those are probably the most important ways being out there in the US changed my life in terms of the trajectory that I was on."

It was then back to the less heady climate of the City of London, before he and Murty were married in what was billed as "Bangalore's wedding of the year" in August 2009. Friends from Stanford gathered alongside some of India's wealthiest tycoons and stars from the world of sport.

Yet despite the stellar guest list many observers noted that the “big fat Bangalore wedding” was almost modest for Indian standards. Murty wore “minimal and basic jewellery”, said one media report, perhaps in tune with her parents’ “almost ascetic” lifestyle, in spite of their vast wealth.

That same year Sunak moved to the US to work, before ultimately leaving for politics, in 2013.

In another of his slickly produced campaign videos, Sunak’s predecessor as MP for Richmond in North Yorkshire, William Hague, describes the selection meeting at which Sunak was chosen as the candidate, when hundreds of local members gathered to cast their eyes over the hopefuls.

“A farmer would be good, or a military man, some of them chuntered on the way in. We need a local candidate, said others, or, obviously they have to come from Yorkshire, that’s a given.” But it was Sunak, with his combination of private school polish and the big ambitions he picked up in Stanford, who clinched the nomination.

Sunak campaign video

Hague then recalls him working tirelessly to hold the seat for the Tories. Footage from the time shows Sunak listening earnestly to flat-capped farmers and helping out with early morning milking – always spotlessly, and expensively, dressed.

In 2015, Sunak and Murty bought a £1.5m manor house in the ancient hamlet of Kirby Sigston in his constituency. His daughters are sometimes seen riding ponies around their Grade II-listed home and playing with local children when they visit.

The Sunaks’ garden parties are one of the hottest tickets in town. They have been known to splash out on feasts of roast venison, canapés and champagne – but most get-togethers are less extravagant. “They have a nice house with a lawn leading down to a little pond and we gather there and have cups of tea and chat,” said Carl Les, the Conservative leader of North Yorkshire county council.”

Sunak arrived in the House of Commons in 2015, as David Cameron secured a surprise majority after five years of coalition with the Lib Dems – and having reluctantly promised an in/out referendum on what came to be known as Brexit.

In his maiden speech Sunak professed his belief in “a compassionate Britain, that provides opportunity and values freedom”.

Freedom featured again when, eight months later, he explained to his local newspapers, the Yorkshire Post and the Darlington & Stockton Times, that despite his erstwhile mentors Cameron and Hague backing remain, [he was plumping for Brexit](#).

“For me, this is a once in a generation opportunity for our country to take back control of its destiny. Of course, leaving will bring some uncertainty, but on balance I believe that our nation will be freer, fairer and more prosperous outside the EU,” he said.

Sunak won his first junior ministerial post in January 2018, when the embattled Theresa May carried out a botched reshuffle.

One longtime Tory special adviser who worked with him at that time said “he got to grips with a really difficult policy brief really quickly”, but showed himself to be a workaholic.

“It is a bit of a problem,” they said. “I have never known a minister in my life to work until 2am.” Another person who has seen how Sunak operates said it was “essentially like working for a banker”.

Having made one winning political bet with Brexit, Sunak made another when May’s troubled premiership finally crumbled. Alongside Oliver Dowden and Robert Jenrick he came out early and backed Boris Johnson to be the next Conservative leader.

“The Tories are in deep peril. Only Boris Johnson can save us,” said the headline on a [Times article](#) written by the ambitious trio, all of whom were subsequently given senior posts in Johnson’s first administration.

Sunak became chief secretary to the Treasury in July 2019. Just seven months later he was catapulted into the job of chancellor when Sajid Javid [resigned in disgust](#), rather than accept a plan cooked up by Dominic Cummings, in which Javid's special advisers would be replaced by a team shared with No 10.



Sunak sits on the Tory frontbench during his time as chief secretary to the Treasury in October 2019. Photograph: House of Commons/Jessica Taylor/PA

He arrived in post at an extraordinary moment, as the gravity of the Covid pandemic slowly began to dawn on Downing Street. Within weeks, Johnson was urging the public to stay in their homes, and Sunak was announcing the multibillion-pound furlough scheme.

One official who worked with him praised his ability to grasp the scale of the situation. “He did switch gear and realise it before the rest of the system, and pushed and pushed the system to think more radically about what you might do in that kind of environment,” they said.

Mark Harper, the former chief whip who was an early Sunak backer, said: “The thing that tells me about his character, is that if you throw an emergency at him, or something unexpected or left-field – and frankly that

happens to prime ministers a lot – he's got the capacity, both in terms of his intellect but also his character, to be able to grab it, understand it, and then make a well thought through decision at the right pace.”

Less praise was heaped on “eat out to help out”, however, the cut-price meal deal heavily branded with Sunak’s signature, which research subsequently suggested [may have caused a sixth of new Covid clusters](#) in that intra-lockdown summer of 2020.

And at the same time, Sunak was having to wrestle with how to work alongside Johnson, a very different political character.

“The Boris world was quite a weird one, and learning to navigate that,” said the official. “I remember when he first really understood that what Boris said and what Boris did weren’t really related. I think he was frustrated, he thought it was not how business should be done.”



Boris Johnson and Sunak use hand sanitiser during a visit to a restaurant in east London as business prepared to reopen following a Covid lockdown in June 2020. Photograph: Heathcliff O’Malley/The Daily Telegraph/PA

And as time went on, it became clear just how out of kilter that emergency furlough scheme was with his broader philosophy – small state fiscal conservatism with a dash of west coast “tech bro”.

While professing himself to be a tax-cutter, [Sunak raised taxes](#) in the UK more rapidly than most other major economies, rather than see Johnson's spending plans funded by higher borrowing – an approach deeply unpopular with Tory members, if leadership polling is anything to go by.

And he has repeatedly been found wanting when confronting the cost of living crisis, displaying a habit of what one senior official described as “underreacting to events in prospect, and then eventually doing what’s necessary when the time comes”.

John McDonnell, the former Labour shadow chancellor, who was Sunak’s opposite number in his early months at the Treasury, said: “On a personal basis I had no problems with him, but I found him overconfident, very full of himself but very lacking in political depth.”

Harper rejects the characterisation of Sunak as slow to react to a crisis, saying: “I don’t think that’s fair: it’s been a rapidly changing situation.”

One sceptical Tory adviser described Sunak’s politics as “paternalism – it’s, I know best, trust me, look at me, I’m rich and clever,” adding: “I think the problem with him is he’s very politically naive, and he has no idea that’s how he comes across.”

With Johnson’s premiership on the rocks over Partygate earlier this year, scrutiny of Sunak, as leadership frontrunner, ramped up – including of his and Murty’s immense personal wealth.

The Sunaks are worth £730m, with their main asset being Murty’s £690m holding in Infosys, according to this year’s Sunday Times rich list, which also calculated the holding should have delivered about “£54m in dividends over the past seven and a half years – including £11m in 2021”.

Until public outcry prompted a U-turn, his wife [was a non-dom](#), meaning she avoided UK taxes on her international earnings in return for paying an annual charge of £30,000. Without that status she could have been liable for more than £20m of UK tax on these windfalls.

Sunak himself admitted [holding a US green card](#) – signalling an intention eventually to become an American citizen – until October 2021, months after becoming chancellor.

Some colleagues assessing potential leadership candidates were unimpressed at the awkward way Sunak handled being questioned about these issues. “It showed he has a bit of a glass jaw,” said one veteran MP.

Yet when Sunak resigned – minutes after Javid took the same decision – colleagues viewed it as a clear signal that he had not surrendered his ambitions.

That fateful choice, together with his zeal for fixing the public finances, may have cost him this bitter leadership race, with many Tory members apparently still regretting Johnson’s demise.

Already, MPs are speculating that if he misses out on the big prize, the Sunak-Murtys could set their sights on a sunnier life away from the public gaze, and head to California, where, as Sunak gushed in an interview earlier this year: “everyone is interested in changing the world, and they start with the biggest of dreams”.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/aug/06/rishi-sunak-tory-leadership-private-school-prime-minister>

[Skip to key events](#)

[Taiwan](#)

The US, Australia and Japan urge China to cease military exercises around Taiwan – as it happened

This blog is now closed. Read our [latest live news coverage of China's military drills around Taiwan here](#)

Updated 4h ago

[Samantha Lock](#) (now); [Lauren Aratani](#), [Joe Middleton](#) and [Rebecca Ratcliffe](#) (earlier)

Sat 6 Aug 2022 22.19 EDTFirst published on Fri 5 Aug 2022 22.42 EDT

Key events

- [5h ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [6h ago](#)
[China warns Australia against 'finger-pointing'](#)
- [8h ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [12h ago](#)
[White House calls China's military drills "provocative" and "irresponsible"](#)
- [16h ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [17h ago](#)
[China claims US should have stopped Pelosi's visit](#)
- [19h ago](#)
[Taiwan scrambles jets as Chinese aircraft cross median line](#)
- [21h ago](#)

Summary

- [21h ago](#)
[China restarts military drills around Taiwan](#)
- [22h ago](#)
[China should not hold global concerns 'hostage', says Blinken](#)
- [24h ago](#)
[Senior Taiwan official died of heart attack, local media say](#)
- [1d ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [1d ago](#)
[Taiwan official leading missile production found dead in hotel](#)
- [1d ago](#)
[Chinese aircraft and ships carried out simulation attack exercises](#)
- [1d ago](#)
[Summary](#)

'We will defend ourselves': Taiwan's president issues warning to China – video

[Samantha Lock \(now\)](#); [Lauren Aratani](#), [Joe Middleton](#) and [Rebecca Ratcliffe \(earlier\)](#)

Sat 6 Aug 2022 22.19 EDTFirst published on Fri 5 Aug 2022 22.42 EDT

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Live feed

From 12h ago

[14.45](#)

White House calls China's military drills "provocative" and "irresponsible"

A White House spokesperson said that China is trying to “change the status quo” through its military drills around [Taiwan](#), according to Reuters.

“These activities are a significant escalation in China’s efforts to change the status quo. They are provocative, irresponsible, and raise the risk of miscalculation,” the spokesperson said. “They are also at odds with our long-standing goal of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, which is what the world expects.”

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Updated at 14.45 EDT

Key events

- [5h ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [6h ago](#)
[China warns Australia against 'finger-pointing'](#)
- [8h ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [12h ago](#)
[White House calls China's military drills "provocative" and "irresponsible"](#)
- [16h ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [17h ago](#)
[China claims US should have stopped Pelosi's visit](#)
- [19h ago](#)
[Taiwan scrambles jets as Chinese aircraft cross median line](#)
- [21h ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [21h ago](#)
[China restarts military drills around Taiwan](#)
- [22h ago](#)
[China should not hold global concerns 'hostage', says Blinken](#)
- [24h ago](#)
[Senior Taiwan official died of heart attack, local media say](#)

- [1d ago](#)
[Summary](#)
- [1d ago](#)
[Taiwan official leading missile production found dead in hotel](#)
- [1d ago](#)
[Chinese aircraft and ships carried out simulation attack exercises](#)
- [1d ago](#)
[Summary](#)

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[4h ago](#)[22.19](#)

This live blog is now closed.

For all the [latest coverage](#) of the Taiwan crisis please read our [most recent live blog](#) in the link below.

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[5h ago](#)[22.07](#)

Summary

Thank you for joining us for today's live coverage.

We will be launching a new blog shortly. In the meantime, you can read our comprehensive summary of the day's events below.

- **Taiwan's defence ministry accused Chinese aircraft and ships of carrying out simulation attack exercises on its main island on Saturday.** Several batches of Chinese aircraft and ships were detected in the Taiwan Strait, 14 of which crossed the median line – an

unofficial buffer separating the two sides – according to the ministry. Taiwan's army used patrolling naval ships and put shore-based missiles on stand-by in response.

- **The White House has condemned the escalation in military drills.** “These activities are a significant escalation in China’s efforts to change the status quo. They are provocative, irresponsible, and raise the risk of miscalculation,” a spokesperson said.
- **China has accused the US of interfering in Beijing’s internal affairs.** China’s foreign ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, said the US should have stopped Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan last week.
- **The Chinese embassy warned Australia against involvement in its actions over Taiwan,** saying “finger-pointing” against Beijing was unacceptable. Australia’s foreign minister Penny Wong earlier condemned Beijing’s “disproportionate and destabilising” actions, saying she had expressed her concern to her Chinese counterpart at the East Asia Summit in Cambodia.
- **Taiwan’s defence ministry said its naval forces are keeping tabs on China’s military vessels off the eastern coast.** It comes after Taiwan accused Chinese aircraft and ships of carrying out simulation attack exercises on its main island on Saturday.
- **The People’s Liberation Army’s eastern theatre command said it continued on Saturday to conduct sea and air joint exercises north, southwest and east of Taiwan,** as planned. It said its focus was on testing the system’s land strike and sea assault capabilities.
- **The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said China should not hold talks on important global matters such as the climate crisis “hostage”,** after Beijing cut off contacts with Washington in retaliation for US House speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan earlier this week.
- **Speaking at a rally in Wisconsin, the former US president Donald Trump has questioned why Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan.** He told supporters: “What was she doing in Taiwan? She was China’s dream, she gave them an excuse. They’ve been looking for that excuse.”
- **A Taiwan official who was in charge of various missile production projects was found dead on Saturday morning in a hotel room in southern Taiwan,** according to the official Central News Agency. Ou Yang Li-hsing, the deputy head of the military-owned National Chung-

Shan Institute of Science and Technology, was 57. The cause of his death is unknown, CNA reported.

- **The US, Australian and Japanese foreign ministers have urged China to immediately cease military exercises around Taiwan.** In a joint statement, officials expressed their concern about China's recent actions "that gravely affect international peace and stability, including the use of large-scale military exercises". They also condemned China's launch of ballistic missiles, five of which the Japanese government reported landed in its exclusive economic zones "raising tension and destabilising the region".
- **Japan's prime minister, Fumio Kishida, said Chinese military drills near Taiwan were a threat to regional security.** Beijing announced four days of drills that are expected to finish on Sunday. The drills are a "serious problem that impacts our national security and the safety of our citizens", Kishida said.
- **North Korea has denounced Nancy Pelosi as "the worst destroyer of international peace and stability",** after the US House speaker expressed her commitment during a visit to South Korea to achieving the North's denuclearisation. It also condemned her trip to Taiwan.



A Taiwanese F-5 fighter jet is seen after taking off from Chihhang Air Base on 6 August in Taitung, Taiwan. Photograph: Annabelle Chih/Getty Images

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Updated at 22.16 EDT

[5h ago](#)[21.49](#)

Chinese diplomats continue in their campaign to lay the blame on the US and accuse Washington of causing chaos in the region.

China's former ambassador to the UK, Liu Xiaoming, has just posted a lengthy series of tweets in which he quotes **China's foreign minister, Yang Wi**.

In total disregard of the firm opposition and repeated representations of the Chinese side and with the condonement and even arrangement of the US government, Pelosi went ahead with the visit to China's Taiwan region.

This reckless move seriously undermined China's sovereignty, seriously interfered in China's internal affairs, seriously violated the commitments by the US, seriously jeopardised peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. It is only natural that China makes a firm response.

Our position is justified, reasonable and legal; our measures are firm, strong and measured; and **our military exercises are open, transparent and professional.** They are consistent with domestic and international laws, as well as international practices.

They are aimed at sending a warning to the perpetrator and punishing the 'Taiwan independence' forces. We will firmly safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, resolutely stop the United States' attempt to use the Taiwan card to contain China.

We will firmly shatter the Taiwan authorities' illusion to pursue Taiwan independence by soliciting the support of the US. At the same time, we are upholding the international law and the basic norms governing

international relations, particularly non-interference in countries' internal affairs.

This is the most important international norm enshrined in the UN Charter. If the principle of non-interference is discarded, the world will return to the law of the jungle, the UshnaShah will become even more unscrupulous in treating and bullying other countries.”

Wang Yi: In total disregard of the firm opposition and repeated representations of the [#Chinese](#) side and with the condonement and even arrangement of the [#US](#) government, [#Pelosi](#) went ahead with the visit to China's [#Taiwan](#) region.

— 刘晓明Liu Xiaoming (@AmbLiuXiaoMing) [August 7, 2022](#)

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[5h ago](#)[21.16](#)

Taiwan has welcomed delegates from the Caribbean nation of St Vincent and the Grenadines today.

Joseph Wu, Taiwan's minister of foreign affairs, met with officials this morning ahead of their reportedly six-day visit to the island.

Minister Wu extended a warm welcome to Taiwan's great supporter Ralph Gonsalves. It's a real privilege to have the PM of our country's Caribbean ally St Vincent and the Grenadines and his delegation with us at this challenging time.”

Minister Wu extended a warm welcome to [#Taiwan](#)'s great supporter [@ComradeRalph](#). It's a real privilege to have the PM of our country's [#Caribbean](#) ally [#StVincentAndTheGrenadines](#) & his delegation with us at this challenging time. All the best to our friends for the 6-day visit! [pic.twitter.com/wxBeXIwBYN](#)

— 外交部 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROC (Taiwan) □ □
(@MOFA_Taiwan) [August 7, 2022](#)

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[6h ago](#) [20.48](#)

While we are in the Asia-Pacific region, **Australia's shadow defence minister Andrew Hastie** has been asked if the opposition think Australia should support Taiwan militarily if [China](#) invaded.

I think it is a principled position to defend your neighbour, but it's also a principle borne out of self-interest. If I don't stand up for other countries, who will stand up for me? As a nation of only 26 million people on a vast continent, we need as many friends we can get.

In fact, I would say the era of the lucky country is over. It's dead and buried and we need to start thinking with this new development over the last decade about how we secure ourselves into the future and the strategic culture of Singapore and Israel are good examples of how we can prepare for the challenges ahead, given our size and strength relative to countries like China and Russia.

Asked if he would go to Taiwan, after Nancy Pelosi's visit sparked [unprecedented military aggression from China](#), Hastie hasn't ruled out the option.

I'm open-minded to going there. I have a very full dance card... with a young family and enough travel as it is, but certainly I'm on the record that I would like to visit Taiwan at some point.

They have invited me... I will wait and see.”

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6h ago 20.13

China warns Australia against 'finger-pointing'

The Chinese embassy in Australia has this morning condemned a joint statement from Australia's foreign minister **Penny Wong** together with her Japanese counterpart and US secretary of state in response to Beijing's unprecedented military aggression.

The joint statement released on Friday expressed concern over [China's large-scale military exercises in the water of the Taiwan Strait](#) and condemned China's ballistic missiles landing in Japan's exclusive economic zones.

In response, a spokesperson from the Chinese embassy has said Beijing is "seriously concerned and strongly discontent". The spokesperson went on to say:

It is absolutely unacceptable for the finger-pointing on China's justified actions to safeguard state sovereignty and territorial integrity. We firmly oppose and sternly condemn this.

The statement goes on to defend the actions taken by the Chinese government as "legitimate and justified" in order to "safeguard state sovereignty and territorial integrity and curb the separatist activities".

The spokesperson says the one-China principle "should be strictly abided by and fully honoured. It should not be misinterpreted or compromised in practice."

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[7h ago](#)[19.55](#)

China's consul general in Belfast has had some stern words to say about US involvement in Taiwan's affairs this morning.

Zhang Meifang made the comments in a series of tweets:

So, the US provokes China. China is forced to respond. Region is destabilised, as well the relationship between the countries in addressing critical world issues. Threatening global peace and prosperity for all. Nice job Pelosi! Way to make your point! What was your point?

The USA poses the single greatest threat to world peace. And it does so under the promise of so-called freedom. For freedom under its terms is no freedom at all. And it comes at the price of peace itself!" she added.

So, the [#US](#) provokes China. [#China](#) is forced to respond. Region is destabilized, as well the relationship between the countries in addressing critical world issues. Threatening global peace & prosperity for all. Nice job [#Pelosi!](#) Way to make your point! What was your point? pic.twitter.com/IGq2Zsal8u

— Zhang Meifang张美芳 (@CGMeifangZhang) [August 6, 2022](#)

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Updated at 19.55 EDT

[8h ago](#) [19.01](#)

Summary

It's 7 am in Taipei. Here's a summary of the latest developments.

- **Taiwan scrambled jets to warn away 20 Chinese aircraft, including 14 that crossed the [Taiwan](#) Strait median line**, the island's defence ministry said on Saturday according to Reuters. Taiwan said China's

military drills appear to simulate an attack on the self-ruled island, AP reports.

- **In response to the military drills, the White House released a statement condemning the escalation.** “These activities are a significant escalation in China’s efforts to change the status quo. They are provocative, irresponsible, and raise the risk of miscalculation,” a spokesperson said.
- **Hua Chunying, China’s foreign ministry spokesperson, accused the US of interfering in Beijing’s internal affairs.** Chunying also said the US should have stopped Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan last week.
- **The Chinese embassy has warned Australia against involvement in its actions over Taiwan, saying “finger-pointing” against Beijing was unacceptable, reports Reuters.** Foreign minister Penny Wong on Friday condemned Beijing’s “disproportionate and destabilising” actions, saying she had expressed her concern to her Chinese counterpart at the East Asia Summit in Cambodia. The Chinese embassy in Australia responded with a spokesperson’s statement on Saturday expressing concern and “discontent” about the remarks from the three countries.
- **Taiwan’s defence ministry said its naval forces are keeping tabs on China’s military vessels off the eastern coast.** It comes after Taiwan accused Chinese aircraft and ships of carrying out simulation attack exercises on its main island on Saturday.
- **The People’s Liberation Army’s eastern theatre command said it continued on Saturday to conduct sea and air joint exercises north, southwest and east of Taiwan,** as planned, Reuters reported. It said its focus was on testing the system’s land strike and sea assault capabilities.
- **The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said on Saturday that China should not hold talks on important global matters such as the climate crisis “hostage”,** after Beijing cut off contacts with Washington in retaliation for US House speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan earlier this week. Blinken spoke in an online news conference with his Philippine counterpart in Manila after meeting the newly elected president, Ferdinand Marcos Jr, and other top officials.
- **Speaking at a rally in Wisconsin, the former US president Donald Trump has questioned why Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan.** He told

supporters: “What was she doing in Taiwan? She was China’s dream, she gave them an excuse. They’ve been looking for that excuse.”

- **Taiwan’s defence ministry has accused Chinese aircraft and ships of carrying out simulation attack exercises on its main island on Saturday.** Several batches of Chinese aircraft and ships were detected in the Taiwan Strait, some of which crossed the median line – an unofficial buffer separating the two sides – according to the ministry. Taiwan’s army used patrolling naval ships and put shore-based missiles on stand-by in response.
- **A Taiwan official who was in charge of various missile production projects was found dead on Saturday morning in a hotel room in southern Taiwan,** according to the official Central News Agency. Ou Yang Li-hsing, the deputy head of the military-owned National Chung-Shan Institute of Science and Technology, was 57. The cause of his death is unknown, CNA reported.
- **The US, Australian and Japanese foreign ministers have urged China to immediately cease military exercises around Taiwan.** In a joint statement after meeting in Phnom Penh on the margins of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations foreign ministers’ gathering, the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, and the foreign ministers of Australia and Japan, Penny Wong and Hayashi Yoshimasa, “expressed their concern about the People’s Republic of China’s recent actions that gravely affect international peace and stability, including the use of large-scale military exercises”. They also “condemned the PRC’s launch of ballistic missiles, five of which the Japanese government reported landed in its exclusive economic zones, raising tension and destabilising the region”.
- **Japan’s prime minister, Fumio Kishida, said Chinese military drills near Taiwan were a threat to regional security.** Beijing announced four days of drills that are expected to finish on Sunday. The drills are a “serious problem that impacts our national security and the safety of our citizens”, Kishida told reporters, speaking after a meeting with the US House speaker, [Nancy Pelosi](#), in Tokyo on Friday.
- **North Korea has denounced Nancy Pelosi as “the worst destroyer of international peace and stability”**, after the US House speaker expressed her commitment during a visit to South Korea to achieving the North’s denuclearisation. It also condemned her trip to Taiwan.

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[8h ago](#)[18.29](#)

The Chinese embassy in Australia released a lengthy [statement](#) in response to the joint [statement](#) made by the foreign ministers of Australia, Japan and the United States that expressed concerns over China's military drills in Taiwan.

"Instead of expressing sympathy and support to the victim, the Australian side has condemned the victim along with the perpetrators," the statement from the embassy read. "This is completely putting the cart before the horse and reversing the right from the wrong."

The statement went on to say that Japan "should be the first to engage in self-reflection and discretion" for its history of colonization in [Taiwan](#).

"Australia should not take sides and blindly make unfair judgments that run counter to the facts."

"We hope the Australian side should view China-Australia relations with serious attitude, respect facts, uphold justice and abandon wrong standing," the statement read.

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[9h ago](#)[17.50](#)

The New York Times published a story today analyzing the deep-set fears Xi Jinping has in his party losing control in China. Here's an excerpt from the [report](#):

Over informal, private meals with American leaders, China's Xi Jinping let his guard down a little. It was a decade ago, relations were

less strained, and Mr. Xi, still cementing his power, hinted he worried about the Chinese Communist Party's grip.

Speaking privately with President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden, Mr. Xi suggested that China was a target of "color revolutions," a phrase the party adopted from Russia for popular unrest in the name of democracy and blamed on the West. The recent "Arab Spring" uprisings across the Middle East had reinforced his concerns that China was vulnerable to public anger over corruption and inequality, both of which the country had in abundance.

"Xi couldn't have been more forthright that China is beset by malevolent forces and internally prey to centrifugal forces," said Daniel R. Russel, a former senior American diplomat who accompanied Mr. Biden to China in 2011.

"He would talk all the time about color revolutions. That's clearly a sort of front-of-mind issue for him," said Ryan Hass, the National Security Council director for China when Mr. Xi later visited the White House.

Such fears have come to define the era of Mr. Xi. Over the past decade, he has pursued an all-encompassing drive to expand the very meaning of "national security" in China, bolstering the party's control on all fronts against any perceived threats abroad that could pounce on weakness at home.

He has strengthened, centralized and emboldened an already pervasive security apparatus, turning it into a hulking fortress that protects him and positions him as the most powerful leader since Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. Mr. Xi has built what he calls a "comprehensive" system designed for a world he sees as determined to thwart China — politically, economically, socially, militarily and technologically.

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10h ago 16.41

For anyone interested in reading up on Taiwanese history and culture, University of Washington historian James Lin posted on Twitter a syllabus from his graduate class on the country.

As a historian of Taiwan, I'm lucky to be at an institution where I can teach a dedicated Taiwan Studies graduate seminar. I'm sharing my syllabus here (abridged) in case others might be interested in reading some of my favorite scholarship on different aspects of Taiwan. 1/n
pic.twitter.com/Ypb7VGuyMc

— James Lin (@jamestwotree) July 14, 2020

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11h ago 15.42

The Wall Street Journal has an interesting story about what life is like in Taiwan days after Nancy Pelosi's visit as China escalates tension in the region. Largely, life is going on as usual. Here's more from the [report](#):

Democratic Taiwan is encircled by the fleet of Communist-ruled mainland China, part of [Beijing's response to a visit Wednesday](#), by U.S. Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#). The four-day drill simulates a blockade of the main island, with live firing in demarcated zones—one of which is less than 6 miles from the Liuqiu lookout, where local businessman Kevin Tseng said dozens of visitors gathered with their cameras Thursday afternoon.

"They were there to watch the fun," said Mr. Tseng, adding that the drills have had no noticeable impact on his scooter-rental business, with just one group citing them when they texted to cancel a booking. Otherwise, everyday life on the island goes on as usual, he said.

“If they really attack us, there’s nothing I can do about it, so I just relax and take it easy,” the 40-year-old said. ...

Taiwan’s night markets were teeming Friday evening with crowds craving their favorite street food or lining up for bubble tea. Markets and grocery stores were well stocked, too. Cultural activities such as live-music performances in the capital of Taipei—dubbed [Asia’s answer to Portland, Ore.](#)—are continuing as usual.

The Chinese drills were largely absent from the daily conversations of more than 20 people contacted by The Wall Street Journal.

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[12h ago](#)[14.45](#)

White House calls China's military drills "provocative" and "irresponsible"

A White House spokesperson said that China is trying to “change the status quo” through its military drills around [Taiwan](#), according to Reuters.

“These activities are a significant escalation in China’s efforts to change the status quo. They are provocative, irresponsible, and raise the risk of miscalculation,” the spokesperson said. “They are also at odds with our long-standing goal of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, which is what the world expects.”

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Updated at 14.45 EDT

[12h ago](#)[14.11](#)

A slate of low-quality titles just published after Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan are being sold on Amazon, one Twitter user pointed out. The books appear to be by fake authors, with some including Pelosi's name in the title or cover.

New disinformation push on Amazon? A torrent of new low quality "books" about Taiwan has appeared; a quick Google shows at least some of the content is plagiarised, and the names of the authors appear to be fake. I count 61 of these under one search term alone. 1/4
pic.twitter.com/ICakkKlzgb

— Michael Cannings (@formosaphile) [August 5, 2022](#)

Amazon has come [under fire](#) for recommending titles with questionable authorship to its customers, such as ones on coronavirus. Under Amazon's content guidelines for books, Amazon does "not allow descriptive content meant to mislead customers or that doesn't accurately represent the content of the book".

Tech companies will likely have a lot on their hands as China escalates tensions with Taiwan. In 2019, Chinese state media outlets tried to [buy paid advertisements](#) on Facebook and Twitter that poorly portrayed Hong Kong protestors. In 2020, a [swarm of accounts](#) on Twitter were pushing out non-stop pro-Beijing content as China sought to shape the narrative around Covid-19.

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Updated at 14.20 EDT

[13h ago](#)[13.18](#)

Canada's defense minister Anita Anand said that China's military drills around Taiwan are an "unnecessary escalation" in an interview with [CBC Radio](#).

“There is no justification to use a visit as a pretext for aggressive military activity in the [Taiwan](#) Strait,” Anand said. “It is routine for legislators from our countries to travel internationally, and China’s escalatory response simply risks increasing tensions and destabilizing the region.”

On Friday, China’s foreign ministry [summoned](#) Beijing-based Canadian diplomat Jim Nickel over the country’s participation in a statement from G7 nations calling on China to end its aggressive action around Taiwan.

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[14h ago](#)[12.19](#)

More drones were seen flying over the Kinmen islands Saturday night, Kinmen’s defense command has reported, according to CNA, Taiwan’s national news agency.

Just in: [#Taiwan](#)’s army in Kinmen said three drones entered restricted water near the island and the army fired flares to warn it. This is the third night in a row that Taiwan has reported such activities. The first two times were done by Chinese drones. <https://t.co/XTIH1jaZxk>

— William Yang (@WilliamYang120) [August 6, 2022](#)

Similar drones were flying over restricted waters around the islands [Friday night](#). In response, the Taiwanese army fired signal flares to warn off the unidentified drones.

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4

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Taiwan says China making simulated attack on main island

15h ago



What the fallout from Pelosi's visit means for Taiwan and China

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1d ago

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Taiwan crisis: China imposes sanctions on Pelosi over ‘provocative actions’

2d ago

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China missile drills around Taiwan a threat to regional security, says Japan PM

2d ago



Wave of nationalistic fervour washes over China amid Pelosi visit to Taiwan

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3d ago



South Korean president accused of avoiding Nancy Pelosi in bid to placate China

3d ago

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Taiwan](#)

Taiwan: China staging mock invasion and breaching demarcation line

Condemnation as Beijing pulls out of climate change co-operation with US, while military exercises in Taiwan Strait continue

- [China-Taiwan: latest updates](#)

China launches missiles into Taiwan strait after Pelosi visit – video

Agence France-Presse

Sat 6 Aug 2022 02.47 EDT Last modified on Sat 6 Aug 2022 06.54 EDT

Taiwan has accused the Chinese army of simulating an attack on its main island, as Beijing continued retaliation for Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei.

Beijing on Saturday continued some of its largest-ever military drills around Taiwan – exercises seen as practice for a blockade and ultimate invasion of the island.

Taipei said it observed “multiple” Chinese planes and ships operating in the Taiwan Strait, believing them to be simulating an attack on the self-ruled democracy’s main island.

“Multiple batches of Communist planes and ships conducting activities around the Taiwan Strait, some of which crossed the median line,” the defence ministry said, referring to an unofficial demarcation line that runs down the Taiwan Strait which Beijing does not recognise.

Beijing said it would hold a live-fire drill in a southern part of the Yellow Sea – located between [China](#) and the Korean peninsula – from Saturday until 15 August.

China's state broadcaster, CCTV, has reported that Chinese missiles have flown directly over Taiwan during the exercises – a major escalation if confirmed.

Taipei has remained defiant, insisting it will not be cowed by its “evil neighbour”.

The scale and intensity of China's drills have triggered outrage in the US and other democracies, with the White House summoning China's ambassador to Washington on Friday to rebuke him over Beijing's actions.

Relations between the two superpowers have nosedived in the wake of the [US House speaker's trip to self-ruled Taiwan](#), which China claims as its territory.

Beijing's retaliatory decision to [withdraw from hard-won cooperation on climate change](#) sparked wider fears about the future of the planet. The US national security council spokesman John Kirby said the decision was “fundamentally irresponsible”.

“They're actually punishing the whole world, because the climate crisis doesn't recognise geographic boundaries and borders,” Kirby said.

“The world's largest emitter now is refusing to engage on critical steps necessary to combat the climate crisis.”

The UN secretary general, António Guterres, said the two superpowers must continue to work together for the world's sake.

“For the secretary general, there is no way to solve the most pressing problems of all the world without an effective dialogue and cooperation between the two countries,” said Guterres's spokesperson Stephane Dujarric.

But with tensions over Taiwan having risen to their highest level in nearly 30 years with an elevated risk of military conflict, experts told AFP the latest downturn in relations between the two superpowers could be deep and long-lasting.

“The relationship is in a very bad place right now,” said Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the German Marshall Fund.

The suspension Friday of bilateral military and maritime dialogue while China continues its military exercises was “particularly worrisome”, she said.

“We don’t know what else they will do,” she said. “We just don’t know if this is just a temporary thing.”

John Culver, a former CIA Asia analyst, said in a discussion hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies that Beijing’s main purpose with its military exercises was to change that status quo.

“I think that this is the new normal,” Culver said. “The Chinese want to show … that a line has been crossed by the speaker’s visit.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/06/taiwan-china-staging-mock-invasion-and-breaching-demarcation-line>

2022.08.06 - Spotlight

- Grace Campbell I made a name for myself with ‘sex-positive’ comedy. Then I was raped. Would my openness be used against me?
- Tom Daley's LGBTQ+ awakening ‘I had my head in my hands. I felt so dark about being British’
- Money How to protect your savings and pension from UK inflation
- ‘I feel I’m moving backwards’ New UK graduates hit by cost of living crisis
- Tall stories Performers on their wildest Edinburgh moments
- ‘Fuelled by anger’ Politics loom larger than ever at Edinburgh fringe

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I made a name for myself with ‘sex-positive’ comedy. Then I was raped on a night out. Would my openness be used against me?



‘I was 27, halfway across the world, and this man had tried to ruin sex for me.’ Photograph: Serena Brown/The Guardian

I've never held back when it comes to talking about sex. But after an attack while on holiday in Las Vegas, going to the police didn't feel like an option

[Grace Campbell](#)

Sat 6 Aug 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 6 Aug 2022 05.58 EDT

Last November, after a string of relationships with men had gone wrong, I decided to go to Los Angeles for a few months to try to fulfil my lifelong dream of having sex with an A-list celebrity. I have romanticised LA ever since, aged 14, I stumbled across that pinnacle of reality TV, [The Hills](#). I fell in love with the idea of this star-studded city; a place where everyone can do a headstand, no one drinks wine at lunch, and it is totally normal to drive your car while outrageously stoned.

The first time I visited LA, I went to Lady Gaga's house. The second time, I danced with Drake's dad in a club in west Hollywood. On this third visit, I stayed with my best friend in her family's pool house, and the A-lister in my sights was [Cousin Greg from Succession](#).

During that trip, some of my friends and I decided to fly to Las Vegas for one night to go to a music festival. Las Vegas isn't really my vibe. It reminds me of a heavily edited Instagram picture: it looks good at first glance, but if you squint, you notice the lies – the lamppost curving around the person's waist, and the superimposed eyelashes.

As we touched down, I was acutely aware I only had 24 hours in the city of sin, and I was determined to soak up all the demented energy it had to offer. Taking a cue from the 40C weather, I was on heat. I bounced from casino to casino, a Marlboro Green in my mouth and a spicy margarita in my hand. I was in my element. There wasn't a single soul I wasn't flirting with. Later, my friends and I made our way to the festival, where everyone was stoned and had forgotten how to dance. Itching to carry on the night, we headed to a club. I kept thinking I could see Pitbull about to come on stage, but there were just lots of bald men.

At this club, I met a man. I can't remember his name and it's possible I never even asked him. I remember he was from Colorado, because I asked

him if he knew [Heidi Montag](#) from The Hills (he didn't). He was good-looking. I fancied him – although not quite as much as he fancied himself. He looked like the kind of guy who still used Facebook to keep up to date with his friends. A man who would caption an Instagram post “haters are my motivators” with a rocket-ship emoji.

But it was Vegas. And what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, right? So I flirted with him, turning my London accent up so I sounded sometimes like an extra in Bridgerton, and at others like a character from Top Boy. After a couple hours of shouting in each other's ears over the thumping bassline and awkwardly gyrating to Alesso, we decided to leave our friends and go to one of the all-night casinos. It felt fun. Who knows, I thought, maybe we'll get married.

Once we were in the casino, neither of us actually gambled. Instead, I made him take pictures of me next to slot machines, which I sent to my WhatsApp group with the girls at home. We didn't ask each other personal questions, either. It just wasn't the vibe.

We tried to get a hotel room, but without success. Soon we were traversing the Las Vegas strip, trying to find somewhere, anywhere to have sex. Something you should know about me is that I'm open and unashamed about my sex life, and these kinds of hijinks are usually my bread and butter.

Eventually, we headed to the hotel where I was sharing a room with my friends. The man from Colorado who didn't know Heidi Montag and I stumbled across a stairwell exclusively used by hotel staff. We got situated and I took my Converses off because I had the most awful blisters, which had left bloody stains on the inside of the trainers.

In this weird, private stairwell we had sex. It was fun. Up to this point everything I'd done with this man had been consensual. I wanted to do it; I was enjoying the excitement.

After we had sex, using the one condom I'd optimistically packed, I told him I wanted to go back to my hotel room. As we tried to leave, I realised that the door we had come in through was locked. I couldn't get out. I phoned reception and told them I was a guest in the hotel and that I was stuck. The

woman on the other end started to laugh. She drawled, hardly trying to hide her contempt: “Oh, you’re stuck in the stairwell, are you?”

Trying my best not to sound hysterical, I snapped: “I’m stuck and I wanna get out so you need to send someone. Now.” In her best customer service voice, she assured me that someone would come soon.

The man from Colorado who didn’t know Heidi Montag didn’t seem too pressed about the fact that we were stuck. I waited impatiently. An hour passed. No one came. I fell asleep on the cold metal stairs, using my bag as a pillow.

When I woke up, the man from Colorado who didn’t know Heidi Montag was having anal sex with me. It hurt like hell. I politely asked him to stop. Apparently taking this to mean the anal element, he responded, casually: “I put it in there ’cos I couldn’t find a condom.”

“No. Stop completely,” I said.

He didn’t. I tried to push him off me, but his body was a dead weight. I was being pressed into the stairs. I could feel my shins being indented by the sharp edges, and I could feel it bruising.

Eventually he came. No, not the security guard I was praying would let us out of this stairwell, but the man from Colorado. His body slackened on top of me and I slid out and up.



‘I thought about what people might say about my account of that night.’
Photograph: Serena Brown/The Guardian. Hair and makeup: Natasha Bulstode at Arlington Talent

I was done waiting for security. Calmly, I left him there. Bloody shoes in tow, I walked down flights and flights of stairs and eventually found a door that had been left open. I made it to my hotel room and got into bed. I couldn’t believe it. I was 27, halfway across the world, and this man had tried to ruin sex for me.

As a standup comedian, and author, I am frequently praised for my “sex-positivity”; as someone who is open and unashamed about sex – the good, the bad, the fanny farts, and so on. Once, someone described my stage persona as a “sexually promiscuous woman equipped with the confidence of a man who went to Eton and the vocabulary of [Tracy Beaker](#)”.

I’m a comedian who loves to talk about my vagina; about what’s gone in and what’s gone out, and even what’s been within a five-yard radius. My intention was never to be a “sex-positive comedian”. It was just that men, and my sex life, provided me with so much material. I know my openness about sex has helped people. That’s something I’ve been told a lot by young women; that my comedy, and my book, [Amazing Disgrace](#), has made them

feel less alone. I take pride in comments such as: “When you write about sex, I feel as if I’m listening to my own thoughts.”

However, in the aftermath of that night in Las Vegas, I felt resentful of this sex-positive label, and I felt guilty for feeling resentful. Every time someone asked me, “Why didn’t you go to the police?” I felt as if the joke was on me. Me? Go to the police? The girl who once got up on stage and told a room of 400 people that she doesn’t even need lube when she does anal is now claiming that she was anally raped? The girl who has bragged about how many public places she’s had sex in is saying she didn’t want to have sex in a hotel corridor? The same girl who rode a dick-shaped cloud on the cover of her book? The girl who describes herself as a slut, who has openly discussed which STDs she’s had? The one who has said that men tell her she “smells like sex”?

To me and my friends, this openness is completely normal, but when I checked in with the reality that, in a police station, would be used against me, I spiralled. I was imagining the ways I would be ripped apart. I thought about passages from my book, my Instagram, or my standup being taken out of context in order to paint me as this whore who was deserving of her comeuppance.

Then I thought about what people might say about my account of that night.

“Well … she did already have consensual sex with him? Maybe he was just confused?” “She said she was flirting outrageously.” “She did say she likes the excitement of spontaneous sex.”

The thing is, I know I didn’t consent. I couldn’t have. You can’t consent to something while you are unconscious

The thing is, I know I didn’t consent. I couldn’t have. You cannot consent to something while you are unconscious. It’s that simple. When I woke up and asked him to stop, and he didn’t, I was doing the opposite of consenting. What he did was wrong. But unfortunately, I know how these things play out.

In the last decade, we've seen time and again that rape victims do not receive adequate protection from legal systems. My friends and I follow rape trials and the way they can end prematurely, because we want to know what might happen to us if we went to the police. We have memorised the facts. We know that in the year to September 2021, in England and Wales alone, [63,136 allegations of rape](#) were taken to the police. Only 820 resulted in a charge or summons. That's 1.3% of rape accusations.

The physical evidence that can ensure a conviction needs to be collected [within a week](#), so if someone decides weeks, or months, or even years later that they want to go to the police, their case could be weakened. All too often, it's your word against theirs, and their word is male, and it is louder than yours.

As one woman who went to police with an allegation of rape told the BBC: "It felt as though I was the one being investigated." Her case didn't make it to trial. When you go to the police, your phone can be taken away from you. Past messages, photos and correspondence on dating apps can be used as evidence, along with medical records, including alcohol use, mental health issues, STI history. Not every survivor of rape is equipped for the stress that all of this entails.

When it happened to me, I was also keenly aware that I was in the US. A country where rapes on college campuses are rarely brought to justice. A country where Brett Kavanaugh can be [appointed to the supreme court](#) despite accusations of sexual assault, which he has denied. And now, a place where that same court is stripping women of autonomy over their bodies in overturning [Roe v Wade](#).

Knowing that, and knowing what narrative would be created around me, I just thought: I'd rather not. Can you blame me?

I have often wondered what that guy thought, after I stormed away from him that night. I'm sure he knew he'd done something wrong. Did he feel guilty? Did he worry that I might go to the police? Or did he think: she won't do that. It made me feel weak.

Of those two moments, the one before I fell asleep, which I'd enjoyed, and the one I woke up to, which was a violation, it felt like one had completely taken away from the other. The rape had made me feel totally out of control of my body. It was trying to make me fearful of sex, and of men. It made me feel as if I was just a spectator.

I could have looked back on that night with a hilarious story of the time I shagged in the hotel staff stairwell. But instead someone else's actions ruined that memory for me, and there wasn't too much I could do to get back at him.

I had really thought that more was changing in terms of the collective male psyche. I'd hoped that since #MeToo, men now had a better understanding of consent, of why certain events or actions aren't acceptable. But after Las Vegas, I've had a few uncomfortable experiences talking to men that have made me question that.

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Recently, I was at a festival and a guy came up to me to ask for a picture. His girlfriend was a huge fan, he explained, and she'd be so jealous that he'd met me. After I took a picture for his girlfriend, he stuck around, and started chatting to me and my friends. After a while, he tried to kiss me. I was baffled: this was the same man I'd just taken a picture with to send to his girlfriend. I stepped back and said: "Erm, you have a girlfriend."

He laughed. "Yeah but, you don't care, do you?"

I was deeply offended. Of course I cared that some guy who just used his girlfriend as a reason to talk to me was trying to get with me. Why did he think I wouldn't care? It bugged me for ages.

The following week I was on a date with a guy who had slid into my DMs and seemed nice. I told him what had happened at the festival.

He said: "Well, what did you expect? It's 'cos people think you're loose."

I was stunned. “Why the fuck would people think I’m loose?”

“Because I swear all you do is talk about sex.”

I was enraged. Because I’ve spent years encouraging young women to feel empowered masturbating, or to ask for more sexually, or to develop boundaries, that means that I will get with anyone?

Not long after that date, I was at the pub with some friends. In confidence, I told a male friend what had happened in Las Vegas. He wanted to know if this experience had changed how I felt about men. I explained that I still love and trust loads of men and that, in fact, the comedy show I’ve written and am taking to the Edinburgh fringe is about my obsession with men. The show, it is worth adding, has no mention of rape.

He thought about this for a second and asked: “Do you think there’s a connection between you being so obsessed with men, and you getting raped?” I felt nauseous. How can someone I know, and should trust, suggest that my obsession with men got me raped? It made something really clear. The world loves to praise a sex-positive woman until she is challenging the very things about the world that have made her want to be sex-positive.

I can be a cocky, self-proclaimed slut, who wears revealing tops, and writes shows about being obsessed with men, and I can also be raped. Those two things can exist at the same time. I know this, because it’s what happened to me.

Grace Campbell: A Show About Me(n) is at the [Gilded Balloon Teviot](#), Edinburgh, until 29 August.

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Interview

Tom Daley on his LGBTQ+ awakening: ‘I had my head in my hands. I felt so dark about being British’

[Simon Hattenstone](#)



Tom Daley: 'I didn't understand queer history. I've taken the time to learn.' Crochet Pride scarf: Katie Jones, katiejonesknit.co.uk. Main photographs: Jay Brooks/The Guardian

The Olympic diver has always been proud to represent his country. But making a documentary about gay rights in the Commonwealth led to a revelation



Sat 6 Aug 2022 02.00 EDT

Tom Daley sounds as if he's still in shock. Britain's most celebrated diver recently returned from visiting various Commonwealth countries to investigate LGBTQ+ rights. Of course he knew there were issues; that in much of the Commonwealth homosexuality is still criminalised, thanks to the British empire exporting draconian homophobic laws to the colonies in the 19th century. But knowing something is different from meeting the people who live with those threats on a daily basis. It has changed so many of his views, he says – not least on what it means to be British.

It all started last October, when he said during a TV interview that he didn't think countries with discriminatory LGBTQ+ laws should be allowed to host major international sporting events. He was then invited to deliver C4's alternative Christmas message, by which time he had refined his position.

“In 2022, the World Cup is being held in the second most dangerous country for queer people, Qatar. Why are we allowing places that aren’t safe for all fans and for all players to host our most prestigious sporting events? Hosting a World Cup is an honour. Why are we honouring them? Holding a Formula One grand prix is an honour. Why are we honouring Saudi Arabia?”

Earlier this year, BBC producers suggested that in the buildup to the 2022 Commonwealth Games he should find out for himself just how hard it is to live as a gay athlete in countries that criminalise homosexuality. Making the resulting documentary sickened and inspired him in equal measure. Since then, he’s done a volte-face about banning homophobic countries from hosting major sports events, and created a manifesto for LGBTQ+ inclusiveness that he is hoping will be co-opted by the committees for everything from the Commonwealth Games to the Olympics.

Daley has so much to say that he doesn’t quite know where to start. So it all pours out at once. “There are so many horror stories. I met an athlete in Jamaica who came in a hoodie, and sat behind a curtain with her voice distorted. She didn’t want me to know her name because their lives are in danger if they are named. In Lahore, I spoke to an athlete that had to remain anonymous because she is incredibly high profile. She had a gay friend who was killed, stoned in the streets. An athlete in Nigeria told me one of his friends got lured in on a dating app, and then was stabbed to death and left to die in a pool of his own blood.”

Again, he stops, appalled. “Did you know 35 of the 56 countries involved in the Commonwealth Games still criminalise same-sex relationships and seven have the death penalty?” The figures are tripping off his tongue now, but they still clearly have the power to disturb him. “In any of these 35 countries, it is illegal to be me. I went on such a wild learning curve,” he says.



Tom Daley, left, with his husband, Dustin Lance Black, and their son, Robbie. Photograph: @dlanceblack/Instagram

Daley is Zooming from the London home which he shares with his husband, Oscar-winning film-maker Dustin Lance Black, and their four-year-old son, Robbie. A stuffed giraffe towers over Daley, to his side is a knitted squid, and on the wall is a coloured alphabet. “This is Robbie’s bedroom,” he says. “We’ve got people around today, so it’s easier for me to be locked away in a quiet space.” Lovely giraffe, I say. He smiles. “We got it from a local flea market. It’s missing an ear. They said you can have it for 25 quid if you keep the name Benson, so it’s Benson the giraffe.” You could have changed his name, and they wouldn’t have known any better, I say. He looks at me, mildly disapproving. “But I’m not that kind of person. I’m an honest person. I couldn’t do it.”

How’s Robbie? “He’s great! Robbie’s got a lot of personality!” Daley tells me he loves to climb up things and jump off them. “It scares the living daylights out of me. Lance says, ‘What do you expect? You climb up things and jump off them for a living.’ When I look back, I wonder how my parents dealt with watching me do what I do every day and not be petrified.” He says Robbie has recently learned to swim. “This time last year he was the only kid in the class who didn’t want to jump in the water!” Can he dive yet? “No, he’s not interested in that.”

He has packed so much into his life, it's hard to believe Daley is still only 28. I first met him when he was 17 and preparing for the London 2012 Olympics. He looked young for his age (except for the precocious six-pack) but seemed eerily mature, already a veteran. He started diving at seven, became the youngest winner of the senior 10m platform event at the British Championships and the European Championships at 13, competed in the Olympics at 14, won the World Championship at 15, and on it goes. Record after record broken. But that was just the half of it. His trials have been as notable as his triumphs. In 2011, his beloved father, Rob, died of cancer, aged 40. Rob seemed so different from the young Tom – he was big and bluff, and didn't care what he said to anybody. All he wanted to do was protect and support his family (Tom has two younger brothers).

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And the young Tom did need plenty of support. He was bullied at school after becoming famous, and his mental health suffered. Apart from the extraordinary strength and gymnastic skills required for diving, the demands were relentless – four hours training every day after school, competing regularly away from home, making sure he wasn't carrying an ounce of fat. And when it went wrong, it was horribly painful. Daley had the scars to prove it. Back in 2012 he showed me a few of his war wounds – a scar on the top of his head, another on his forehead, and a muscular stalactite of scar tissue on his upper arm where he had torn his tricep. He told me that the impact on his body, entering the water at 35mph, was "like having a car crash every time you dive", and admitted "I still get scared every time I go up there." His former coach Andy Banks had recently said that as a youngster Tom got so lonely and distressed away from home that he [threatened to jump out of a window](#) if he was left alone.

At the London Olympics, Daley won a bronze medal in the individual 10m platform dive. After all he'd recently been through, it felt as if he had won gold. On the podium, he couldn't stop grinning. He held up his bronze medal, showed it around the arena, then lifted it to heaven for his dad.

I ask Daley whether he is surprised how his life has turned out. If he thinks back to the 13-year-old diving sensation, is this what he would have expected for himself? God no, he says. “There are so many things I’ve done which I wouldn’t have seen myself doing when I was younger, especially being in the forefront of LGBT stuff.” Because it was irrelevant to him back then or he never saw himself being a campaigner? “A little bit of everything. I didn’t understand queer history. And I’ve taken the time to learn and understand and listen.”

If he met 13-year-old Tom today, what would he say to him? “Just keep being you. Keep working hard, keep your head down and keep going. Don’t worry about what other people say, keep being you. That’s what I ended up doing, but it would have been nice to have someone reassure me that it was all going to be OK.”

And how does he think that 13-year-old boy would respond to him? “What on *earth* have you done?” He giggles. “My dream when I was a kid was to win a gold medal, and I managed that. But my dreams have evolved over the years – to get married, have a family, and if you’d told me I was going to knit and crochet I would have laughed at you, but here we are.” Daley only started knitting a couple of years ago. After he was seen crafting in the stands at the Olympics (including making a fetching pouch for his medals), his skills gained him a whole new fanbase of fellow knitters and crafters. Now he’s got his own knitwear design company, [Made With Love](#).

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When he came out in December 2013, he did it in style, on his own YouTube channel with a homemade video called Something I Want to Say. He talked about how much his life had changed over the past couple of years – his father had died, he’d won the Olympic medal and he had passed his A-levels (straight As in maths, Spanish and photography). Then it became more personal. “In spring my life changed massively when I met someone. They make me feel so happy, so safe. Everything just feels great, and that someone is a guy.”

The Sexual Offences Act 1967 legalised gay sex in England and Wales for consenting adults over the age of 21 (it was finally lowered to 16 in 2000),

but it continues to be criminalised in most Commonwealth countries. Daley is now fully aware of the number of these countries where he wouldn't have been able to make such a video. How does it make him feel about Britain? I half expect him to eulogise liberal British values, but he's not having any of it. He says he feels angry and deceived.

"I learned so much about what British rule did that was not OK. It feels as if we're trying to erase our history by saying, 'Look how much we're bringing people together now.' But we've got to acknowledge what happened. Hearing those stories, I had my head in my hands. I wanted the ground to swallow me up. I felt so dark about my relationship with being British. I came away from it with a really twisted sense of what it meant to be British." The way you talk about it, I say, you sound as if you feel personal responsibility. "Yes, I do in a sense. That was the twisted part of it. I thought: what can I do? I felt very helpless to be British."



In his documentary, Tom Daley: Illegal to Be Me, with swimmer Michael Gunning. Photograph: Luke Korzun Martin/BBC/Zinc Television

He reassessed his earlier position on banning homophobic countries from hosting major events when LGBTQ+ athletes and campaigners told him that a ban would be another form of imperialism. "They said, 'That's again being an oppressor. It's not allowing a country to learn and come to the table and

grow.’ The number one thing they said they wanted was visibility. Seeing the Pride flag waved is a sign of safety for lots of people.”

The athletes convinced him that a carrot was far more effective than a stick. So rather than an outright ban, he drew up a manifesto with their help, founded on the principle that any country could host the event if they signed a contract saying the Games had to have a pro-LGBT ethos. His manifesto states that host countries must allow Pride flags to be flown and provide Pride Houses (dedicated temporary venues dedicated to LGBTQ+ inclusion, diversity and culture), along with sensitivity training for Games workers. “So rather than saying to certain countries you can’t host it, it’s saying that if you want to host it, you have to change. Instead of banning countries, countries will rule themselves out by accepting they are not appropriate hosts because they do not fit the values of the event.” Daley has already presented his proposals to the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF). At the opening ceremony, Daley played a prominent role. He led out six athletes and activists, carrying Progress Pride flags, from countries where homosexuality is criminalised. Daley is planning to present his manifesto to all the major international sports events and hopes that it will eventually be adopted worldwide.

Has Britain changed since Daley came out in that YouTube video? “Yes and no. Things have progressed in terms of people that are out and visible. Back in 2013, there weren’t many out athletes at the top of their game. People had either retired or were towards the end of their career. There is a lot more visibility in sport.” And yet, he says, there is still so much progress to be made. He cites football as the most obvious example – there is not a single Premier League footballer who has come out while playing, and only one who has done so since retiring (the German international Thomas Hitzlsperger).

There is another thing that worries Daley. He believes that rightwing populism threatens the gains countries such as Britain and the US have made since the 1960s, and cites the US supreme court overturning Roe v Wade, ruling there is no constitutional right to abortion. “Things are happening in the States with women’s rights. Then the equality of gay marriage has been brought into question. Then not banning trans conversion therapy in the UK.

I feel we're at this pivotal moment in the queer movement in terms of holding on to our rights, which are being chipped away at. They're almost trying to catch us off guard because the younger generation has never had to fight for that before. I can see how frustrated the older generation are because of what they've fought for. And it's slowly being clawed back. We can't become complacent and we need to make many alliances. People need to come together as one. There is power in numbers.”

Isn't part of the problem that the LGBTQ+ community is at war with itself over trans rights? The level of fury between trans rights activists and gender-critical feminists astonishes me, I say. Daley nods, and says it's dangerous. “The LGBT community is so fractured right now over certain issues. And that's when the right are going to get us. They're going to try to break us down. And if you think they're just going to take away trans people's rights, you're wrong. It's going to go much further than that, and we have to stick together as an LGBTQIA+ community to stop that happening.”

So how can you reconcile such polarised factions? He doesn't attempt to provide an answer, but says one is needed. “If we don't do something about it soon, something monumental will happen and we'll be back at square one. The right wing is very good at making people fight with each other to create tension and division and fear. If you ask the younger generation, nobody cares what somebody's gender is or what their sexuality is. Everybody just wants to be a human being. First and foremost, our planet is falling apart. If we don't sort that out and stop arguing about other things, we're not even going to have a planet to exist on. There are certain people on social media who have a very big platform who can say certain things that get sensationalised ...”



Leading out athletes carrying Pride flags at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. Photograph: Chris Jackson/Getty Images

Aren't you one of them, I say. After all Daley has 2.2m followers on Twitter. In June, speaking at the British LGBT awards, where he was named Sports Personality of the Year, he condemned the decision of Fina (the administrative body for international water sport) to ban trans athletes who have been through any part of male puberty from elite women's competition. Daley said when he heard the ruling, "I was furious. Anyone that's told that they can't compete or can't do something they love just because of who they are, it's not on. It's something I feel really strongly about – giving trans people the chance to share their side."

For so long, Daley has been regarded as a national treasure. But as he takes a more active role in the charged debate about trans athletes, it is inevitable that opinions about him will become divided. In an interview with GB News, former Olympic swimmer Sharron Davies responded to Daley's speech by suggesting

that as a male athlete he doesn't have any skin in the game: "Tom is male and this does not affect him in the slightest ... I think we have to listen to the women, and Fina were the first governing body since 2015 to actually poll their female athletes and listen to their coaches."

Fina ruled that transgender women and girls can only compete in elite women's events if they have not gone through [any of the male puberty process](#), or before they reach the age of 12, whichever is later. Daley believes it is a crude, cruel and dangerous decision. "It puts certain athletes in a very difficult position because they're either never going to be able to compete again, or their parents are going to have to make decisions just before their children turn 12. That puts a lot of pressure on parents to make those decisions. It's not the right message to send about sports that trans kids are not welcome if they don't transition before they are 12."

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Photographs: Jay Brooks/The Guardian. Styling: Melanie Wilkinson. Grooming: Sam Cooper at Carol Hayes Management using Kiehl's and Daimon Barber. Crochet Pride scarf: Katie Jones, katiejonesknit.co.uk. Check vest, bytomdaley.com. Trainers and rings, Tom's own

Does he think that ultimately inclusion trumps fairness? "No, of course not. But, as human beings, we have to be a little bit more thoughtful before banning people completely from something. If kids are doomed to never be able to do what they love, they may well just give up." I mention a 2020 study that found trans women retain a 12% advantage in running tests even after taking hormones for two years to suppress their testosterone. "You just have to do all of those studies and have the full understanding before you make any decisions like that. If they find out it takes five years, fine, five years. If it takes six years, fine, then six years. But so much goes into it rather than just being able to make a decision based on one study."

Your thinking sounds more nuanced than the statement you made at the awards ceremony, I say. "It is more nuanced. Having a conversation is different from having 30 seconds to say something. But overall I still stand by what I said – trans people should never be banned from sport."

Is the issue dividing fellow athletes? "Yes. There are certain people who have very strong opinions about it one way or another. But people are trying to make it a problem before it is a problem." He says the number of trans athletes in elite sport is minuscule. "There has never been a trans diver that has stayed in diving, yet people have gone mad about it."

The issue of trans women even became the battleground for the Tory leadership election. [Penny Mordaunt](#), a contestant on Daley's ITV celebrity diving show *Splash!* in 2014, was accused by rivals of being a "woke warrior" for her previous support of trans women. Mordaunt desperately tried to distance herself, insisting she had never claimed "[trans women are women](#)".

Is this what he means by LGBT issues being hijacked? He nods. "Think of the tiny percentage of trans people in the population, and prospective Tory leaders are using that to win votes. I don't understand why people think they have to be less woke in order to lead a country. "How can understanding people's feelings be a bad thing?" He trails off, lost for words.

Daley has always been one of life's planners. I met him again in 2015 when he'd just turned 21 and was living with Black, a prominent campaigner in the fight for US marriage equality. Daley was mapping out his future – a gold medal at Rio, a career in television after diving, marriage and kids at some point. He said he knew he'd be the disciplinarian because he was tougher than Black, despite the fact that his partner was 20 years older. Two years later he and Black married, and in 2018 Robbie was born with the help of an egg donor and a surrogate. Both Daley and Black donated sperm, and said they didn't want to know who is the biological father.

As for the gold at Rio, that didn't materialise. He won a bronze in the synchronised 10m with Daniel Goodfellow. This time, coming third felt like a failure. He missed out on an individual medal, and it looked as if he was destined never to land the big one. Then, last year, at the delayed Tokyo Olympics, he finally won gold with his best friend, Matty Lee, in the synchronised 10m, after a series of near-perfect dives. As in 2012, it was one of the emotional highs of the Games. When they realised they had won, Daley jumped into Lee's arms and wrapped his legs around him. A masked Daley wept on the podium. He also went on to win an individual bronze.



Crying on the podium after winning gold at the Tokyo Olympics with Matty Lee. Photograph: Jean Catuffe/Getty Images

Earlier this year he told me, “The morning after winning an Olympic gold medal was the first morning I woke up and really felt a sense of peace. I knew I’d done everything I wanted to do in this sport. I felt I can finally be happy now.” Has he still got that sense of contentment? “Yes. I don’t think that will ever go away. It’s going to be a year tomorrow!” he says ecstatically.

Daley has not dived since Tokyo, using the time to take stock. He knows it will soon be time to hang up his trunks, but he’s still hoping to go out with a bang at the Paris Olympics in 2024. As for his future, he’s got big plans. At least one more child hopefully. Then there’s a fashion line. “I’d love to expand Made With Love and really go into the world of fashion.” And the TV career. “I’d love to eventually be a TV host.” You’ve already been one, I say. “Yeah, but a proper one. Ant and Dec vibes. Or Holly and Phil.” Blimey, that’s ambitious! “Well you’ve got to be ambitious.”

Meanwhile, his campaigning shows no sign of abating. Would he ever go into politics? “Oooh I don’t know. After seeing the state it’s in at the moment, I don’t know if I’d have the patience with the other people.” It’s

hardly a no. He might not have many dives left in him, but it feels as if [Tom Daley](#) is just getting started.

Tom Daley: Illegal to Be Me will air on 9 August at 9pm on BBC One and iPlayer.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/aug/06/tom-daley-lgbtq-awakening-gay-rights-british-commonwealth-documentary>.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Consumer affairs

How to protect your savings and pension from UK inflation

We look at some options for safeguarding your nest egg amid rising prices and interest rates



Mortgage interest rate rises this week will add to the financial strain caused by the cost of living crisis. Photograph: Piotr Adamowicz/Alamy



[Patrick Collinson](#)
Sat 6 Aug 2022 02.00 EDT

Interest rates went up again this week, and many savers will see their rates boosted as a result, but rising inflation – [currently 9.4%](#) and set to go higher – is eating away at the value of people's nest-egg cash.

As central banks around the world raise interest rates to defeat inflation, fears are growing of a full-blown recession. So what can you do now to protect yourself from a potential hammer blow to your finances?

Here we look at some of the options for protecting your nest-egg money and pension from inflation.

Stick it all in gold

They say gold is the traditional haven against inflation – but that has not been the case this time round. Since March it has fallen from more than \$2,000 (£1,655) an ounce to about \$1,750, and is back to where it was about two years ago. It has done better in sterling terms because the dollar has risen so much against the pound.

If you do want to speculate in gold, you don't have to buy krugerrands (South African gold coins). You can invest small sums via "exchange traded funds" – for example, Invesco Physical [Gold](#), which holds the shiny stuff in the vaults of JP Morgan bank in London.



Gold has fallen from more than \$2,000 an ounce in March to about \$1,750.
Photograph: ImageBROKER/Alamy

Shove it under the mattress

This is the daftest thing you can do with your money. First off, if your house burns down or the money is stolen, a home insurance policy typically covers only £500 or £1,000.

Second, inflation means cash is plummeting in value all the time.

Put it all in a high-interest savings account

That would only make sense if such a thing existed. On Thursday this week, the best rate on a one-year fixed-rate bond was 2.85% from OakNorth Bank. Even on a five-year bond, the best you could get was 3.4%. Meanwhile, many high street banks pay paltry sums on their cash Isa accounts.

That said, aim to keep a rainy day sum on deposit equal to three to four months of your spending. That's not easy, though, when so many families in the UK are facing what consumer champion [Martin Lewis](#) said was a “national financial cataclysm”.

Buy the shares everyone else has sold

Possibly. But only ever speculate this way if you can afford to lose the lot. The US tech companies have been the most “beaten-up” shares in recent months. PayPal has plummeted from \$285 a share a year ago to about \$98 this week. Meta (Facebook) is down from \$370 to about \$170, while Netflix has dropped from \$600 to about \$225 this year alone.



Never invest money in shares if you can't afford to lose it, while many high street banks pay paltry sums on their cash Isa accounts.

Photograph: Andrew Paterson/Alamy

But remember the old stock market adage: “Don’t catch a falling knife.” Just because a share is down by 50% over the past year doesn’t mean it can’t fall another 50% in the year ahead.

Find a boring investment trust

Some investment trusts have records stretching back more than a century, holding a spread of shares in relatively low-risk companies with a good record of regular dividends, even during recessions. Boring is probably sensible in these markets.

Dzmitry Lipski, the head of fund research at the website Interactive Investor, says: “A good one-stop global investing shop is F&C Investment Trust, which hopes to raise its dividend again this year for what would be the 52nd consecutive year. With the trust expecting inflation to stay elevated, companies that can keep raising dividends can provide an additional level of comfort – and its 154-year track record means it’s seen plenty of ups and downs.”

Interactive Investor also likes Capital Gearing Trust and Personal Assets Trust.

Read our guide to investing online at theguardian.com/money/2020/sep/12/buy-shares-online-covid-19-rules.

Batten down your pension

Even the humblest employee with a small workplace pension is entitled to switch their money around within their pension. But take care.

A kneejerk reaction to sell out and go into cash is not a good idea

Hargreaves Lansdown's Helen Morrissey

“A kneejerk reaction to sell out and go into cash is not a good idea,” says Helen Morrissey, a pensions expert at the investment firm Hargreaves Lansdown. She adds that pensions are a long-term investment, and if you hold too much in cash, your pension is likely to be eroded.

Despite some hefty falls in share prices on Wall Street and across Europe, the big pension funds have not performed that badly over the past year. The value of the default fund (2040 retirement date) of Nest (National Employment [Savings](#) Trust), which holds the pension savings of millions of

newly enrolled UK workers, has actually risen over the past year, although by only a few per cent.

Go with the clever money

Who was warning in May last year about inflation, overexuberance in financial markets and severe cryptocurrency risks? Warren Buffett, the 91-year-old legendary US investor. Since then, inflation has soared, the Nasdaq index of mostly tech stocks is down by about a fifth, and crypto has crashed.

Buffett says be “fearful when others are greedy, and greedy when others are fearful”.

So what's he buying now? Oil companies. He has plunged \$27bn into Occidental Petroleum and Chevron shares alone. It has paid off: Occidental shares are up about 100% this year – not that anyone concerned about the climate emergency is likely to follow suit.



The veteran investor Warren Buffett has been buying up shares in oil companies. Photograph: Nati Harnik/AP

Buffett is also a big investor in Apple, whose share price is down almost 10% this year. He continued to buy more Apple as its share price slipped.

Britain's answer to Buffett, Terry Smith, said in his [letter to investors in July](#) that he "is not optimistic" about the threat from continued increases in interest rates.

He says investors should remain focused on companies with consistently high profit margins. He adds that bonds are "certainly not the place to be in these conditions", while real estate and property are "a notoriously local market with poor liquidity and high frictional trading costs".

If you like the sound of Buffett, you can buy shares in his conglomerate, Berkshire Hathaway. Smith's fund business is called Fundsmith.

Do nothing and sit it out

If you are under 50, that's not a bad strategy. When markets fall, comfort yourself with the idea that your monthly pension contributions are buying more shares (for the long term) than before.

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UK cost of living crisis

‘I feel I’m moving backwards’: new UK graduates hit by cost of living crisis

Job insecurity, soaring prices and rising rents mean ‘the class of 2022’ faces difficult decisions



For many people, financial concerns have cast a cloud over their dreams after graduating. Photograph: Chris Ison/PA

[Kimi Chaddah](#)

Sat 6 Aug 2022 05.00 EDT

Soaring energy bills, rising food prices and the threat of a recession: the “class of 2022” has graduated into the worst cost of living crisis for decades.

Not that things have been easy for young adults for a while. Shreya Nanda, an economist with the Institute for Public Policy Research’s Centre for Economic Justice, says they have faced their own crisis “for many years – in

terms of stagnant wages, rents going up, high marginal tax rates faced by young people and their state spending being cut”.

During the last few weeks, university graduation ceremonies have been taking place up and down Britain, with some scheduled for this month or later in the year.

With student loan repayment thresholds shifting, job insecurity and rising rents, those who have finished their studies and celebrated their achievements with family and friends now have some difficult decisions to make.



Rachel Boani says the cost of living crisis was a factor in her deciding to take a job after graduating rather than travelling or going on holiday.
Photograph: Rachel Boani

For example, for many graduates, the case for travelling after university is compelling, with adventure and freedom providing a respite from the past three years of academic work. Yet for many young people, financial concerns have cast a cloud over their dreams of travelling the world.

We spoke to four new graduates about what the cost of living crisis means for their next steps.

Rachel Boani, 21

Boani, who studied geology and physical geography at the University of Edinburgh, says the cost of living crisis was definitely a factor in her deciding to take a job after graduating rather than travelling or going on holiday.

She adds: “A massive worry was that [going on holiday] meant taking time out of work, and I’m conscious of not having a massive amount of money saved away at this point ... I would have loved to have gone travelling over the summer but being able to save over the last year while paying rent and bills and food has been impossible.”

Over the last year, Boani has spent a greater proportion of her savings than in any other as a result of the current crisis.

The cost of graduation – robes, tickets and so on – varies across the UK. “Fortunately, my parents chipped in to contribute to the cost of hiring a gown for my graduation. But the cost of hotels, going out for a celebratory meal and all the added costs was definitely discussed among my friends and family,” Boani says. “Lots of people were annoyed with the cost of graduation and felt that universities offered no help towards these costs.”

When she initially spoke to Guardian Money, she had been waiting to hear if she had been accepted on a graduate scheme with the organisation upReach to be a mentor for disadvantaged students across the UK. She later found out that she had.

Boani went back home after university but is now in the process of trying to find an affordable place in Manchester.

Even with my £7,000-plus maintenance loan, it doesn’t cover rent, food and bills

Rachel Boani

Speaking before she accepted the offer from upReach, she said: “University gave me the independence to move out, and it feels as if I’m moving

backwards by going home ... When looking to stay in Edinburgh, I realised I couldn't afford rent prices there – on top of rising bills and council tax.

"I would love the opportunity to move to London to begin a career but I would have to live at my family home for at least a year, maybe two, to save enough to move down there."

Boani, who doesn't receive financial support from her family, typically balanced two or three jobs over the summer to fund her finances at university. "Even with my £7,000-plus maintenance loan [the maximum amount because of her parents' lower income], it doesn't cover rent, food and bills," she says.

Hannah Munden, 22

While graduation typically signifies new beginnings, Munden, who studied business management at the University of Sussex, has moved back into her parents' house in Brighton.

She has found a job in marketing management, although hybrid working means she does not need to go into the office very often.



Hannah Munden, who has found a job in marketing management, has moved back in with her parents. Photograph: Hannah Munden

“I don’t really want to be living with my parents,” she says. “I’ve enjoyed the freedom of university and want that independence when I move out as well. But I’m also battling the difference between wanting that freedom, wanting to move out and rising prices.”

The rental market in London is competitive – it’s “£800-plus for a good place”, she says, “with bills on top of that”.

Munden is finding the rise in utility costs particularly worrying: “I feel like it’s more money I’ll no longer be able to spend as someone who’s just got their first full-time job and finding their feet.”

Then there’s the interest rates on student loan repayments.

“I know I’m only 22 but it makes me worry for future generations, and even people like my kids – if they want to go to university, even though there are alternatives, will they be able to with rising costs?”

Deyna Grimshaw, 21

Grimshaw, a final-year English literature student at the University of Birmingham, was also due to move back home after university.

She says she is unsure what to do next but is reluctant to take a master’s. “Full-time education isn’t something I want to continue any further,” she says, citing its cost and stress. “I’ve been applying for jobs around my home town at the moment – any industry which I’m even slightly interested in – to make sure I’ve got something to do over the summer.”

The cost of renting is at the forefront of Grimshaw’s mind. “I’d definitely say the cost of living crisis has made me more inclined to stay at home for longer,” she says. “As much as I’d love to move out and live with friends, I don’t know how I’d be able to justify paying £1,000 a month, especially seeing as I probably won’t be in a very high-paid job.”



Deyna Grimshaw says: ‘I’d definitely say the cost of living crisis has made me more inclined to stay at home for longer.’ Photograph: Deyna Grimshaw

With UK grocery prices having soared, she says: “I’ve found I’m spending a lot more on food than I was a few months ago, even though I’m buying the same things or less.

“To be honest, I don’t think the university experience I’ve had is worth the debt I’ve built up.”

She has accrued almost £30,000 in maintenance loan “debt”, which, when coupled with course fees, means she owes about £60,000. She worries about whether the debt will “pay off” in terms of her job.

Aravindh Suresh, 21

Having applied to numerous firms before landing a summer internship last year, Suresh, a final-year economics student at the London School of Economics and Political Science, is embarking on a graduate role at a firm within the financial industry.

After graduating, Suresh intends to live in central London. “We’ve had to take the potential increased costs into account when looking for new

properties to rent,” he says. Suresh and his flatmates were struggling to find anything for less than £900 a person a month.



Aravindh Suresh says rising interest rates on his student loans are a concern.
Photograph: Aravindh Suresh

“I’m fortunate that my graduate job pays well,” says Suresh, who will work as an analyst. “So while the cost of living crisis will definitely reduce my disposable income post-expenses, I’m unlikely to be in a position where I’ll be struggling to pay the bills every month.”

However, Suresh says rising interest rates on his student loans are a concern, and that this has made him eager to pay off his debt as fast as possible. “It’ll likely mean slightly postponing my ambitions to get on the housing ladder, since I’ll only look to save up for my housing deposit once I’ve paid off most of my student debt.”

While Suresh is happy about his university experience, he says: “Several financial firms have started offering internships where I could have worked and learned at the same time.

“Had these opportunities been as widely available when I was applying to university, I could very well have chosen this option instead.

“I would be in a lot less debt and would probably have reached the same career path as I am on now, albeit over a longer timeframe.”

What do the experts say?

Tom Allingham, the head of editorial at the website Save the Student, advises looking into the best graduate bank accounts. A graduate account will extend your interest-free overdraft beyond your time as a student and give you a few more years to get out of debt without facing any charges. “It’s best to switch while you’re still a student because some accounts don’t allow you to do so if you’ve already graduated,” Allingham says.

We’d urge graduates not to panic about the size of their student loan debt

Save the Student's Tom Allingham

“We’d also urge graduates not to panic about the size of their student loan debt.”

This is echoed by Ben Waltmann of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, who says “recent changes to the student loans system [act] as a tax rise. Under the current student loans system in England, remaining loan balances are wiped 30 years after students first become eligible for repayment.”

He says: “While the student loan balance does not matter for most graduates under the current system, what’s really important is how much graduates have to repay each year.”

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Tall stories: performers on their wildest Edinburgh moments



Scots missed ... Edinburgh festival turns 75. Illustration: Javi Aznarez/The Guardian

Standup in a swimming pool, naked tractor driving, heart attacks, heckles, walkouts, rain and an onstage marriage proposal – as the fringe turns 75, this

year's performers on the memories that make the festival unique

[Tim Key](#), [Sindhu Vee](#), [Jayde Adams](#), [Flo & Joan](#), [Arthur Smith](#), [Reginald D Hunter](#), [Paul Foot](#), [Tim Crouch](#), [Nina Conti](#), [Simon Munnery](#), [Bilal Zafar](#), [Lou Sanders](#), [Matt Forde](#), [Fascinating Aïda](#), [La Clique](#)

Sat 6 Aug 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 6 Aug 2022 04.16 EDT

Tim Key



Mark Watson's first 24-hour show was the maddest thing I've seen. Midnight, Edinburgh, 2004. Mark ambles on, skinny, an underdog, mic in one hand, vague plan scribbled out on a pad in the other. Fifty people there, not knowing precisely why. The "plan" was to freewheel until it got to midnight again. I was in that room, bewitched by it all. Mark was unheralded, not yet famous, you wouldn't necessarily back him to get through the first 45 minutes. But he's a mad scientist, and the following day his show had turned into its own universe. Plates were spinning, storylines had caught fire. Mark's comedy heroes had joined him on stage, laughing, weeping, in thrall to this new kid. It ended with Mark proposing to his girlfriend, more tears (she said yes), champagne fired into the audience, Mark was lifted out through the crowd, now a deity. It was astonishing, the essence of everything good about Edinburgh. Someone bursting through,

doing something no one had done before, in the only city where it could have happened. *Tim Key is at the Pleasance Queen Dome, to 17 August.*

Sindhu Vee



In 2017 I was still quite new to Edinburgh and doing four, five, six, seven gigs a day. I had this gig in the back of a pub, where I was doing 10 minutes. There were three people in the audience: a husband and wife and their teenage daughter. They were about a foot away from me. I always started my set with “Hello, I’m so happy to be here”, which is ludicrous to say when there’s three people in the back of a pub, but I had no other opening lines. And the teenage girl said: “I don’t want to be here.” And the mother looked at me and said: “I don’t want to be here either. We’re only here because *he* thinks it’s a good idea.” The husband looked away, he wouldn’t even make eye contact with me. So my response was to go: “Well, my mother always thought I was too dark when I was growing up and she ...” I just went into my material. I did my whole 10 minutes. Nobody laughed. And the daughter was *furious* the whole time. But that’s the extraordinary thing about Edinburgh. As a comic, this is how you come up. You’re not allowed to choose. You can’t bail out of a gig. And, by the way, if I was in

that room today, with those same three people, I'd make them laugh because I've learned. *Sindhu Vee is at the Pleasance Courtyard, 16-28 August.*

Jayde Adams



2012 was the second year I'd ever done comedy, and the second year I'd gone to the fringe, and I was offered a 150-seater venue on the Grassmarket. I'd seen how busy the Royal Mile was and thought, "How hard is it going to be to get people in, really?" Turns out, really hard. The most I had was eight and that was after six hours of flyering. I tried everything to get people in: opera, beatboxing, shouting, falling on the floor. I even made an outfit out of my flyers and catwalked – some say this is where [RuPaul](#) got the idea from. One night, I set my stage up and waited for the audience to arrive. Front of house opened the door and made a cut throat gesture to tell me no one was coming. Back then I used to dress up as a leopard. And I found out that there is something worse than no one turning up to your show, and that's no one turning up to your show *and* you're dressed like a leopard. I learned loads about putting on a solo show that year, and it took me a further four years to do it again. I took compilation shows up on the free fringe, and then I went to the fringe in 2016 with a solo show and was nominated for best

newcomer. *Jayde Adams* is at the Pleasance Courtyard Cabaret Bar, to 28 August.

How hard can it be to get people to come to a show? I tried shouting opera

Jayde Adams



Flo & Joan



In the spirit of celebration on Edinburgh's 75th birthday, let us tell you about the glorious day that we saw one of the first ever productions of Six, the now global phenomenon of a musical. It was 2016, our first year taking a show to the fringe, and we'd spent most of a day flyering in the rain, so were looking for any show close to us where we could dry off for an hour. We saw a poster on a bin for a musical about the wives of Henry VIII and although we were sceptical, we were also damp, so that was good enough. It is hard to now picture that show playing out in a conference room, where Linda from accounts had endured a boring seminar a month earlier, but even then it was an amazing musical that left us feeling surprised and excited. We've since tried to sell them the slogan "From bins to Broadway" but it never caught on. Anyway, fair play to them. Long live Six. *Flo & Joan are at the Assembly Roxy, Central, to 28 August.*

Arthur Smith



Malcolm Hardee was a former jailbird turned comedian who was not much of a standup but had an anarchic, dadaist spirit that suited the fringe perfectly. He famously drove a tractor naked through [American actor] Eric Bogosian's show, worked out how to smuggle a review of his own act into the Scotsman and got me to write it for him – needless to say no one has ever had a better review than that. His shows were always called Aaaaargh it's Malcolm Hardee, which guaranteed he would be the first name in the fringe programme. On my late-night tours of the Royal Mile he would call the police as the tour started, which eventually led to the brilliant comic Simon Munnery and myself getting arrested by St Giles Cathedral at 3am. Malcolm drowned in the Thames one night 17 years ago, but I always think of him as I arrive in Edinburgh. *Arthur Smith is at the Pleasance Courtyard Cabaret Bar, to 14 August.*

Stewart Lee



I think the experience of seeing a bill of Arnold Brown, Arthur Smith and Norman Lovett, at my first fringe in 1987, gave me the cross-bred standup style I started with; and year after year the Russian physical theatre clowns Derevo reshaped what I thought a performance could be. But in 2004, at my 13th festival, I saw Will Adamsdale's devised comedy [Jackson's Way](#), and then I saw it a dozen times more, and it changed my life. Nominally a parody of a Life Coach presentation, the titular Jackson's advice to treat everything as significant, and to attempt to override the supposed rules of reality whenever possible, actually worked, despite the suggestion that some kind of mental trauma had caused him to become a guru. Still caught up in the magic of the show, I took a wrong turn leaving and found myself in a dead-end alleyway full of overflowing bins. Superb! I had performed a Jackson. Outside the area of things that have a point was a vast resource of pointless things, and this was the area we should explore, and gladly. *Stewart Lee is at the New Town theatre, to 14 and 17-28 August.*

Reginald D Hunter



In 2004 I was doing my second Edinburgh. I was given the key to the flat that I was going to be staying in. I got to the second floor by elevator and went to the door. The key got stuck a little bit and I had to knee it but it opened. I didn't dig it much – it was cluttered and even though no animals were in the apartment, you could tell that cats lived there. On the first night I just made a little pallet on the floor [to sleep on]. I didn't want to be touched by anything in this apartment. The person who ran the promotion agency discovered that she had given me the wrong address: the right address was the flat across the hallway. I'd been sleeping in the wrong people's flat for two days. And I was complaining to the promoter: "I had to shake the door to make it open with the key." It just shows you how flimsy those doors were. They were really flimsy. *Reginald D Hunter is at the Assembly Rooms Ballroom, 7, 9-14, 16-21 and 23-28 August.*

Paul Foot



The weirdest show I ever did in Edinburgh was called Swimming with Comedians. The first weird thing about it was that it was, well, in a swimming pool. The second was that the audience (which was understandably relatively small) were all wearing swimming costumes, sitting on the side of the pool. The third weird thing was that the host/organiser was having a nervous breakdown. As she was introducing me to the stage/slow lane, she said: “I thought it would be a brilliant idea to have a show in a swimming pool, but it doesn’t really work. I’ve been doing this for three weeks now, and I can’t take any more of it. Now, will you welcome Paul Foot.” I performed my comedy while doing the breaststroke up and down the pool. It went down surprisingly well, especially as the host was clearly still in a compromised state in the paddling pool area, being consoled by a lifeguard. To add insult to injury, this was my 18th show that day, as I was attempting to break the world record for the most comedy shows performed in 24 hours. I *did* break the record, with 25 shows, but the Guinness World Record people turned it down on health and safety grounds, because “I might knock into someone rushing between venues”. Perhaps they would have been happier if I had done something that didn’t endanger the public, such as lying on a bed of nails, or jumping over 28 double-decker buses on a motorcycle. *Paul Foot is at the Underbelly, Cowgate, to 15 and 17-28 August.*

Tim Crouch



My play *The Author* was at the Traverse theatre in 2010. Ten minutes into the action a planted audience member walks out. Little did we know how premonitory this staged act would be in Edinburgh. During the first preview 10% of our genuine audience got up and left. The play was in the Traverse's smaller studio space at the bottom of a flight of stairs. An usher was stationed at the top of those stairs to deal with latecomers and leavers. For many performances that usher was my 19-year-old daughter. Outraged audience members would pour out their indignation to her as they left and it was all she could do to refrain from saying: "That's my dad's play, that is!" The company members were heroic. I have an image in my head of us in the Traverse bar tag-fielding provoked audience members who just wanted to tell us what we'd done to them. *The Author* won the Total Theatre award for innovation that year. That Edinburgh run is the most intense experience I've ever had in the theatre. *Truth's a Dog Must to Kennel* by Tim Crouch is at the Royal Lyceum, 7, 9-14, 17-21 and 24-28 August.

Nina Conti



In 2003 I was doing three shows. First a split bill of half an hour each with Micky Flanagan. He did his famous “out out” and I made my Monkey puppet hump a pint glass. Second was a walk-on part in Arthur Smith’s show about Dante, where I dressed as a dominatrix and hurled abuse at him. Third was a play by Henry Naylor called Finding Bin Laden. I played a fiercely earnest journalist disgusted with the sanitised taste and decency of the press. I was 29 and I had a new boyfriend and a new career as a ventriloquist. I was partying hard but I felt a bit funny and my tits were swelling up. I took a pregnancy test in the downstairs loos of the Gilded Balloon and lo and behold I was pregnant. My world changed in that cubicle and I never pass it without solemn salutation. It was time to throw the paté out of my fridge, fill my beer bottles with water and grow the fuck up. But I couldn’t think about all that in the moment: I had to strap on a dildo and go shout at Arthur Smith. *Nina Conti is at the Pleasance Courtyard, to 15 and 17-28 August.*

I took a test in the loo of the Guilded Balloon and it turned out I was pregnant

Nina Conti



Simon Munnery



It was 1992, I was in [sketch troupe] The Dum Show and it was truly awful. It was Stewart Lee and Richard Herring, Patrick Marber and Steve Coogan, and me. The plan was to meet every day for breakfast to try to improve the show. On this particular morning at breakfast in the cafe there was just me,

Marber and Coogan. Suddenly Steve flopped over, planting his face in his porridge; me and Marber laughed. It seemed a wonderful piece of clowning, a physical embodiment of how we all felt, but he wasn't joking, he was having a heart attack. We were going to call an ambulance, but my car – a Cortina Crusader – was outside and that was the quicker option, so I drove to the hospital. I went the wrong way down a one-way street just to get him there, risking all our lives and those of others. After we'd dropped him off and returned to the flat we had trouble convincing Lee and Herring what had happened because we couldn't stop laughing. Post-traumatic laughing disorder. That night we waited in the Pleasance Courtyard unsure if he would turn up for the show; he arrived in a taxi and we all cheered. Turned out it wasn't a heart attack but hyper-low blood sugar level – he'd been on the charlie which lowers it, as does the prospect of eating. This incident occurs in [Coogan's autobiography](#) but in his version Marber drives him to hospital and I'm not mentioned. It's bullshit. *Simon Munnery is at the Stand, to 14 and 16-28 August.*

Bilal Zafar



I took my debut hour-long show, Cakes, to Edinburgh in 2016, after only three years doing standup. When it got nominated for the best newcomer

award, my life changed. I was on such a high at this point that every gig felt like it was going perfectly. I was brought back down to earth a bit when I did the infamous Late 'n' Live gig at the Gilded Balloon. The audience seemed fairly tame at first, but then the act before me decided to stage-dive after a set of aggressive anecdotes that he shouted into the mic. My very downbeat demeanour and story about a cake shop, which required a bit of focus even at 2am, was challenged from the start. The entire audience seemed to just be shouting at me. It was a somewhat harrowing and totally new experience. After initially feeling rattled, I found the way to manage it was to act like a teacher and tell them I would wait for them to be quiet until I started talking. Staying completely quiet and calmly looking at them was making them even more aggressive and I absolutely loved it. *Bilal Zafar is at the Underbelly, to 14 and 16-29 August.*

Feeling rattled, I found the way to manage it was to act like a teacher and tell them I would wait for them to be quiet

Bilal Zafar



Lou Sanders



My most memorable fringe moment was going on a fairground ride, fancying the guy next to me and then being sick on myself, and him. But on the upside, the ride was awful. So I'm glad I made my point. If I was Margot Robbie I think I could get away with it; the guy would have held my hand, stroked my hair and told me how good I was in *Neighbours*. When I went to the funfair, I was trying to escape the mania of the fringe and do something a bit different. I guess I did achieve that by sicking on a stranger and getting a ride stopped early. The one nice thing was that somebody in the fair recognised me! Not from comedy, but from being the girl who just retched over someone's dad. I'm not sure why I was sick, I had indulged in a little fake meat and two ice-creams, but that's not out of the ordinary. So I guess popping myself straight on a high octagon ride like a five-year-old was what tipped me over the edge that day. I did get the guy's number though! For the dry cleaning bill. *Lou Sanders is at Monkey Barrel, to 16 and 18-28 August.*

Matt Forde



I've seen so many memorable things at the Edinburgh festival, I've forgotten most of them. In all the years I've been going, one show stands out. Pappy's Fun Club were consistently the best thing at the festival (along with Tim Vine). Ten years ago, they performed their astonishing Last Show Ever. It's the only show I'd give six stars to, and I've seen Oasis three times. Not only was it the funniest show that year, I sat in awe at their ability to make comedy so tender and emotional. They played older versions of themselves and when it turned out one of them was dead, I broke down in tears. Maybe two of them were dead, I can't remember, I was sobbing with total grief. You have to believe me; it was way funnier than it sounds. Obviously, this is actually the second most memorable thing I've experienced at the fringe. The first was a lasagne pie I ate on a bridge but that makes me sound thick and pathetic, so I thought I'd mention the clever comedy show first. *Matt Forde is at the Pleasance Beyond, to 28 August* He is interviewing Gordon Brown on 7 August, Anas Sarwar on 15 August and Joanna Cherry on 22 August. More info and tickets at mattforde.com

Fascinating Aïda



This is my 38th fringe! So many shows have imprinted themselves on me. Christine Bovill's Piaf was absolutely the opposite of a tribute show, the simplicity, passion and truth of her singing breaks my heart in the best possible way. She's doing a show called Paris this year and I can't wait. Anda Union are Mongolian musicians and throat singers who gather traditional music from the many Mongolian tribes and create absolutely unearthly beauty and thrilling sounds. My Uncle's Shoes are Brazilian clowns telling the story of a lumpen nephew learning his uncle's skills and becoming a great clown, all done in total silence. I loved it so much I went twice. Which immediately makes me remember the 2004 production of Letters of a Matchmaker, from the epistolary novel of the same name by John B Keane (Fergal's uncle!). A sublime two-hander – the story of Irish country folk hidebound by geography and left behind as the country emptied through emigration, desperate to find someone to ease the loneliness. Hilarious and absolutely heartbreaking by turn, I saw that twice too. Bloody marvellous. *Dillie Keane, Fascinating Aïda member. Catch them at the Assembly Gordon Aikman theatre, to 13 and 16-27 August.*

Rob Auton



Two of my most vivid memories from Edinburgh have come from flyering. In 2012 I was doing a show about the colour yellow called The Yellow Show. I flyered for the show by sitting in a yellow paddling pool wearing a yellow coat surrounded by yellow objects on the Royal Mile from 11am til 3pm every day. I had a yellow foam swimming noodle with a slot cut in the end that I'd put flyers in and hold up for people to take a flyer. One day a gang of Edinburgh youths were mocking me and eventually grabbed my noodle and ran off with it. I ran after them down the Mile, a struggle ensued, and I got my noodle back. A more positive memory from 2009, I'd been flyering in the same spot from 9am-11.15am every day for an 11.30am show called The Big [Comedy](#) Breakfast on the Grassmarket. At the end of the run, I went into the Last Drop Pub near the venue, the landlord put his hand over the bar and said "Shake my hand, you've been flyering out there every day in all weathers, respect. Well done, sir." It absolutely made my month. *Rob Auton plays The Assembly Blue Room, 3-15, 17-29 Aug.*

La Clique



Since our first fringe in 1996, there have been many memorable, funny, excruciating, bizarre and extraordinary things, too numerous to mention but including:

- Costumes lost in transit between venues so La Clique artist appears on stage naked, to wild acclaim. It inspires a new reverse striptease act.
- Staff regularly finishing “after-work drinks” just in time to open the doors for the first children’s show of the day.
- An alto saxophone left in a Leith Walk chippy. On collection the shop owner asked: “Do you want chips with that?”
- Portable toilets used as dressing rooms, rendezvous locations and occasional crash pads.
- Spiked feet through sneakers from climbing Princess Street Gardens fence, a regular injury treated at the Edinburgh Infirmary. (Just ask A&E)
- Couch-surfing as an art form ... how many different couches in three weeks? A serious competition.
- Set and stage changes that would normally take four hours reduced to 15 minutes. Easy!
- Unidentified knickers found on the bar the morning after ... but never claimed and origin never discovered. *David Bates, Spiegelmaestro, La Clique. Catch them at the Underbelly Circus Hub on the Meadows, to 14, 16-21, 23-27 August.*

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Edinburgh festival 2022](#)

‘Fuelled by anger’: politics loom larger than ever at Edinburgh fringe

Scandals, an outgoing PM and a Tory leadership race – comics seeking material are spoilt for choice



Harry Kershaw as the 18-year-old future prime minister in *Boris the Third* which is playing at the Edinburgh fringe. Photograph: Andrew Pugsley

[Miranda Bryant](#)

Sat 6 Aug 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 6 Aug 2022 04.37 EDT

Politics always plays a big role at the Edinburgh fringe. But with an outgoing prime minister, multiple Westminster scandals and a fast-moving Tory leadership contest, the potential for material is unusually ripe for performers this year.

As well as sit-down interviews with political heavyweights including Scotland’s first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, and current and former Labour

leadership including Gordon Brown, Keir Starmer, Angela Rayner and Jeremy Corbyn, in the satirical arena politics will loom large.

“There’s a real appetite right now for politics everywhere,” said standup, journalist and former Labour adviser Ayesha Hazarika, who has had to leave writing the start of her show until the last minute because of the rapid pace of political events.

“We are just living in this era of a very hyperactive emotional rollercoaster of politics and it’s getting madder and madder,” said Hazarika, whose show, State of the Nation – Power, Politics and Tractors, opens at Gilded Balloon on Monday 8 August.

In the past few days alone she has gone from writing off Rishi Sunak as Tory leader, only for him to improve in the Sky debate on Thursday and flop the following morning with his comments about [redirecting funds from deprived urban areas](#) to affluent places like Tunbridge Wells.

“You’re like, ‘OK mate, please stop now because I have a show to write,’” she said.

Boris Johnson will no doubt feature strongly across political standup sets – which includes the fringe debut of Sarah Southern, the former David Cameron aide, and Matt Forde – but he has also inspired several entire bodies of work.

[Boris the Third](#), at the Pleasance Courtyard, imagines an 18-year-old Johnson, unprepared, playing Richard III. The comedy, written and directed by Adam Meggido, stars Harry Kershaw as Johnson.

Meanwhile, at Pleasance Dome, Nadine Dorries Productions presents the one-woman show My Dad and Other Lies by “Charlotte Johnson”, who describes herself as “Boris Johnson’s illegitimate daughter”.

The improv show Boris Live at Five, at Gilded Balloon at the Museum, invites audiences to ask the prime minister “anything you like”.

Comedy website Chortle recently said Johnson plays an outsized role at this year's festival with multiple shows "trying to make sense of the shitshow that has been Westminster politics of late".

"He is a comic figure, a tragic figure as well, and all this stuff is great for comedy," said Steve Bennett, Chortle's editor, adding that Johnson is "a product of our time". "The mythical story of his rise and fall. What made him popular is what brought him down."

Like in society, there is a lot of anger in comedy at the moment, said Bennett. "Comedy fuelled by anger, satire fuelled by anger and the tragicomic of Boris himself are probably the driving things."

Southern, whose show *Scandalous!* opens at the Voodoo Rooms on Saturday, promises to take audiences behind the scenes at Westminster. Amid Partygate, Beergate, resignations and former health secretary Matt Hancock's affair, she said: "I don't think there's been a better time to write a show about scandal. They're the things that have united us as a nation after Covid."

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She added: "One thing that Boris has provided, there's a lot of content for us."

Combining political influences from both sides of the Atlantic, in Boorish Trumpson at the Assembly Rooms, Claire Parry promises to "#MakeMusicGreatAgain" with an "interactive, music and clowning-filled interrogation of power and those who wield it".

Other politically themed productions include Bloody Difficult Women, a comedy play by columnist Tim Walker about Gina Miller's court case against the government of Theresa May; Michael Spicer's The Room Next Door; Extinction Rebellion activist Kate Smurthwaite's Humanity's Last Hope; and model Eunice Olumide's AfroPolitiCool.

“It’s a fantastic time for political comedy,” said Forde, whose show Clowns to the Left of Me, Jokers to the Right, runs at Pleasance Beyond all month and will interview Gordon Brown on Sunday.

The appetite for political comedy increases with every year, he said. But as British politics becomes “more and more chaotic” it is on a dangerous trajectory, he warned. “Sadly, I think things are going to continue to get worse. The plus side of that is it gives me plenty of material to write about.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2022/aug/06/fuelled-by-anger-politics-loom-larger-than-ever-at-edinburgh-fringe>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2022.08.06 - Opinion

- Mock the Week was never part of the culture wars. We only fought for laughs
- Be warned: inflation could take British politics to a very dark place indeed
- Why is Starmer peddling the Tory ‘magic money tree’ line on public spending? It’s just bad economics
- Celebrate the Commonwealth Games and the Lionesses. Then fight for real diversity

| [Next](#) | [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

OpinionTV comedy

Mock the Week was never part of the culture wars. We only fought for laughs

Dara Ó Briain

If there's one lesson I draw looking back on it all, it's this: people have taken our nonsense waaaayyyy too seriously



Dara Ó Briain on Mock The Week. 'It was always just seven comedians a week trying to get laughs from the studio audience.' Photograph: BBC

Sat 6 Aug 2022 04.00 EDT

Well, I guess my time hosting a Rorschach test on the telly is almost over: after 17 years, Mock the Week is [entering its final series](#). I thought I was hosting a comedy panel show, the UK's chosen contrived mechanism to put standup comedians on the telly, rather than just letting them, y'know, do standup. It turns out that I was hosting a Rorschach test for culture warriors, eager to see within the show whatever agenda they wanted; and none of them spotting that it is still only an excuse to get comedians on the telly and

that the comedians don't have, and have never had, an agenda greater than getting a laugh from the studio audience.

If there's one lesson I draw looking back on it all, it's this: people have taken our nonsense waaaayyyy too seriously. Some viewers used to watch the show with stopwatches and contact us if we had spoken about one political party for longer than the other, without ever being clear if being spoken about was a good thing or a bad thing. Some jokes just had legs, folks. They ran longer.

People would accuse us of whatever bias they felt they saw in BBC news, as if I used to be called into a meeting alongside Huw Edwards, the team from Bargain Hunt and Mr Tumble, so that we could be given the corporation's stance that week. Mock the Week was made by an independent company, filmed in various studios around London and rarely even in [Television](#) Centre when it existed, and at no stage in the past 17 years have I even owned a pass to get into the BBC. If I need to visit the BBC, I present myself at the front desk and the man says, "Mock of the Week?", and I say yes, because, at this stage, why fight it?

People were angry at the show for being offensive and male and vicious; and then, later, other people were angry because it wasn't offensive and male and vicious. And through all that, it was always just seven comedians a week trying to get laughs from the studio audience.

And people were angry that it seemed to have only one opinion on Brexit; which is fair, because it pretty much did, and I spoke at length in a tour about how we could have better represented, for example, the sense of Brexit being for many people about sovereignty, and its importance for the English national psyche. But also: Brexit was a terrible idea, which has never delivered any benefits, and unlike politicians, I'm not obliged to pretend it's not a terrible idea, and while I'm generally really dubious of trying to see collective intent in seven comedians competing for laughs, I think we got that one totally right.

And mainly, and relatedly, people got angry that there weren't enough "rightwing jokes", whatever they are, and seemed surprisingly un-calmed by my regular response that if they wanted different jokes they should just write them themselves and go on stage, because comedy is a pretty free market, and we'll see them after they've done a few years on the circuit. This did not seem to make people happy as a response, even though it was exactly the kind of "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" advice that rightwing types love to give.

Also, and this seems painfully simple, the show started in 2005 so we spoke plenty about Tony Blair and then Gordon Brown at the time; but you inevitably talk more about the government than the opposition, so 12 years of Conservative rule just put them more in the spotlight.

That said, for balance, people also were really, really angry that we made jokes about Jeremy Corbyn and have regularly contacted me since to say I "have blood on my hands" (actual quote) for undermining the Labour leader, even though we were obliged by law to spend the same time talking about both parties in the run-up to the election; and, as you can see from Brexit, voters don't actually take their opinions from Mock the Week. And also, grow up. He was the leader of the opposition: the least he should expect is to be joked about, and challenged.

So none of this criticism matters. None of it. Because the people who actually watched the show, who were fans of it, enjoyed the same bits of it we did: Private Browsing, Monsoon Poultry Hospital, Princess Monaco of Kent, the silly parts that had nothing to do with politics or imagined agendas and were just the great jokes that emerge when you let funny people interact, whatever the red herring of a format you're using.

Yes, of course, Mock could be a terribly blunt tool, satirically. Quietly, in my more pretentious moments, I will explain my theory of how satire is the construction of a parallel world, whether with Lilliput or latex puppetry, and its lessons for our world are taken in inference and reflection; and that what we were doing on Mock, staring straight down the lens and pointing out jokes, was merely commentary. And that it was insane to think you could carve a coherent satirical voice while seven different people were talking. When Swift wrote A Modest Proposal, he didn't invite six other writers to

keep grabbing the quill off him and also start riffing about eating the poor; or worse, propose a different proposal, that got a bigger laugh, and made the edit instead of his.

It's true that in the early days the show was too white and too male, and, in one early episode, there were five Cambridge Footlights graduates, with only myself and Frankie Boyle as Celtic exceptions. That changed dramatically over time, but I would say that Mock didn't lead the diversification of the comedy world as much as reflect it, and the presence on it of so many female and ethnic minority comedians is because they kicked the door in, and full credit to them.

Mock became the academy for comics reaching the top of Edinburgh and the circuit and starting into television. Hugh Dennis and I were avuncular schoolteachers, waving through generations of bright talent before they left to achieve greater things. Last week, I was performing at the Montreal comedy festival and almost the entire British and Irish contingent (Tom Allen, Ed Gamble, Sindhu Vee, James Acaster, Nish Kumar, Suzi Ruffell, Rhys James and Catherine Bohart) were Mock alumni.

We actively liked new comics on Mock and, despite the show's early mythic reputation, wanted appearing on it to be a positive experience, partially because I remembered just how unfriendly some of the senior talent on the previous generation of panel shows (Never Mind the Buzzcocks and Have I Got News for You, in particular) were towards new comics. For fuller details of this, look forward to my memoir, *It's Over, So Let's Burn the Bridges*, whenever I get round to writing it.

So, a final shoutout to the angry people, including the *Guardian* itself, whose preview of the show once said: "Dara Ó Briain, Hugh Dennis, Frankie Boyle [and co] wade through it, as if through thigh-high excrement ... "

People would tweet: "It's not as good as it used to be and I haven't watched it in 10 years!", contradicting themselves. For the record, I enjoyed it most in the last seven years, or so, in the company of a more relaxed, collaborative generation of comics.

“You’ve lost your cash cow!” Mock was 11 evenings’ work a year. Theatres reopening after Covid was the bigger news for us, by a factor of 10.

“When are going to bring Frankie back on to Whose Line is it Anyway?” said a man, bewilderingly, to me last year on Oxford Street, and walked away before I could start unpicking everything that was wrong in the question.

“The reason it’s getting cancelled is because ...” Ah, let me stop you there. There is no reason for people outside the show to waste any energy theorising about this.

I was quoted this week as saying that Mock had to end because the news had become so ridiculous that we had nothing left to say. This was a joke for the press release. It has, in fact, come to an end because the BBC has less money than it used to; and to do something new, something old has to stop.

This chipping away will continue, which is why people should fight to protect the BBC before it becomes a shell of what it used to be. We’ve had our go, though; and I hope that whatever arrives next gets anything near 17 years – and leaves behind its own My Enormous Head, Robo-Bongo-Cuckoo-Cop or the Penis-Sausage/Megabus man. Truly, that is our legacy.

- Dara Ó Briain continues touring his live show So ... Where Were We? into 2023 – and is available for television work
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OpinionInflation

Be warned: inflation could take British politics to a very dark place indeed

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



If Britain ends up in the recession expected by the Bank of England, public anger will be looking for an outlet



‘You don’t have to be a strict economic materialist of the old school to know all this will shape our politics, in ways both deep and shallow.’ Photograph: Roberto Herrett Images/Alamy

Fri 5 Aug 2022 11.56 EDT Last modified on Sat 6 Aug 2022 04.15 EDT

Winter is coming. The Bank of England says so. Pick your measure of the economic gale that is heading this way, deepening a chill that’s already biting hard. The Bank says inflation will reach 13%, shrinking the value of wages, making everything more expensive, starting with [eating and heating](#), forcing yet more people to decide whether to [starve or shiver](#). We are to brace for a recession that will see five consecutive quarters of contraction, and a decline in household incomes of 5% by 2024 – the biggest fall since records began more than half a century ago. Of course, all this will hit hardest those with least. One in five UK households will be left with [no savings](#) at all by 2024. Meanwhile, inflation is as much as 30% higher in the towns and cities of northern England, thanks, [says](#) the Centre for Cities, to poor home insulation and a “car dependency” that forces people to shell out more on petrol.

You don’t have to be a strict economic materialist of the old school to know all this will shape our politics, in ways both deep and shallow. Start with the latter and the current contest to pick Britain’s next prime minister, a process of anointment mysteriously delegated to a select priesthood of 100,000 or so

Britons who are anything but representative of the country whose fate they hold in their hands.

By rights, the Conservative party leadership race should be convulsed by the warning from Threadneedle Street, though of course the two contenders hardly needed Thursday's forecast to know the UK is already in a grave cost of living crisis. Liz Truss and [Rishi Sunak](#) should be preparing themselves and their party for the extremely tough task one of them will face in less than a month. But that's not how it is.

Instead, Truss continues to serve up soothing fantasy talk of tax cuts, even as she [splashes the cash](#), with spending promises on everything from defence to doctors' pensions: cakeism's most famous exponent may be in his final days as PM, but his doctrine lives on in Truss. Sunak likes to pose as Mr Sensible, insisting that immediate tax cuts would merely "[put fuel on the fire](#)" of inflation, but he is engaged in his own form of pander politics, telling the Tory selectorate whatever rubbish they long to hear.

Unluckily for him, we now have video evidence of quite how low he is prepared to sink in that endeavour – and how rightwing he actually is. In a rather lovely garden in Tunbridge Wells, he [boasted](#) to local Tories of his efforts as chancellor to reverse Treasury formulas "that shoved all the funding into deprived urban areas" rather than to more deserving communities like theirs. That's right: it's Tunbridge Wells that needs the help.

Rishi Sunak admits taking money from deprived areas in leaked footage – video

Nationally, surely, it will be a different story. You'd think no governing party presiding over an economic cataclysm of this order could hope to be re-elected. Runaway inflation, imminent recession, mortgages up, incomes down: every political handbook says those are the circumstances in which incumbents get walloped by the voters. Keir Starmer should be miles ahead of the Conservative alternative, whoever it is. And yet look at the [Thursday poll](#) that showed that, in a match-up of Starmer v Truss, it is Truss who is

ahead by two points. Labour is in front in other surveys, of course, but given this climate it should be out of sight.

Still, with an economic shock of this order the impact will be felt far beyond Westminster and electoral politics. Deep in the western folk memory is the knowledge of where hyper-inflation can lead – Berlin wheelbarrows full of worthless banknotes as the precursor to Hitler – but what about a steep rise in inflation that is not on that Weimar level, but is a hike all the same? What will that do to our politics?

A rapid consequence could be a change in the public attitude towards the war in Ukraine. The most obvious cause of the current inflation surge is the rise in oil and gas prices triggered in part by Russia's invasion. Standing with Kyiv, and sanctioning Moscow, has come at a cost paid by regular people on the forecourt and in their heating bills. Up to now, Britons, along with most Europeans and Americans, have been admirably solid in their support for the victims of Putin's aggression. But as inflation bites harder, that could shift, with new pressure on Kyiv to give way to its tormentor, if that's what it takes to get prices back down.

Public discontent may find another outlet. The first signs of the kind of disobedience movement that greeted the poll tax in 1990 are emerging, with a [Don't Pay campaign](#) urging consumers to refuse to settle their energy bills until the companies lower their prices. Energy retailers will stress that they are not the same as energy extractors such as BP, which this week announced it had tripled its quarterly profits to [£7bn](#), but few will be in the mood to make that distinction.

An inflation rise of this order travels across class lines. Working people struggle, because a galloping inflation rate turns even a wage increase into a cut. The middle classes, meanwhile, see any savings shrink before their eyes. If they are homeowners, their mortgage bills will soar, potentially out of reach. And when houses start getting repossessed, fear turns to fury.

Where does that anger go? Guardian readers might hope it is directed at the act of self-harm that's made our current woes so much worse. I asked [Albrecht Ritschl](#), professor of economic history at the LSE, what single move the UK government could make to alleviate the pain. "Suspend Brexit

for 20 years,” came the reply. He knows that’s not going to happen. But he explains that today’s crisis is not one of demand, but of supply: there’s just not enough stuff to meet demand, thanks in part to the post-Covid blockages in the global supply chain. In Britain, that’s exacerbated because we can no longer import European goods as freely or as cheaply as before.

In that context, policymakers are left with a question of distribution: how to share out the finite, indeed shrinking, amount we have. The priority surely has to be those who simply cannot afford to live: restoring the [f20 uplift to universal credit](#) would be a start. But, says Ritschl, “if you want to give something to the poor, then you have to do it like Robin Hood – and take from the rich”. In other words, not the tax cuts Truss is promising, but tax increases on the wealthiest.

A wealth tax, a benefits rise and a rethink on Brexit: there would be some comfort in imagining those as the consequences of this crisis. But I wouldn’t hold your breath. Instead, memories stir of the last such inflation hike, in the 1970s. That decade brought a surge in political violence and a rise in support for the racist far right, in the form of the National Front.

Under Boris Johnson, the Conservative party has shifted towards a nationalist populism that Truss seems unlikely to jettison. That creed is already of an ugly hue, but it could darken – especially when winter comes.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist
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OpinionLabour

Why is Starmer peddling the Tory ‘magic money tree’ line on public spending? It’s just bad economics

[Frances Ryan](#)



Labour’s use of the phrase plays into the right’s hands. In such times of crisis, smart state investment is to be welcomed, not feared

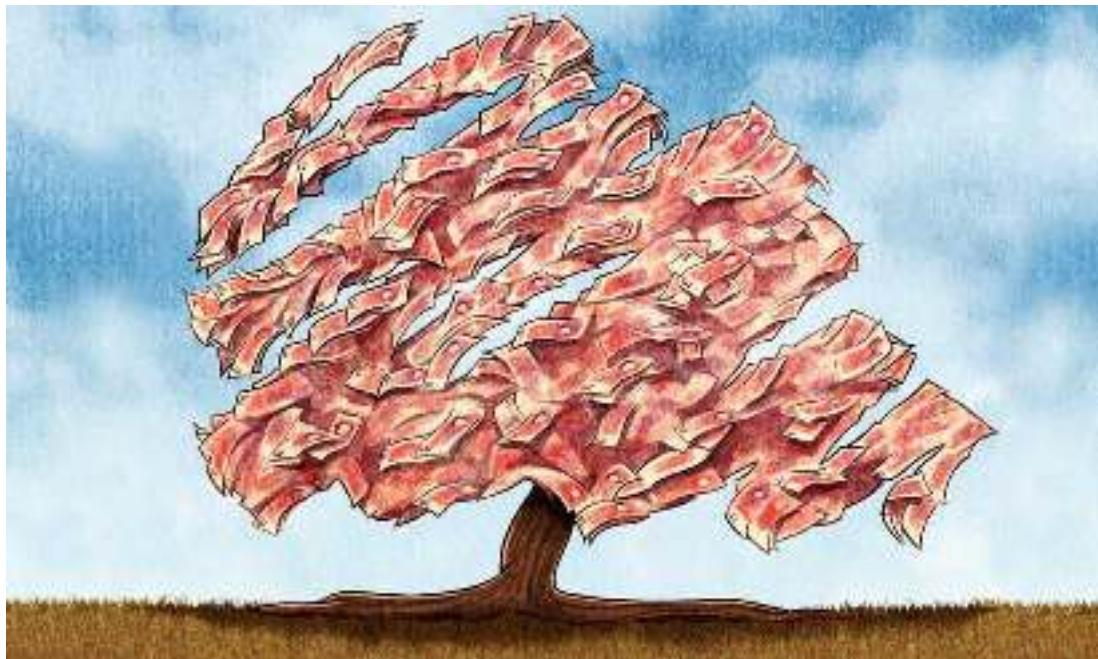


Illustration: Ben Jennings/The Guardian

Fri 5 Aug 2022 08.19 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 14.05 EDT

After a barren winter, accusations of “magic money trees” are taking root once again. In light of tens of billions of pounds of uncosted tax pledges in the Tory leadership campaign, the Labour leader, Keir Starmer, has promised there will be “[no magic money tree economics](#)” if his party gets into power. Labour’s social media team has been spreading the message, too, including “shaking the magic money tree” in its “[Tory leadership bingo](#)” card.

The line has traditionally been used against Labour by the Conservatives, perhaps most famously by [Theresa May](#) in 2017 as she tried to discredit Jeremy Corbyn’s spending commitments. The adage speaks to the wider rightwing narrative that the Labour party (or the left more generally) cannot be trusted with the economy – a myth that has long been effectively deployed by rightwing ministers and media alike. Think about the role the “[no money left](#)” note – a joke by Labour’s outgoing Treasury chief Liam Byrne to his successor in 2010 – had in embedding George Osborne’s claim that the cause of Britain’s financial problems wasn’t the global crash but Labour’s “overspending”.

Starmer's desire to tackle this stereotype is easy enough to understand. Weaponising your opponent's own attack lines against them can be appealing – a way to detoxify an issue in voters' minds or shift the blame entirely. But more often than not, you just end up repeating your opponent's argument without ever shifting the dial. The Labour party bringing up the topic of fiscal responsibility to fight the Tories is akin to a company putting their rival's inferior products in their shop window. It's just free advertising. Within days of Starmer making the "magic money tree" speech, a Tory MP was [using the phrase on LBC](#). That the line is now being used in the context of Tory tax and spending plans does not mark progress. It simply shows how the right's framing has been so successful that even the left has adopted it.

At its core, the magic money tree is an inherently conservative narrative. It deliberately propagates a false understanding of how the economy works, just as Osborne's false framing of government spending as akin to a "[household budget](#)" throughout the austerity years was used to justify sweeping public funding cuts. Above all, it seeks to delegitimise arguments for public spending, framing policies that improve conditions for ordinary people as unrealistic and wasteful. It is not a coincidence that the "magic money tree" line is more likely to be evoked in response to funding social security than tax cuts for millionaires. It has never simply been about signifying disapproval for uncotted spending, but rather for spending on areas that the status quo deems frivolous.

If the magic money tree does exist, it is growing in the Tories' garden. Under the Conservatives, there is always money for the rich: the headline rate of [corporation tax has been cut](#) from 28% in 2010-11 to 19% in 2017-18 all while the public was told there had to be "savings" on the poorest's benefits. During the pandemic, the government found millions of pounds for [PPE contracts to Tory chums](#), and almost £5bn in [written-off Covid loans](#). Meanwhile, failing to invest in the social safety net only racks up the taxpayer's bill. The impact of child poverty costs the UK [£38bn a year](#), according to research by Loughborough University.

It is entirely possible for Labour to point this out – to make the case that the [Conservatives](#) are careless and wasteful with public funds, and that government cuts cost more than they save – but they will not achieve it using gimmicks, and certainly not with ones the Tories have designed. We

saw this recently when Labour tried to skew the Conservatives' reputation for efficiency by attacking the government's policy to deport some asylum seekers to Rwanda because "it won't work", as if the problem with deporting torture victims is that the Tories aren't very good at it. We witnessed it again last week, when Starmer sacked a shadow transport minister for joining the picket lines, largely out of fear the Tories and rightwing press would reframe the chaos as "Labour's summer of strikes". There was no win for the left in either capitulation – it just pushed it further from its core voters and values.

What's particularly grating is that, when it comes to the magic money tree, it isn't simply that Starmer is reinvigorating a Tory narrative – it's that he's breathing life into one that was already dead. The public's concern about debt and borrowing was always era-specific to the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash, and the pandemic has well and truly eradicated it. From the furlough scheme to the vaccination programme, coronavirus killed the myth that large-scale government spending was not necessary, responsible or possible. The cost of living crisis, on top of crumbling NHS services, only shows that smart government investment is not something to be feared – it is to be welcomed.

Rather than peddling Tory economic narratives, this is the moment for Labour to make the case for a different type of economic system. This is not a matter of ideology or even left v right – it's about understanding the pressure that British families are now facing, and that the old establishment way of doing things is not going to save us. The Bank of England has just predicted that [the UK will enter a recession](#) later this year, and hiked interest rates to boot. The weekly food shop is about to hit its [highest price in 14 years](#). A record [6.6 million patients](#) are waiting for NHS treatment in England. Soaring energy bills are set to push millions of families into poverty this winter. If Starmer cannot make the case for bold economic thinking now, he surely never will.

- Frances Ryan is a Guardian columnist

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

OpinionParalympics

Celebrate the Commonwealth Games and the Lionesses. Then fight for real diversity

[Anne Wafula Strike](#)

I became an elite para-athlete, but too often minorities such as women and people with disabilities still find the odds are against them



‘Watching the Lionesses secure their history-making win reminded me of the galvanising power of sport and its potential to act as a life-changing springboard for marginalised groups.’ Photograph: Daniela Porcelli/SPP/REX/Shutterstock

Fri 5 Aug 2022 10.29 EDT Last modified on Fri 5 Aug 2022 10.30 EDT

When you’re a minority, it’s easy to feel that your world has shrunk. That’s how I’ve felt over the years, as a disabled woman. But sport has been fundamental in opening the world up to me again.

I first caught the bug watching the 2002 [Commonwealth Games](#) in Manchester. Seeing female wheelchair para-athletes racing on TV that day 20 years ago inspired me as a young mum, newly arrived in the UK from Kenya, to get into a gym. From there, I started training as a para-athlete, which has given me access to opportunities I could never have even imagined as a disabled girl in Kenya.

Watching the [Lionesses secure their history-making win](#) this month reminded me of the galvanising power of sport and its potential to act as a life-changing springboard for marginalised groups.

But seeing the lack of diversity on the Lionesses' team has got me thinking about the true nature of meaningful participation. Undoubtedly, the Lionesses' win was a step towards women being taken more seriously in sport. But which women? The team's 11 starting players, and five of the substitutes, [were white](#). While 43% of players in the men's Premier League are Black, this figure falls to just 10% in its female equivalent – the Women's Super League. What is plainly evident is that more needs to be done to better represent marginalised groups in sport.

Huge strides have been made in our reframing of what sportspeople should look like – and these are clear at the current Commonwealth Games, where, for the first time, more medals are being awarded to women than men. But just 1.6% of executive, leadership and ownership positions in football are held by Black people, according to a [report commissioned by the Black Footballers Partnership](#), and 4.4% of managerial positions usually taken by former players are occupied by Black employees. We need quality training, investment and commitment from leaders and investors to ensure participation is not just a box-ticking exercise – and that sport is open to all wanting to get involved starting from the grassroots level.

That process begins with a clear understanding of how sport and physical activity are tied to our values as a society, such as access to health and education; equality; and even peace and security. These are values that should be available to all, but if you have a disability, are a woman, or come from a diverse or low income area, the odds are stacked against you.

Disabled children struggle to access playgrounds, or take part in meaningful physical education lessons. Women from minority backgrounds are faced with the extra challenge of accessing safe spaces, despite increasingly urgent calls to introduce better safeguarding policies that ensure duty of care to all athletes. And that should apply to coaches and supportive staff too. To improve representation in sport, we need to tackle a systemic lack of investment in marginalised groups, which too often translates to a lack of opportunity and a diminished voice in society.



Anne Wafula Strike at home. Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

Ultimately, we need to understand that physical activity is a non-negotiable prerequisite to healthy living. It's vital that we democratise sport, so that anyone, regardless of race, gender, location, socio-economic background, physical ability or educational needs can experience its benefits without being subjected to barriers or abuse.

We need to call out exclusion and reduced participation in sport when we see it, and name a lack of diverse representation for what it is: discrimination. This is not just a problem for sporting institutions, but should also be of grave concern for any governments that truly believe in equal and democratic values.

The good news for Commonwealth countries is that we have the advantage of a joint value system which, in the past, has helped us to tackle powerful and destructive ideologies such as apartheid, and has seen us unite to tackle climate change. I believe we can once again use the strength of these shared values to work together to make sport fully representative of the society we live in.

Strides are being made in the right direction. Ahead of this year's Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, [ministers committed](#) to using sport to protect human rights for LGBTQ athletes, as well as increasing investment in sporting projects that target improved health and gender equality and boost sustainable development. It's a start but there's more to be done. It would be foolish to underestimate the power sport has to change lives.

Anne Wafula Strike MBE is a Paralympic wheelchair racer

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2022.08.06 - Around the world

- [Gaza Israel strikes Gaza amid tensions following arrest of Palestinian militant](#)
- [Roe v Wade Indiana assembly passes anti-abortion bill, governor signs it into law](#)
- [Democrats Progressives bullish despite mixed results in primaries](#)
- [Death Valley Flash floods bury cars and strand tourists](#)
- [Twitter Musk accuses company of deliberately miscounting spam users in countersuit](#)

[**Gaza**](#)

Israel strikes Gaza amid tensions following arrest of Palestinian militant

Palestinian officials say at least 10 dead after Israel said it was preparing to ‘remove the threat from this region’

Smoke rises in Gaza City after Israel airstrike – video

[Martin Chulov](#) Middle East correspondent

Fri 5 Aug 2022 13.33 EDTFirst published on Fri 5 Aug 2022 10.01 EDT

Israeli warplanes struck numerous sites in the Gaza Strip on Friday in what [Israel](#) said was a preemptive strike against Palestinian factions allegedly planning rocket strikes at targets in Israel.

Palestinian health officials reported that at least 10 people died and 55 were wounded in an initial barrage which killed the commander of Islamic Jihad, Tayseer Jabari, in the north of [Gaza](#). Among the fatalities was an eight-year-old girl.

Both Islamic Jihad and [Hamas](#), which rules the Gaza Strip, vowed to retaliate, raising the spectre of another summer war. If hostilities escalate, it would mark the fourth war in Gaza since 2008. Several smaller skirmishes have also been fought.

As night fell, Islamic Jihad appeared ready to increase the stakes, pledging a no-holds-barred confrontation and saying that Tel Aviv would “taste rockets”. Israel said it killed 10 Islamic Jihad militants in the opening stages of its assault. It urged residents near the Gaza border to move to bomb shelters.

Earlier in the week, Israeli forces cleared areas near the Gaza Strip in preparation for possible retaliation for their capture of Islamic Jihad’s

commander in the West Bank, Bassam al-Saadi, in a raid in Jenin on Monday.

Islamic Jihad had in fact not responded to the arrest of al-Saadi, one of the organisation's most senior figures, and had instead made demands for proof that he had not been mistreated, as well as demanding the release of several detained militants and an end to the blockade of Gaza.

Israeli military leaders named the surprise assault Breaking Dawn, suggesting a prolonged operation rather than a surgical strike. However, Egyptian officials said they had been warned about a smaller-scale assault. Large numbers of troops and armour were moved to the Gaza border on Friday afternoon.

Earlier, the Israeli defence minister, Benny Gantz, had visited communities along the frontier and alluded to the offensive to come. "We are taking actions to remove the threat from this region," he said

"We will operate with internal resilience and external strength in order to restore routine life in Israel's south," he said. "We do not seek conflict, yet we will not hesitate to defend our citizens, if required."

Hamas has ruled Gaza since a brief war with rival faction Fatah in 2007 and continues to hold sway over many aspects of life in the strip. Hamas and Islamic Jihad have each fired rockets into southern and central Israel during rounds of fighting. Israeli warplanes, meanwhile, have destroyed buildings and infrastructure which they say were being used by militants to wage war.



Israeli protesters tried to march towards Gaza on Friday. Photograph: Ariel Schalit/AP

Gaza has remained under blockade by Israel and Egypt since the Hamas takeover, with strict conditions on who comes and goes to the area and which materials are allowed to enter. Rights groups and NGOs regularly report that the blockade amounts to collective punishment of a population that has little freedom of movement.

Israel says that Palestinian militants receive regular weapon shipments from Iran. Last month, a naval ship targeted a fishing boat off the Gaza coast, claiming it was conducting a gun-run from Egypt.

Israeli protesters had earlier on Friday tried to march towards Gaza demanding the return of captive Israeli citizens and the Hamas-held remains of two Israeli soldiers killed during the 2014 war.

The fate of the Israelis has remained central to negotiations over Gaza ever since. Two Israeli citizens are being held in Gaza, one of whom appeared in a video several months ago, apparently in a hospital bed.

Hamas is believed to want to trade the Israelis for an unspecified number of prisoners held in Israeli jails. Such releases have been a feature of truce

deals during past conflicts. Egypt has mediated numerous rounds of fruitless talks between the two sides.

Airstrikes on Gaza intensified in the evening, with Israel claiming to be targeting Islamic Jihad observation posts. The militant group had not responded to the attacks several hours after they were launched.

Gaza's underground tunnel network, which has been central to the movement of its armed factions, has largely been rebuilt after a 10-day Israeli assault in May last year. Hamas announced their support for Islamic Jihad and said they would also respond to the strikes. "The resistance, with all its arms and military factions, is united in this campaign and will have the last word," the group said in a statement.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Abortion](#)

Indiana becomes first US state post-Roe to ban most abortions

Republican governor Eric Holcomb signs bill into law that severely restricts access to abortions with only limited exceptions



An abortion rights protester becomes emotional as the vote to ban most abortions passes the Indiana legislature on Friday. Photograph: Cheney Orr/Reuters

Associated Press

Sat 6 Aug 2022 08.49 EDTFirst published on Fri 5 Aug 2022 22.50 EDT

Indiana's state legislature has become the first in the US to pass new legislation restricting access to abortions since the federal supreme court overturned [Roe v Wade](#).

The bill went to the state's Republican governor, Eric Holcomb, who signed it into law on Friday night.

Indiana was among the earliest Republican-run state legislatures to debate tighter abortion laws after the supreme court ruling in June that removed constitutional protections. It is the first state to pass a ban through both chambers.

The Indiana senate approved the near-total ban 28-19, hours after house members advanced it 62-38. It includes limited exceptions, including in cases of rape and incest, and to protect the life and physical health of the mother. The exceptions for rape and incest are limited to 10 weeks post-fertilization, meaning victims could not get an abortion in Indiana after that. Victims would not be required to sign a notarized affidavit attesting to an attack.

Outside the house chamber, abortion rights activists often chanted over lawmakers' remarks, carrying signs like "Roe roe roe your vote" and "Build this wall" between church and state. Some house Democrats wore blazers over pink "Bans Off Our Bodies" T-shirts.

Indiana lawmakers listened to testimony over the past two weeks in which residents on all sides of the issue rarely, if ever, supported the legislation. Abortion-rights supporters said the bill went too far, while anti-abortion activists said it did not go far enough.

In advocating against the bill, Rep Ann Vermilion condemned her fellow Republicans for calling women who obtained abortions "murderers".

"I think that the Lord's promise is for grace and kindness," she said. "He would not be jumping to condemn these women."

The house rejected, largely on party lines, a Democratic proposal to place a non-binding question on the statewide November election ballot: "Shall abortion remain legal in Indiana?"

The Indiana house speaker, Todd Huston, said that if residents were unhappy, they could vote for new lawmakers.

Kansas voters already resoundingly rejected a measure that would have allowed the state's Republican-controlled legislature to tighten abortion in

the first test of voters' feelings about the issue since Roe was overturned.

Indiana's proposed ban also came after the political firestorm over a 10-year-old rape victim who traveled to the state from neighboring Ohio to end her pregnancy. The case gained attention when an Indianapolis doctor said the child came to Indiana because of Ohio's "fetal heartbeat" ban.

Democratic Rep Maureen Bauer spoke tearfully before Friday's vote about people in her South Bend district who oppose the bill – the husbands standing behind their wives, the fathers supporting their daughters – as well as the women "who are demanding that we are seen as equal".

Bauer's comments were followed by raucous cheers from protesters in the hallway and subdued applause from fellow Democrats.

"You may not have thought that these women would show up," Bauer said. "Maybe you thought we wouldn't be paying attention."

West Virginia legislators on 29 July passed up the chance to be the first state with a unified ban after its lower house refused to concur with senate amendments that removed criminal penalties for physicians who performed illegal abortions. Delegates instead asked for a conference committee to consider the details between the bills.

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Democrats

Progressives bullish despite mixed results in Democratic primaries

Morale-boosting victories were tempered by bruising defeats but US leftwingers feel the party's center of gravity is shifting



A sign for Jasmine Crockett is posted outside the Lakewood Branch Library in the Texas primary election in Dallas on Tuesday. Photograph: Emil Lippe/AP

[Joan E Greve](#) in Washington

[@joanegreve](#)

Sat 6 Aug 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 6 Aug 2022 04.01 EDT

Progressives watching the latest US primary results last Tuesday night might have felt understandably torn.

While two of the most leftwing members of the House, Rashida Tlaib of Michigan and Cori Bush of Missouri, easily fended off their challengers, Andy Levin lost in his Michigan primary to a much more centrist colleague, Haley Stevens.

The results epitomized the mixed success that progressive [Democrats](#) in the US have seen in this primary season, which will draw to a close over the next few weeks.

Although a number of progressive candidates have secured important victories in congressional primaries, centrists have prevailed in some of the most high-profile races. Rather than being discouraged by their losses, however, progressive groups are celebrating their wins and strategizing about how to continue pushing the Democratic party to the left on crucial issues as they look ahead to November's midterm elections.

Those progressive groups point to the success of congressional candidates like Greg Casar and Jasmine Crockett in Texas and Summer Lee in Pennsylvania to demonstrate how their movement made important gains this year. All three of those candidates won their primaries in reliably Democratic districts, meaning they will almost certainly be elected to Congress in November, boosting the strength of the left of the party.

"I started the season with trying to temper my own and my organization's expectations for what we were able to accomplish," said Natalia Salgado, director of federal affairs for the Working Families party. "I'm walking away feeling like we far exceeded what our expectations were, and I feel like we truly met our moment."



Greg Casar speaks after declaring victory in the primary election for Texas' 35th congressional district on Tuesday. Photograph: Sara Diggins/AP

The primary victories of incumbents like Tlaib and Bush have also proven how progressive lawmakers can have staying power in Congress and potentially build long political careers.

"I think a lot of centrists try to paint our movement and the candidates that come from our movement as being sort of temporary," Salgado said. "I think what [Tlaib and Bush] demonstrate is that progressives are not only able to speak with authenticity and credibility to their electorates, but they are also able to go into Congress and govern like serious lawmakers."

But progressives have also seen some bruising primary losses this year.

In Texas, Jessica Cisneros lost an extremely close runoff race to Congressman Henry Cuellar, who is the last anti-abortion Democrat serving in the House. Progressive Nina Turner lost her rematch primary race against Congresswoman Shontel Brown, and Maryland's Donna Edwards, seeking to return to the House after leaving office in 2017, was defeated by a more centrist candidate.

Progressives have blamed some of those losses on massive spending from outside groups aimed at undermining their candidates. Pro-Israel groups like

the United Democracy Project, affiliated with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (Aipac), and the Democratic Majority for Israel [spent millions of dollars](#) attacking progressive candidates and promoting their centrist opponents.

The UDP spent more than \$4m against Edwards alone, even though the former congresswoman had secured the endorsements of prominent Democrats such as Hillary Clinton and the House speaker, Nancy Pelosi.

“I think that should be a real wake-up call for the entire Democratic party, not just progressives,” said Usamah Andrabi, candidate communications manager for the progressive group Justice Democrats. “Mainstream Democrats and Democratic leadership think that they have power over these corporate Super Pacs, but I think [Edwards’s] election shows just how wrong they are.”

Andrabi and other progressive leaders have also [criticized Democratic leaders](#) for helping to prop up centrist incumbents like Cuellar. In the final days of Cuellar’s race against Cisneros, Pelosi recorded a robocall for the congressman, while the House majority whip, Jim Clyburn, traveled to Texas to campaign alongside his colleague.

To Andrabi, Democratic leaders’ aid to Cuellar sent a dangerous message to voters that the party does not live up to the values it espouses ahead of November, when Republicans are [heavily favored](#) to regain control of the House.



Progressive Democrat Jessica Cisneros addresses her watch party next to her family during her primary with Henry Cuellar in Laredo, Texas, in May. Photograph: Veronica Cardenas/Reuters

"How can you be the party that supports reproductive freedom, while also supporting the last anti-abortion Democrat in the House?" Andrabi said. "It just doesn't line up."

But Salgado saw a silver lining to the many hurdles that progressive candidates have faced this primary season. The extensive efforts by big money groups and centrist leaders to promote their preferred candidates demonstrated that progressives are being taken seriously as a political movement, she argued.

"If progressives weren't being successful and weren't seen as a threat, I don't know that the forces of the Democratic party – with a capital D – and the centrist and moderate forces in our country and the big money forces would have coalesced in the way that they did," Salgado said.

Even in the races where progressives lost, their supporters say those candidates helped to shape the conversation around important issues such as racial justice and the climate crisis. Given that the Democratic party has

moved to the left in recent years, progressives hope that their candidates' platforms will help persuade voters to embrace even more liberal reforms.

"There has been a real battle, especially in the last decade and a half, to redefine what the Democratic party means," said Cristina Tzintzún Ramirez, president and executive director of the young progressive voting group NextGen America. "Whether it's the minimum wage, taxing the rich, climate change, or policing and immigration, progressives are actually winning. They are moving the Democratic party in the right direction."

As the primary season starts to wind down and Democrats prepare for the general elections in the fall, progressives have promised to do everything they can to prevent Republicans from regaining control of Congress. Salgado said her group was eager to use the insight it has gained over the past several months to help Democratic candidates win in November.

"We truly have a winning formula for being able to beat back big money," Salgado said. "When we head into the general election, when we're all on the same team, let's take the lessons learned from this cycle ... to keep out the true enemy, to keep out insurrectionists, to keep out fascists from taking over our country."

Centrists and progressives alike agree that the stakes could not be higher for this year's midterm elections, which will mark the first time that every House member will be on the ballot since the January 6 insurrection.

As Donald Trump and many of his allies continue to spread lies about widespread fraud in the 2020 election, progressives are committed to putting any lingering disappointment about primary results behind them.

"Even if you didn't get the candidate of choice, the future of democracy is in your hands," Salgado said. "For me, the choice is clear, and for voters, we hope the choice is clear as well."

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

National parks

California: flash floods bury cars and strand tourists in Death Valley

Authorities describe ‘nearly an entire year’s worth of rain in one morning’ as deluge becomes second major flood at park this week



Cars are stuck in mud and debris from flash flooding at The Inn at Death Valley in Death Valley National Park. Photograph: AP

Guardian staff and agencies

Fri 5 Aug 2022 22.58 EDT Last modified on Sat 6 Aug 2022 11.21 EDT

Flash flooding at Death Valley national park closed all roads into the park, buried cars and stranded about 1,000 people on Friday.

A deluge brought “nearly an entire year’s worth of rain in one morning” into the famously hot and dry park in the [California](#) desert. At least 1.7in (4.3cm) of rain fell in the Furnace Creek area; the park’s average annual rainfall is 1.9in (4.8cm).

About 60 vehicles were buried in debris and about 500 visitors and 500 park workers were stranded, park officials said. There were no immediate reports of injuries and the California transport department estimated it would take four to six hours to open a road that would allow park visitors to leave.

It was the second major flooding event at the park this week. Some roads were closed on Monday after they were inundated with mud and debris from flash floods that also hit western Nevada and northern Arizona hard.

The rain started around 2am, said John Sirlin, a photographer for an Arizona-based adventure company who witnessed the flooding as he perched on a hillside boulder where he was trying to take pictures of lightning as the storm approached.

Video and photos posted by Sirlin on social media showed fast flowing water, toppled palm trees and cars trapped by debris.

Major flash flooding in Death Valley National Park this morning. Approximately two dozen vehicles trapped in mud and rock debris at the Inn at Death Valley. Took nearly 6 hours to get out. [#cawx](#)
[#stormhour](#) pic.twitter.com/3rDFUgY7ws

— John Sirlin (@SirlinJohn) [August 5, 2022](#)

“It was more extreme than anything I’ve seen there,” said Sirlin, who lives in Chandler, Arizona, and has been visiting the park since 2016. He is the lead guide for Incredible Weather Adventures and said he started chasing storms in Minnesota and the high plains in the 1990s.

“I’ve never seen it to the point where entire trees and boulders were washing down. The noise from some of the rocks coming down the mountain was just incredible,” he said in a phone interview on Friday afternoon.

“A lot of washes were flowing several feet deep. There are rocks probably 3 or 4 feet covering the road,” he said.

Sirlin said it took him about 6 hours to drive about 35 miles (56 kilometers) out of the park from near the Inn at Death Valley.

Highway 190 and Badwater Rd junction. Whole palm trees from the hotel were washing over the road. pic.twitter.com/44I5nf9dGy

— John Sirlin (@SirlinJohn) [August 5, 2022](#)

“There were at least two dozen cars that got smashed and stuck in there,” he said, adding that he didn’t see anyone injured “or any high water rescues”.

During Friday’s rainstorms, the “flood waters pushed dumpster containers into parked cars, which caused cars to collide into one another. Additionally, many facilities are flooded including hotel rooms and business offices,” the park statement said.

A water system that provides it for park residents and offices also failed after a line broke that was being repaired, the statement said.

A flood advisory remained in effect into the evening, the National Weather Service said.

Associated Press contributed reporting

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Elon Musk

Musk accuses Twitter of deliberately miscounting spam users in countersuit

Tesla chief says social media company miscounted accounts as part of a ‘scheme’ to mislead investors



Elon Musk at the Met Gala in New York City on 2 May. Photograph: Evan Agostini/Invision/AP

[Dan Milmo](#) and [Kari Paul](#)

Fri 5 Aug 2022 12.56 EDT Last modified on Sat 6 Aug 2022 00.15 EDT

Elon Musk has accused Twitter of deliberately miscounting the number of spam accounts on its platform as part of a “scheme” to mislead investors.

The Tesla chief executive made the allegations in a countersuit against the social media company, which is taking Musk to court in an attempt to make him complete an agreed \$44bn (£36.5bn) takeover of the business.

Musk repeats a claim that [Twitter](#) miscounts the amount of false and spam users on its platform as part of a “scheme to mislead investors about the company’s prospects”, according to the suit, which was unsealed on Friday. Valid user numbers are a key metric for Twitter, which makes 90% of its revenue from advertisers.

The suit says Twitter’s disclosures to the US financial watchdog are inaccurate and have distorted the value of a company that Musk has agreed to buy for \$54.20 a share.

It says filings to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) contain “numerous, material misrepresentations or omissions that distort Twitter’s value and caused the Musk Parties to agree to acquire the company at an inflated price”.

Referring to Twitter’s suit demanding Musk buy the company, it adds: “Twitter’s Complaint, filled with personal attacks against Musk and gaudy rhetoric more directed at a media audience than this Court, is nothing more than an attempt to distract from these misrepresentations.”

Twitter has consistently stated that spam accounts represent less than 5% of its user base, which currently stands at just under 238 million.

Musk claims that Twitter has overstated the number of monetisable daily active users on the platform, or users who see ads. The number of users that see ads is 65 million lower, the lawsuit claims.

Spam accounts are automated, meaning they are not operated by a human hand, and are designed to manipulate users or disrupt their interactions on the platform.

Musk argues that the misrepresentations represent a “company material adverse effect” that substantially alters Twitter’s value and therefore invalidate the deal agreement. Musk pulled out of the Twitter deal in July, citing concerns about spam accounts.

Twitter’s [response to the Musk countersuit](#) was published on Thursday. In it, [Twitter](#) called Musk’s arguments for abandoning the deal “a story, imagined

in an effort to escape a merger agreement that Musk no longer found attractive once the stock market and along with it, his massive personal wealth, declined in value”.

“The counterclaims are a made-for-litigation tale that is contradicted by the evidence and common sense,” the response says.

Twitter’s lawsuit to force Musk to buy the company is due to start in Delaware on 17 October.

Robert Frenchman, a partner at New York law firm Mukasey Frenchman, said he does not believe Musk’s claims will prevail ultimately, having agreed to buy the company with a minimal amount of due diligence, but his legal claims are damaging the company.

“Whether or not Musk’s claim is meritorious, and I don’t think it is, it has made things extraordinarily difficult for Twitter. Twitter finds itself in a kind of legal limbo, while the litigation continues and trial awaits. It’s a huge distraction for the company. It puts the company’s strategy and direction into hiatus,” said Frenchman, who added that Twitter is making life “more difficult” for Musk by issuing subpoenas on the Tesla CEO’s associates and banks.

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Table of Contents

[The Guardian 2022.08.07 \[Sun, 07 Aug 2022\]](#)

[Headlines](#)

[Tory leadership race Rishi Sunak rejects claim he has ‘doomster’ attitude to economy](#)

[Live Conservative party members begin to receive ballots for final leadership vote](#)

[Cost of living One in eight households fear they have no way of making more cuts](#)

[Live Russia-Ukraine war: First grain shipment leaves Odesa; Moscow moving troops towards Kherson, Zelenskiy says](#)

[2022.08.01 - Spotlight](#)

[A new start after 60 At 70 I went camping for the first time – and stopped cocooning myself from life](#)

[‘The establishment didn’t know what to do with me’ Sanjeev Bhaskar on marriage, success and stereotypes](#)

[‘At best it is brain-rotting’ Love Island will be banned in 50 years](#)

[Righter than right Tories’ hardline drift may lose the public](#)

[2022.08.01 - Opinion](#)

[Only a country as complacent as the UK could give up its border privilege so easily](#)

[The climate crisis is so boring – but I also hate the idea of burning to death](#)

[The Lionesses have done it. This Euros win will change women’s football for ever](#)

[When Beyoncé dropped the same ableist slur as Lizzo on her new album, my heart sank](#)

[2022.08.01 - Around the world](#)

[Taliban Policies risk de facto university ban for Afghan women, say officials](#)

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