



JAMES HILL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

**Tracking (and Dodging) Russia in the Baltic Sea**  
French team members of Baltic Sentry, aimed at suspected sabotage. None has occurred since NATO began patrols. Page A6.

## Environmental Moderate Turns MAGA Warrior

By LISA FRIEDMAN  
When President Trump’s cabinet secretaries clashed with Elon Musk in March over the billionaire’s chain saw approach to shrinking government, Lee Zeldin, the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, made it clear where he stood.  
Mr. Musk had just traded barbs with Sean Duffy, the transportation secretary, and Marco Rubio, the secretary of state. Things were tense. That’s when Mr. Zeldin chimed in to say he had no complaints about Mr. Musk, according to three people briefed on the March 6 meeting.  
It was a telling moment for Mr. Zeldin, who has evolved from

### As Leader of the E.P.A., Zeldin Is Gutting the Agency With Zeal

moderate blue-state Republican to full MAGA warrior, taken to dismantling the agency he oversees with zeal.  
Over the past nine weeks, Mr. Zeldin has withheld billions of dollars in climate funds approved by Congress, tried to fire hundreds of employees, recommended the elimination of thousands more E.P.A. scientists and started trying to repeal dozens of environmental regulations that limit toxic pollution. The New Yorker

has filled the leadership ranks at the agency with lobbyists and lawyers from industries that have fought environmental regulations.  
He has embraced Mr. Musk, calling theirs “an incredible partnership” and requiring that any expenditure at the E.P.A. over \$50,000 be approved by Mr. Musk’s advisory group, the Department of Government Efficiency. Two members of the DOGE team, Kathryn Loving and Cole Killian, occupy an office outside Mr. Zeldin’s wood-paneled executive suite on the third floor of the E.P.A. headquarters. A handwritten note was recently taped to the door that said “Welcome to DOGE.”

Continued on Page A20

## Pitch on Tariffs Is That People Can Take Pain

By ALAN RAPPEPORT  
WASHINGTON — President Trump’s sweeping tariffs are expected to raise the cost of cars, electronics, metals, lumber, pharmaceuticals and other products that American consumers and businesses buy from overseas.  
But Mr. Trump and his advisers are betting that they can sell an inflation-weary public on a provocative idea: Cheap stuff is not the American dream.  
“I couldn’t care less if they raise prices, because people are going to start buying American-made cars,” Mr. Trump said on NBC’s “Meet the Press” on Sunday in response to fears of foreign car prices spiking.  
The notion that there is more to life than low-cost imports is an acknowledgment that tariffs could impose additional costs on Americans. It is also a pitch that the burden will be worth it. Mr. Trump’s ability to convince consumers that it is acceptable to pay more to support domestic manufacturing and adhere to his “America First” agenda could determine whether the president’s second term is a success or a calamity.  
But it is not an easy sell.  
The onslaught of tariffs has rolled markets and dampened consumer confidence. Auto tariffs that go into effect on Thursday will add a 25 percent tax on imports of cars and car parts, likely upending pricing in the sector. Mr. Trump has already imposed tariffs of 20 percent on Chinese goods and more are expected later this week, when the president announces his “reciprocal” tariffs on major trading partners, including those in Asia and Europe.  
In confronting anxiety over the

Continued on Page A17



QASSEM AL-KAABI/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

**A Solemn Start to Eid**  
In Najaf, Iraq, women visited relatives’ tombs on Monday as Eid al-Fitr marked Ramadan’s end.

## No Evidence for Healing Powers, but ‘Tastes Like Dead Cancer’

By RICHARD FAUSSET  
Joe Grinsteiner is a gregarious online personality who touts the anti-parasitic drug ivermectin. In a recent Facebook video, he produced a tube of veterinary-grade ivermectin paste — the kind made for deworming horses.  
He gave the tube a squeeze.

Then he licked a slug of the stuff, and gulped.  
“Yum,” Mr. Grinsteiner said in the Feb. 25 video, one of a number of ivermectin-related posts he has made that have drawn millions of views on Facebook this year. “Actually, that tastes like dead cancer.”  
Ivermectin, a drug proven to treat certain parasitic diseases,

exploded in popularity during the pandemic amid false claims that it could treat or prevent Covid-19. Now — despite a persistent message from federal health officials that its medical benefits are limited — interest in ivermectin is rising again, particularly among American conservatives who are seeing it promoted by right-wing influencers.

Mr. Grinsteiner, 54, is a Trump supporter and country music performer who lives in rural Michigan. He has claimed in his videos that ivermectin cured his skin cancer, as well as his wife’s cervical cancer. In a video in February, he said a woman told him her non-verbal autistic child had become verbal after using ivermectin. In a

Continued on Page A21

## Russia Testing Trump’s Mettle Over Ukraine

### Kremlin Stalls on Talks as It Presses Attacks

By PAUL SONNE  
and MARC SANTORA  
BERLIN — The White House, for two months, has warmly embraced the Kremlin.  
But President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia has given little in return, despite his professed willingness to cooperate.  
His forces have carried on bombarding Ukraine, both on the front and deep into the Ukrainian heartland. He has barely budged in peace negotiations, freighting an agreement to a unconditional 30-day cease-fire with myriad conditions. His subordinates have dragged out talks, voicing requirements for a limited Black Sea truce in recent days.  
Then, during an Arctic appearance late last week, Mr. Putin suggested that a temporary Ukrainian government might need to be installed under the auspices of the United Nations and that an election might need to be held to pave the way for a lasting end to the war.  
The implication was that a quick peace would not be in the offing, with Mr. Putin again suggesting he couldn’t cut a deal with President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, whom Moscow for months has been tarnishing as illegitimate.  
President Trump took notice.  
The U.S. president told NBC News this weekend that he was “very angry” about the comments and threatened to impose tariffs on any country buying Russian oil, a measure that could dent Moscow’s most crucial source of income for the war.  
“If Russia and I are unable to make a deal on stopping the bloodshed in Ukraine, and if I think it was Russia’s fault — which it might not be — but if I think it was Russia’s fault, I am going to put secondary tariffs on oil, on all oil coming out of Russia,” Mr. Trump said.  
The result is a question of increasing relevance for the most Russia-friendly American administration in decades: Is Washington prepared to pile pressure on Mr. Putin, whose authoritarian power, disregard for term limits and crusade against liberals have long appealed to Mr. Trump?  
“I think Trump wants so much a deal with Putin that he will not immediately go in the other direction and put Russia under pressure,” said Stefan Meister, a Russia ex-

Continued on Page A6

## Ban of Le Pen Sets Up Fight Over France

### Verdict Tests the Law As an Election Nears

By ROGER COHEN  
PARIS — Last year, Marine Le Pen spoke menacingly of the possible fallout from her trial on embezzlement charges: “Tomorrow, potentially, millions and millions of French people will see themselves deprived of their candidate for the presidency.”  
After a court disqualified her on Monday from running for public office for five years, those millions of French voters are adrift and angry.  
France is a democracy governed by the rule of law, as the verdict demonstrated. But it is unclear how far its troubled Fifth Republic can resist an inevitable gale of political protest before the 2027 election.  
Unlike President Trump, who met with convictions, indict-



STEPHANE DE SAKUTIN/A.F.P. — GETTY IMAGES  
Marine Le Pen was convicted of embezzling E.U. funds.

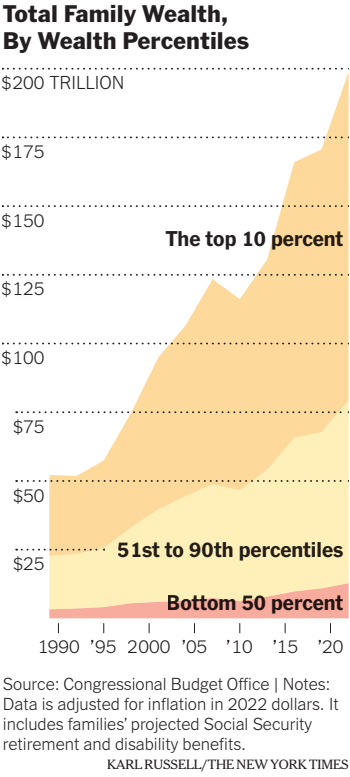
ments and criminal cases on the way to his election last year, possibly even benefiting from perceived persecution, Ms. Le Pen could find no political path past the verdict of the French legal system.  
“The independence of our justice system and the separation of powers stand at the heart of our democracy,” said Valérie Hayer, a centrist lawmaker in the European Parliament. “Nobody is above the law.”  
That view is certain to come under sustained attack in a global environment where questioning of the legitimacy of legal systems has become frequent — across Europe, but particularly in Mr. Trump’s United States. Mr. Trump has called for the impeachment of judges who rule

Continued on Page A12

## Wealth in the U.S. Is Way Up. So Why Do We Feel So Down?

By TALMON JOSEPH SMITH  
America is more prosperous than ever.  
U.S. household net worth reached a new peak at the end of 2024. The unemployment rate has levitated just above record lows for three years. The overall debt that households are carrying compared with the assets they own is also near a record low.  
But even a land of plenty has its shortcomings, influencing both perceptions and realities of how Americans are doing.  
The U.S. economy remains deeply unequal, with vast gaps in wealth and financial security persisting even as inflation has ebbed and incomes have risen. And data designed to capture the overall population may be obscuring challenges experienced by a broad range of Americans, especially those in the bottom half of the wealth or income spectrum.  
The share of wealth held by

Continued on Page A14



BUSINESS B1-6

**Seeking Help to Secure Labor**  
With the migrant work force squeezed, businesses push for legislation to ensure a legal flow of workers. PAGE B1

**A Chinese Truck Maker’s Aim**  
An E.V. entrepreneur is fueled by \$300 million, Beijing’s technology and faith in more pleasant geopolitics. PAGE B1

INTERNATIONAL A4-12

**Quake Relief in Myanmar**  
As the death toll rose past 2,000, some volunteers complained of being blocked by the military from reaching a rebel stronghold that was badly hit. PAGE A8

**Fury Over Pacific Proposal**  
More than 30 nations have criticized a plan that could allow the start of seabed mining by 2027. PAGE A4

SPORTS B7-11

**The New Shape of Power?**  
A torpedo-like bat may have figured in a Yankees home run surge. Players across baseball are intrigued. PAGE B9

NATIONAL A13-21

**Gender Gap at Black Colleges**  
Only 19 percent of students at Howard University are Black men, whose enrollment levels at four-year colleges have plummeted across the board. PAGE A13

**Steep Tab at Guantánamo**  
The Pentagon estimates that it cost \$40 million in the first month to jail roughly 400 migrants at the U.S. base. PAGE A18

OBITUARIES B12

**A Fixture at Vanity Fair**  
As an arbiter of style, Reinaldo Herrera helped define Manhattan’s high life for many years. He was 91.

SCIENCE TIMES D1-8

**Butterfly Population Declines**  
A new study offers a comprehensive assessment of the status of the winged insects in the lower 48 states. PAGE D8

**Dinosaurs on Display**  
A museum has opened at a site where some of the New Jersey area’s very first inhabitants roamed. PAGE D1

ARTS C1-6

**Return of the Sleazy Salesmen**  
Kieran Culkin, Bill Burr and Bob Odenkirk star in a bumpy revival of “Glenrarry Glen Ross.” PAGE C1

**Stylish Behind the Easel**  
An exhibition in France looks at what the sartorial choices of artists have revealed about their place in society. PAGE C1

OPINION A22-23

**Don Bacon** PAGE A22