

The Economist

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JANUARY 4TH-10TH 2020

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The world this week

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The world this week

The world this weekJan 4th 2020 edition

After an Iranian-backed militia allegedly attacked an Iraqi army base and killed an American contractor, America bombed the militia's bases in Iraq and Syria. The militia's supporters then staged violent protests outside the American embassy in Baghdad. The **Iraqi** authorities, who had dispersed recent anti-government protests with lethal force, stood by and let the anti-American rioters enter the compound. Donald Trump blamed Iran for

organising the mêlée. The Pentagon deployed an extra 750 troops to the region. See [article](#).

In **Somalia** America carried out air strikes against al-Shabaab jihadists suspected of planting a car bomb on the outskirts of Mogadishu that killed at least 80 people.

A court in **Saudi Arabia** sentenced five men to death for murdering Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018. The closed trial concluded that the killing of the Saudi dissident was an impulsive decision taken by the assassins. The CIA believes that Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman ordered the murder. He denies it.

Binyamin Netanyahu, the prime minister of **Israel**, said he would ask parliament to grant him immunity from prosecution in three corruption cases. Court proceedings against Mr Netanyahu would be put on hold until the request could be heard, probably after a general election in March. Earlier in December he easily defeated a challenge to his leadership of the Likud party.

Joe Biden, a former vice-president, said he “would obey any subpoena” to testify at the **impeachment trial** of Donald Trump in the Senate, having earlier suggested that he would not do so. Mr Trump’s request to Ukraine to investigate Mr Biden’s son formed the basis of the vote in the House to impeach the president.

Boris Johnson, the Conservative prime minister, moved Britain closer to Brexit. His withdrawal agreement with the EU won a majority of 124 in the House of Commons. Britain will formally leave on January 31st. But that is only the end of the beginning of the Brexit ordeal; Mr Johnson must now try to secure a good trade deal by the end of 2020.

Andrew Bailey was named as the new governor of the **Bank of England**, to take over from Mark Carney in mid-March. Mr Bailey has been head of the Financial Conduct Authority since 2016. Before that he was a deputy governor at the bank. See [article](#).

Firefighters fought Australia's worst **wildfires** for decades. The government refused to review its climate policy. See [article](#).

Carlos Ghosn, a former boss of Nissan and Renault, jumped bail and was somehow spirited out of Japan, where he had been awaiting trial for alleged financial misdeeds. He turned up in Lebanon, which has no extradition agreement with Japan. Mr Ghosn, a Lebanese citizen, said he fled to escape a “rigged” justice system and “political persecution”. See [article](#).

North Korea's dictator, Kim Jong Un, said he would end a moratorium on testing nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. He tested two dozen short-range missiles in 2019.

He Jiankui, a Chinese biologist who achieved notoriety in 2018 by altering the DNA of twin girls when they were still embryos, was sentenced by a court in Shenzhen to three years in prison for an “illegal medical practice”.

Tens of thousands of pro-democracy **Hong Kongers** demonstrated on New Year's Day. Police fired tear-gas and arrested 400 people. In **India** protests continued against a new law that makes it easier for refugees from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan to gain Indian citizenship, as long as they are not Muslim.

Bolivia's interim president, Jeanine Añez, expelled the Mexican ambassador and two Spanish diplomats, accusing them of trying to give succour to an aide of Evo Morales, who stepped down as president in November amid protests against his 13 years in power. Ms Añez is overseeing a caretaker government.

Germany and **Russia** responded angrily to America's imposition of sanctions on companies that work on the **Nord Stream 2 pipeline**, which will transport gas directly to Germany from Russia via the Baltic Sea. America argues that Russia is seeking to dominate German energy. But the German finance minister described the penalties as a “serious interference” in Germany's internal affairs. The sanctions are unlikely to stop the pipeline's completion by the end of 2020.

Boeing sacked Dennis Muilenburg as chief executive, deciding “that a change in leadership was necessary to restore confidence” in the company amid the debacle of its 737 MAX jetliner, which has been grounded for nine months after two fatal crashes. The new CEO will be David Calhoun, who is currently Boeing’s chairman.

Stockmarkets had a sparkling 2019, ending the year much higher than when it started. The FTSE All-World, a global index, rose by a quarter over the year, its best performance since 2009. The S&P 500 was up by 29%, the NASDAQ by 35% and the Euro Stoxx 50 by 25%. Other European and Japanese markets recorded similar gains. After a rotten 2018, China’s CSI 300 index rebounded, rising by a third in 2019. See [article](#).

This article appeared in the The world this week section of the print edition under the headline "The world this week"



Economist.com

Kal

KAL's cartoon

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Leaders

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The Economist

The superpower split Don't be fooled by the trade deal between America and China

The planet's biggest break-up is under way

Leaders Jan 2nd 2020 edition

ON JANUARY 15TH, after three years of a bitter trade war, America and China are due to sign a “phase one” deal that trims tariffs and obliges China to buy more from American farmers. Don’t be fooled. This modest accord cannot

disguise how the world's most important relationship is at its most perilous juncture since before Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong re-established links five decades ago. The threat to the West from China's high-tech authoritarianism has become all too clear. Everything from its pioneering artificial-intelligence firms to its gulags in Xinjiang spread alarm across the world.

Just as visible is America's incoherent response, which veers between demanding that the Chinese government buy Iowan soybeans and insisting it must abandon its state-led economic model. The two sides used to think they could both thrive; today each has vision of success in which the other lot falls behind. A partial dismantling of their bonds is under way. In the 2020s the world will discover just how far this decoupling will go, how much it will cost and whether, as it confronts China, America will be tempted to compromise its own values.



Undeterred America shows how not to tame Iran

By bombing Iraqi territory, America has helped Iran

[LeadersJan 2nd 2020 edition](#)

AFTER NEARLY coming to blows in 2019, America and Iran celebrated the new year in fitting style: with prophecies of war. The escalation began on December 27th, when dozens of missiles, allegedly fired by an Iranian-

backed militia in Iraq called Kataib Hizbulah, struck an Iraqi military base in Kirkuk, killing an American contractor and wounding American and Iraqi soldiers. Two days later America responded, over objections from the Iraqi government, with air strikes on Iraqi soil that killed at least 25 militia members and wounded over 50. After thousands of militiamen and protesters then attacked the American embassy in Baghdad, President Donald Trump said Iran would be held responsible. “They will pay a very ^{BIG} PRICE!” tweeted Mr Trump. “This is not a Warning, it is a Threat. Happy New Year!”

Iran is responsible for stoking the conflict. Its interference in Iraq has spurred tens of thousands of Iraqis to march against it in the streets since October. The protesters are fed up with their own politicians, many of whom seem to want only to please Iran’s leaders, their fellow-Shia patrons. Tehran has even helped its Iraqi clients quell the unrest. Hundreds of protesters have been killed by pro-Iran militias. At the same time, says America, Iranian-backed groups have carried out nearly a dozen attacks on Iraqi bases and facilities housing American contractors and soldiers, who are there at the invitation of the Iraqi government to train local forces. With the Iraqis neglecting their security, America understandably hit back to deter future attacks.



AFP

Fled to the Med No one comes out of the Carlos Ghosn affair smelling of roses

Le Cost Killer is on the run

LeadersJan 2nd 2020 edition

THE LAST time there was an international fugitive from justice called Carlos lying low in Lebanon was in 1975, when Carlos the Jackal hid in Beirut. Today the man on the run is not a terrorist but a celebrity executive known

for fanatical cost-cutting. On December 31st Carlos Ghosn, the former boss of Renault-Nissan, who was arrested in Japan in November 2018 on charges of financial misconduct, jumped bail and fled to Lebanon. He grew up there and it has no extradition arrangements with Japan. Mr Ghosn says he is a victim of “injustice and political persecution” by Japan’s legal system. Japan’s prosecutors, meanwhile, view him as a crook evading justice. In fact, this is far from being a simple morality tale. Each of the three main parties in the saga—Renault-Nissan, Japan’s authorities and Mr Ghosn himself—has hard questions to answer.

Mr Ghosn took charge of Nissan in 2001 and then, in 2005, of Renault, too. The French car firm has a 43% stake in the Japanese one, and together with Mitsubishi they form an alliance that is the world’s biggest carmaker by volume. It sounds impressive, but even the laser-focused Mr Ghosn struggled to make the fiddly pact run smoothly. He claims that he was planning closer integration of Renault and Nissan, and that nationalistic Japanese executives and officials, who wanted to keep Nissan independent, foiled the plan by engineering his arrest.



Reuters

Governing dangerously A year of Jair Bolsonaro

Brazil's president can boast some achievements. They come at a high price

Leaders Jan 2nd 2020 edition

WHEN JAIR BOLSONARO took office as Brazil's president on January 1st 2019, many observers feared the worst. The former army captain had made his name by extolling the military dictators who ruled from 1964 to 1985 and by

disparaging women and gays. He won the election because voters were traumatised by the country's worst-ever recession, from 2014 to 2016, by crime and by revelations of corruption at the highest levels of politics and business. They hoped that Mr Bolsonaro would restore prosperity, peace and probity to Brazil.

After his first year in office they have some of what they wanted. The economy has improved, and violent crime has fallen. Yet Mr Bolsonaro has not put to rest the doubts raised by his unlikely rise to power. The provocateur has not become a statesman. Instead of strengthening Brazil's democratic institutions, he is testing them. When it comes to corruption and the environment, Brazil is either stuck or going backwards.



Elusive justice How to reduce rape

It is the hardest violent crime to prosecute. But most countries can do better

Leaders Jan 2nd 2020 edition

SEXUAL VIOLENCE is less common today than it was in earlier generations. But even in rich, peaceful democracies it is both widespread and distressingly easy to get away with. A fifth of American women will be raped at some point, by

one estimate. Yet only a quarter of victims report it. Most stay silent despite the lifelong damage that rape can inflict and the desire to lock up a predator and deter others. They do so partly because the odds are stacked against them. In England and Wales in the 12 months to March 2019 only 1.5% of reported rapes ended in a criminal charge. With so little prospect of justice, many women are reluctant to undergo the ordeal of reporting an attack to the police.

Many people think women often lie about rape. They do not. The precise figure is unknowable, but the most credible estimates are that between 2% and 8% of rape allegations are false. In surveys, many police officers presume that the figure is far higher, which surely affects how they handle complaints. When a British teenager reported that she had been gang-raped in Cyprus, local police grilled her for hours, while she was traumatised, without a lawyer present. She says they pressed her into retracting her allegations, which she now insists are true. On December 30th she was convicted of lying, and faces up to a year in prison. Other women thinking of reporting rape in Cyprus may now decide not to.

Letters

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On carbon capture, health care, rats, conservation, Joe Biden Letters to the editor

A selection of correspondence

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Negative carbon emissions

Briefing

- [Chinese students in America: The new red scare](#)



Chinese students The new red scare on American campuses

Both their host government and their home government increasingly view Chinese students with suspicion

Briefing Jan 2nd 2020 edition

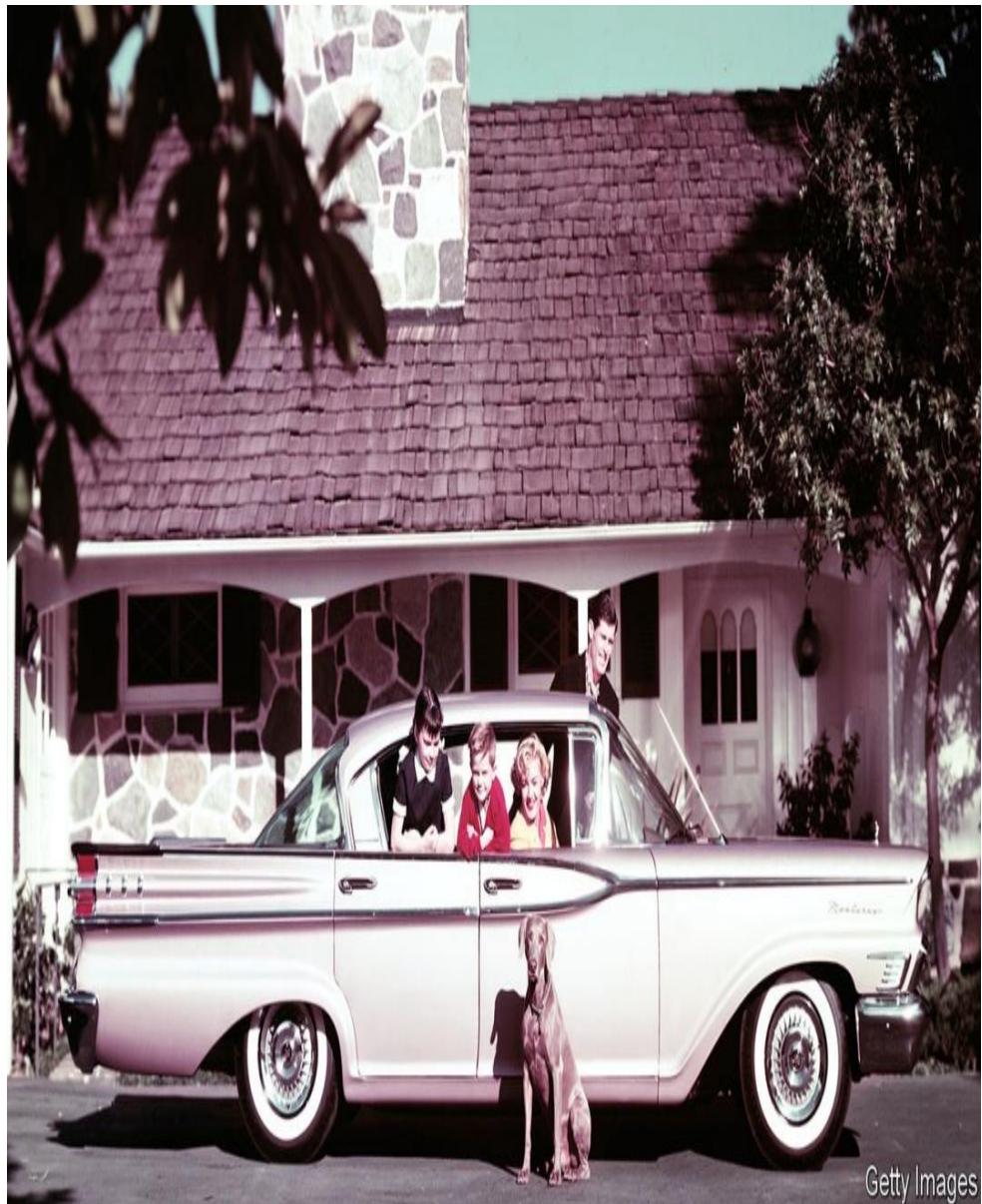
EARLY LAST autumn Alex and Victor, two students from mainland China, sat in the back row of a packed auditorium at Columbia Law School, in New

York. They were there for a talk by Joshua Wong, thrice-jailed young hero of the Hong Kong democracy movement, which the two students support. They applauded enthusiastically; they also wore blue face masks.

The masks were in part symbols of solidarity with Mr Wong's fellow protesters half a world away. But they were also a way of hiding their identities from face-recognition systems in China that might be scanning pictures of the audience, and from Chinese students in the hall less in tune with Mr Wong's message—such as the ones who sang the national anthem of the People's Republic in response to the talk. Their names are not, in fact, Alex and Victor; they asked *The Economist* to give them pseudonyms and not to say where in China they came from. As they talked, other Chinese students quietly observed them, national flags in hand.

United States

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Laboratories of democracy

The 2020 presidential election will be decided in the suburbs

Contrary to a widespread belief, Democrats do not have a decisive edge in suburbia

[United StatesJan 4th 2020 edition](#)

UNDER THE SPANISH MOSS and live oaks of Skidaway Island, a suburb of Savannah, the Oyster Roast, a barbecue-cum-fund-raiser for the University of Georgia, is

winding down and politics is raising its ugly head. “When we first came here,” says Allen Blount, a businessman from Jacksonville, “we were the only Democrats for miles around, and had to keep quiet about it. Now we’ve discovered a network of secret Democrats, but we still keep quiet so as not to upset our Republican friends.” Skidaway is majority Republican. Ten miles north, in a precinct of downtown Savannah, Hillary Clinton won 98% of the vote. Almost next door, in the suburb of Bloomingdale, Donald Trump won over 80%. “It’s still red versus blue,” says Mr Blount, “but everything is more complicated.”

And not only in suburban Savannah. More than half of votes in 2020 will probably be suburban ones. It is hard to be precise because America has no standard definition of suburbs, and definitions matter. Some people classify them as areas dominated by single-family homes and commuting by car, but that is not how the Census Bureau does things. Data on jobs, ethnicity and education are gathered by county; America has just over 3,000 of these. Even though Kalawao County in Hawaii has fewer than 100 residents, whereas Los Angeles County has over 10m and includes dense urban areas and empty countryside, counties are therefore the only proxy for suburbs. Based on the counties around the 100 largest cities, Bill Frey of the Brookings Institution, a think-tank, distinguishes between three sorts of suburb: inner “mature” ones in which 75-95% of the land is built upon; outer “emerging” ones with 25-75% urbanisation; and “exurbs” with less than 25% of land developed.



TexEd **Austin has changed sex education in its schools**

The rest of Texas is primed to react

[United States](#)[Jan 4th 2020 edition](#)

FOR A CONSERVATIVE bunch, Texans are talking a lot about anal sex. The cause is a change to sex-education lessons in the progressive city of Austin which, some fear, could spread to the rest of the state.

Texas is a poster-child for abstinence education. Over 80% of schools teach either abstinence-only or nothing on sex at all. State law requires teaching to emphasise abstinence “as the preferred choice of behaviour in relationship to all sexual activity for unmarried persons of school age.” It does not require mention of condoms, contraceptives or sexual orientation. The last time the state Board of Education touched this hot-button issue, in 2004, abstinence advocates won and kept calls for more comprehensive sex education at bay.



The wrong kind of racy A dispute over racism roils the world of romance novelists

Truth is stranger, and less sexually charged, than bodice rippers

[United States](#) Jan 2nd 2020 edition

IT BEGAN, like so many contemporary racial kerfuffles, on social media. Courtney Milan, a bestselling romance novelist and former chair of the Romance Writers of America (^{RWA})'s ethics committee (which sounds like

fun) called “Somewhere Lies the Moon”, a historical novel by Kathryn Lynn Davis, “a fucking racist mess”. Ms Milan, who is Chinese-American, objected to physical descriptions (“slightly yellow” faces and “slanted almond eyes”) and to a character who said that Chinese women were “demure and quiet, as our mothers have trained us to be” and “modest and submissive, so they will make good wives.”

Ms Davis and Suzan Tisdale, a writer who also runs a romance-publishing imprint that employs Ms Davis, accused Ms Milan of violating several sections of the RWA’s ethics code. The RWA’s ethics committee dismissed all of Ms Davis’s complaints save one: that Ms Milan’s comments violated “the organisation’s expressed purpose of creating a ‘safe and respectful environment’” for its members. The committee recommended a year’s suspension of Ms Milan’s RWA membership, and a lifetime ban on holding any RWA leadership position.



Magnum Photos

Crying in the chapel The decline of Las Vegas weddings

A much-mythologised institution hits the skids

[United States](#)Jan 2nd 2020 edition

“GET MARRIED to your best friend for life, your longtime partner, your cellphone, anything really!” reads the brochure for The Little Vegas Chapel. Its pretend wedding package (\$199) promises all the thrill of a wedding

without the lifetime obligation. Many Las Vegas chapels now offer a range of non-binding ceremonies to pad out thinning wedding schedules. Vow-renewals account for much of their business, alongside friendship affirmations and business-partner commitments.

The self-proclaimed “wedding capital of the world” is suffering from millennials postponing marriage, perhaps indefinitely. About 40% fewer licences were issued to couples in their 20s and 30s in Clark County in 2018 than a decade earlier. Overall, marriage licences issued were down 42% on their peak in 2004, which meant that the local economy missed out on \$1bn of annual revenue. A Vegas wedding was supposed to be a counter-cultural choice, but turns out to have been tied to those traditional habits it was supposed to subvert.



Lexington **Pete Buttigieg's illuminating struggle down South**

The front-runner in Iowa and New Hampshire may have no path to the Democratic nomination

[United States](#)Jan 4th 2020 edition

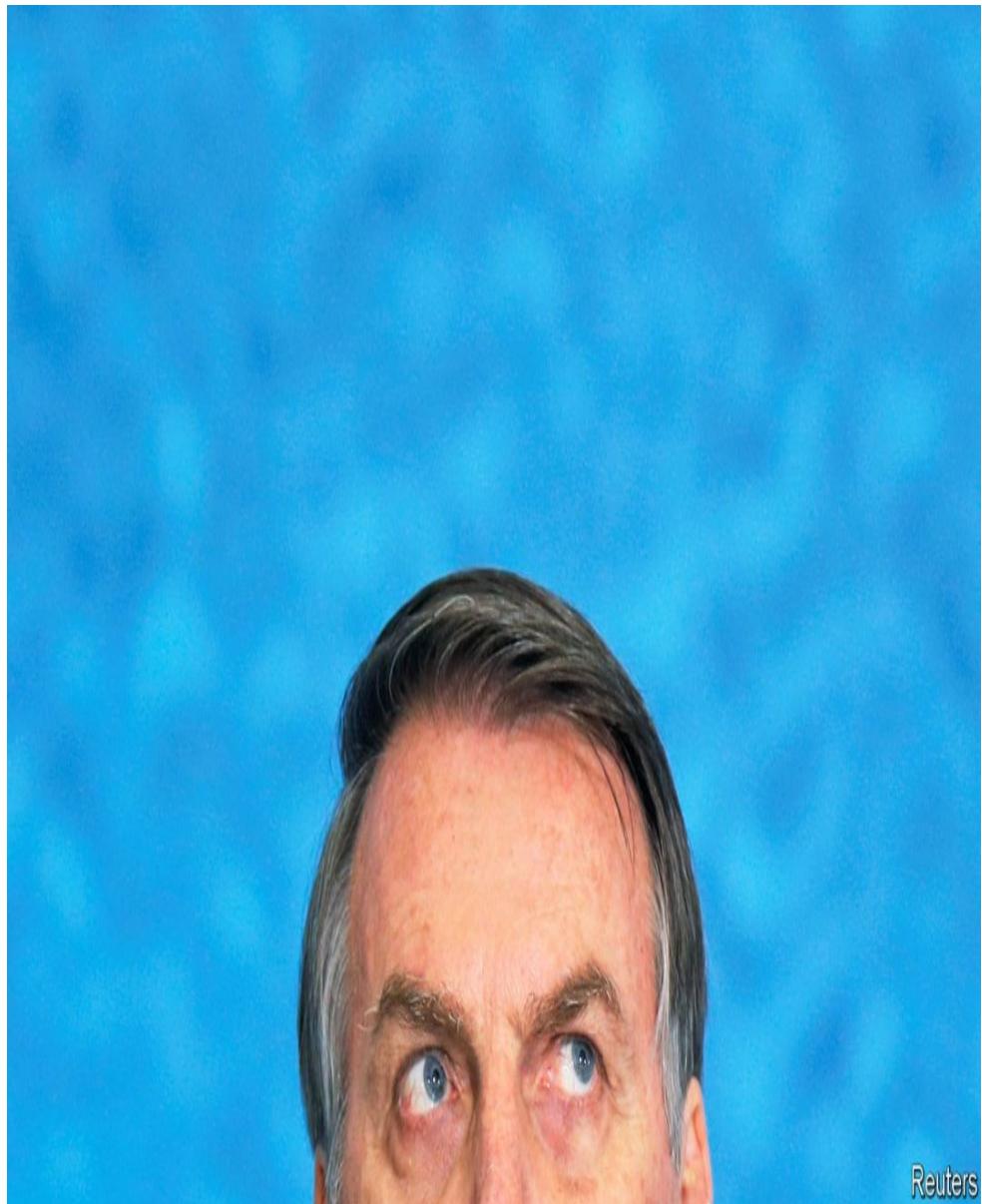
THE TRAVEL writer Paul Theroux called Allendale a “ghost town”—“poor, neglected, hopeless-looking, a vivid failure”—and the capital of South

Carolina's poorest county seems not to have improved in the years since his visit. Derelict shops and pump stations line its approach roads. It looks as though it has been hit by a hurricane—though Allendale would probably be less forsaken if it had been. Its more prosaic calamity, half a century ago, was the construction of the I-95 highway, which diverted away the traffic between Columbia and the coast that had been its lifeline. Poor and isolated, its heavily African-American population has fallen by a quarter this century. “There are no jobs here,” says Willa Jennings, the local Democratic Party chairwoman. “But”, she adds, for the tantalising benefit of the three Pete Buttigieg campaign managers crowding eagerly around her, “we vote.”

That is why the staffers’ sudden interest in Allendale is familiar to Ms Jennings. Every presidential cycle or so, Democratic contenders flock to South Carolina, which has the earliest primary of any diverse southern state. Given that 60% of its Democratic voters are black, the candidates often claim to have an answer to racial injustice, which they advertise on well-publicised trips to poor black communities. Mr Buttigieg’s “Douglass Plan”, true to type, includes promises to hire more black teachers, splurge \$50bn on historically black colleges and reverse the exodus from poor rural communities. The mayor of South Bend, Indiana, was recently in Allendale to promote it. But Ms Jennings sounded unconvinced. “Candidates often come and promise the world to us and after we come out to vote in full force, we never hear from them again,” she tells his three staffers, all of whom are black. As for trying to reverse the exodus: “I don’t think that would be a good idea,” she says. People in Allendale want help to move to places where there are good jobs, not inducements to stay where there are none.

The Americas

- [A year of Jair Bolsonaro: Please don't let me be misunderstood](#)
- [Colombia: Not so fast](#)



Reuters

Please don't let me be misunderstood Jair Bolsonaro's contentious first year in office

Brazil's global image is worse; its economy is doing better

The Americas Jan 4th 2020 edition

SINCE JAIR BOLSONARO became Brazil's president on January 1st 2019, he has quarrelled with an impressive array of foreign leaders and celebrities. After France's president, Emmanuel Macron, accused him of encouraging

deforestation of the Amazon, Mr Bolsonaro called his wife ugly. When Greta Thunberg, a young Swedish climate activist, highlighted the murder of indigenous people in the Amazon, the Brazilian president called her a “brat”. Michelle Bachelet, the ^{UN} human-rights commissioner (and a former president of Chile), criticised a rise in killings by police in Brazil. Mr Bolsonaro responded by praising Chile’s dictatorship of the 1970s and 1980s, which tortured her father.

These spats are a sign of the gulf between Brazil’s far-right president, who has made a career out of attacking liberal ideas about tolerance, human rights and conservation, and the elites who espouse them. Mr Bolsonaro’s put-downs suggest he does not mind causing offence. But senior officials in his government do worry, especially when ^{NGOs} threaten to promote boycotts of Brazilian products and governments reconsider whether to ratify trade deals.



Not so fast The troubles of Bogotá's TransMilenio

A model public-transport system runs into trouble

[**The Americas**](#)**Jan 2nd 2020 edition**

DURING ONE recent morning rush hour Yuraima Salas, a cleaner running late for work, found herself squeezed in a crowd of commuters waiting for a bus.

When it arrived the crowd surged, she tripped and someone trod on her foot. She ended up in hospital, with severe bruises and a sprained ankle.

Ms Salas was a casualty of Bogotá's TransMilenio bus system, which uses stations on dedicated lanes to mimic an underground metro. Cities smaller than Colombia's capital, such as Curitiba in Brazil, pioneered such bus rapid-transit (_{BRT}) systems. Bogotá, with 8m people (four times the population of Curitiba), was the first to build one on a large scale. Enrique Peñalosa, the mayor who built it in the late 1990s, became a star among urban planners. Now the TransMilenio is overcrowded and unpopular. Bogotá's mayor, Claudia López, who took office on January 1st, campaigned against expanding it and in favour of adding to a planned overground train system. Bogotá is the largest Latin American city without an urban rail network. She may have to reconsider those ideas.

Asia

- [**Justice in Japan: Ghosn, going, gone**](#)
- [**Fires in Australia: The summer inferno**](#)
- [**Election tension in Taiwan: The China factor**](#)
- [**Who's an Indian citizen?: Papers, please**](#)
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Ghosn, going, gone The flight of a car-industry megastar shocks Japan

In Lebanon, Carlos Ghosn is unlikely to plan a quiet life

[AsiaJan 2nd 2020 edition](#)

CARLOS GHOSN, a former chairman of Nissan and Renault, would ring in the new year at his luxurious home in Tokyo. Or so Japanese prosecutors thought until two days before the start of the 2020s. News that Mr Ghosn, 65, had

other plans came from an unexpected source: a report by the Associated Press quoting Ricardo Karam, a Lebanese television host and friend of Mr Ghosn. He said the megastar executive had skipped bail and fled to Lebanon. In a statement released a day later through a spokeswoman, Mr Ghosn insisted: “I have not fled justice—I have escaped injustice and political persecution.”

Who ya gonna call? Ghosnbusters!



Summer inferno

Australia's bushfires intensify its debate about climate change

The government that scrapped a carbon tax has no plans to bring it back

[AsiaJan 2nd 2020 edition](#)

THE FIRES eased over Christmas. But as 2020 neared, Australia's inferno blazed anew. In the state of Victoria, thousands of people fled to the seashore on New Year's Eve as bushfires ringed the coastal town of Mallacoota. Samuel

McPaul, a volunteer firefighter, died earlier in neighbouring New South Wales when a “fire tornado”, as colleagues described it, overturned his vehicle. The federal government has called in military planes and ships to help evacuate people sheltering on beaches in both states. Experts say the fires are the most extensive in Australia’s history and are far from over. They have sparked heated debate about the impact of climate change and the government’s equivocal commitment to tackling it.

New South Wales is the country’s most populous state and has suffered some of the biggest losses: 15 lives and about 1,300 homes. (Pictured is a house under threat in Lake Conjola.) The state’s bushfires have covered almost 40,000 square kilometres, nearly the area of Denmark. That is greater than the total area during the past three years’ fire seasons. These usually start in October, Australia’s mid-spring. In 2019 the fires began in July. A drought that started in eastern Australia three years ago had left plenty of dry fuel. On December 18th Australia as a whole had its hottest day on record, at 41.9°C. The fires have spread across the country, at one point closing the highway to the Nullarbor Plain that links Western Australia to the east coast.



Reuters

The Hong Kong effect Taiwan's China-sceptic president, Tsai Ing-wen, may win again

But the threat from Beijing is not going away

[AsiaJan 2nd 2020 edition](#)

ELECTION RALLIES in Taiwan often feel like festivals with a dash of politics thrown in. At a recent one in Taiwan's capital, Taipei, thousands of people watched a fireworks display, then heard a blind blues singer. Eventually the show's

political star took to the stage: Enoch Wu, a young would-be legislator for the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). China's leader, Xi Jinping, "is watching to see if we are sure to defend our homeland," he told the crowd. "We are," his fans roared back.

One question always looms largest in Taiwan's elections for president and parliament, held simultaneously every four years, this time on January 11th: how to handle the island's twitchy relations with an ever more powerful China. Many of Taiwan's nearly 24m people have been warily watching the unrest in Hong Kong. Twice in 2019 Mr Xi declared that Taiwan should reunify with the mainland under a "one country, two systems" formula, as Hong Kong did. China's ability to force such a solution on Taiwan is increasingly plain. On December 26th China sent its newly commissioned aircraft-carrier, the *Shandong*, through the Taiwan Strait for the second time in as many months.



**Papers, please
Protests against India's anti-Muslim citizenship law have
turned bloody**

Narendra Modi, the Hindu-nationalist prime minister, faces angry crowds and a constitutional challenge

[AsiaJan 2nd 2020 edition](#)

SINCE INDIA'S enacting of new citizenship rules on December 12th, widespread protests against them have left 27 dead, scores injured and tempers high. The prime minister, Narendra Modi, says he wants to make it easier for refugees to naturalise as Indians—unless they are Muslims. His government also plans to conduct a nationwide tally of citizens to hound out foreign “infiltrators”. Hindus and devotees of other named faiths who cannot prove they are citizens will probably be able to naturalise quickly. Muslims without the right papers—a common problem in rural areas—may not be so lucky. Mr Modi used his crushing parliamentary majority to pass the law, but the fury against it from across the political spectrum marks the strongest challenge to his Hindu-nationalist party since it won power in 2014. All eyes turn now to the Supreme Court, expected to rule later this month on whether the law is constitutional.



Banyan

Why Japanese names have flipped

They will now be written in English in the same order as in Japanese

[AsiaJan 2nd 2020 edition](#)

ON JANUARY 1ST a minor lexical revolution rolled through Japan. A new decree ordained that official documents should reverse the order of Japanese people's names when they are rendered in the Latin alphabet. Hitherto in,

say, English documents, Japanese names have been written with the given name first, using the Western practice. Henceforth the family name will come first and, to banish any ambiguity, may be entirely capitalised. One backer of the change is the prime minister. From now on *The Economist* will refer to him as Abe Shinzo rather than Shinzo Abe.

Like other newspapers, we have long followed the convention of writing Japanese names in the Western order (while scholarly publications have tended to use the Japanese order). If Japan wants to change, why should anyone object? As is common in East Asian cultures, in Japanese the family name always comes first.

China

- [China's view of America: 400-pound rivals](#)
- [Journalist wanted](#)



**400-pound rivals
China views Donald Trump's America with growing distrust
and scorn**

And cynics in Beijing hope for his re-election

China Jan 2nd 2020 edition

ZOOLOGISTS USE a mild-sounding term—"displacements"—for moments when a strong, young mountain gorilla confronts the dominant male in his group.

Behind the jargon lies a brutal reality: a drawn-out, bloody conflict looms. China's leaders similarly use prim, technical-sounding terms to describe their confrontation with America. In closed-door briefings and chats with Western bigwigs, they chide the country led by President Donald Trump for responding to China's rise with "strategic anxiety" (ie, fear). They insist that China's only crime is to have grown so rapidly.

However, behind that chilly, self-serving analysis lurks a series of angrier, more primal calculations about relative heft. These began before Mr Trump came to office, and will continue even if an initial trade truce is made formal (Mr Trump says he will sign one on January 15th). They will endure long after November, when American voters next choose a president. China has spent decades growing stronger and richer. It already senses that only one country—America—can defy Chinese ambitions with any confidence. Its leaders have a bleak worldview in which might makes right, and it is a fairy tale to pretend that universal rules bind all powers equally. Increasingly, they can imagine a day when even America ducks a direct challenge, and the global balance of power shifts for ever.

The Economist

Journalist wanted

[ChinaJan 4th 2020 edition](#)

Journalist wanted: *The Economist* is hiring a new China correspondent to join our Beijing bureau. We're looking for someone with a deep knowledge of China, excellent writing skills in English and a sharp analytical brain. Please send a cv and an unpublished 600-word article on any China-related topic to chinajob@economist.com by January 31st.

Middle East and Africa

- [America, Iran and Iraq: Combustible](#)
- [Countering Iran: Neighbourhood watch](#)
- [Algeria: Hoping for a cheerier Algeria](#)
- [The end of the CFA: Frankly speaking](#)
- [The Rand Club: Rhodes to redemption](#)
- [Education in Liberia: Schools of hard knocks](#)



Getty Images

Combustible The conflict between America and Iran intensifies in Iraq

Missiles, air strikes and an embassy under attack

Middle East and Africa Jan 2nd 2020 edition

FOR MONTHS young Iraqi protesters trying to reach the Green Zone, the government enclave in Baghdad, were met with bullets and tear-gas canisters, the latter often fired at their heads. But on December 31st

hundreds of militiamen were allowed to enter unmolested. The men, affiliated to Kataib Hizbulah, an Iranian-backed Shia paramilitary group, tried to storm the American embassy. They threw petrol bombs over the walls and broke into a reception area where security personnel would normally screen visitors. Iraqi police largely stood by for hours; it was not until nightfall that the Counter Terrorism Service (^{CTS}), an elite unit, sent men to secure the embassy. They did not have orders to evict the rioters, who made plans to camp outside. As night fell, American Apache helicopters could be seen flying overhead, dropping flares.

The riot was another escalation in a crisis between America, Iran and Iraq. On December 27th more than 30 rockets hit an Iraqi military base near Kirkuk. That attack, the 11th of its kind in two months, killed an American contractor and wounded four American soldiers. The American response, two days later, was a series of air strikes on five bases run by Kataib Hizbulah. At least 25 of its members were killed.



U.S. Army photo/Spc. Terrell Sherman

Neighbourhood watch How America and its allies are keeping tabs on Iran at sea

Many eyes aim to deter Iran from making mischief

Middle East and Africa Jan 2nd 2020 edition

FOR ALMOST two decades America's navy and its allies in the Middle East spent most of their time chasing pirates, drug smugglers and terrorists in the

region's busy waters. But a string of attacks on oil tankers in 2019—blamed on Iran—has shifted their focus.

In July America launched Operation Sentinel to improve its ability to spot and respond to threats to shipping in and around the Persian Gulf. In November it formally placed the operation under a coalition with the ungainly name of the International Maritime Security Construct (IMSC). This now consists of seven countries: America, Australia, Bahrain, Britain, Saudi Arabia, the UAE—and plucky Albania (which can squeeze most of its sailors onto one aeroplane).



Reuters

Hoping for a cheerier Algeria An Algerian general takes over from another general

As a new government struggles with empty coffers and angry streets

[Middle East and Africa Jan 4th 2020 edition](#)

IT WAS AS if the old general running the country behind the scenes for the past eight months had not died after all. A bare week after a heart attack felled General Gaid Salah on December 23rd, another septuagenarian in a green

uniform under a brocaded peaked hat harangued a hall full of generals (all similarly attired). The army, said General Said Chanegriha, the country's new top military man, must confront a "serious conspiracy against stability". No one doubted he was referring to the protest movement known as *Hirak* that has convulsed Algeria since last February. In April it brought down the country's despot, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, after 20 years in office. Though a new civilian president, Abdelmajid Tebboune, had been elected in early December, the new general in charge said the risk of chaos was too great for the army to return to the barracks.

Algeria had a few months of civilian rule after independence in 1962. But the generals have dominated ever since. Keeping their grip is getting harder. What began as a protest against corrupt politicians has turned on the generals. The hundreds of thousands who cheered when the army removed an ailing Mr Bouteflika in April now march every Friday against those who ousted him. They hiss at the phalanx of anti-riot forces facing them and call for the *isaba*, or gang of top brass, to go. "You can't recycle this rubbish," they cry. "Civilian not military rule."



Francly speaking Making sense of west Africa's new currency

The French-backed CFA franc is going. Will the new eco be as stable?

Middle East and AfricaJan 4th 2020 edition

MONETARY POLICY, done well, is meant to put everyone but economists to sleep. Yet in west Africa it has pulled thousands of protesters onto the streets. Many locals have long objected to the west African and central African CFA francs, two monetary unions pegged to the euro and backed by France. This arrangement has delivered low inflation and currency stability to the 14 African countries that use one or other of the CFA francs. But critics call the CFA a relic of past subjugation and absurdly portray it as a “colonial tax” imposed by France, the former power.

On December 21st those calling for an end to the CFA franc mostly got their way. Emmanuel Macron and Alassane Ouattara, the presidents of France and Ivory Coast, announced the most far-reaching changes to the currency area since its formation in 1945. The west African CFA franc, which is used by eight countries, will be ditched in 2020 and replaced by the eco, which will have far looser ties to France. The central African CFA franc is unchanged, but many expect the six countries using it to implement similar reforms.



Reviving Johannesburg's Rand Club The new generation trying to overhaul a once racist and sexist club

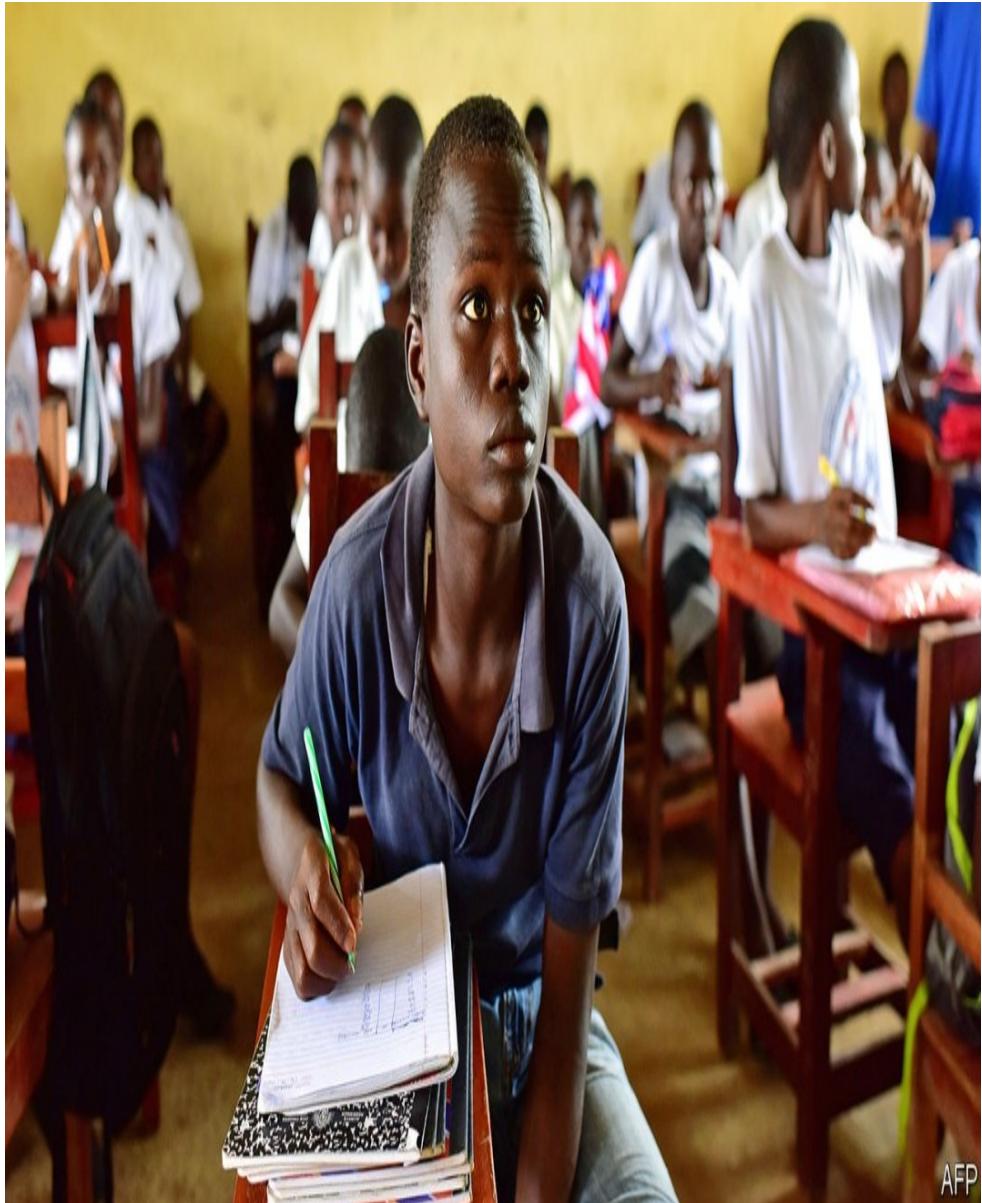
A bastion of a reactionary era reinvents itself

Middle East and Africa**Jan 2nd 2020 edition**

WHEN ALICIA THOMPSON was a student in Johannesburg before the end of apartheid, she would often walk past the beautiful cars parked outside a club she was

not allowed to join. It was not by chance that the Rand Club, the oldest private-members' club in the city, was filled with old white men. It was by design. Women and blacks were not admitted as members until the early 1990s. "It was not my space," says Ms Thompson. "That was the power of apartheid: you never questioned where you couldn't go."

The Rand Club was once a centre of power in Johannesburg, the haunt of financiers and mining magnates, including Cecil Rhodes and Lionel Phillips, who in 1913 was inconveniently shot by a trade unionist on the way to lunch (he survived, but missed his meal). Its official history calls it "a civilised refuge for good fellows". Rules imposed decorum; no ice in drinks in the billiards room, for example, lest clinking distract players. At the same time the longest bar in Africa (31.2 metres) encouraged inebriation.



AFP

On trial Lessons from a radical education experiment in Liberia

The messy reality of trying to improve schools in a poor country

Middle East and Africa Jan 2nd 2020 edition

IN 2016 GEORGE WERNER faced an unenviable task. Liberia's education minister was in charge of one of the most difficult school systems in the world. More than a decade of civil war and an outbreak of Ebola in 2014 had stopped many

children from going to class. Those who did learned little. Just 25% of Liberian women who completed primary school could read, one of the lowest shares anywhere. Mr Werner's budget was a mere \$50 per pupil per year. Many teachers on his payroll were "ghosts" who did not exist but somehow kept on drawing salaries.

So Mr Werner signed off on one of the boldest public-policy experiments in recent African history. He outsourced 93 primary schools containing 8.6% of state-school pupils to eight private operators. Five charities and three companies were monitored in a randomised controlled trial (_{RCT}). Researchers tracked test scores in the operators' schools and nearby government ones. More than three years later, the results are in. They reveal the messy reality of education reform in one of the world's poorest countries.

Europe

- [Germany: From protest to power](#)
- [Campione d'Italia: Unhappy recruit](#)
- [Joblessness in the EU: Steady state](#)
- [Charlemagne: Huntington's disease](#)



From protest to power The stars have aligned for Germany's Greens

The next election may put them in government

[**EuropeJan 2nd 2020 edition**](#)

THE STORY of Germany's Greens is a series of once-per-decade eruptions. Forty years ago an eccentric band of environmentalists, peaceniks and anti-nuclear activists gathered in Karlsruhe to set up a political party. In the early

1990s, after the party stumbled by failing to back German reunification, it merged with civil-society groups in the former east, yielding a clunky name that survives today: Alliance 90/The Greens. In 1998 the party joined Germany's federal government serving for seven years as junior partner to Gerhard Schröder's Social Democrats (^{SPD}). In 2011, surging in polls after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, they took control of their first German state: Baden-Württemberg, in the rich south-west, where Winfried Kretschmann, a communist-turned-centrist, remains the Green premier today. Now a fifth eruption is looming.

As the Greens prepare to mark their 40th birthday on January 13th, they are squarely ensconced as Germany's second most popular party (behind Angela Merkel's conservative Christian Democratic Union, the ^{CDU}), and have a hunger for power that would have scandalised their hippie forebears. Germany's next election is due in autumn 2021, if the ailing "grand coalition" of the ^{CDU} (and its Bavarian sister party, the ^{CSU}) and the ^{SPD} survives that long. Whenever it comes, it will almost certainly restore the Greens to government, probably alongside the ^{CDU/CSU}. It is even conceivable that Germany will provide the world with its first Green leader (bar a short-lived Latvian premiership in 2004).



AFP

Goodbye casino, hello smugglers A tiny Italian enclave unwillingly joins the EU's customs union

Campione d'Italia, a little piece of Italy inside Switzerland

[Europe](#)Jan 2nd 2020 edition

“WE FEEL COMPLETELY abandoned,” says Giancarlo Bortoli, as a cormorant skims behind him to land on Lake Lugano. A retired croupier, Mr Bortoli is a citizen of one of Europe’s least-known micro-territories: Campione d’Italia,

an exclave of Italy within Switzerland. With fewer than 2,000 residents, the exclave results from a territorial adjustment in the 16th century. Like similar geopolitical oddities, Campione has a colourful past. Its casino, owned by the local government, was founded in 1917, reputedly to help tease intelligence out of off-duty diplomats in the first world war. Among those who later found it convenient to establish themselves in Campione was Howard Marks, one of the world's biggest cannabis-smugglers.

Visitors coming from Switzerland encounter a grandiose arch marking the frontier. Yet “until now, it was as if Campione were part of Switzerland,” says Alessandro Alfieri, a senator for Lombardy, the Italian region to which the exclave belongs. Campione’s inhabitants have their rubbish collected, their water purified and their telephones supplied by Swiss utilities. They drive on Swiss number-plates. And until this week they were, in effect, part of the Swiss customs area, an arrangement with which they were perfectly happy.



AFP

Steady state Europe's employment recovery seems to be nearing an end

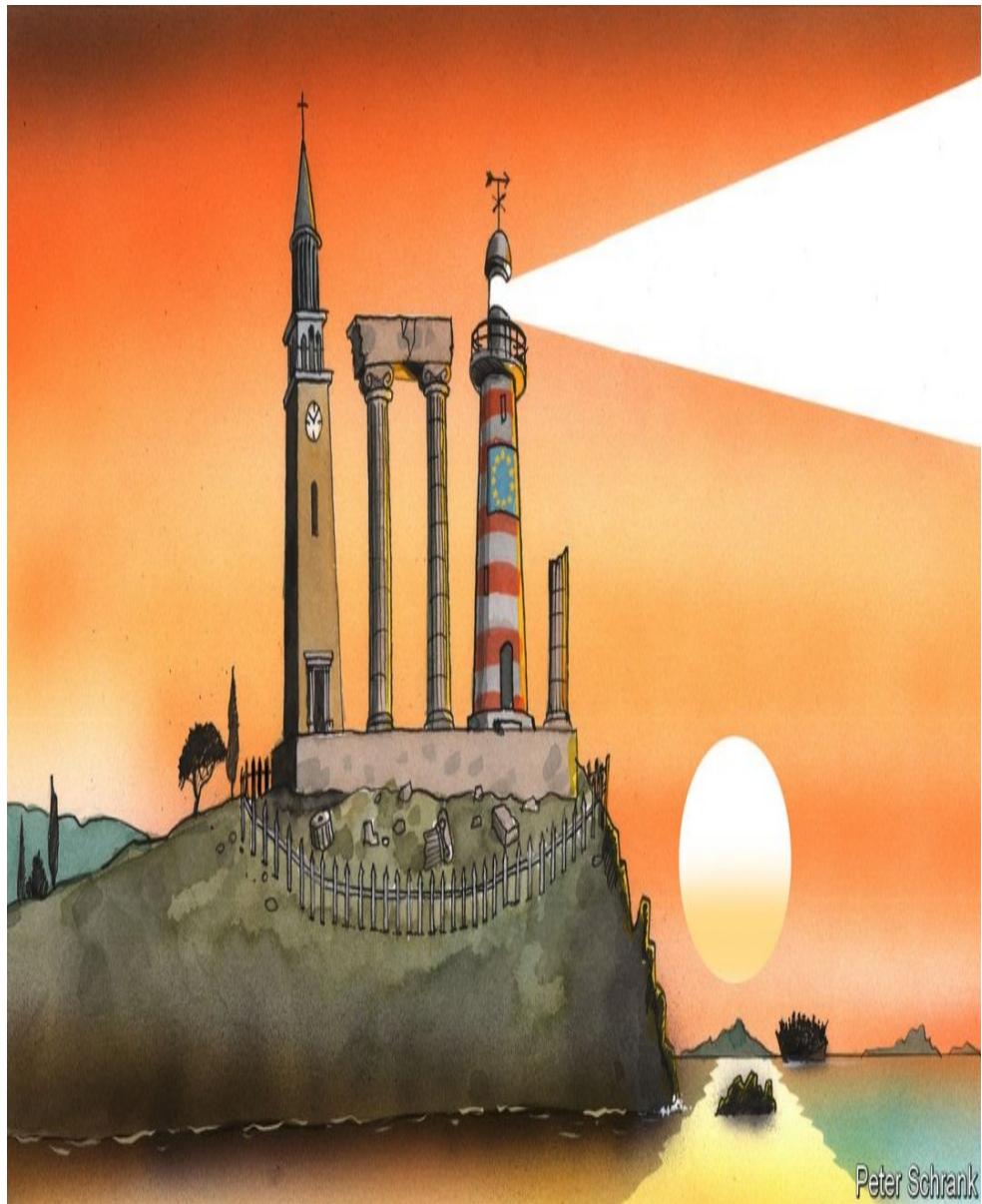
The EU's unemployment rate has not changed since the spring

[EuropeJan 2nd 2020 edition](#)

A DECADE AGO, as the sovereign-debt crisis engulfed the euro zone, long queues of the unemployed snaked outside job centres in Athens and Madrid. Unemployment, which had already been rising after the global financial

crisis of 2007-08, took another jump up. By the summer of 2013 over a quarter of the workforce—and half of young people—were out of work in Greece and Spain. Then the crisis waned and the picture drastically improved. Unemployment has fallen by 40%, from more than 26m in the EU to just shy of 16m. Remarkably, the recovery has taken place even as more women and older people entered the workforce. Around 14m new jobs have been added, or around 6% of total employment.

In 2019, though, that recovery seemed to draw to a close. The EU unemployment rate has been stuck at 6.3% since May; the euro-area average has hovered around 7.5%. Job creation, too, has lost momentum. In the first nine months of the year employment grew at an average quarterly pace of only 0.2%, half the rate seen in 2017, when the economy was motoring along. What has driven the deceleration?



Charlemagne Huntington's disease and the clash of civilisation-states

Our new Charlemagne columnist ponders Europe's future

[EuropeJan 2nd 2020 edition](#)

SAMUEL HUNTINGTON was almost right. The late American professor pricked a bubble of Western triumphalism with a gloomy prediction of strife in “The Clash of Civilisations?” in 1993. Where he erred was the medium through

which this friction would take place. Rather than civilisations rubbing against one another as groups of nation-states, as Mr Huntington forecast, the 21st century is witnessing the rise of the “civilisation-state”.

The term is in vogue. Chinese academics herald China as the world’s sole civilisation-state, rather than an old-hat, 19th-century nation-state. Vladimir Putin, however, has hopped on the bandwagon, declaring that Russia’s status as a civilisation-state prevented the country “from dissolving in this diverse world”. Indian commentators have long wrestled with whether their country is one, too. Other potential candidates for civilisation-state status include the United States and even Turkey. Another name is rarely mentioned, but should be added to this growing list: the EU.

Britain

- [Reshaping the state: The Cummings plan](#)
- [Darts: Bull market](#)
- [Bagehot: One nation under Boris](#)



Britain after Brexit Dominic Cummings's plan to reshape the state

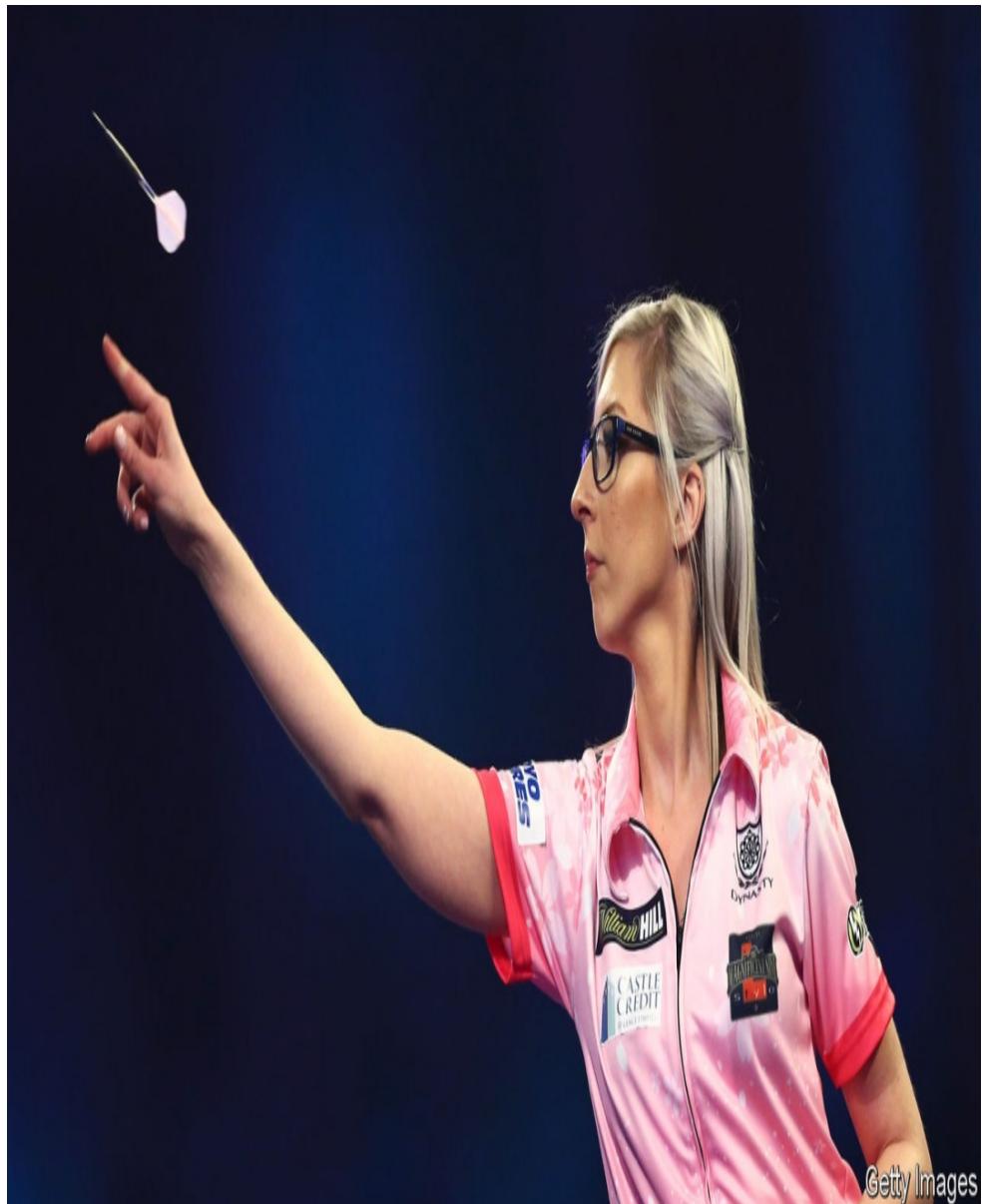
Why Downing Street thinks that to get anything done it must first fix the machinery of government

Britain Jan 2nd 2020 edition

THE SUSPICION with which many Brexiteers have long regarded Brussels has come to be matched by an equal mistrust of Whitehall. After repeated delays to

Britain's exit from the European Union, many Leavers became convinced that *bien-pensant* officials were out to subvert the will of the people. Yet for Dominic Cummings, the prime minister's chief adviser and brains behind the Leave campaign, the frustration with the civil service goes back much further. The subtitle of an entry on his personal blog, written in 2014, sums up his outlook: "The failures of Westminster & Whitehall: Wrong people, bad education and training, dysfunctional institutions with no architecture for fixing errors." Some Eurosceptics want to put a bomb under Whitehall in order to get Brexit done. Mr Cummings wants to get Brexit done so that he can put a bomb under Whitehall.

Following Boris Johnson's triumph in the December election, the government has an opportunity to reshape the country. Labour is in chaos, the Remainers are defeated and the British system gives huge power to governments with a large parliamentary majority. Mr Cummings's thinking—set out over hundreds of thousands of words in a blog that ranges from Sun Tzu and Bismarck to education policy and space exploration—helps explain why many in Downing Street think that to get anything done in government they will first have to fix the civil service.



Bull market How darts flew from pastime to prime time

The sport has staggered out of the pub and onto television. Next stop, America

[BritainJan 2nd 2020 edition](#)

BRITISH SPORT has a new star. On December 17th Fallon Sherrock, a 25-year-old from Milton Keynes, became the first woman to win a match at the PDC

World Darts Championship, the sport's most prestigious event. She then went one better by knocking out the tournament's 11th seed with a magical shot at the bullseye, eventually taking home £25,000 (\$33,000) in prize money. Ms Sherrock, a far cry from the beer-bellied blokes who used to typify the game, symbolises how in recent years darts has gone from a peculiar British pastime to an entertainment juggernaut with transatlantic ambitions.

Darts staggered out of the pub and onto television in the 1970s, but low viewing-figures and a loutish reputation eventually led broadcasters and sponsors to pull the plug. In the early 1990s a group of disgruntled players broke from the stuffy British Darts Organisation and struck a deal with Sky, Rupert Murdoch's fledgling broadcaster. Their new outfit, which became the Professional Darts Corporation (^{PDC}), attracted the attention of Barry Hearn, a promoter with a knack for turning pub games into money-spinners (snooker gave him his big break). In 2001 Mr Hearn took over the ^{PDC} and set about revitalising the sport.



Bagehot

Boris Johnson is reinventing one-nation Conservatism

The phrase doesn't mean what most Tories think it means

[BritainJan 2nd 2020 edition](#)

BORIS JOHNSON is well placed to become one of the most powerful prime ministers in modern times. Margaret Thatcher had to contend with a powerful internal opposition of moderate “wets”. Tony Blair had Gordon

Brown to deal with. But Mr Johnson has purged the internal opposition and reduced his cabinet colleagues to a pack of poodles. If politics in 2019 was about calculating the strength of parliamentary factions, politics in 2020 and beyond will be about cataloguing the intrigues in the court of King Boris.

But what does Mr Johnson want to do with all this power, other than “get Brexit done”? The best clue lies in the phrase “one-nation Conservatism”. During the election campaign Mr Johnson repeatedly promised to lead a one-nation Conservative administration. Though it may sound like one of those feel-good phrases that politicians use to fill the void, the phrase is pregnant with meaning: you cannot understand the Johnson project without decoding it. Yet it does not mean what most Tories think it means.

International

- Sexual assault: Her word against his



Her word against his Why so few rapists are convicted

The justice system is still stacked against women

[International](#)[Jan 4th 2020 edition](#)

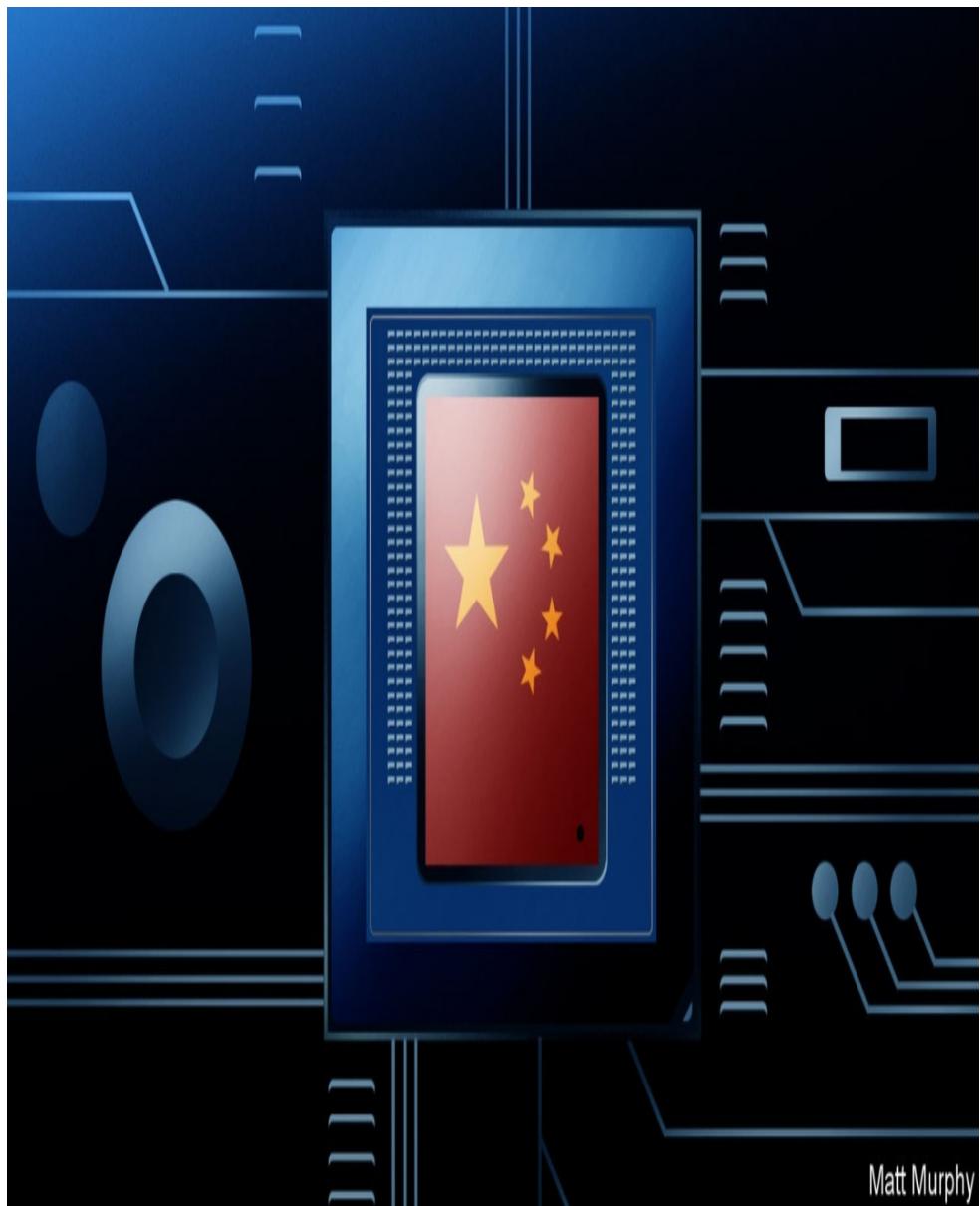
ON JANUARY 6TH a rape trial will begin and the world will hear all about it. Harvey Weinstein, a Hollywood mogul, will face five charges of sex crimes. Dozens of women have accused him of using his position to prey on them.

In 2017 their testimony helped set off the #MeToo movement. If found guilty, Mr Weinstein, who denies all allegations of non-consensual sex, could spend decades in prison.

The accusations against Mr Weinstein set off such a storm because so many women had experienced something similar. But in other ways, the case is wildly unrepresentative. Most rape trials do not involve a famous defendant or multiple movie stars. More importantly, most rapes are not reported and most that are reported never come to trial. In England and Wales only 1.5% of rapes reported in the year ending March 2019 led to charges being filed, compared with 7.8% for all crimes and 8.3% for all violent crimes.

Technology Quarterly

- Chinese technology: From the people who brought you fireworks...
- Success stories: Reactors and railways
- Cars: Electric leapfrog
- Intellectual property: Laser brain
- Data: A new trinity
- Microprocessors: From bottom to top
- The future: Of coupling and decoupling



Chinese technology With the state's help, Chinese technology is booming

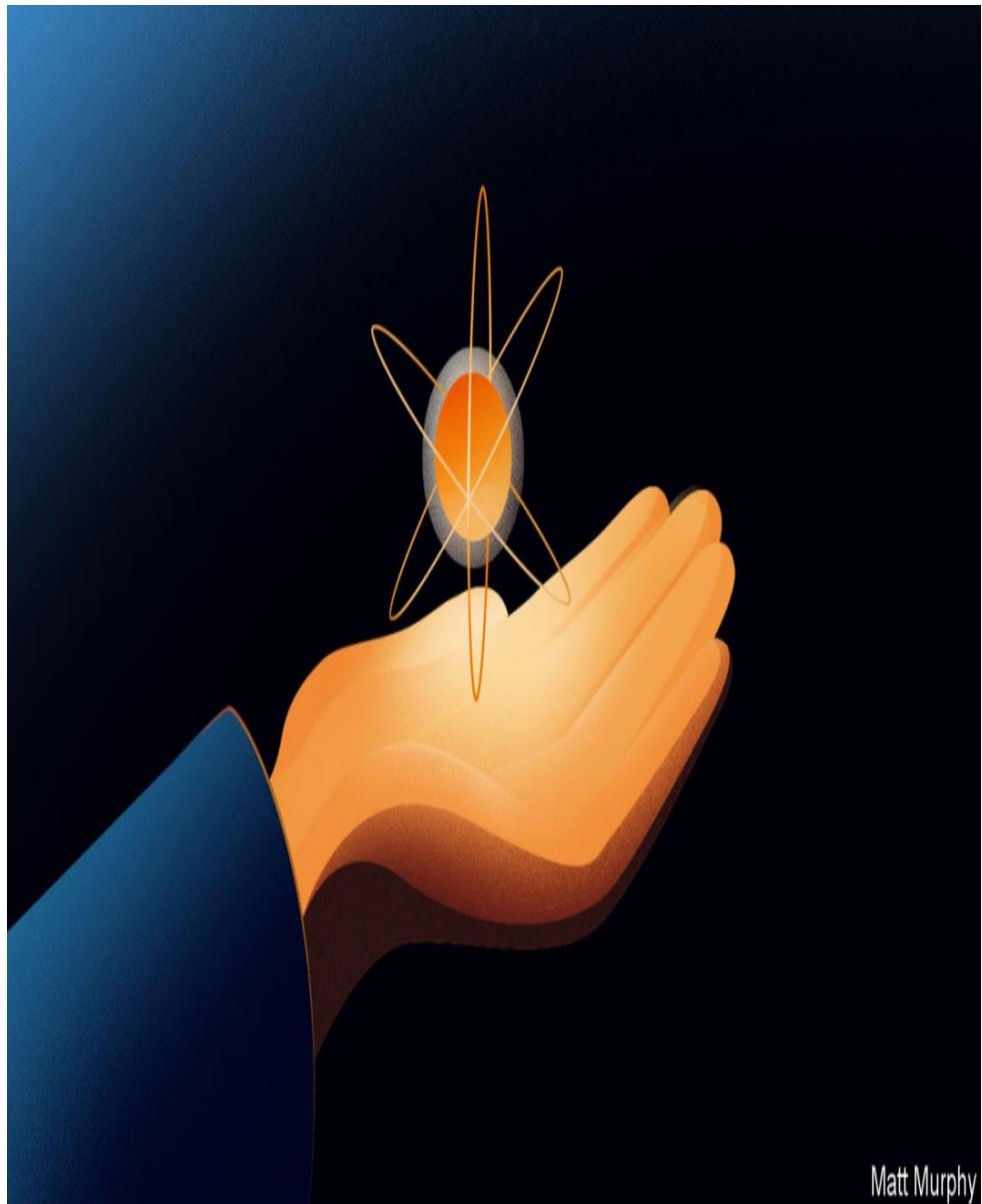
But it will not be a smooth road to global dominance, says Hal Hodson

Technology Quarterly Jan 2nd 2020 edition

FOR MOST of human history, China was the world's most advanced technological power. The blast furnace originated there, and thus so, too, did cast iron. Other breakthroughs included porcelain and paper. Its

gunpowder propelled the first military rockets farther than javelin or arrow could fly; its compasses magically revealed magnetic north when the stars were hidden.

Only in the Middle Ages did Europe begin to match Chinese ingenuity and capacity in these fields, doing so largely through imitation. Only with the growth of European mechanical industries and overseas empires in the 18th century did the Westerners become its rivals. In the centuries that followed, hampered by its own stifling education system, China was defeated in the opium wars, then suffered terrible civil unrest and a disastrous revolution that reduced the country to a technological bystander and “Made in China” to a byword for gimcrackery.



Success stories China's nuclear industry and high-speed trains are world class

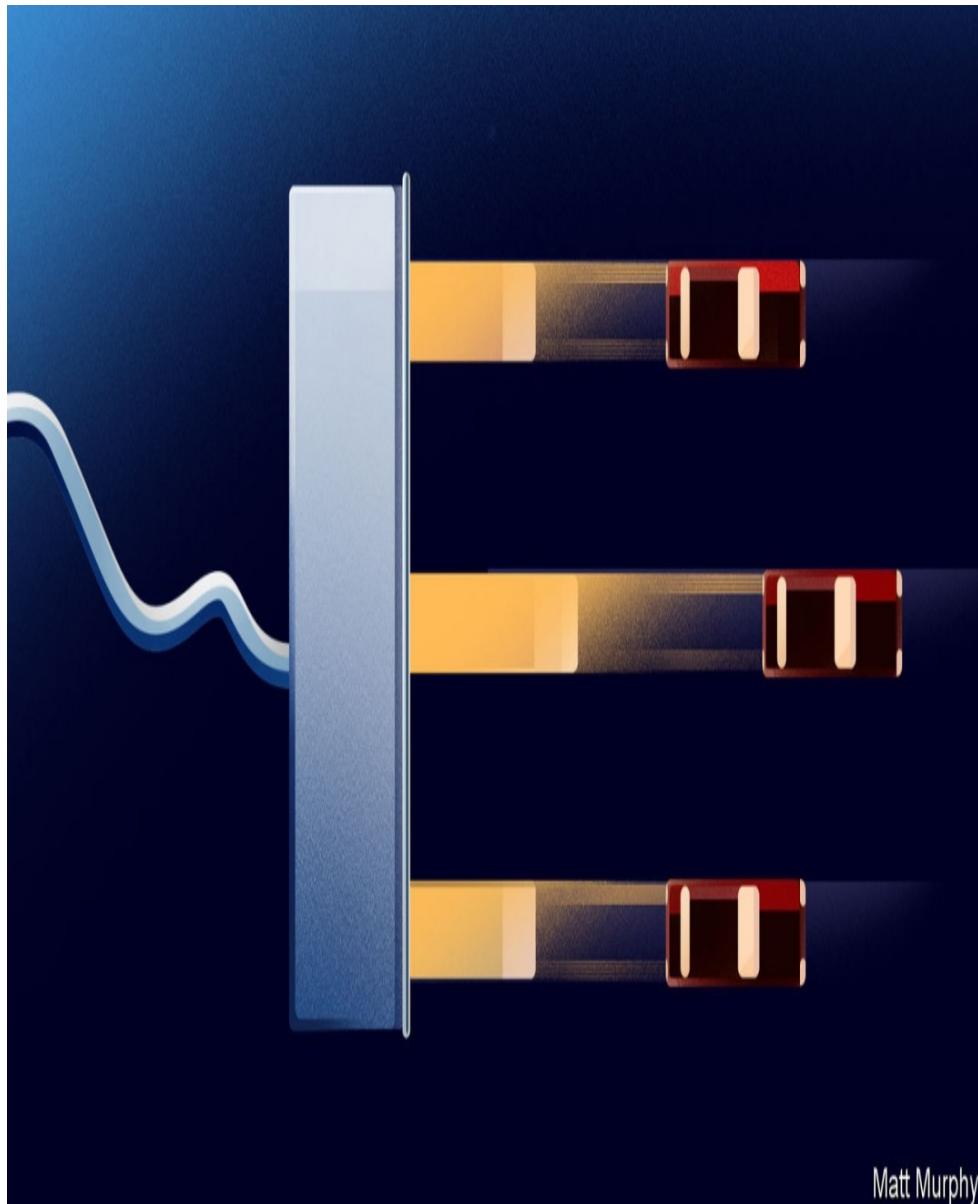
And the state has been crucial in making them so

Technology Quarterly Jan 2nd 2020 edition

WITHIN THE cavernous factory of Dongfang Heavy Machinery Company (DFHM), a state-owned firm based in Guangdong province, lies what looks like a suit of armour built for a mis-shapen giant. In fact, they are parts built to contain

something even more fearsome—nuclear reactors and the high-pressure, high-temperature steam that they produce. Some are still being worked on. Some are almost ready to head off, by barge, to sites along the southern coast where China is expanding its nuclear-power industry with greater ambition than any other country in the world.

In 1996, with the help of Framatome, a French firm with a lot of nuclear history, China built a reactor at Ling Ao, 60km (37 miles) from Hong Kong. Part of the deal was that Framatome would share its know-how. It helped a local firm that had previously made boilers learn how to make the hulking metre-thick metal vessels that can safely contain a nuclear reaction. That firm became ^{DFHM}. As well as the main reactor vessels, it also now makes the steam generators which turn the nuclear heat into something which can drive turbines and make electricity. Zou Jie, a ^{DFHM} executive, says his firm's products are now competitive with Framatome's.



Matt Murphy

Cars China has never mastered internal-combustion engines

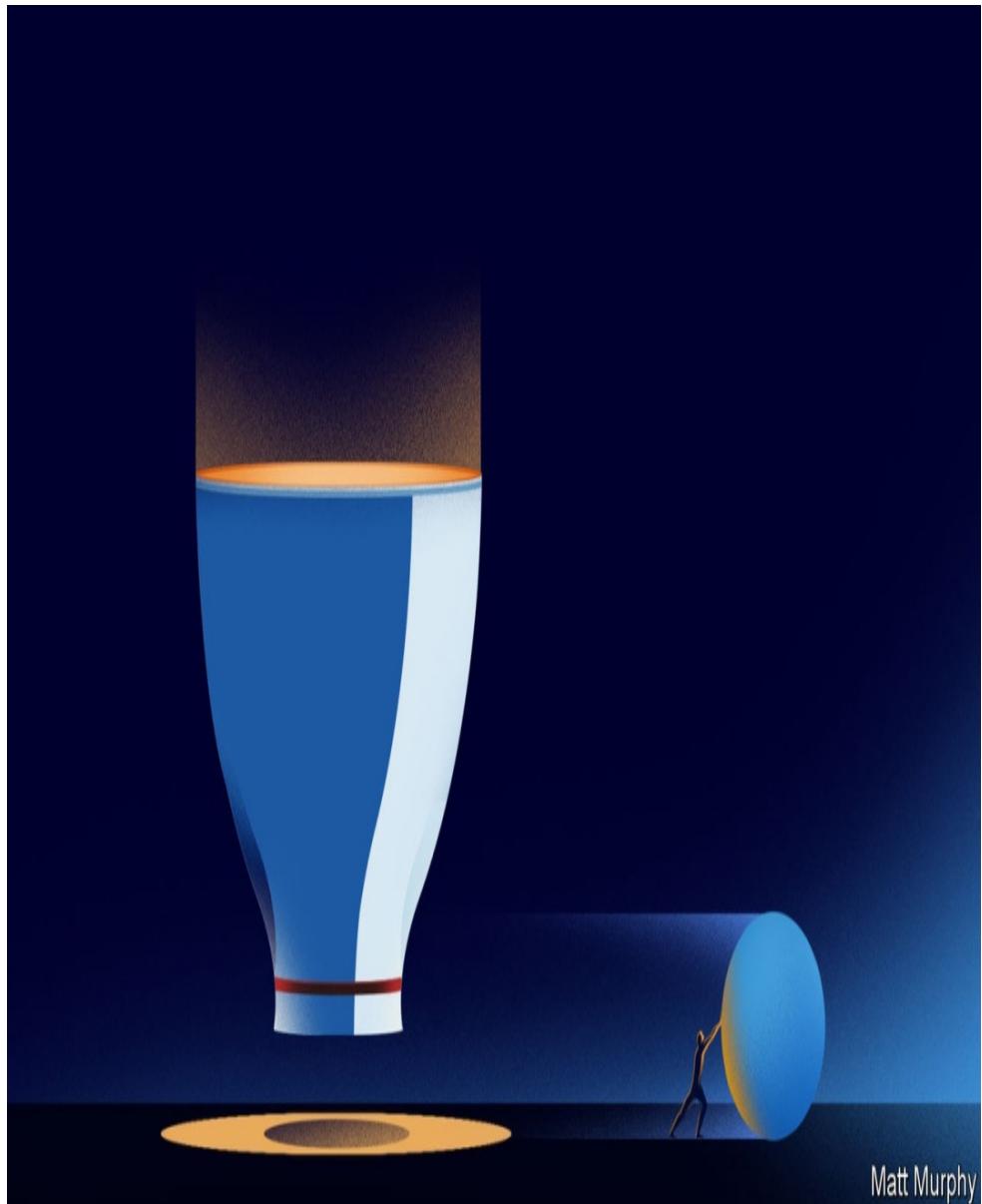
Electric cars will be different

Technology Quarterly Jan 2nd 2020 edition

AT A SHINY new factory in the suburbs of the port city of Wenzhou in south-eastern China, a sturdy robot arm picks up a curved sheet of glass. As a vehicle crawls past it on a conveyor belt, the arm gently nestles the

windscreen into its housing, then swivels back to get its greedy suction cups on the next one. Bleepy electronic versions of “Greensleeves” and “Baa Baa Black Sheep” blare out over the factory floor every so often, signalling break time for one of the various groups of human workers.

This is the first factory of a newish Chinese firm called ^{WM} Motor. At the end of the production line, brand new electric SUVs roll out into the world at a rate of about 16 every hour, two-thirds of the factory’s maximum rate. Though it currently makes only the one model, the company’s global ambitions are clear. The car’s Chinese name is Weima, which means “powerful horse”. Its Western name is a German word, Weltmeister, which means “world champion”. The German name is the one to focus on. Executives in China’s electric-vehicle industry believe it has a chance to do something that its older internal-combustion-engine carmakers never managed—become a global force.



Matt Murphy

Intellectual property Chinese inventiveness shows the weakness of the law

Entrepreneurs struggle to retain control of their inventions

Technology Quarterly Jan 2nd 2020 edition

AS THE DOTCOM boom was approaching its peak in 1999, Yi Li was working for JDS Uniphase, a Silicon Valley company that made lasers and optical fibres. JDS was a high-flyer, with a market capitalisation five times the value of Apple

at that time. Investors loved the firm for its role in building out the infrastructure of the internet. But when boom turned to crash ^{JDS}'s share price plunged by 99.8%. Employees whose stock options had made them paper millionaires lost it all overnight. "I got killed by the bubble," says Mr Li. "I was too young, too naive. But it was a very good lesson."

The lesson was one that Mr Li would put to good use back in his native China. But even though he went on to make the fortune that he missed out on with ^{JDS}, he discovered first-hand the problems that Chinese entrepreneurs face in protecting their inventions in a nation where protections for intellectual property are nascent at best. His tussles to retain control of his inventions typify a big barrier to China's technological advancement.



Data China's success at AI has relied on good data

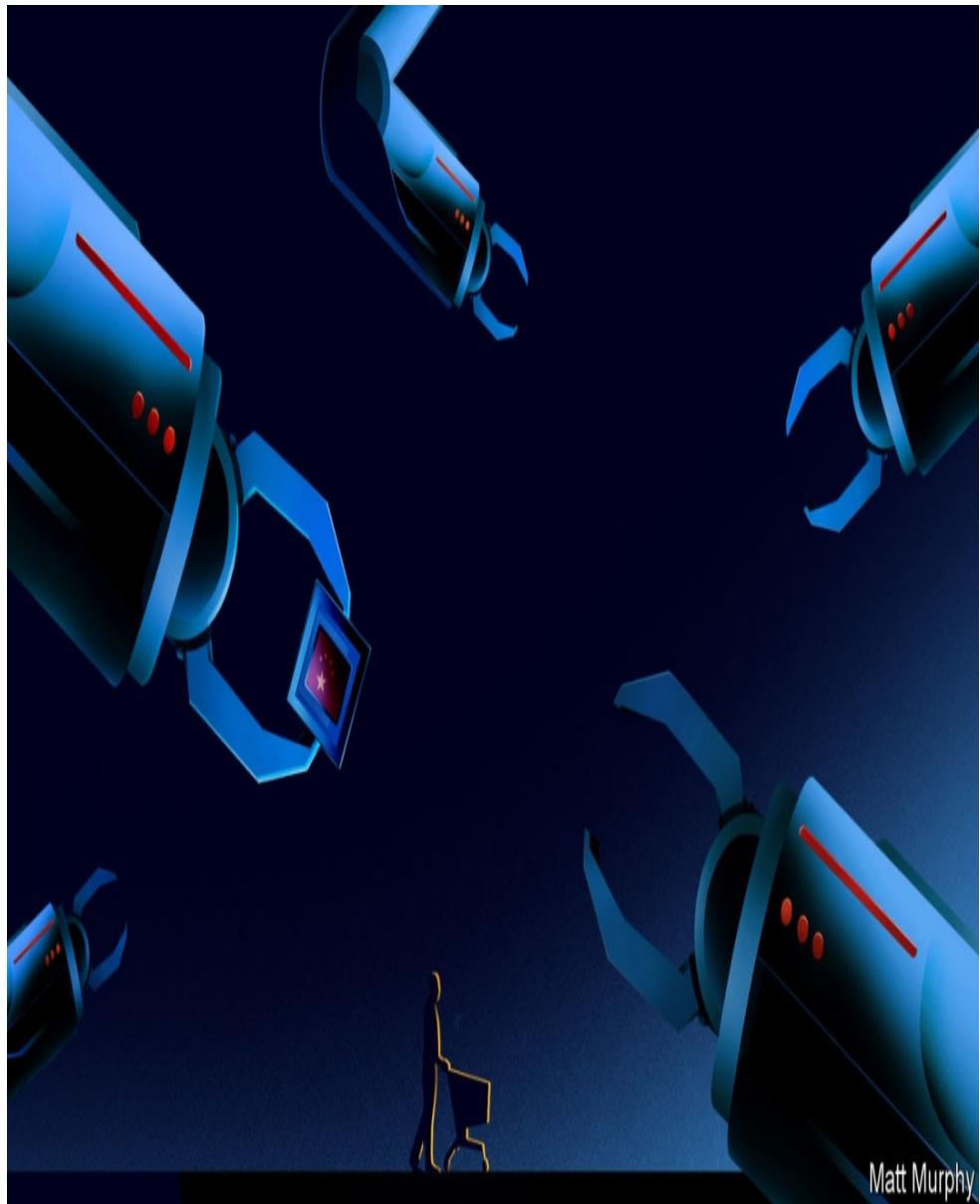
But cheap labour has also played an important part

Technology Quarterly Jan 2nd 2020 edition

CHINA IS THE land of face recognition. Cameras able to extract face prints from passers-by are common in the streets of large cities like Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Boxy vending machines at airports offer to let you pay for a cup

of orange juice, robot-squeezed for perfect freshness, by scanning your face. From December 1st all people applying for an account with one of China's telecoms companies such as China Mobile must have their face scanned. Previous regulations required proof of identity, but the possession of users' face prints will let firms verify identities in real-time via smartphone cameras.

Considering the oppressive purposes to which this technology is being put—most notably in the Muslim-majority areas of north-west China—it would not be appropriate to call China's rapid adoption of it anything more than a technical success. The underappreciated fact that companies leaping ahead in the field are more reliant on cleverly deployed cheap labour for their progress than on any technological edge, suggests another reason for caution before declaring a Chinese victory in the tech wars. But understanding how China has got face recognition to flourish is nonetheless instructive. Two of the world's most valuable startups, Megvii and SenseTime, worth \$4bn and \$7.5bn respectively, are Chinese AI companies specialising in the field. Their application of it alone would make it one of the most widely deployed forms of artificial intelligence in the world.



Microprocessors

China is slowly moving up the microprocessing value chain

Getting good at designing is easier than at manufacturing, however

Technology Quarterly Jan 2nd 2020 edition

THE FORTUNE PRECISION EQUIPMENT COMPANY makes chunks of metal. Hulking sheets of it are cut with millimetre accuracy using robot arms in room-sized enclosures bearing the brand of their German or Japanese manufacturers. The white

spray of cooling lubricant makes the process look like an industrial-strength shower for some post-modern Cleopatra.

Based in Shenyang, five hours north-east of Beijing by train, Fortune is the bottom rung of the most important and complex supply chain on Earth: the one which produces the integrated circuits, or chips, found in smartphones and servers. Fortune's robots make parts for equipment which will be installed in factories in Taiwan and Oregon, and used to etch circuitry on silicon and make chips. Selling equipment to industry giants like Applied Materials in America makes it a small success for the semiconductor supply chain. Much of the rest of the industry is not doing so well.



Matt Murphy

The future Technological progress in China could still lead to fireworks

Is a showdown likely with America?

Technology Quarterly Jan 2nd 2020 edition

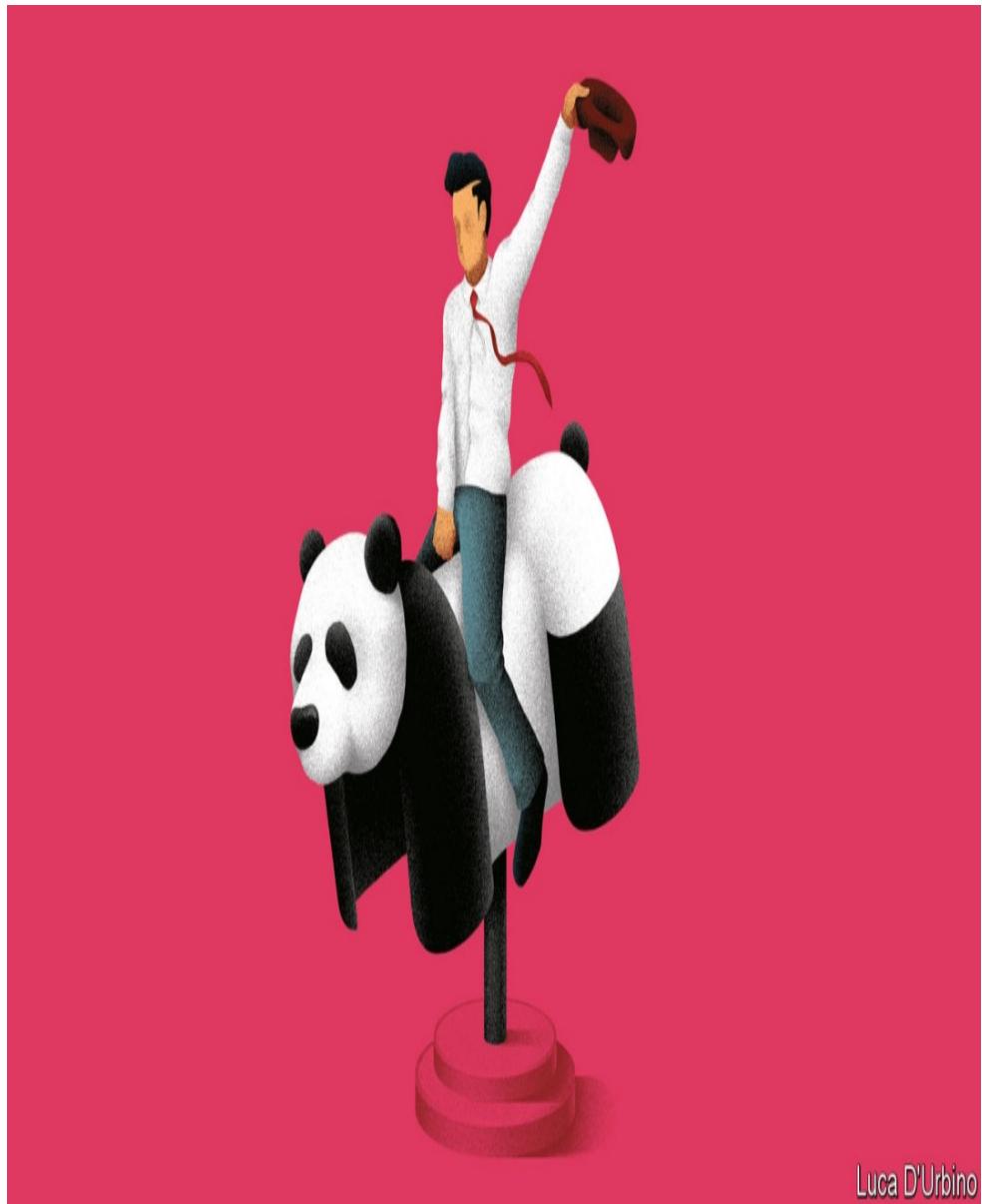
CHINA'S TECHNOLOGICAL rise, brought about by an authoritarian state actively guiding a market-oriented industrial base with access to global supply lines, is unlike anything in history. That does not necessarily make it unstoppable, or

world-beating. But the possibility that it will provide a definitive edge in technologies vital to 21st-century success makes the West anxious.

America, in particular, is unsettled by the prospect of Chinese technological capabilities that might erode its geopolitical dominance. Behind their legitimate concerns that China has stolen ^{IP} and that some of its companies cheat, American politicians worry that China's approach to technological development can produce results which America's mostly market-led model cannot.

Business

- [American firms in China: Still worth it](#)
- [LG: Life's not good enough](#)
- [Entertainment: Thank you for the music](#)
- [Bartleby: A manager's manifesto](#)
- [Schumpeter: Cloning Tesla](#)



Luca D'Urbino

Still worth it Despite political woes, America Inc is still thriving in China

Trade wars aren't the only complications multinationals face there

Business Jan 2nd 2020 edition

FOUR DECADES ago communist China officially opened its doors to America and its capitalist firms. Politics, once seemingly set aside for the purpose of commerce, has recently made a comeback. President Xi Jinping has stirred

up nationalism as part of his effort to consolidate power—worryingly for American firms seen as insufficiently deferential to China's line on Hong Kong among other sensitive political topics. President Donald Trump's trade war against China and his crackdown on Huawei, a domestic telecoms-equipment giant, have provoked further anti-American sentiments.

On December 31st Mr Trump tweeted that he will soon sign a “phase one” trade agreement with China. That will lead to some tariff cuts on Chinese imports, and to a presidential trip to Beijing for further haggling. When he visits, Mr Trump will surely hear grousing from his country's firms about their troubles in China. What they are less likely to trumpet is how surprisingly well they are still doing there.



Life's not good enough LG, South Korea's cuddliest chaebol, wants a sharper edge

Can a newfound appetite for risk help it take on Samsung?

BusinessJan 2nd 2020 edition

BEFORE LG EXECUTIVES mull a new product, corporate types in South Korea like to joke, they first ask themselves: “Has Samsung already done this?” Only if the answer is “yes” does the country’s fourth-biggest conglomerate, which

makes everything from consumer electronics and cosmetics to chemicals and health-care goods, move ahead with the plan.

The gibe says a lot about how LG is perceived on its home turf. Unlike Samsung, South Korea's largest *chaebol*, which has been mired in scandal, LG oozes reliability and law abidance. When the government urged large groups to unwind their convoluted cross-shareholding structures, LG was one of the first to do so. But cuddliness may have blunted LG's innovative edge. After years of profit growth the group's performance has started to show cracks. LG Electronics, its flagship affiliate, has been struggling with plunging earnings in its mobile-phone division, where it faces fierce competition from Samsung, as well as Apple and China's Huawei. Many are wondering if the "follower" strategy that has served LG well is still fit for purpose.



Thank you for the music Tencent buys a stake in Universal Music

Streaming has turned the music business around in recent years

BusinessJan 2nd 2020 edition

I_T WAS A nice example of nominative determinism. On December 31st a consortium led by Tencent, a giant Chinese digital conglomerate, announced it was buying 10% of Universal Music Group, a subsidiary of

Vivendi, a French company, for €3bn (\$3.4bn). The deal, first mooted in August, gives Tencent a stake in a firm whose catalogue spans artists from ^{ABBA} and Bob Marley to Jay-Z and Taylor Swift.

Tencent's purchase values Universal at around €30bn. That is remarkable, for two reasons. The first is that Vivendi's total market capitalisation is just €31.5bn. But Universal is merely the largest component of a conglomerate that also includes Canal+, a French pay-TV channel, and Havas, a PR-and-advertising firm. Both bring in profits of hundreds of millions of euros, and Vivendi is only lightly indebted.



Paul Blow

Bartleby A manager's manifesto for 2020

Eight resolutions to adopt in the new year

BusinessJan 2nd 2020 edition

THE START of the year is traditionally the time to make resolutions to change your behaviour. Hardly anyone keeps them, of course, but in the spirit of

optimism, here are Bartleby's eight suggestions for what managers ought to resolve to do in 2020.

1. Give out some praise. People don't come to work just for the money. They like to feel they are making a valuable contribution. Praise doesn't have to happen every day and it cannot be generic. Pick something specific that a worker has done which shows extra skill or effort and single them out; ideally so that others can hear the compliment. This is particularly important for the most junior employees, who will feel anxious about their status.



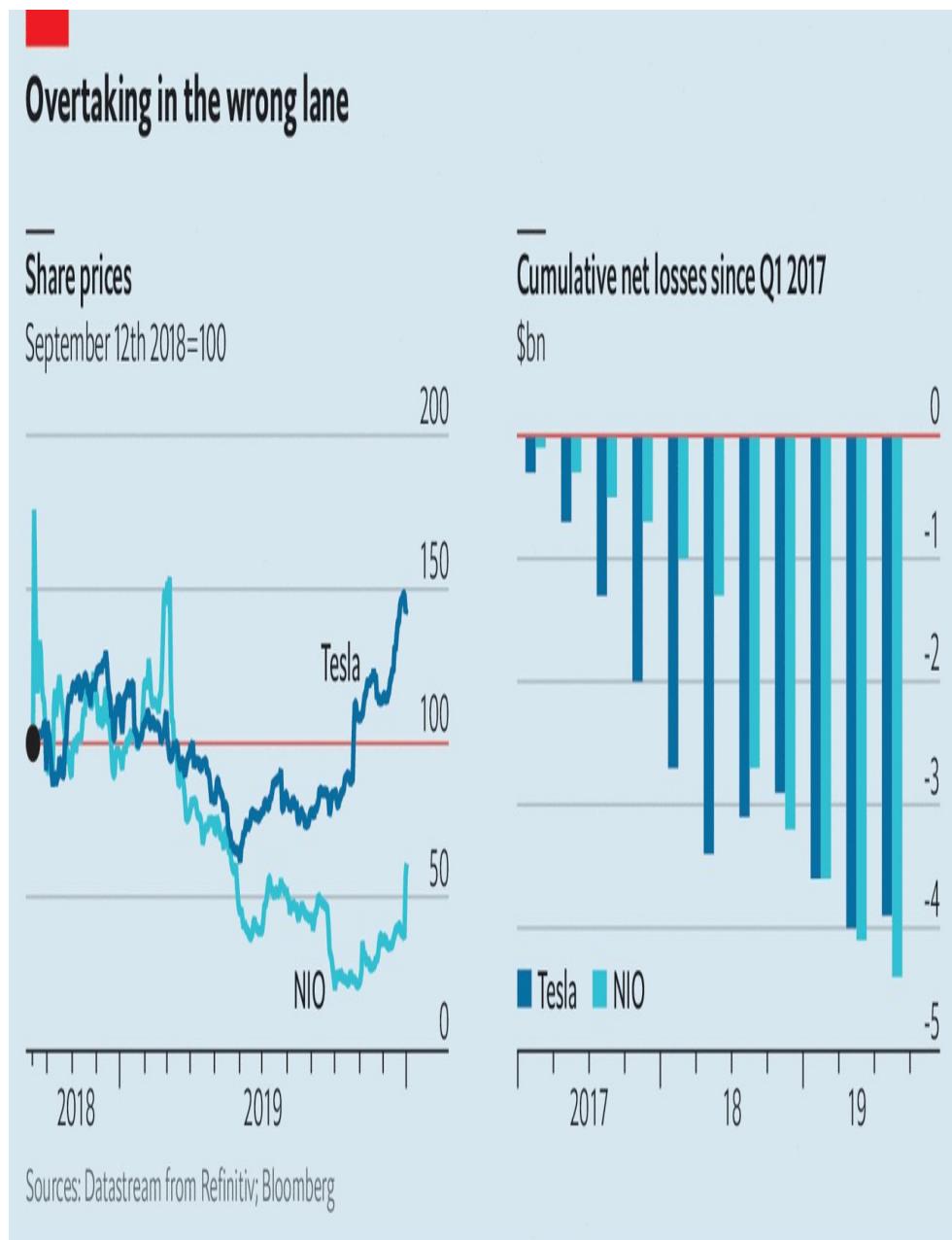
Schumpeter Cloning Tesla: electric-vehicle wars in China

Why Elon Musk has learned to love China

[BusinessJan 4th 2020 edition](#)

WILLIAM BIN LI is as close as China may have come to cloning Elon Musk. The founder of ^{EV} NIO, a swanky electric-vehicle (^{EV}) company, is in his 40s, a tech nerd, and though not as meme-able as the founder of Tesla, is treated like a

rock star by his adoring customers. NIO, worth \$4bn, is a fraction of the size of Mr Musk's Tesla, valued at \$75bn, but of all China's 30-odd EV startups, it is the best known. It also raises and dashes investors' hopes with Tesla-like frequency. On December 30th NIO's shares soared 54% when Mr Li said output had probably reached 8,000 vehicles in the fourth quarter from almost 4,800 in the third. But over the whole of 2019 they lost almost 40% (see chart).



Finance and economics

- [The stockmarket: Christmas bonus](#)
- [The World Trade Organisation: What's the catch?](#)
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Christmas bonus

The causes of a booming stockmarket are unlikely to last through 2020

Global growth, a trade deal and lower rates have added oomph to shares

Finance and economics Jan 2nd 2020 edition

THE CHRISTMAS of 2018 was a dismal one for American stockmarket investors. Meagre gains eked out through a volatile year were reversed at its end, on

fears of slowing global growth and all-out trade war between America and China. The ^{s&p} index of large companies tumbled by 15% between November 30th and December 24th that year. Many thought a recession was imminent.

The fears proved overblown. The ^{s&p} 500 rose by 28.9% during 2019, close to the 2013 record increase and well above the average annual gain for the past decade (see chart). December is often good for markets—a phenomenon traders call the “Santa rally”. This one was particularly strong, with the index rising by 2.9%. Markets beyond America also did well. The ^{FTSE} All-World, a global index, rose by 24% in dollar terms, its best showing since 2009.



What's the catch?

Trade negotiators have missed a deadline to help protect fish stocks

Government subsidies support overfishing, but are hard to get rid of

Finance and economics Jan 2nd 2020 edition

In 2015, world leaders signed up to a long list of sustainable development goals, among them an agreement to limit government subsidies that contribute to

overfishing. Negotiators at the World Trade Organisation (^{wto}) were told to finish the job “by 2020”. They have missed their deadline.

Overfishing is a tragedy of the commons, with individuals and countries motivated by short-term self-interest to over-consume a limited resource. By one measure, the share of fish stocks being fished unsustainably has risen from 10% in 1974 to 33% in 2015. Governments make things worse with an estimated \$22bn of annual subsidies that increase capacity, including for gear, ice, fuel and boat-building. One study estimated that half of fishing operations in the high seas (waters outside any national jurisdiction) would be unprofitable without government support.



Up for Grab

Grab and Singtel will bid for a digital-banking licence in Singapore

A ride-hailing firm and a telecoms group take on South-East Asia's banks

Finance and economics Jan 2nd 2020 edition

IN 2014 SINGTEL, a Singaporean telecoms group, teamed up with Standard Chartered, an Asia-focused bank, to create Dash, a mobile-money unit it

claimed would “revolutionise mobile commerce and banking”. But red tape meant it went nowhere fast. It refocused on mobile payments, but still struggled. Insiders liked to quip, says one, that “the only place that accepted Dash was Singtel’s canteen”.

Singtel’s banking ambitions are no longer a joke. On December 30th it said it was tying up with Grab, a car-hailing firm, to bid for a digital-banking licence from the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS). Together, the two firms are well-placed to benefit from one of the city state’s biggest financial reforms in two decades—and perhaps, to shake up banking across South-East Asia, a market of 655m.



Who pays?
A study suggests that higher minimum wages hit poorer bosses' pockets

Wage floors are still progressive, but can have unintended consequences

Finance and economics Jan 2nd 2020 edition

A MINIMUM WAGE is supposed to redistribute money from rich to poor. But economists disagree about whether it actually does so. Some researchers,

for example, have found that, in America, Canada and Europe, raising the minimum wage tends to decrease employment among the least-skilled workers, as firms downsize to trim costs. Others have found no effect on employment. And although no one doubts that the policy raises wages for the workers who stay employed, still unsettled is the question of where that extra money comes from.

A new paper by Lev Drucker and Katya Mazirov of Israel's Ministry of Finance, and David Neumark of the University of California, Irvine, examines increases in Israel's minimum wage in 2006-08 in search of an answer. The more low-wage workers a company employed, they found, the more its profits declined. Companies with 60-80% of staff earning the minimum wage saw their profits cut by almost half.



Buttonwood

Why the most important hedge is against unexpected inflation

High asset prices stem from low inflation and interest rates

[Finance and economics](#) Jan 2nd 2020 edition

IT IS HARD to say precisely when a cherished theory of inflation lost its sway. But if you had to pick a moment, it might be during an exchange last July

between Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a first-time congresswoman who had risen quickly to prominence, and Jerome Powell of the Federal Reserve.

The occasion was the twice-yearly testimony by the Fed's chairman to Congress. The unemployment rate, noted Ms Ocasio-Cortez, had fallen by three percentage points since 2014, yet inflation was no higher. Might the Fed's estimates of the lowest sustainable jobless rate have been too high in recent years? "Absolutely," replied Mr Powell. The once-strong link between unemployment and inflation, known as the Phillips Curve, was a "faint heartbeat", he said.



Free exchange China's industrial policy has worked better than critics think

But the state-led model is breaking

[Finance and economics Jan 2nd 2020 edition](#)

EARLY IN ITS trade dispute with China, America declared that Chinese industrial policy was a form of “economic aggression”. America’s negotiators hoped to rein it in. No such luck. The very week in December that America and

China announced a mini-deal on trade, China's president, Xi Jinping, vowed that the Chinese government would do more in 2020 to support strategic sectors, ranging from robotics to biomedicine. Having seen its vulnerability to American export controls, China is more determined to build up its domestic abilities than it was before the trade war began.

This raises an obvious question: does industrial policy work? Since at least Jean-Baptiste Colbert, France's finance minister under Louis XIV in the 17th century, governments have used taxes, tariffs and subsidies to cultivate national champions. Colbert worried about the dominance of Venetian glassmakers; Mr Xi worries about the dominance of American chipmakers.

Science and technology

- [Physics: Assembling the future](#)
- [The Richard Casement internship](#)



Alexander Glandien

The future of physics Finding new physics will require a new particle collider

What it should look like and where it should be built are uncertain

Science and technology Jan 2nd 2020 edition

Deep under the countryside north of Geneva, straddling the Franco-Swiss border, one of the most advanced scientific machines ever built has been banging subatomic particles together for more than a decade. This device,

the Large Hadron Collider (_{LHC}), accelerates beams of protons (members of a class of particle called hadrons) in opposite directions around a 27km ring until they reach almost the speed of light. Powerful magnets then force these protons into head-on collisions, causing the energy they carry to be converted—as described by Einstein’s best-known equation, $E=mc^2$ —into matter. And what matter! For sorting through the ejecta from the collisions gives physicists fleeting glimpses of the fundamental building blocks of the universe and the forces that bind or repel them.

The _{LHC} belongs to the world’s leading particle-physics laboratory, _{CERN}. It is the latest in a long line of increasingly sophisticated machines built over the past century by researchers intent on finding out how the universe truly works. The result of this effort has been one of the most successful, most tested scientific ideas of all time: the Standard Model of particle physics (see chart).

The Economist

The Richard Casement internship

[Science and technology](#)[Jan 4th 2020 edition](#)

We invite applications for the 2020 Richard Casement internship. We are looking for a would-be journalist to spend three months of the summer working on the newspaper in London, writing about science and technology. Applicants should write a letter introducing themselves and an article of about 600 words that they think would be suitable for publication in the Science & Technology section. They should be prepared to come for

an interview in London or New York. A stipend of £2,000 a month will be paid to the successful candidate. Applications must reach us by January 26th. These should be sent to: casement2020@economist.com

Books and arts

- [Ostracism: And stay out](#)
- [Vanished worlds: Writing wrongs](#)
- [Johnson: Climate-speak](#)



Getty Images

And stay out In ancient Athens, ostracism did the job of impeachment

When the system of temporary exile fell into disuse, Athenian democracy degenerated

Books and artsJan 2nd 2020 edition

AS EVERY AMERICAN knows, democracies need a means to deal with office-holders whose behaviour seems so terrible that they simply have to go. Modern

states have impeachment; ancient Athens had ostracism, a gloriously simple device that gave voters the annual right to impose a decade of exile on a reviled individual.

The word ostracism comes from the *ostrakon* or potsherd (the equivalent of scrap paper) on which a candidate's name was incised. With every new dig and discovery, fragments of pottery, bearing scratched names and sometimes a drawing or an insult, are deepening knowledge of the procedure among archaeologists and historians. It has become clear that the tool was at the heart of the Athenian political system.



Writing wrongs
An intimate chronicle of Sephardic Jewish history

Sarah Abrevaya Stein brings the Levy clan of Salonika to life

Books and arts Jan 2nd 2020 edition

Family Papers: A Sephardic Journey through the Twentieth Century.
By Sarah Abrevaya Stein. *Farrar, Straus and Giroux*; 336 pages; \$28.

WHEN THE sultan came to Salonika, David Levy was waiting. As befitted an Ottoman official and president of a local Jewish organisation, he greeted Mehmed V at the port when he landed in the summer of 1911. The next day, as the sultan was preparing to leave, he gave David a pair of diamond cufflinks. Yet all this pageantry was the wheeze of a dying world. Soon the Ottomans lost Salonika (now Thessaloniki) to the Greeks; their empire crumbled. And David, once dignified with the Turkish honorific *effendi*, would die in Auschwitz with much of his family in 1943.



Johnson Of train-boasts, plane-shame and electric automobiles

The words of 2019 reflect the rise of climate-change activism

Books and arts Jan 4th 2020 edition

IDENTIFYING SHIFTS in the Earth's climate requires decades of data, not just the observations of 2019 or any other single year. Climate change moves slowly, which is part of its calamitous power. Huge fires in California and

Australia are probably worsened by the phenomenon—but no blaze can unequivocally be pinned on it, a fact seized on by those who would rather avoid the subject. Yet in the growing strength and coherence of climate protests, something did change discernibly in 2019.

Extinction Rebellion, a new movement, disrupted major cities. Greta Thunberg, a teenage activist, was *Time*'s Person of the Year; she travelled by boat to a climate summit in New York to avoid flying (and the associated carbon emissions). Another summit, in Madrid, ended in acrimony. Policy may not have evolved much, but wider attitudes did—and with them, the language in which the issue is discussed.

Economic and financial indicators

- [Economic data, commodities and markets](#)

Economic data, commodities and markets

[**Economic and financial indicators**](#)Jan 2nd 2020 edition

Economic data

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	Gross domestic product				Consumer prices			Unemployment rate	
	% change on year ago: latest	quarter*	2019†		% change on year ago: latest	2019†		%	
United States	2.1	Q3	2.1	2.3	2.1	Nov	1.8	3.5	Nov
China	6.0	Q3	6.1	6.1	4.5	Nov	2.9	3.6	Q3§
Japan	1.7	Q3	1.8	0.8	0.5	Nov	0.4	2.2	Nov
Britain	1.1	Q3	1.7	1.3	1.5	Nov	1.8	3.8	Sep††
Canada	1.7	Q3	1.3	1.7	2.2	Nov	1.9	5.9	Nov
Euro area	1.2	Q3	0.9	1.2	1.0	Nov	1.2	7.5	Oct
Austria	1.5	Q3	-0.7	1.6	1.1	Nov	1.5	4.6	Oct
Belgium	1.6	Q3	1.7	1.3	0.8	Dec	1.3	5.6	Oct
France	1.4	Q3	1.1	1.3	1.0	Nov	1.3	8.5	Oct
Germany	0.5	Q3	0.3	0.6	1.1	Nov	1.3	3.1	Oct
Greece	2.7	Q3	2.3	1.9	0.2	Nov	0.5	16.8	Sep
Italy	0.3	Q3	0.2	0.2	0.2	Nov	0.7	9.7	Oct
Netherlands	1.9	Q3	1.8	1.8	2.6	Nov	2.7	4.3	Nov
Spain	2.0	Q3	1.6	2.1	0.8	Dec	0.8	14.2	Oct
Czech Republic	3.4	Q3	1.5	2.6	3.1	Nov	2.8	2.2	Oct†
Denmark	2.3	Q3	1.5	2.1	0.7	Nov	0.8	3.7	Oct
Norway	1.3	Q3	0.1	1.0	1.6	Nov	2.2	3.9	Sep‡‡
Poland	4.2	Q3	5.3	4.2	2.6	Nov	2.2	5.1	Nov§
Russia	1.7	Q3	na	1.1	3.1	Dec	4.5	4.6	Nov§
Sweden	1.7	Q3	1.1	1.2	1.8	Nov	1.8	6.8	Nov§
Switzerland	1.1	Q3	1.6	0.8	-0.1	Nov	0.4	2.3	Nov
Turkey	0.9	Q3	na	0.1	10.6	Nov	15.5	13.8	Sep§
Australia	1.7	Q3	1.8	1.7	1.7	Q3	1.5	5.2	Nov
Hong Kong	-2.9	Q3	-12.1	-0.6	3.0	Nov	3.0	3.2	Nov#
India	4.5	Q3	4.5	4.9	5.5	Nov	3.4	7.7	Dec
Indonesia	5.0	Q3	na	5.1	3.0	Nov	3.0	5.3	Q3§
Malaysia	4.4	Q3	na	4.5	0.9	Nov	0.8	3.2	Oct§
Pakistan	3.3	2019**	na	3.3	12.6	Dec	9.5	5.8	2018
Philippines	6.2	Q3	6.6	5.7	1.3	Nov	2.4	4.5	Q4§
Singapore	0.8	Q4	0.1	0.6	0.6	Nov	0.5	2.3	Q3
South Korea	2.0	Q3	1.7	1.8	0.7	Dec	0.4	3.1	Nov§
Taiwan	3.0	Q3	2.4	2.6	0.6	Nov	0.5	3.7	Nov
Thailand	2.4	Q3	0.4	2.4	0.2	Nov	0.7	1.1	Nov§
Argentina	-1.7	Q3	3.8	-3.3	52.1	Nov#	53.2	9.7	Q3§
Brazil	1.2	Q3	2.5	0.9	3.3	Nov	3.6	11.2	Nov##
Chile	3.3	Q3	3.0	1.5	2.7	Nov	2.3	6.9	Nov##
Colombia	3.3	Q3	2.3	3.1	3.9	Nov	3.5	9.3	Nov§
Mexico	-0.3	Q3	0.1	nil	3.0	Nov	3.6	3.5	Nov
Peru	3.0	Q3	2.9	2.3	1.9	Dec	2.1	6.3	Nov§
Egypt	5.6	Q3	na	5.6	3.6	Nov	8.1	7.8	Q3§
Israel	4.0	Q3	4.0	3.4	0.3	Nov	0.9	3.9	Nov
Saudi Arabia	2.4	2018	na	0.4	-0.1	Nov	-1.2	5.5	Q3
South Africa	0.1	Q3	-0.6	0.6	3.6	Nov	4.2	29.1	Q3§

Source: Haver Analytics. *% change on previous quarter, annual rate. †The Economist Intelligence Unit estimate/forecast. §Not seasonally adjusted. #New series. **Year ending June. ‡Latest 3 months. §§3-month moving average.

Economic data

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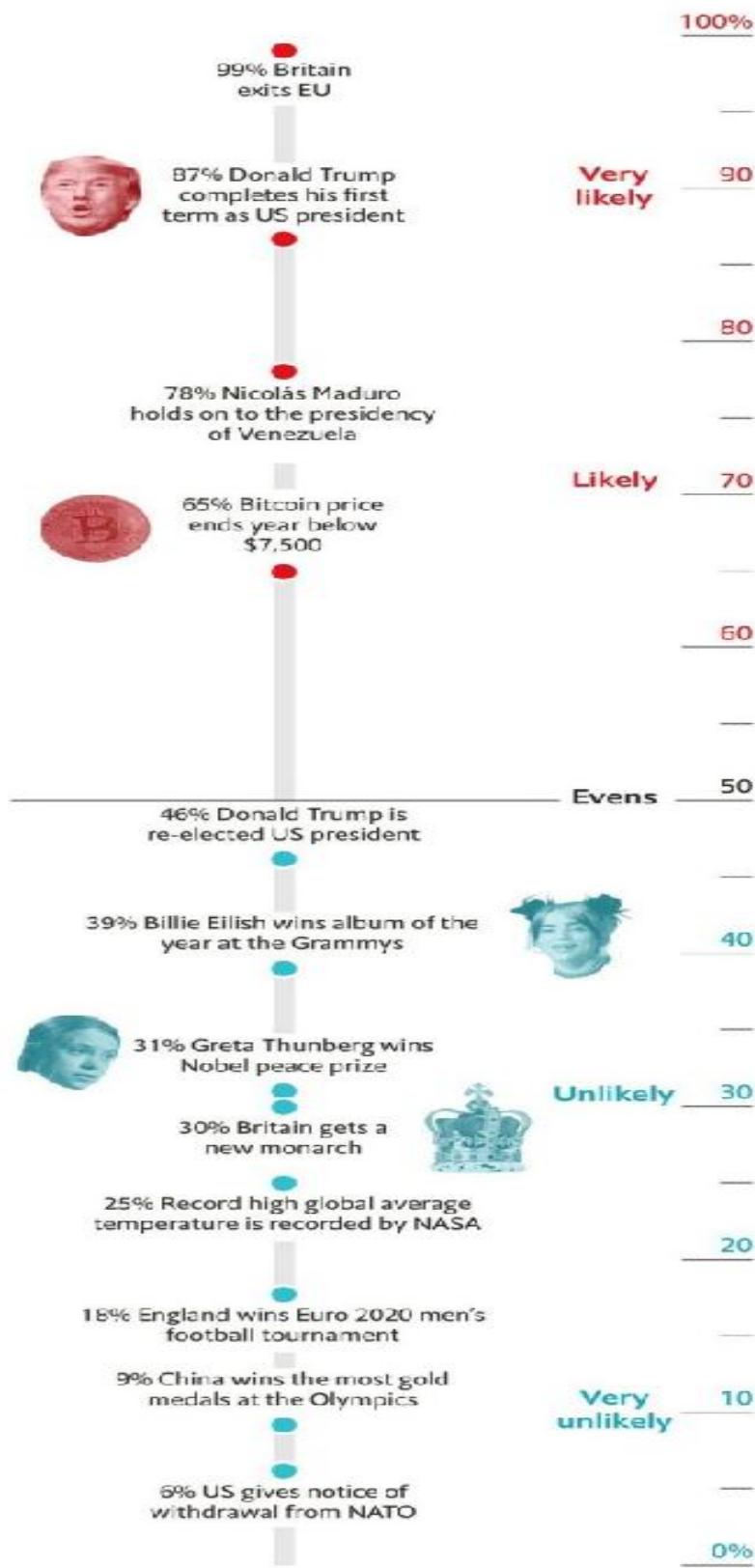
	Current-account balance	Budget balance	Interest rates		Currency units	
	% of GDP, 2019†	% of GDP, 2019†	10-yr govt bonds latest, %	change on year ago, bp	per \$ Dec 31st	% change on year ago
United States	-2.4	-4.6	1.8	-135	-	
China	1.5	-4.3	2.8 §§	-19.0	6.97	-1.4
Japan	3.1	-2.9	nil	-8.0	109	1.0
Britain	-4.3	-2.0	0.8	-55.0	0.75	5.3
Canada	-2.2	-0.9	1.7	-27.0	1.30	5.4
Euro area	3.2	-1.0	-0.2	-44.0	0.89	-2.3
Austria	1.6	0.2	nil	-47.0	0.89	-2.3
Belgium	-0.1	-1.3	0.1	-71.0	0.89	-2.3
France	-0.9	-3.2	0.1	-64.0	0.89	-2.3
Germany	7.3	1.0	-0.2	-44.0	0.89	-2.3
Greece	-2.3	0.6	1.5	-292	0.89	-2.3
Italy	2.9	-2.2	1.4	-132	0.89	-2.3
Netherlands	9.4	0.6	-0.1	-44.0	0.89	-2.3
Spain	1.0	-2.3	0.4	-98.0	0.89	-2.3
Czech Republic	0.7	0.2	1.6	-27.0	22.6	-0.6
Denmark	7.8	1.6	-0.1	-38.0	6.66	-1.9
Norway	5.4	6.5	1.6	-24.0	8.79	-1.5
Poland	0.2	-1.2	2.1	-75.0	3.79	-0.8
Russia	6.2	2.3	6.4	-240	62.1	11.7
Sweden	3.4	0.4	0.1	-32.0	9.36	-5.2
Switzerland	10.2	0.5	-0.5	-31.0	0.97	2.1
Turkey	0.2	-3.0	11.9	-458	5.95	-10.6
Australia	0.4	0.1	1.4	-95.0	1.42	nil
Hong Kong	4.8	-0.1	1.8	-16.0	7.79	0.5
India	-1.8	-3.9	6.5	-92.0	71.4	-2.2
Indonesia	-2.3	-2.0	7.0	-85.0	13,883	3.6
Malaysia	3.1	-3.5	3.3	-78.0	4.09	1.0
Pakistan	-3.5	-8.9	11.0 ‡‡	-215	155	-10.4
Philippines	-1.2	-3.2	4.4	-261	50.6	3.8
Singapore	17.9	-0.3	1.7	-30.0	1.34	1.5
South Korea	3.1	0.8	1.7	-29.0	1,156	-3.5
Taiwan	11.9	-0.9	0.7	-18.0	30.0	2.5
Thailand	6.8	-2.8	1.5	-80.0	29.9	8.7
Argentina	-1.6	-4.3	11.3	562	59.9	-37.1
Brazil	-1.7	-5.8	4.6	-280	4.02	-3.5
Chile	-2.9	-1.7	3.2	-109	752	-7.7
Colombia	-4.4	-2.5	6.1	-64.0	3,282	-1.0
Mexico	-0.8	-2.7	6.8	-186	18.9	4.3
Peru	-1.9	-2.0	4.2 ‡	-137	3.31	2.1
Egypt	-0.2	-7.1	na	nil	16.1	11.6
Israel	2.4	-3.9	0.8	-144	3.45	8.4
Saudi Arabia	1.9	-6.0	na	nil	3.75	nil
South Africa	-3.9	-5.9	8.3	-63.0	14.0	2.9

Source: Haver Analytics. †New series. §§5-year yield. ‡‡Dollar-denominated bonds.

Graphic detail

- [Predicting 2020: What are the odds?](#)

Implied chance of happening in 2020



Picture credits: AFP; Dreamstime; Getty Images

The year in probabilities

What markets and models expect in 2020

Brexit is a near-certainty; American withdrawal from NATO a long shot

Graphic detailJan 4th 2020 edition

“PREDICTION IS DIFFICULT,” they say, “especially about the future.” Statistical models can yield tolerably accurate projections for events that occur often, but not for one-offs, for which there are no historical data. One way to estimate the odds of such events is the “wisdom of crowds”. Just as stockmarkets aggregate beliefs about risk and firms’ future profits, betting markets reveal a consensus view about future political and news events.

Obituary

- [Yuri Luzhkov: Tearing down the past](#)



Tearing down the past

Obituary: Yuri Luzhkov died on December 10th

The long-time mayor of Moscow and transformer of the city was 83

Obituary Jan 2nd 2020 edition

In September 1997 Yuri Luzhkov, proud mayor of Russia's capital, threw a three-day birthday party. It had been three years in the planning, down to the last almost Godlike detail, seeding the clouds to keep the rain away. A huge

pageant, with 1,200 performers and a fire-breathing dragon, filled the streets. A son-et-lumière show was beamed onto the hilltop façade of Moscow State University. The Bolshoi ballet danced outside, Luciano Pavarotti sang in Red Square, and in the cathedral of Christ the Saviour, which Mr Luzhkov had raised again from Stalin’s dynamiting with its gold cupolas gleaming, three orchestras boomed out Tchaikovsky’s “1812”. There was nothing like that shout of victory over Napoleon to make the mayor’s stout Russian heart beat stronger in his breast.

Of course it was not his birthday. It was Moscow’s, which 850 years before —more or less, since no one really knew—had first appeared as a wooden stockade beside the Moscow river. But it might as well have been his party, because in his energy, his get-on-with-it attitude, his chutzpah and exuberance, he summed up the city. As a Muscovite born and bred, he also shared its love of circus, even appearing in the ring to celebrate his friend, the clown Yuri Nikulin, by driving a toy car and tumbling down a ladder.

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