

MUSK’S RELIANCE
ON CHINA DRAWS
RISING SCRUTINY

BET THAT SAVED TESLA

A Symbiotic Relationship
Could Offer Leverage
to Beijing Leaders

This article is by **Mara Hvistendahl, Jack Ewing and John Liu.**

When Elon Musk unveiled the first Chinese-made Teslas in Shanghai in 2020, he went off script and started dancing. Peeling off his jacket, he flung it across the stage in a partial striptease. Mr. Musk had reason to celebrate. A few years earlier, with Tesla on the brink of failure, he had bet on China, which offered cheap parts and capable workers — and which needed Tesla as an anchor to jump-start its fledgling electric vehicle industry. For Chinese leaders, the prize was a Tesla factory on domestic soil. Mr. Musk would build one in Shanghai that would become a flagship, accounting for over half of Tesla’s global deliveries and the bulk of its profits.

Mr. Musk initially seemed to have the upper hand in the relationship, securing concessions from China that were rarely offered to foreign businesspeople. But in a stark shift, Tesla is now increasingly in trouble and losing its edge over Chinese competitors in the very market he helped create. Tesla’s China pivot has also tethered Mr. Musk to Beijing in a way that is drawing scrutiny from U.S. policymakers.

Interviews with former Tesla employees, diplomats and policymakers reveal how Mr. Musk built an unusually symbiotic relationship with Beijing, profiting from the Chinese government’s largess even as he reaped subsidies in the United States.

As Mr. Musk explored building the factory in Shanghai, Chinese leaders agreed to a crucial policy change on national emissions regulations, following lobbying by Tesla that was not previously reported. That change directly benefited Tesla, bringing in an estimated hundreds of millions of dollars in profits as China production took off, The New York Times found.

Mr. Musk also gained unusual access to senior leaders. He worked closely with a top Shanghai official who is now the premier, Li Qiang. The Shanghai factory went up at lightning speed and without a local partner, a first for a

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MIKE SEGAR/REUTERS

Divers searched for the bodies of six construction workers on Wednesday near the Francis Scott Key Bridge. Officials halted traffic just before the collapse on Tuesday.

The Fateful Minutes Before a Bridge Crumpled in Baltimore

A MAYDAY CALL

A transcript of officers’ efforts to divert traffic before a cargo ship hit the Francis Scott Key Bridge.

- 1:27:53 a.m.** SPEAKER 1: I need one of you guys on the south side, one of you guys on the north side, hold all traffic on the Key Bridge. There’s a ship approaching that just lost their steering. So until they get that under control, we’ve got to stop all traffic.
- 1:28:13 a.m.** SPEAKER 3: (inaudible) I’m holding traffic now. I was driving but we stopped prior to the bridge, so I’ll have all outer loop traffic stopped.
- 1:28:25 a.m.** SPEAKER 1: 10-4, Is there a crew working on the bridge right now?
- 1:28:37 a.m.** SPEAKER 4: Want me to stop traffic along this side right now?
- 1:28:42 a.m.** SPEAKER 1: Yeah if we could stop traffic, just make sure no one’s on the bridge right now. I’m not sure where there’s a crew up there. You might want to notify whoever the foreman is, see if we could get them off the bridge temporarily.
- 1:28:58 a.m.** SPEAKER 4: 10-4, once the other unit gets here I’ll ride up on the bridge. I have all inner loop traffic stopped at this time.
- 1:29:17 a.m.** SPEAKER 4: Once you get here I’ll go grab the workers on the Key Bridge and then stop the outer loop.
- 1:29:27 a.m.** SPEAKER 5: C-13 Dispatch, the whole bridge just fell down! (inaudible), whoever, everybody, the whole bridge just collapsed.

Audio Reveals Distress and Actions

This article is by **Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, Campbell Robertson, Annie Correal, Michael Forsythe and Mike Baker.**

BALTIMORE — “Hold all traffic on the Key Bridge.”

The terse command from an officer in Baltimore’s busy commercial shipping port was one of the first warnings of a disaster that experts now predict will transform shipping on the Eastern Seaboard and change how ships and bridges function around the world. But after the cargo ship Dali lost power early Tuesday, there were precious few minutes to act.

In those minutes, many people — from the ship’s crew, who sent out a mayday signal, to the transportation authority police officers, who stopped traffic heading onto the Francis Scott Key Bridge — did what they could to avert catastrophe, most likely saving many lives.

And yet — no matter what any-

one did — several factors made catastrophe all but inevitable. When a ship of this size loses engine power, there is little to be done to correct its course, even dropping an anchor down. And the Key Bridge was particularly vulnerable. As long ago as 1980, engineers had warned that the bridge, because of its design, would never be able to survive a direct hit from a container ship.

The collision and subsequent collapse of the bridge swallowed up seven road workers and an inspector who could not be alerted and pulled off the bridge in time; two were pulled alive out of the water, but four others are still missing and presumed dead. Two bodies were retrieved on Wednesday, authorities said.

Also caught up in the disaster were the ship’s 21 crew members, all from India, who had prepared for a long journey to Sri Lanka on the Dali. While none of them were

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Israelis Deploy
High-Tech Tool
To Surveil Gaza

By **SHEERA FRENKEL**

TEL AVIV — Within minutes of walking through an Israeli military checkpoint along Gaza’s central highway on Nov. 19, the Palestinian poet Mosab Abu Toha was asked to step out of the crowd. He put down his 3-year-old son, whom he was carrying, and sat in front of a military jeep.

Half an hour later, Mr. Abu Toha heard his name called. Then he was blindfolded and led away for interrogation.

“I had no idea what was happening or how they could suddenly know my full legal name,” said the 31-year-old, who added that he had no ties to the militant group Hamas and had been trying to leave Gaza for Egypt.

It turned out Mr. Abu Toha had walked into the range of cameras embedded with facial recognition technology, according to three Is-

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JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN, 1942-2024

Symbol of Rectitude in Senate
And Would-Be Vice President

By **ROBERT D. McFADDEN**

Joseph I. Lieberman, Connecticut’s four-term United States senator and Vice President Al Gore’s Democratic running mate in the 2000 presidential election, which was won by George W. Bush and Dick Cheney when the Supreme Court halted a Florida ballot recount, died on Wednesday in Manhattan. He was 82.

His family said in a statement that the cause was complications of a fall. His brother-in-law Ary Freilich said that Mr. Lieberman’s fall occurred at his home in the Riverdale section of the Bronx and that he died at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital in Upper Manhattan.

At his political peak, on the threshold of the vice presidency, Mr. Lieberman — a national voice of morality as the first major Democrat to rebuke President Bill



FRED R. CONRAD/THE NEW YORK TIMES

He was the first Jewish candidate on a major-party ticket.

Clinton for his sexual relationship with the White House intern Monica Lewinsky — was named Mr. Gore’s running mate at the Democratic National Convention that August in Los Angeles. He became

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RICHARD SERRA, 1938-2024

Fiery Sculptor Who Made the Immense Intimate

By **ROBERTA SMITH**

Richard Serra, who set out to become a painter but instead became one of his era’s greatest sculptors, inventing a monumental environment of immense tilting corridors, ellipses and spirals of steel that gave the medium both a new abstract grandeur and a new physical intimacy, died on Tuesday at his home in Orient, N.Y., on the North Fork of Long Island. He was 85.

The cause was pneumonia, John Silberman, his lawyer, said.

Mr. Serra’s most celebrated works had some of the scale of ancient temples or sacred sites and the inscrutability of landmarks like Stonehenge. But if these massive forms had a mystical effect, it came not from religious belief but from the distortions of space created by their leaning, curving or circling walls and the frankness of their materials.

This was something new in sculpture; a flowing, circling ge-



RAFA RIVAS/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Richard Serra in 2005. His art had to be walked into, or around.

ometry that had to be moved through and around to be fully experienced. Mr. Serra said his work required a lot of “walking and looking,” or “peripatetic perception.” It was, he said, “viewer centered”: Its meanings were to be

arrived at by individual exploration and reflection.

These pieces were assembled from giant plates of cold rolled steel made in mills more accustomed to fabricating the hulls of

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Russia Drives Ukraine Wedge

Having found better ways to conceal its influence campaigns, Moscow is poised to push candidates who oppose aiding Kyiv, officials warn. PAGE A9

Fresh Criticism of Garrick Club

One of Britain’s oldest men’s clubs has long guarded its membership list. A recent leak caused a scandal. PAGE A10

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NBC Hire Not Politics as Usual

The deal with Ronna McDaniel risked the credibility of NBC News, our critic James Poniewozik writes. PAGE B1

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Broad Museum Is Expanding

An addition designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro is in the works for a popular destination in Los Angeles. PAGE C1

Moving Forward, Forcefully

The Trisha Brown Dance Company returned to the Joyce Theater with an enthralling performance. PAGE C6



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Biden’s Ex-Boss Offers Advice

Former President Barack Obama, with grave concerns about the November election, has been strategizing with President Biden’s top aides. PAGE A16

Cancer Victims Get Younger

Colon and rectal cancers are increasing among people younger than 50. Experts have a few ideas about why. PAGE A13

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Unmasker of Mental Bias

Daniel Kahneman pioneered a psychologically based branch of economics that led to a Nobel. He was 90. PAGE A24

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Outrage Is Losing Steam

Has fashion canceled canceling? Recent history suggests the answer may be yes, Vanessa Friedman writes. PAGE D1

Redefining Stardom

The actress Rebecca Hall was warned about dividing her talents too much. But she refuses “to stay in one lane.” PAGE D7



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16 Teams and 16 Questions

We break down the N.C.A.A. men’s basketball tournament’s regional semifinals, which start on Thursday. PAGE B8

Baseball’s Missing Milestones

There are no active players with 500 home runs, 3,000 hits or 300 wins. How long will it take to fill the void? PAGE B7

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Elizabeth Spiers

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