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# The New York Times

THE WEATHER

Today, hot and less humid, dehydration a concern, high 93. Tonight, cloudy skies, light winds, low 75. Tomorrow, warm, a mixture of clouds, high 88. Weather map is on Page 20.

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Prices in Canada may be higher

\$6.00

## Iranians Elect Reform Leader To Presidency

### Upset Delivers Blow to Hard-Line Faction

By FARNAZ FASSIHI

In an election upset in Iran, the reformist candidate who advocated moderate policies at home and improved relations with the West won the presidential runoff against a hard-line rival, according to results released by the interior ministry on Saturday.

The winner was Masoud Pezeshkian, a 69-year-old cardiac surgeon, who got 16.3 million votes to defeat Saeed Jalili, who had 13.5 million votes. It was a blow to the conservative faction in Iran's ruling establishment and a major victory for the relatively moderate reformist camp, which had been sidelined from politics for the past few years.

After polls closed at midnight, turnout stood at roughly 50 percent, about 10 percentage points higher than in the first round, with about 30.5 million ballots cast, according to the interior ministry.

The first round had a record-low turnout as many Iranians boycotted. But the prospect of a hard-line administration that would double down on strict social rules, including enforcing mandatory hijabs for women, and remain defiant in negotiations to lift international economic sanctions, apparently spurred Iranians to turn out.

"The difficult path ahead will not be smooth except with your companionship, compassion and trust," Mr. Pezeshkian wrote on social media after his win. In another post, he thanked the young people "who came to work lovingly and sincerely for Iran" and "shined a ray of hope and confidence in the future."

Mr. Pezeshkian said during the campaign that he recognized fixing the economy was inextricably linked to foreign policy — namely the standoff with the West over the nuclear program — and would negotiate to lift sanctions.

He has said he opposes the mandatory hijab law. But when it

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President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris celebrated the Fourth of July at the White House with their families on Thursday.

## Crisis? What Crisis? President Rejects Party's Bleak Outlook.

By PETER BAKER

All sounds fine in President Biden's world. That devastating debate? Just a bad night. Those dismal poll numbers? Simply inaccurate. The gloomy election predictions? The same old doom-sayers, wrong again. The Democrats who want him to drop out? No one has told him that.

For Mr. Biden, the crisis seen by so many Democrats who are not on his payroll — and by some who are — is nothing more than another bump in the road, another obstacle to overcome as he always has. He does not agree that he is slipping as he ages. He does not accept that he is losing to former President Donald J.

Trump. He does not believe much of his own party wants him to step aside.

His prime-time interview that aired on ABC News on Friday night was an exercise not just in damage control but in reality control. For much of his long and storied political career, Mr. Biden has succeeded through sheer force of will, defying the doubters and the skeptics and the scorners to prove that he could do what no one expected. Yet now, in what may be the most threatened moment of his presidency, that self-confidence leaves him increasingly isolated in his own party.

"You really see a president in

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## Harris Emerges From Sidelines As Democrats Rethink the Ticket

By ERICA L. GREEN

SELMA, Ala. — By early this year, around the time a prosecutor called President Biden a "well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory," Vice President Kamala Harris already knew something had to change.

It was up to her, she had told allies, to finally distinguish herself in her job — something she had been struggling to do for more than two years — and reassure American voters that the Biden-Harris ticket was still a safe bet. She had been feeling sidelined in the early stages of the campaign, one adviser said, and she wanted a bigger role.

She fled the Washington bubble and embarked on an ambitious travel schedule, making more

than 60 trips this year alone. She tossed talking points to speak out more forcefully on abortion rights, the war in Gaza and race. She invoked her personal story more often, from her mother's influence on her life to her inspiration for becoming a prosecutor.

Her allies emphasize that she has been taking on a bigger role for some time, notably after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade two years ago and during high-profile foreign assignments.

But even before the questions about Mr. Biden's age and acuity burst into the open, people close to her say, she was looking for more powerful ways to support the ticket.

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## FOREIGN SOLDIERS IN A UKRAINE UNIT KILLED PRISONERS

### AMERICAN-LED TROOPS

#### Unarmed Russians Slain While Surrendering, a Medic Says

By THOMAS GIBBONS-NEFF

KYIV, Ukraine — Hours after a battle in eastern Ukraine in August, a wounded and unarmed Russian soldier crawled through a nearly destroyed trench, seeking help from his captors, a unit of international volunteers led by an American.

Caspar Grosse, a German medic in that unit, said he saw the soldier plead for medical attention in a mix of broken English and Russian. It was dusk. A team member looked for bandages.

That is when, Mr. Grosse said, a fellow soldier hobbled over and fired his weapon into the Russian soldier's torso. He slumped, still breathing. Another soldier fired — "just shot him in the head," Mr. Grosse recalled in an interview.

Mr. Grosse said he was so upset by the episode that he confronted his commander. He said he spoke to The New York Times after what he regarded as unwarranted killings continued. It is highly unusual for a soldier to speak publicly about battlefield conduct, particularly involving men whom he still considers friends.

But he said he was too troubled to keep silent.

The shooting of the unarmed, wounded Russian soldier is one of several killings that have unsettled the Chosen Company, one of the best-known units of international troops fighting on behalf of Ukraine.

Mr. Grosse's witness recollection is the only available evidence of the trench killing. But his accounts of other episodes are bolstered by his contemporaneous notes, video footage and text messages exchanged by members of

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## Conservative Intellectual Vanguard Is Putting Down New Roots

By RUTH GRAHAM

COEUR D'ALENE, Idaho — The Claremont Institute has been located in Southern California since its founding in the late 1970s. From its perch in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, it has become a leading intellectual center of the pro-Trump right.

Without fanfare, however, some of Claremont's key figures have been leaving California to find ideologically friendlier climes. Ryan P. Williams, the think tank's president, moved to a suburb in the Dallas-Fort Worth area in early April.

His friend and Claremont colleague Michael Anton — a California native who played a major role in persuading conservative intellectuals to vote for Mr. Trump in 2016 — moved to the Dallas area two years ago. The institute's vice president for operations and administration has moved there, too. Others are following. Mr. Williams opened a small office in another Dallas-Fort Worth suburb in May, and said he expects to shrink Claremont's California headquarters.

"A lot of us share a sense that Christendom is unraveling," said Skyler Kressin, 38, who is friendly with the Claremont leaders and shares many of their concerns. He left Southern California to move to

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, in 2020. "We need to be engaged, we need to be building."

As Mr. Trump barrels through his third presidential campaign, his supporters buoyed by the debate on June 27, many of the young activists and thinkers who

have risen under his influence see themselves as part of a project that goes far beyond electoral politics. Rather, it is a movement to reclaim the values of Western civilization as they see it. Their ambitions paint a picture of the country they want should Mr.

Trump return to the White House — one driven by their version of Christian values, with larger families and fewer immigrants. They foresee an aesthetic landscape to match, with more classical architecture and a revived conserva-

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Some Christian conservatives are moving to states and communities they see as more welcoming.

## Romance Finds Its Own Time And Place in New Bookstores

By ALEXANDRA ALTER

Last summer, when Mae Tingstrom had the idea to open a romance bookstore in Ventura, Calif., the first thing she did was search online to see whether there was already one in her region. She found The Ripped Bodice — a bookstore in Culver City that was doing so well, it was expanding to a second location in Brooklyn.

"That was intimidating," she said.

If their success was daunting, it also suggested that there might be room for another romance store. So this February, she opened Smitten on a busy strip of Main Street, about 60 miles from her competitor.

In the months since, Smitten has become a vibrant hub for romance readers, with author signings, tarot readings, book clubs and trivia and craft nights.

Customers sometimes approach her with highly specific requests. "Someone came in and was like, 'I like fantasy, I want it to be queer, I want it to have representation from a different culture and I want it to be as smutty as possible,'" Tingstrom said.

And they come in often. "I have regulars who come a couple of times a week," Tingstrom said.

Over the last two years, the U.S. went from having two dedicated romance bookstores to a network of more than 20.

"I'm like, didn't you just buy two books the other day?"

Once a niche that independent booksellers largely ignored, romance is now the hottest thing in the book world. It is, by far, the top-selling fiction genre, and its success is reshaping not only the publishing industry, but the retail landscape as well.

Over the last two years, the

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NATALIE KEYSSAR FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

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