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2021.06.06 - Opinion

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[Opinion](#)**Kate Winslet**

Just enjoy your success, Kate Winslet. Your husband can take care of himself

[Barbara Ellen](#)



The actor's 'ocean warrior' spouse does what wives do each day, so why the huge praise?



Kate Winslet and husband Edward Abel Smith at a Hollywood Film Awards ceremony in Los Angeles. Photograph: Frazer Harrison/Getty Images

Kate Winslet and husband Edward Abel Smith at a Hollywood Film Awards ceremony in Los Angeles. Photograph: Frazer Harrison/Getty Images

Sat 5 Jun 2021 12.00 EDT

Why do highly successful women feel they must overpraise spouses who merely do what women do all the time? Kate Winslet is having a “moment” with the television series *Mare of Easttown* and deservedly so. Still, why did she feel the need to uber-gush about her husband, Edward Abel Smith (Richard Branson’s nephew, formerly self-christened Ned Rocknroll) in a recent *New York Times* [interview](#)? According to Winslet, Abel Smith is a “super-hot, superhuman stay-at-home dad” and an “absolutely extraordinary life partner”. He looks after her and the children. Although dyslexic, he helps Winslet with her lines. He maintains his zen with veganism, yoga, breath work and cold swims. His long hair makes him resemble “an ocean warrior”.

Note to Kate: there are acceptable levels of spousal gushing and then there’s “umbrella for the journalist, please!”. Winslet adds: “He didn’t particularly plan on meeting and marrying a woman who is in the public eye and therefore having been so judged.” And there perhaps you have it: while

Winslet stops short of technically de-alpha-ing herself, she could be endeavouring to ensure that her husband doesn't feel quite so beta.

Is Abel Smith a stay-at-home dad or is he still head of marketing, promotion and astronaut experience for Uncle Richard's firm? It seems odd that a man should be eulogised for supporting his wife. Women do this all the time – does it qualify them as “superhuman”? Is Abel Smith's ego so fragile that Winslet must lavish praise on him or he might have a panic attack about being an A-list house husband with a sideline in astronaut experiences?

Or is this beyond Winslet and Abel Smith and more about the great unspoken curse of successful women generally? The idea, even now, that men are conditioned to resent female success. That female power emasculates a man and it's up to the woman to make that right, to make the neutered male's contribution bigger by making herself smaller. That all too often such women are paranoid about unmanning their spouses and feel they must lay the praise on super-thick to the point where it borders on relationship damage control.

This kind of thinking is the knotweed of gender dynamics – it never quite goes away. Last year, in equality-minded Sweden, there was a [study](#) about how women who become CEOs divorce faster than men who become CEOs. Still, there are always couples bucking such trends and Winslet and Abel Smith could be among them: Abel Smith, growing up around fame and therefore not cowed by it; Winslet, a thespian supernova, but one who wants real love in a real life.

Still, for all the accomplished women out there, it bears noting that it must be a rare successful man who'd worry for a solitary second about losing his woman because of it. In 2021, it's a tragedy if women feel they'll be punished and abandoned for what they've earned.

Laurence Fox, less a man of the people, more a man of one millionaire



Laurence Fox: bankrolled, but to no avail. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

It would take a saint not to laugh on learning from the Electoral Commission that Laurence Fox (actor turned anti-woke-Flashman) received [almost as much money](#) in donations (£1,153,300) as the Liberal Democrats for the London mayoral race and yet his Reclaim party still only managed to come sixth, garnering 1.9% of the vote share. Then again, Fox managed to beat Count Binface and you can't take that away from him.

Other news from the Electoral Commission includes the large Tory donation from Peter Cruddas, the businessman Boris Johnson made a peer last December against House of Lords advice. What a mysterious coincidence.

Back to Fox. His mayoral war chest, like all of his funding, came from Jeremy Hosking, the wealthy, Brexit-supporting fund manager. Now what? Will Fox finally admit (to himself, if no one else) that he may have taken a wrong turn? He trashed his career and his reputation to spend more than a million quid of someone else's money to stand as a "man of the people" and ended up only just beating the equivalent of Screaming Lord Sutch.

Still, every cloud and all that... At least the one person who seems to like Fox happens to be a multimillionaire.

Welcome to Britain, unless you're a young European



The London Eye, off-limits for many European students.

Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

Does Britain really need to strengthen its borders against European youngsters on school trips? Forthcoming post-Brexit requirements are likely to cut the number of European young people visiting the UK [by half](#). Continental tour operators dealing in school excursions say that the UK used to account for 90% of trips, but now inquiries are about Ireland, or previously less travelled territories such as Malta and the Netherlands.

This is as depressing as it is unnecessary. Despite appeals, the UK government has refused to exempt young Europeans from the new passport and visa measures on the grounds that it is “committed to strengthening the security of our border”. Against what: the existential threat of European schoolkids wanting to see the London Eye?

Among those particularly affected will be non-EU European pupils (generally immigrant children), as the UK will no longer allow them to visit under the “list of travellers” visa scheme, meaning considerable extra

expense and administrative aggravation. Who could blame European schools for thinking that the UK is just not worth the bother?

This isn't just about London – the changes will affect towns and cities across the UK, notably all the businesses that offer European pupils educational, residential, hospitality or tourist facilities, which rely upon a steady flow of young overseas visitors.

It's also another door slamming shut on our relationship with Europe, all the more heartbreaking because it involves young Europeans, aka the future. Most of us remember overseas school trips as a blast. Far from elitist, for some people, myself included, they were the only chance to go abroad as a minor, with the added bonus of doing so without your parents. Young people benefit from these short cultural-cum-educational trips, and UK businesses need the custom, so why is an exemption out of the question? Let's face it, Britain feels increasingly shut.

Barbara Ellen is an Observer columnist

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[OpinionNHS](#)

Tell me how you'll use my medical data. Only then might I sign up

[Kenan Malik](#)



We need more transparency before offering up our health information



A doctor checks a patient's notes at Headley Court hospital in Surrey.
Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

A doctor checks a patient's notes at Headley Court hospital in Surrey.
Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

Sun 6 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

Would you allow your medical data to be anonymised and used for research into cancer or to aid future pandemic planning? Most people would probably say yes. I certainly would. But what if that data could be accessed by tech giants such as Google, medical corporations such as [Babylon Health](#), security firms such as [Palantir](#), or coercive state institutions like the police or immigration service? That raises a few red flags. And what if that anonymised data could in fact help pinpoint who you are? Now you're getting me worried.

That's the problem with medical data. It is indispensable for research and planning. And yet it can also be used in ways that invade our privacy or harm our future. It's a tension likely to shape the character of healthcare and medical research. Rarely, though, do we have an open debate about this, an honest public conversation about the good and the bad. Governments, public institutions and private corporations – all would rather simply grab our data with the least amount of fuss.

Many studies have shown the possibility of identifying individuals even from anonymised data

That is just what's happening right now. Last month, the government quietly announced a scheme called [General Practice Data for Planning and Research](#) (GPDPR) under which, from July, all data held by GPs about their patients will become part of a [central database](#) that can be accessed by researchers and private corporations. You can opt out – but only until 23 June. Beyond that date, even if you object, the database will still keep the information it already has. The project, the opt-out and the deadline have all barely been publicised. [Many doctors are hostile to the scheme](#), worried about questions of privacy and trust.

There are two kinds of medical databases important to the NHS. The first allows clinicians to access the records of patients they may be treating. So, for instance, if someone allergic to penicillin turns up at A&E, that information will be available to doctors there. One might have thought that such joined-up thinking already exists. Not so. A survey of NHS medical record-keeping in 2019 found 21 electronic systems, [many of which could not share information](#). A quarter of NHS trusts were still using paper records. A new national system [called shared care records is expected to be in place by September](#), though there are still questions about [privacy and access](#).

The second kind of database aggregates information from millions of people, allowing researchers and planners to see the big picture, from geographic or ethnic variations to hidden links between health issues. In 2013, NHS England launched its care.data project to create such an information store. [The government was forced to close it down](#), however, after controversies over [poor privacy safeguards](#) and the [sale of data to private companies](#).

That disaster may have been one reason for the new project being pushed through by stealth. The new database will include even more sensitive data, including on criminal activity, personal relationships and child abuse, as well as [medical history](#). Yet a number of the problems that doomed the earlier scheme remain unresolved.

Many studies, for instance, have shown the possibility of identifying individuals even from [anonymised data](#). The sale of such data to private corporations is still a live issue. In October 2019, NHS England’s top brass met big tech and pharma executives to discuss how they may be able to exploit the [proposed database](#). There is, in principle, nothing wrong with private researchers accessing the data. The problem arises when it can be used potentially to snoop into our lives or to undermine the health service, for instance, by companies that want to take over GP surgeries.

Then there’s the issue of consent. Most medical procedures and research projects require “informed consent” – they cannot proceed without the explicit assent of individuals involved. The [NHS](#) data scrape rests on “presumed consent” – people are assumed to have agreed to give up their data unless they specifically opt out. This turns informed consent on its head. The problem is exacerbated by the almost furtive way in which the project has been set up. It’s the opposite of how an open, transparent system should work and could serve to undermine public trust in the [NHS](#) and in science.

When I die, I intend to leave my body for medical research. While I am alive, I am happy to donate my data for the same purpose. But I want that to be my decision. I want to know what the data is being used for. And I want to ensure that the public health service is not being damaged by the push for private profit. That’s not too much to ask, is it?

Kenan Malik is an Observer columnist

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[Opinion](#)[Education](#)

The Observer view on the cost of scrimping on education spending

[Observer editorial](#)

Rishi Sunak's woeful underfunding of the pandemic catch-up programme will lead to a far bigger cost to the nation in years to come



‘Rishi Sunak reportedly regarded the evidence for extra investment in children as ‘thin’.’ Photograph: Ian Lamming/PA

‘Rishi Sunak reportedly regarded the evidence for extra investment in children as ‘thin’.’ Photograph: Ian Lamming/PA

Sun 6 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Sometimes, a single decision reveals a multitude of failings and so it was with the government's announcement last week that it would be making just £1.4bn of education catch-up funding available. This is less than a tenth of what was recommended by Sir Kevan Collins, the education recovery “tsar”, and a fraction of what some other governments are investing in post-

pandemic [education catch-up](#). The rejection of his comprehensive and evidence-based package of extra support for children and young people prompted Collins's resignation, accompanied by an [attack](#) on the government's "half-hearted approach [which] risks failing hundreds of thousands of pupils".

Much of the blame for a wider failure to alleviate the impact of the pandemic on children and young people can be laid at the door of the prime minister and the education secretary, Gavin Williamson. But this particular decision also reveals a great deal about the poor decisions of chancellor, [Rishi Sunak](#), who, like his predecessors, exerts a great deal of power over spending policy. Sunak reportedly blocked Collins's recommendations for more funding because he regarded the evidence for extra investment in children as "thin" and because he said the government had no means to pay for it. Collins is the former long-serving chief executive of the Education Endowment Foundation, set up by the government to provide regular, independent assessments of the evidence.

It speaks volumes that Sunak might rate his own assessment above that of an internationally respected independent expert. But it is also economically illiterate to argue that all pandemic recovery decisions have to be paid for through higher taxes or cuts to spending, rather than through borrowing to invest – not just in improving children's lives, but also in reducing the long-term costs of the pandemic to the nation's finances. The Institute for Fiscal Studies says the education costs of the pandemic could be in the region of £350bn in lost lifetime earnings across this [generation of children](#).

This is symptomatic of the wrong-headed economic thinking at the heart of government, epitomised by Sunak's fiscal hawkery. He deserves credit for quickly rolling out a generous furlough scheme last spring, even if it left too many self-employed people without support. But so many decisions have been dangerously misguided. He refused to fund a decent level of sick pay for those who have to self-isolate, reducing levels of compliance for those for whom the choice was between going out to work or not feeding their children. His "[eat out to help out](#)" scheme gave people financial incentives to mix in enclosed spaces late last summer. He reportedly opposed those in cabinet arguing for an earlier lockdown last autumn in line with expert scientific advice. His reasoning was based on a misunderstanding of basic

maths: that an exponentially spreading virus makes the choice not between social restrictions versus economic costs today, but social restrictions and economic costs today versus worse social restrictions and higher economic costs later. The delay in locking down in autumn, backed both by the prime minister and chancellor, was one of the worst decisions of the pandemic and partly accounts for the more severe death toll of the second wave.

Sunak's Conservative predecessors left the NHS with the [tightest funding settlement](#) in its 70-year history, overstretched and with barely enough capacity to manage a bad winter flu season, let alone a pandemic that was sufficiently anticipated that it was near the top of the national risk register. And the education funding decision is symptomatic of his broader approach to post-pandemic recovery: false economy today, even if it costs dearly tomorrow.

Boris Johnson has spoken of his desire to “level up” the country by reducing regional inequalities. Yet 10 years of Tory spending cuts have disproportionately affected less affluent areas and cuts to financial support for low-paid parents have widened income inequality and increased levels of child poverty.

There is little evidence that Johnson or Sunak are willing to commit the levels of investment needed to address some of the biggest regional inequalities of any rich nation.

The bad economic decisions of the last year are primarily political, but there are deeper, longstanding institutional problems with an over-mighty Treasury. The chancellor has vast powers invested in him via the Treasury, which sets the government budget, determining what departments can spend, therefore giving it significant policymaking power. It controls fiscal policy, sets taxes, manages the national debt and has responsibility for economic policy designed to maximise long-term growth. This contributes to short-termist and over-centralised decision-making.

A recent [proposal](#) by the thinktank Nesta to split the Treasury into finance and economic ministries, with budgetary decisions absorbed by the prime minister's office, in order to improve the quality of long-term economic decision-making, merits serious consideration.

False economies by Conservative chancellors have proved costly over the last decade, but during the pandemic those effects have been magnified. Sunak's approach to economics has not just harmed the nation's finances over the last year, it has cost people their lives. And his failure to stump up more education investment will depress the life chances of a generation of children.

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[OpinionG7](#)

The Observer view on the G7 summit

[Observer editorial](#)

Is this outdated clique capable of delivering its highly challenging summit goals?



The G7 finance ministers at Lancaster House in London last week.
Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

The G7 finance ministers at Lancaster House in London last week.
Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

Sun 6 Jun 2021 01.30 EDT

The [G7](#), an exclusive club comprising the world's largest "advanced economies", began life in 1975 as the Group of Six, was renamed the Group of Seven when Canada joined in 1976, became the Group of Eight when Russia was added in 1997 and then shrank back to the Group of Seven in 2014 when Russia was expelled. In the world of 2021, it seems a bit of an anachronism, yet a great deal is expected of it.

Boris Johnson, who will host this year's three-day summit in Cornwall, starting on Friday, is busily talking it up, hailing it as a "historic moment for the planet". For the prime minister, it is a golden opportunity to showcase "Global Britain" and demonstrate how, in his myopic view, the rupture with the EU has given the country a new lease of life as an international "[force for good](#)".

Another anachronistic aspect of this event, to be attended by the leaders of the US, Germany, Japan, France, Italy and Canada, is the absence of the country that, by most estimates, will soon be the largest economy of all: China. Troubling, too, is the fact that these seven countries, representing a mere tenth of the world's population, command a whopping 40% of global GDP.

It's little wonder that many in the developing world look askance at what they see as a rich man's clique that presumes to direct international affairs on the basis of an outdated global pecking order created several decades ago. Little wonder the G7's usefulness is questioned when, as Johnson is doing now, its members talk big then fail to live up to their promises. Delivery is all.

Unabashed, Johnson has set out some highly challenging summit aims: leading the post-pandemic global recovery, tackling climate change, promoting free trade and "championing our shared values". It sounds good. Yet civil society groups say the agenda is actually [not ambitious enough](#), for example, on tackling gender and racial equality.

Johnson's headline announcement has already been trailed: a call for "concrete commitments" to vaccinate the entire world by the end of 2022. This, if achieved, would be "the single greatest feat in medical history", he will say, and would place the G7 (and not China) at the head of a global recovery. Britain will announce plans to donate vaccine doses to countries most in need.

But this feelgood declaration leaves unanswered key questions about resources, availability and patent-sharing at a time when the international Covax scheme cannot ensure equitable vaccine access for all. An impressive-sounding G7 vow to build a pandemic-proof [global health](#)

[system](#) to counter future threats is another fine aspiration that will be [difficult to deliver and fund](#).

Johnson says he wants the summit to focus on “creating a greener, more prosperous future” and will urge other leaders to match the UK target of reducing carbon emissions by 78% by 2035. All well and good, but more is urgently needed. Rich countries have a lousy record on helping poorer ones fight climate change – and are still investing more in [fossil fuels](#) than in clean energy.

The US and the UK are the only two G7 countries to have set out proposals in recent months to increase climate finance to help poorer countries reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the effects of extreme weather, according to a new report. A 2009 promise to provide \$100bn a year to developing countries by 2020 has been broken, researchers say.

Changes to international tax rules governing multinationals are welcome. But there will be scepticism about other, too familiar G7 aims, such as increasing the global total of children in full-time education. Promoting multilateralism and shared democratic values in opposition to China, Russia and similar authoritarian regimes is a difficult enough task without obvious own goals, such as Johnson’s deplorable [£4bn cut](#) to UK foreign aid. How does that help get girls into school in Afghanistan?

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[Coronavirus](#)

Going on holiday? Not if the Delta variant has its way – cartoon

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[NotebookUK news](#)

Despite everything, we're no unhappier than we were a year ago

[Tim Adams](#)



The latest wellbeing index confirms the theory that we quickly get used to almost anything that life throws at us



‘In the year of lockdown and Covid, there were no great swings in the data, only very minor dips on the year before.’ Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

‘In the year of lockdown and Covid, there were no great swings in the data, only very minor dips on the year before.’ Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

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Among the stranger pieces of psychological research is the idea of thermostatic contentment or, to give it its fancier title, “hedonic adaptation”. The original work was led in the 1970s by the US professor Philip Brickman and published under the title [Lottery Winners and Accident Victims: Is Happiness Relative?](#)

The study examined the effects of extreme life-changing events on perceived contentment. Against all intuitive expectation, it discovered that after a short period of adjustment the reported “happiness” of those who had enjoyed a major windfall hardly changed, while those who had suffered an accident still rated themselves above averagely happy. The researchers concluded that happiness adjusted in relation to expectation and that there was a strong genetic element in feelings of contentment.

I was reminded of that study when looking at the [ONS data on national wellbeing](#) between March 2020 and April this year. The data was part of an initiative established by [David Cameron](#) a decade ago to find metrics other than economic ones to plot national growth. Each quarter, respondents are asked four questions: “how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?”; “to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?”; “how happy did you feel yesterday?”; and “how anxious did you feel yesterday?”.

In the year of lockdown and Covid, there were no great swings in the data, only very minor dips on the year before. Perhaps even more surprisingly, in the 10 years since the questions were first asked – before austerity and cuts, before Brexit, before the pandemic – the dial of reported national contentment is fractionally more upbeat on all counts.

Swiss timing



Roger Federer after winning the French Open in 2009. Photograph: Bernat Armangué/AP

In 2009, I interviewed [Roger Federer](#) for a magazine profile near his family home in Basel, Switzerland. He suggested we meet for lunch at his local sports centre and my abiding memory is of perhaps the greatest athlete of

our time strolling into the cafe, with his sports bag on his shoulder, as if he was just any other gym member after a workout. At 28, he had just achieved a long-held ambition to win the French Open and complete his “career grand slam”. The feeling was that there might be no more worlds left for him to conquer.

I asked him how he thought he could continue to motivate himself and he said that his new goal was to play long enough for his twin daughters, whose birth was due in a few weeks, to watch him play. A dozen years later, Federer continues to advance, astonishingly, at [Roland Garros](#) with all his former grace and power intact as he approaches his 40th birthday this summer. His daughters are nearly teenagers. It no doubt gives him extra satisfaction to hear them ask: “Do we have to go and watch Dad be a genius again?”

Don't mention the war



John Cleese and Andrew Sachs in Fawlty Towers. Photograph: PA

It is to be hoped that Carbis Bay hotel, near St Ives in Cornwall, Boris Johnson's venue for this week's [G7 summit](#), provides a suitable backdrop for world leaders to agree how to “build back better”. If comments from some of last week's guests on TripAdvisor are anything to go by, however, a little

fine-tuning might still be needed for the full English seaside experience: “Told room had been refurbished but stained carpets, wallpaper ripped and dirty. Telephone not working. Pool and spa closed,” one said. Another complained of “Bank Holiday Hell... food OK, cocktails like water”, while a third reported: “Reception staff are rude and clearly need intense training... all that was missing was Basil Fawlty.”

Tim Adams is an Observer columnist

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[Opinion](#) **Carrie Johnson**

Memo to the G7 spouses: do say ‘nice doggie’, don’t say ‘Cumplings’

[Catherine Bennett](#)



For Mrs Johnson’s fellow consorts, the essential dossier of the Cornish summit’s dos and don’ts



The prime minister with Carrie Johnson, who is to play a ‘central role in forging relationships’ at the G7 summit. Photograph: Adrian Dennis/AFP/Getty Images

The prime minister with Carrie Johnson, who is to play a ‘central role in forging relationships’ at the G7 summit. Photograph: Adrian Dennis/AFP/Getty Images

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Whatever the third Mrs Johnson’s previous impression upon public life, her contribution as a married woman is already remarkable. Single-handedly, following last week’s May-December themed wedding, Carrie Johnson, nee Symonds, has stimulated something almost resembling popular interest in a [G7 summit](#), specifically the one happening in Cornwall later this week.

In a striking departure from tradition, Mrs Johnson’s conventionally thankless role as [G7](#) hostess – leading docile partners on vaguely cultural or gastronomic trips – is being depicted as if it were central to the proceedings of a keenly anticipated event.

It must be bitter indeed for predecessors including Cherie Blair, Sarah Brown and, last time, Brigitte Macron, who [doggedly performed this duty](#), routinely unappreciated though sometimes mocked, to find the traditional

Stepford role, now it is occupied by a millennial zoo PR, suddenly recognised as not remotely humiliating but diplomatically vital, a position of rare dignity and global reach. Nobody, for instance, cared when Cherie Blair, breaking with tradition (though not to the point of refusing the gig), “decided to give my wives a rather more serious programme”. One night, “a group from the Royal Shakespeare Company gave us Shakespeare’s Women, which went down very well”.

Now, with Mrs Johnson’s marriage supplying, just in time, her crowning qualification for national representation, there is excited talk of a “world stage” on which, according to some especially terrifying reports, Britain’s “[first lady](#)” (having already extinguished the Queen) is [predicted](#) to “play a central role in forging relationships with the UK’s international allies”.

Though it will not please all UK citizens (certainly not those who believed [Dominic Cummings](#) on Mrs Johnson’s priorities when dog trouble coincided with bombing and the pandemic), her [eminence](#) must look promising for G7 visitors seeking direct, informal influence. But what is Mrs Johnson like and what will she organise? Are there subjects to avoid? Is there any risk, as at her [wedding](#), of a barefoot dress code, even of hay bales? Some pre-summit briefing notes may help.

On entertainment, we assume some standard Cornish outings, anything from Tate St Ives and cream teas to an enactment of the duchy’s colourful best-bids ritual, featuring an estate agent and some legendary Cornish characters, if the guests are lucky, such as Gordon Ramsay and [David Cameron](#). Security considerations may rule out a display of massed SUV reversing.

Background

Mrs Johnson, 33, is a professional publicist, formerly for the Tory party where, [the story romantically goes](#), she fell for Mr Johnson, 56, the then foreign secretary and father of five children who would shortly liberate himself from the mother of four of them. Her G7 companions, mostly in their 60s or more, can relax then, about any generational differences. Far from it: older people propelled Mrs and Mr Johnson into their [recently refurbished address](#).

Yet more reassuringly, a concern for elder welfare is among Mrs Johnson's noted qualities. From early on, she was seen escorting Mr Johnson's father, Stanley, a task from which many women would recoil, on and off platforms; her 30th birthday celebrations featured a delegation of conspicuously mature visitors – John Whittingdale, Sajid Javid, Michael Gove, Mr Johnson, naturally – whose company, again, may not appeal to less caring thirtysomethings.

Reporting of the same event indicates that G7 diplomats and spouses including [Jill Biden](#) (70), Mariko Suga (67), Brigitte Macron (68) and Serena Cappello (73) may find a working knowledge of the Abba repertoire helps bring their countries closer to the UK.

Mrs Johnson is currently head of communications for the Aspinall Foundation, the latest iteration of a fatal accident-prone private zoo founded by John Aspinall, a gambling magnate with a fondness for eugenics. Talk to her, instead, about his love of apex predators.

Political influence

This is increasingly understood as disproportionate, democratically outrageous and probably irreversible. Earlier objections – that Mrs Johnson's critics were merely sexist – seem to have dwindled following credible accounts of her political achievements, which range from overriding official advice and replacing disliked senior staff with [favourites](#) to the promotion of animal welfare. Her allies, according to a *Times* report following her wedding, are in the No 10 ascendant: "Boris would lose in any war with Carrie..." Mrs Johnson's organisation of a secret ceremony in a Catholic church which has virtuously denied that sacrament to similarly constituted couples, one that from that sacred perspective delegitimises all Mr Johnson's children save her own, has been perceived as further proof of Machiavellian genius.

Busy leaders may accordingly prefer to request bilaterals with Mrs rather than Mr Johnson.

Interests

Animals, as above, and in particular the Johnsons' dog, Dilyn, whom Mrs Johnson is grooming, via a carefully curated [public image](#), into a fellow habitué of the world stage. G7 delegates should bear in mind that any disrespect towards this animal amounts, effectively, to a hostile act and will be treated as such.

As for other species: the lives of badgers and otters are peculiarly cherished by Mrs Johnson, the happiness of [game and cows](#), for reasons probably not worth investigating in Cornwall, less so.

Mrs Johnson's similarly idiosyncratic if lavishly publicised take on sustainability may make this subject, too, best avoided. The Johnson version shuns, for instance, single-use plastics and party dresses, but unapologetically subscribes to obsolescence in despised furnishings, while also tolerating long-haul air travel when this is vital for Caribbean sun or to Stanley Johnson's interests.

A final checklist of themes or words best avoided by a G7 delegate hoping for a Mrs Johnson-forged entente: [wallpaper](#), *Macbeth*, super-injunction, Cummings, [peanuts](#), domestic, Allegra Stratton, [expenses](#), [inquiry](#), Petronella, [takeaways](#), [Charity Commission](#), Arcuri, child support, [John Lewis](#), [Marie Antoinette](#).

The delegate who focuses on Mrs Johnson's key field of expertise – the most loved yet most viciously slandered dog in recorded history – may find, however, that the bond thus initiated with the UK's third female prime minister makes this a G7 like no other.

- Catherine Bennett is an Observer columnist

The weekly stats uncoveredCoronavirus

Have more than 100% of older people been vaccinated?

[David Spiegelhalter](#) and [Anthony Masters](#)

To understand vaccine coverage, we need to know how many people there are



Without the census, we would have little idea of how many are in each age group. Photograph: Libby Welch/Alamy

Without the census, we would have little idea of how many are in each age group. Photograph: Libby Welch/Alamy

Sun 6 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

Across the world, [more than 2bn doses](#) of Covid-19 vaccines have gone into arms, and on 2 June, the [BBC headline](#) “75% of UK adults have had [their] first vaccine jab” was based on an [Office for National Statistics estimate](#) of the UK population aged 18 or over in June 2019.

Underneath this encouraging headline statistic, things get a bit more complicated. Consider those aged between 75 and 79. [NHS England](#) reports 1,984,700 first vaccinations have been given to this age group, but this is over 40,000 more than the ONS population estimate of 1,940,686. So NHS England reports that more than 100% of people in this group have been vaccinated: [Public Health Scotland](#) also reports many age groups with 100% coverage.

So have some older people been able to fiddle more jabs? No. As people age, they move into older age groups and mortality rates improve. In June 2019, there were more people aged 73-74 than 78-79. Fast forward to June 2021 and the number in the 75-79 group has increased. Migration also affects these statistics.

Alternative counts come from the National Immunisation Management System (NIMS), which says 2,084,180 people aged 75-79 are registered with GPs, 140,000 more than the ONS population estimate, which leads to a claim of 95% coverage. But people may register in more than one place and so the true figure will probably be more than 95%.

You may be surprised that we don't know how many people there are in the country, but that's why we need better data on migration and a regular and efficient census. Fortunately, one has just come along, which covered an [impressive 97%](#) of households. The [OpenSAFELY analysis](#) of 23m electronic patient records estimates that among 70-79s up to 26 May, 97% of people of white ethnicity had been vaccinated at least once, compared with 73% of black ethnicity. This means nine times the proportion of unvaccinated people in the black population compared with those who are white.

In the current race between the Delta variant (originating in India) and the vaccine rollout, these disparities only add to the unequal impacts of this virus.

David Spiegelhalter is chair of the Winton Centre for Risk and Evidence Communication at Cambridge. Anthony Masters is statistical ambassador for the Royal Statistical Society

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/commentisfree/2021/jun/06/have-more-than-100-per-cent-of-people-been-vaccinated>

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[Observer letters](#)[Assisted dying](#)

Letters: the complexity of assisted dying

Determining who should have the right to an assisted death is a legal minefield; perhaps fiction can help



Lionel Shriver. Photograph: David Levenson/Getty Images

Lionel Shriver. Photograph: David Levenson/Getty Images

Sun 6 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

I am a great admirer of Lionel Shriver and enjoyed her article on assisted dying (“[Not fade away?](#)”, the New Review). She has clearly thought about the subject deeply and will be aware of the complexity of trying to legislate on this topic. Limiting assisted dying to those with a terminal illness judged to have less than six months to live (as per the Falconer bill of 2014) is the most likely outcome of any change in the law but would not meet her example of unbearable chronic pain, nor the vexed issue of dementia, let alone the existential demand to die at a time of one’s own choosing. I look forward to reading her new novel; fiction is a valuable way to explore difficult subjects.

Robin Byron

Bartley, Southampton
Hampshire

As a former chairman of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society, I was very interested in Lionel Shriver's article. Between 2005 and 2016, I accompanied five determined individuals to Switzerland for a medically assisted rational suicide (Mars). As a retired GP, I was very pleased to be asked to help each of them on their final journey.

A Mars for competent, severely suffering adults has been possible in Switzerland for several decades and is fully supported by a great majority of Swiss doctors and people. Why cannot we, in the UK, have the same compassionate opportunity?

Michael Irwin

Cranleigh, Surrey

The real climate victims

Summer heatwaves may well pose significant threats to older and/or less healthy people in the UK and northern Europe but should be kept in perspective ("[Heatwave deaths set to soar as UK summers become hotter](#)", News). Those in poorer and hotter countries will face far worse problems, especially when richer countries don't take in the climate refugees their apathy, delay and bickering have created.

Decades have been wasted arguing about climate change, even though many ideas, essential if mainstream views are correct, make sense. Examples include less waste, alternatives to fossil fuels, combining conservation with careful use, silviculture, adopting regenerative agriculture and growing fewer cash crops. When those suffering most from climate change try to identify those responsible, the greed, spineless attitudes and stupidity of western politicians, policymakers, rich vested interests and (sadly) many scientists on both sides of the debate should be high on their lists.

Iain Climie

Whitchurch, Hampshire

Injustices of Airbnb

It should now be clear from your article that Airbnb is a misnomer ([“Staycation popularity squeezes tenants out of seaside resort homes”](#), News). It is nothing to do with those friendly bed-and-breakfast offers of the past. It not only distorts the housing market in favour of an increasingly greedy “rentier” class, but also radically changes the very nature of the locations in which they occur. Local councils should step in with overseeing regulations regarding letting and tenancies to ensure such injustices are reversed by more responsible market conditions.

Peter Seddon

Brighton

Her name is Mbuya

Jason Burke refers to the new statue in Harare of “... a revered spiritual leader who resisted subjugation by Cecil Rhodes and his British South Africa company” ([“Macron begs forgiveness on Africa tour”](#), World). She had a name, Nehanda Charwe Nyakasikana, known as Mbuya. If Rhodes is named, so should she be.

Jonathan Blundell

Thame, Oxfordshire

Bias in schools

In your article about A-level results, the Ofqual spokesperson misrepresents Ofqual’s own findings ([“Parents prepare for legal action over A-levels”](#), News). In its recently published “Systematic divergence between teacher and test-based assessment” review, Ofqual found that bias against more disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs “was a common finding”.

Liz Crow

Bristol

Crass Cummings

Your editorial is right that Dominic Cummings “expressed what appeared to be genuine contrition for his role in the policy disasters that caused people to die” ([“The witness is unreliable, the verdict is clear. Government incompetence has been deadly”](#)). But Cummings’ score-settling appearance before a joint parliamentary committee was trivialised by his crass use of popcorn movie analogies to illustrate his marathon evidence. As the Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK rightly [tweeted](#): “That this information is... littered with Independence Day, Jeff Goldblum and Spiderman references, is utterly inappropriate and makes this even more appalling.”

Ironically, Cummings sounded most authentic when assessing his own and his former boss’s basic unsuitability for their powerful political roles: “It is completely crazy that I should have been in such a senior position... just as it’s crackers that Boris Johnson was in there.”

Joe McCarthy

Dublin

Publish – and be quick

Andrew Rawnsley’s insistence on a public inquiry into government handling of the pandemic “starting very soon” should be matched by an insistence on equal promptitude on the publication of the inquiry’s findings and recommendations ([“Tories made a Faustian bargain when they gave us this lord of misrule”](#), Comment). The absence of a commitment to such urgency (think Hillsborough, Grenfell) can only jeopardise the accountability of those who may be responsible and the vindication of those who may be innocent.

Francis Prideaux

London W9

Bangladesh needs vaccines

The article [“As China races ahead, the rollout has barely begun in world’s poorest states”](#) (News) emphasised Africa’s need for vaccines. However, the newest deadly virus is in south Asia and Bangladesh is enormously exposed owing to its porous border with India, its population density and worse healthcare than in India. Like African countries, Bangladesh has also been

let down by the Serum Institute of India, from which it had ordered 30m vaccines.

To date, Bangladesh has received only 5.5m doses for its 170 million people, giving only 1.6% of its population two doses. Now, both the Indian and South African variants are spreading in Bangladesh. People are worried. The government is appealing urgently for vaccines. To avoid another Brazil, please spare a few million vaccines for Bangladesh.

Professor Dr MLR Sarker

University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh

Professor Janet Nichol

University of Sussex, Brighton

Credit where credit's due

I read Donna Ferguson's very interesting article in relation to Ann Oakley's forthcoming book, *Forgotten Wives: How Women Get Written Out of History*, concerning the literary airbrushing of Charlotte Shaw's immense contribution to her husband George Bernard Shaw's success ("[My fair lady: how George Bernard Shaw's wife played a vital role in his masterworks](#)", News). How shocking that she did not get the recognition she so deserved, except perhaps from a more perceptive TE Lawrence. It makes my blood boil. So to misquote a line from *My Fair Lady*, based on his book *Pygmalion*: "Move your bloomin' ego, George."

Judith A Daniels

Cobholm, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk

Of flocks, locks and rocks

What a lovely article about people flocking to live and holiday on the inland waterways ("[More boats on canals and rivers since 18th century](#)", News). I read it while stuck in a five-hour boat jam at some fairly straightforward staircase locks, during which I witnessed two marriages hit the rocks and several teenagers asking for directions to the nearest bus stop.

Ian Grieve

Gordon Bennett, Llangollen canal

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For the record

This week's corrections

Sun 6 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

A piece about tennis players to watch at this year's French Open ("Rising at Roland", 30 May, Sport, page 10) featured 19-year-old Lorenzo Musetti but mistakenly showed a picture of another Italian competitor, Lorenzo Sonego.

Other recently amended articles include:

[Drugged, sexually abused, swindled... Maria Callas's tormented life revealed](#)

[Former Australia team coach Ange Postecoglou in line for Celtic post](#)

[Staycation boom forces tenants out of seaside resort homes](#)

[Gadgets have stopped working together, and it's becoming an issue](#)

[Flights v flamingos: can Barcelona wildlife reserve survive airport expansion?](#)

[Ai Weiwei on colonialism and statues, Churchill, China and Covid](#)

Write to the Readers' Editor, the Observer, York Way, London N1 9GU, email observer.readers@observer.co.uk, tel 020 3353 4736

Opinion**Boris Johnson**

Scroungers, lefty lawyers... the Tories duck scrutiny by inventing enemies

Nick Cohen



Abiding by judicial oversight is alien to a government that acts as if it's
above the law



The high court ruled that the standard of living at Napier barracks was ‘not adequate’ and criticised the ‘detention-like’ setting. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

The high court ruled that the standard of living at Napier barracks was ‘not adequate’ and criticised the ‘detention-like’ setting. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

Sat 5 Jun 2021 13.30 EDT

You cannot say anything coherent without generalising, and so, and to generalise, the British will lose their rights to challenge an over-mighty and underwhelming state because they hate foreigners more than they love political accountability.

The Johnson administration knows that as long as it portrays asylum seekers as cheats arriving in the UK illegally and their solicitors as activist “[lefty lawyers](#)”, tricking the trusting public into allowing scrounging aliens to remain on our island, it can end scrutiny of its abuses of power.

Stopping accountability is, after all, its prime purpose. Journalists and academics write so much about populists you can be forgiven for thinking they are complicated men. They could not be simpler. The answer to the

question what do populists want is that they want power: to win it, maintain it and prohibit opposition to it.

Boris Johnson's government ducks every hard issue from the abysmal state of social care to declining productivity. Instead, it proposes to put scrutiny of its actions beyond the reach of the courts by restricting judicial review of unlawful state decisions.

Ministers will sell secrecy as a defence against today's sly lefty lawyers and forget to add that judicial review has existed for 400 years. I have a picture of Conservative voters cheering [Priti Patel](#) and Johnson on as they bash asylum seekers only to discover, too late, that the government has abolished their right to challenge plans to drive a road through the fields next to their home or build houses on their village green.

Or indeed challenge any unlawful government decision. With a typically indolent concern for the truth, the justice secretary, Robert Buckland, maintained that the government's review of the courts had found a "worrying" trend of judges moving beyond their rightful sphere. In truth, the review panel, chaired by former Conservative minister Lord Faulks, no less, found no "overall trend that you could extract" and recommended only [minor changes](#). Buckland swore to uphold the law when he took office and then sanctioned Johnson's plan to [break international law](#) during the Brexit crisis. You can expect nothing better from him.

The dismissal of independent advice, however, is as characteristic of the populist when the will to power is upon him as the contempt for truth. Sir Alex Allan, Johnson's ethics adviser, resigned after he found evidence that Patel bullied civil servants and Johnson decided to [defend her](#) rather than basic standards. Johnson ignored [warnings](#) from doctors and epidemiologists about the dangers of releasing lockdown too early and condemned thousands to needless deaths. When an appointments panel refused to make Paul Dacre chair of Ofcom, because a former editor of the *Mail* was unlikely to defend impartial broadcasting, Johnson would not accept its decision. He created a new interview panel and told it to [try again](#). Last week, another independent adviser, Sir Kevan Collins, went. He resigned because his recommendations to save the education of Covid-disrupted pupils were replaced by Rishi Sunak's "half-hearted approach [that] risks failing hundreds of thousands".

As a triumphant leader with an unassailable majority, Johnson does not believe anyone should hold him to account

Populism wants a good press rather than good government. Johnson will calculate that hurting pupils won't hurt the Conservative party, whose support is dominated by [pensioners](#) without school-age children. He can count on the rightwing press and the instinctive beliefs of Tory voters to hold that asylum seekers are criminals because they arrived illegally and forget how hard it is for genuine victims of persecution to travel to Britain legally.

For all that, I still do not see how anyone apart from sociopaths can look at the high court's judicial review of conditions in the Napier barracks on the Kent coast last week and conclude that ministers can be safely left to govern in darkness.

The Home Office put 414 asylum seekers, who had committed no crime, into the abandoned camp. It left them in cramped, badly ventilated dormitories rather than house them in the hotels the pandemic had emptied. Decent accommodation might have produced headlines about scroungers living in luxury and that would never do. There was a "very clear steer to eliminate the use of hotels for contingency accommodation", said Mr Justice Linden as he [noted](#) the political imperative to keep the tabloids happy. "Home Office staff were rarely present, which led to dangerous shortcomings."

Although they were not meant to be prisoners, the men were locked in a camp surrounded by barbed wire and patrolled by security guards. There was one serious fire, the site was riddled with plywood and asbestos, while an inevitable Covid outbreak saw nearly 200 inmates and staff go down.

Johnson wants to stop judges examining such horrors for many reasons. He does not want to pay compensation to victims, as the judge's ruling that detention at the Napier barracks was unlawful may force him to do. He does not want to allow the courts or anyone else to force ministers and civil servants to work hard and do their duty. And he is very keen on keeping the Conservative-voting public in a politically useful state of ignorance.

But as so often, the simplest explanation is the best. As a triumphant leader with an unassailable majority and divided opposition, Johnson does not believe anyone should hold him to account.

The Napier barracks are named after Sir Charles Napier (1782-1853). He was a hero of the Napoleonic wars, whose horse was shot from underneath him twice in the Peninsula campaign. He was also a surprisingly liberal general by 19th-century standards. In the late 1830s, he commanded 6,000 troops in the north of England with orders to crush the Chartist movement. Far from regarding the campaign to democratise Britain as a threat, however, Napier sympathised with the Chartist demand for one man, one vote, and condemned the poverty endured by the new working class. If there was trouble, he said, “[Tory injustice and Whig imbecility](#)” were its root causes. Plus ça change.

In everything he does, from trying to silence the courts to rigging broadcasting regulation, Johnson shows that he wants to hide the facts and escape the consequences of his own injustice and imbecility.

Nick Cohen is an Observer columnist

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Headlines friday 4 june 2021

- [Hillsborough South Yorkshire police agree payouts for 'cover-up'](#)
- ['Hostage' video Belarus opposition decries latest footage of detained journalist](#)
- [Live UK Covid: data 'pointing in more negative direction', says professor Neil Ferguson](#)
- [Coronavirus NHS says it can't provide extra Covid vaccines in Blackburn despite infection rate](#)
- [Prof Neil Ferguson Delta variant 30-100% more transmissible, says UK Covid expert](#)
- [Vaccines UK urged to give 20% of stock to other countries](#)

Hillsborough disaster

South Yorkshire and West Midlands police agree payouts for Hillsborough ‘cover-up’

More than 600 people are to be compensated for false campaign that tried to blame victims for disaster



Flowers and tributes left at the Hillsborough Memorial outside Anfield stadium in Liverpool last month. Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA

Flowers and tributes left at the Hillsborough Memorial outside Anfield stadium in Liverpool last month. Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA

[David Conn](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 09.02 EDT

South Yorkshire and West Midlands police have agreed a settlement with more than 600 people to compensate them for [the false police campaign](#)

aimed at avoiding responsibility for the 1989 Hillsborough disaster and blaming the victims instead, which bereaved families have always said was a cover-up.

The forces will pay compensation to families whose relatives were among the [96 men, women and children unlawfully killed at Hillsborough](#), and to survivors of the disaster, for additional trauma and psychiatric damage caused by the police campaign.

The financial recompense is for the psychiatric injuries the families and survivors have suffered and to pay for treatment or counselling. The civil claims, alleging misfeasance in a public office, were first made in September 2015 during the new inquests into how the 96 people died.

The inquest's jury wholly rejected the South Yorkshire police case, which was advanced again, that people who were at Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough stadium to support [Liverpool](#) in the FA Cup semi-final against Nottingham Forest had caused the disaster by being drunk and misbehaving.

The jury found that no behaviour of the Liverpool supporters contributed to the dangerous situation at the ground, and that [the 96 were unlawfully killed](#) due to gross negligence by the South Yorkshire police officer in command of the match, Ch Supt David Duckenfield.

South Yorkshire police previously agreed in November 1989 to settle claims for compensation to bereaved families and some of those injured in the disaster, which amounted to £19.8m, according to the [Hillsborough independent panel's 2012 report](#).

Sheffield Wednesday and the club's stadium engineers, Eastwood & Partners, contributed £1.5m each, and Sheffield city council, the safety authority for the ground, contributed £1m.

Lawyers who have acted for the family members and survivors in the new claims for psychiatric damage described the police campaign after the disaster as "one of the largest and most shameful cover-ups by a police force in history".

In a statement, they said: “Through this civil claim for misfeasance in a public office, 601 victims sought justice and accountability for the deliberate, orchestrated and thoroughly dishonest police cover-up that suppressed the truth about the responsibility of the police, and blamed the football supporters for the horrific events that unfolded at the Hillsborough stadium on 15 April 1989.

“Ninety-six Liverpool supporters were unlawfully killed as a result of the police failings that day, and countless others suffered physical and psychological harm.

“The distress and heartache caused by the loss of life, and the injuries caused to those who survived, were made significantly worse by the lies told and the cover-up that followed. As a result of the cover-up, that was maintained for nearly 30 years, the victims, both the bereaved and the survivors, and their families and loved ones, suffered additional psychiatric injury.

“No amount of money can compensate them for the ordeal they have suffered, but this settlement acknowledges both the cover-up and its impact upon each of the victims.”

In a [tweet](#) Charlotte Hennessy, who was six when her father, Jimmy, then 29, was unlawfully killed at Hillsborough, thanked the families’ legal teams but said the settlements were “insulting” and that the process had been “so humiliating, having to justify your own mental torture”.

Margaret Aspinall, who was the last chair of the Hillsborough Family Support Group, said she lost a “gem” when her son James, then 18, was killed at Hillsborough, and the settlements “mean nothing to me”. Aspinall said she remained very angry about the lack of accountability for the unlawful killing of 96 people, and the police lies that followed.

West Midlands was the force appointed to investigate the disaster, but has since been accused of malpractices and failures that have been subject to a long-running investigation by the Independent Office for [Police](#) Conduct (IOPC).

The families have not been able publicly to mention the settlement, which was agreed at the end of April, while the prosecution was still ongoing of two former South Yorkshire police officers and the force's then lawyer on [charges of perverting the course of public justice](#) for amending police statements after the disaster.

The three defendants were formally acquitted last week after the judge, Mr Justice William Davis, [stopped the trial](#) on the basis that the public inquiry held by Lord Justice Taylor, to which the amended statements were sent, was [not a "course of public justice"](#).

The defendants all pleaded not guilty, and since their acquittal, two of their barristers have said publicly that there was no police cover-up after the disaster. The Crown Prosecution Service barrister Sarah Whitehouse QC also infuriated families by appearing to minimise their 32-year fight for recognition that there was a cover-up. Whitehouse said in court there had always been a "swirl of rumour" about there having been a cover-up.

Yet South [Yorkshire](#) police was agreeing settlements to the claims of public misfeasance, which alleged a cover-up, while the trial was taking place.

The acting chief constable of South Yorkshire police, Lauren Poultney, said: "We offer an unreserved apology to those affected by the [Hillsborough disaster](#) and its aftermath. We acknowledge that serious errors and mistakes were made by South Yorkshire police, both on 15 April 1989 and during the subsequent investigations.

"Those actions on the day of the disaster tragically led to lives being lost and many being injured. The force's subsequent failings also caused huge distress, suffering and pain, both to the victims and their families. This is something South Yorkshire police profoundly regrets.

"Since 2016, we have worked closely and in a constructive manner with the legal representatives of the families affected by the Hillsborough tragedy to agree a scheme to compensate those affected. We know these settlements can never make up for what they have lost and suffered.

“We would like to thank the families for their dignified approach, which has enabled us to progress and agree the scheme. Today, our thoughts continue to be with them and the loved ones they have lost.”

The West Midlands police deputy chief constable Vanessa Jardine said: “The deaths of 96 people at Hillsborough was a tragedy and my thoughts are with the families and friends of the victims who must live every day with the loss of their loved ones.

“We deeply regret the harm and distress caused to those affected by the tragedy and although I know it cannot make up for their suffering, working with South Yorkshire police, we have agreed a scheme to compensate those affected.

“I would also like to thank the families for the dignified way in which they have conducted themselves and engaged with us.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/jun/04/south-yorkshire-police-agree-payouts-for-hillsborough-cover-up>

[Belarus](#)

Belarus airs more footage of detained activist as family call it ‘hostage’ video

Supporters say Raman Pratasevich’s apparent confession was result of ‘abuse, torture and threats’



Raman Pratasevich was detained after a Ryanair plane he was on was forced to land in Minsk. Photograph: Reuters

Raman Pratasevich was detained after a Ryanair plane he was on was forced to land in Minsk. Photograph: Reuters

[Andrew Roth](#) in Moscow and agencies

Fri 4 Jun 2021 10.12 EDT

The family of the detained activist and journalist [Raman Pratasevich](#) and members of Belarus’s opposition have decried what they described as a “hostage” video after state television aired a primetime “interview” that they believe was filmed under duress.

In his third appearance since his Ryanair plane was [forced to land in Belarus](#) by the authorities on 23 May, Pratasevich appeared battered, with cuts on his wrists. During the appearance, he claimed that no makeup had been applied to hide marks from torture.

The 26-year-old's father, Dmitry Pratasevich, said the video was the result of "abuse, torture and threats".

[Belarusian activist stabs himself in court](#)

[Read more](#)

"I know my son very well and I believe that he would never say such things," he told Agence France-Presse. "They broke him and forced him to say what was needed," he added, saying it pained him to watch the interview.

Franak Viačorka, an adviser to the [Belarus](#) opposition leader, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, said it was painful to see "confessions" and called Pratasevich a "hostage of the regime".

Belarusian rights groups have told the Guardian the government is [increasingly using coerced confessions](#) as a propaganda tool to silence dissent. Prisoners have described being forced to memorise pre-written confessions and then deliver them to television crews from prison.

01:18

Belarus video confessions clearly coerced, say family – video report

"It's become widespread now," said Valentin Stefanovich of the Viasna human rights centre. "And in a bunch of cases they don't even hide that people were tortured before giving the confessions."

In the nearly hour-long appearance, Pratasevich gave remarks inconsistent with his previous political views, praising the Belarusian leader, [Alexander Lukashenko](#), and decrying the opposition under Tsikhanouskaya, saying her movement was being funded by European governments and wealthy Belarusians in exile.

He named other activists whom he said were involved in a protest movement that rocked Belarus following Lukashenko's disputed reelection last summer. He has ruled the country since 1994.

['Persecuted, jailed, destroyed': Belarus seeks to stifle dissent](#)
[Read more](#)

Pratasevich also teared up when asked if he was concerned about threats of being handed over to Russian-backed forces in east Ukraine, where Lukashenko has said he could face the death penalty. Pratasevich repeated a previous statement, given on camera in a Belarusian police station after his arrest, that he was cooperating with investigators.

Pratasevich's girlfriend, Sofia Sapega, was arrested with him and is now facing criminal charges after giving an on-camera confession in a Belarusian police station that her relatives have also said was coerced.

European officials have also decried the interview. The UK foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, on Friday said it was filmed "clearly under duress" and that "those involved in the filming, coercion and direction of the interview must be held accountable".

Ahead of the broadcast, Viasna said Pratasevich must have been coerced into speaking by Belarusian security services because he was facing "unfair, but very serious accusations".

"Everything Pratasevich will say was said under duress – at the very least psychological duress," the Viasna head, Ales Bialiatski, told AFP Thursday. "Whatever he is saying now is pure propaganda, under which there is no truthful basis."

Pratasevich and Sapega, 23, were [arrested in Minsk](#) after Belarus scrambled a military jet to divert the Athens-Vilnius Ryanair plane they were travelling on.

[Belarus regime uses video confessions as a tool to silence dissent](#)
[Read more](#)

The opposition has also said the [video confession](#) made last month by Sapega, a Russian citizen, appeared coerced.

Previously, authorities have said Pratasevich is an extremist who has facilitated violence. They have maintained that television confessions by members of the opposition were made voluntarily.

Recent evidence has shown that the government has piled pressure on opposition members in order to secure confessions in a nearly year-long crackdown on dissent.

Earlier this week, the jailed activist Stsiapan Latypau stabbed himself in the throat with a pen [during a court hearing in Minsk](#). Prior to stabbing himself, Latypau said he had been held in a punitive cell where inmates faced beatings and torture for more than 50 days. He also said investigators had told him to confess or they would arrest his friends and family.

In another case, a teenager being investigated for allegedly “inciting riots”, the most common criminal charge used against protesters, jumped off a 16-storey building, blaming Belarus’s Investigative Committee for putting “moral pressure” on him.

Before his arrest, Pratasevich had given no indication he supported Lukashenko or held the views aired in the interview. After serving as an editor-in-chief of Nexta, a Telegram channel that both broadcast and helped coordinate protests last year, he had remained active in Belarus’s opposition media and last month called Lukashenko a “dictator”.

He was arrested while returning from vacation in Greece following a conference where Tsikhanouskaya addressed European officials.

Western countries and international rights groups have condemned Lukashenko over the forced landing of the aircraft and also imposed sanctions against Belarusian officials over a crackdown on protests following the contested election last year.

Tsikhanouskaya said on Monday she believed Pratasevich had been beaten and tortured in prison.

Reuters and Agence France-Presse contributed to this report

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[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)

[Politics](#)

UK Covid: new daily cases hit 6,238 as R value rises to between 1.0 and 1.2 – as it happened

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[Coronavirus](#)

NHS says it can't provide extra Covid vaccines in Blackburn despite infection rate

Town's director of public health says 'unjust' decision could lead to local hospital being swamped within four weeks

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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The entrance to the Covid-19 vaccination centre at the cathedral in Blackburn. The town received extra doses in May. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

The entrance to the Covid-19 vaccination centre at the cathedral in Blackburn. The town received extra doses in May. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

[Helen Pidd](#) North of England editor

Fri 4 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

The NHS cannot provide thousands of extra doses of Covid-19 vaccines to Blackburn with Darwen borough, despite it having the [highest infection rate in the UK](#) and a death rate almost a third higher than the national average.

The local MP said it “beggared belief” that Blackburn’s repeated pleas to continue surge vaccinations had been knocked back, arguing the move will place the NHS under “overwhelming and unnecessary pressure”.

Correspondence seen by the Guardian shows Blackburn’s director of public health warning the [NHS](#) that not providing additional doses would lead to avoidable deaths and the [NHS](#) being swamped within four weeks, calling it “unfair, unjust and avoidable”.

In mid-May 19,500 extra doses were sent to Blackburn and surrounding areas to distribute by 30 May after an outbreak of the Delta variant of Covid, which originated in India.

Since then, the rolling seven-day infection rate in Blackburn has increased to 436.2 per 100,000 people, almost 14 times higher than the UK average of 32.1 per 100,000.

Concerned about the rise, Dominic Harrison, Blackburn’s director of public health, wrote to the NHS asking to be allowed to extend surge vaccination for another fortnight, with at least 1,000 extra doses offered to vaccinate everyone over 18 who was eligible every day. He said he was backed by Dr Sakthi Karunanithi, Lancashire’s director of public health.

Harrison received a response from Jane Scattergood, an NHS official leading the Covid-19 vaccination programme rollout in Lancashire and south Cumbria. In an email seen by the Guardian, she said: “I don’t believe that we are able to secure further additional supplies in the same volume as the ‘surge’ weeks in Blackburn as this is inbound supply dependent.”

Explaining the decision, she said it was “increasingly difficult to drive uptake in the eligible cohorts” during the second week of the surge fortnight

in Blackburn.

Last week a different NHS official wrote to Harrison to say: “Surge vaccination periods will not exceed two weeks to help maximise community activation experienced as a result of the additional supply and increase uptake. Any request to exceed this two-week period would need clear evidence of continued demand from the population.”

More than 60% [see footnote] of Blackburn’s adults had received at least one dose of the vaccine, she said. Take-up has been significantly under the national average: across the UK, almost 40 million people have had a first vaccine dose – 75% of the adult population – and more than 26 million have had a second. But Blackburn has a significantly younger population than much of the UK, meaning it has a disproportionate number of under-30s who are not yet eligible for a jab.

Scattergood’s response prompted a stark warning from Harrison, who suggested that ending the surge vaccination period would lead to unnecessary deaths.

“Failure to continue with accelerated vaccination in [Blackburn with Darwen] has a high chance, at this point of the variant surge, of generating some avoidable mortality, which will be attributable in part to the failure to offer BwD residents vaccination protection equivalent to other local authority areas in the UK [who are at lower risk] ... This risk now seems self-evident and is unfair, unjust and avoidable,” he said.

He added: “The national NHS vaccination protection coverage is now very poorly focused on areas of ‘high and enduring transmission’ or variant surges ... Failure to accelerate vaccine protection now in BwD and in neighbouring high- and enduring-risk and variant-surge areas will put the local NHS hospital [East Lancashire hospitals trust] at avoidable risk of being potentially overwhelmed with cases in 3-4 weeks.”

He said that other areas – notably Twickenham and Bolton – seemed to be given more leeway and doses for surge-vaccination programmes, complaining: “We are now the highest variant-surge/case-rate local authority

in the UK. It is increasingly hard to understand how the NHS is making these decisions on surge-vaccination priority.”

The Covid death rate in Blackburn is already almost a third higher than the national average across the whole pandemic, with 307 deaths per 100,000, compared with 228 per 100,000 in the UK.



Kate Hollern, Labour MP for Blackburn. Photograph: Facundo Arrizabalaga/EPA

Kate Hollern, the MP for Blackburn, blamed the government for the situation. “Given Blackburn has the highest rate of infections in the country, the government’s decision beggars belief. Without further surge vaccinations, the NHS will be placed under overwhelming and unnecessary pressure – the government’s inaction could cause entirely avoidable deaths across Lancashire,” she said.

A spokesperson for the Department of [Health](#) and Social Care said: “We are making phenomenal progress through our vaccination programme, including increasing the number of centres and extending opening hours and capacity in Blackburn.

“On top of enhanced vaccine deployment, the government is reducing the spread of variants in the region with a huge number of preventive measures

including whole genome sequencing, surge PCR testing and enhanced contact tracing.”

Asked why more doses were not being provided for another fortnight of surge vaccinations, an NHS spokesperson said: “NHS staff have pulled out all the stops to ensure eligible people can receive a jab as quickly as possible, with half of adults in England now fully vaccinated and three-quarters having received a first dose of the life-saving jab. All vaccination services are expected to continue to vaccinate in line with guidance set out by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.”

This article was amended on 4 June 2021 to remove references to the NHS as having “refused” to provide extra doses to continue surge vaccinations in Blackburn with Darwen. Also, the percentage of adults in the borough to have received at least one vaccine dose at the time of publication is 73%.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/04/no-more-vaccine-surge-in-blackburn-says-nhs-as-infection-rate-grows>

[Coronavirus](#)

UK reports 6,238 daily Covid cases amid fears over Delta variant infectiousness

Prof Neil Ferguson says India variant may be 30-100% more transmissible than the Alpha variant

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Shoppers in Oxford Street, central London. Photograph: NurPhoto/Getty Images

Shoppers in Oxford Street, central London. Photograph: NurPhoto/Getty Images

[Nicola Davis](#) and [Sarah Marsh](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 12.28 EDT

The Delta variant of coronavirus is 30% to 100% more transmissible than the previously dominant variant, Prof Neil Ferguson has warned, as the number of daily reported Covid cases exceeded 6,000 for the first time since March.

In one of a number of signs of a third wave, [Office for National Statistics](#) data suggested infection levels in England rose by about 75% in a week, with 85,600 people thought to have had Covid in the week ending 29 May – or one in 640 people - compared with 48,500 the week before.

The estimated [R number for England](#) is now 1.0 to 1.2, up from 1.0 to 1.1 last week. More than three-quarters of UK adults have now received their first vaccine dose, which ministers hope will break the link between cases and hospitalisations or deaths.

Discussing the Delta variant first identified in India and now dominant in the UK, Ferguson, a leading epidemiologist at Imperial College London whose Covid modelling was key to the UK's first lockdown, told the BBC: “We’re certainly getting more data. Unfortunately, the news is not as positive as I would like in any respect about the Delta variant. The best estimate at the moment is this variant maybe 60% more transmissible than the Alpha [Kent] variant.

“There’s some uncertainty around that depending on assumption and how you analyse the data, between about 30% and maybe even up to 100% more transmissible.”

Previous modelling has suggested that the Delta variant being 50% more transmissible could translate to up to 10,000 hospitalisations a day, more than double the UK peak of the pandemic so far.

The 60% figure appears to echo data from Public Health England (PHE) on the likelihood that a close contact of a person infected with the Delta variant will themselves become infected – the “secondary attack rate”. [The latest PHE report](#) suggests this figure is around 51% higher for contacts of cases with the Delta variant and no travel history. Estimates produced the week before [suggested a 67% higher](#) secondary attack rate for the Delta variant.

The Delta variant has also been linked to a [more than twofold higher risk of hospitalisation](#) compared with the Alpha variant – although experts have cautioned this is far from certain. The Delta variant is also believed to be somewhat more resistant to Covid vaccines, [particularly after the first dose](#).

The rising cases will put pressure on the prime minister ahead of the 21 June planned lockdown lifting date for [England](#). But on Friday the communities secretary, Robert Jenrick, said there was still “nothing at the moment that suggests that we won’t be able to move forward” with the next stage of lifting restrictions.

“We’ve got a further 10 days until we are going to make that decision on or around June 14, so during that period we’ll see where are we with hospitalisations, with deaths, where are we with the vaccine rollout – we’re doing everything we possibly can to expedite that – and then at that point, we’ll make our final decision,” he said.

Dr Mike Tildesley, a member of the scientific pandemic influenza modelling group government advisory panel, said the 21 June reopening would be a “really difficult decision”.

He told BBC Breakfast: “I think the question the government needs to answer, and I can’t answer this, is: if we show that cases may rise, and of course, hospital admissions and deaths may rise over the coming months, what kind of rise in those the government can cope with to allow society to reopen?”

“Of course, if you delay that date then those rises will not be as severe. So, that’s the trade-off the government are going to have to have in terms of if they are willing to open up knowing there may be a rise if they delay that may lessen the rise, but of course then that impacts businesses all around the country, so I think it’s a really difficult decision.”

He said his “hope and belief” was that hospital admissions would not rise on the same scale as they did in January.

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[Coronavirus](#)

UK urged to give 20% of its Covid vaccines to other countries

Top scientist Jeremy Farrar calls on Boris Johnson to use G7 presidency to take global lead on dose sharing

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The G7 should commit to sharing 1bn doses this year, according to Jeremy Farrar, head of the Wellcome Trust. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

The G7 should commit to sharing 1bn doses this year, according to Jeremy Farrar, head of the Wellcome Trust. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

[Sarah Boseley](#) *Health editor*

Thu 3 Jun 2021 19.01 EDT

One of the UK's leading scientists has called on the prime minister to donate 20% of the UK's Covid vaccines to other countries in an effort to try to save lives and stem the spread of coronavirus variants.

The head of the Wellcome Trust, Sir Jeremy Farrar, and the executive director of Unicef UK, Steven Waugh, have published an open letter to Boris Johnson appealing for the UK to set an example ahead of the [G7](#) summit in Cornwall, which begins in a week's time.



Jeremy Farrar. Photograph: Ruben Sprich/Reuters

UK science played a core part in “breathtaking advances” that have enabled vaccines to be developed, which is the way out of the pandemic, they say in their letter.

“At home, the UK vaccination rollout has been a phenomenal success and has already saved countless lives,” they write. “Yet, globally too many countries still lack doses to protect healthcare workers and the most vulnerable.

“As president of the G7, the UK has the opportunity to set the standard for global action on sharing doses. Three months ago, you proudly pledged that the UK would share vaccines with the world. Now we ask that you turn this pledge into reality.”

The UK should “show the historic leadership needed to end this crisis”, they say. It should share at least 20% of the vaccines it has between now and August and call on the G7 nations to commit to sharing 1bn doses this year. The G7 should also fully fund the Access to Covid-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, which is a partnership involving the World [Health](#) Organization to speed up the development of vaccines, tests and treatments and ensure all countries can access them.

“We can share vaccines now and still meet UK vaccination targets,” they write. “The truth is, the UK cannot afford not to share its vaccines. The world won’t be safe while any single country is still fighting the virus. Failing to act now risks reversing our hard-won progress.”

It is the best way to protect the UK and end the pandemic quickly, they say: “As long as the virus continues to circulate, it will continue to mutate. We have already seen first-hand how quickly new variants can emerge and travel. We cannot rule out variants against which our vaccines and treatments no longer work.”

[Vaccine inequality exposed by dire situation in world’s poorest nations](#)
[Read more](#)

[Covax](#), the UN scheme to distribute vaccines equitably, is 190m doses short of what it needs for this year. The UK has ordered more than 400m vaccine doses. Johnson told a virtual G7 meeting in February that the UK would donate its surplus to poorer countries, but has not said when or how many doses that would involve.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/04/uk-urged-to-give-20-of-its-covid-vaccines-to-other-countries>

2021.06.04 - Coronavirus

- [England India Covid variant spreading in schools, data shows](#)
- ['Vax-n-win' Guam launches lottery prize for vaccine recipients](#)
- ['Running dry' Zimbabweans turned away for vaccinations after shortages](#)
- [Nepal Covid variant Does it exist and should we be concerned?](#)

Schools

India Covid variant spreading in England's schools, data shows

Public Health England figures show the number of Delta variant infections in schools and colleges rose sharply in May



Experts say the figures from Public Health England showed that schools were now a 'major source' of transmission. Photograph: Peter Lopeman/Alamy Stock Photo

Experts say the figures from Public Health England showed that schools were now a 'major source' of transmission. Photograph: Peter Lopeman/Alamy Stock Photo

[Richard Adams](#) and [Nicola Davis](#)

Thu 3 Jun 2021 16.05 EDT

The Delta Covid-19 variant has begun spreading in schools and colleges throughout England, it has been revealed, after Public Health England

published new data, demanded by teachers and staff unions, on outbreaks of the variant.

The new data, covering 26 April to 30 May, showed the number of Delta variant infections in schools or other educational settings rising rapidly throughout the period, with a total of 140 incidents.

Prof Christina Pagel, director of University College London's clinical operational research unit, said the figures were evidence that schools were now "a major source" of transmission, after the government last month dropped its requirement for secondary school pupils to wear masks in classrooms.

[Pupils should keep wearing masks into the summer, Sage told ministers](#)
[Read more](#)

Dr William Welfare, deputy director of health protection at Public Health England (PHE), said that while outbreaks in schools are still at low levels, "we have seen a slight increase over recent weeks", in line with the higher levels of variants being detected in the community.

"The latest PHE data suggest that there have been 97 confirmed Covid-19 outbreaks in primary and secondary schools that have had at least one variant case linked to them over the most recent four-week period. This represents around one in 250 schools.

"Public Health England's health protection teams continue to work with local authorities and schools to carry out surveillance of Covid-19 cases in schools to understand and reduce transmission in these settings," Dr Welfare said.

Of the Delta variant, the number of confirmed outbreaks or clusters found in primary and secondary schools has risen from just three at the end of April to 39 in the final week of May. The combined number of outbreaks and clusters of all variants has also grown at pace, from 24 at the end of April to 93 by the end of last month.

Pagel said: “It is clear that schools are a major source of transmission and that outbreaks in primary and secondary schools have been growing a lot, week on week.

“Meanwhile, the government removed the mask mandate on 17 May and the PHE surveillance report this week shows that the number of tests being done in secondary schools – the government’s main mitigation now for schools – is decreasing all the time. The government needs to get serious about reducing cases in schools.”

Last week the leaders of eight trade unions representing school staff, including the four main teaching unions, wrote to the Department for Education asking that the data on variants in schools and colleges be released.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jun/03/india-covid-variant-spreading-in-englands-schools-and-colleges-data-shows>

[The Pacific project](#)Guam

‘Vax-n-win’: Guam launches lottery prize for vaccine recipients

Governor announces online lottery which offers \$10,000 in cash, a brand-new car and other small prizes each week



Tumon Bay near Hagåtña, Guam. The US has launched a lottery with prizes for Covid-19 vaccine recipients. Photograph: Tassanee Vejpongsa/AP

Tumon Bay near Hagåtña, Guam. The US has launched a lottery with prizes for Covid-19 vaccine recipients. Photograph: Tassanee Vejpongsa/AP

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Mar-Vic Cagurangan

Fri 4 Jun 2021 04.14 EDT

Guam has joined other US states dangling lottery money and other cash prizes in a bid to achieve herd immunity by 21 July, marking the 77th anniversary of the island's liberation from Japanese forces.

The island's governor, Lourdes Leon Guerrero, said the "vax n' win" incentive program is intended to accelerate the government's "Operation Liberate Guam" – a campaign to fully inoculate 80% of the island's 160,000 people by liberation day.

"As of today, we have vaccinated 82,778 people. To achieve herd immunity, we are targeting to vaccinate as many as 96,000 people," Leon Guerrero told a press conference Friday. "We need over 13,000 more shots in arms to achieve Operation Liberate [Guam](#)."

[Guam boy, 10, dies as Covid outbreak threatens country's health system](#)
[Read more](#)

The government is using a portion of its coronavirus-relief aid from the US government to fund the online lottery, which offers \$10,000 in cash, a brand-new car and other small prizes each week starting 16 June leading up to liberation day.

“These prizes will be paid for by a number of federal grants for outreach and incentive programs,” Leon Guerrero said.

Free vaccine shots are being administered at government facilities and private clinics. The territory is among the US jurisdictions with the highest vaccination rates.

To date, Guam has a Covid count of 8,193 cases and 139 deaths since March 2020. At least 63 are in active isolation.

Guam, whose economy is driven by the service industry, has repeatedly attempted to reopen tourism, but the plan has been hampered by the intermittent emergence of Covid clusters.

The Western Pacific island [hit its Covid peak in September](#). The large wave of positive cases was feared to cause the island’s fragile healthcare system to collapse. At some point, the island’s lone government hospital reached overcapacity, forcing it to set up beds at the kerbside of the emergency driveway.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/04/vax-n-win-guam-launches-lottery-prize-for-vaccine-recipients>

Global development

‘Running dry’: Zimbabweans turned away for vaccinations after shortages

As staff sit idle in treatment centres, anger focuses on government failures to secure supplies as fears of a third wave increase

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Vials of India's Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin at a hospital in Harare. Zimbabwe is experiencing shortages of China's Sinovac vaccines. Photograph: Tafadzwa Ufumeli/Getty

Vials of India's Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin at a hospital in Harare. Zimbabwe is experiencing shortages of China's Sinovac vaccines. Photograph: Tafadzwa Ufumeli/Getty

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[Nyasha Chingono](#) in Harare

Fri 4 Jun 2021 02.15 EDT

Hundreds of people are being turned away from vaccination centres in [Zimbabwe](#) as the country's supplies of China's Sinovac vaccine appear to have run out, triggering panic that the government is failing to acquire new stocks.

While the government said that it had taken delivery of more medicines in recent weeks, centres in Harare have not had any stocks for nearly a week and there is growing anger at the failure to communicate acute vaccine shortages, which are being reported around the country.

In [Bulawayo](#), [authorities](#) last week suspended vaccination programmes due to a lack of vaccines.

At Wilkins hospital in the capital, Harare, people demanded an explanation from the matron after nurses turned away dozens of people who had arrived for their second dose of Sinovac.

The hospital, Harare's leading Covid-19 referral centre, is now administering only India's Covaxin jab, the uptake of which remains low

among Zimbabweans.

“We only have Covaxin for the second jab. We do not have the Sinovac second dose. If you are waiting for the Sinovac second dose, check towards the end of the week. We are still waiting for deliveries. They delivered Covaxin yesterday, we hope the Sinovac will come soon,” the matron said, to jeers from the crowd.

According to the government, as of 31 May, 675,678 people in Zimbabwe had received their first dose of the Covid vaccine, while 344,400 had received their second.

With a population of 14.6 million, Zimbabwe aims to vaccinate 10 million people. It received 1.5m doses from China, while India donated 35,000 shots of Covaxin.

Many at Wilkins hospital this week were afraid their first dose would lose effectiveness without the second.

The chief coordinator of Zimbabwe’s Covid-19 response, Agnes Mahomva, said: “We have heard such stories of shortages but we asked the Ministry of Health to do an assessment on the ground. All clinics got quantities that are proportional to their size but some moved vaccines faster than others. So the Ministry of Health is currently doing the redistribution of vaccines. Any minute from now we should hear from them.”

Previously a bustling centre vaccinating hundreds of people daily, Wilkins now operates one inoculation table where Covaxin is being administered.

“We only had the second dose sometime last week. We spend most of the time sitting, there is nothing to do. If you see such large centres running dry, it is almost certain that [smaller] polyclinics also do not have any vaccines,” a nurse said.

[‘Think of others’: elderly people in Zimbabwe dispel scepticism on Covid vaccine](#)

[Read more](#)

Mernard Makotore, 50, travelled about 40 miles from Darwendale, a town west of Harare, to get his second vaccine.

“I came here very early only to be told at 8am that there are no vaccines. I was supposed to have come on 20 May, but my mother passed away so I could not get the vaccine. We are getting into the cold season and cases are starting to rise again. The government needs to do something fast,” Makotore said.

“Why did they give us the first dose, if they knew that the second dose would not be available,” he added.

Claudina Maneni, 43, had come with her 70-year-old mother.

“I have been coming here for the past five days and they are telling me the same story. I came here again at 4am with my elderly mother, she desperately needs her second dose because of travel. The minister of finance assured us that he was going to buy more vaccines but there is nothing,” Maneni said.

“We hear that vaccines are now being sold in private practices. This is the corruption that we do not want. Zimbabweans should never tolerate such incompetence.”

Despite initial scepticism about the Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines, Zimbabweans have been commended by their president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, for overcoming their hesitancy in the past month. He also gave assurances that more vaccines were on their way.

Experts say the government should speed up vaccination as winter may bring more cases, with fears that a third wave could bring the already precarious economy to its knees.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/04/running-dry-zimbabweans-turned-away-for-vaccinations-after-shortages>

Coronavirus

Nepal Covid variant: does it exist and should we be concerned?

UK transport secretary mentioned mutation but Public Health England says it is not examining such a variant

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Passengers push their luggage past Covid testing centre signage at Heathrow airport in London. Photograph: Daniel Leal-Olivas/AFP/Getty

Passengers push their luggage past Covid testing centre signage at Heathrow airport in London. Photograph: Daniel Leal-Olivas/AFP/Getty

[*Ian Sample*](#)
[*@iansample*](#)

Thu 3 Jun 2021 15.07 EDT

Another day, another variant. The latest incarnation of the coronavirus to raise concerns has been linked to [Nepal](#), which has been hit by infections spilling over from the outbreak in India.

What is the Nepal variant?

Many scientists are asking the same question. There are thousands of variants of the coronavirus that cause Covid-19, but public health authorities focus only on those that have worrying-looking mutations or are demonstrably more dangerous. Public [Health](#) England calls these “variants under investigation” or “variants of concern” respectively. There is no Nepal variant under investigation or variant of concern according to PHE.

Where did the name come from?

The devastating outbreak [in India](#) has [spread to Nepal](#). The country does not do much genomic sequencing, but among the variants identified, there is at least one case of Delta variant, first found in India, that carries a mutation called K417N. The same variant has been found in numerous countries including the UK, Portugal, the US and India. It has cropped up 14 times in Japan, and 13 of those samples were in travellers from Nepal. It is not clear, however, where the variant originated. In all, 91 cases have been logged in the [Gisaid coronavirus database](#).

Why is it getting so much attention?

When the UK transport secretary, [Grant Shapps](#), removed Portugal from the England’s travel “green list” on Thursday, he cited rising positivity rates and “a sort of Nepal mutation of the Indian variant that’s been detected”, adding “we just don’t know the potential for that to be a vaccine-defeating mutation and simply don’t want to take the risk as we come up to June 21 and the review of the fourth stage of the unlock”.

01:24

'Safety first': Grant Shapps on Portugal's removal from travel 'green list' – video

Aren't we supposed to avoid country names?

Yes. The World Health Organization has drawn up a [naming system](#) for coronavirus variants so as not to stigmatise the countries where they are first detected. Variants may well be found first in countries that do the most genomic sequencing. All of which suggests Shapps's reference to a Nepal mutation was not quite on message. Under the new system, it is out with the Kent, South Africa, Brazil and India variants and in with Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta.

Could the variant evade vaccines?

The same K417N mutation is found in the Beta variant [first detected](#) in South Africa. The Beta variant is a concern because evidence suggests it is partially resistant to vaccines based on the original pandemic virus, and to immunity gained from previous Covid infection. The K417N mutation is believed to be part of the reason the Beta variant can evade vaccines to some degree, so when the highly transmissible Delta variant acquires the mutation, scientists are bound to pay attention.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/03/nepal-covid-variant-does-it-exist-should-concerned>

2021.06.04 - Spotlight

- [Gaming Why I started streaming video games on Twitch at the age of 43](#)
- ['A new dark era' Palestinians welcome Netanyahu exit but fear more of the same](#)
- [Angélique Kidjo 'Africa has so much talent – we can't even grasp it'](#)
- [Analysis 'This isn't ideological': reluctant 'green hero' behind Exxon coup](#)

Games

Why I started streaming video games on Twitch at the age of 43

Over lockdown, comedian, mother of two and former games journalist Ellie Gibson took up livestreaming, loved the community – and learned to love playing again



Playing it for laughs ... Ellie Gibson livestreams her PS5 games on Twitch.
Photograph: Ellie Gibson

Playing it for laughs ... Ellie Gibson livestreams her PS5 games on Twitch.
Photograph: Ellie Gibson

[Ellie Gibson](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 04.30 EDT

Like so many things in my life, it began as a daft experiment. I love learning new stuff, and over the course of my 43 years I've tried all sorts. Some things have stuck, like comedy, running, and having kids. Some haven't, like

kung fu, olives and holidays in Germany. To be honest, I thought that livestreaming games on [Twitch](#) would fall into the latter category.

For those who aren't familiar (I wasn't until this year), Twitch involves [playing video games live on the internet](#) while providing a running commentary. People watch you, and chat to you via a message window, and sometimes give you money. It's sort of like exotic dancing, but with fewer breasts.

It was January 2021, and we were in lockdown. I hadn't played any blockbuster games for years, put off by the amount of time and commitment involved. But there I was, stuck at home, staring down the barrel of another three months making sourdough banana bread in the shape of Joe Wicks's face, so I thought I'd give Assassin's Creed Valhalla a go, a historical action game from Ubisoft about slicing up Saxons in ninth-century England. I chose to play as female Viking Eivor, and she quickly became my favourite video game character since Lara Croft – tough, cool, and equipped with skills I've coveted all my life, like the ability to slice through a man's spine with the single swing of an axe, and apply eyeliner.



But where's Nando's? Assassin's Creed Valhalla. Photograph: Ubisoft

I adored exploring snowy Norway and ancient Croydon, trying to work out which monastery was on the site of what's now the Nando's by the tram stop. ([Very strong branch](#), by the way.) But it's a long old game, and sometimes it would get a bit lonely. My husband's not a gamer, and surely there are only so many times you can watch your wife swearing as she hacks a bunch of virtual men to death without wishing you'd just married that other girl who was into scones and cross-stitch.

So I started thinking about giving Twitch a try. I was inspired by a conversation I'd had with the comedian and streamer [Sooz Kempner](#) on Extra Life, the [games podcast](#) I co-host. "It's never too late for Twitch," she'd said, like one of those kind daughters whose 57-year-old mum is about to walk out in front of the X Factor judges. I didn't really understand what Twitch was or how it worked, or why anyone would want to stream themselves playing games in front of a bunch of strangers, but I knew there was a button on my PS5 controller that made it go. So one night, I pressed it.

That first time was terrifying. I was more nervous than the first time I did standup. With comedy, you know roughly what you're going to say when you're up there, even if you can't predict the fistfight between two women in the back row. With Twitch, I wasn't really sure why anyone would turn up to watch me play a video game, or what they wanted from me.

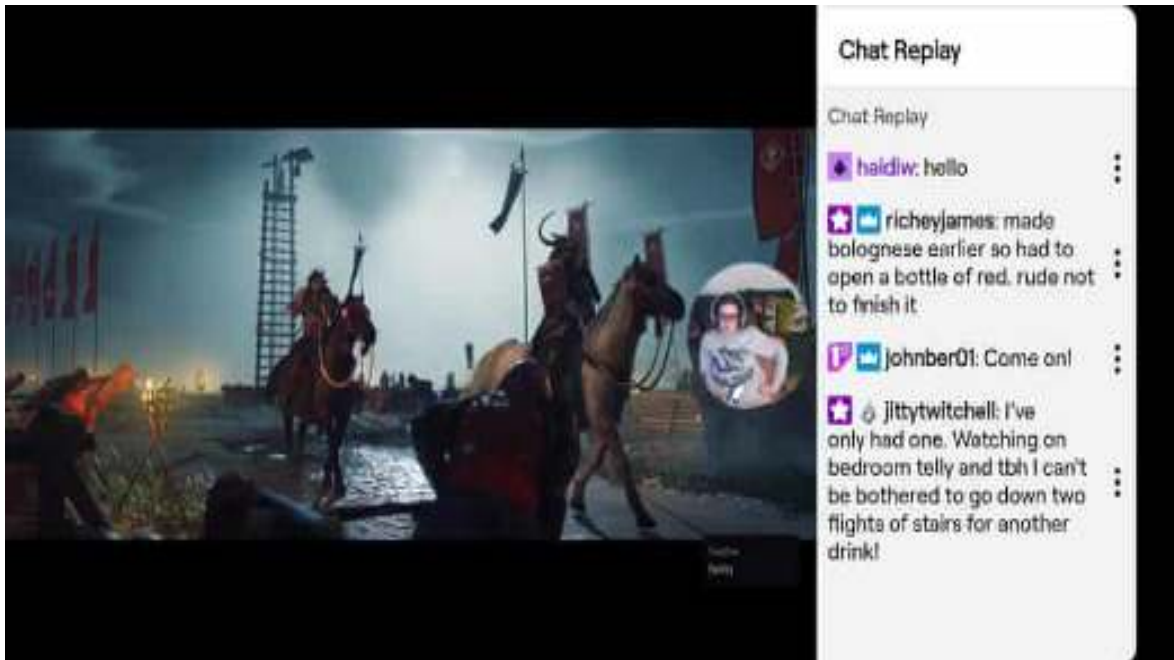


Who summoned the stallion? Ellie Gibson ‘felt enormous pressure to do all the things at once’ on Twitch. Photograph: Courtesy: Ellie Gibson

And I was suddenly and acutely conscious of being absolutely terrible at games. I seemed incapable of remembering which button you press to call the horsey, and which one you use to fire arrows. An accidentally summoned stallion would inconveniently appear about every 12 seconds while I was trying to shoot someone in the eye. I felt enormous pressure to do all the things at once – play the game well, be funny, respond to all the comments in the chat, not look like an utter dick. It was like doing a standup gig while trying to row a boat, make a sandwich, and shave a cat.

Echoing from some cavernous depth I thought I’d sealed off years ago, the voices came, whispering every negative comment I ever received in 20 years of games journalism: “She’s not funny.” “Who does she think she is?” “This is why girls shouldn’t play games.” “What kind of dickhead gives Sonic the Hedgehog 4 a 9 out of 10?” (Fair.) But there, in the chat windows popping up on my screen, were new voices. Keep going, they said. You can do it. There were lots of laughing emojis and smiley faces. I started to relax, realising that it didn’t really matter that I was rubbish at the game. This wasn’t about skill, it was about people with a shared interest having a laugh. At me, mainly, but still – a laugh’s a laugh, as all attention-craving comedians (read: all comedians) know.

So I did keep going. Soon I was playing twice a week, on a regular schedule. A couple of hours on Tuesdays, with a nice pot of tea. Friday became Vikings and Vodka night, where I’d start at 9pm and get increasingly drunk and progressively worse at the game until I gave up at about 1am. Somehow a drinking game based around my appalling skills emerged, with viewers taking a sip every time I mistakenly summoned a horse, set myself on fire, read a boring letter, or accidentally killed a dog.



Chat replay from one of Ellie Gibson's games. Photograph: Twitch

I started to pay more attention to the names in the chat, as I saw the same ones popping up again and again. Sometimes people I knew in real life would turn up, like other comedians, or my dad, or people I'd worked with on a terrible games magazine in Macclesfield a thousand years ago. It felt like having a mate pop round for a cup of tea, which was very welcome at a time when that sort of thing was illegal. But there were many more names I didn't recognise. One advantage of Twitch, I realised, is that you can join in and make a connection without anyone being able to judge you based on your gender, race, age or appearance. I totally understand the appeal, as someone who once received a barrage of sexist abuse during a game of fucking Xbox Live Uno.

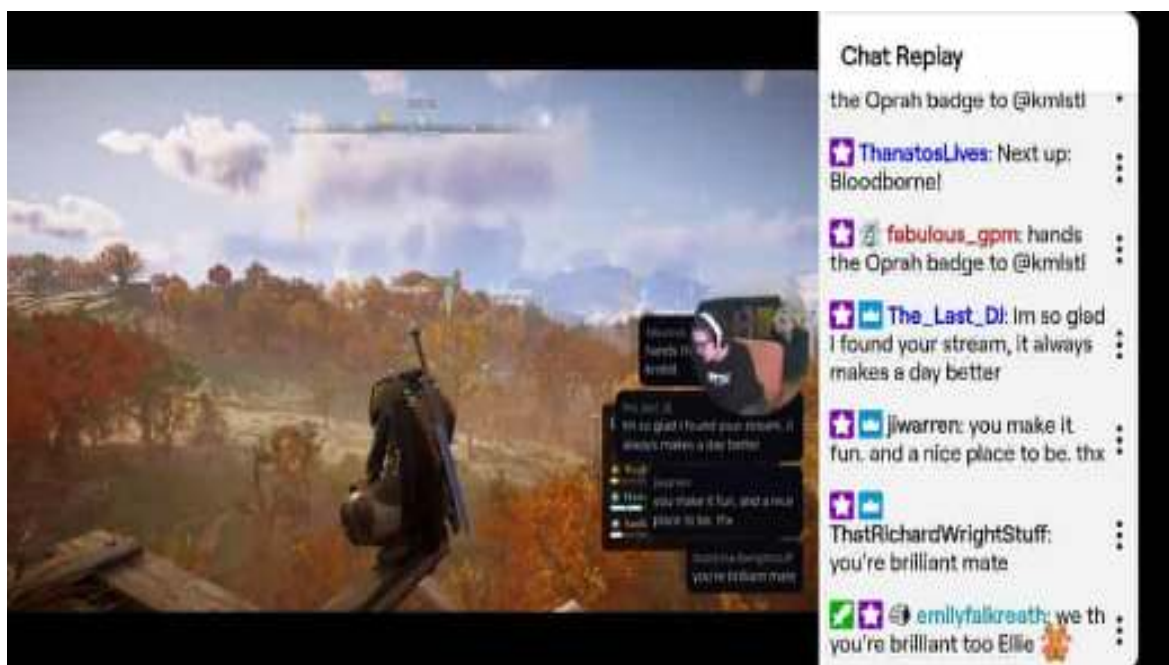
I feel safe here. I've streamed for more than a hundred hours now, and contrary to what I would ever have predicted, there have been only a few slightly dodgy incidents. A viewer who I'm pretty sure was up past his bedtime accused me of being a "MOM GAMER", which I think was supposed to be an insult. But I wasn't offended, because that's what I am – a mum, and a gamer. You might as well try to insult me by shouting "BRUNETTE", or "OLIVE HATER".

Another time, someone simply wrote, “You’re hot.” I was immediately unnerved. I know how quickly these things can escalate from seemingly innocent comments to graphic filth, followed by can’t-you-take-a-joke and hideous threats. My mods weren’t around, and I wasn’t sure what to do. Ignore it, and hope he goes away? Make light of it, and risk encouraging him? Shut it down, and get accused of overreacting – which maybe I was?

As it turned out, I didn’t have to do anything. “You’re right, she does look a bit hot actually,” said one of my regulars.

“Yeah Ellie, maybe turn the central heating down?” wrote someone else.

And just like that, with grace and humour, they gently but firmly let the bloke know this wasn’t that kind of party. I think that was the first time I realised I’d accidentally created a community. I understood it wasn’t about me or my performance, but my relationship with the audience, and their interactions with each other. I began to encourage backseat gaming – inviting (or sometimes begging) people to give me tips on beating the boss or finding the sodding rusty key for the chapel dungeon. I was no longer playing this game on my own. I had a team.



Chat replay from one of Ellie Gibson’s game streams. Photograph: Twitch

Without them, I'm sure I'd have given up playing Valhalla weeks ago. As much as I love the game, it doesn't half go on a bit. After about 60 hours it became like one of those relationships where you know it's over, but you shuffle along, going through the motions until one of you finally has the guts to end things, or dies. But along we shuffled, and eventually, last Tuesday, I finished the game. It took me 97 hours, 13 minutes and 51 seconds. Based on previous timings, I could have spent those hours giving birth eight times.

I marked the finale with a little speech. I thanked everyone for all their support, like I'd just won a bloody Oscar, and worried terribly about forgetting someone. We paid our respects to Harry Trotter, Amy Winehorse, and other ponies we had known. Everyone cheered. And I cried. If you'd had told me three months ago that I'd be crying on the internet in front of a bunch of new friends I've never actually met, I'd have laughed in your ludicrous face. But here we are. And it was a Tuesday, so I wasn't even drunk.

This experience has restored my faith, not just in games, but in gamers. I realise that makes me sound like an ex-vicar who's just rediscovered Jesus after seeing his face in a cup of Horlicks, but it's the truth. I took a lot of shit when I was a full-time games journalist; sometimes because I'm a woman, sometimes just because people can be twats. But on Twitch, I've found a group of people who don't give a toss about my gender, or how rubbish I am at boss battles. Together we've created somewhere safe for us to come together to laugh at the ridiculousness of video games, and ourselves.

[See Ellie's channel at twitch.tv/elliegibsongames.](https://www.twitch.tv/elliegibsongames)

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[Israel](#)

Palestinians welcome end of Netanyahu era – but fear more of the same

Relief in the occupied territories is mixed with sense that ‘nothing will change’



Palestinian musicians in Gaza perform in the ruins of buildings destroyed during last month’s 11-day war. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Palestinian musicians in Gaza perform in the ruins of buildings destroyed during last month’s 11-day war. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[Hazem Balousha](#) in Gaza, [Sufian Taha](#) in Jerusalem, and [Peter Beaumont](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

“It is the end of Netanyahu’s dark era,” says Kareem Hassanian, 44, a Palestinian psychologist who lives in the Gaza Strip, a place still counting the cost of the latest devastating war between [Israel](#) and Hamas.

He adds quickly: “And it’s the beginning of a new dark era. The new coalition won’t be different from the previous one. Israel still occupies Palestine. We will not see the end of the occupation in the coming years.”

[Palestinians in Gaza](#) are still clearing up after last month’s 11-day war with Israel, which saw tower blocks levelled by bombs.

How Palestinians in the occupied territories view changes in Israeli governments is always complicated. The prospect of the departure of Netanyahu as Israel’s prime minister, a little less so.

Without a vote in Israeli elections, Palestinians living in the occupied territories have no say in the decision, despite the fact that Israeli politics has far-reaching consequences in defining how Palestinian life is shaped.

[Israel’s fragile anti-Netanyahu coalition in race to get sworn in](#)
[Read more](#)

And in the immediate aftermath of the announcement of a possible coalition government that would end 12 years of continuous rule by Benjamin Netanyahu, the responses from [Gaza](#) to the West Bank have inevitably been conflicted.

“We have seen more leftwing Israeli governments [than this one],” adds Hassanian, expressing the pessimistic view of many, “but the building of new [Jewish] settlements and persecution of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza continued.”

If there is one new feature, however, that puzzles many – in a proposed coalition that seeks to bring together left and far right – it is the mooted involvement in government of a party representing Palestinian citizens of Israel, Mansour Abbas’s United List. “It is strange that Mansour Abbas is part of this coalition,” said Hassanian.

Basem abu Shanab, 37, a teacher in Gaza, had similar thoughts. “I am glad that the criminal Netanyahu will not be in power again. This is the end of every criminal. But [Naftali] Bennett and [Yair] Lapid [the two Israeli

leaders who plan to rotate the prime minister's office] will not be able to bring about a real change in the relationship with the Palestinians.

“We'll remain as we have always been: in a confrontational relationship with the occupation, regardless of who the prime minister is, because previous experiences says there's no real difference in Israeli policies towards the Palestinians.



Benjamin Netanyahu. Photograph: Ronen Zvulun/AP

For some in Gaza, however, the news of the proposed new government seems like an irrelevance. “I don't follow the news from Israel,” said Latifa al-Nafar, 36, a housewife. “I don't care who'll be in power. I do not know Bennett or Lapid. What I care about is my life here.

“We have been living under siege for many years. Our lives have become difficult. It is not Netanyahu who imposed the siege, but successive Israeli governments that impose the same policy on us in Gaza.

“We want to live in better conditions. I do not know who is responsible for this ... What I care about is that we live in peace and in better conditions.”

It is not only Gazans who hold this view. In Ramallah on the West Bank, relief at the expected departure of Netanyahu is mixed with a sense that

things will not change substantially, if at all.

[‘One name in a long list’: the pointless death of another West Bank teenager](#)
[Read more](#)

“The government has moved from extreme right to even more extreme right,” says Jamal al-Khatib 62, a professor at Al-Quds University in Ramallah, referring to the hard-right nationalist views of [Naftali Bennett, the proposed first prime minister](#) in the coalition’s planned rotation. “But there is joy in Netanyahu’s exit from the government, and this is what the Palestinians consider part of the victory achieved by the resistance [to occupation].”

“Only we can change the Israeli policy with our unity and steadfastness. We do not count on the Israeli governments, because history has proven that they are two sides of the same coin.”

Abu Assad Mutair, 55, a resident of Qalandia refugee camp, echoes his sentiments, suggesting that the recent war in Gaza, far from benefiting [Netanyahu, has contributed to his undoing](#). “I am very happy that Netanyahu is gone, and what makes me happier is that the war on Gaza and the resistance brought down Netanyahu.”

But he adds: “The settlements will continue, along with the confiscation of houses and land. And because the international community will not exert pressure on the government of Israel, nothing will change.”

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[Angélique Kidjo](#)

Interview

‘Africa has so much talent – we can’t even grasp it’: Angélique Kidjo on pop, politics and power

[Emmanuel Akinwotu](#)



‘Music is like a language; it’s such a powerful, transformative thing’ ...
Angélique Kidjo. Photograph: Fabrice Mabillot

‘Music is like a language; it’s such a powerful, transformative thing’ ...
Angélique Kidjo. Photograph: Fabrice Mabillot

She’s played with everyone from Tony Allen to David Byrne. Now the Grammy winner is singing with a new generation of African stars, celebrating their continent while confronting its failings

Fri 4 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

On a video call from Paris, [Angélique Kidjo](#), 60, shifts and leaps in her seat with the restive energy of a teenager. “I’m always changing and innovating and this album is no different,” she says. “Change brings life to things; it keeps me going. In life, you never know what to expect.”

Over a career that spans five decades, the Beninese artist has crossed paths with everyone from Gilberto Gil and [Tony Allen](#) to Talking Heads, Bono and Vampire Weekend. She has [four Grammy wins](#) in “world music” categories – second only to [Ladysmith Black Mambazo](#).

On her new album, *Mother Nature*, her 15th, she takes sounds on which she has touched before – Cuban salsa, Congolese rumba, soul, jazz and west African musical traditions – and blends them with modern African pop, in collaboration with a younger generation of stars including the Nigerians [Burna Boy](#), [Yemi Alade](#) and [Mr Eazi](#) and the Zambian rapper [Sampa the Great](#). The songs on *Mother Nature* celebrate the continent’s cultural might and zeal, while exploring urgent themes from the climate crisis to police brutality. At an age when some singers might coast, Kidjo sounds like a woman armed with a loudhailer and a placard.

‘Soro soke, werey’ ... the single *Dignity*, featuring Yemi Alade, draws on the #EndSars protests against police brutality in Nigeria.

She sits in a dim rehearsal room, but brims with light, speaking to the screen as if trying to leap into it: “I can talk, talk, talk about music for hours, because I breathe it!” she says, her arms outstretched, looking stylish in a patterned khaki shirt, a black turtleneck, gold droplet earrings and cropped blond hair. She revels in the collaborations with those young artists, who call her “Mum”; the songs are intended to showcase the best of [Africa](#). “They have something to say about where [Africa](#) is and where it is going,” she says. “This was really a delight – it gives me energy and a good feeling.”

Free & Equal, a pulsing, beat-heavy track that protests against authoritarianism, came about after she saw Sampa the Great performing on YouTube. Other collaborations were built on personal relationships – and after some controversy.

Do Yourself, a feelgood rallying call for African pride sung in a mixture of English and Yoruba – “I’ve been on my knees but I don’t need help” – was written and co-performed by Burna Boy after he lost the award for best world music album at the 2019 Grammys to Kidjo. Her winning album, Celia, adapted songs from the Cuban salsa singer [Celia Cruz](#) – “one of my inspirations,” she says – drawing out the shared historical and musical synergy of west Africa, South America and the Caribbean.

When you are on stage you have to be naked spiritually

Burna Boy’s rival album, [African Giant](#), was a blockbuster production (on which Kidjo collaborated) and to many a litmus test of whether the awards fully appreciated the recent traction of African pop. Amid collaborations with Ed Sheeran, Coldplay and more, he has led a wave of the continent’s pop singers out of a world music tag and into the global pop mainstream, so Kidjo’s win was seen by some as a conservative choice. She gracefully dedicated her win to Burna Boy and then went to console him.

“The week after the [Grammys](#), I went to see him, because I was in LA. We had a conversation. I said: ‘Look, my first Grammy was after how many albums? It’s nothing against you, it’s just the way it works.’ He also deserved to win.” And he did, the following year. For years, she has lobbied the US music establishment to pay greater attention to African music. “I was telling them that the new generations are gonna take you by storm – and the time has come.”

Activism against political repression and state violence courses through many of the songs. The single Dignity, featuring the Afrobeats star Yemi Alade, draws on [the #EndSars protests against police brutality](#) that swept through Nigerian cities in October, in one of the largest demonstrations seen in the country for decades. Alade sings: “Soro soke, werey,” meaning “speak up, idiot” in Yoruba, echoing the slightly jovial yet demanding slogan of the movement.



‘I’ve never let any boundary stop me from being creative’ ... Kidjo in the 90s. Photograph: Simon Ritter/Redferns

The protests came to a halt after [security forces shot dead at least 12 protesters](#) on 20 October at a toll gate in the Lekki area of Lagos. Protesters livestreamed the events to hundreds of thousands of viewers, showing soldiers and police firing live rounds at the protesters, many of whom were singing the national anthem and were draped in the country’s flag. In the subsequent crackdown, thousands of people across the country were [arrested and abused by security forces](#).

“I was watching what was happening and it was really affecting me,” Kidjo says. “I was thinking of my family in Lagos – and Lagos is just next door to Benin.” Despite the crackdowns, finding ways of speaking out in defiance is vital, she says. “It’s so important to keep making the demand that this is not the leadership we want. I’m offering this song with Yemi Alade as part of that conversation, that what is going on in [Nigeria](#) might happen in Benin. It might happen in Ghana, in Jo’burg, in Nairobi. Leaders, our leaders, don’t see that the only asset that can keep them in power is their population, not violence.”

Her vociferous resistance is no mere sloganeering – in her youth, Kidjo actively opposed the communist dictatorship that ruled Benin from 1972 to

1991. Born in 1960, Kidjo had grown up surrounded by creativity, with a mother who ran a theatre troupe and who started Kidjo's career at six by pushing her on stage when a lead actor was ill. But the repressive regime, established after a military coup, allowed space for only the narrowest kind of art. "Every artist was summoned to write propaganda – I refused," she [recounted later](#).

She left the country in 1983 and moved to Paris, releasing Logozo, her major label debut, in 1991. It immediately demonstrated her range, hopping from keening acoustic ballads to crisp funk-pop. The strictures in Benin meant she was musically voracious when she got out: in the 90s, she soared through Jimi Hendrix covers and Carlos Santana collaborations and began charting the musical links across the [black Atlantic](#).

She has become a kind of anthropologist and a model of sound cultural exchange. It would be easy to see [her 2018 re-recording of Talking Heads' Remain in Light](#), an album in thrall to African rhythm, as simple reclamation, but [she has heralded the "bravery" of the band's creativity](#) and framed her recording as part of a cultural conversation.

Our leaders don't see that the only asset that can keep them in power is their population, not violence

"Music for me is like a language; it's such a powerful, transformative thing and we share it and add to it. I've never let any boundary stop me from being creative and taking music further," she says with an indignant passion, almost as if I had suggested otherwise.

While she has continued to champion artistic freedom, however, opposition groups and activists in her native country – now a presidential republic – have been systematically repressed. In a 2020 report, Amnesty found [discrimination against women, minorities, journalists and health workers](#), restrictions on expression and "excessive force" from police.

Across Africa, meanwhile, a resurgence in third-term presidential bids and efforts to change constitutions have been opposed by young populations that have grown weary of ageing, despotic leadership. "We're seeing different

examples of dictatorship in Africa, but also around the world, that we have to keep standing against, because this is our future,” she says. “We can’t just sit and watch. It’s up to us to act, to keep pushing further, to shape the future we want.”

Benin is fundamental to her music – and a rubric for exploring themes that resonate more widely in Africa. Omon Oba, a gently folksy song meaning “child of the king”, urges a pride in African identities, drawing on royal histories such as the Kingdom of Benin – a centuries-old area that imperial British forces violently subsumed into Nigeria in the late 19th century. The region is the source of [the Benin bronzes](#), sculptures that still sit mainly in British and western institutions, amid growing calls for their return.



‘They have something to say about where Africa is and where it is going’ ... Sampa the Great and Burna Boy, two of the young artists on Kidjo’s new album. Composite: Barun Chatterjee & Stephen Tayo/The Guardian

National and continental pride, she says, carries the obligation to do better than the preceding generation and tell the stories of these injustices. “Africa is a continent that has so much talent, wealth and potential. We know it and, at the same time, we can’t even fully grasp it yet,” she says. “We still have negative stereotypes. We are still documenting our histories. Some of it is, but much of our history is not yet written.” Music, for her, can be a form of

history-telling. “It’s an oral transmission: it gives us a sense of belonging, a sense of identity and strength,” she says.

The climate crisis, which has had devastating effects in Africa and across the global south, has been at the front of her mind in recent years. “Africa is on the frontline of climate change – we’re seeing this, the devastation it’s causing. All people in Africa need to become more aware of this and there needs to be more leadership to face up to this,” she says. On the title track of her new album, she sings: “Mother Nature has a way of warning us / A timebomb set on a last countdown.”

She says the pandemic is an example of the way our relationship to the environment has come into sharper focus. “You know we are all interconnected. What started in one place has spread absolutely everywhere, so the impact of our ways of life, our choices, affects us all. That’s why our solutions need to have unity. I’m always saying it over and over: we have to come together to solve our problems.”

She isn’t quite ready to give up flying, though – “I enjoyed one year of just going nowhere and now I can’t wait to go back on the plane, going around and around!” – but the pandemic caused her to reflect on the importance of touring and connections. “My mum used to say: when you are on stage, you have to be naked spiritually. You can’t pretend. You just have to do what you love to do, in the truth and the light of it.”



Global star ... Kidjo and Sheila E on stage at the Apollo theatre in New York in March 2020. Photograph: Al Pereira/Getty Images

On stage, Kidjo often sings as if each word is a song in itself, with such care and strength of emotion. Nothing feels left behind. “When you are in that kind of mindset, you’re completely vulnerable and at the same time very powerful. So, when you are touring, you discover your smallness,” she says – your vulnerability, that is, and mortality. “You realise that anything can happen at any time and, when you go, that’s it.”

The vitality of her new pop sound suggests Kidjo is not at the end, but very much in the middle of her career – and is as driven as ever. A short film she has made, exploring how patriarchal dynamics within households in Benin are upended during crises such as the pandemic, will be shown at the Manchester international festival in July as part of [Postcards From Now](#), an exhibition on the post-pandemic future. That month, she will also record a collaboration with Philip Glass, singing lyrics from David Bowie’s *Lodger* for Glass’s *Symphony No 12*, which premiered live in Los Angeles in 2019. “It’s a beautiful adaptation from David Bowie’s poetry and it’s such an honour, because they said they wanted only me to do it, for what I would bring to it.”

This work in the classical realm keeps evolving. “I’m doing a rehearsal with a classical piano player: we have a project called Love Words, singing only love songs. After this, I have a 24-hour break before I go to Prague to record with [Philip Glass](#), then I have to go to New York because I have a show at the Kennedy Centre in June,” she says breathlessly. “I’m like: no, I need one day to rest, and they’re like: oooh,” laughing while mimicking her manager pulling her hair out. “It’s hectic now, but I love it. Music is my breath. I don’t think that I can do any other job.”

Mother Nature is released 18 June by Universal Music Group. [Postcards From Now](#) is at Manchester international festival from 1-18 July. Kidjo’s film will be available online for free during the festival.

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ExxonMobil

‘This isn’t ideological’: reluctant ‘green hero’ behind Exxon coup

Tiny hedge fund Engine No 1 says a strong climate strategy simply makes good business sense



Engine No 1 has forced one of the world’s biggest polluters to confront the threat of the global climate crisis. Photograph: Karen Bleier/AFP/AFP/Getty

Engine No 1 has forced one of the world’s biggest polluters to confront the threat of the global climate crisis. Photograph: Karen Bleier/AFP/AFP/Getty

[Jillian Ambrose](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 02.58 EDT

The activist hedge fund behind ExxonMobil’s boardroom coup last week has claimed another seat from the oil giant’s board, to take the number of new directors who will push for climate action from within the company to three.

The result of last week's shareholder vote has installed the hedge fund, named Engine No 1 after a San Francisco fire station, as a reluctant hero of the climate movement.

But its founders insist that the green agenda is not the primary motive behind its David v Goliath battle to drive down the oil giant's carbon emissions. A strong climate strategy, they say, just makes good business sense.

"This debate should not be ideological," Chris James, the founder of Engine No 1, told the Guardian. "When companies think about their impacts, whether they are on communities or the environment, it brings a lot of common sense back to capitalism."

It has taken less than five months for the tiny Engine No 1 to succeed where many big-name climate campaigners and green investors have failed, forcing one of the world's biggest climate polluters to confront the existential threat of the global climate crisis.

The investment fund has just a 0.02% stake in [Exxon](#), but staged the first major rebellion against Exxon at the company's annual shareholder meeting last week by galvanising the support of the biggest investors in the world behind its plan [to oust Exxon's board members](#) in favour of handpicked candidates with the nous to transform the climate laggard.

But unlike the campaigns which last week forced Chevron and Shell to cut their carbon emissions, Engine No 1 puts profits first.

James said that environmental impact is just one consideration his firm uses to allocate its time and capital, and that ultimately the aim is to create wealth.

"We strongly believe that climate risk is business risk," he says. "Fossil fuels have big negative impacts. We take a long-term view to value creation, which means taking these externalities into account. There's an intrinsic link."

James's strategy is to find companies that are falling short of their potential, and then press for changes to increase their market value. The fund has just 22 employees and \$240m (£170m) of funds under management.

Exxon was the first target, and the fund set out to replace four board members with directors who have "experience in successful and profitable energy industry transformations" which can help to turn the challenge of the climate crisis "into a long-term business plan, not talking point".

The three directors shown the door were big business names: 69-year-old former MetLife insurance boss Steven Kandarian; former IBM boss Samuel Palmisano, also 69; and 60-year-old Wan Zulkiflee, a former boss of Malaysian state oil group Petronas, who joined the Exxon board this year.

Engine No 1 is now reportedly preparing to raise more funds to test its mettle beyond just waging a war on the polluting energy industry.

Industry commentators believe their success proves that the world's biggest investors are [finally aligned with climate campaigners](#) in accepting that sustainability is not only essential for the survival of the planet, but for the future of major companies too.

The architect of the rebellion, Charlie Penner, a former partner at the activist fund Jana before joining Engine No 1, told the Guardian that it had convinced Exxon shareholders they would be better off with "more dynamic strategic planning, better long-term risk management, more disciplined capital allocation and, most importantly, directors with track records of looking profitably around corners in energy".

"All will be needed to prepare ExxonMobil to compete in a decarbonising world over the long-term," he says.

The road to a low-carbon future will be particularly steep for Exxon. The oil giant is one of the world's [biggest contributors to the global climate crisis](#) and pumps about 4m barrels of oil every day. Its failure to adapt to a low-carbon agenda has provoked outrage among climate campaigners and growing unease among its investors.

Exxon was once the biggest listed company in the world, with a market value of \$520bn before the financial crash in 2008. Since then its worth has shrivelled to around \$234bn, amid stumbling oil market prices and the rise of future-focused technology companies such as Apple and Amazon.

The company's chief executive, Darren Woods, said Exxon had "been very actively engaged with our shareholders, sharing our plans and hearing their viewpoints and the key issues of importance to them".

But by April two of the largest US pension funds had joined the Engine No 1 rebellion: New York's \$255bn Common Retirement Fund and California's \$300bn teachers retirement fund.

In the days leading up to the shareholder vote at the end of May, it emerged that BlackRock, the world's biggest asset manager with \$9tn under management and one of Exxon's largest shareholders, would also side with the insurgents at Engine No 1.

Then Vanguard Group, a \$7tn investment adviser and Exxon's largest shareholder fell into line with \$3tn State Street, which is Exxon's third largest investor. They both voted to oust two of Exxon directors in favour of Engine No 1's candidates.

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BlackRock later said it was "concerned about Exxon's strategic direction" and that the company could benefit from the new directors who would bring "fresh perspectives" to Exxon's board.

Prenner says they are making progress: "They've already abandoned their goal of growing production by 25% by 2025 in response to the campaign, which called for them to focus on their highest return projects that can be profitable under lower long-term demand scenarios rather than chasing production growth."

Exxon will need to go much further, but it's an encouraging start for the reluctant green pioneers of Engine No 1.

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History shows that the Conservatives can't hold back social change

[Andy Beckett](#)

Tory election victories haven't prevented many British people becoming more liberal in their social attitudes



Illustration: Thomas Pullin/The Guardian

Illustration: Thomas Pullin/The Guardian

Fri 4 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

Britain is a conservative country. This is repeated so often that even many of those who want a different society have come to believe it. Especially during long periods of Tory government, when disheartening electoral results and the exercise of rightwing power can feel almost like the whole of politics.

But politics isn't just about elections and holding office, however much politicians, party activists and Westminster journalists might want that to be the case. It's also about slower, less noticed, more continuous shifts in public attitudes and behaviour. What we consume; how families function; what we consider a legitimate sexual relationship; which words we use to talk about race. Changes in such things may begin with a few individuals, yet they can alter the distribution of power across society.

Through their legislation and rhetoric, governments play a big role in social change. But change can also happen without them, or despite them. Since the annual British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey was first published in 1983, the [Conservatives](#) have ruled Britain almost two thirds of the time. They have often aggressively promoted traditional social norms and attacked perceived threats to them, from John Major's campaign for what he called "the old values" to the Johnson government's current "war on woke".

Yet, according to the latest [BSA report](#), public attitudes to many kinds of personal behaviour "have steadily loosened since the 1980s", with "an increasing sense of 'live and let live' when it comes to our views on other people's relationships and lifestyles". Urbanisation, immigration, a more diverse popular culture, the growth of liberal universities, the decline of some religions and the dwindling of what the BSA describes as the "socially conservative" generations born in the first half of the 20th century – all these have gradually undermined the hopes of Tory traditionalists. We might be a conservative country politically, but increasingly that is not how we live.

The liberalisation of Britain hasn't seriously hurt the Tories yet. Sometimes it has done the opposite. Not because recent Conservative leaders have been adept at killing off or co-opting liberal ideas – David Cameron's "hug a hoodie" phase was better at creating Tory divisions than attracting new voters – but because their party has exploited a political weakness in many movements for social change.

In their early stages, social movements are not very compatible with parliamentary democracy. Movements often start small, and small numbers of voters usually have little influence in national elections. Instead, they can be presented by conservatives as alien minorities – a supposed threat against which rightwing voters can be mobilised. In Britain, with our often alarmist

and judgmental press and elderly people a disproportionately powerful section of the electorate, this reactionary tactic can be very effective.

In many ways the “war on woke” is a rerun of an earlier Conservative culture war, almost four decades ago. In the mid-80s, the British lesbian and gay rights movement had been at work for three decades, and had won support from leftwing local authorities such as the Greater London Council. Yet only about [one in 10 Britons](#) approved of same-sex relationships – the same proportion as recently [told the polling firm YouGov](#) that they thought “being woke” was “a good thing”. In the runup to the [1987 general election](#), the Conservatives and rightwing newspapers concocted endless scare stories about gay and lesbian activism and its “loony left” Labour allies.

The smears worked. In a leaked internal memo about the state of the campaign in London, the Labour strategist Patricia Hewitt wrote: “It is obvious from our own polling, as well as from the doorstep, that ... [being called] the “loony Labour left” is now taking its toll; the gays and lesbians issue is costing us dear amongst the pensioners.” At the election the Conservatives won another large majority. They did especially well in London, beating Labour by 15 percentage points.

Yet this victory for social conservatism was short-lived. From the late 80s, the increasingly common experience of living among people with openly different sexualities began to outweigh the scare stories about homosexuality. Public approval of same-sex relationships began to rise. It is now at almost 70%.

The realisation that social liberation can occur despite electoral defeat first began to preoccupy parts of the left during its years of retreat in the 70s and 80s. French political theorists such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argued that new ways of living and forms of identity could transform society, individual by individual, at least as radically as a reforming government.

At the time, it was possible to see these advocates of what Guattari called “micropolitics” as leftists seeking a political consolation prize. But since then they have in many ways been proved right. Across the west, millions of lives have taken new paths, and sometimes governments have been forced to

follow. “State power derives from other forms of power,” Foucault said in 1979. “If we want to change state power, we must change the various relationships of power that operate in society.” I doubt Cameron is much of a Foucault reader, but in 2013 his government legalised same-sex marriage.

Will the Tories ultimately have to accept “wokeness”? It’s harder to imagine. Abandoning homophobia involves giving up only one kind of power. But accepting wokeness – as much as such a contested term can be defined – means accepting that all of society can no longer be arranged primarily for the benefit of straight white men. And straight white men are the Conservatives’ largest group of supporters. Since the arrival of Johnson’s blokey government and its absorption of many Brexit party ideas and voters, the Tories have become even less woke than before. Much of Britain may be becoming more liberal, but the Conservatives and many of their voters seem to stomping off furiously in the opposite direction, much like rightwing populists across the world.

And yet, as in the 80s, there are signs that social conservatism in Britain may be less solid than it seems. YouGov’s recent polling about wokeness found that 59% of respondents still don’t know what the word means. Their views are still up for grabs.

More intriguingly still, of those who described themselves to YouGov as “not woke”, a substantial minority claimed that causes such as racial and transgender equality were not woke, either. “The fact that support for [such causes] ... is not seen as a marker for wokeness,” suggested YouGov, may mean that these are causes that “the not-woke [actually] support”.

Many Britons may be becoming woke bit by bit, without necessarily realising it. That’s how social attitudes often shift here. Britain is a country that likes to say it doesn’t like change. But it rarely stays the same.

- Andy Beckett is a Guardian columnist

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Opinion Tax and spending

A global agreement on corporate tax is in sight – let's make sure it happens

[Nadia Calviño](#), [Daniele Franco](#), [Bruno Le Maire](#) and [Olaf Scholz](#)

As G7 finance ministers meet in London, we have a chance to get multinational businesses to pay their fair share

- [European finance ministers say tax deal is ‘within reach’](#)



‘With the new Biden administration, there is no longer the threat of a veto hanging over this new international tax system.’ Photograph: Kevin Lamarque/Reuters

‘With the new Biden administration, there is no longer the threat of a veto hanging over this new international tax system.’ Photograph: Kevin Lamarque/Reuters

Fri 4 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

For more than four years, France, Germany, Italy and Spain have been working together to create [an international tax system](#) fit for the 21st century. It is a saga of many twists and turns. Now it's time to come to an agreement. Introducing this fairer and more efficient international tax system was already a priority before the current economic crisis, and it will be all the more necessary coming out of it.

Why? First, because the crisis was a boon to big tech companies, which raked in profit at levels not seen in any other sector of the economy. So how is it that the most profitable companies do not pay a fair share of tax? Just because their business is online doesn't mean they should not pay taxes in the countries where they operate and from which their profits derive. Physical presence has been the historical basis of our taxation system. This basis has to evolve with our economies gradually shifting online. Like any other company, they should pay their fair share to fund the public good, at a level commensurate with their success.

Second, because the crisis has exacerbated inequalities. It is urgent to put in place an international tax system that is efficient and fair. Currently, multinationals are able to avoid corporate taxes by shifting profits offshore. That's not something the public will continue to accept. Fiscal dumping cannot be an option for [Europe](#), nor can it be for the rest of the world. It would only lead to a further decline in corporate income tax revenues, wider inequalities and an inability to fund vital public services.

[A corporate tax reset by the G7 will only work if it delivers for poorer nations too](#) | [Alex Cobham](#)

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Third, because we need to re-establish an international consensus on major global issues. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, with the support of our countries, has been doing exceptional work in the area of international taxation for many years. The OECD has put forward fair and balanced proposals on both subjects: the taxation of the profit of the most profitable multinationals, notably digital giants (Pillar 1), and the minimal taxation (Pillar 2). We can build on this work. For the first time in decades, we have an opportunity to reach a historic agreement on a new international tax system that would involve every country in the world.

Such a multilateral agreement would signal a commitment to working together on major global issues.

With the new Biden administration, there is no longer the threat of a veto hanging over this new system. The new [US proposal on minimal taxation](#) is an important step in the direction of the proposal initially floated by our countries and taken over by the OECD. The commitment to a minimum effective tax rate of at least 15% is a promising start. We therefore commit to defining a common position on a new international tax system at the G7 finance ministers meeting in London today. We are confident it will create the momentum needed to reach a global agreement at the G20 in Venice in July. It is within our reach. Let's make sure it happens. We owe it to our citizens.

- Nadia Calviño, second deputy prime minister of Spain, is the country's economy minister. Daniele Franco is minister of economy and finance in Italy. Bruno Le Maire is France's minister of economy, finance and recovery. Olaf Scholz is German vice-chancellor and minister of finance

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[OpinionGreen economy.](#)

Private finance won't decarbonise our economies – but the 'big green state' can

[Daniela Gabor](#)

While the private sector wants to keep control of the green transition, what's needed is massive public investment



A sand artwork highlighting the upcoming Cop26 global climate conference in Wirral, Merseyside, May 2021. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

A sand artwork highlighting the upcoming Cop26 global climate conference in Wirral, Merseyside, May 2021. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Fri 4 Jun 2021 05.00 EDT

The pandemic, we often hear, is forcing a rethink in economics. We are leaving behind one model: the austerity-obsessed small state that outsources

the job of macroeconomic stability to unelected central banks. Central banks, in turn, worked to target inflation under a regime of benign neglect for unemployment; it was assumed, meanwhile, that the bond market should and would discipline governments into fiscal rectitude.

Now, the Biden administration's "once in a generation" [spending plans](#) suggest a paradigm shift is under way. It puts governments, through fiscal policy (taxing and spending), back in the driving seat. In this sense, macroeconomics has the potential to become more democratic. But are we [celebrating](#) too soon? The big test of the paradigm shift, possibly the fundamental test, is how we go about decarbonising our economies.

There are two ways to organise the low-carbon transition: through the state itself or through the financial sector. What might be termed the "big green state" approach involves massive public investments in green infrastructure and industries. When private finance recently lamented Biden's [infrastructure plans](#), it was objecting to a big-state route to decarbonisation that rejects the rhetoric of public-private partnerships.

Indeed, the "big finance" approach wants the state – through its fiscal and central bank arms – to simply guide the private sector by changing price signals. In this scenario, the state plays a smaller role, making carbon expensive by forcing companies to pay for polluting. For instance, Germany recently [introduced](#) a €25 (£21) tax per tonne of carbon emissions on petrol, diesel, heating oil and gas. Higher carbon prices, the wisdom goes, will incentivise producers and consumers to transition to green energy. Private finance is there to lend the money that this transition requires.

The numbers behind private green investment seem to add up: there is now \$30tn (£21tn) in ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) assets. The green "rush" is expected to accelerate as central banks move to [decarbonise](#) their operations and reduce subsidies to carbon-intensive activities. Take the Bank of England's plans: under its new environmental mandate, it [argues](#) that the transition to net zero must be largely financed by private finance (as opposed to the state), in an orderly fashion that requires central banks to subsidise green and only "escalate" to penalising carbon financiers if, over time, companies fail to meet commitments towards decarbonisation.

The strategy of cuddling carbon financiers is at the heart of the Cop26 conference that takes place this year in Glasgow. The hot new [private sector gig](#) for high-level public employees is green finance. But the world of “green finance” has injustice and inequality built in. It reduces democratic government action to higher carbon taxes, which often place the [burden](#) of decarbonisation on the poor. Government spending is to be directed to “[derisking](#)” private infrastructure, to cover the gap between the fees paid by users of essential public services and the commercial rates of return expected by private investors.

Yet having privatised public services while hiking carbon taxes on ordinary people threatens a political backlash, which will reduce politicians’ appetite for meaningful decarbonisation measures. It will also reinforce the pressures to trust global asset managers to set the pace of green investment, even though the financiers’ “environmental, social and governance” (ESG) rush is rife with [greenwashing](#): PR exercises that stick green labels on high-carbon activities. This greenwashing is a feature, not a bug, of big finance-led decarbonisation. It allows private finance to both enjoy the green subsidies promised by central banks and to protect profits from democratic forces that may, one day, transition from cuddling to penalising carbon financiers.

The big finance approach owes its political appeal to [fiscal fundamentalists](#) who point to Covid-19-related surges in public debt to argue that the state simply cannot afford to green the economy. Instead, financiers dangle trillions of ESG investments in front of politicians, seducing them into believing the market will take care of the climate crisis. This validates unambitious carbon politics, as we see all too clearly in the EU’s sustainable finance [initiative](#), which created a green public standards system. Four years after it was launched, this classification system for “sustainable” activity is now under serious threat of [greenwashing](#) from member states that want to include natural gas and other dirty activities within its scope. In turn, European [commitments](#) to develop in parallel a system that works towards penalising dirty lending have evaporated.

Surrendering to vested carbon interests is easier when politicians cannot rely on a plausible green macroeconomic paradigm; instead they are still confronted, on a daily basis, with threats that inflation-concerned central banks will withdraw their protective hand from government bond markets.

Indeed, central banks worried about the inflationary pressures triggered by economies reopening are now furiously debating how quickly to allow borrowing costs to rise.

Climate activists should be prepared to fight the battle against fiscal fundamentalists with a simple message: the government is not a household. It has central banks on its side, and if there is a macroeconomic lesson the pandemic has taught us, it is that central banks can do a lot. In high-income countries, central banks have bought almost all debt issued by governments in 2020. They can and should continue to work closely with governments to accelerate decarbonisation. We cannot rely on private finance to lead us out of a climate crisis it has systematically contributed to. We have to disempower carbon financiers, and we do that by making the democratic state – not investors – lead the way forward.

- Daniela Gabor is professor of economics and macrofinance at UWE Bristol

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[OpinionChina](#)

By banning Tiananmen vigils in Hong Kong, China is trying to rewrite history

[Louisa Lim](#)

The Communist party is widening its attack on the legacy of 1989 – and criminalising a new generation of activists



‘Last year, tens of thousands of Hongkongers defied a Covid-inspired ban to flock to the vigil.’ Victoria Park in Causeway Bay, Hong Kong, on 4 June 2020. Photograph: Miguel Candela/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

‘Last year, tens of thousands of Hongkongers defied a Covid-inspired ban to flock to the vigil.’ Victoria Park in Causeway Bay, Hong Kong, on 4 June 2020. Photograph: Miguel Candela/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Thu 3 Jun 2021 19.07 EDT

Over the weekend, a diminutive, white-haired woman carrying a yellow umbrella and a homemade cardboard sign saying “32, June 4, Tiananmen’s

lament” [was arrested](#) on suspicion of taking part in an unlawful assembly. She had been marching along the pavement alone. This Kafkaesque scene happened not in China, but in Hong Kong. The fate of “Granny Wong”, a 65-year-old protest veteran called Alexandra Wong Fung-yiu, underlines the rapidity of Beijing’s clampdown in the city where, just two years ago, 180,000 people attended the annual vigil remembering the 1989 killings in and around Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

This year the Hong Kong vigil has [been banned](#). Anyone gathering at the vigil site in Victoria Park on Friday could face five years in prison. Even publicising the event could lead to one year in jail under Hong Kong’s draconian National Security law, imposed sight unseen [at the end of last June](#) following a year of massive pro-democracy demonstrations. Public commemoration has become so risky that one Hong Kong newspaper even suggested writing the digits “64”, to commemorate the date of the protest, on light switches, so that flipping the switch became an act of remembrance. These moves underline the dangerous power of public memory, and how the events of 32 years ago still represent a suppurating sore at the moral heart of China’s Communist party.

This approach seems designed to prevent a rerun of last year, when tens of thousands of Hongkongers defied a Covid-inspired ban to flock to the vigil, where they quietly held candles aloft in socially distanced groups. At least [two dozen people](#), including the newspaper publisher Jimmy Lai and the activist Joshua Wong, have been charged with unauthorised assembly as a result of the gathering, with some [sentenced to as much as 10 months in jail](#). This is just one in a welter of [public order offences](#) laid against the territory’s most prominent politicians, lawyers, journalists and unionists, creating a kind of perp walk of conscience through the courtrooms as a generation of activists is criminalised.

Seven years ago, when I published my book on Beijing’s attempts to expunge the memory of the 1989 killings, certain China-watchers argued the events of a quarter-century before were no longer relevant to the country. But the authorities’ post-protest rectification campaign in [Hong Kong](#) makes them more relevant than ever. It cleaves so closely to the post-Tiananmen playbook that the same chilling term – “white terror” – is popularly used to describe the scale of the repression.

It includes heavy prison terms even for those who played minor roles. Last week, a student was [jailed](#) for more than four years for “rioting” after being caught on camera hitting a water-filled barricade with a hiking pole. This is one manifestation of what a now-jailed politician described to me as a “network of rhetoric” ensnaring Hongkongers. They’ve become the victims of a narrative war that is reshaping language in line with Communist party definitions.

Beijing’s post-Tiananmen strategy is also being replayed in Hong Kong in the guise of an intense ideological campaign to bring the territory’s universities, media, civil society and public servants to heel. This time round, the patriotic education of 1989 has been replaced by national security education. Six-year-olds are being taught the definition of secession through cartoons, history textbooks are being rewritten all the way back to the Qin dynasty in 221BC, and national security content is being added to chemistry and biology syllabuses.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong’s newspapers carry pictures of once-neutral civil servants making oaths of loyalty, with even government cleaners and lifeguards required to pledge allegiance to uphold the Basic Law.

At Tiananmen vigils round the world last year, the events of Beijing 1989 and Hong Kong 2019 were yoked together. In Melbourne where I live, alternating footage from the two suppressions flickered across large outdoor screens to create a flashing montage of state violence, as those present shouted popular rallying cries including “Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times!” That’s one of the protest slogans outlawed by the National Security Legislation, whose global reach is allowing Beijing to export its coercive amnesia far beyond its borders. This year, anyone – Hongkonger or not – shouting a forbidden protest slogan at a Tiananmen vigil anywhere in the world could find themselves in violation of the legislation.

This has dramatically heightened the cost of public remembrance of 4 June, especially given the tendency of security officials from China’s diplomatic missions to monitor such gatherings. Even if the law is not easily enforceable overseas, it has a paralysing effect, leaving Hongkongers in other countries weighing up a stark calculation: whether attending a vigil might prevent them from returning home. Through its actions, Beijing has

weaponised historical memory to the detriment of global freedoms of speech and expression.

[China will crush dissent in Hong Kong, just as it did in Tiananmen Square | Ma Jian](#)

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Open discussion of Hong Kong politics in global university classrooms has now become fraught, for students from Hong Kong or China, and for lecturers themselves. One friend at an American university told me they'd stopped teaching classes on Chinese politics, instead taking only one-on-one tutorials to ensure student safety. This immediately brought to mind a meeting I once had with a Chinese dissident, who'd asked me to come to an open pavilion on a hilltop in a park so we could see anyone approaching. Back then, some topics were too dangerous to broach in groups of more than two on the Chinese mainland. Now the same dynamics are beginning to apply in classrooms around the world. Using fear as a cudgel, China's Communist party has succeeded in transplanting its closed discursive spaces into western academic institutions.

Beijing's epistemological campaign will not be content with choking off public commemorations of 4 June. Following the pattern laid down three decades before, another target is the reframing of the 2019 Hong Kong protest movement as a violent insurgency driven by hostile foreign forces. So long as western countries continue to act like Hong Kong is not their problem, Beijing will be empowered not just to excise the past, but also to rewrite the history of the present.

- Louisa Lim is a senior lecturer in audio visual journalism at the University of Melbourne

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Opinion Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

TikTok accidentally detected my ADHD. For 23 years everyone missed the warning signs

Matilda Boseley



Learning you have ADHD on TikTok is now such a common phenomenon it has become its own meme, but it can be tricky



‘I’d never been behind at school, I wasn’t hyperactive all the time, I’d never even been that disruptive in class. It wasn’t until I downloaded TikTok that I truly considered I might have ADHD.’ Photograph: Christopher Hopkins

‘I’d never been behind at school, I wasn’t hyperactive all the time, I’d never even been that disruptive in class. It wasn’t until I downloaded TikTok that I truly considered I might have ADHD.’ Photograph: Christopher Hopkins

Thu 3 Jun 2021 13.30 EDT

It’s kind of embarrassing to say, but the social media app [TikTok](#) figured out I had ADHD before I did.

For 23 years my parents, my teachers, my doctor, my psychologist and my own brain all missed the warning signs, yet somehow it only took that app’s algorithm a few days to accidentally diagnose me.

Growing up I had always had a nagging feeling that everyone else in the world was coping better than I was. Somehow they could remember appointments and deadlines, they had the discipline to keep an updated planner and they didn’t drift off daydreaming in the middle of important conversations.

[A new life: being diagnosed with ADHD in my 40s has given me something quite magical | Jason Wilson](#)
[Read more](#)

In university I remember googling “how to tell if you have ADHD”, but all the information that popped up was about diagnosing your six-year-old boy, and none of the symptoms really sounded like me.

I’d never been behind at school, I wasn’t hyperactive all the time, I’d never even been that disruptive in class. I just felt like there were 10 TVs constantly switched on in my head, and with so much going on, all the small things would fall through the cracks.

It wasn’t until I downloaded TikTok that I truly considered I might have the disorder.

See, the app is based around the “for you” page which curates a stream of videos for you. It starts out pretty generic, but as you “like” some videos, and quickly scroll past others, the app’s algorithm builds a profile of you and your interests.

And that profile is scarily accurate sometimes. It genuinely knew me better than I knew myself.

Women have been under-diagnosed with ADHD for decades

What I think happened is that the algorithm noticed that every time a video titled something like “Five little known signs of ADHD in women” showed up on my feed I would watch it, fascinated, all the way to the end. So, like the dystopian capitalism machine it is, the app showed me more and more of these videos desperate to keep me on the app and extract every possible advertising cent my eyeballs could buy.

But, as a side effect, all of a sudden I was seeing ADHD content made by women and for women, for the very first time. It was like someone putting everything that always felt weird in my brain into words. Forgetting

something exists if you can't see it could be a problem with "object permanence". Being unable to stand up and tidy my apartment, despite desperately wanting to, might not be laziness; it could be "executive dysfunction".

I did the right thing. I went to the doctor. I got a clinical diagnosis

Suddenly it occurred to me, maybe I wasn't somehow just "worse at being a person" than everyone else. Maybe I simply didn't have enough dopamine in my brain. I can't overstate how liberating that felt.

So I booked a doctor's appointment, and three referrals, four months and about \$700 later my new psychiatrist looked straight into the webcam and said: "Yes, I think you clearly have ADHD and you've had it for your whole life." I cried from joy when he said it.

Mental health experts told me it wasn't actually that surprising that hearing first-hand accounts of neurodivergence is what finally made the pin drop. In fact, Beyond Blue's lead clinical advisor Dr Grant Blashki said social media could be an extraordinarily powerful tool for increasing what the medical community refer to as "mental health literacy".

In fact "learning you have ADHD on TikTok" is now such a common phenomenon that it's become its own meme on the app. There isn't any hard and fast data on the phenomenon but just from my own experience, since telling my friends about my diagnosis, no less than four people have come back to me saying they reckon they might have it too.

Women have been systematically under-diagnosed with ADHD for decades, so I guess it's not surprising that now we have a platform that promotes women talking about their experiences that a new wave of girls would come to suspect they have the disorder.

It can be easy to fall down a rabbit hole

But experts say this is where things get tricky – because this algorithm isn't guided by a set of strict clinical ethics, and its diagnostic techniques are built

around viewing time, not DSM-5 criteria sets. Blashki said without a proper medical diagnosis (which at least in Australia should be relatively affordable because of Medicare) it can be easy for people to “fall down a rabbit hole” of misinformation, and diagnose themselves with a disorder despite their symptoms having a whole range of other potential causes.

Perhaps an incorrect ADHD self-diagnosis wouldn't be that damaging in the grand scheme of things, but this isn't the only mental health community on the app. It isn't too hard to find creators asking you to “put a finger down” for every symptom of dissociative identity disorder (multiple personality disorder) you have. I saw another person suggesting that if you've ever experienced nightmares and have a chronically messy room you might be suffering from complex PTSD.

Associate Professor Marie Yap from Monash University said this can be extremely anxiety-inducing to some people and in the most extreme cases can even progress to the realms of “hypochondriasis” and self-medication.

She said sometimes if people wait too long before seeking actual clinical advice they can become set in their self-diagnosis, and it can be difficult to consider other options, even if it's a doctor suggesting them.

And this made me wonder if I could have fallen into this trap too.

I did the right thing. I went to the doctor. I got a clinical diagnosis, and I like to think if the medical professionals I saw hadn't agreed with my hypothesis, I would have believed them. But this is primarily an app for teenagers, and I'm not convinced I would have been so level-headed if I was 16 when I saw those videos, not 23.

The promise of a “fix” to feeling “less than” was so irresistible. Would a younger version of myself have been able to take no for an answer?

[The lost girls: ‘Chaotic and curious, women with ADHD all have missed red flags that haunt us’](#)

[Read more](#)

But experts say there are ways to mitigate any potential harms of self-diagnosis. This could take the form of increased screening for mental health misinformation, targeted resources for young viewers, or as Yap suggested, even potentially “Covid-19 style” warnings integrated into videos that link users to verified mental health resources and explain the next steps towards clinical diagnosis they should take.

TikTok’s platform does have some safeguards in place. Searches for “self harm” or “proana”, a term used by pro-eating disorder communities, automatically direct users to pages with a number for Lifeline or the Butterfly Foundation, and mental health content that breaches community guidelines is removed. But, at least from my usage of the app, these platform interventions seem far from universal.

A spokeswoman told me the company “recognises the important conversations happening on [their] platform about mental health”.

“We’ve also been working with experts and have rolled out resources to make access to support readily available to anyone in need. TikTok is committed to the mental health and wellbeing of its users.”

At the end of the day I am so grateful for TikTok, and the creators that make ADHD videos. That algorithm has profoundly changed my life, undoubtedly for the better. I just hope the company is putting enough infrastructure in place to make sure my experience is the norm, and not just a lucky outlier.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jun/04/tiktok-accidentally-detected-my-adhd-for-23-years-everyone-missed-the-warning-signs>

2021.06.04 - Around the world

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Tiananmen Square protests 1989

Hong Kong vigil leader arrested as 7,000 police enforce ban on Tiananmen anniversary protests

Officers mobilised to break up the once-traditional events to mark the brutal crackdown against dissent in China 32 years ago



An artist takes part in a performance in Hong Kong on Thursday to mark the Tiananmen Square crackdown anniversary. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

An artist takes part in a performance in Hong Kong on Thursday to mark the Tiananmen Square crackdown anniversary. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

[*Helen Davidson*](#) in Taipei and [*Vincent Ni*](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 06.45 EDT

Hong Kong police have arrested a prominent barrister for allegedly promoting an unauthorised assembly on the anniversary of the Tiananmen

Square massacre, as thousands of officers were deployed to enforce a ban on protests and gatherings across the city.

Police confirmed that barrister and activist Chow Hang Tung, vice-chairwoman of the group which organises annual vigils for the victims of China's 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters, was arrested. A 20-year-old male was also detained on suspicion of publicising an unlawful assembly through social media posts.

“Their online remarks involved advertising and calling on others to participate or attend banned public activities,” senior superintendent Law Kwok-hoi told reporters.

Discussion of Beijing's brutal military crackdown on the evening of 3 June and morning of 4 June, 1989 is all but forbidden on the mainland. And Hong Kong's traditional status as the only place in China where large-scale commemorations were tolerated appeared to be coming to an end.

Thousands of police were deployed on Friday to enforce a ban on the city's traditional candlelight vigil, which has drawn [huge crowds to Victoria Park](#) on 4 June for more than three decades. The day has traditionally served as a display of pro-democracy people power that China has made clear it will no longer tolerate.

[‘Mourn June 4 in your own way’: Tiananmen Square events vanish amid crackdowns and Covid](#)

[Read more](#)

Authorities banned this year's gathering citing the coronavirus pandemic – although Hong Kong has not recorded an untraceable local transmission in more than a month, and held large public events. Police have also cited the national security law in warning people not to gather for unnamed events, and [reminded the public](#) of the recent convictions of some activists.

Police say that thousands of officers will be on standby to halt any “unlawful assemblies” while officials have also warned that a sweeping [new national security law](#) could be wielded against Tiananmen mourners.

Public broadcaster RTHK, citing unnamed sources, reported police would have 7,000 officers on the streets on Friday, conducting stop-and-search operations throughout the day.

While last year's vigil was also denied permission because of the pandemic, thousands simply defied the ban.

But much has changed in Hong Kong over the last year as authorities seek to snuff out the city's pro-democracy movement using the security law to criminalise much dissent. Police arrested 24 activists as organisers of the vigil, and several were convicted and jailed.

So now apparently roadblocks are going up at all HK island-bound lanes of the cross harbour tunnels, right before the Friday evening peak hour. Because we should absolutely definitely believe that this is just another ordinary day with nothing special going on.

— Antony Dapiran (@antd) [June 4, 2021](#)

Most of the city's most prominent democracy figures – many of whom would organise and attend the annual Tiananmen vigils – are in jail, have been arrested or have fled overseas, after Beijing imposed a controversial national security law in Hong Kong last year.

Veteran political journalist Ching Cheong, who was jailed in China for three years, said the perseverance of Hong Kong in holding the vigil had made it “the conscience of China”.

“It's very sad to see that, starting last year, authorities have tried to stamp out memorial activity purely for the selfish sake of the CCP to cling to power,” Ching said.

“I don't think marking the anniversary of the crackdown itself will lead to the collapse of the communist regime, but it's evident proof the regime is extremely afraid of people knowing the atrocities that it has committed.”

The threat of mass arrests on Hong Kong has forced those who would normally attend the vigil [to think creatively](#). Activists have called on

residents to light candles in their own homes or neighbourhoods on Friday evening, or post commemoration messages on social media.

[By banning Tiananmen vigils in Hong Kong, China is trying to rewrite history_| Louisa Lim](#)

[Read more](#)

One campaign has called for Hong Kongers to write the numbers 4 and 6 – representing 4 June – on light switches at home.

“A regime can ban an assembly but it can never ban the indelible grievances in people’s hearts,” Lee Cheuk-yan, a now jailed democracy activist, wrote in a message published on his Facebook page on Thursday. “I hope everyone can find your own way to light a candle by the window, on the road, wherever that can be seen by others, to continue our mourning,” he added.

Vigils are planned in cities like Tokyo, Sydney, London, Berlin and Washington.

In mainland China, the Tiananmen anniversary is usually marked with a dramatic increase in online censorship and the square in Beijing being cordoned off.

Ahead of this year’s anniversary, the Tiananmen Mothers support group made new appeal in a statement. It also said that many young Chinese have “grown up in a false sense of prosperous jubilation and enforced glorification of the government (and) have no idea of or refuse to believe what happened on June 4, 1989, in the nation’s capital.”

The United States said on Thursday it stands “with the people of China” in their fight for human rights. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said his country will “honor the sacrifices of those killed 32 years ago, and the brave activists who carry on their efforts today in the face of ongoing government repression.”

In Britain, six former British foreign secretaries – including Jack Straw and David Miliband - have urged Boris Johnson to rally international action over Beijing’s Hong Kong actions in an open letter. They called on the Prime

Minister to “ensure that the crisis in Hong Kong is on the agenda” at the G7 leaders’ summit in Cornwall next week.

“As the human rights situation in Hong Kong continues to deteriorate, we hope you will personally recognise the pronounced need for international leadership from the UK government on this matter,” the former foreign secretaries wrote.

Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen said Taiwan’s people would not forget what happened in 1989.

“I believe for all Taiwanese who are proud of their freedom and democracy, they will never forget about this day and will firmly stick with their faith, unshaken by challenges,” she said.

In a statement sent to Reuters, China’s Taiwan Affairs Office said the island’s government was “smearing and attacking” China when it should be focused on fighting a spike in domestic Covid-19 cases.

“In the face of increasing coronavirus infections and death, this veil they are using to attack others is a bit too much.”

Agence France-Presse and Reuters contributed to this report

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/04/hong-kong-7000-police-ready-to-enforce-ban-on-tiananmen-anniversary-protests>

Myanmar

Ousted Myanmar politicians call for Rohingya to join fight against junta

NUG says it will scrap law denying citizenship, in ‘notable step forward’ for rights of Rohingya people



A demonstration against the military coup in Monywa, Sagaing region, in April. The NUG statement said: ‘The solidarity of the entire people is now at its best.’ Photograph: Facebook/AFP/Getty Images

A demonstration against the military coup in Monywa, Sagaing region, in April. The NUG statement said: ‘The solidarity of the entire people is now at its best.’ Photograph: Facebook/AFP/Getty Images

[Rebecca Ratcliffe](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 04.02 EDT

Myanmar’s parallel government has urged [Rohingya](#) to join with them in fighting the military junta, promising to offer justice and citizenship to the

persecuted minority.

The statement has been welcomed by rights experts as “an important and notable step forward” in the movement for full rights for the Rohingya, who have faced decades of discrimination and violence in [Myanmar](#).

Despite roots that go back for centuries, Rohingya are widely seen as foreigners in the country and have been denied citizenship under successive governments, including that of Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD). Her government avoided even using the term Rohingya, instead referring to the minority ethnic group as “Muslims in Rakhine state”. In 2019 Aung San Suu Kyi appalled international observers when she traveled to The Hague to defend the military against allegations of a genocide.

In a statement on Thursday, Myanmar’s national unity government, which includes many NLD politicians, said attitudes were changing.

“The entire people of Burma is sympathetic to the plight of the Rohingya as all now experience atrocities and violence perpetrated by the military,” it said.

[‘We cannot hope for anything good’: Myanmar coup sparks despair for Rohingya](#)
[Read more](#)

“The solidarity of the entire people is now at its best. We are confident that we can build a union that meets the needs of all those in the country who have a stake in its future.”

The statement said the NUG would scrap a 1982 citizenship law that denies Rohingya citizenship, and which has effectively rendered them one of the largest stateless populations in the world. Citizenship would instead be based on birth in Myanmar, or birth anywhere to a Myanmar citizen, the NUG said.

The NUG, which was set up after the military coup, also said it was committed to the safe repatriation of Rohingya who have been forced to flee

military violence, and promised to “actively seek justice and accountability for all crimes committed by the military against the Rohingya”.

Nearly 900,000 Rohingya refugees remain stuck in squalid, crowded conditions in refugee camps [in neighbouring Bangladesh](#). This includes about 750,000 people who were forced to flee over the border in 2017, when the military launched [a genocidal campaign](#) of violence, rape, murder and torching homes.

The NUG, which is seeking international recognition, has faced questions, including from the US, over whether it will recognise the citizenship and rights of Rohingya.

Tun Khin, president of Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK, said the NUG’s statement was a welcome announcement, but that further clarity was needed, including on how the NUG would commit to seeking international justice.

“The NUG must, crucially, recognise that a genocide is taking place against the Rohingya,” he said. “If we can’t face the reality of the past, there is no way that we can build a common future.”

Tom Andrews, the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, said the NUG’s announcement was “an important and notable step forwards”.

“I am hopeful that today’s policy statement marks an initial, long-deserved though long-denied movement towards peace, justice and security for the Rohingya,” he said in a statement. International governments should increase pressure on the junta, Andrews added, so that such commitments could be transformed by Myanmar’s legitimate representatives into law.

At least 845 people have been killed by the military since it seized power on 1 February, while thousands remain in detention, including Myanmar’s elected politicians.

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[France](#)

Macron says French pension changes will not go ahead as planned

President rules out overhaul amid Covid crisis and again refuses to say if he will stand for re-election



Emmanuel Macron meets local people during a visit to Martel, southern France, on Thursday. Photograph: Lionel Bonaventure/AP

Emmanuel Macron meets local people during a visit to Martel, southern France, on Thursday. Photograph: Lionel Bonaventure/AP

[Jon Henley](#) *Europe correspondent*

[@jonhenley](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 04.47 EDT

Emmanuel Macron has said his controversial pension changes, the biggest single revamp of the French system since 1945, will not go ahead as planned

as he again refused to say whether he would run for another five-year presidential term.

“I do not think the reform as it was originally envisaged can go ahead as such” in the wake of the Covid crisis, the French president told reporters following him on [a nationwide tour](#) on Thursday in the run-up to regional elections this month.

“It was very ambitious and extremely complex and that is why it generated anxiety, we must admit that. Doing it right now would mean ignoring the fact that there are already a lot of worries,” Macron said in the southern French village of Martel.

The planned [pension overhaul](#), among other pro-business changes that helped spark the 2018-19 *gilets jaunes* (yellow vests) protest, were halted in their tracks by the pandemic in February last year, prompting the government to postpone any further debate on the topic to this year.

Central to Macron’s ambition of creating a more flexible and competitive labour force, the proposed changes included raising the retirement age by two years to 64, but are now unlikely to make progress until after the 2022 presidential election.

Macron, [whose 2017 win](#) transformed France’s political landscape, said he would make “difficult” decisions this summer, again refusing to confirm he would run. “I’m going to have to make some choices, some of them difficult,” he said.

It would be a shock if the 43-year-old centrist did not seek re-election, but he has stayed resolutely quiet on the question while rivals such as the far-right leader Marine Le Pen and centre-right heavyweights Xavier Bertrand, Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier and Édouard Philippe, the former prime minister, have thrown their hats in the ring.

Macron defended his economic policies as well as his decision not to raise taxes as the country grapples with spiralling debt from efforts to limit the damage of the Covid crisis. “You have to produce wealth to redistribute it,

something we forget too often in our country,” he said. “We are the EU country that taxes the most.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/04/emmanuel-macron-french-pension-changes-will-not-go-ahead-planned>

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Netherlands

Amsterdam residents offered free book on city's links with slavery

Deputy mayor says citizens 'need to know the facts and not be afraid of the conversation'



The Slavernijmonument (slavery monument), by Erwin de Vries, in Amsterdam. Photograph: Peter de Jong/AP

The Slavernijmonument (slavery monument), by Erwin de Vries, in Amsterdam. Photograph: Peter de Jong/AP

[Daniel Boffey](#) in Brussels

Fri 4 Jun 2021 05.27 EDT

Every Amsterdammer is being offered a free copy of a book exploring the city's role in the organisation and management of the global slave trade as part of a wider reckoning with the Netherlands' past.

Last year the International Institute of Social History carried out research on behalf of the municipality of Amsterdam, and the results have now been made into a book: Amsterdam and the history of slavery.

Researchers uncovered the integral role played by Amsterdam administrators in the Dutch East India company and the West India company, as well as the investments made by high-profile individuals in slave ships and sugar plantations.

Copies of the book, which also explores how the racist ideas of the Dutch “[golden age](#)” continue today, are now being made available to Amsterdam residents and can be picked up at the City hall or at larger libraries.

[Rijksmuseum slavery exhibition confronts cruelty of Dutch trade](#)
[Read more](#)

Rutger Groot Wassink, a deputy mayor of Amsterdam, told Het Parool newspaper: “Who we are as a city is partly determined by our shared past, the beautiful and the terrible. We need to know the facts and not be afraid of the conversation.

“In this way we can share the lessons of the past with each other and pass them on to new generations.”

Dutch traders shipped more than 600,000 African people to North and South America and between 660,000 and 1.1 million people around the Indian ocean. Last year King Willem-Alexander apologised for the “excessive violence” of the Dutch colonialists in [Indonesia](#).

But there remains a live debate in the Netherlands about the portrayal of empire and slavery in schools and public places through street names and statues.

There has nevertheless been a push by the royal family and key cultural institutions to acknowledge the scale of the involvement of the Dutch in the exploitation of enslaved people.

Last month, King Willem-Alexander opened the first [exhibition](#) on the subject, to be shown at the Rijksmuseum. It examines 10 lives caught up in the [Dutch slave trade](#) between the early 17th century and 1863, when the practice was finally made illegal in Suriname and the Antilles.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/04/amsterdam-residents-offered-free-book-on-citys-links-with-slavery>.

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Biden administration

Biden sanctions Chinese companies as Beijing says ‘normal communication’ resumed

Executive order will enforce a ban on 59 companies including Huawei and chip maker SMIC as president expands Trump-era policy



Chinese and US national flags flutter at the entrance of an office building in Beijing. Photograph: Wang Zhao/AFP via Getty Images

Chinese and US national flags flutter at the entrance of an office building in Beijing. Photograph: Wang Zhao/AFP via Getty Images

[Vincent Ni](#) *China affairs correspondent*

Thu 3 Jun 2021 19.33 EDT

Joe Biden has signed an executive order that bans Americans from investing in a number of Chinese companies with alleged ties to defense or

surveillance technology sectors, in a move that analysts said would further complicate Washington's trade relationship with Beijing.

The US administration said it will expand the scope of a legally flawed Trump-era order, the US treasury will enforce and update on a "rolling basis" the new ban list of about 59 companies.

Beijing has condemned the move on Friday, accusing Washington of "overextending the concept of national security and abusing its national power". "China urges the US to respect market rules and principles and rescind the so-called list that suppresses Chinese companies," said Wang Wenbin, the foreign ministry spokesperson.

[US and China hold first 'candid' trade talks under Biden tenure](#) [Read more](#)

Washington's latest move came on the same day that China's commerce ministry said the two countries have resumed "normal communication", following recent high-level meetings between the two countries' trade and financial officials.

In the past week, China's vice-premier Liu He held calls with US trade representative Katherine Tai and US treasury secretary Janet Yellen. Chinese commerce ministry said both sides exchanged "candid" views on a range of issues.

Yet, experts said that despite the optimism in Beijing, Washington's latest move could add further complication into the bilateral relationship.

Biden's latest order prevents US investment from supporting the Chinese military-industrial complex, as well as military, intelligence and security research and development programs.

"In addition, I find that the use of Chinese surveillance technology outside [China] and the development or use of Chinese surveillance technology to facilitate repression or serious human rights abuse constitute unusual and extraordinary threats," Biden said.

A White House fact sheet on the order said the policy would take effect for those companies listed on 2 August.

Major Chinese firms included on the previous defense department list were also placed on the updated list, including Aviation Industry Corp of China (AVIC), China Mobile Communications Group, China National Offshore Oil Corp (CNOOC), Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology, Huawei Technologies and Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp (SMIC).

SMIC is key to China's national drive to boost its domestic chip sector.

[Chips with everything: how one Taiwanese company drives the world economy.](#)

[Read more](#)

“We fully expect that in the months ahead ... we'll be adding additional companies to the new executive order's restrictions,” one of the senior officials said.

A second official told reporters that the inclusion of Chinese surveillance technology companies expanded the scope of the Trump administration's initial order last year, which the White House argues was carelessly drafted, leaving it open to court challenges.

The president has been reviewing [a number of aspects of US policy toward China](#), and his administration had extended a deadline for implementation set by Donald Trump's order while it crafted its new policy framework.

Analysts said the move is part of Biden's broader series of steps to counter China, including reinforcing US alliances and pursuing large domestic investments to bolster American economic competitiveness, amid increasingly sour relations between the world's two most powerful countries.

Reuters contributed to this report

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- [Coronavirus Bolton GPs offer second jabs four weeks after first to use surplus](#)
- [Schools Pupils should be vaccinated 'as matter of priority'](#)
- [Disadvantaged Covid has eroded progress by pupils – study](#)
- [Analysis The pros and cons of giving Covid vaccines to UK children](#)

Vaccines and immunisation

Bolton GPs offer second Covid jabs four weeks after first to use surplus

Town is ‘drowning in vaccines’ and bending national rules while other areas ask for more first doses

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



A public health message on a screen in Bolton last week. Photograph: Oli Scarff/AFP/Getty Images

A public health message on a screen in Bolton last week. Photograph: Oli Scarff/AFP/Getty Images

[*Helen Pidd*](#), [*Robyn Vinter*](#) and [*Richard Adams*](#)

Sat 5 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

GPs in one of the UK's Covid hotspots are offering all adults their second dose of Covid vaccination four weeks after their first, in a rush to administer vaccines within their shelf life.

Some GPs in [Bolton](#) have been sent so many doses of the Pfizer vaccine that they are offering second jabs a month earlier than government rules allow, concerned that otherwise they may be wasted.

It is just the latest sign that local areas are increasingly flexing – if not ignoring – national guidance in order to vaccinate everyone they can without throwing any doses away.

Across England, some local health services are offering jabs to people aged 18 or even 16 and over, while others – such as Blackburn, the current Covid hotspot – have begged for more first doses.

Blackburn, which has an infection rate of 439 cases per 100,000 people, 13 times the UK average, asked for thousands more doses in order to continue surge vaccination for all adults for another fortnight, but was [knocked back this week](#).

Dominic Harrison, Blackburn's director of public health, appealed against what he called an “unfair, unjust and avoidable” decision, saying it would lead to avoidable deaths and local [NHS](#) services being swamped within four weeks.

Kate Hollern, the Labour MP for Blackburn, said: “If there are additional vaccines that Bolton is struggling to make use of, Blackburn will willingly take them off their hands. We'll work with them to make sure jabs get into arms where they're needed most. It's incredibly damaging that the government decided that Blackburn, which has got the highest case rate in the country, isn't a priority.”

Nationally, only people aged 30 or over are eligible for vaccination, unless they are in a vulnerable group. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) guidance stipulates that clinics can invite patients “outside the cohort only in very limited circumstances to avoid wastage”.

Yet the Guardian has received numerous examples of institutions and local authorities across the country that are ignoring the JCVI rules.

University College London has told its students of all ages they can receive vaccinations from noon on Saturday at a surgery near its Bloomsbury campus.

“The vaccination will be offered to all UCL students regardless of age on a first-come, first-served basis and no prior booking is required. We recommend you arrive early, as only a limited number of vaccinations are available on the day,” UCL said in a message to its 44,000 students.

Several boroughs in Greater Manchester are deviating from the JCVI guidance. In Stockport, the clinical commissioning group (CCG) [offered a walk-in clinic](#) for anyone aged 28 or over on Friday, while a Guardian reader in Salford said his 20-year-old daughter had been invited for a jab by Salford CCG on Wednesday. In parts of Manchester with large ethnic minority communities, [16-year-olds](#) have been vaccinated in recent weeks.

In Bolton – which last month had the highest rates of the Delta variant of Covid, linked to travel from India, and is now second only to Blackburn – clinicians are using their discretion to speed up delivery of second doses.

“They’re drowning in vaccines and are really feeling the pressure not to waste any,” said one source in the local healthcare system. “They’ve been given so many doses that we are struggling to give them away. We are saturated.”

In a move to tackle the Delta variant, the JCVI guidance was changed on 14 May to say the second dose interval could be shortened from 12 to eight weeks for all over-50s plus younger people in vulnerable groups.

But the Guardian has seen texts sent by two Bolton surgeries inviting patients to get their second vaccination at a pop-up clinic at Eden boys’ school if their first dose was at least 28 days ago.

Some of the recipients queried the invitation on the Facebook page of Bolton’s CCG. They received a response from Dr Helen Wall, who is

running Bolton's vaccine programme.

"It's licensed from four weeks, guidance nationally says eight but it's clinical discretion," she wrote. "There is felt to be potentially a small benefit in some people at leaving to eight weeks, but given we are 14 times the England average in our rates and the vaccine at first dose is only thought to be about 38% effective against [the Delta] variant compared to 89%-plus after two doses, you could argue getting two doses is ultimately beneficial. The clinical directors are making a clinical risk-based decision based on rates in the area."

She agreed that the national messaging was confusing, given that the official Bolton CCG line is still that second dose eligibility is after a minimum interval of eight weeks, not four. "I agree it's caused some confusion, apologies," she said. "The challenge is we can't change national guidance or advice but each clinician has scope to weigh up the pros and cons" for their patient population.

While the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine can be stored in a fridge for up to six months, [all Pfizer doses](#) must be used within 31 days after being removed from the deep freeze. When it was first licensed in the UK late last year, regulators said the Pfizer vaccine had to be used within five days, leading many vaccine centres to bend the rules at the end of the day to avoid wastage.

An NHS North West spokesperson said: "The NHS in Blackburn received extra doses of vaccines for surge vaccination services which helped jab over 19,000 people in just a few weeks and from a vaccine bus to walk in jab centres, the local area continues to jab all of those who are eligible and has enough supply to do so.

"Two new pharmacy-led sites will open next week, offering both walk in and pre-bookable appointments, and as vaccination offers the best protection for people and their families, anybody who is eligible for the vaccine but has not yet been vaccinated, should book themselves in for the lifesaving jab today."

An NHS spokesperson said: “All vaccination services are expected to continue to vaccinate in line with guidance set out by the JCVI.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/05/bolton-gps-offer-second-covid-jabs-four-weeks-after-first-to-use-surplus>

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Schools

School leaders say pupils should be vaccinated as matter of priority

Call follows the approval of Pfizer jab for 12-to 15-year olds and Delta variant outbreaks in English schools



Union leaders said vaccinating students would benefit their safety but also minimise further disruption to their educations. Photograph: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

Union leaders said vaccinating students would benefit their safety but also minimise further disruption to their educations. Photograph: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

[Richard Adams](#) and [Sarah Boseley](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 13.47 EDT

School leaders are calling for pupils to be vaccinated as a matter of priority [after UK regulators approved a jab for 12- to 15-year-olds](#) and data showed

outbreaks of the Delta variant [in schools throughout England](#).

The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Authority (MHRA) on Friday gave its approval for the use of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine in children aged 12 to 15, paving the way for its use among all but the youngest secondary school pupils.

But a decision on whether it will be rolled out to children, and when, will fall to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and ultimately ministers.

Teaching union and school leaders said that starting a vaccination programme for teenagers soon could mean most secondary school pupils would receive two doses by the time schools begin the new term in September, minimising the risk of further disruption to their education.

[The pros and cons of giving Covid vaccines to UK children](#)
[Read more](#)

On Friday, new government-commissioned research showed that a decade's worth of progress in reducing [the attainment gap for disadvantaged children](#) could have been eradicated during the pandemic.

But some scientists warned it could be unethical to prioritise jabs for children, who are at extremely low risk of serious illness from Covid, given the small risk of side-effects and as vaccine rates remain low in many other countries.

It comes after the Delta variant was shown to be spreading in schools and other educational settings in small but growing numbers, with 140 incidents reported so far.

After the approval of the Pfizer vaccine for children, Hamid Patel, chief executive of the Star Academies trust based in Blackburn, said: "This is very welcome news. We now need to ensure that all teenagers have received at least the first jab before the summer holidays.

“Schools are best placed to accommodate vaccinations and the infrastructure is already in place for delivering inoculations. We will get much higher take-up if we ask youngsters to receive the jab in term time rather than when they are enjoying their holidays. This will also enable all of us to have a safer, freer and more normal summer.”

Patel, whose multi-academy trust includes more than 30 schools across England, including in Bolton, Manchester and Blackpool, added: “With infection rates surging among teenagers in some areas of the country, it is vital to prioritise schools in these hotspots. This will help manage and eradicate current infection outbreaks.”

Union leaders called on the JCVI – which advises the government on setting vaccine group priorities – to seriously consider offering doses to younger teenagers.

Patrick Roach, general secretary of the NASUWT teaching union, said: “Offering young people access to vaccination would not only be of benefit to their safety and help to minimise further disruption to their education, it would also help protect the wider adult population who are at greater risk from Covid.

“With case numbers in schools rising, the JCVI must now study the evidence and come forward with a swift decision on expanding the vaccination programme to younger people.”

Dr June Raine, the MHRA’s chief executive, said her agency had concluded that the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is safe and effective for 12 to 15-year-olds, with the benefits outweighing any risks.

Use of the Pfizer version for young teenagers [has already been approved by US authorities](#). Pfizer has reported 100% efficacy in the 12 to 15 age group, meaning none of the children in the trials developed Covid symptoms.

But some experts urged caution. Adam Finn, professor of paediatrics at the University of Bristol, said the key questions was whether vaccinating children would protect them from infection and prevent disruption to their education and development.

“Reports of cases of Delta variant infection in schools this week are clearly of concern in this context,” Finn said, adding that children at risk of serious illness were in the process of being identified so they can be offered vaccines as soon as possible.

But Dominic Wilkinson, professor of medical ethics at the University of Oxford, said there was an urgent need to vaccinate vulnerable people in countries with the greatest need.

“It is unethical to give vaccines to people at very low risk in our own country when there are others overseas at much higher risk who are dying. For the time being, we should not be extending our Covid vaccination programs to include children,” he said.

In the US, Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, urged parents to vaccinate their children after the publication of new research.

“I am deeply concerned by the numbers of hospitalised adolescents and saddened to see the numbers of adolescents who required treatment in intensive care units or mechanical ventilation,” Walensky said.

The study found that nearly a third of teenagers hospitalised with Covid earlier this year required intensive care, while 5% required mechanical ventilation.

Data published by Public Health England (PHE) revealed for the first time that 140 outbreaks of the Delta or Indian variant had been recorded in schools in England, with cases overall rising last month following the relaxation of mask-wearing in schools.

But campaigners said that PHE and the government needed to publish more details about the spread of Covid within schools, including numbers of infections in each location rather than only outbreaks.

A pressure group named The Citizens said it had served legal notice on PHE and would begin proceedings for a judicial review unless PHE published the more detailed figures.

A spokesperson for the Department of Health and Social Care said: “The government has asked the independent experts at the JCVI to advise whether routine vaccination should be offered to younger people aged 12 to 17.

“We will be guided by the expert advisers and will update in due course.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jun/04/school-leaders-say-pupils-should-vaccinated-as-matter-of-priority>

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Education

Covid has eroded progress by disadvantaged pupils in England, finds study

Research shows regional disparities, with some children in the north losing twice as much learning

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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The government-commissioned research prompted renewed calls from teaching unions for more investment in catch-up efforts. Photograph: SolStock/Getty

The government-commissioned research prompted renewed calls from teaching unions for more investment in catch-up efforts. Photograph: SolStock/Getty

[Peter Walker](#) Political correspondent

[@peterwalker99](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 13.38 EDT

Much of the progress made in reducing the attainment gap for disadvantaged children over the past decade could have been eradicated during the pandemic, new government-commissioned research has found.

The studies, [published on Friday](#) by the Department for Education (DfE), also show significant regional disparities in the impact of the disruption to schooling caused by Covid, with pupils in some parts of northern England losing twice as much learning over the same periods as those in London.

It prompted renewed calls from teaching unions for more investment in catch-up efforts, two days after the government's education recovery chief, Sir Kevan Collins, [resigned in protest](#) at what he called "half-hearted" ministerial plans.

The research was carried out by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) thinktank in English primary and secondary schools during the autumn term of last year, and spring 2021, using the metric of months of attainment lost for reading and maths.

While it found that overall attainment suffered notably during both periods when the bulk of pupils were learning from home, with some recovery when students returned last autumn, the effect was magnified because of disadvantage and location.

By October in last autumn's term, average learning losses for primary students were 3.7 months for maths, and 1.8 months for reading. But for disadvantaged pupils, the average was 4.3 months of maths and two months for reading. A similar effect was found for secondary students.

While the most recent data for learning loss among disadvantaged children, gauged in March, has not yet been published, the report's authors said there were signs of a growing gap. Overall, they said, it appeared to have undone between a third and two-thirds of all progress made in the past decade.

There were also notable regional differences, although the researchers urged some caution on these due to smaller sample sizes.

One set of data found that in last year's autumn term, primary children overall had lost 1.3 months of reading attainment in London and 1.5 months in the south-west of England, but 2.3 months in the north-east and 2.6 months in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Jon Andrews, head of analysis at the EPI, who co-authored the research, said it had uncovered "a clear penalty faced by disadvantaged pupils during the pandemic", which risked widening the overall gap in educational attainment, and significant regional disparities.

"We need to continue to look at how we can support all pupils through effective catch-up programmes, but especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, whose education has seen the most damage from the pandemic," he said. "It is also important that policies address the large losses seen in certain parts of the country."

The same point was made by teaching unions, who were highly critical of the DfE's catch-up plan, [announced on Wednesday](#), which provided funding for extra tuition and other measures – but, at £1.4bn, was about a 10th of what Collins had proposed in his plan.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary the NAHT, which represents school leaders, said that while there was the "silver lining" in the report of learning loss being reduced when pupils were fully in school last autumn, the research showed the need for an ambitious recovery package.

[Labour flags concern over outsourcing of England catch-up tuition](#)
[Read more](#)

He said: "It is becoming increasingly clear that disadvantaged pupils have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, and we are starting to see regional disparities too. That's why the government's failure to back its own catch-up tsar's plans for support this week was such a disappointment."

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said: “It is abundantly clear that a recovery programme is urgently required at a scale and scope to address this massive issue.

“Instead, we have seen this week a package of measures from the government that is lacking in ambition, inadequately funded and which has caused the education recovery commissioner to resign in protest.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jun/04/covid-has-eradicated-disadvantaged-pupils-progress-finds-study>.

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Children

The pros and cons of giving Covid vaccines to UK children

Analysis: the Pfizer/BioNTech jab has been approved for 12-15 year-olds but the risk-benefit equation is more complex than it is for adults

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Schoolchildren in Britain will not be part of mass vaccination programmes until a decision is made by the JCVI. Photograph: Matthew Horwood/Getty Images

Schoolchildren in Britain will not be part of mass vaccination programmes until a decision is made by the JCVI. Photograph: Matthew Horwood/Getty Images

[Sarah Boseley](#) *Health editor*

Fri 4 Jun 2021 12.05 EDT

Which vaccines against Covid have been approved for children?

Following successful trials, the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has been given approval in the UK by the medicines regulator for children aged 12-15. It is already approved for that age group in the US, Canada and the EU. The Moderna jab, which is made in a similar way, is also approved for children in the US. They can both be used for older teenagers, since the main trials involved young people over the age of 16. AstraZeneca is now trialling its vaccine in younger children between the ages of six and 17. It is currently approved only for over-18s.

Will we now see a vaccination campaign in schoolchildren?

Not immediately. The decision on whether to use the vaccines in children in the UK rests with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which advises governments. It's [not a straightforward decision scientifically](#) as the risks and benefits for children are not clearcut. It's also potentially fraught because of different interest groups. Teachers may want children to be vaccinated but some parents may be reluctant and not all doctors think it is a good idea. In the end, the decision will have to be taken by politicians.

What are the benefits for children?

Rather less than they are for adults because the vast majority of children generally do not suffer from severe illness when they get infected with coronavirus. A very small minority can get seriously ill from a complication of Covid called multisystem inflammatory syndrome. Although most recover, some have had longer-term mobility problems and mental health issues.

The families of disabled children have been keen for vaccination, because they have been shielding and would like to get back to school and a more normal life. But otherwise the main reason for vaccinating children is to

protect adults, such as elderly grandparents, vulnerable relatives and teachers. Because all vaccines carry the small risk of side-effects, the risk-benefit equation is more complex with children.

High-risk children definitely need vaccination, says Adam Finn, professor of paediatrics at Bristol and a member of the JCVI, but “we need to know who they actually are”. Some have probably been shielding unnecessarily, he says, and urgent work should take place to sort this out. Doctors can in extreme circumstances vaccinate a vulnerable child at their discretion.

[UK coronavirus cases](#)

Are there risks?

There weren't any major side-effect issues in the children's trials but they were done in several thousand children – not hundreds of thousands. You don't see very rare side-effects until you start using vaccines in whole populations. The US has been vaccinating large numbers of children recently, so there should soon be some real-world evidence to look at. In adults, there have been rare cases of blood clots with low blood platelets with the Oxford/AstraZeneca and the Johnson & Johnson vaccines, and those have been a bit more common in younger people. There have also been cases of myocarditis – a heart condition – with the Pfizer/BioNTech jab in Israel. There's no reason to suppose there will be problems in children, but it's a bit early to be sure.

Do we actually need to vaccinate children?

Some say not. They point to Israel, which vaccinated such a high proportion of adults that it eliminated cases in children. But we need to stop children being excluded from school and missing out on education, which happens whenever somebody in a class tests positive. Lately there have been reports in schools of the Delta variant, which originated in India and is more transmissible than other variants in the UK. The variant may also cause more hospitalisations.

Are there enough doses to vaccinate schoolchildren?

The UK has ordered 400m doses in total, although not all are available and some of the vaccines are not yet approved. The priority at the moment is getting second doses into adults to ensure they have the best possible protection against the Delta variant in areas where it has taken off.

Dominic Harrison, the director of public health in Blackburn with Darwen, one of the country's Covid hotspots, has said they need more supplies and preferably a Twickenham-style mass walk-in vaccination effort to reach younger adults who are most likely to socialise and spread the virus.

But there is also the global need. No country is safe while the virus is unchecked elsewhere, with the likelihood of more and potentially vaccine-evading variants developing. There are calls for the G7 meeting next week in Cornwall to commit to sharing vaccine doses with lower-income countries for everybody's sake. That would make vaccinating children a lower priority.

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- [UK What can the government do to stave off a third Covid wave?](#)
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Belgium to vaccinate 16- and 17-year-olds next month; Italy gives 600,000 jabs in a day – as it happened

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[Coronavirus](#)

What can the UK government do to stave off a third Covid wave?

From delaying step four of roadmap, closing schools and speeding up vaccine doses, we look at the options

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Scientists also say existing regulations on indoor mixing and mask wearing could also be tweaked or reinforced. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

Scientists also say existing regulations on indoor mixing and mask wearing could also be tweaked or reinforced. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

[Natalie Grover](#) *Science correspondent*

Sat 5 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

The coronavirus variant first identified in India is now dominant in the UK. Data is emerging that suggests it is substantially more transmissible than the one first detected in Kent last year, and may [increase the risk of hospital admissions](#) and renders vaccines somewhat less effective, particularly after the first dose.

Although cases of the Delta variant are rising rapidly across the country, hospital admissions are yet to follow suit, but scientists say that could start to change if it is as infectious and harmful as the early data suggests.

Paul Hunter, a professor of medicine at the University of East Anglia said cases were predominantly in younger age groups still to be vaccinated, so the vaccination rollout was still key.

Beyond that it would be very difficult to argue for too many more regulations if the number of hospital admissions were to remain flat, he said. “But it would be inconceivable that if case numbers go through the roof that there’s no impact on hospitalisations.”

Here are some of options available to the government to stave off a potential third wave, which some scientists say [may have already begun](#).

Reduce the gap between vaccine doses

Some studies, including [lab-based](#) work and [analysis of real-world data](#), indicate the current vaccines are somewhat less effective against the Delta than the Alpha variant first identified in Kent. Recent Public Health England (PHE) [data](#) shows that after a single dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech or Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines there was a 17% absolute reduction in effectiveness against symptomatic disease with Delta compared with the Alpha variant, but only a modest reduction after two doses.

Some experts advocate shortening the gap between the first and second jabs from 12 to eight weeks for all adults. [Second doses have already been](#) brought forward for priority cohorts, including health workers and elderly people, and efforts to get the first dose to other adults have been stepped up, particularly in [Delta variant hotspots](#).

Delay step four of the roadmap

According to [documents released by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies \(Sage\)](#), modelling suggests a variant that substantially escapes immunity or is highly transmissible – more so than the Alpha variant – could lead to a wave of infections potentially larger than that seen in January 2021 in the absence of interventions.

For Hunter, caution is key. Once cases start to rise, it takes a few weeks for that to translate into an increase in hospital admissions, but if that happens despite the current pace of vaccinations, then delaying step four – potentially until the end of the school term – would be an option, he said.

Rowland Kao, a professor of veterinary epidemiology and data science at the University of Edinburgh, said early evidence showed the vaccines were somewhat less effective at thwarting symptomatic disease caused by the Delta variant, but the impact on severe infection was unclear.

“It does lend extra credence to the idea of slowing down easing restrictions and in limited cases considering stronger local measures,” he said. “How local remains a question.”

Tweak existing regulations

Some scientists have criticised the existing border policy as porous and [confusing](#). They say it needs to be completely overhauled to avoid the risk of importing and exporting variants.

“We should be imposing strict border controls, getting rid of the confusing amber list and requiring supervised quarantine for everyone,” said Martin McKee, a professor of European public health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Another key issue is indoor mixing, which was sanctioned in certain circumstances last month. “We know that this is a virus that spreads in indoor spaces ... and we know that the probability that people in these

settings will only become infected if someone carrying the virus is among them, which is a function of the prevalence in the local community,” he said.

“So it follows that we should be adopting a nuanced approach which takes account of the situation in each area.”

Close schools or make them safer

Closing schools would have a huge impact on infection rates, but most scientists agree it should be a measure of last resort given that disrupting education can have a devastating long-term effect on a child’s future.

More work needs to be done, however, to reduce transmission in schools, including improving ventilation and encouraging mask wearing, said Dr Kit Yates, a senior lecturer in mathematical biology at the University of Bath.

New PHE data covering 26 April to 30 May shows the Delta variant has [begun to spread in schools and colleges throughout England](#). The government removed the mask mandate in secondary schools on 17 May, hoping that regular testing would suffice, but surveillance data shows the number of tests being done in secondary schools is decreasing all the time.

One of the key ways to keep schools safe is to [improve the underperforming test, trace and isolate system](#) that we’ve allocated so much money to, Yates said.

Delay return to workplaces

Recommending that people work from home where they can has a considerable impact on infection rates in the community, and should continue, especially in areas where case numbers are higher, according to Stephen Griffin, a virologist from the University of Leeds. He acknowledged, however, that people in certain occupations such as hospital, transport and supermarket workers would not be able to do that.

Overall, from a population perspective if more people were to stay at home to work, the better it would be, he said.

Continue mask wearing

Mask wearing should probably be continued, scientists say, especially given that those under 18 are not being offered the vaccines for now.

“It’s about minimising the amount of infectious virus — the aerosols and droplets — that are released, so on a population basis that makes the difference,” said Griffin. “In high-risk indoor situations, it’s an absolute no-brainer in terms of keeping a lid on things, especially in high-risk areas.”

Additional reporting by Nicola Davis

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Holidays abroad: many Britons plan to press on despite government advice

Tui says half of its passengers booked to visit Portugal in June are still planning to travel

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‘Most passengers are taking a pragmatic approach to government travel advice’ Photograph: Nick Ansell/PA

‘Most passengers are taking a pragmatic approach to government travel advice’ Photograph: Nick Ansell/PA

[*Rupert Jones*](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 12.40 EDT

As recriminations continue over the [UK government's decision to remove Portugal from the travel green list](#), many Britons have decided to press ahead with overseas holiday plans, even if that means going against official advice.

At 4.45pm on Sunday 6 June, Pont-Aven, one of Brittany Ferries' flagship cruise liners, will leave Plymouth for Santander in Spain – the company's first sailing on that route for eight months. The UK government says people should not travel to [amber list](#) locations such as Spain and advises against [all but essential travel](#) to the country – but that has not stopped the company, or the more than 800 people making the trip.

“The fact that Spain remains amber is very disappointing. But we have seen very little drop-off in passenger numbers for the first voyage,” said a spokesperson for Brittany Ferries, which had gambled that the green light for trips by this point would be a given.

He added: “We suspect most passengers are taking a pragmatic approach to government travel advice. The unquantifiable threat of a potential new Covid variant may be far less persuasive to them than careful consideration of risk, based on hard data.”

They are not the only ones who have decided to keep calm and carry on packing their suitcases. It appears growing numbers of holidaymakers – many of whom are older and will now have had both vaccinations – are starting to make their own decisions about travel and the risks involved.

Noel Josephides, chair of tour operator Sunvil, said that when it came to destinations such as Greece, also on the amber list, a “fair proportion” of customers were still planning to travel. Sunvil's clientele is largely older and retired. “They have no qualms about going ... and they don't mind quarantining,” he said.

Europe's largest travel company, Tui, said 50% of passengers booked to go to [Portugal](#) with the company in June were still planning to travel. On Thursday, it was announced that [Portugal](#) – including Madeira and the Azores – would move to the amber list at 4am on 8 June.

Just a few weeks ago, in May, Portugal had been the only major tourist destination placed on the green list. At that point, Tui bookings to Portugal had skyrocketed by 182%.

While some Britons are taking the view that they will press ahead, many others will now be wondering what to do, and whether they will get abroad – or anywhere at all – this year. [The uncertainty sent airline shares tumbling for a second day on Friday.](#)

Ryanair's chief executive Michael O'Leary – a frequent critic of ministers' policy in this area – claimed the UK government was “[making it up as they go along](#)” and that this “mismanagement of the Covid recovery” had created “unnecessary disruption and stress for hundreds of thousands of British families”.

[Portugal removed from 'green list' of Covid travel destinations](#)
[Read more](#)

Paul Charles, chief executive of the travel consultancy PC Agency, a key spokesperson for the sector, said: “I think the danger is the government's decision has crushed confidence in people wanting to book a holiday for the summer.”

He thinks there will still be an overseas getaway during July and August, but that “it is going to be the summer of the last-minute booking ... It will be a squeezed summer”.

The green list is due to be reviewed again on 28 June, and Charles said we could expect “a major travel industry offensive” to try to ensure that “holidays are back on” from then.

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Many will take the view that for this summer at least, a UK staycation is the safest bet – if you can find room at the inn. During the past few months, holiday cottage websites, caravan park owners and campervan hire firms have reported big jumps in bookings – with prices jumping too.

The travel industry body Abta said: “If you look at the cost of domestic holidays this year, they have gone up substantially.”

A spokesperson said there may be people who simply could not afford those prices. “What is their holiday going to be?” they said.

Josephides firmly believes confidence will come back – for example, when those who do take the plunge return from overseas trips and tell their friends it was fine and there were no crowds.

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France

France to allow UK tourists to enter if fully vaccinated

Arrivals who have had two vaccine doses will only need to show proof of negative antigen test

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Customers enjoy lunch on the terrace of a beach restaurant in Nice last month as cafes, bars and restaurants reopened. Photograph: Eric Gaillard/Reuters

Customers enjoy lunch on the terrace of a beach restaurant in Nice last month as cafes, bars and restaurants reopened. Photograph: Eric Gaillard/Reuters

[Edna Mohamed](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 14.06 EDT

France has announced it will allow fully vaccinated UK travellers with proof of negative antigen tests to enter the country without needing a “compelling reason”.

A new document released on Friday called Strategy for Reopening Borders says people who are fully vaccinated – which is understood to mean two weeks after having the second dose of an EU-approved vaccine, which covers all jabs currently in use in the UK – can use the NHS app as proof of their status, the Daily Mail [reports](#).

Children accompanying fully vaccinated adults will not need to have a vaccine but must prove a negative test result. While there is no specific age cut-off point, according to the French government, travel rules currently do not apply to children under 11.

Tourists with only one dose of a vaccine, or who are unvaccinated, must isolate for seven days, provide proof of a negative test result on arrival and have a “compelling reason” for visiting.

The French government announced earlier on Friday that it was removing the need for coronavirus tests for vaccinated Europeans and allowing vaccinated tourists from most of the world, including the US, to visit, provided they had a negative test.

The Associated Press has reported that the new rules will come into effect on 9 June when the border is set to reopen and allow other European tourists into the country.

[‘Unfair and illogical’: Britons react angrily to Portugal’s downgrade](#)
[Read more](#)

The announcement comes as the European Commission prepares to issue digital travel certificates to allow Europeans to travel freely across the bloc. However, the French government’s travel relaxations come a day after the British government imposed more [substantial travel restrictions](#) to stop the spread of Covid-19.

France remains on the amber list, which means Britons, regardless of vaccination status, will have to quarantine for 10 days on their return and take two Covid tests, and test negative before arrival.

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[Opinion](#) **Coronavirus**

If we can vaccinate the world, we can beat the climate crisis

[Abhijit Banerjee](#) and [Esther Duflo](#)

Rich countries can't expect to be trusted on their climate promises if they fail the poorest on vaccines



A woman is among the first in Niger to receive a Covid-19 vaccine, Niamey, 29 March 2021. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

A woman is among the first in Niger to receive a Covid-19 vaccine, Niamey, 29 March 2021. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Sat 5 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

It would only cost \$50bn to ensure 40% of the world's population is vaccinated by the end of the year, and 60% by the first half of 2022. This is a recent estimate from the [IMF](#), the latest institution to join a chorus of voices calling for a global vaccination programme to bring Covid-19 under control.

The IMF has highlighted the economic benefits of global vaccines, which would be huge. But there is another powerful reason for a worldwide campaign.

Vaccinating the world will be crucial if countries are going to act together to confront the climate crisis, which will require many of the same things as delivering vaccines: resources, innovation, ingenuity and a true partnership between rich and developing countries. The Cop26 climate conference in November will be an opportune moment for building this partnership. But to do so, rich countries need to deliver on their early promises to deliver global vaccines.

As it stands today, vaccine access is deeply unequal. The US is starting to vaccinate children, even as health workers and elderly people are waiting for shots in most of the world. At the end of April, less than 2% of the population of Africa [had been vaccinated](#), while 40% of the population of the US and 20% of the population of Europe had received at least one dose. India, one of the largest vaccine manufacturers in the world, has fully vaccinated [3% of its population](#), and is still in the middle of a nightmarish second wave that has forced the country to [stop exports](#) of all vaccines.

It was clear for some time that this was where things were heading. Despite all the talk of solidarity at the beginning of the pandemic, rich countries built sufficient capacity to produce only enough vaccines for themselves and then proceeded to corner the world's supplies. By March, high-income countries accounting for 16% of the world's population had [bought up 50%](#) of vaccine doses. As of this month, only [80m of the 2bn vaccines promised](#) to the world's poorest through the [ACT accelerator](#), a partnership including the UN-backed Covax scheme, have been delivered. The reason? A combination of insufficient donor funds and competition for vaccine doses from the richest countries, who can afford to pay high prices if needed, and who are planning to stockpile millions of extra doses for the future. The Bill and Melinda Gates foundation [estimates](#) that rich countries will have up to a billion extra doses on hand by the end of this year.

These inequities were mirrored by what happened with economic policy. While rich countries borrowed massively and spent [more than 20%](#) of GDP to help their populations ride out the crisis, poor countries could afford to

spend only 2% of GDP. An estimated [100 million more people](#) are now living in extreme poverty compared to the start of the pandemic. Developing countries contemplating lockdown are caught in a double bind between economic disaster (in India, for example, the first lockdown cost the country [almost a quarter of its GDP](#)) and overflowing morgues and mortuaries.

The catastrophic moral failure on the part of rich countries to help poorer nations can only reinforce the strong suspicion in much of the developing world that, despite talk of global cooperation and shared fortunes, when push comes to shove it's everyone for themselves. This could be devastating for global efforts against the climate crisis. The success of Cop26 depends in part upon larger developing countries such as Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan committing to sacrifices that will only pay off if countries such as the US, UK, Germany, France and Canada can be relied upon to stick to their own commitments.

By agreeing to cut CO₂ emissions, these developing countries will potentially curtail their own growth and perhaps even have to give up equipment that protects them from an already changing climate in the short term, such as cheap, polluting air conditioners. This sacrifice will only pay off if rich countries respond by cutting their own emissions so that worst-case scenarios can be avoided. Without everyone doing their part, we're effectively rearranging the deckchairs on a sinking ship. In the aftermath of Covid-19, these countries may wonder what guarantee they have that when the next disaster strikes – and domestic pressures mount – rich countries won't abandon their commitments. Trust, therefore, is key.

Even if rich countries made binding commitments to domestic climate policies at Cop26, this would be unlikely to get developing countries to sign a demanding agenda. There is a strong and entirely justified perception that the world's poor are being asked to make sacrifices to atone for rich countries' past sins of careless growth. The fact that these countries have now shown they care little about the wellbeing of poorer nations obviously does not help.

Developing countries will, quite reasonably, demand to be compensated for the more onerous choices that Cop26 demands of them. Research by colleagues in our MIT lab J-PAL, which runs the [King Climate Action](#)

[Initiative](#), demonstrates that this kind of conditional compensation works: in Uganda, paying landowners to not cut down trees has [curbed deforestation](#) and reduced carbon emissions at a cost of less than \$1 per tonne. Researchers are studying dozens of other policy innovations that could work across the world – from [emissions trading](#) to incentives to [reducing crop burning](#).

These schemes only work if developing countries trust they will be paid compensation. Such promises have been made: advanced economies have formally agreed to raise \$100bn per year for the Green Climate Fund to address the pressing mitigation and adaptation needs of developing countries. But at the moment, both developing countries and their citizens are questioning whether they can trust them to stick to their part of the bargain.

How do we rebuild trust quickly? Investing now to vaccinate the world is a chance to repair the damage done in the past year. The IMF price tag of \$50bn is a rounding error compared to what the US and Europe have already spent on Covid relief. Of course, money won't be enough: vaccines will need to be produced, stored and delivered. Pharmaceutical companies will, somehow, need to be persuaded to share their profits drawn from intellectual property; supply chains for all the ingredients to make the vaccines need to be streamlined to avoid bottlenecks. Then, a tremendous effort in developing countries will be required to efficiently administer the shots.

There is some faint indication that the world is heading in the right direction: the G20 countries just [acknowledged](#) “the importance of addressing the ACT-Accelerator funding gap, in order to help it fulfil its mandate”. Covax was recently able to sign an agreement to buy 200m doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccines. The US and the EU have agreed to donate relatively small numbers of unused jabs ([80m](#) and [100m](#), respectively). The Biden administration signalled it would be open to a waiver of patents on Covid-19 vaccines, which will undoubtedly put some fire under the pharmaceutical companies to find partners and produce more. And the heads of the World Trade Organization, World Bank, IMF and World Health Organization have jointly endorsed the IMF plan.

But this is all too little and too slow. Succeeding in this vaccination effort is our chance to show that the talk of a common community and a shared destiny is more than just words. To prove that it is there, let's start with vaccines.

- Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo were the joint winners of the 2019 Nobel prize in economic sciences

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Netanyahu embodied dishonest, divisive demagoguery. If he's gone, good riddance

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



Although the new coalition taking shape may not agree on much, the prime minister's downfall is long overdue



‘In power for far, far too long, Netanyahu has corroded Israel from the inside.’ Photograph: Sebastian Scheiner/AFP/Getty Images

‘In power for far, far too long, Netanyahu has corroded Israel from the inside.’ Photograph: Sebastian Scheiner/AFP/Getty Images

Fri 4 Jun 2021 12.15 EDT

It could be over before it starts. As you read this, it may already be unravelling. But a new government has been formed in Israel, thereby removing the man who has ruled that country longer than anyone else. [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) has dominated Israeli politics for most of the past quarter-century: first elected as prime minister in 1996, he has ruled Israel uninterrupted for the past 12 years. But now, if the new coalition holds together – a big if – the reign of Bibi, King of Israel, will come to an end. Even if we should have no illusions about what comes next, that itself is a cause for celebration.

It is also the new government’s sole, animating purpose. The motley collection of parties, which runs from the settler hard right through the centre to the liberal left – and which includes a Palestinian Islamist party – has next to nothing else in common. It cannot be described as hawkish or dove-ish, left or right: it is simply the anti-Netanyahu bloc, forged to prise his fingers off the prime ministerial desk once and for all.

That will only happen if the alliance holds together long enough to pass a confidence vote in the Knesset, which could be a week or more away. That's hardly a done deal – not when Netanyahu's supporters continue to harass and threaten members of the pro-settler Yamina party, whose leader, Naftali Bennett, is [slated to become the new PM](#). One or two of them may yet succumb to the pressure and death threats, and then it will be all but over.

Even if that happens, this moment will not have been without value. Its most significant element is the inclusion of Ra'am, the Islamist party. That breaks a taboo: the first time a genuine party of Israel's Arab minority will participate in the governing of the country. Of course that taboo should never have existed, shutting out 20% of Israel's citizens. But the image of a smiling Mansour Abbas alongside Bennett and the coalition's architect, the centrist former TV host and newspaper columnist Yair Lapid, will have an enduring power. On Wednesday, Israelis [waited](#) as the question of who would form their government rested on the blessing of a group of Islamic clerics and lay leaders, Ra'am's consultative council. Such a scenario would once have been unimaginable. That it happened in a country where Jews and Arabs were fighting each other on the streets just a few weeks ago is mind-boggling and heartening.

Still, those who long for a change in the dreadful status quo, an end to the occupation or even a small move towards Israeli-Palestinian coexistence, let alone equality, should not hold their breath. Ideologically, Bennett is even more hardline than Netanyahu. A former leader of the West Bank settlers and a longtime believer in [annexing occupied territory](#), he [once told](#) the Guardian that a Palestinian state was never going to happen and “would be a disaster for the next 200 years” if it did.

What's more, most analysts agree that Netanyahu was, relative to his predecessors, fairly risk-averse when it came to military activity. He felt no great need to prove his security credentials. It would fit a pattern if Bennett and Lapid turned out to be more, rather than less, bellicose, if only to defy Netanyahu's taunts that he alone is the true “defender of Israel”.

For all those reasons, it's wise to lower expectations. And yet Netanyahu's departure will still be grounds for qualified jubilation – because of all that he's done and all that he represents.

For Benjamin Netanyahu did not only entrench the occupation. He also embodied a dishonest, divisive, demagogic ethno-nationalism that echoed around the world, from Viktor Orbán's Hungary to Donald Trump's US. It showed a contempt for democratic norms, for any restraint on executive power and for the truth. It denigrated critics, promoted hacks, thugs and cronies, and was corrupt in its bones.

Witness how the Netanyahu era is ending – apparently – just as it began: in blood-curdling incitement. In late 1995, then opposition leader Netanyahu stood before rallies that denounced the would-be peacemaker Yitzhak Rabin as a traitor, with doctored images depicting him as a Palestinian terrorist or Nazi SS officer. The head of Israel's internal security agency went to see Netanyahu, [urging him to calm things down](#). Netanyahu refused and, before long, [Rabin was dead](#), slain by a Jewish extremist. Now some of the [same images](#) are being deployed against Bennett.

Divide and rule has been Netanyahu's guiding principle, recklessly pitting one group against the other. In the 2015 election, he mobilised his supporters on election day by warning that their Arab fellow citizens were going to the polls [“in droves”](#). It worked. This year, he manoeuvred to get Itamar Ben-Gvir, [leader of a racist, medievally bigoted party](#), into the Knesset, simply because he thought it would help him retain power. It's no wonder that Netanyahu has felt comfortable with the likes of Orbán, despite the [Hungarian leader's trafficking](#) in anti-Jewish tropes.

[An anti-Netanyahu coalition government would suggest Israelis are ready for change | Dahlia Scheindlin](#)
[Read more](#)

Netanyahu has attacked any institution that threatened to hold him to account or even to act as a check on his power, branding them part of a hated leftist elite. His assaults on the independence of the judiciary have been ceaseless. He appointed loyalists as attorney general and chief of police (and couldn't conceal his frustration when they acted impartially), and to the previously independent watchdog role of state comptroller.

He has tried to hobble the media, [shutting down a state broadcaster](#) deemed insufficiently loyal and [having a backer launch](#) a Pravda-esque daily

newspaper to hymn his praises. When a rival looked set to take the largely ceremonial role of president in 2014, Netanyahu [sought to abolish](#) the post altogether. He has trampled on valuable democratic conventions, including the one that says an indicted PM should step down. Instead, he has clung to office [even as he stands](#) trial on three major corruption charges.

In power for far, far too long, Netanyahu has corroded Israel from the inside. Replacing him with a government too divided to do much will not solve every problem, but it will solve one – and that's a start.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist
- Jonathan Freedland will be in conversation with Gordon Brown as part of our [digital festival](#) on Wednesday 9 June. [Book tickets here](#)

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OpinionAid

If we really are a ‘global Britain’ we must keep our commitment to international aid

Tobias Ellwood

As the G7 summit gathers, now is not the time for the UK to retreat on a key part of its soft power



The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, at the G7 finance ministers’ meeting in London on Friday. Photograph: Reuters

The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, at the G7 finance ministers’ meeting in London on Friday. Photograph: Reuters

Sat 5 Jun 2021 04.30 EDT

Next week the seven most powerful leaders in the democratic world meet at the G7 summit in Cornwall – literally to put the world to rights.

Britain, as host, has wisely invited three other top democratic nations – Australia, South Korea and India – to join the US, Canada, Japan, France, Germany and Italy.

The world is now faced with the clear and present danger that growing authoritarianism, extremism and the climate crisis now adds a host of new challenges to old ones. Add to this the consequences of a brutal pandemic that continues to take lives and wreck economies, and you begin to appreciate how busy the G7 agenda will be. Next week the democratic world should rise to the historic occasion.

There is very much a 1930s feel to the world at the moment: changing geopolitical powerbases, weak international institutions, economic hardship, competitive states investing in hard power, and an absence of western resolve and leadership. What we collectively believe in, stand for and are truly willing to defend is becoming increasingly under threat. As Britain starts to lift its head up after the distractions of Covid, and, indeed, Brexit, we see the world has changed and is now on a worrying trajectory.

At times like this, Britain needs to use its power and influence wisely. We can make great gains with our soft power – a key part of which is our world-leading commitment to international development aid.

I would be the first to say areas of the UK's aid budget could have been better spent. This is taxpayers' money, and when there is hardship at home I understand the resentment felt by many when we see it spent on projects that are hard to justify.

Yet our failure in [Afghanistan](#) – as our troops [set about withdrawing](#), 20 years after their deployment – is an extreme example of the wise utility of soft power being trumped by faith in hard power alone. If you want to put fires out, it cannot be done only by military means. There are a growing number of local fires around the world, the consequences of which – if left unattended – will spread to our doorstep. Mass migration is just one of them. This cannot be solved by greater Royal Navy presence in the English Channel but requires dealing with the challenges at the source. It's the duty of government to understand this, and then and explain it to the electorate.

Ministers have argued our aid budget must be cut because Britain's economy has shrunk. But this factor is built into the calculation to spend 0.7% of gross national income on overseas aid. The aid budget has [already shrunk](#), yet here we are imposing a further reduction – the [only G7 nation](#) to do so.

And well targeted aid can pay for itself. By supporting wider country strategy programmes, we can ease poverty and advance education – as well as help strengthen local governance and democratic institutions by investing in grassroots organisations. Pieced together, these efforts can lead to strengthened markets and greater prosperity, from which the UK can directly benefit.

This does not require Britain to do all the heavy lifting, but our international reach, connectivity and trust across the world means we can call ourselves a soft superpower (as the author [Jo Nye](#) put it, the ability to attract and co-opt rather than coerce). Britain is seen as an exemplar. The places where we invest our aid budgets and focus our soft power are often supported by other western countries that follow our lead. The work we do in this space is arguably why we are able to justify our seat on the UN security council.

Were we to cut our aid spending, other nations could very well follow suit: this could have short- and long-term security consequences. First, [cutting our programmes](#) in Yemen, Libya and Somalia, for example, would lead to increased child mortality. Children will simply die without our support. And removing the British soft power flag from war-torn areas would give space for extremists and non-state actors to further their grip on local communities.

More worryingly, our supportive bond with any nation might be replaced by another state, most likely China, which would pursue a very different bilateral relationship, most likely ensnaring yet another nation into economic programmes it can ill afford.

[Tory rebels expect to defeat government on overseas aid cuts](#)
[Read more](#)

This is the bigger picture I hope to articulate if given the opportunity to debate the 0.7% target in the [House of Commons on Monday](#). The G7 summit has already acknowledged the worrying trajectory of our world

splintering into two spheres of competing interests with many smaller nations obliged to choose sides. The G7 rightly want to design a counterweight to China's global programme. Thanks to our soft power status, Britain has earned the right to lead that design. But that hard-fought reputation would be severely damaged if we reduced our overseas aid footprint.

I hope Monday's debate will help widen our understanding of how Britain's overseas aid commitments not only cement our global moral leadership in upholding international values, but play a pivotal role in supporting our economy and strengthening national and international security.

The government rightly promotes a "global Britain" agenda that urges us to be "[a problem-solving, burden-sharing nation](#)", able to amplify our influence.

As our history shows, we are that Churchillian nation that steps forward when others hesitate. The next decade is going to get bumpy. Now is not the time to retreat on our soft power. Let's stay firm and honour our manifesto commitment.

- Tobias Ellwood is the Conservative MP for Bournemouth East and chair of the House of Commons defence select committee

[Hadley Freeman's Weekend column](#)[Social history](#)

‘Mum, what’s a phone box?’: watching 80s films with my kids has become a history lesson

[Hadley Freeman](#)



I expected to have to explain some Americanisms to them, but I didn’t anticipate that I would be explaining actual history



A phone box, Alex Winter and Keanu Reeves in Bill And Ted's Excellent Adventure, 1989. Photograph: The Hollywood Archive/Alamy

A phone box, Alex Winter and Keanu Reeves in Bill And Ted's Excellent Adventure, 1989. Photograph: The Hollywood Archive/Alamy

Sat 5 Jun 2021 04.00 EDT

“There is no such thing as reproduction. When two people decide to have a baby, they engage in an act of production.” So begins [Andrew Solomon](#)’s brilliant book [Far From The Tree](#), about parents learning to accept their children’s differences, which I read during my first pregnancy. I get it, I thought. Parents shouldn’t narcissistically expect their children to be the same as them. But just because my kids aren’t the same as me, that doesn’t mean they shouldn’t be forced to have exactly the same childhood as me.

My parents very much did not make me watch [Howdy Doody](#), or whatever shows they grew up with, but while other modern children are raised on CBeebies and [Paw Patrol](#), mine get 1980s TV shows and movies poured down their gullets. This allows them to enjoy wholesome classics such as [Dogtanian](#) and [The Princess Bride](#), and allows me to relive my peak years. Everybody wins! Except, possibly, my children, who, on seeing a little boy dressed as Harry Potter on Halloween, asked if he was the witch in The

Wizard Of Oz. They're like the Amish kid in [Witness](#), bemused by the modern world.

But they're also bemused by the past. I expected to have to explain some things to them, mainly from the American shows – [Mister Rogers](#), [Reading Rainbow](#) – that I have merrily forced on them. You know, educating them in the exotic linguistic differences: “zee” for “zed” and so on. But I didn't anticipate that I would be explaining actual ancient history.

This started when we watched [Back To The Future](#), which is one of those rare 1980s films I watched as a kid that is just about suitable for kids. (On that subject, Police Academy is *way* racier than my memories of Mahoney suggested.) My children, naturally, loved [Marty McFly](#) (they didn't fall *that* far from the tree) and they grasped the concept of time travel. But something else threw them. It's in the scene when Marty's in the [diner in 1955](#) ... what is that weird box he's walking into?

“That's a phone box. It's what people used to make calls in before they had mobiles,” I said. They stared at me, as if I spoke of a time before people had oxygen (which doesn't say great things about how much they see me with my phone, but let's ignore that). It got worse: what is that book Marty's looking in?

“That's a phone book. It's how people found out other people's numbers,” I said, suddenly understanding how my grandfather felt that time he told me about growing up without indoor plumbing.

Now, let's take this apart. Back To The Future is about a teenager who travels back in time 30 years. Sure, people in 1955 don't know about diet sodas, or padded jackets, or [reruns](#), and [Chuck Berry songs don't exist yet](#). But, overall, the world in 1955 is recognisable to a kid from 1985. He knows what a phone box and phone book are, for a start.

To kids born in 2015, however, as my twins were, both worlds are completely baffling. Why look up someone's phone number in a book instead of on the phone itself? (Thank heavens Marty didn't then use a phone card, surely the most baffling phone-accessory-from-the-past of all.) It's the same thing with [Sesame Street](#) (if Bert can't find Ernie, why doesn't

he just call him?); with [The Muppet Show](#) (why can't Kermit just ask Google where he could find a new theatre?); with [The Karate Kid](#) (why doesn't Daniel just take an Uber instead of always riding his bike?).

[There's nothing guilty about the pleasure I get from TV shows by women, for women | Hadley Freeman](#)

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Times change, technology changes: this has always been a source of comedy for time-travel movies (although Bill And Ted's Excellent Adventure dates itself now, given Bill and Ted travel [in a bloody phone box](#)). But the changes over the past 40 years, not just in our daily lives but in how we think, have been so vast and fast that the past is another solar system. This explains the rise of micro-generations, such as the latest one, dubbed "[geriatric millennials](#)", referring to anyone born between 1980 and 1985, meaning those who remember life pre-Facebook, but not pre-Myspace. I'm even more geriatric and am a "xennial", between generation X and (geriatric) millennials, which is defined as "neither as disaffected as gen X-ers nor as optimistic as millennials", or, as I define it, "a little too obsessed with My So-Called Life".

Mainly, this is down to the rise of the internet and mobile phones, both of which have obliterated things kids in particular relied on for decades, from Encyclopedia Britannicas to actual phone calls, which have been replaced by likes and emojis. How to explain all the Walkmans in 80s movies? The Discmans in 90s movies? And – soon – iPods in 2000s movies? (A phone that doesn't phone? Genius!) Life moves pretty fast, as an 80s movie once said. It certainly seems to for me, because while my kids are still five, I now sound like an 85-year-old: "Gather close, children, as I tell you about something called the PalmPilot..."

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2021.06.05 - Around the world

- [California Katie Hill ordered to pay \\$220,000 in costs after failed intimate photos suit](#)
- [Iran Supreme leader says rejected election candidates were 'wronged'](#)
- [Facebook Trump responds to ban by hinting at return to White House](#)
- [Facebook Trump's account to be suspended for two years](#)

California

Katie Hill ordered to pay \$220,000 in costs after failed intimate photos suit

- Ex-congresswoman had sued Daily Mail and two journalists
- Hill resigned from Congress in 2019 after photos published



Katie Hill tweeted: 'A judge just ordered me to PAY the Daily Mail more than \$100k for the privilege of them publishing nude photos of me obtained from an abuser.' Photograph: J Scott Applewhite/AP

Katie Hill tweeted: 'A judge just ordered me to PAY the Daily Mail more than \$100k for the privilege of them publishing nude photos of me obtained from an abuser.' Photograph: J Scott Applewhite/AP

Associated Press in Los Angeles

Fri 4 Jun 2021 17.49 EDT

The former California congresswoman Katie Hill has been ordered to pay about \$220,000 in attorneys' fees to the Daily Mail and two conservative journalists she sued after the [publication of intimate photos](#) without her consent.

[Ex-congresswoman Katie Hill is 'still here' – and she wants the world to know it](#)

[Read more](#)

The Democrat, who briefly represented a district north of Los Angeles, accused them in a revenge-porn lawsuit of violating the law by publishing or distributing the compromising photos. The lawsuit was thrown out earlier this year on first amendment grounds, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Hill resigned in 2019 after the publication of the photos and amid a House ethics investigation into allegations of an inappropriate sexual relationship with one of her congressional staffers, which she denied.

On Wednesday, judge Yolanda Orozco of Los Angeles county superior court awarded about \$105,000 to the parent company of the Mail. Hill had called for a boycott of the tabloid on Twitter and sought donations for her legal costs.

“A judge just ordered me to PAY the Daily Mail more than \$100k for the privilege of them publishing nude photos of me obtained from an abuser,” she tweeted. “The justice system is broken for victims.”

A spokeswoman told the newspaper Hill plans to appeal against the rulings that dismissed her lawsuit. An attorney for the Daily Mail did not respond to a request for comment.

The judge previously ordered Hill to pay about \$84,000 to the attorneys of Jennifer Van Laar, managing editor of the conservative website Red State, and about \$30,000 to lawyers representing the radio producer Joseph Messina. Hill initially accused Messina of being part of a conspiracy to distribute the pictures, but dropped her claim against him earlier this year.

Krista Lee Baughman, an attorney representing Van Laar and Messina, told the Los Angeles Times the ruling showed that “those who file speech-chilling [intimidation] lawsuits must pay the price”.

Hill, 33, gained national attention in 2018 when she was elected to Congress in a district long under Republican control. She was celebrated as the face of millennial change and was close to the House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, a fellow [California](#) Democrat.

Less than a year later, as Hill was going through a divorce, Red State published stories alleging she had an affair with a male congressional staffer and that she and her husband, Kenneth Heslep, had a previous relationship with a female campaign worker. The website and the Daily Mail published provocative pictures.

Hill confirmed that she and Heslep had a relationship with the campaign worker, which she conceded was inappropriate because the woman was a subordinate.

In December, Hill sued the two media outlets, Van Laar, Messina and Heslep, arguing that they violated California’s revenge-porn law by distributing or publishing intimate images, including photographs that showed her nude.

[Katie Hill: Matt Gaetz backed me but he must quit if nude-photo reports are true](#)

[Read more](#)

The publications and Van Laar successfully argued that Hill’s lawsuit failed to meet the requirements of the revenge-porn statute. They also asserted that they had a first amendment right to publish information about an elected official’s behavior that is newsworthy.

The parent company of Red State has not sought attorneys’ fees, the newspaper said. Heslep has not filed any legal responses and does not have a lawyer on record in the case.

Hill [wrote a book about her experience](#) and formed a political committee to support women and younger candidates, including those of color. She has not ruled out another run for public office.

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Iran

Iran's supreme leader says rejected election candidates were 'wronged'

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei concedes that some candidates disqualified from 18 June vote were unfairly treated



Ayatollah Ali Khamenei made the comments in a televised speech on Friday.
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei made the comments in a televised speech on Friday.
Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[*Patrick Wintour*](#) and agencies

Fri 4 Jun 2021 15.19 EDT

Iran's supreme leader has said that some candidates rejected from this month's presidential election had been "wronged" and unfairly smeared, but the country's powerful Guardian Council said the decision to ban them would not be reversed.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say on Iran's affairs, last month endorsed the watchdog's rejection of several prominent candidates – including former parliament speaker Ali Larijani – for the 18 June vote.

But in a speech on Friday, Khamenei said some of the disqualified candidates had been treated unfairly. “Some candidates were wronged. They were accused of untrue things that were unfortunately spread throughout the internet too. Protecting people's honour is one of the most important issues. I call on the responsible bodies to restore their honour,” he said in a televised speech.

[Iran's leadership accused of fixing presidential election](#)

[Read more](#)

In response, Mohammad Mohajeri, one of Larijani's media advisers, said: “The Guardian Council must explain clearly, quickly and transparently why such a big mistake has been made, and every person and entity that has given false information must be made public,”

Some members of Iran's parliament and other candidates for the presidential race called for Larijani's reinstatement even though the election campaign is well under way.

Larijani had taken his shock disqualification 10 days ago with little public complaint, saying he had done God's duty by applying to stand.

The Guardian Council always filters candidates in Iranian elections to reduce the field to about six or seven, but its pruning this year was attacked as some of the most nakedly political disqualifications in the republic's history.

Iran's reformist vice-president, Ishaq Jahangiri, and former deputy interior minister Mostafa Tajzadeh were also left out. The criteria for exclusion – including factors such as age, piety and experience – give the council wide leeway.

The filtering of the field has led some reformists to say they will boycott the election since they have no candidate they can support, and others to rally

behind the candidate closest to their thinking left in the contest, the former governor of Iran's central bank Abdul Hemmati. The former governor joined the calls for Larijani's reinstatement.

Larijani's brother Sadegh Larijani, a member of the Guardian Council, had denounced his brother's disqualification, saying that it was because of false information provided by the intelligence services.

But the Guardian Council said its decision to ban the candidates had not been affected by any rumours against them, and the prohibitions still stood.

The decision arguably leaves Iran in the worst situation with the Supreme leader acknowledging that a serious candidate has been wrongfully excluded from the field but nothing practical will be done to rectify the injustice.

It would have been an extraordinary step for the council to revise a decision that was reportedly taken by nine votes to three, and would raise profound questions about its legitimacy.

The authorities, secular and clerical, in recent days have been warning Iranians they have a moral duty to vote in the elections.

The warnings reflect fears that, with the field so fixed, the turnout for the elections will be very low – well below 40% – raising questions about the mandate of the victor. The reinsertion of Larijani into the field might have reignited interest in a contest.

At present, the authorities appear to have left little to chance to ensure Ibrahim Ra'isi, the head of the judiciary, wins.

Donald Trump

Donald Trump responds to Facebook ban by hinting at return to White House

Taunt directed at Mark Zuckerberg suggests either a presidential run or the unfounded belief that ex-president might be reinstated

- [US politics – live coverage](#)



Donald Trump leaves the White House with his wife, Melania, to board Marine One ahead of the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden on 20 January. Photograph: Leah Millis/Reuters

Donald Trump leaves the White House with his wife, Melania, to board Marine One ahead of the inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden on 20 January. Photograph: Leah Millis/Reuters

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York
[@MartinPengelly](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 15.43 EDT

Donald Trump has appeared to drop his strongest hint yet at another presidential run in 2024, responding to news of his two-year ban from Facebook on Friday by saying he would not invite Mark Zuckerberg to dinner “next time I’m in the White House”.

It has also been [widely reported this week](#) that Trump believes he will be reinstated in the presidency by August.

[Facebook to suspend Trump’s account for two years](#)

[Read more](#)

He will not. But in his statement on Friday he did not say if he thought he would return to the White House because he would be reinstated or because he would run for the Republican nomination again and then defeat Joe Biden or another Democrat.

Trump’s statement read: “Next time I’m in the White House there will be no more dinners, at his request, with Mark Zuckerberg and his wife. It will be all business!”

Trump has a history of using public statements to troll his opponents and a long record of lies and exaggerations and promoting baseless conspiracy theories. At the same time Trump has maintained a strong grip on the Republican party and there is intense speculation about whether or not he would run for the presidency again.

Nick Clegg, the former British deputy prime minister who is now Facebook’s vice-president of global affairs, announced the social media website’s ban on Trump until 2023.

It follows the recommendation of Facebook’s oversight board. Trump has been suspended from the social media site since January, when he incited supporters to attack the US Capitol in service of his lie that his defeat by Joe Biden was the result of electoral fraud.

In a first statement on the suspension, Trump said it was an “insult” to those who voted for him in “the rigged presidential election” and said: “They shouldn’t be allowed to get away with this censoring and silencing.”

Amid [striking polling](#) about support for his lies among Republican voters, Trump still dominates polls of possible contenders for the party's nomination in 2024.

Trump appears to be convincing himself the election was stolen and that some mechanism exists by which he might be reinstated, a belief apparently stoked by Mike Lindell, the chief executive of MyPillow and a hardline Trump supporter.

[According to CNN](#), which confirmed reporting by Maggie Haberman of the New York Times and by the conservative National Review, Trump has asked advisers: “What do you think of this theory?”

A source also told CNN: “People have told him that it's not true.”

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Donald Trump

Facebook to suspend Trump's account for two years

Decision follows oversight board recommendation over ex-president's post on Capitol attack



Donald Trump's Facebook and Instagram accounts have been suspended since January. Photograph: Olivier Douliery/AFP/Getty Images

Donald Trump's Facebook and Instagram accounts have been suspended since January. Photograph: Olivier Douliery/AFP/Getty Images

[Julia Carrie Wong](#) in San Francisco

[@juliacarriew](#)

Fri 4 Jun 2021 13.57 EDT

Facebook is suspending Donald Trump's account for two years, the company has announced in a highly anticipated decision that follows months of debate over the former president's future on social media.

“Given the gravity of the circumstances that led to Mr Trump's suspension, we believe his actions constituted a severe violation of our rules which merit

the highest penalty available under the new enforcement protocols. We are suspending his accounts for two years, effective from the date of the initial suspension on January 7 this year,” Nick Clegg, Facebook’s vice-president of global affairs, said [in a statement on Friday](#).

[FBI chief likens ransomware threat to 9/11 as Biden plans to confront Putin at G7 – live](#)
[Read more](#)

At the end of the suspension period, [Facebook](#) said, it would work with experts to assess the risk to public safety posed by reinstating Trump’s account. “We will evaluate external factors, including instances of violence, restrictions on peaceful assembly and other markers of civil unrest,” Clegg wrote. “If we determine that there is still a serious risk to public safety, we will extend the restriction for a set period of time and continue to re-evaluate until that risk has receded.”

He added that once the suspension was lifted, “a strict set of rapidly escalating sanctions” would be triggered if Trump violated Facebook policies.

Friday’s decision comes just weeks [after input](#) from the Facebook oversight board – an independent advisory committee of academics, media figures and former politicians – who recommended in early May that Trump’s account not be reinstated.

However the oversight board punted the ultimate decision on Trump’s fate back to Facebook itself, giving the company six months to make the final call. The board [said](#) that Facebook’s “indeterminate and standardless penalty of indefinite suspension” for Trump was “not appropriate”, criticism that Clegg wrote the company “absolutely accept[s]”.

The new policy allows for [escalating penalties](#) of suspensions for one month, six months, one year, and two years.

The former president [has been suspended](#) since January, following the deadly Capitol attack that saw a mob of Trump supporters storm Congress in an attempt to overturn the 2020 presidential election. The company

suspended Trump's Facebook and Instagram accounts over posts in which he appeared to praise the actions of the rioters, saying that his actions posed too great a risk to remain on the platform.

Following the Capitol riot, Trump was suspended from several major tech platforms, including Twitter, YouTube and Snapchat. Twitter has since [made](#) its ban permanent.

The former president called Facebook's decision "an insult to the record-setting 75m people, plus many others, who voted for us in the 2020 Rigged Presidential Election," in a statement. "They shouldn't be allowed to get away with this censoring and silencing, and ultimately, we will win." Trump received fewer than 75m votes in the 2020 election, which he lost. He [also hinted at](#) a 2024 run.



Nick Clegg, a Facebook executive, said Trump's actions 'constituted a severe violation of our rules'. Photograph: Niklas Halle'N/AFP/Getty Images

Facebook also [announced](#) that it would revoke its policy of treating speech by politicians as inherently newsworthy and exempt from enforcement of its content rules that ban, among other things, hate speech. The decision marks

a major reversal of a set of policies that Clegg and Facebook's CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, once championed as crucial to democracy and free speech.

The company first created the newsworthiness exemption to its content rules in 2016, following [international outcry](#) over its decision to censor posts including the historic “napalm girl” photograph for violating its ban on nude images of children. The new rule tacitly acknowledged the importance of editorial judgment in Facebook's censorship decisions.

In 2019, at a [speech](#) at the Atlantic festival in Washington, Clegg revealed that Facebook had decided to treat all speech by politicians as newsworthy, exempting it from content rules. “Would it be acceptable to society at large to have a private company in effect become a self-appointed referee for everything that politicians say? I don't believe it would be,” Clegg said at the time.

Under the new rules, Clegg wrote Friday, “when we assess content for newsworthiness, we will not treat content posted by politicians any differently from content posted by anyone else”.

The newsworthiness exemption is by no means the only policy area in which Facebook treats politicians differently from other users. The company also exempts politicians' speech from its third-party fact-checking and maintains a list of high-profile accounts that are exempted from the AI systems that Facebook relies on for enforcement of many of its rules.

Facebook did not immediately respond to questions about whether those policies remain in effect.

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Education policy

Covid: generation of children in England ‘at risk’ from lost learning

Prof Lee Elliot Major’s comments follow resignation of schools recovery chief over catch-up row

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Pupils attend a maths lesson at a primary school in England. Photograph: Jason Cairnduff/Reuters

Pupils attend a maths lesson at a primary school in England. Photograph: Jason Cairnduff/Reuters

[*Lucy Campbell*](#)

Thu 3 Jun 2021 05.33 EDT

A generation of children are at risk of being failed by the government if it does not properly address the educational needs caused by lost learning during the Covid pandemic, a social mobility expert has said.

The comments came after the unexpected [resignation of the government's schools recovery chief](#), Sir Kevan Collins, on Wednesday in protest at its watered-down offer of £1.5bn in funding to help schoolchildren in England catch up on lost learning – a tenth of the £15bn he had recommended.

In his resignation letter, Collins said the “half-hearted approach risks failing thousands of pupils” and fell “far short” of what was needed to meet the scale of the challenge. He said disadvantaged and vulnerable children would suffer most and the impact was likely to be “particularly severe” in parts of the country where schools were closed for longer, such as the north.

Lee Elliot Major, a professor of social mobility at Exeter University, told BBC Radio 4's Today programme that children in [England](#) had lost 110 of 190 classroom days, and about 2 million children did no learning at all during the first lockdown.

Describing Collins as “one of the most respected” people in the sector, Major said he would not have taken the decision to step down lightly. “I just hope it's a wake-up call for government to see this as the beginning of a much bigger, more ambitious programme.

“What we do know, and there is a lot of evidence around this, is that extra teaching for children will have huge benefits. And remember this is an investment for the future. If we don't address these issues now, the real fear is that we will fail a whole generation.

“This is about a whole generation of children and so my belief is that there is compelling evidence that, if done well, if you extend teaching, then that will help us catch up. I don't see any other way of doing it.”

The Home Office minister Victoria Atkins said the government had not ruled out extending the school day to help children catch up after the pandemic, as she defended what she called the “huge” investment in recovery plans. She

told Today: “We are reviewing this recommendation about extending the school day.”

Atkins said the education recovery fund was “very much focused on what we can deliver and deliver quickly”, despite Collins citing in his resignation letter that the package of support was “too narrow, too small and will be delivered too slowly”. She said she had not read his statement and disputed that he was alleging those worst affected by the pandemic had been failed by the plans.

The minister told Sky News the government was “determined to get [children] back on track” and insisted the £1.4bn announced on Wednesday for tutoring was “a huge amount of money”.

But the senior Conservative MP Robert Halfon, who chairs the Commons education select committee, said ministers must “decide their priorities in terms of education”, adding that the Treasury could “find the money from the back of the sofa” if there was the political will.

He told Today: “Of course there are funding constraints but the Treasury announced over £16bn extra for defence only last year, we’ve got £800m being spent on a new research agency, £200m being spent on a yacht.

“So where there is the political will, the Treasury can find the money from the back of the sofa, and there has to be that political will because we need a long-term plan for education, a proper funding settlement.”

He said the [damage caused by the pandemic to younger children](#) had been “a disaster” in terms of mental health, attainment, safeguarding and life chances. “We need some radical thinking, some thinking out of the box, a proper long-term plan [for education] and I will keep campaigning for that, and a proper funding settlement so that that plan is properly resourced.”

Schools

Schools should not send exam-year pupils home early, says Ofsted head

Exclusive: Amanda Spielman says it is concerning pupils are going on study leave despite there being no exams



Many year 11s are in line to have a 100-day holiday before the new term starts in September. Photograph: parkerphotography/Alamy

Many year 11s are in line to have a 100-day holiday before the new term starts in September. Photograph: parkerphotography/Alamy

[Richard Adams](#) *Education editor*

Thu 3 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Schools in England should continue to educate pupils for the remainder of the school year, rather than giving them an extended holiday as “study leave” for exams that were cancelled, the head of the Ofsted has said.

Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools, said it was "concerning" that secondary schools were allowing pupils on GCSE and A-level courses to end the summer term six weeks or more early, meaning that some 15 and 16-year-olds would have 100 days of holiday before the new year started in September.

Spielman said [Ofsted](#) "will want to know" how schools are using the remainder of the term to help their pupils in the exam year groups – year 11 and year 13 – catch up on learning lost during the pandemic lockdowns.

[Learning time for children declined as 2020 Covid lockdown progressed – study](#)

[Read more](#)

Schools usually allow students to go on study leave before their exams. This year exams for GCSEs, BTecs and [A-levels](#) have been cancelled and replaced by teacher assessment, but many schools still allowed students to leave at the end of May, after the deadline for work to be included in teacher assessments.

Spielman said in a statement to the Guardian: "The Department for Education has set clear expectations for schools to encourage year 11 and 13 pupils to continue their education during the last half of the summer term, even if the work they do doesn't contribute towards their final grades.

"This makes sense as many pupils have struggled to learn remotely, and so haven't got as far as they might otherwise have done. This leaves them less well-prepared for post-16 or post-18 education, so it is concerning that some pupils could be allowed to finish the term early.

"We will want to know how schools are using the remainder of the summer term for these year groups."

The DfE's coronavirus guidance tells school leaders that "a period of independent study leave may not be applicable" this year. The guidance suggests schools make "appropriate judgments" on activities for year 11s, including "remote provision combined with attendance in person".

A DfE spokesperson said: “Our guidance strongly encourages all schools and colleges to maximise opportunities during the summer term to support those students to progress to the next stage of their education, training or work.”

But school leaders say the procedure to create teacher-assessed grades (Tags) used to replace A-levels and [GCSEs](#) is time-consuming and demanding, so keeping the pupils in school for longer would be impractical.

One head from a central London school said Tags had created “10 times the normal amount of work” for teachers and a “bureaucratic nightmare” of changing demands from the exam boards, leaving childcare rather than education as the only option if year 11s were to remain in school.

Other heads said they feared many students would simply refuse to attend, and efforts to make them do so would not be supported by parents.

But the parent of a year 11 student in London said she was shocked when her son finished school for the year on 21 May without any activities offered.

“I understand schools have had a terribly challenging year, but surely the government should have given this some thought after our children’s education has suffered so much,” the parent said.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said many schools were putting on extra provision. “Their ability to do this is constrained by the huge workload pressures they are having to juggle, particularly around the extremely time-consuming process of assessing students and submitting grades to the exam boards.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jun/03/schools-should-not-send-exam-year-pupils-home-early-says-ofsted-head>

[Education policy](#)

Education recovery chief quits in English schools catch-up row

Sir Kevan Collins said to be dismayed that his long-awaited £15bn proposals were watered down to a £1.4bn package

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Sir Kevan Collins: ‘More will be needed to meet the scale of the challenge.’
Photograph: TC/Alamy

Sir Kevan Collins: ‘More will be needed to meet the scale of the challenge.’
Photograph: TC/Alamy

[Sally Weale](#) *Education correspondent*

Wed 2 Jun 2021 12.54 EDT

The government's education catch-up chief has resigned in protest over the prime minister's scaled-down recovery plan, warning it "does not come close" to meeting the needs of children whose education has been thrown into chaos by the pandemic.

In an emotional statement outlining why he could not remain in his post, Sir Kevan Collins said advising the government on the education recovery plan for England's pupils had been the most important task of his professional life.

[Covid catch-up plan for England pupils 'pitiful compared with other countries'](#)

[Read more](#)

But he said the government's catch-up offer – a £1.4bn plan announced hours earlier, which he said would mean the equivalent of just £22 per child in the average primary school – "betrays an undervaluation of the importance of education".

He added: "A half-hearted approach risks failing hundreds of thousands of pupils. The support announced by government so far does not come close to meeting the scale of the challenge and is why I have no option but to resign from my post."

Collins's resignation came after his proposals for a "landmark investment" of £15bn in teachers, tutoring and an extended school day to help children catch up were watered down to [£1.4bn](#) for schools in England in an announcement by the Department for Education (DfE) on Wednesday morning.

Pulling no punches, Collins said the package of support fell "far short" of what was needed. "It is too narrow, too small and will be delivered too slowly," he said, adding that the average primary school will directly receive just £6,000 a year, equivalent to £22 per child.

Other countries are spending far more, including the US which is investing £1,600 per young person, or £2,500 a head in the Netherlands, according to figures provided by the Education Policy Institute.

Collins also said not enough was being done to help vulnerable pupils, children in early years or 16- to 19-year-olds. “Above all, I am concerned that the package announced yesterday betrays an undervaluation of the importance of education, for individuals and as a driver of a more prosperous and healthy society.”

His resignation from the voluntary post is a blow to the government’s post-Covid education plans, which appear to have been severely curtailed by the Treasury. Sources close to Collins said he was optimistic his ambitious programme would get the go-ahead after a series of positive meetings with the chancellor and the prime minister.

But about a month ago at one of the meetings, he was asked to leave the room, according to one source. “Suddenly the Treasury were not playing ball. They thought it was all too much.”

The DfE attempted to persuade Collins to stay, promising more money in the months to come with the autumn comprehensive spending review on the horizon, but the dramatic downscaling of funding and ambition made left him believing he had little choice but to quit.

“You don’t necessarily go into these things thinking you’ll get everything you want,” said one senior education figure. “But when the prime minister asks you to do something, then only delivers 10% of what’s required, it’s pretty difficult to take the process seriously.”

In his resignation letter to the prime minister, Collins said it would be impossible to deliver a successful recovery without “significantly greater support” than the government has so far committed to.

“I am concerned that the apparent savings offered by an incremental approach to recovery represent a false economy, as learning losses that are not addressed quickly are likely to compound.”

He went on: “The [package of measures announced today](#) provides valuable support, including important investment in teaching quality and tutoring. However ... I do not believe it is credible that a successful recovery can be achieved with a programme of support of this size.”

A former teacher who went on to be the director of children's services and chief executive in Tower Hamlets, east London, Collins is one of the most well-respected figures in the world of education and his appointment to the role in February added significant credibility to the government's education recovery plans.

He was most recently head of the Education Endowment Foundation, which examines evidence for what works in education and is widely trusted across the sector.

Responding to his resignation, Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said: "We know that Sir Kevan had much bolder and broader plans but that these required substantially more investment than the government was willing to provide. He's tried his hardest on behalf of children and young people, but, in the final analysis, the political will just wasn't there to support him."

A No 10 spokesperson said: "The prime minister is hugely grateful to Sir Kevan for his work in helping pupils catch up and recover from the effects of the pandemic. The government will continue to focus on education recovery and making sure no child is left behind with their learning, with over £3bn committed for catch-up so far."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jun/02/education-recovery-chief-kevan-collins-quit-english-schools-catch-up-row>

2021.06.03 - Coronavirus

- [Live Coronavirus: Hong Kong to vaccinate over-12s; Bulgaria to share doses with Balkan neighbours](#)
- [Travel EU delays adding UK to Covid 'white list' over fears of Delta variant](#)
- ['Canary in the coalmine' Expert expresses fears over Covid outbreaks at Bristol schools](#)
- [Travel restrictions England could reconsider traffic-light status of some countries](#)

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UK reports 5,274 new cases; Italy opens vaccinations for all over-12s – as it happened

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[European Union](#)

EU delays adding UK to Covid ‘white list’ over fears of Delta variant

Decision not to lift travel restrictions follows rise in cases linked to variant first identified in India

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Travellers arrive at Lisbon airport. Portugal has said it welcomes British tourists despite the EU’s official recommendation. Photograph: Horacio Villalobos/Corbis/Getty Images

Travellers arrive at Lisbon airport. Portugal has said it welcomes British tourists despite the EU’s official recommendation. Photograph: Horacio Villalobos/Corbis/Getty Images

[Daniel Boffey](#) in Brussels

Wed 2 Jun 2021 11.12 EDT

The EU has delayed putting the UK on a “white list” of countries from where non-essential travel into the bloc is approved because of concerns about the rise in cases linked to the Delta variant first identified in India.

Japan, which is in an extended state of emergency during which there has been a sustained reduction in the number of new infections, has been added to the list, diplomatic sources said. The country is due to host the Olympic Games on 23 July.

The decision in principle was made during a meeting of ambassadors in Brussels on Wednesday. Sources said the UK’s status would be examined again on 14 June.

Member states are recommended to lift travel restrictions on people coming from countries on the EU’s white list, which is currently composed of Israel, New Zealand, Rwanda, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and Australia.

The UK’s infection level meets the threshold to enter the list but [concerns over a rising trend](#), largely driven by the highly transmissible Delta variant, prompted EU ambassadors to be cautious.

Just over 25,240 people tested positive in the UK over the last seven days, up 34.7% on the previous week. Hospital admissions were up 17.1% from 742 to 869.

Despite the official recommendation to member states, a number of countries in [Europe](#), including Greece and Portugal, have said they will welcome British tourists coming for their summer holidays.

The infection level in the UK remains comparatively low, with 3,165 cases reported on 1 June. The Office for National Statistics also reported on Wednesday that the number of deaths was at its lowest level for eight months. There were 9,860 deaths from all causes registered in the week ending 21 May.

Of these, 107 had “novel coronavirus” mentioned on the death certificate. At the peak of the second wave, in the week ending 29 January, Covid-19 accounted for 45.7% of registered deaths.

Diplomatic sources said the debate in the UK over whether to fully unlock restrictions on 21 June had fed into the EU's debate over entry to the white list.

A growing number of scientists and advisers to the government have urged the prime minister to delay the final lifting of restrictions, including the removal of social contact limits and the opening of nightclubs and large events, for fear of a third wave.

[Boris Johnson said on Wednesday](#) that there was “nothing in the data at the moment that means we cannot go ahead with step four” of lifting coronavirus restrictions, though he appeared less bullish than in previous days.

“We’ve got to be so cautious,” he said. “We always knew that was going to happen. What we need to work out is to what extent the vaccination programme has protected enough of us, particularly the elderly and vulnerable, against a new surge, and there I’m afraid the data is still ambiguous. The best the scientists can say at the moment is we just need to give it a little bit longer.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/02/eu-delays-adding-uk-to-covid-white-list-over-fears-of-delta-variant>

Coronavirus

Expert expresses fears over Covid outbreaks at Bristol schools

Schoolchildren could be becoming ‘canary in coalmine’ for rising number of Delta variant cases

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Rising cases of Covid in children are worrying, say experts, because they come into contact with more people and spread it to older adults. Photograph: Felix Clay/The Guardian

Rising cases of Covid in children are worrying, say experts, because they come into contact with more people and spread it to older adults. Photograph: Felix Clay/The Guardian

[Rachel Hall](#) and [Linda Geddes](#)

Wed 2 Jun 2021 13.42 EDT

Outbreaks of the Delta variant at several schools across [Bristol](#) could signal that coronavirus infection rates in the city are higher than reported, an expert has said.

Around 11 primary and secondary schools are understood to be affected by the outbreak, with some cases confirmed as the variant first identified in India.

A parent at one school said that 12 cases had been confirmed across various year groups, including one member of staff. Most schools broke up for half term on 28 May.

A Bristol city council spokesperson said: “We are aware there are a number of confirmed and probable cases of the variant of concern ... at some schools in Bristol. Our public health teams are working closely with these schools and Public Health England to make sure that anyone required to self-isolate has done so. As a precautionary measure, these staff and students are also being asked to take a PCR test.

“This particular variant of concern is more infectious, but we would like to reassure all residents of Bristol that work is in hand to identify and follow up all confirmed and probable cases with intensive contact tracing as part of our local outbreak management plan arrangements. We would like to encourage everyone to take part in regular rapid testing.”

Bristol’s rate of infection was [19 per 100,000](#) on 21 May, suggesting that either child-to-child transmission in schools could be driving a local epidemic or that rates in the community are higher than reported, potentially because of a lack of testing taking place.

One parent whose two children tested positive last week said: “Everyone was really shocked, because the Covid figures for Bristol were, and still are, extremely low.”

Julian Tang, a professor of respiratory sciences at Leicester University, said Bristol’s example could signal that schoolchildren are becoming the “canary in the coal mine” for rising case numbers in the community because they

come into contact with more people and may be more likely to be tested by worried parents.

It could also signal that cases in the community are going undetected because unvaccinated people, who are mostly less vulnerable to severe effects from the virus, may be less likely to get tests as they are not worried about it or because they are concerned about being unable to work or socialise, he said.

The outbreaks undermined messaging from the government that “kids aren’t at risk and don’t pose any problems”, Tang said. “The virus doesn’t cause a lot of harm in children, but the risk is they spread it to older adults.”

Bristol was among eight local areas to receive incomplete data on positive tests following problems with the software used in England’s test and trace system in April and May. The failure has been blamed for a surge in the Delta variant in some of the worst affected parts of the country.

[Data from Public Health England](#) published last week showed 28 recorded cases of the variant in Bristol, compared with 1,354 in Bolton, the worst affected local area. There is a long time lag on this data, because genomic sequencing can take up to three weeks to determine the variant.

Scientists have called on the government to speed up the vaccination rate to prevent the spread of the Delta variant and [recommended](#) that the final phase of the roadmap to reopen the economy on 21 June be delayed until transmission rates slow down to prevent a third wave.

[Coronavirus](#)

England to give quarantine-free status to ‘handful’ of new places, say sources

Portugal’s green list status under review as PM warns restrictions could be reimposed for some countries

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Tourists and locals riding a bus in Lisbon: an uptick in Covid cases in Portugal has put the country’s status on England’s green list at risk. Photograph: Horacio Villalobos/Corbis/Getty Images

Tourists and locals riding a bus in Lisbon: an uptick in Covid cases in Portugal has put the country’s status on England’s green list at risk. Photograph: Horacio Villalobos/Corbis/Getty Images

[Jessica Elgot](#), [Aubrey Allegretti](#) and [Daniel Boffey](#)

Wed 2 Jun 2021 14.30 EDT

People in England are unlikely to get the go-ahead for quarantine-free travel to major tourist destinations until days before the school holidays, with UK ministers considering reimposing restrictions on those returning from certain green list countries.

A source said ministers were set to discuss whether Portugal, given its uptick in cases, would remain on the green [list](#), which allows travellers from those countries into England without having to self-isolate on arrival.

[Boris Johnson warned travellers](#) on Wednesday that countries could have restrictions reimposed over the summer, sparking fresh fears of a repeat of last year's travel corridor chaos.

The government is set to announce revisions to the travel traffic-light system on Thursday, but Whitehall sources expect just a "handful of new places" to be given quarantine-free travel – few of which are tourist destinations.

It comes after the [EU delayed putting the UK on a "white list"](#) of countries from which non-essential travel into the bloc is approved, because of concerns about the rise in cases linked to the Delta coronavirus variant first identified in India.

Speaking on Wednesday, Johnson issued a warning that countries could be moved on as well as off the list requiring tougher restrictions.

"We're going to try ... to allow people to travel, as I know that many people want to, but we've got to be cautious and we've got to continue to put countries on the red list, on the amber list, when that is necessary," he said.

"I want you to know we will have no hesitation in moving countries from the green list to the amber list to the red list if we have to do so. The priority is to continue the vaccine rollout, to protect the people of this country."

Travel industry experts have predicted that the Canary and Balearic islands could open up to tourism, in what would be a major boost to the sector, but Whitehall insiders said there were significant doubts about putting those on the green list.

There is more optimism about Malta, which only narrowly missed out on quarantine-free travel the last time the list was reviewed. Other European countries that could be moved to the green list are Finland and Poland.

Concerns have been raised about allowing travel to Spanish islands because of the level of air traffic to mainland Spain, as well as their abilities to carry out adequate genome sequencing to spot emerging variants.

Whitehall sources said a number of countries could also be moved on to the red list, which requires hotel quarantine. Holiday destinations that could go on the red list include the Maldives and Seychelles, as well as Bahrain. Another source said that concerns were growing over Egypt, South Sudan and Sri Lanka.

Nick Thomas-Symonds, the shadow home secretary, said Border Force were facing an increasing struggle to process rising passenger numbers.

“This is yet more evidence of the dangerous impact of Conservative chaos over travel planning,” he said. “This is causing ongoing confusion over the ‘amber list’ that is resulting in far too many people still travelling to Covid hotspots and mixing at airports, further increasing the risk of variants reaching the UK.

“Ministers need to scrap the ‘amber list’ urgently, to limit travellers reaching the UK and ensure that Border Force have the resources they need to manage arrivals from the ‘green list’ safely.”

The EU is set to examine the UK’s status again on 14 June. The UK’s infection level meets the threshold for inclusion on the list, but [concerns over a rising trend](#), largely driven by the highly transmissible Delta variant, prompted EU ambassadors to be cautious.

Despite the official recommendation to member states, a number of countries in [Europe](#), including Greece and Portugal, have said they will welcome British tourists travelling to them for their summer holidays.

Diplomatic sources said the debate in the UK over whether to fully unlock restrictions on 21 June had fed into the EU’s debate over inclusion on the

white list.

A growing number of scientists and government advisers have urged the prime minister to delay the final lifting of restrictions, including the removal of social contact limits and the opening of nightclubs and large events, warning the country is in the [early stages of a third wave](#).

Case rates have risen in Portugal since 7 May, when the country was placed on the green list, from 33 cases to 51 cases per 100,000 on 2 June. Most new infections were reported in and around Lisbon, Reuters reported.

However, the country has taken steps to lift more of its restrictions, including allowing restaurants to stay open past midnight from mid-June, and its work from home order will be lifted.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/02/uk-to-give-quarantine-free-travel-status-to-handful-of-new-places-say-sources>

2021.06.03 - Spotlight

- [Sacheen Littlefeather 'I promised Brando I would not touch his Oscar'](#)
- [The empty office What we lose when we work from home](#)
- [Joan Allen 'Acting's like tennis. You bring your game'](#)
- [China's image problem Why Xi wants Communist party to churn out sunny propaganda](#)

Native Americans

Interview

‘I promised Brando I would not touch his Oscar’: the secret life of Sacheen Littlefeather

[Steve Rose](#)

In 1973, she made history at the Academy Awards, appearing in place of Marlon Brando, declining his statuette and making a speech about Native American rights. She has been speaking out ever since



Sacheen Littlefeather at the 1973 Oscars. Photograph: Album/Alamy

Sacheen Littlefeather at the 1973 Oscars. Photograph: Album/Alamy

[@steverose7](#)

Thu 3 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

Sacheen Littlefeather begins by announcing that this will be one of her last interviews: “I’m very, very ill. I have metastasised breast cancer – terminal – to my right lung. And I’ve been on chemotherapy for quite some time, and daily antibiotics. As a result, my memory is not as good as it used to be ... I’m very tired all the time because cancer is a full-time job: the CT scans, MRIs, laboratory blood work, medical visits, chemotherapy, infectious disease control doctors, etc, etc. If you’re lazy, you need not apply for cancer.”

For the next couple of hours, speaking over Zoom from her home in northern California, as she trips down memory lane her solemn demeanour gives way to chattiness and laughter. At 74, she has lived a full, eventful life, though she will be for ever remembered for an event that took up little more than one minute of it, on the night of 27 March 1973. This was when she took the stage at the 45th Academy Awards to speak on behalf of [Marlon Brando](#), who had been awarded best actor for his performance in *The Godfather*. It is still a striking scene to watch. Amid the gaudy 70s evening wear, 26-year-old Littlefeather’s tasselled buckskin dress, moccasins, long, straight black hair and handsome face set in an expression of almost sorrowful composure, make a jarring contrast.

When the presenter, Roger Moore, attempts to hand Littlefeather Brando’s Oscar she holds out her hand as if to push it away. She explains that Brando cannot accept the award because of “the treatment of American Indians today by the film industry”. The crowd interrupts her, half-applauding, half-booing. “Excuse me,” she says calmly, then continues: “And on television and movie reruns, and also with recent happenings at Wounded Knee.” At the time, Wounded Knee, in South Dakota, was the site of a month-long standoff between Native American activists and US authorities, sparked by the murder of a Lakota man. Littlefeather ends her speech begging that “in the future, our hearts and our understandings will meet with love and generosity”.

At the time, nobody knew what to make of it. Not the audience, the press or the 85 million people watching on television (this was the first year the [Oscars](#) were broadcast internationally via satellite). Was it a prank? A surrealist performance piece? Littlefeather was rumoured to be a hired actor,

a Mexican impostor, a stripper. “It was not a performance, it was a real presentation,” she says. “I think that’s what took people by surprise: that it was so real. It really touches people’s hearts to this day.”

It was hastily planned, says Littlefeather. Half an hour before her speech, she had been at Brando’s house on Mulholland Drive waiting for him to finish typing an eight-page speech. She arrived at the ceremony with Brando’s assistant, just minutes before best actor was announced. Howard Koch, the producer of the Academy Awards show, immediately informed her she could not read it – and she would be removed from the stage after 60 seconds. “And then it all happened so fast when it was announced that he had won. I had promised Marlon that I would not touch that statue if he won. And I had promised Koch that I would not go over 60 seconds. So there were two promises I had to keep.” As a result, she improvised her speech.

However valid Brando’s charge of the way Hollywood stereotyped [Native Americans](#), it did not go down well that night. John Wayne, serial slaughterer of [Native Americans](#) on-screen and self-professed white supremacist off it, just happened to be in the wings during Littlefeather’s speech. “During my presentation, he was coming towards me to forcibly take me off the stage, and he had to be restrained by six security men to prevent him from doing so.” Presenting best picture soon after (also for *The Godfather*), Clint Eastwood quipped: “I don’t know if I should present this award on behalf of all the cowboys shot in all the John Ford westerns over the years.” When Littlefeather got backstage, she says, there were people making stereotypical Native American war cries at her and miming chopping with a tomahawk. After talking to the press, she went straight back to Brando’s house where they sat together and watched the reactions to the event on television.



Littlefeather campaigning on the streets of San Francisco, c. 1990.
Photograph: Kim Komenich/The LIFE Images Collection/Getty Images

But Littlefeather is proud of the trail she blazed. She was the first woman of colour, and the first indigenous woman, to use the Academy Awards platform to make a political statement. Today they are almost expected, but in 1973 it was radical. “I didn’t use my fist [she clenches her fist]. I didn’t use swearwords. I didn’t raise my voice. But I prayed that my ancestors would help me. I went up there like a warrior woman. I went up there with the grace and the beauty and the courage and the humility of my people. I spoke from my heart.”

Littlefeather’s life up to that point had been difficult. Her father was Native American, a mix of Apache and Yaqui, and her mother was white. They met in Arizona – where mixed-race couples were still illegal – so moved to Salinas, California, working as saddle-makers and leather-stampers. “My biological parents were both mentally ill and unable to raise me,” she says. “I was a child who was abused and neglected. I was taken away from them at age three, suffering from tuberculosis of the lungs. I lived in an oxygen tent at the hospital, which kept me alive.” She was raised by her maternal grandparents, but saw her parents regularly. She recalls a time as a small child when she interrupted her father beating her mother – by hitting him with a broom. “I think that’s when I really became an activist.” Her father

chased after her. “I escaped through a doorway and I ran with all my might down the road. And he got in the pickup truck, and he tried to run me over. There was a grove of trees. And it was near dark. I ran up a tree, and he couldn’t find me. I stayed up in the tree and I cried myself to sleep.”

Littlefeather was between two worlds. Since the late 19th century, there had been a concerted project in the US to “make Indian people white”, she explains, spearheaded by federal government and Christian schools for Native American children. “They wanted to make us something else. And this leads us into terrible pain, into suicide, into alcoholism, into jails.” She did not fit in at the white, Catholic school her grandparents sent her to. “There was a lot of racism. I was called the N-word.” When she was 12, she and her grandfather visited the historic Roman Catholic church Carmel Mission, where she was horrified to see the bones of a Native American person on display in the museum. “I said: ‘This is wrong. This is not an object; this is a human being.’ So I went to the priest and I told him God would never approve of this, and he called me heretic. I had no idea what that was.” In her teens, Littlefeather had a breakdown and was hospitalised for a year. She attempted suicide. “I was so confused about my own identity, and I was suffering,” she says. “I could not tell the difference between me and my pain.”



At a memorial service in California in 2000 with Lanny Pinola, a Pomo/Miwok spiritual leader. Photograph: Ben Margot/AP

Fortunately, in the late 1960s and early 70s Native Americans were beginning to reclaim their identities and reassert their rights. After her father died, when she was 17, Littlefeather began visiting reservations in Arizona, New Mexico and California. She visited Alcatraz when it was occupied by Native American activists in the early 1970s. She travelled around the country, between camp-outs and pow-wows, learning traditions and dances, making outfits. “I really had a breakthrough, with other urban Indian people, getting back into our traditions, our heritage. The old people who came from different reservations taught us young people how to be Indian again. It was wonderful.”

By her early 20s Littlefeather was working as public service director at a San Francisco radio station, and head of the local affirmative action committee for Native Americans, studying representation in film, television and sports (they successfully campaigned for Stanford University to remove their offensive “Indian” sports team symbol). One of her neighbours was Francis Ford Coppola. “I used to hike the hills of San Francisco every day,” she says. “He’d be sitting on his porch, drinking iced tea.” She got to know him to say hello to. At the time, many celebrities were expressing interest in Native American affairs, including Jane Fonda, Anthony Quinn and Burt Lancaster. Sometimes it was sincere, at others more self-interested, she says. So, when she heard Marlon Brando speaking about Native American rights, “I wanted to know if he was for real”. She wrote a letter to him and, walking past Coppola’s house one day, said: “Hey! You directed Marlon Brando in The Godfather.” She asked him for Brando’s address. Eventually, Coppola gave it to her.



In 1973. Photograph: Etienne Montes/Gamma-Rapho/Getty Images

She heard nothing for months, but one night a man phoned her at the radio station. “He said: ‘I bet you don’t know who this is.’ And I said: ‘Sure I do.’ And he said: ‘Well, who is it?’ I said: ‘It’s Marlon Brando. It sure as hell took you long enough to call. You beat “Indian time” all to hell.’ And we started to laugh as if we’d known each other for ever.”

They talked for about an hour, she says, then called each other regularly. Before long he was inviting her to visit. She stayed with him several times. They became good friends, but were never lovers or romantically involved. “No, no, he was far too old for me. He was my mother’s age, for God’s sake! He was extremely intelligent, and always entertaining. He had a great sense of humour. He would put on tons of different voices. We used to have a great time, laughing till tears were coming out of our eyes.”

The Brando household was a busy and often heated place – with children, ex-wives and girlfriends. Brando sent her and his girlfriend Jill Banner to go and see his latest movie, *Last Tango in Paris* – Bernardo Bertolucci’s controversially graphic erotic drama (which would earn Brando another Oscar nomination). Littlefeather was not shocked, she says. “I just thought that it was about a man who had a very difficult relationship with women. I thought about Marlon in his early days with his mother. It was as though his

life was being played out in that film.” Brando, too, had had difficult parents: his father was disapproving and unloving; his mother an alcoholic. “When he was young, they didn’t have therapy. Maybe that was why he was such a great actor – because he worked it out in his acting. He was able to share those real emotions with an audience. And maybe that was the love-hate relationship that he had with acting.”

Littlefeather’s Oscar speech drew international attention to Wounded Knee, where the US authorities had essentially imposed a media blackout. It was a key moment in the struggle for Native American rights and may well have saved lives, she suggests. It did little for her own career, however. She had had a few small roles in movies, including *Freebie and the Bean* and *The Trial of Billy Jack*. After the Oscars, she believes she was blacklisted by Hollywood. “I couldn’t get a job to save my life. I knew that J Edgar Hoover had gone around and told people in the industry not to hire me, because he would shut their talkshow or their production down. I got the word from people in the industry that that would happen to them.” She is not sure it helped Brando’s career, either. “I was a hotbed of controversy. And for any actor, I don’t know how safe that is for them, box office-wise.” They stayed in contact for a little while, but their lives naturally went separate ways. “We had our time together. We made history together.”



Sachene Littlefeather today

A few years later, when she was 29, Littlefeather's lungs collapsed – a consequence of her childhood tuberculosis – and she became very ill. She found taking a holistic approach to her health helped and did a degree in holistic health and nutrition. She became a health consultant to Native American communities across the country, combining her knowledge with traditional medicine. She also reconnected with the Catholic faith, working with Mother Teresa caring for Aids patients in hospices, and led the San Francisco Kateri Circle, a Catholic group named after Kateri Tekakwitha, the first Native American saint. Their religious practice is a synthesis of both traditions, she explains. “For example, we have our buffalo dances in the middle of the mass.” It has helped her resolve her identity. “This is how I saved my life, by blending the two together. The acceptance of my dominant culture's ways and my Indian ways together, living peacefully side by side.”

Now she is one of the elders transmitting knowledge down generations. Littlefeather gestures behind her to the sofa, where she mentors young Native American people. This is the real fulfilment in her life, she says. “When I go to the spirit world, I'm going to take all these stories with me. But hopefully I can share some of these things while I'm here.” Littlefeather talks about the end of life with the same composure and dignity she exhibited that night in 1973. “I'm going to another place,” she says. “I'm going to the world of my ancestors. I'm saying goodbye to you ... I've earned the right to be my true self.”

For more information on the documentary *Sacheen: Breaking the Silence*, visit onebowlproductions.com/sacheen

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The empty office: what we lose when we work from home

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[Television](#)

Interview

Joan Allen: ‘Acting’s like tennis. You bring your game’

[Zoe Williams](#)

Adulterous housewives, CIA bosses – Joan Allen has played them all with consummate skill. Now, in Stephen King adaptation *Lisey’s Story*, she’s turned her hand to visceral horror



Joan Allen ... ‘I don’t feel, if I don’t act again, I’m going to die.’
Photograph: M Spencer Green/AP

Joan Allen ... ‘I don’t feel, if I don’t act again, I’m going to die.’
Photograph: M Spencer Green/AP



[@zoesqwilliams](#)

Thu 3 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

In some ways, Joan Allen is like an American [Gary Oldman](#); wait, stay with it. She looks so different from one role to the next that she's way beyond mercurial, further towards intangible – like a spirit slipping into a role more than a flesh-and-blood actor. Or maybe this is just acting at its most rarefied. One of the late 70s founders of [Steppenwolf](#), the legendary Chicago theatre troupe that most famously launched [John Malkovich](#), her early career was edgy, ensemble work, with an activist's purity of purpose. "We'd have to write these applications to get arts grants, and people would say 'What is your mission statement?'," she remembers as she Zooms from Connecticut. "Well, what were we? A group of like-minded people who wanted to do strong visceral theatre and had a similar sensibility and sense of humour. We saw the pinnacle of our job as to tell whatever story we were telling to the best of our ability." This was married, certainly in Allen's mind, with a craftsmanlike lack of pretension. "It's like tennis. You come in, and you bring your game. The better you play, the better your partner plays, the better your opponent plays."

Although Steppenwolf were multi-award-winning and there was no shortage of mainstream theatre success – Allen won a Tony in 1988 for *Burn This*, in

her Broadway debut – you can still get a whiff of how uncomfortable the ensemble was with the idea of Hollywood, especially as Malkovich’s star started to rise. “At that time, there really was a concern, if we do go out and do other work, will this still be the most important thing in our lives? Is it more important to stay in Chicago and do it for local audiences?”



Steppenwolf purpose ... Joan Allen won a Tony for her stage performance opposite John Malkovich in *Burn This*. Photograph: Michael Brosilow

In fact, her markedly undramatic professional personality – she’s thought of as the ultimate un-diva – she put down more to her childhood, in the 50s and 60s, her father a gas-station owner, her mother looking after four children. “Not to be corny, I grew up in the Midwest, there’s a stereotypical way of being: no nonsense, don’t feel sorry for yourself. If you can do it yourself, don’t ask somebody else to do it. I was raised with a very strong work ethic. You’re not better than anyone else. You really need to be kind to people. These homilies. I would feel uncomfortable being any other way.”

What ported her to films, in the end, was something quite simple – she had a daughter in 1994 with her then husband, the actor Peter Friedman, and continuing in theatre would have made her miss every bedtime. “I knew I was only going to have one child, and I thought, ‘This is my one shot. Do I really want to be out every night from six till 11?’” She will not be drawn on

whether there's a particular maternal penalty meted on actors, a mixture of practicalities and atmosphere; what it's like to work in theatre, which can never accommodate you as a whole person with a life, because, well, it just can't. Allen resists the polemic as steadfastly as she does the tantrum or the elaborate trailer request: the "you're not better than anyone else" part of her upbringing jumps off the page.



Pure fear ... Allen with Julianne Moore in *Lisey's Story*. Photograph: Apple TV+

Instead, she turned to film, although we're here to discuss [Lisey's Story](#), a new Apple TV mini-series from the renowned Chilean director [Pablo Larraín](#). Adapted from the Stephen King novel of the same name, it has a fascinating, quite old-school horror sensibility, clues delicately laid juxtaposed against moments of unbelievable gore. At one point I actually sprang out of my chair, it was so gruesome. Allen locates its distinctiveness with the director: "I haven't done a lot of episodic or serial television, but traditionally you have a different director for every episode, and the person who holds the overarching vision is the showrunner." She sounds quite winning and naive, in her early experiences of the box set – she'd be asking to call the director to check on a mood, and they'd be looking at her quizzically, like "What's he got to do with it?" "We had the luxury of having Pablo, but it also meant we shot all eight episodes as if it were one big film."

Less than positive emotions were not welcome in my family

As a viewer, though, the memorable thing is the ensemble of the three sisters: [Julianne Moore](#) is Lisey, who has recently lost her husband; [Jennifer Jason Leigh](#) is Darla; Allen is Amanda, who sinks into a psychotic episode at the outset, and has an immensely powerful journey into something like pure fear. Moore, Jason Leigh and Allen often seem to be communicating through sheer telepathy that the viewer can unaccountably hear. “We’re of a similar age,” she says. “I’m definitely the oldest but we’re close enough in experience, between film and television and theatre, that I felt that we would have a language and an understanding and an approach that was simpatico. And that was true on camera and off, we have very similar lifestyles, rather low key. We got along together personally.” It’s a pure introvert’s description – on no evidence at all, I have a sense that all three of these actors are introverts – pared down, conveying more than it says; and it was introversion that brought her into acting in the first place. “I felt a sense of release and safety of expression, after being such an introverted child. I had wonderful parents who were old school in some ways. Less than positive emotions were not encouraged in my family.”

Allen’s most blockbustery film roles were as the CIA boss Pamela Landy in the [Bourne films](#) – “That’s the role where my UPS delivery driver started calling me Pam Landy” – and she speaks very highly (as everyone does, actually) of the director [Paul Greengrass](#), but the bit she talks about the most is the charming way he fired her. “It was such a hard call for him to make, I remember him saying, ‘Joan, I’ve been thinking about it...’ and I was like, ‘Paul, it’s OK.’”



Blockbuster ... as CIA handler Pamela Landy in *The Bourne Ultimatum*.
Photograph: Allstar/Universal

The film that in the past she's called her best was [The Ice Storm](#), Ang Lee's mesmeric 1997 masterpiece about rich dysfunctional people in 70s Connecticut. Sigourney Weaver will always have delivered the show-stopping line in that movie ("You're boring me," she says to the guy she's having an affair with. "I have a husband who can bore me") but Allen's performance was the signature, so subtle and loaded that you felt as though you were missing some vital part of the puzzle whenever she wasn't right there on the screen. The way she remembers it, "I saw it in a screening room in Los Angeles, and I feel like I remember the sound of the train and Tobey Maguire's character is talking. Just at the sound of the whistle, I thought, I just know I'm going to love this movie."

If that sounds like an absolutely typical answer – throwing the spotlight off her own performance or process, indeed, off any human performance, onto a whistle – it's actually atypical of her to watch her films at all. She says she put *Face/Off* on with her daughter, and shudders: "I think she was too young. I shouldn't have turned it on." [Pleasantville](#), quite a groundbreaking comedy-fantasy released to acclaim the year after *The Ice Storm*, is an exception, since she watched it as a favour for her friend who's a psychoanalyst. "Actually I'm friends with his wife," she corrects herself, as

if it would be mad show-offy to pretend to be friendlier with a therapist than you actually were. “Anyway, he has a group, and they study specific films, and they wanted to do Pleasantville, so I watched that so I could go in and speak about it.”



Chromatic awakening ... Allen in Pleasantville, with Tobey Maguire.
Photograph: New Line/Allstar

As she describes all this she looks almost physically braced for the searching questions she's going to be asked about a role that everybody remembers for the surreal, expertly drawn contrasts as her prim character becomes chromatic by masturbating in the bath; people in psychoanalysis could ask *anything*. Then her relief is almost palpable, as she concludes: “It actually wasn't as deep as I thought. They were a little bit more interested in how it was made.”

There's very little chaff in Joan Allen's CV. From [Manhunter](#) to [Nixon](#), the films she's made, and the roles she made memorable within them, speak of careful planning and intense discernment. Yet that's not how she remembers it: she says she's never been as selective as she is now, “because I feel like I've acted a lot in my life, I don't have the same feeling, ‘If I don't act again, I'm going to die.’ Some actors, their sense of vitality comes from that. Some actors will read the phone book aloud and feel more fulfilled, and that's OK

obviously. I don't really have that because I've done it since I was 13 or 14 years old, fairly consistently. If I don't do it frequently or regularly, I won't feel like a shrivelled vine."

- [Lisey's Story is on Apple TV+](#) from 4 June.

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China

China Communist party ‘striving for people’s happiness’, says Xi Jinping, in call for charm offensive

China must tell the world a better story about itself, says president, as he seeks stronger ‘international voice’



Xi Jinping: ‘We should help the foreign people realise that the Communist party really strives for the happiness of the Chinese people.’ Photograph: Xinhua/REX/Shutterstock

Xi Jinping: ‘We should help the foreign people realise that the Communist party really strives for the happiness of the Chinese people.’ Photograph: Xinhua/REX/Shutterstock

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Wed 2 Jun 2021 19.14 EDT

China needs to improve the way it tells the world stories about itself, and convince people the ruling party is striving for the happiness of all Chinese people, [Xi Jinping](#) has said.

The Chinese president's comments to a Communist party meeting on Tuesday come amid the country's growing isolation in the global community, and tension with international media, largely driven by international concerns over human rights abuses.

Suggesting continued concern over Beijing's negative image, Xi said it was crucial that China develop a stronger "international voice" which matches its national strength and global status, to present a "true, three-dimensional and comprehensive China" to the world, according to state news agency [Xinhua](#).

[If the Wuhan lab-leak hypothesis is true, expect a political earthquake | Thomas Frank](#)

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"We should strengthen the propaganda and interpretation of the Communist party of [China](#), and help foreign people realise that the Communist party of [China](#) [CCP] really strives for the happiness of the Chinese people," the report cited Xi as saying. The official English translation by Xinhua refers to "publicity" rather than "propaganda".

While the growing world power has sought to increase its standing on the global stage, [relations with many western nations have taken a dive](#), largely driven by concerns over human rights abuses against ethnic minorities, [particularly Muslims in Xinjiang](#), the [crackdown on Hong Kong](#), aggression towards Taiwan, and last year's attempts to cover up the early spread of the coronavirus.

Worsening relations with the US and its allies such as Canada, the UK and Australia have seen tit-for-tat trade sanctions, the expulsion or intimidation of foreign press, and increasingly belligerent commentary from China's "wolf warrior" diplomats, a name referring to combative diplomats who use their platform to aggressively defend China's policies and disparage opponents.

Margaret Lewis, a professor and China specialist at Seton Hall law school in New Jersey, said [China's ruling class has long explored](#) how to “get its message out to international audiences”, notably through state media channel CGTN, which is broadcast in numerous countries but has also [faced penalties by foreign regulators over its conduct](#).

She said Beijing had a different view of human rights to other nations, which prioritised the right to development over independent human rights. This belief would still be presented in any CCP international messaging.

“This is not a call for greater openness, transparency and accessibility,” she said.

“This is a call for the party state apparatus to put out a more sugarcoated view of what’s happening. Nothing I’ve heard makes this sound like it’s encouraging press freedom. It’s that: you international media should listen more intently to how we, the party state, believe we are helping the people and you should report more ‘objectively’ on our successes.”

Xi’s comments prompted some speculation among analysts that he was calling the “wolf warriors” to tone it down, while beefing up the state’s public relations.

But Lewis said it wasn’t “an either/or”. “You can have ‘good cop, bad cop’ scenarios. You can have the moments of more fiery rhetoric alongside things also presenting a more pleasant and contrived narrative,” Lewis said.

Natasha Kassam, a China analyst with the Lowy Institute in Australia, said Beijing’s leadership was reading the same data as anyone else, and could see international opinion had “moved away pretty decisively” in the past year.

“Its economic relationships haven’t necessarily been harmed by the negativity but clearly there is at least some consideration of whether it’s sustainable to have such a negative image of China in the world,” said Kassam.

“On some level this is acknowledging that something is wrong and change is needed, but the change is in the message rather than the change in policy.”

The damage to China's reputation comes at an awkward time, just weeks out from the centenary anniversary of the formation of the CCP. It promises to be a lengthy and bombastic nationwide celebration, but also an opportunity for Xi – who abolished term limits – to cement his leadership.

Kassam said the centenary would be a largely domestic affair but would likely also see greater efforts to delegitimise the voices of foreign critics. She said there was likely also a longer term [concern ahead of the 2022 Olympics](#), and a poor international image harming a “moment of national pride” for China.

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2021.06.03 - Opinion

- The United Kingdom was always a fragile illusion – but what will replace it?
- Why Israeli progressives have started to talk about ‘apartheid’
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The United Kingdom was always a fragile illusion – but what will replace it?

[Alex Niven](#)

There's an astonishing lack of thinking about how to address the radical implications of Britain's disintegration



‘Many think the UK in its current form is probably doomed, and that the break up of the union is inevitable.’ Photograph: Valéry Hache/AFP/Getty Images

‘Many think the UK in its current form is probably doomed, and that the break up of the union is inevitable.’ Photograph: Valéry Hache/AFP/Getty Images

Thu 3 Jun 2021 04.00 EDT

There is a famous quote from the Italian writer Antonio Gramsci: “The old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.”

His argument could equally apply to the United Kingdom. Many think the UK in its current form is probably doomed, and that the break up of the union is inevitable. But outside the various nationalist causes, few people seem to have a clear idea about what should replace the dying dream of unionism.

[It's too late to save the union, Gordon Brown | Letters](#)
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With a pro-independence majority installed in the Holyrood parliament, it seems almost certain that Scotland will achieve independence in the near-ish future. Meanwhile, spurred on by Brexit and the destabilising impact of Covid-19, Northern Ireland's place in the union looks increasingly precarious — with a [majority of its citizens](#) expecting Irish reunification in the next 25 years. Even in Wales, where opposition to the UK is modest by comparison, calls for independence are [growing louder](#) by the year.

In stark contrast, the unionist cause is beleaguered. While Scottish, Irish and Welsh nationalist movements have gained in strength, underlined by the SNP's decisive breakthrough in the May elections, the union has become a hazy, marginal idea that is rarely articulated with much confidence or sense of belief.

Part of the problem is that British unionism has always been a fragile concept, underpinned by confused, overly broad notions of Englishness. The series of conquests and treaties that paved the way for the formation of the UK were almost all led by England (even if, as with the [1707 Act of Union](#) that joined Scotland with England and Wales, there was often the pretence of an equal partnership). Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the rise of an “Anglo-British” state benefited English interests enormously, while more partial gains were awarded to its fellow nations.

But in the longer term, England's ambiguous role within the union and its empire was a problem when it came to more fundamental questions of

identity. In order to absorb the surrounding nations of the British Isles, and then other territories throughout the world as the empire grew, [England](#) had to sacrifice its sense of self to the much vaguer notion of Britishness – an identity so wide and loose it could be applied to almost the entire world.

Underneath it all, instead of a coherent nation state with a written constitution lay the United Kingdom – a pragmatic trade venture held together for three centuries by the astonishing material success of the British empire (not to mention, of course, the often brutal actions of its armed forces).

Fast forward to the 21st century, when the empire is a distant memory, and most people find it difficult to make a case for the union without resorting to vague clichés about tradition and togetherness (sometimes joined, at the liberal end of the spectrum, by well-meaning, but equally vague, talk of multiculturalism).

While more coherent Scottish, Welsh and Irish identities have developed in opposition to the hollowed-out, post-imperial UK, confusion reigns in England about our constitutional future and the union's place within it. Many in the liberal centre – like some of the celebrities who signed [a letter in 2014](#) opposing Scottish independence – are affluent English people who simply like the idea of being on the same geopolitical team as Scotland and Wales (often, it would seem, because of distant family ties or fond memories of holidays in picturesque parts of these countries).

A more nuanced approach is taken by older unionist establishment figures across the British Isles. The former prime minister Gordon Brown has talked recently about the [“everyday benefits” of the union](#) – making a strong case for constitutional reforms to the UK that would prevent it from breaking apart entirely. Yet this latter-day New Labour strategy, whose support is strongest among the sorts of [free-market voices](#) Brown indulged when he was running the millennial economy, seems unlikely to succeed at a time when the ideals of the Blair years are widely seen as yesterday's news.

Meanwhile, ironically, the electorally dominant Conservative and Unionist party seems to have accepted deep down that the union is a busted flush, and adapted to this new political reality. While some in the Johnson government,

such as Michael Gove, have made [token attempts](#) to bang the drum for unionism, the Tory grandee Chris Patten was probably right to claim recently that the Conservatives are [now an “English nationalist” party](#) in all but name. With a large majority based almost entirely in English seats, and mindful of the SNP’s continuing stranglehold on Scotland, it makes sense for the Tories to consolidate their power base in England.

Like that other failed unionism of recent times – the campaign for Britain to remain in the European Union – support for the United Kingdom is hampered by association with a status quo that many people in the British Isles feel has not worked for them. And when arguments for unionism have cut through, as in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, they have tended to rely on anxieties about the alternative (“[project fear](#)”) rather than deep-seated optimism about the UK itself.

As the union limps on – for a while – with the aid of such small-c conservatism, there is an astonishing lack of thinking, especially in England, about how to respond to the rising tide of nationalism in the British Isles. While the Conservatives seem likely to retain unionism’s traditional symbols (monarchy, patriotism, imperial nostalgia) in a rump UK encompassing England and perhaps [Wales](#), far too many people on the English left simply haven’t stopped to consider the radical implications of the imminent break-up of Britain – namely, the risk of an eternally conservative Greater England rushing into the gap. In progressive circles, a sort of somnolent unionism founded in distaste for nationalism is still too often a default stance.

Those on the radical left are sometimes fond of invoking the dream of a world with “no borders”. There is much to be said for this idea in the abstract, but it will not be much help as we look for a workable future for the British Isles beyond the UK. Should that future be based on a [reimagining of England](#) on federal lines, or even [actual independence](#) for its constituent parts? Should we start to plan for a more modern, [informal version of unionism](#) in the event of Scottish independence and Irish reunification? The time to answer these urgent questions is now, because the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is heading for the history books.

- Alex Niven is a lecturer in English literature at Newcastle University and the author of *New Model Island*

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[OpinionIsrael](#)

Why Israeli progressives have started to talk about ‘apartheid’

[Michael Sfard](#)

When I first heard this argument from Palestinians 20 years ago, I rejected it. But the evidence is mounting before our eyes



‘In Jerusalem, settlers are attempting to forcibly displace Palestinians from their homes.’ Israeli security forces detain a Palestinian during a protest over evictions in the Silwan district of Jerusalem. Photograph: Ahmad Gharabli/AFP/Getty Images

‘In Jerusalem, settlers are attempting to forcibly displace Palestinians from their homes.’ Israeli security forces detain a Palestinian during a protest over evictions in the Silwan district of Jerusalem. Photograph: Ahmad Gharabli/AFP/Getty Images

Thu 3 Jun 2021 01.00 EDT

The latest chapter in the Israel-Palestine conflict unfolded in many locations, all at once. In the Gaza Strip, civilian population centres were [heavily bombed](#) by Israeli fighter planes and artillery, bringing death, injuries and massive damage to property. Towns in Israel were targeted by Palestinian rockets launched from Gaza; those that get past Israel's Iron Dome missile-defence system also kill and destroy. In Jerusalem, settlers are attempting to [forcibly displace](#) Palestinians from their homes and worshippers have clashed with Israeli forces in [one of the holiest sites](#) for Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

In Israeli cities, the tension [between Palestinians and Jews](#) is rising. Anger and frustration from decades of dispossession, neglect and discrimination – coupled with images that for many represent the [desecration of al-Aqsa](#) – sparked eruptions of street violence by Palestinians, mostly from the margins of their society, against Jews.

[Renewed diplomacy is urgently needed to prevent another Gaza war | Jane Kinninmont](#)
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On social media, Israeli Jews from the far right post hateful messages, not only against Palestinians living in Gaza, but also against those who are citizens of their country – inciting extreme violence, using racially charged language and organising for pogroms. The result of all this has been riots, horrifying violence and even [lynchings by both sides](#). The Land of Israel – *Eretz* Israel-Palestine – is once again burning. In Gaza, Jerusalem, the West Bank, Acre, Jaffa and Lod.

Viewing Jewish-Palestinian relations in all of these places as one single issue is not the way many of us were taught to analyse the conflict. I received my political education in 1980s Jerusalem. At that time, Israeli progressives understood the conflict as having two distinct elements.

First, there was Israel “inside the green line” – the [de facto border](#) established in 1949. We believed this was a democracy – imperfect, in need of improvement, but democratic. Its citizenry included a Palestinian minority (about a fifth of the population) who suffered from institutional discrimination, but hey, there are plenty of democracies in which minorities

suffer discrimination. While the injustice surely needed correction, the fact that members of this minority enjoyed political rights preserved Israel's status as a democracy in our eyes.

The second part of the conflict was in the [Palestinian territories](#) that had been seized in the 1967 war and kept under a regime of military occupation – undemocratic by definition. We regarded the occupation of the Palestinian land as a temporary situation that did not point toward Israeli sovereignty – and we were fighting to end it sooner rather than later. Back in the 1980s, very few Israeli observers believed it was meant to last for ever.

Put together, these two elements provided a clear explanation of what was going on between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. One part was a democracy; the other part was under occupation. This two-tiered paradigm became the lens through which we understood and analysed the situation we were living in.

But as the years went by, this lens turned out to produce a rather limited view – to the point of distorting the picture. This understanding seeped slowly but steadily through to Israeli activists who were exposed to the reality of Israel's colossal colonisation project in the West Bank, which consists of more than [250 settlements](#) – a massive landgrab with its own road and infrastructure networks, served by a separate legal system. This looked anything but a temporary regime.

This understanding grew along with the recognition that Israeli policies in the occupied territories stifle Palestinian development and divert all the resources of the occupied land to Jewish settlers at the expense of Palestinian subjects. These practices could not be explained through the lens of “occupation”. The [international laws governing occupations](#) – which prohibit any transfer of civilians from the occupying state to the occupied territory – lacked the language to frame a reality where the physical and legal spaces are divided, along national lines, by the governing principle of Jewish supremacy and Palestinian subjugation. It is occupation, obviously, but not only occupation.

At the same time, political insights we tried to repress chipped away at the ethos on which we were raised, forcing us to admit that the recognition of

Israel as a democracy obscures and conceals key features of its governmental personality – features that have always been there, but have intensified in the last decade. The constant incitement against Israel's Palestinian citizens, which under Benjamin Netanyahu reached unprecedented levels; the vitiation of their political power through the vilification and delegitimisation of their elected representatives; the deeply ingrained, systemic institutional discrimination; the [nation-state law](#) that constitutionally cemented their collective inferiority; and the drift towards Putinist authoritarianism, with its hallmark persecution of government critics. Does that sound like a democracy?

In July 2020, the Israeli human rights organisation Yesh Din, which for the last 16 years has been investigating violations of Palestinian rights by settlers and security forces, [published a legal report](#) that I authored. It concluded that the West Bank was governed by a regime of domination and oppression by Israeli Jews over Palestinians, and that it carried out inhuman acts designed to perpetuate this state of affairs. In other words, the report concluded that Israelis were committing the crime of apartheid, considered a crime against humanity under international law, in the West Bank.

In January, the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem [published a position paper](#) asserting that throughout the area between the Jordan and the Mediterranean – including inside Israel – the policy of the state was intended to advance and maintain Jewish supremacy. That is, this is a reality in which the guiding principle of the government is the promotion of Jewish interests, power and wellbeing, which is achieved by providing preference to Jews in resources and legal rights. For B'Tselem, there is only one regime, and it is an apartheid regime.

In late April, Human Rights Watch [published an in-depth report](#) supporting the claim that the Israeli authorities “methodically privilege Jewish Israelis and discriminate against Palestinians” in the entire area, though it found that only in the occupied territories was it accompanied by inhuman acts that together amounted to the crime of apartheid. While there are nuances and differences between them, the three reports had a common theme: Israel is advancing Jewish supremacy. This is a phrase that is starting to be heard more often among Israeli progressives – a phrase that was used previously

only to describe the ideology of extremist settler groups, but which is now employed to describe the policies of the Israeli government.

This discourse joins a conversation that Palestinian intellectuals and rights groups have been having for decades, and charges they made long before we did. When I first heard this argument 20 years ago, I strongly opposed it. The lens that saw the conflict in two parts, a democracy and an occupation, helped to dismantle the charge of apartheid. Israel was committed to liberal democracy even if it did not live up to it in practice, and the occupation, well, it was temporary. But now, with the evidence mounting before my eyes, I can no longer deny the blatant apartheid in the West Bank and the relevance of the accusations about efforts to maintain Jewish supremacy in Israel proper as well.

The new images and videos of the conflict, visible on my mobile stream, provide no context. They show criminals and victims, and that's it. They come and go at TikTok pace. It is impossible to extract a political thesis out of them. In the Israeli media, Jews have a history but Palestinians have only a biography, if that. That is why the [torching of a synagogue](#) and despicable attacks on Jews by Palestinian thugs in Lod invoke references to national traumas like Kristallnacht or the 1929 massacre of Jews in Hebron, but when the victims are Palestinians, their names barely get a mention in the papers. The context Israeli discourse obscures and hides must be pulled out of the shadows; otherwise, we will never fix the place we live in, nor will we ever be freed of the sense of victimhood in whose name we are victimising millions.

Israel's progressive camp is in the midst of updating its frame of reference for the conflict. Admittedly, it is a small group, even among those to the left of Israel's increasingly right-leaning mainstream. But given that the progressive camp is the main ideological alternative to the prevailing political current – and given the credibility that Israeli human rights groups enjoy around the world – it is influential beyond its size.

The updated paradigm provides a comprehensive analysis to understand the situation in [Gaza](#), the West Bank and Israel – using a lens that reveals an Israeli ethnocracy. Our upgraded lexicon reduces the gap between the racialised reality and its political description, and therefore makes the

forging of a shared Palestinian-Israeli vision possible – a vision that respects the national aspirations of both peoples, and guarantees equal rights to everyone living in the land. This new model is critical – but only moral and political integrity will make it possible.

- Michael Sfard is an Israeli human rights lawyer

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OpinionInflation

Why governments should keep spending, and stop worrying about inflation

[Leah Downey](#)

Many believe it's actually the expectation of inflation that causes prices to rise



‘The prevailing narrative is that inflation is the product of overly “ambitious government spending”. Rishi Sunak has expressed these fears.’ Photograph: Reuters

‘The prevailing narrative is that inflation is the product of overly “ambitious government spending”. Rishi Sunak has expressed these fears.’ Photograph: Reuters

Thu 3 Jun 2021 03.00 EDT

People have been [freaking out about inflation](#). Recent numbers from the [UK](#) and the [US](#) seem to have confirmed their fears. Prices are clearly rising. Anyone trying to build a house or do up their garden for the summer can attest to that. The question is, are they rising because of lockdowns, Brexit and the [big, marooned ship](#) or are they rising because, on both sides of the Atlantic, we've over-egged our fiscal response to the pandemic?

Before we conclude "[it is clear that inflation is here](#)" we should think long and hard about what is causing prices to rise and who has the ability to influence that trend. The prevailing narrative is that inflation is the product of overly "[ambitious](#) government spending". The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, [has expressed](#) these fears. And the former US treasury secretary Larry Summers [said](#) of President Biden's spending proposals: "I'm concerned that what is being done is substantially excessive."

Comments such as these are dangerous because they can create a narrative that threatens much-needed government spending. [Inflation](#) can result from mistaken expectations, just as easily as monetary mismanagement. It is common knowledge among inflation watchers that inflation expectations matter, because people set prices.

If people expect their costs to go up, they raise prices to compensate. High inflation expectations beget actual inflation. The most "dangerous" version of this story is the fabled "[wagey-pricey](#)" spiral in which workers expect prices to rise, and thus the cost of living to increase, and as a result, they will negotiate higher wages. This forces firms to raise prices, which spurs workers to negotiate raises, and on it goes – an inflation spiral. This is what Andy Haldane, the chief economist at the Bank of England, has in mind when [he says](#), "once it's in pay packets as well as prices, the genie truly is out".

But this same spiral could look very different. As we come out of lockdown and begin to spend again, firms could use this extra capital to invest and hire more people, leading to rising incomes and more spending. In other words, instead of inflation we get growth.

So, which is it? Scary, damaging inflation or temporary price increases and long-term growth? Depends on who you ask. This is where the influence of

economic ideas, theories and models comes in. When he thinks about how the economy works, [Summers imagines a bathtub](#). If the government puts too much money in the economy, it results in inflation, causing the bathtub to overflow. In this model, high government spending necessarily causes inflation.

Imagine instead that the economy is like a flower bed. It's possible that overwatering could cause spillover, but it depends on how you water it and where. If you pour water in one place that is already saturated, it's likely to flood and cause the flowers to die. In contrast, if you shower water over the whole bed, or focus on the driest areas, the water will be soaked up and the flowers will grow. Similarly, there is a difference between the government pouring yet more money into Jeff Bezos's pocket and it spending on infrastructure, education, research and development, and healthcare. There is a difference between inflation expectations leading to higher financial sector bonuses and NHS nurses getting the pay rise they've [asked for](#).

Inflation expectations determine how and what we do as economic agents, as consumers and as price-setters. Those expectations are formed by what we think the economy looks like. Economic ideas, theories and models frame the way we interpret the world and thus what we expect to happen. They seep through to us in myriad ways, via what Summers writes in a newspaper or what we were taught about the great inflation of the 1970s and 80s.

Much of monetary policy is aimed at “anchoring” inflation expectations. Most major central banks design policies, press releases and announcements with the aim of establishing the widespread belief that inflation will average 2% relatively soon, and will stay there. If most economic actors expect inflation to be about 2%, they will base their pricing on that projection, thus causing inflation to be about 2%.

The “anchor” term here is useful. An anchor keeps a boat in roughly the same position. Anchored inflation expectations are meant to keep inflation in roughly the same position, namely 2%. We know, however, that strong currents and tides can drag an anchor. Similarly, strong narratives can change inflation expectations through their performative power. Economic narratives have performative power when they don't just describe the economy, but instead drive economic action. As the sociology professor

Donald MacKenzie so aptly put it, economic models can act as [engines](#) as well as cameras.

Economic concepts need not be true to have performative power. Suppose that I am a price-setter in the economy and I believe that high government spending causes inflation. I then witness the UK government's spending reaching [record levels](#). It would make sense for me to raise prices because I expect inflation and, therefore, rising costs. In acting on this expectation, I create inflation. What causes inflation in this example is not government spending, but instead my actions based on my own (false) beliefs.

We can have inflation without high government spending, or high government spending without inflation. The most obvious evidence of this is the [2008 global financial crisis](#). In response to this financial meltdown, major central banks, including the Bank of England, injected a huge amount of newly created money into the economy, superseded only by the recent response to the coronavirus crisis. Economists and market participants worried at the time that this would [result in dangerous inflation](#). It didn't.

Yet we are living in a world in which many people, specifically many price-setters, believe that high government spending will necessarily cause inflation. This mistaken belief, if allowed to exert performative power, could have serious consequences. First, it could result in actual inflation. This might not be such a bad thing, because inflation has been below target in most advanced countries for many years, and because [evidence suggests](#) that the negative effects of inflation only kick in when it hits double digits.

The real danger is that a performative belief that high government spending causes dangerous inflation could [stymie government spending](#) despite the fact that high government spending – especially on fundamentals such as physical and social infrastructure – need not lead to dangerously high inflation. What is essential to remember is that it is within our power to prevent inflation, not by radically limiting government spending, but by ensuring that those with pricing power don't mistakenly expect it.

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[Opinion](#)Coronavirus

Cummings' care homes claim could lead to corporate manslaughter charges

[Alex Bailin](#)

The former adviser's testimony on Covid and care homes should sound legal alarm bells at the Department of Health



Dominic Cummings arriving to give evidence at the health and science select committees, London, 26 May 2021. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

Dominic Cummings arriving to give evidence at the health and science select committees, London, 26 May 2021. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

Thu 3 Jun 2021 05.00 EDT

Criminal lawyers watched Dominic Cummings' [electric testimony](#) at the health and science select committees last week with considerable interest. Not just because every select committee cries out for forensic cross-

examination, but because if some of Cummings' key claims are true then legal alarm bells should sound.

Cummings' central claim was "We were told categorically in March that people would be tested before they went back to care homes. We only subsequently found out that that hadn't happened ... The government rhetoric was we put a shield around care homes ... it was complete nonsense."

Following Cummings' testimony, the health secretary, Matt Hancock, was specifically asked in parliament whether he had indeed told the prime minister that patients being discharged from hospital would be Covid-tested before re-entering care homes. [His response](#) was that the government had followed clinical advice, which was not a direct answer. He later added that testing could only be carried out for people being discharged to care homes once the necessary capacity had been built – implying they had not been tested but still not clarifying what Downing Street had been told by him and his department.

Of course, politically motivated testimony needs to be treated with caution, but if Cummings' claims are true – that there was a policy for patients to be discharged to care homes without being tested – then the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has difficult questions to answer. The fundamental issue to be addressed is whether the DHSC implemented a policy that forced care homes to readmit infected patients knowing that they had not been tested.

Hancock's truthfulness on the topic is legally a side issue. The real question is whether such a reckless policy was a gross breach of duty that created an avoidable risk of death. If so, then there are serious questions to be asked about whether the DHSC could be liable for corporate manslaughter. Part of the rationale for the enactment of the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act in 2007 was to enable the aggregation of fault within an organisation to establish liability and to limit so-called [crown immunity](#), which had previously provided a legal shield to government departments from homicide prosecutions.

Although the act still immunises public authorities from certain policy decisions, such as the allocation of public resources or emergency services' rescue responses, it is doubtful that a policy that effectively forced care homes to import Covid-infected patients into a highly vulnerable environment would be shielded from prosecution. It would not matter if the policy had been formulated by a number of senior individuals who were collectively, rather than individually, at fault. The DHSC certainly owes discharged hospital patients a duty of care and that duty must extend to those with whom they reside.

If the DHSC were to argue that it had no choice whether to implement such a policy, because the testing capacity at that time made it impossible to test discharged patients, that claim would have to be scrutinised under the legal microscope at a corporate manslaughter prosecution. A jury in such a prosecution might well be interested that in February the [government advice](#) was little short of extraordinary: “[There is] currently no transmission of Covid-19 in the community ... it is therefore very unlikely that anyone receiving care in a care home or the community will become infected.”

That guidance was hastily withdrawn two weeks later. Yet [on 2 April](#), government guidance was merely that discharged patients should isolate before re-entering care homes – no mandatory testing requirement was advised. Although some care homes decided to implement their own routine testing, it was not until 15 April that the DHSC finally published guidance that required compulsory testing of all those discharged to care homes. That week, it was [announced](#) that almost 100 care homes had reported Covid outbreaks within the previous 24 hours. Some [40%](#) of all Covid-deaths in the first wave occurred in care homes: a total of almost 20,000 deaths. The testing capacity during that period would have to be assessed very carefully against that backdrop.

That disturbing chronology appears to support Cummings' testimony that DHSC policy was initially to direct that discharged patients should be returned to care homes without mandatory testing – and that policy was only changed after the virus had firmly taken hold in care homes and many lives had avoidably been lost as a result. If correct, that would potentially place the DHSC in a very serious position as regards liability for corporate manslaughter. Further details should emerge during the public inquiry into

the government's handling of the pandemic. Although evidence at a public inquiry is usually protected from subsequent use in criminal proceedings, criminal lawyers will be watching very carefully.

- Alex Bailin QC is a barrister who specialises in criminal and human rights law

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[OpinionAgeing](#)

How do I know middle age is at an end? I fell over in the bath

[Adrian Chiles](#)



The revelation that I've got eight weeks of pain ahead of me has made me realise: we humans get out of practice when it comes to falling down



A doctor examines a back injury. Photograph: Gilaxia/Getty Images/posed by models

A doctor examines a back injury. Photograph: Gilaxia/Getty Images/posed by models

Thu 3 Jun 2021 02.00 EDT

The older you get, the more dramatic it feels to fall over. I think this is less to do with creeping fragility than how out of practice adults are at it. When you are a kid, you fall over all the time and bounce straight back up like [Wile E Coyote](#) after he's been flattened by a steamroller. When you take a tumble in middle age, your life flashes past you before you hit the ground, at which point you see stars and then, for an instant, keep perfectly still before you dare to explore what life-changing injuries you may have sustained.

In my 20s, I played a lot of football as a goalkeeper; I enjoyed throwing myself about. The last time I played, quite recently, I was delighted to find I could still get substantially airborne. I was less delighted to find that upon coming back to Earth I nigh-on passed out and needed half the team to help me back to my feet. Never mind pilates, yoga and whatnot, we should be able to go to falling-over sessions during which we're pulled, pushed and tripped over willy-nilly until we get reaccustomed to falling over.

All of which is my preamble to the sub-Pooterish revelation that I fell over in the bath a week ago last Monday. It was early in the morning. One moment I was standing up to get out of the tub, the next I was beached like a broken whale: half in, half out, having given the right side of my ribcage an almighty bash. There I remained, speechless in pain, listening to the 6.30am sports bulletin. The agony remains very real. “It will hurt like hell for two weeks,” my GP promised. “And carry on hurting for six to eight weeks.” I think this is the event marking my transition from middle to old age. And there’s a long way still to fall.

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‘Mourn June 4 in your own way’: Tiananmen Square events vanish amid crackdowns and Covid

Hong Kong, Macau and China ban gatherings, and Taiwan has a serious Covid outbreak, leaving people to remember the massacre alone or online



People in Hong Kong attend a candlelit vigil at Victoria park in 2020 to mark the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Such events could now fall foul of the national security law. Photograph: Isaac Lawrence/AFP/Getty Images

People in Hong Kong attend a candlelit vigil at Victoria park in 2020 to mark the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. Such events could now fall foul of the national security law. Photograph: Isaac Lawrence/AFP/Getty Images

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Thu 3 Jun 2021 00.35 EDT

For the first time since the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, there will be no formal commemoration event held in the Chinese-speaking world for the anniversary.

Thirty-two years after soldiers crushed student protests in Beijing and killed anywhere from several hundred to several thousand people, a combination of censorship, government crackdowns on criticism and pandemic restrictions will ensure no physical gathering is allowed in the People's Republic of China (PRC), [Hong Kong](#), Macau or Taiwan.

Remembering the violent events of 4 June has [never been allowed in the PRC](#), where it has been officially censored. Each year around this time, the censorship increases: sensitive words, numbers, photographs, symbols, emojis – anything that could be a reference to the event – disappear online. Activists are [sent on enforced holidays](#), [online events are shut down](#), and security tightens [around the Beijing square](#).

[‘No political story allowed’: Hong Kong broadcaster falls silent on sensitive subjects](#)
[Read more](#)

But government efforts to suppress memorialising of the event have expanded into Hong Kong, which had – every year since 1990 – proudly held the largest of the only two vigils allowed on Chinese soil.

[The last lawful vigil](#) was held two years ago in both Hong Kong and Macau. In 2020 and again this year Hong Kong authorities cited anti-pandemic measures to ban such events. Last year thousands attended Hong Kong [in defiance of the ruling](#) but now authorities have the national security law as added enforcement. Macau authorities [specifically cited criminal laws](#).

In Hong Kong [activists have again accused authorities](#) of using a health crisis to muzzle dissenting voices, particularly given the low number of cases, and recent large public events such as Art Basel.

The city's security bureau said this week that anyone taking part in a vigil, or even promoting it, could face up to five years in jail, citing both public ordinances against gathering and the national security law.

Hong Kong police have about 3,000 riot response officers on standby in case anyone attempts to gather on Friday, according to local media. This week Hong Kong's 4 June museum closed after it was suspected by authorities of violating public entertainment regulations. It had been open for just three days since undergoing renovations, during which 550 visited, according to the Hong Kong Alliance, a non-government organisation advocating for remembrance and accountability over the massacre.

‘History is on our side’

William Nee, a researcher at [China](#) Human Rights Defenders, said: “With authorities cracking down harshly on the annual Tiananmen vigil in Hong Kong, which was once the only place on Chinese soil where people could freely commemorate the victims of Tiananmen, many people recognise that it will be all the more important to carry out small vigils and amplify them using social media.

“Unfortunately, this will be the main way that people can continue to remember the dead and press for justice.”

Although thousands attended Hong Kong's vigil last year, 24 pro-democracy figures including Joshua Wong, Lee Cheuk Yan, and Albert Ho were later arrested, accused of organising an unauthorised assembly. Lee, who was in Beijing during the massacre, told the Guardian at the time he didn't want the candlelight to be dimmed in the park on that night.

This year, [they are in jail](#), and the alliance has publicly distanced itself from any potential gathering, and told media there will be no online event, fearing authorities could interpret that as an unauthorised assembly in a public place.

“Under the circumstances, mourn June 4 in your own way, at the right time and place, so that the truth will not disappear!” the alliance said.



This week Hong Kong's 4 June museum closed after it was suspected by authorities of violating public entertainment regulations. Photograph: Kin Cheung/AP

As Hong Kong became a sanctuary for those who fled the mainland, [Taiwan](#) has now taken in many who have fled Hong Kong. In previous years, politicians from both sides of Taiwan's democracy have spoken in memoriam of 4 June, and in protest against China's state violence.

"This year marks 32 years since the Tiananmen massacre, but the CCP [Chinese Communist party] has never apologised and has not made reparations to the victims," legislator for the ruling Democratic Progressive party, Hung Sun-han, said this week.

In 2019, President Tsai Ing-wen angered Beijing by being the first Taiwanese leader in three decades [to meet Chinese activists](#) who were there at the time.

But due to bad timing rather than government suppression, there will also be no event in Taiwan. For the first time since the pandemic began, the island is dealing with a mass community outbreak of Covid-19 and has limited all outdoor gatherings to a maximum of 10 people.

Instead, an alliance of almost 30 Taiwan-based groups have announced an online event for Friday, and the erecting of a large LED screen with messages about the anniversary in Taipei's Liberty Square, as well as other events held online or in a manner that complies with gathering restrictions.

“In some ways online events aren't entirely a bad thing,” said Badiucao, a Chinese-Australian artist whose work frequently centres on the massacre, and who will speak at two online events.

“The traditional form of being in a place physically is definitely very powerful, and we witnessed it in Hong Kong every year ... but I do think new forms must be invented, especially in this time of so many uncertainties.”

He said the Taiwan event organisers saw it as “a chance to continue what can't be done in Hong Kong any more, or at least what can't be done safely”.

Rowena Xiaoqing He, author of *Tiananmen Exiles: Voices of the Struggle for Democracy in China*, said Hong Kong's Victoria park vigil was as iconic as the historic image of the [“tank man”](#), when it came to remembering the atrocity.

“Two years [after the lawful 2019 vigil] here I am in Hong Kong, we cannot even get close to the park without fear on June 4,” she told the Guardian. “Yes, Victoria park will be without candles this year. But one thing I learned from two decades of studying Tiananmen is that there is always light in our hearts that cannot be swallowed by darkness. History is on our side.”

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Hungary

Free Hong Kong Road: Budapest renames streets to frustrate Chinese campus plan

Uyghur Martyrs' Road and Dalai Lama Road also adorn Hungary's capital near project condemned as 'Chinese influence-buying'



Activists hold the Tibetan flag underneath a street sign reading 'Dalai Lama Road', close to the planned Chinese Fudan university campus in Budapest. Photograph: Attila Kisbenedek/AFP/Getty Images

Activists hold the Tibetan flag underneath a street sign reading 'Dalai Lama Road', close to the planned Chinese Fudan university campus in Budapest. Photograph: Attila Kisbenedek/AFP/Getty Images

Agence France-Presse

Wed 2 Jun 2021 20.29 EDT

Budapest has renamed streets around the planned site of a leading Chinese university campus to protest an “unwanted” project forced on it by the government of the prime minister, Viktor Orbán.

Four street signs at the site now bear the names Free Hong Kong Road, Uyghur Martyrs’ Road, Dalai Lama Road, and Bishop Xie Shiguang Road, the last referring to a persecuted Chinese Catholic priest.

“We still hope the project won’t happen but if it does then it will have to put up with these names,” the city’s mayor, Gergely Karacsony, told a joint press conference with the district mayor, Krisztina Baranyi.

[‘They can see us in the dark’: migrants grapple with hi-tech fortress EU](#)
[Read more](#)

Currently derelict, the area is to house Fudan university’s first European campus in a 500,000 sq metre (5m sq ft) complex by 2024, according to a deal signed between [Hungary](#) and the Shanghai-based university’s president.

But the sprawling project has fed growing unease about Hungary’s diplomatic tilt from west to east and its soaring indebtedness to [China](#).

Leaked internal documents revealed that China is expected to give a €1.3bn (\$1.6bn) loan to cover most of the estimated €1.5bn costs.

“We don’t want the elite and private Fudan university here at the expense of Hungarian taxpayers,” said Karacsony.

The liberal mayor has previously blasted “Chinese influence-buying” in Hungary and urged Orban to honour a previous pledge not to force projects on the capital against its will.

A city-wide “consultation” to canvass the population’s opinion on the project begins on 4 June, said Baranyi.

[Boris Johnson raised human rights issues at Orbán meeting, says No 10](#)
[Read more](#)

Opinion polls show a majority of Budapest residents oppose the plan.

The government argues that a prestigious outpost of Fudan university would permit thousands of Hungarian, Chinese and other international students to acquire high-quality degrees.

It would also fit in with previously agreed plans to build a “Student City” dormitory project for thousands of mainly Hungarian students at the site, it says, although Karacsony said the Fudan campus would take over most of that project’s area.

Fudan is the latest landmark in Orban’s foreign policy of “Eastern Opening”, which analysts describe as a geopolitical balancing act.

Critics portray the nationalist prime minister as China and Russia’s “Trojan horse” inside the European Union and Nato.

In May Karacsony announced he would run in a primary election organised by an alliance of six opposition parties to select a challenger to Orban at a general election in early 2022.

Polls show the opposition alliance holds a narrow lead over Orban’s ruling rightwing Fidesz party, and that Karacsony is currently the most likely to win the primary which will be held in September.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/03/free-hong-kong-road-budapest-renames-streets-to-frustrate-chinese-campus-plan>

ExxonMobil

Activist fund expected to win third seat on ExxonMobil board

Third director nomination secured by Engine No 1 amid growing pressure over fossil fuels



Engine No 1's founder has said the hedge fund was motivated by a plan to raise Exxon's share price rather than direct environmental concerns. Photograph: Richard Drew/AP

Engine No 1's founder has said the hedge fund was motivated by a plan to raise Exxon's share price rather than direct environmental concerns. Photograph: Richard Drew/AP

[Jasper Jolly](#)

[@jjpjolly](#)

Thu 3 Jun 2021 04.28 EDT

ExxonMobil expects to lose a third board seat to an activist hedge fund, Engine No 1, [adding to the pressure](#) on one of the world's largest oil companies to introduce a more effective climate transition plan.

The Texas-based producer announced late on Wednesday that lawyers counting shareholder votes had found a third director nomination was secured by Engine No 1, which argued Exxon had not done enough to prepare for the global shift from fossil fuels.

[‘Black Wednesday’ for big oil as courtrooms and boardrooms turn on industry.](#)

[Read more](#)

The vote for the third director had been too close to call immediately after Exxon's annual meeting last week, in which two rebel directors from Engine No 1 were voted in by shareholders.

The rebellion came on the same day as a [series of victories for climate activists](#) – both shareholders and campaigners – as [Chevron lost a vote calling](#) for it to reduce the carbon emissions of the products it sells. Its Anglo-Dutch rival Royal Dutch Shell was ordered by a Dutch courtroom to cut its emissions by 45% by 2030, in a landmark ruling.

Appointing directors backed by the company is usually a formality, but the imposition of three board members by an activist hedge fund founded less than six months ago represents a significant blow to Exxon's plans to drill new wells in the US and [off the coast of Guyana](#).

Engine No 1 has said Exxon will also have to cut carbon emissions from its products, which will mean drilling for less oil and gas in the future. Engine No 1's founder said the hedge fund – reportedly named after a San Francisco fire station sign – was motivated by a plan to raise Exxon's share price by forcing it to take into account decarbonisation, rather than direct environmental concerns.

Guardian business email sign-up

Engine No 1 said: “We are grateful for shareholders’ careful consideration of our nominees and are excited that these three individuals will be working with the full board to help better position [ExxonMobil](#) for the long-term benefit of all shareholders.”

The hedge fund garnered support from large investors by nominating directors with significant oil industry experience. There is still a nine-to-three majority of Exxon nominees on the board.

“We look forward to working with all of our directors to build on the progress we’ve made to grow long-term shareholder value and succeed in a lower-carbon future,” said Darren Woods, Exxon’s chairman and chief executive.

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Trump administration

Trump justice department secretly obtained New York Times reporters' phone records, paper says

Previous seizures of the records of journalists from the Washington Post and CNN have emerged in the past month



Joe Biden has said he would not allowed the practice of obtaining reporters' phone records after previous examples during the Trump administration. Photograph: Alastair Pike/AFP/Getty Images

Joe Biden has said he would not allowed the practice of obtaining reporters' phone records after previous examples during the Trump administration. Photograph: Alastair Pike/AFP/Getty Images

Associated Press

Thu 3 Jun 2021 02.03 EDT

The justice department under Donald Trump secretly obtained the phone records of four [New York Times](#) reporters as part of a leak investigation, the newspaper has reported.

The case announced on Wednesday is the third instance in the past month in which a news media organisation has disclosed that federal authorities seized the records of its journalists in an effort to identify sources for national security stories published during Trump's administration.

President Joe Biden has said he would not allow the department to continue the practice of obtaining reporters' records, calling it "simply, simply wrong".

A department spokesman, Anthony Coley, said it notified the four reporters on Wednesday that it had obtained their phone toll records last year and that it had sought to obtain non-content email records as part of "a criminal investigation into the unauthorised disclosure of classified information".

[Trump justice department secretly seized CNN journalist's phone records](#)
[Read more](#)

The newspaper said the records that were seized covered a nearly four-month period in 2017 and belonged to reporters Matt Apuzzo, Adam Goldman, Eric Lichtblau and Michael S Schmidt. Lichtblau has since left the newspaper.

The journalists are neither the subjects nor the targets of the investigation, Coley said.

Coley added: "Forthcoming annual public reports from the department covering 2019 and 2020 will indicate that members of the news media have now been notified in every instance in this period in which their records were sought or obtained in such circumstances."

The department did not disclose which article it was investigating, according to the newspaper.

The period covered by the phone record seizure encompasses an April 2017 story from the four journalists that described the decision-making of then-FBI director James Comey during the conclusion of the Hillary Clinton email investigation, and that referenced a classified document obtained by Russian hackers.

Dean Baquet, the executive editor of the New York Times, said in a statement published by the newspaper that seizing reporters' phone records "profoundly undermines press freedom".

"It threatens to silence the sources we depend on to provide the public with essential information about what the government is doing," Baquet said.

The Washington Post disclosed last month that the justice department had last year [obtained phone records belonging to three of its journalists](#) who covered the investigation into 2016 Russian election interference. CNN later revealed that the department had [seized phone records of its Pentagon correspondent, Barbara Starr](#).

After those disclosures, Biden told a reporter he would not allow the department to persist in obtaining reporter phone records. That would mark a break from Democratic and Republican predecessors alike, whose administrations have seized reporter call logs in an effort to identify sources of classified information.

The justice department under former attorney-general Eric Holder announced revised guidelines for leak investigations, requiring additional levels of review before a journalist could be subpoenaed – though it did not end the practice.

Jeff Sessions, who served as Trump's first attorney-general, announced in 2017 an aggressive government crackdown on leaks.

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