

# FINANCIAL TIMES

MONDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2023

INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

ASIA



How the Premier League took over football  
THE BIG READ, PAGE 15

Why Thai baht is the most resilient currency  
RUCHIR SHARMA, PAGE 17

## China balloons cross Taiwan airspace 'very frequently'

- Island officials point to military use
- US seeks debris from downed objects

KATHRIN HILLE — TAIPEI  
JAMES POLITI AND  
DEMETRI SEVASTOPOLO — WASHINGTON

Dozens of Chinese military balloon flights have crossed Taiwan's airspace in recent years, the country's officials have revealed, as US and Canadian authorities search for the wreckage of two airborne objects which were shot down at the weekend.

A senior Taiwanese official said the Chinese balloons "come very frequently, the last one just a few weeks ago". Another person briefed on the matter said such incursions were happening on average once a month.

China's extensive military balloon programme has drawn global attention after the US shot down a suspected spy balloon this month off the coast of South Carolina.

The two objects shot down by US fighter jets in recent days — one over Canada's Yukon territory on Saturday and the other over Alaska on Friday — were also balloons, the top Democrat in Congress said yesterday.

Chuck Schumer, the Senate majority leader, told television channel ABC he had been briefed by US national security adviser Jake Sullivan that officials believe "they [balloons]... but much smaller than the first one".

The National Security Council said: "These objects did not closely resemble, and were much smaller than, the PRC [People's Republic of China] balloon and we will not definitively characterise them until we can recover the debris, which we are working on."

Asian countries including Japan and the Philippines have observed balloon incursions into their airspace, but their

governments have given little detail. Previously, Taiwan's defence ministry had only confirmed one incident in February last year, in which multiple Chinese balloons in four batches loitered over the north of the country.

Taiwanese government officials said the Chinese balloons normally fly at about 20,000ft, much lower than the one that traversed the US, and are made from a different material. But the officials said the balloons' dimensions and payload put them outside the scope of ordinary weather balloons.

According to officials who deal with military and intelligence issues in three Asian countries, the balloons observed over Taiwan were developed by the division in charge of weapons systems under China's Central Military Commission, which is headed by president Xi Jinping.

"Some of the balloons are fielded by the PLA [People's Liberation Army] Air Force and some by the Rocket Force," said one Taiwanese official, adding that military aircraft were regularly sent up to observe the balloons.

According to people briefed on the matter in Taiwan and one US ally, the balloons have been collecting atmospheric data for use in radar and missile systems.

"Atmospheric specifics such as air pressure and density at the time can affect the accuracy of a missile after re-entry into the atmosphere, and tiny errors will be magnified a lot because of speed," said Katsch Liao, assistant director of the Global China Hub at the Atlantic Council, a Washington think-tank.

Rana Foroohar page 15

## Building flaws Turkey arrests developers over fears poor standards led to higher death toll



A Turkish soldier in the south-eastern town of Hatay walks among buildings destroyed in last week's earthquake.

Turkish authorities have issued arrest warrants for 113 developers in response to widespread allegations that the huge loss of life was exacerbated by lack of enforcement of building standards, leaving many apartment blocks susceptible to collapse.

The death toll in Turkey reached 29,605 yesterday, according to the country's crisis management agency. In Syria, 3,555 people have died, data from state media in regime-controlled parts of the country and civil defence forces in rebel-held areas showed.

Murat Kurum, Turkish environment and urban planning minister, whose teams have so far surveyed more than 17,000 buildings, said at least 1mm individual units in Turkey

had been damaged by the 7.8 magnitude earthquake, which struck last Monday across a wide zone straddling the Turkish-Syrian border.

State-run media reported that several of the country's top officials were in the pursuit of suspect developers. The issue threatens to undermine President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in elections due in May.

News & analysis page 3

### Briefing

#### Deutsche Bank forex probe finds rulebreaking

An investigation into mis-selling has found that staff acted in "bad faith" for years, pushing smaller Spanish companies to buy highly complex derivatives. — PAGE 5

#### Shift in interest rate bets

Changes in futures markets have shown that investors are starting to accept the Fed's message that cooling inflation will take more time. — PAGE 4; WEEK AHEAD, PAGE 7

#### Fresh 'Qatargate' charges

Belgian socialist Marc Tarabella has become the second member of the European parliament to be charged with corruption over the "Qatargate" scandal. — PAGE 2

#### Scholz setback in Berlin

The conservative CDU has won return elections in the German capital, according to projections, in a blow to the chancellor's centre-left party. — PAGE 2

#### Meta lines up new job cuts

The social media company has delayed finalising budgets as it prepares more cuts under Mark Zuckerberg's plan to limit costs in his "year of efficiency". — PAGE 7

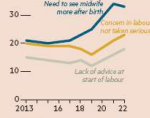
#### Lawyers' bonuses dry up

Sign-on payments for joining big US and UK firms, which broke records in 2021, have dried up as the decline in dealmaking takes a heavy toll on the sector. — PAGE 5

### Datawatch

#### Maternity matters

% of respondents with these concerns



Source: NHS

Disatisfaction with maternity care in England has not fallen back to pre-Covid levels and, by some measures, continues to rise. Some 38 per cent of services are now rated as 'require improvement' or 'inadequate', up from 18 per cent last year

News & analysis page 3



Clayburn rallies Democrats for Biden re-election bid  
Analysis > PAGE 4

Australia	A\$700(=CST)
China	RMB83
Hong Kong	HK\$23
India	Rup20
Indonesia	Rp45,000
Japan	¥500(=CT)
Korea	₩150
Malaysia	RM150
Pakistan	Rupae 300
Philippines	Peso 140
Singapore	S\$580(=CST)
Taiwan	NT\$40
Thailand	Baht40
Vietnam	US\$450

Subscribe in print and online

www.ft.com/AsiaSubs  
Tel: (852) 5803 3388  
Fax: (852) 2905 5590  
email: subsasia@ft.com

© THE FINANCIAL TIMES LTD 2023  
No. 41,246 \*

Printed in London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Dublin, Frankfurt, Milan, Madrid, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, Seoul, Dubai



## Goldman jobs axe should have fallen sooner, Solomon admits to partners

JOSHUA FRANKLIN — NEW YORK  
KAYE WIGGINS — HONG KONG

David Solomon told a private gathering of Goldman Sachs' top executives that he had erred by not cutting jobs earlier last year, according to people familiar with the remarks.

Speaking to about 400 Goldman partners at a closed-door meeting in Miami last week, the chief executive said he took responsibility for being slow to reduce headcount and pare back investment in new projects when it became apparent that there would be a significant business slowdown.

Goldman waited until January to cut 5,200 jobs, roughly 6.5 per cent of its workforce, as part of the bank's biggest cost-cutting exercise in years. Solomon acknowledged this would have been less drastic if he had taken action earlier.

"As the environment was growing more complicated in Q2 of last year, every bone in my body believed we should be much more aggressive in slowing hiring and reducing headcount," Solomon said, according to one of the people with knowledge of the remarks.

Goldman's net profits in 2022 fell almost 50 per cent from record earnings in 2021 after a drop in investment banking fees, mark-downs at its asset management business and losses in its financial technology division.

The lay-off followed a period of rapid expansion as Goldman pushed into new businesses while also pausing an annual cycle of the poorest-performing employees during the pandemic.

A bank spokesman said "it would have been unusual to not address the process on headcount reduction

this year" at the partners' meeting. Solomon stressed the underlying strength of Goldman's business in trading and investment banking, which have both gained market share in recent years. That fact will form part of the pitch to shareholders at Goldman's February investor day, according to people familiar with the matter.

Some of the bank's rank and file have privately complained about Goldman's focus on newer businesses, such as retail banking.

"The hope is that, through this meeting, we give the partners transparency and they feel empowered to go out and tell that story to the people they work with. I think we accomplished that," said Ericka Leslie, Goldman's chief administrative officer and co-chair of the partnership committee.

"Bad faith" at Deutsche page 5

### World Markets

STOCK MARKETS				CURRENCIES				GOVERNMENT BONDS					
	Feb 10	Prev	%Chg	Feb 10	Feb 3	Feb 10	Feb 3	Yield (%)	Feb 10	Feb 3	Chg		
S&P 500	4027.85	4081.50	-0.21	£/€	1.060	1.088	€/\$	0.927	0.921	4.50	4.46	0.04	
Nikkei Composite	11863.08	11789.58	-1.02	¥/€	1.288	1.271	F/\$	0.828	0.828	US 10 yr	3.72	3.60	0.13
Hong Kong	30765.46	30588.99	0.57	£/€	0.864	0.889	€/¥	1.123	1.116	US 20 yr	3.87	3.63	0.24
FTSE 100	1985.32	1921.81	-3.32	¥/\$	131.310	131.040	¥/€	146.193	142.277	UK 2 yr	3.86	3.54	0.32
Euro Stoxx 50	4197.35	4250.14	-1.24	¥/€	158.583	158.650	F/index	77.912	78.189	UK 10 yr	3.59	3.29	0.31
FTSE 200	7867.45	7911.15	-0.55	\$/€	0.867	1.062	\$/¥	1.180	1.111	UK 30 yr	3.81	3.74	0.07
FTSE All Share	4312.89	4334.08	-0.49	CRYPTO						JPN 2 yr	0.06	0.04	0.02
CAC 40	7129.73	7188.38	-0.82	Bitcoin						JPN 10 yr	0.49	0.49	0.01
Hang Seng	18307.08	18522.42	-1.28	Bitcoin	21647.90	21791.90				JPN 30 yr	1.55	1.53	0.02
Nikkei	27670.98	27584.95	0.31	Bitcoin	1523.84	1544.44				GER 2 yr	2.75	2.68	0.07
Hang Seng	21190.42	21624.38	-2.01	COMMODITIES						GER 10 yr	2.36	2.30	0.07
MSCI World	7190.53	7261.98	-0.97	Oil WTI \$						GER 30 yr	2.32	2.27	0.05
MSCI EM E	1024.51	1020.90	0.35	Oil Brent \$						Gold \$	1875.10	1821.85	2.21
MSCI ACWI E	648.01	651.09	-0.52										
FT Wilshire 2000	3320.01	3371.44	-0.16										
FT Wilshire 5000	41962.38	41963.83	-0.06										

### FT LIVE

## BRAZIL SUMMIT

Which Path Will Lead to Stable & Sustainable Growth?

10 May 2023 | In-Person Conference  
etc/venues 601 Lexington, New York | #FTBrazil

This year's Brazil Summit will explore the challenges and opportunities of unlocking Brazil's enormous potential, its place in global affairs and key investment trends.

Early Confirmed Speakers Include:

- Daniel Bassan, CEO, UBS BB
- Augusto Neves Dal Pozzo, Lawyer and Founding Partner, Dal Pozzo Law Firm
- Charles Schramm, Executive Manager, FGV Projetos
- Veronica Sánchez de Cruz Rios, President-Director, Agência Nacional de Águas e Saneamento Básico (ANA)
- Marcos Troyjo, President, New Development Bank (NDB)

Learn more at [brazils Summit.live.ft.com](https://brazils Summit.live.ft.com)





INTERNATIONAL

Corruption scandal

# Second MEP charged in 'Qatargate' probe

### Belgian socialist accused of accepting bribes to shape EU policymaking

ANDY BOUNDS — BRUSSELS

A second member of the European parliament has been charged with corruption and another arrested as Belgian prosecutors continue their investigation into the "Qatargate" scandal.

Marc Tarabella, a Belgian socialist, was remanded in custody on Saturday after being charged with corruption, money laundering and participating in a criminal organisation. He was arrested on Friday, eight days after parliament lifted his immunity from prosecution. He denies the charges.

Andrea Cozzolino, an Italian socialist, was arrested at a Naples hospital on Friday night, according to his lawyer. The Belgian federal prosecutor's office confirmed the arrest and said it was seeking his transfer to Belgium.

Belgian authorities claim that they and others took bribes from Qatar and Morocco to shape EU policymaking.

Cozzolino's lawyer, Dimitri De Becco, said his client was undergoing treatment for a heart problem. "Our client is opposed to his transfer to Belgium. We immediately sought and obtained his release. The Naples appeal court confirmed today that there was no reason to deprive our client of his liberty in these conditions," he said.

He added that his client "has returned home, where he will continue to exercise his rights against these unjustified accusations".

Tarabella is the sixth person to be charged with the same three offences.

Eva Kaili, a Greek socialist MEP who was vice-president of the parliament, group, was released on bail on February 4. Panzeri's accountant, Monica Rosanna Bellini, was arrested in Milan last month.

### Qatar's alleged motivation to be blunt resolutions condemning its treatment of migrant workers

Qatar's alleged motivation to be blunt resolutions condemning its treatment of migrant workers remains in detention. Sodes Pier Antonio Panzeri, a former MEP who ran a human rights charity, and Francesco Giorgi, his former assistant and Kaili's partner, Niccolò Figà-Talamanna, secretary-general of another human rights

group, was released on bail on February 4. Panzeri's accountant, Monica Rosanna Bellini, was arrested in Milan last month.

Panzeri, believed to be the head of the group, has struck a plea bargain and admitted working for foreign countries, the federal prosecutor has said. Giorgi has made a partial confession, according to documents seen by the Financial Times, while Figà-Talamanna, Kaili and Bellini deny wrongdoing.

Figà-Talamanna, secretary-general of No Peace Without Justice, released a statement on Saturday saying he was grateful to be released from prison and would continue his fight for human rights.

Panzeri's wife and daughter are under house arrest in Italy. Police say they

found €1.5m in cash at the homes of Panzeri and Kaili and in a suitcase in the possession of Kaili's father.

On Friday, they also searched a safe-deposit box used by Tarabella at a bank in Liège and several offices in the town hall at Anthisnes, in southern Belgium, where Tarabella is mayor.

Qatar's alleged motivation was to blunt resolutions condemning its treatment of migrant workers ahead of the World Cup and secure visa-free travel for its citizens. The Qatari government has denied the accusations.

Morocco allegedly sought support for its claim to sovereignty over the Western Sahara, and deals with the EU over fishing and agricultural product trade. The Moroccan government denied any wrongdoing.

Germany

# Blow for Scholz's SPD after CDU wins Berlin poll rerun

GUY CHAZAN — BERLIN

The conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) has won elections in the German capital, Berlin, according to projections, after a rerun of a poll held in 2021 that was so chaotic its results were nullified by the city's top court.

The result is a blow for German chancellor Olaf Scholz and his party, the left-of-centre Social Democrats (SPD), who have governed Berlin in shifting coalitions for the past 22 years. According to German TV it was the party's worst performance in the capital since the second world war.

"The Berliners have made their views clear, they want something else," said Franziska Giffey, the city's SPD mayor. "We have to exercise some humility in this situation."

The victorious CDU said the result was a vindication of its campaign message that Berlin was a "dysfunctional" city that needed a radical change of course. That perception had grown among many voters after New Year's Eve celebrations in the capital degenerated into a full-scale riot, with violent attacks on police and firefighters.

But it is unclear whether the Christian Democrats will be able to form a government in a city where the majority traditionally votes left. Most of the other big parties have no interest in teaming up with the party. "You can only create a government once you've formed a majority in parliament and there are options there beyond the CDU," the former mayor of Berlin, Michael Müller told ARD TV yesterday.

But leading Christian Democrat politicians insisted that they should now take power in Berlin. "The CDU gained 10 percentage points and the government got a shattering," said Carsten Linnemann, deputy head of the CDU's parliamentary group. "There was a clear winner and the people now expect that this winner is given the chance to form a government."

Karl Wagner, the CDU's leader in Berlin, said there were "two options for stable two-party coalitions" — one between the CDU and SPD, and one between the CDU and Greens.

But although the CDU won the election, it is likely that the city will continue to be ruled by the three-way coalition since SPD, Greens and Die Linke, a hard-left party, has governed it since 2016.

Projections based on exit polls broadcast by ARD put the CDU on 27.4 per cent, the Greens on 18.5 per cent, the SPD on 18.5, Die Linke on 12.6 per cent and the far-right Alternative for Germany on 9 per cent.

Yesterday's election was the rerun of a poll held in September 2021 which was so chaotic that its results were nullified by Berlin's top court. It was the first time in Germany's postwar history that a regional election has had to be repeated. In the 2021 election, Berliners had to queue for hours at polling stations, which ran out of voting papers and ballot boxes. Some stayed open late to cope with the crowds, when broadcasters were already calling the result.

Election observers from the Council of Europe, the continent's top human rights body, were in Berlin yesterday to monitor the poll.

### Defence. Munich conference

# Germans divided over national security reform

### Move to take more assertive role in Europe held up by tensions in ruling coalition

LAURA PITEL — BERLIN

On the eve of the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, German officials had hoped to use this coming weekend's Munich Security Conference to unveil their long-awaited national security strategy.

But disagreements in Chancellor Olaf Scholz's governing coalition have put paid to those plans. The annual security gathering, dubbed the "Davos of defence", will most likely not be the place to showcase progress on its promised *Zentrumswende*, or historic turning point, that pledged a more assertive role for Germany in European defence.

The dispute centres on a disagreement over whether Berlin should set up a US-style National Security Council, an idea that some German ministries fear could hand too much power to Scholz's office.

"The issue is how much of the brain and the muscle in that set-up should rest with the chancellor and how much with the other ministries," said a person familiar with the discussions.

Another put it more bluntly: "It's a power question."

German diplomats and some western allies have argued for more than 10 years that Germany needs a coherent approach to national security that matches its political and economic standing — and avoids mistakes such as the blindness policymakers showed to the risks of depending on Russian gas.

Scholz's government, which came to power in December 2021, included a commitment in its coalition agreement to produce a national security strategy. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine the following February brought a new urgency to the task.

"Facing up to this nuclear armed big power in Europe — Russia — we have to get our wits together," said Ekkehard Brose, a former diplomat who now heads the government-funded Federal Academy for Security Policy. "There's a very concrete challenge, not just an abstract realisation that this is what others expect of us."

While there have been various Ger-



Official visits: Chancellor Olaf Scholz meets German troops taking part in an exercise on Lüneburg Heath, northern Germany, in October. *See FT.com/page/021323*

man policy documents addressing security over the years, there has never been a "truly integrated, cross-ministry strategy," according to Sarah Brockmeier, a researcher at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt.

She pointed to two events in 2021 — Berlin's chaotic handling of the international withdrawal from Afghanistan, which left Afghans employed by the German army at the mercy of the Taliban, and the devastating floods in Germany's Ahr valley — as examples of where greater strategic planning and clearer decision making could have limited the damage.

The task of leading the process to draw up a national security strategy was handed to Annalena Baerbock, the Green foreign minister. She said Germany needed to think of national security as much more than "military plus diplomacy" and called for the country to "rigorously address our economic dependencies", especially when it came

to China. Baerbock has pointed to the role of business, municipalities and universities in making strategically important decisions, and called for the strategy to encompass the response to the fallout from climate change and trade policy as well as cyber attacks and conventional warfare. A separate policy on Berlin's relationship with Beijing is expected to be published once the overall strategy is finally settled.

The disputes that have held up the plan, according to one of the officials briefed on the details, include the question of whether to include a commitment to meet NATO's requirement of spending at least 2 per cent of gross domestic product on defence. There is also disagreement on how to co-ordinate the response to natural disasters.

But the most sensitive issue is the idea of establishing an NSC such as the ones in the US and UK that bring together ministers from across government along with representatives of the intelli-

gence services and other agencies. The body would almost certainly be based in the chancellery. But Baerbock's foreign ministry is reluctant to hand too much power to Scholz and his team.

Christoph Heugens, a long-serving foreign policy adviser to former chancellor Angela Merkel who is now the chair of the Munich Security Conference, said last week that the previous government never even broached the subject "because we knew it would represent the kind of fundamental break, the kind of structural change, that would be impossible to master in a coalition government".

Advocates of a German NSC argue that the chancellor already has the final say on critical issues such as last month's decision to send Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine.

"Ultimately, for crisis management, it happens anyway," said Julia Friedlander, a former member of the US NSC who now heads the Berlin office of Atlantic Bridge, which promotes closer ties between Germany and the US. "But there has to be some sort of more formalised structure for communication."

Some argue that a security council is no fail-safe against bad decisions.

Lord Peter Ricketts, a former senior British civil servant who helped set up the UK's own NSC in 2010, said its version had failed to prepare for coronavirus even though a pandemic had been set as one of the top risks facing the country. "There's an issue about progress chasing and follow-up," he said. Still, he believed that Germany's "disjointed" system would benefit from an NSC to improve co-ordination and promote long-term thinking.

Berlin has sought to play down the seriousness of the disagreements. A spokesman for Scholz refused to be drawn on questions about internal disputes at a press conference last month, saying only that the discussions were "progressing well" and that the strategy would be finalised before the end of March.

But experts wonder what will be left, and whether it will be too watered down to be meaningful — perhaps by ducking the decision on forming an NSC. Ricketts cautioned against that: "A national security strategy with a National Security Council is only halfway there — it's just a document."

*Additional reporting by Guy Chazan*

### Facing up to this nuclear armed big power in Europe — Russia — we have to get our wits together

**FINANCIAL TIMES**  
6th Floor, Nat King Tower  
Central, Hong Kong

**Subscriptions and Customer Service**  
Tel: 0852 2862 3863, [subscriptions@ft.com](mailto:subscriptions@ft.com)

**Advertising**  
Tel: 0852 2862 3863, [advertising@ft.com](mailto:advertising@ft.com), [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com)

**Letters to the editor**  
[letters.editor@ft.com](mailto:letters.editor@ft.com)

**Published by**  
The Financial Times (UK) Limited,  
6th Floor, Nat King Tower, 88 Canina Road  
Central, Hong Kong  
Asia Editor: Robin Harding

**Printed by**  
Australia: Spotpress Pty Ltd, 24-26 Lillian Fowler  
Place, Marcollin, NSW 2204  
Hong Kong: Ho Ming Printing Co Ltd,  
15/F, B/L, A, 18 Ka Yip Street, Ming Pao Industrial  
Centre, Chai Wan, Representative: Angela Mackay,  
ISSN 1025-988X

Japan: Nikko Tokyo Newspaper Printing Center Inc,  
1-10-5, Shinjuku, Kojimachi, Tokyo 163-0006  
Representative: Hiroko Hoshino, ISSN 0955-9460  
South Korea: Haeil Business Newspaper, 30-1-1 G/a,  
Pi-Dong, Jung-Gu, Seoul 100-729  
Singapore: SPH Media Limited, 2 Jurong Port Road,  
099090  
Representative: Anjali Mahendro

© Copyright The Financial Times Limited 2023  
All rights reserved.  
Reproduction of the contents of this newspaper  
in any form is not permitted without the  
publisher's prior consent. Financial Times and  
FT are registered trademarks of The Financial  
Times Limited.

The Financial Times and its journalism are subject to  
a self-regulation regime under the FT Editorial Code  
of Practice. [www.ft.com/editorialcode](http://www.ft.com/editorialcode)

Reprints are available of any FT article with your  
company logo or contact details inserted (minimum  
order 100 copies). One-off copyright  
licenses for reproduction of FT articles are also  
available. For both services phone +44 20 7873 4886,  
or alternatively, email [syndication@ft.com](mailto:syndication@ft.com)

# Poland's shoppers grapple with rising cases of 'shrinkflation'

RAPHAEL MINDER — WARSAW

A trip to the supermarket in Poland now requires not only a full wallet but also a magnifying glass to check the fine print on the packaging.

Parents tasked with wiping their children's runny noses this winter have been caught out by packets containing not 10, but eight tissues. The health-conscious have found their half-kilo tubs of ketchup cut to 420g. The famous "Bird's milk" chocolate box sold by local confectioner Wedel now contains just 340g of the sweet stuff, down from 360g in December.

With inflation at about 17 per cent in December, the cost of living has almost doubled the eurozone average — retailers and food producers in Poland are resorting to a practice as old as price pressures to hide the rise in costs from their customers.

That practice is "shrinkflation" — a phenomenon that involves skipping on the amount — or quality — of produce sold to consumers, rather than raising the cost of the item itself. It is a technique that has been used by everyone from Roman emperors, who debased silver and gold coins with copper and other

cheaper metals to finance their empire building, to bakers in the Middle Ages, who tried to prevent bread riots by selling smaller loaves.

In Poland, following a surge in producers' energy costs triggered by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, consumer goods companies have devised sneaky albeit legal ways to hide the fact they are forcing their consumers to pay the same for less. They are reshaping bottles and tubs, thinning down cleaning sponges and reducing the size of their bags of crisps.

Polish economist Rafal Mundry, who has been compiling a "shrinkflation" database for four years, described it as "the shadow side of inflation that many people unfortunately don't notice or don't even ever think about." With inflation at a 25-year high, Mundry said packaging was being changed "on a scale I've never seen before".

As in many other countries, Poland's statistics office calculates inflation by focusing on the cost of items based on their actual weight rather than the format in which they are sold. If a confectioner cuts the amount of chocolate in each of their bars, this will show up in

the statistics. Yet those cuts may not be spotted by consumers doing their weekly shop.

Consumer goods producers argue that they have little choice but to rely on customers' reluctance not to check familiar items, as their production costs have soared by 50 to 40 per cent on the back of higher inflation.

Pawel Bajorek, regional director of UK consumer goods company Reckitt Benckiser, said: "You cannot just increase prices that much in one shot."

Among its flagship products on sale in Poland, Reckitt is now selling its Finish

dishwasher detergent in batches of 46 tablets, down from 50.

In some cases, soaring production costs are also getting passed on to consumers by using cheaper ingredients, something that is even harder for consumers and statisticians to track.

Mundry has found more palm oil in his butter, less fluoride in his mouthwash and more glucose syrup being substituted for sugar in his confectionery. In almost every case, he said, the change had been so subtle that he had to compare new labels with older ones to identify it.

He mostly shops at Biedronka, one of the biggest supermarket chains in Poland, but he has found similar issues in other stores.

Katarzyna Grabowska, brand development manager at Biedronka, said that altering the weight or content of over-brand products was not "our focus when it comes to looking for savings".

Still, Mundry worries about the quality of what people now buy in inflation-hit Poland. "It's very surprising to me how the ingredients in some products have recently been changed, but unfortunately never for the better," he said.



Cutbacks: a packet of herbal tea sold in Poland now has fewer bags



INTERNATIONAL

# Turkey's Syrian refugees suffer double tragedy in quake zone

War victims' hopes for a safe place to call home have been dashed again

RAYA JALABI — GAZIANTEP

Um Anwar fled Syria for a new life as a refugee in the southern Turkish city of Gaziantep. When, early on Monday last week, the rundown apartment block she now calls home began to shake uncontrollably, she found herself jolted back to her previous life.

"I felt like I was back in Syria in the bombs," said the mother-of-two, who used a pseudonym to protect family still living in the government-held city of Aleppo.

The huge quake that struck south-eastern Turkey and northern Syria was a tragedy for all those affected. But for Turkey's nearly 4m Syrian refugees, who fled civil war in their homeland, the grief was compounded by the familiar sense that their hopes for a safe place to call home had been dashed once again.

Turkey has welcomed more Syrian refugees than any other country, giving them shelter, allowing them to work and providing access to healthcare and education. Turkey says it has spent more

They said the mosque [shelter] had to prioritise Turks. It's always the same story: they hate us

than \$40bn accommodating the new arrivals. But the quake struck at a time of worsening public hostility towards Syrians in Turkey, exacerbated by a cost of living crisis. It also comes two months before a general election set for May that experts say will further politicise their plight. The refugees fear they will be the ones to lose out in the allocation of resources as Ankara faces the massive task of reconstruction.

"All political parties made unrealistic promises to play on the emotions of the constituency and harvest votes by blaming many woes on Syrians," said Omar Kadkoy, an expert on migration at Ankara-based think-tank Tepav.

There are even a few politicians who saw in the aftermath of the earthquake an opportunity for populism. This will fan nativism and further hamper the thinly stretched social cohesion between Turks and Syrians.

Anwar and her children are staying with friends, but other refugees have not been so fortunate. One former neighbouring family of 10 is camped outside their collapsed home, sheltering under a plastic tarpaulin.

It is a scene replicated across the poorest pockets of a city that, only 40 miles from the epicentre, felt the full force of the quake. Days after the disaster, the displaced huddle on roadsides, sleep in cars or shelter in overcrowded mosques. The nearly 500,000 Syrians in

Gaziantep make up more than a fifth of the city's population. They came to escape the brutal war that erupted in 2011, and have painstakingly rebuilt their lives while grappling with the scars of conflict. For many, it was to be a stop on the way to a new life in Europe.

That dream died after Turkey struck a deal with the EU to halve the flow of "irregular" migrants into Europe, where governments were alarmed by the number of refugees fleeing Syria's war.

Instead they stayed, amid rising anti-Syrian sentiment in their new home. Yet for most Syrian refugees, life is better in Turkey than Lebanon or Jordan, which took in people fleeing the war but have mostly denied them the right to work or integrate into society.

Nour lost his parents' home when their building collapsed in central Gaziantep. But dozens of his Turkish neighbours, who had kept vigil for their own missing relatives all week, were by his side when he received the dreaded news that his brother, sister-in-law and six-month-old nephew were found under the rubble. "We share the same excruciating pain," he said.

Many of the Turks caught up in the quake managed to flee to the safety of family or friends in cities further north. But the majority of Syrians in Turkey, without money, cars or a network to call upon, have nowhere to go.

In the aftermath of the disaster Abu Alwaleed has been living out of a two-door van with more than a dozen family members. The 35-year-old is trying to find the money to get his family out of the quake zone but people are charging \$750 to make the 1,140km journey by car to Istanbul, an unimaginable sum for those who have lost everything.

Mona Mahmoud, another of Gaziantep's Syrians, found temporary shelter with a friend outside the city. "I ran out of my house with just the clothes on my back. I have nothing," she said. "I've no idea where I'm going to go or what I'm going to do," she added.

Most of the Syrian refugees would recognise such sentiments. Layal Khleif recounted how she and others were sheltering in a mosque in Akçakale, a border town about 125 miles from Gaziantep, when a group came in and threw them out. "They said the mosque had to prioritise Turks," she said. "It's always the same story: they hate us. They raise our rents, won't give us residency cards and won't even let us into their shops."

The tumultuous events of the past few days have even left her asking whether it was time to pack her bags and return home to Syria. "If the Turks don't want me, maybe I'll just have to go back. My house was bombed out during the war but at least there are people I know. So my family won't starve."

Building standards

## Developers face arrest as death toll exceeds 33,000

ADAM SAMSON — ANKARA  
AYLA JEAN YACKLEY — ANTAKYA, HATAY

Prosecutors have issued arrest warrants for scores of developers as the death toll from last week's earthquake in Turkey and Syria exceeded 33,000 and the security situation in some areas of the disaster zone deteriorated.

Turkish investigators have identified 131 people of interest in a wide-ranging probe into the catastrophe, handing out 115 arrest warrants. Fuat Oktay, vice-president, said in a press conference early yesterday. Several people have already been detained, according to state-run media.

The inquiry, which is being led by almost 150 local prosecutors' offices, is the latest sign of how Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is attempting to address mounting criticism over lax enforcement of building standards, which many seismology and civil engineering experts say led to many higher deaths from last Monday's 7.8 magnitude earthquake.

The disaster comes just three months before elections that analysts expect to be Erdoğan's toughest in his two decades in power.

At least 1mn units have been dam-

aged by the earthquake, and a series of aftershocks that followed, said Murat Kurum, environment and urban planning minister, whose teams have so far secured more than 17,000 buildings.

The death toll in Turkey reached 29,605 yesterday, according to the country's crisis management agency. In Syria, 3,553 have died, data from state media in regime-controlled parts of the country and civil defence forces in rebel-held areas showed.

The security situation in parts of the disaster zone remained fraught yesterday and some rescue teams suspended operations over concerns for their safety. German rescue workers reported that gunfire was heard amid looting and growing tensions in parts of Hatay.

The international response to the incident has also accelerated. Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, met Erdoğan yesterday. Greece's foreign minister, Nikos Dendias, travelled to southern Turkey yesterday along with his Turkish counterpart, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu.

Meanwhile, Germany has confirmed that it would issue visas to victims of the earthquake. There are about 3mn ethnic Turks living in Germany.

Additional reporting by Guy Chazan



I ran out of my house with just the clothes on my back. I have nothing. I've no idea where I'm going to go or what I'm going to do

Devastation: a Syrian couple carry belongings in a trolley in Elbistan, Turkey — Reuters

## FT NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DIPLOMA

Available 100% online  
Financial Times Non-Executive Director Diploma  
Cohort 20: 14th March 2023 | Asia

Develop the skills and knowledge to secure non-executive positions and succeed in them.

The Financial Times Non-Executive Director Diploma is a fully-accredited postgraduate qualification that will improve your board effectiveness and contribution.

Available in Hong Kong, London and 100% online, the 6-month course covers the whole range of skills and knowledge needed for any non-executive role and is delivered through a combination of face-to-face and online learning.

bdp.ft.com  
ftnedasiainfo@ft.com  
+852 5969 1565

FT BOARD DIRECTOR PROGRAMME





INTERNATIONAL

Monetary policy

# Fed's signals on interest rates start to sink in

### Investors accept central bank guide that tightening will continue in near term

JAMES POLITI — WASHINGTON  
KATE DUGUID — NEW YORK

Investors are betting on a longer period of higher interest rates as they begin to accept the message from US Federal Reserve officials that more time is needed to cool inflation in the face of a resilient labour market.

Futures markets show that investors expect rates to peak slightly above 5 per cent in July, with only one interest rate

cut by the year-end. As recently as last week, they had been expecting a peak of about 5 per cent in May, with two rate cuts by the end of 2023.

The shift came after a blockbuster employment report that showed the labour market surged by half a million jobs in January. Investors have for months been betting that a rapid deceleration in inflation would allow the Fed to cut interest rates as soon as the fourth quarter of this year, despite the insistence of central bank officials that they had no plans to do so.

Some market watchers, including Morgan Stanley, had bet that the Fed's 0.25 percentage point increase on Feb-

ruary 1 would be its last. But those expectations have recently deflated as investors' bet on when inflation will be in a year's time have stepped up from about 2.4 per cent before the jobs report to 3.9 per cent as of Friday, according to Refinitiv data. The shift in interest rate expectations takes investors closer to the Fed's official projections that were published in December, although they still underestimate the central bank's expectation that it will not cut interest rates until at least 2024.

This week, senior US monetary policymakers sought to reinforce the Fed's message, insisting they did not expect a quick end to their policy tightening.

Christopher Waller, a Fed governor, said on Wednesday: "Some believe that inflation will come down quite quickly this year. That would be a welcome outcome. But I'm not seeing signals of this kind decline in the economic data, and I am prepared for a longer fight to get inflation down to our target."

Also on Wednesday, John Williams, president of the New York Fed, said: "We need to retain a sufficiently restrictive stance of policy. We're going to need to maintain that for a few years to make sure we get inflation to 2 per cent."

But even though markets are now more aligned with the Fed's projections, some economists worry it is not giving

enough clear guidance about its policy path. After the last Federal Open Market Committee meeting, Jay Powell, Fed chair, struck a more dovish tone before reverting to what seemed to be a more hawkish one this week.

"I think the Fed is taking a big risk by not dictating the narrative," said Gregory Daco, chief economist at EY Parthenon. "The Fed is exposing itself to rapid and significant market pivots."

Tomorrow's release of January's consumer price index will be the latest test of the Fed's resolve as it will provide key evidence of whether the pace of price growth is slowing.

Market questions see Companies

Autonomy threat

# Investors uneasy after Lula's attacks on Brazil's central bank

BRYAN HARRIS — SAO PAULO

Brazilian leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has reignited investors' concerns about his new leftwing administration after repeatedly criticising the president of the country's central bank and questioning whether the institution should remain independent.

"Is this country doing well? Is this country growing? Are people's lives improving? No. So, I want to know what independence was good for," said Lula this month, referring to the official autonomy granted to the central bank in 2021 under the previous administration of Jair Bolsonaro.

"I will wait for this citizen [bank president Roberto Campos Neto] to finish his mandate so we can make an evaluation of what the independent central bank meant."

Lula is irritated by the bank's 3.25 per cent inflation target, saying it is too low for "Brazilian standards". By refusing to cut rates, now at 13.75 per cent, more quickly, Lula believes the bank is harming the wider economy.

"There is no reason for the interest rate to be at 13.75 per cent. Does Campos Neto want to achieve European inflation standards? We have to reach a Brazilian standard. An inflation rate of 4.5 per cent in Brazil, of 4 per cent, is a good thing if the economy is growing," said the 77-year-old in one of his almost daily attacks on the bank this week.

The central bank declined to comment. Elected last year on pledges to tackle poverty and improve Brazilians' quality of life, Lula is under pressure to show results, with forecasts suggesting Latin America's largest economy will this year grow less than 1 per cent.

But his attacks on Campos Neto, a largely respected technocrat, have already sent jitters through the market, with investors revising up inflation expectations.

"To fight inflation we need credibility in the institutions and this threat [from Lula] is really backfiring, as we can see interest rates and inflation expectations rising," said Rafaela Vitoria, chief economist at Interbank.

Alessandra Ribeiro from the Tendências consultancy added: "Because it is the president speaking, he generates a lot of uncertainty. And there are immediate effects. Future interest rates rise, the exchange rate depreciates, and the stock market falls."

Many fear that Lula's administration is resembling that of former leftwing president Dilma Rousseff, who pressed the bank to adopt monetary policy to suit her political agenda and whose mismanagement of the economy was widely seen as a factor behind Brazil's deepest recession from 2014 to 2016.

Lula's rhetoric has been taken as a green light by allies to increase attacks against Campos Neto, with some suggesting the Senate should remove him from office on the grounds of mismanagement. Under the terms of the central bank autonomy law, the bank president's mandate should run until the end of 2024.

Luiz Fernando Figueiredo, a former director of the central bank, said its independence was a "necessity" that granted credibility to its decision-making. "If these criticisms from Lula did not subside, they will impact the economy," he said.

Additional reporting by Carolina Injezza

## White House, 2024 election

# Key Democrat backs Biden for four more years

### Influential congressman rejects concerns about president's age and says he should run again

LAUREN FEDOR AND ALEC RUSSELL  
WASHINGTON

Jim Clyburn, the South Carolina congressman whose endorsement proved pivotal in Joe Biden's pursuit of the White House three years ago, has said he believes the US president deserves a second term, marking the latest sign that national Democrats are rallying around a Biden re-election campaign.

In an interview this week with the Financial Times, the influential member of the Democratic leadership dismissed concerns about the president's age and said he saw "no reason" for Biden not to seek four more years in the White House. Biden has repeatedly signalled that he will run for a second term, but has stopped short of formally launching a re-election campaign.

"I want him to run. I see no reason for him not to run," Clyburn said. "And I am very hopeful that he should run. I think he is deserving of a second term. I do not believe that anybody can do a better job of trying to get us back on track."

Clyburn is widely credited with reviving Biden's faltering presidential campaign in 2020, helping the former vice-president win the South Carolina primary and then sweep the so-called Super Tuesday contests by helping boost African-American turnout.

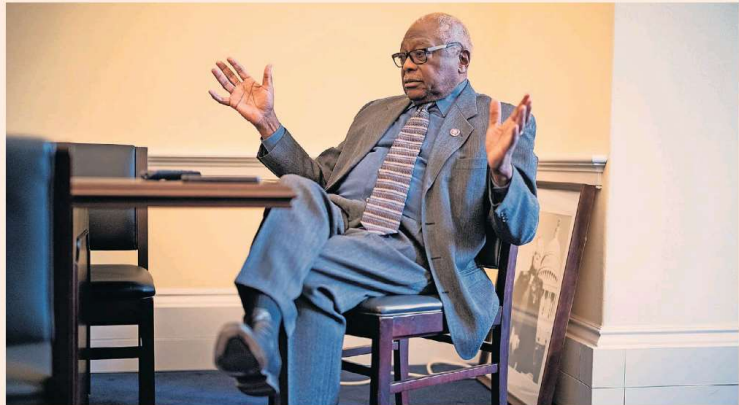
A failure to gain Clyburn's backing for a second term could have thrown Biden's re-election campaign into question. But the Democratic congressman, who is a trusted informal adviser to the president, said he fully backed a Biden re-election bid.

"He still may not do it. But he has got to keep building to that point," said Clyburn, 82, calling Biden "as decent a person as you can have".

Clyburn made headlines shortly before last November's midterm elections when he said at a campaign stop in North Carolina that he would not comment on Biden's re-election prospects until the midterms were over.

But this week Clyburn credited Biden with the Democratic party's strong performance in the elections, where they did better than expected in several key races, holding on to control of the US Senate as they lost the House of Representatives by a narrow margin.

Clyburn's support comes after Biden backed an overhaul of the Democratic



Vital support: Democratic congressman Jim Clyburn credits Joe Biden with the party's strong performance in the midterms

primary schedule that makes South Carolina the first contest in the nation, supplanting New Hampshire and Iowa as a critical battleground.

Clyburn was adamant that he and Biden did not discuss the changes in advance. The Democratic National Committee has since endorsed the plan, sparking outrage among party activists in New Hampshire.

"He wanted South Carolina first. I wanted South Carolina to stay right where it was," Clyburn said, likening the state to a "clean-up" hitter in baseball, traditionally the most powerful hitter on the team who is fourth in the batting order and relied upon for scoring runs.

Asked why he thought Biden had made the move, Clyburn replied: "Because I think he's planning to run again."

Clyburn spoke to the FT on the heels of a State of the Union speech in which Biden clashed with House Republicans and made an impassioned pitch for his economic agenda. At several points in his address, the president went on-script — something Clyburn welcomed.

"I often say to the president that it is one thing to give information. It is something else to engender emotions," Clyburn said. "I think that is what he did."

The congressman brushed aside con-

cerns that Biden, 80, is too old to seek another four years in the White House. If re-elected, Biden would be the oldest president to take the oath of office in US history.

"We all age differently," Clyburn said, noting that he was two years older than the president. "They said the same thing about... Ronald Reagan. How many people said Ronald Reagan was too old? Do you remember in his debate with Walter Mondale, the classic line?"

In a 1984 presidential debate, Reagan, a Republican, responded to a moderator's question by quipping: "I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit, for political purposes, my opponent's youth and inexperience."

Reagan ultimately defeated Mondale, his Democratic opponent, by a landslide, securing more electoral college votes than any presidential candidate in US history.

Clyburn shied away from commenting on Biden's potential Republican challengers for 2024. So far Donald Trump remains the only Republican to formally enter the race. But several polls show Florida governor Ron DeSantis leading Trump among likely Republican voters, and Nikki Haley, the former governor of South Carolina, is

'I want him to run. I think he is deserving of a second term. I do not believe that anybody can do a better job'

expected to launch her campaign in Charleston next week.

Asked about Haley and Tim Scott — the Republican senator from South Carolina who has also been mooted as a possible candidate — Clyburn paused for several seconds, before saying: "I don't mess with Republican politics."

The congressman suggested that the primary calendar change would put Biden in a stronger position to face down any possible challenge from a fellow Democrat, citing the example of Lyndon B Johnson, the Democratic president who abandoned a re-election bid in 1968 after nearly losing the New Hampshire primary to Eugene McCarthy, an antiwar lawmaker.

"Lyndon Johnson... got creamed in New Hampshire and it derailed his presidency, and he quit," Clyburn said. "That is not lost on Joe Biden, and it damn sure is not lost on me."

No Democrat has so far publicly suggested a challenge to Biden for the party's nomination. Asked whether he thought Biden would face any competition from within the party, Clyburn replied: "No, I don't think so."

But he struck a cautionary note, adding: "However, nobody thought anyone would challenge Lyndon Johnson. You can't fly in the face of history."

East Asia

# 'Dark horse' Ueda upends expectations for choice of next Bank of Japan governor

KANA INAGAKI AND LEO LEWIS  
TOKYO

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was expected to pick a continuity candidate to be the Bank of Japan's next governor from a conventional shortlist, as Haruhiko Kuroda prepares to step down after a decade at the helm of the central bank.

Instead, the Japanese leader sent shockwaves across global markets on Friday following reports that he had broken with tradition and picked an outsider to Japan's policy and political establishment: economist Kazuo Ueda.

If the Diet approves Ueda's nomination as expected, it would be the first time in postwar Japan that an academic is appointed central bank chief, a role that had historically rotated between officials from the BoJ and the finance ministry.

Ueda is not a complete stranger to the central bank: he was a board member from 1998 to 2005, and helped introduce forward guidance when the central

bank adopted its zero-interest rate policy in the late 1990s. But the respected monetary policy expert, who has warned against prematurely unwinding Japan's ultra-loose stance, would face the imposing task of steering Asia's most advanced economy towards interest rate normalisation.

Following reports of Ueda's selection, the yen briefly gained 1 per cent against the dollar, while the yield on 10-year Japanese government bonds hit 0.5 per cent — the upper limit of the BoJ's trading band.

A previous report suggested that the government had approached Masayoshi Amamiya, the BoJ's deputy governor who was considered the top candidate for the job. But one of Kishida's advisers had warned against assuming the nomination was a done deal. "There is still the possibility of a dark horse candidate," he said.

Analysts said the secretive process underscored the prime minister's determination to choose a governor who would be able to transcend politics in

tackling the contentious pivot away from a decade of ultra-loose policy.

Kishida's administration had faced strong pressure from the Liberal Democratic faction previously headed by late former prime minister Shinzo Abe to nominate a candidate who would not veer from the "Abenomics" programme that underpinned the BoJ's ultra-easy monetary policy.

According to people familiar with the discussions, Kishida is also expected to nominate Ryuzo Himino, former commissioner of the Financial Services Agency, and Shinichi Uchida, a BoJ executive who has played a central role in shaping Japan's monetary policy, as deputy governors.

The 60-year-old Uchida is considered a star and future governor candidate inside the BoJ, with ties to the global banking community. People close to the central bank said Ueda, 71, would be likely to rely heavily on Uchida in crafting monetary policy.

Hisaoaki Kikuchi, chief equity strategist at Mizho Securities, said that

Ueda, professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo with a PhD in economics from MIT, did not belong to the reflectionist school that favours massive monetary expansion.

"He is a very politically balanced person. The end of quantitative and qualitative easing policy will be sooner than if Amamiya was elected," Kikuchi added.



Kazuo Ueda: wary of prematurely unwinding Japan's ultra-loose stance

Following reports of his selection on Friday, Ueda told reporters that he thought the BoJ's current monetary policy was appropriate.

"For now, I think it is necessary to continue easing measures," he said. "I have been an academic for a long time so I want to make various decisions logically and explain in a clear manner."

Ueda declined a request by the Financial Times to comment further.

Other analysts, however, questioned whether Ueda's selection was a sign of a divisive headhunting process that found few candidates have not led to a sustainable rise in wages and that loose monetary policy was still needed to support an economy and risks of a slowdown outside Japan.

In an interview in July with Nikkei, Ueda cautioned the BoJ against premature tightening of its monetary policy.

But he added that the central bank would need to review its "unprecedented" easing framework in the future: "There is a need for the BoJ to prepare an exit strategy."



**Gathering energy** The green choice now is between using batteries or hydrogen to power electric vehicles **OPINION**

# Companies & Markets

## Deutsche forex investigation finds staff acted in 'bad faith'

- Bank mis-sold derivatives for years
- Clients exposed to extensive risk

OLAF STORBECK — FRANKFURT  
STEPHEN MORRIS — LONDON

A Deutsche Bank probe into the mis-selling of risky foreign exchange derivatives in Spain has found that staff acted disingenuously, exploited flaws in the bank's controls and broke EU rules, according to people with knowledge of the report.

One of the people said employees acted in "bad faith" over years, pushing small and medium sized Spanish companies to buy highly complex foreign exchange derivatives. The products, which were promoted as safe and cheap, were meant to hedge against foreign exchange risks. They generated huge

The products were promoted as safe and cheap and generated huge profits for Deutsche

profits for Deutsche but exposed clients to extensive risk and crippling losses in some cases.

A second person familiar with the probe described some of the Deutsche staff conduct as "very unfortunate". Fewer than 12 people were formally sanctioned by the bank over the misconduct, the people said.

The investigation of the mis-selling — code-named "Project Teal" — was first reported by the Financial Times two years ago and is nearing its conclusion. The bank had paid tens of millions of euros in settlements to affected clients, the people said. It had also tightened internal controls and stopped offering some foreign exchange products to certain client groups.

The bank is still fighting a €500m legal claim by one of Spain's largest hotel

groups in London's high court over the trades, arguing this case was structurally different from others that has settled.

The misconduct, which involved a London desk of Deutsche's investment bank, as well as Spanish operations at its international private unit, spanned several years until 2019.

One of the people familiar with the results of the investigation said that the past lack of awareness of potential misconduct was an odds with the culture the current leadership wanted to promote. Since then, the bank had taken "decisive action", according to another person briefed on the results, replacing large parts of its senior management in Spain as well as some senior investment bankers in London while others had their bonuses cut.

Deutsche Bank told the FT in a statement that it took "appropriate action" after it reviewed "parts of our sales activities in structured FX derivatives", adding that it was "improving our processes and enhancing our controls".

The products in question were types of foreign exchange swaps called targeted accrual redemption notes and forwards. They were pitched by Deutsche as a cheaper way to hedge currency risk. Small companies were told the products were "zero premium" with no initial cost, according to people familiar with the details. In a stable currency market, the derivatives sometimes benefited clients. But if volatility increased and the exchange rate passed a predetermined level, losses could multiply rapidly.

The ECB and German regulator BaFin declined to comment. The Spanish regulator CNMV said it had been conducting some supervisory reviews on the matter but could not comment further. *Additional reporting by Barney Jopson*

## Chatbot choice Investors embrace AI stocks but analysts warn of a bubble in the making



### AI stocks surge on ChatGPT hype



GEORGE STEER — LONDON

Shares in small artificial intelligence groups have soared this year on the back of the hype surrounding ChatGPT and other generative AI models, even as analysts warn of another "speculative" bubble in the making.

Last year marked a breakout year for AI that can produce fluent textual responses to questions, draft poems and stories and generate images on demand. Microsoft hopes to employ the AI used in OpenAI's eerily human sounding ChatGPT chatbot to overturn Google's dominance of the internet search market. Alphabet hopes its own conversational AI service, Bard, will stop users from jumping ship.

Big Tech's embrace of generative AI has sparked frenzied interest among investors. BuzzFeed's stock rose 150 per cent in one day after chief executive Jonah Peretti said "AI inspired content" was appearing on the company's website later this year.

Generative AI technology was showing "all the usual hallmarks of hype: social media echo chambers, exponential venture funding and a polarised media", said analysts at Morgan Stanley. "During our travels around the US last week, ostensibly to discuss decarbonisation and reshoring, conversation regularly turned to 'and what do you make of ChatGPT?'"

US companies offering all manner of AI-related services are reaping the rewards. Shares in SoundHound AI, which specialises in "speech to meaning" technology, have jumped 94 per cent in February alone. Shares in C3.ai and BigBear.ai have shot up 103 per cent and 561 per cent respectively since the start of the year, although both remain well below all-time highs hit during the stock market bull run that began in 2020.

Such groups have quickly become popular with retail investors who have piled into equities this year as global economic forecasts have

improved. Data provider VandaTrack said this week it expected a "continuation of speculative activity" in AI-related stocks should macroeconomic conditions remain favourable.

ChatGPT in particular seems to have caught the public's attention, drawing around 100m monthly active users in January after launching the previous month, according to UBS. "In 20 years following the internet space, we cannot recall a faster ramp in a consumer internet app," the bank said. "It took TikTok nine months after its global launch to add 100m incremental users and it took Instagram 2.5 years."

Even so, some investors burnt by last year's sharp sell-off in once high-flying blockchain and Web3 stocks are wary of betting on the latest fad. Alphabet's shares fell almost 8 per cent after Bard last week produced an ambiguous answer to a question about pictures taken by the James Webb Space Telescope.

## Lawyers' big bonuses fade as fortunes of firms reverse

JOE MILLER — NEW YORK  
KATE BEGLEY — LONDON

Bonuses for associates joining major US and UK law firms, which reached record highs in 2021, have dried up as the legal sector suffers from a sharp decline in dealmaking, according to the industry's largest recruiters.

The six-figure sums paid to junior lawyers as sign-on or retention bonuses had all but disappeared by the end of 2022, said Michelle Fivel, a partner at recruiter Major, Lindsey & Africa, whose company places associates at many of the top 200 international firms. "We are not dealing with a frenzied market like we were in 2021," she said. "Firms then had to do it, they had no choice, because their competitors were doing it and they were under the belief that they were going to lose candidates."

Bonuses reached a peak during 2021, when Kirkland & Ellis, the world's highest-grossing law firm, was offering \$250,000 to mid-level lawyers with job offers elsewhere, according to one recruiter. Another firm offered sign-on bonuses of \$100,000, Fivel said.

Two other top US firms, Paul Hastings and Goodwin Procter, were offering referral bonuses of \$50,000 and \$30,000 respectively to lawyers recommending new associates at that point, amid a sharp rise in M&A activity as big companies came out of lockdown.

But a rise in interest rates has led to a sharp fall in dealmaking, and dozens of job cuts at firms such as Silicon Valley outfit Cooley, Stroock & Stroock & Lavan, Goodwin Procter, Davis Wright Tremaine and Shearman & Sterling.

A survey by the Thomson Reuters Institute, released last month, found that US lawyers were billing fewer hours than they had in decades in the year to the end of November 2022.

Data from Decipher Investigative Intelligence, which provides market insight for law firms, found that the number of associates moving to another firm was down by 14 per cent in 2022 compared with the year before. London-based headhunter Chris Clark, director at Deloitte Search, said that at the height of the frenzy, one UK firm paid \$250,000 to a star associate who was weighing joining a US rival, while top US firms in London were paying sign-on bonuses of up to \$120,000. "The bonuses and salary hikes seen in 2021 have fallen away as the market has cooled, for now," he added.

## Automobiles. Diversification drive

### Saudis make inroads into electric vehicle sector

World's biggest oil exporter pours billions into project to build manufacturing hub

SAMER AL-ATRUSH — DUBAI

For decades, Saudi Arabia has attempted to launch its own car industry with nothing to show for it. It is now trying again — but this time with electric vehicles.

The electric vehicle initiative is part of the kingdom's ambitious diversification drive to wean itself off its reliance on oil income, which is its main revenue source as the world's largest energy exporter. It intends to pour billions into the project to create an electric vehicle manufacturing hub, with the aim of producing 500,000 cars a year by 2030. The US-based Lucid Motors, in which Saudi Arabia acquired a majority stake costing roughly \$2bn, intends to produce about a quarter of that target in the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia hopes the transition to electric will also give the country a better chance of success, as the petrol engine market is extremely difficult to break into because of the dominance of established carmakers in Europe, the US and Japan.

The battery-powered market offered a more level playing field than combustion, said one Saudi official, and would pit the kingdom against other big electric vehicle producers such as China, Germany and the US.

"It's a sector that's already been developed," added Monica Malik, chief economist at Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank. "They [the Saudis] can buy into it and

invest in it rather than build something from scratch. It's gaining traction in global usage and it factors into the energy countries story as well."

There are some doubts over the country's ability to compete against the likes of China with its strong electric vehicle manufacturing base, robust technology, high productivity and cheap labour costs. But electric vehicle manufacturing is planned as an important pillar of the kingdom's diversification drive, which is being overseen by the sovereign wealth fund, the 660bn Public Investment Fund.

The aim of the diversification drive is to expand the local labour force, teach workers new skills and create jobs in the private sector, while attracting foreign direct investment.

The country's broader economic plan includes the creation of the futuristic new city of Neom, a financial centre in Riyadh and tourist resorts.

Electric vehicle production is central to the initiative because the kingdom aims to take advantage of the industry's expected expansion. Electric cars should make up about 60 per cent of vehicles sold annually by 2030, if net-zero targets are to be reached by 2050, the International Energy Agency says.

Key to the Saudi electric vehicle plan is the creation of Ceer, Arabic for drive or go, which the country hopes will produce 170,000 cars a year in partnership with Taiwan's technology group Foxconn and BMW. The first cars are planned to go on sale in 2025 at the affordable end of the market.

PIF has also acquired a majority stake in Lucid Motors, which plans to produce 150,000 cars a year in the kingdom in 2025 and signed contracts with

Hyundai and Chinese electric vehicle group Enovate.

Establishing an electric vehicle industry would substantially cut the kingdom's import bill, said Tarek Fadallah, the chief executive for Nomura Asset Management in the Middle East.

"Transportation accounts for about 15 per cent of the Saudi import bill and is the single largest consumer of foreign currency," he said. "There is a huge incentive to substitute those imports with domestically produced cars."

In addition, the electric initiative fits with Saudi Arabia's target of 30 per cent of all vehicles in Riyadh to be powered by batteries by 2030, while putting it among the world's top five producers.

But there are headwinds, according to Al Bedwell, director of Global Powertrain at LMC Automotive, as chip shortages and high mineral prices needed for batteries threaten development.

He said recessionary forces across the world were likely to constrain the expansion of the electric vehicle sector.



Saudi exhibition booths set in a car made by US EV group Lucid Motors

"By the end of this year, the industry is hoping they will build enough cars, but unfortunately at that point people may not have enough money to buy those cars," he said. "The point at which you could produce an electric vehicle for the same cost as a combustion vehicle was thought to be around 2025, but it's more likely now that it will be towards the end of the decade."

The electric car industry has also been hit by inflation and supply chain bottlenecks of minerals and components that could disrupt Saudi plans.

With this in mind, PIF has launched a company to invest in mining abroad to secure its supply of lithium and other minerals used in batteries. At the same time, Australian battery manufacturer EV Metals is planning a lithium hydroxide train in the kingdom.

For its part, Lucid aims to start the assembly of vehicles in Saudi this year with cars completely built in the country in 2025. The Lucid and Ceer factories will be based in the King Abdullah Economic City, a Red Sea zone built to attract investment and boost the economy, which will act as a hub for the supply chain, according to the city's chief executive Cyril Piat.

"There is a full value chain. There will be a number of suppliers that will be established here," he said. Faisal Sultan, Lucid's managing director for Saudi Arabia, stressed the importance of the government taking the initiative in building a supply chain. "The supply chain is going to be a main thing we're going to go after," he said. "The supply chain doesn't come typically for one OEM [manufacturer]... that's why it's a government-driven initiative rather than OEM driven."

**FT LIVE**

## COMMODITIES GLOBAL SUMMIT

Industry In Transition

20 - 22 March 2023 | In-Person & Digital  
Hôtel Beau-Rivage Palace, Lausanne | #FTCommodities

Meet and hear from 90+ speakers including:

- Alex Sanfelix, Head of Global Trading, Cargill
- Andrea Pescatori, Chief of the Commodities Unit, IMF
- Christine McWilliams, MD, TTS NAM Head Energy Commodities Chemical & Power, Citi
- Nichel Pette, Finance Professor, Peking University & Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment
- Sebastian Barrack, Head of Commodities, Citadel
- Vandita Pant, Chief Commercial Officer, BHP

Register now: [commodities.live.ft.com](https://commodities.live.ft.com)

Scan to register

Founding sponsor: MERRILL LYNCH, GOLD SPONSORS: CARBON CLEAN, CCI, TRAFIGURA, SILVER SPONSORS: ABAXO, AIRCARTON, OXPO, CITADEL, AMPLIFUS LABS, SOCAR, SPENCER STUART, Welcome drinks reception sponsor: Vitrol, Evening nightclub sponsor: Vitrol



# Fertiliser group grows in the shadow of war

OCP benefits from Morocco's phosphate deposits to post record earnings and expand as rivals face soaring energy costs

HEBA SALEH — BENGUERIR

The fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been catastrophic for European nitrogen fertiliser companies. The soaring prices of the natural gas that is their feedstock forced them to cut output more than two-thirds at times last year. The war also disrupted the supply of fertiliser from Russia, the biggest exporter in the world.

But for Morocco's OCP Group, the world's largest phosphate fertiliser company, 2022 brought record earnings thanks to higher prices and profit margins. In the first nine months of last year, operating profit reached \$3.7bn, up from \$2bn for the same period in 2021.

Nitrogen fertiliser is made from natural gas, but phosphate is a mined mineral usually combined with other nutrients to make fertiliser. OCP has exclusive access to the 70 per cent of global phosphate reserves in Morocco. It is one of the five top exporters of fertiliser.

Mostafa Terrab, chair and chief executive and the man credited with transforming the company from a loss-making quasi-state agency exporting mainly phosphate rock to a leading fertiliser manufacturer, told the Financial Times that the world needed more investment in the industry and that prices had been rising even before the war.

"It is due to a structural imbalance between demand and supply," he said. "If you look at the past 20 years there has been very little investment in fertiliser production."

A former telecoms regulator, Terrab was appointed to head OCP in 2006, when it was a minor performer in the market. He spearheaded radical reform, converting it into a joint-stock company in 2008 with the state owning 95 per cent of the shares.

"The phosphate rock trade was going down in volume... and it was not very high margin," said Terrab. "The only growth in that value chain was in the finished fertiliser product. So the strategy was very simple, it was to invest in fertiliser production,



but to do that we needed financing."

The change to a joint-stock company allowed OCP to access international debt markets, with a bond issue to fund a \$10bn capital spending plan. Armed with the new money, in 2012 Terrab set about building an integrated business with big investments in mining and fertiliser production and even a university to support research and development.

The company also recently announced plans to invest \$15bn in renewable energy and "green" hydrogen, produced with renewables. The aim is to be carbon neutral by 2040. By 2021, OCP's fertiliser capacity had quadrupled to 12mn tonnes and revenues were at \$9.4bn, compared with \$2.5bn in 2005. In mid-January, Moody's assigned the

Fertile ground: untreated phosphate at OCP's facility in Western Sahara. Morocco has 70 per cent of the world's phosphate reserves and OCP is one of the top five exporters of fertiliser. Below, a worker inspects granules in Hungary. FILED: GERALD APPROPRIATE IMAGES/REUTERS

company an investment grade credit rating for the first time, of Baa3. It said OCP benefited from trends in demand "driven by a growing global population and reducing arable land". Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparked fears about food security, especially in Africa where many small farmers could no longer afford fertiliser.

Prices have more than tripled since early 2020 and although they have eased in recent months, they remain "at historically elevated levels", according to the World Bank. This had placed crucial fertilisers "out of reach for most [African] farmers, putting the crop cycle and rural stability at risk", said World Bank president, David Malpas in December.

Terrab argues that Africa holds the key to global food security because it has 60 per cent of the world's unused arable land. But currently, he said,

"The strategy was very simple: to invest in fertiliser production, but to do that we needed financing"

Africa did not produce or use enough fertiliser to fulfil its potential.

As well as in Morocco, there were phosphate reserves in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Togo and Senegal, he said. Africa also had potash, another nutrient, and natural gas, he added.

"We [in Africa] should be totally self-sufficient, and even export," he said. "The big opportunities are really in Africa. And that's also if you look at the pent-up demand."

One long-standing hurdle to raising yields in African farms has been low fertiliser use — the continent has the lowest consumption in the world. In 2006, African leaders pledged to increase average use to 50kg per hectare by 2015 up from 7kg, but the target was missed and World Bank figures show consumption was 22.5kg in 2020 compared with a global average of 146kg.

In the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, OCP, which supplies 70 per cent of fertiliser in Africa, gave more than 500,000 tonnes to smallholders in sub-Saharan countries, some of it free, the rest at a discount.

It plans to sell 4mn tonnes, or more than a quarter of its expected output, on the continent in 2023 under a programme that includes training for farmers in co-operation with multilateral donors. Terrab insisted the company's key strategy of developing customised

22.5kg Fertiliser use per hectare in Africa. Global average is 146kg	\$3.7bn OCP's operating profit in the first nine months of last year
---	---

fertilisers, tailored to specific African soils, was the way to cut prices and increase yields.

"It is cheaper to customise because we use less nutrients," he said. "We don't force farmers to buy what they don't need." OCP said its customised products had already increased yields for farmers in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Ghana.

Although only 25 per cent of OCP's sales are in Africa, the company views it as a key growth area and has created a dedicated subsidiary, OCP Africa, and special production units.

OCP started looking south in 2012, at a time when Moroccan businesses sought growth in sub-Saharan states to expand beyond their limited domestic market. The strategy, encouraged by Mohammed VI, the monarch, helped build the kingdom's soft power and influence in a region considered key to its primary foreign policy concern — to shore up international backing for its claim over the disputed territory of Western Sahara.

In 2017, the kingdom rejoined the African Union, 33 years after it had left in anger over the recognition of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, set up by the Polisario Front, which seeks independence. But Terrab insisted OCP was not a tool of foreign policy.

"When we decided to go to Africa as a corporation, we did not have a crystal ball and we did not know that Morocco was going to become interested in rejoining the AU," he said. "But when his majesty embarked on his tours [of African countries], we would have been stupid not to mention or take advantage of the fact that we were already there."

"We [in Africa] should be totally self-sufficient, and even export"



## Sustainable Views

Navigating ESG policy and regulation

The authoritative source on ESG policy and regulation

Sustainable Views helps you navigate through the ever-expanding rules, frameworks and policy decisions shaping the environmental, social and governance space — and affecting business and finance the world over.

With news, analysis, policy tracking and informed comment, readers can mitigate risk and stay ahead of peers on the defining issues of our time.

To request a free trial, scan the QR code or contact our sales team: [enquiries.sustainableviews@ft.com](mailto:enquiries.sustainableviews@ft.com)

A service from the Financial Times

## Airlines Fares set to rise under EU's new carbon rules

**ALICE HANCOCK — BRUSSELS**  
**PHILIP GEORGIADES AND CAMILLA HODGSON — LONDON**

Airline passengers face higher fares under newly strengthened EU rules designed to tackle aviation emissions in a sign that the era of super-low-cost flights may be about to end.

The threat of higher fares comes as carriers put up prices to help them recover from the coronavirus pandemic on the back of renewed demand after the end of travel restrictions.

The EU wants to force carbon-intensive industries to pay more for their pollution with ticket prices rising as much as €10 per return flight because of increased levies on aviation emissions, according to analysts. EU lawmakers have given initial approval to an update of the bloc's carbon pricing rules, forcing industries including aviation to buy enough allowances to cover their pollution under the emissions trading system.

The rules phase out by 2026 the current practice of allowing airlines to obtain a significant proportion of the permits they need for free. The total number of allowances in the system will also fall over time, which analysts expect to drive up prices. Olivier Jankovec, director-general of

airports industry body ACI Europe, told an industry conference that the EU was going through "a major policy reset" that would change "the economics of the sector" and "result in increasing costs for airlines, increasing fares and lower demand".

Airlines for Europe, the lobby group, said that "sustainability legislation such as the EU's... could see flying via EU hubs such as Amsterdam, Paris or Frankfurt becoming about 25 to 20 per cent more expensive in 2035". It said this could lead to up to 17 per cent fewer passengers travelling through EU hubs.

Ryanair boss Michael O'Leary has previously said that rising environ-



Low-cost carrier easyJet has said it is impossible to predict future prices

tal taxes, alongside higher oil prices, meant that the era of "absurdly" cheap fares is over.

easyJet has said it is impossible to predict future prices, but that the industry needed more government support to reach net zero. Ryanair last year reported spending €51mn on credits and said that "in the medium to longer term" it would not be able to "eliminate" the impact of the rising cost of allowances by forward hedging.

The price of allowances in the EU system were trading at close to their all-time highs, near €100 a tonne on Friday. Revenues from the ETS will be put towards schemes to boost the use of sustainable aviation fuels.

Europe's emissions trading system is a flagship element of the EU's plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 55 per cent by 2030, compared with 1990 levels.

Environmental groups said the scheme was an effective way to control carbon emissions. "Carbon pricing is an essential tool for emissions reduction in Europe... it's only right that airlines pay their fair share for emissions," said Jo Dardennes, aviation director at Transport & Environment, an NGO.

Bas Eickhout, a Green MEP, has pushed for free allowances to be phased out as soon as possible, calling them a "fossil fuel subsidy".



COMPANIES & MARKETS

Technology

# Meta delays budgets as more job cuts loom

Employees tell of lack of clarity under Zuckerberg drive to contain costs

HANNAH MURPHY — SAN FRANCISCO  
CRISTINA CRIDDLE — LONDON

Meta has delayed finalising team budgets as the social media company prepares a fresh round of job cuts under Mark Zuckerberg's plan to contain costs in his "year of efficiency".

As a result, staff had complained that "zero work" was being done as managers had been unable to plan their coming workloads, the employees said.

Projects and decisions that usually took days to sign off were taking about a month in some cases, even in priority areas including the metaverse and advertising, those people said.

Instagram and WhatsApp, is planning further rounds of job cuts after dismissing 11,000 employees — about 13 per cent of its headcount — in November.

Three employees said staff were demotivated and demoralised because of the cuts and uncertainty.

Zuckerberg announced earlier this month that the social media company would continue to wrestle with its costs under his new mantra of "the year of efficiency".

Meta's improving outlook at its fourth-quarter results sent shares up 18 per cent, adding \$88bn to the company's market value.

Over the past year, Big Tech stocks, particularly those reliant on advertising dollars, have suffered a dramatic sell-off amid tough macroeconomic conditions and marketers tightening their budgets.

This has led to an industry-wide job cut, as tech bosses concede that they overextended during the coronavirus pandemic's digital boom.

Wall Street investors last year voiced frustration with Meta's finances, including its \$10bn annual investment into the metaverse and bloated headcount, as the economic slowdown began to eat into its earnings.

Despite November's staff reduction, which was the most dramatic cut in Meta's history, further cuts are expected around March. The company was currently going through performance reviews of staff, three current and former employees said.

On an earnings call with analysts last week, Zuckerberg said: "Next, we're working on flattening our org structure and removing some layers in middle management to make decisions faster."

Pharmaceuticals

# Healthcare investing alleged to be a man's world

HANNAH KUCHLER — LONDON

A senior executive at a pharmaceutical company focused on women's health said the sector was chronically under-valued because the investment world is dominated by men.

Susanne Fielder, chief commercial officer of Merck spin-off Organo, said investors often assumed that women's specific health needs were limited to reproductive health, whereas common autoimmune and cardiac conditions could hit women much harder or in different ways.

Investing was still "a bit of a men's world", she told the Financial Times. "I think the fact that most of them are men is not always helpful... We cannot assume that people understand what we mean because they really think it's a niche," she said.

For decades after the Thalidomide scandal, women were excluded from clinical trials in case they were pregnant. In 1995, the US Congress passed a law mandating their inclusion to ensure drugs were tested for their suitability for the whole population.

But both scientific funding bodies and venture capitalists have underinvested in women's health. Organo is the first pharmaceutical company of a significant size to focus on the area.

The lack of attention to women's health means there has been little innovation in treatments for unwanted pregnancies and for problems that can be very debilitating, such as endometriosis — which causes severe period pain — and symptoms of menopause.

All three conditions can hit a woman's ability to participate in the workforce. The US campaign, Women's Health Matters, estimates a \$300m investment in women's health research could yield a \$13bn return in reduced healthcare costs and improved productivity.

Fielder said it was a "no-brainer" for governments to invest in women's health because of the "positive economic impact", pointing to the women's health strategy of the UK's NHS, and the French government's strategy for endometriosis.

Since the spin-off, Organo has done several deals to fill its pipeline with treatments, such as an early stage potential drug for endometriosis, a device used in a hysterectomy, and biosimilars for breast cancer and osteoporosis, which affects far more women than men.

Jessica Federer, managing director of Supernode Ventures, who is raising a \$50m fund to invest in women's health technology, said Organo's dealmaking in the sector should be an example to investors. "Every human on the planet is the product of women's health," she said. "Waiting on male investors to invest in women's health clearly hasn't been working."

Market questions. Week ahead

# Economists predict slowdown in decline of US inflation

How quickly is US inflation receding?

Although US inflation has been trending lower, economists have forecast that in January the decline will have moderated because of recent persistent price pressures in housing and an uptick in the prices of energy and used cars.

Tomorrow's consumer price index report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics is expected to show annual inflation at 6.2 per cent in January, down from 6.5 per cent the previous month, according to an economists' forecast compiled by Bloomberg. That would represent the slowest rate since October 2021, but the smallest decrease in the annual rate since September, as higher petrol prices are expected to have boosted the headline figure.

Core CPI inflation, which strips out the volatile food and energy components, is expected to slow to an annual rate of 5.4 per cent, down from 5.7 per cent in December. High rents will have prevented a bigger drop in core inflation, according to Barclays analysts, in addition to higher prices of used cars.

After rising dramatically at the start of the pandemic because of snarls in the global supply chain, used car prices finally began to drop in recent months. But the most recent reading of the closely watched Manheim used vehicle value index suggests that January could mark a pause in that decline.

Over the longer term, Barclays analysts said they had revised higher their CPI forecasts for the end of 2023 and 2024 because of the continued strength of the US labour market.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported recently that the US added more than half a million jobs in January, roughly triple the number that had been forecast. Kate Duguid

Will UK inflation encourage the Bank of England to slow down?

The UK's January inflation figures on Wednesday will also be watched closely by investors and by the Bank of England as it strives to bring inflation back to its target of 2 per cent.

Economists polled by Reuters expect UK annual inflation to have slowed to a four-month low of 10.2 per cent. That would mark a decline from 10.5 per cent in December.

UK inflation accelerated last year to a peak in October of 11.1 per cent, but has slowed since then on the back of lower energy price growth. Most economists



Forecast: forecast: an uptick in the US inflation in January, data is expected to show tomorrow

forecast it will continue to slow through this year. Sandra Horsfield of Investec expects inflation to have "subsided further" in January because of "lower fuel prices and more intense competition among retailers amid an ongoing easing of supply chain disruptions and squeezed disposable incomes."

But policymakers will also closely monitor services and core inflation to assess the pace of domestically generated price pressures. Analysts expect core inflation, which strips out food and energy, to have slowed to 6.2 per cent in January, from 6.5 per cent in December.

Jobs data released tomorrow will also be scrutinised for signs of an easing of recent labour market tightness. Analysts expect average earnings growth, excluding bonuses, to have accelerated to 6.5 per cent in December, compared with 6.4 per cent in the previous month.

Strong wage growth and higher inflation than expected could call into question the slowdown in the pace of the monetary tightening forecast at the next meeting on March 23. Markets are pricing

in a 0.25 percentage point rise after the bank lifted rates by 0.5 percentage points earlier this month but signalled that it might soon have finished tightening. Valentina Romei

Will the stampede into Chinese equities continue?

Global investors have poured record sums into Chinese equities this year, buying up \$21bn of shares so far in 2023. The release of strong economic data after the lunar new year holiday has spurred investor confidence that China's economy is recovering after zero-Covid restrictions were lifted in December, with the benchmark CSI 500 index rising more than 6.25 per cent year to date.

Analysts say that robust inflows are likely to continue, with US growth expected to slow and retail investors yet to join the fray.

"Emerging markets are going to have a much better decade ahead than the past decade," said Charlie Robertson, global chief economist at Renaissance

Emerging markets are going to have a much better decade ahead than the past decade'

Capital. "Unless you think the US can outperform again in the 2020s as much as it did in the 2010s then emerging markets and China look very interesting for long-term investment."

Markets could also get a further boost from domestic buyers, according to Citigroup. The bank's analysts say that excess household deposits surged to as much as Rmb13tn because of higher savings rates during the Covid-19 pandemic, leaving space for households to put their excess cash into equities.

"Flows could still benefit the financial market if confidence returns and households opt for not only 'revenge spending', but also 'revenge risk-taking'," the analysts said.

But long-term political issues, such as "mounting concerns on the experience of the incoming administration", as well as unfavourable growth figures — the IMF predicts Chinese growth may fall below 4 per cent over the next half decade — may mean China remained out of favour with some investors. Cit added.

Martha Milar

Technology. Handset battle

# Samsung focuses on premium models to tackle sagging smartphone sales

Korean group seeks to gain a competitive edge with latest iteration of the Galaxy brand

SONG JUNG-A — SEOUL

A day after Samsung presented a depressing assessment to investors of the global handset market in 2023, the world's biggest smartphone maker delivered an upbeat, splashy presentation to the media to launch its latest Galaxy-branded phones this month.

The contrasting messages of stagnation and innovation did not illustrate hype or false optimism about the new hardware, according to analysts, but showed Samsung was setting out its stall to maintain market share by focusing on the premium end of the market.

"Amid prolonging geopolitical issues, continued inflation and the continued economic slowdown, we expect the smartphone market to contract in 2023, with the mass market impacted the most," Samsung vice-president Daniel

Araujo said on a fourth-quarter earnings call in Seoul, where the Korean company provided the details behind its lowest quarterly profit in eight years.

On the other side of the world, at the Galaxy launch event in San Francisco, TM Roh, the head of Samsung's mobile business, said: "We intend to focus on the premium segment in developed markets as well as some of the countries where we are seeing solid growth." He added that he had seen a "noticeable shift" to luxury models in developing markets.

Samsung's renewed focus on high-end phones — the new S23 models feature advanced camera improvements and longer battery life — comes as it struggles to compete with lower-cost Chinese rivals in the low to mid-end smartphone market, while premium-focused Apple has outperformed the market with record services revenues in its latest quarter from its software ecosystem.

The South Korean company aims to stay on top and achieve higher average selling prices with the S23 line and other premium phones that have foldable

screens — the new S23Ultra with 1 terabyte of storage retails for more than \$1,600 in the US, before discounts.

The mobile business will also be dropping some mid-priced models to cope better with the increasingly polarised market. Samsung also lifted the lid last week on its renewed interest in mixed-reality offerings for smartphone users, in a partnership with Google and Qualcomm.

"Samsung is focusing on the high end not only because of the better margins but also because it is more resilient than the rest of the market," said Bryan Ma, an analyst at IDC.

He noted that global smartphone shipments fell 11 per cent overall last year to 1.2bn units, the lowest since 2015, yet smartphones costing more than \$600 still slipped about 1 per cent.

Despite economic headwinds, Samsung was able to increase its market share from 20 per cent in 2021 to 21.6 per cent last year, with its Chinese rival's sales suffering from Covid-19 lockdowns, according to IDC.

Samsung hopes it can regain lost ground in China, where its market share

has fallen to about 1 per cent, by launching a specially designed foldable model for Chinese consumers this year.

The company has enjoyed early success in this high-margin niche, although competition in the relatively new segment is expected to intensify with Chinese rivals entering the market.

"Sales of foldable phones keep increasing, but the growth rate seems slower than expected, as not many con-



The new S23 models have improved cameras and longer battery life

sumers are attracted to its allure relative to high prices," said Park Kang-ho, an analyst at Daishin Securities.

Peter Lee, a Citigroup analyst, expects the industry's next move will probably be the development of two folds for a wider screen. "The Chinese smartphone makers will launch foldable phones to compete and there will be differentiation in screen sizes, but Samsung does have a technology advantage over them," he said.

In addition, Samsung is now trying to re-enter the extended reality (XR) market, covering virtual (VR) and augmented (AR) or mixed-reality products and software. The market is being seen increasingly as a long-term growth driver to counteract falling smartphone sales.

Roh was joined on stage in San Francisco by executives from Google and Qualcomm, companies it had worked with in the XR space about a decade ago. They did not reveal a concrete project but are likely to develop a mixed-reality device together, with Apple expected to launch its own XR headset this year.

Samsung first entered the market in

2014, launching its Gear VR headset in partnership with Oculus VR. It dropped the product in 2018 due to a lack of demand. However, with its strengths in chips and displays, it has been courted by many tech firms to collaborate on mixed-reality devices.

Meta chief Mark Zuckerberg visited Samsung's research centre in Silicon Valley in October to discuss a potential tie-up with executives, while Samsung Display is planning to build production facilities this year for so-called micro OLEDs, a next-generation display technology suitable for XR devices.

Despite growing interest, VR has yet to produce a mass-market product, with analysts blaming the inconveniences of wearing the hardware and a lack of

"The questions are still whether the hardware and software are good enough and whether people will have a strong enough appetite for those devices," said CW Chung, an analyst at Nomura. "If the pandemic had continued, they would have needed them more, but after it the reaping, people want to spend more time outside."



MARKET DATA

WORLD MARKETS AT A GLANCE

Change during previous day's trading (%)

Table with columns for Index, Change, and Index, Change. Includes S&P 500 (-0.21%), Nasdaq Composite (-1.07%), Dow Jones Ind. (0.19%), FTSE 100 (-0.36%), FTSE Euro1st 300 (-0.87%), Nikkei (0.31%), Hang Seng (-2.01%), FTSE All-World (-0.64%), \$ per € (-0.743%), \$ per £ (-0.740%), ¥ per \$ (0.290%), Oil Brent \$ per Bbl (0.96%), Gold \$ per oz (0.34%).

Stock market movements over last 30 days, with the FTSE All-World in the same currency as a comparison



Table with columns for Country, Index, Latest, Previous. Lists various regional indices and their values.

EUROPE

Jan 11 - Feb 10



Table with columns for Country, Index, Latest, Previous. Lists European indices like FTSE Euro1st 300, FTSE MIB, CAC 40, etc.

ASIA

Jan 11 - Feb 10



Table with columns for Country, Index, Latest, Previous. Lists Asian indices like Hang Seng, Nikkei 225, Shanghai Composite, etc.

UK MARKET WINNERS AND LOSERS

FTSE 100

Table with columns for Name, % Change, Price. Lists top performing and underperforming UK stocks.

FT.COM/MARKETS/DATA

FT.COM/MARKETS/DATA

STOCK MARKET: BIGGEST MOVERS

Table with columns for Name, % Change, Price. Lists significant movers in various markets.

UK MARKET WINNERS AND LOSERS

Table with columns for Name, % Change, Price. Lists top and bottom performing UK stocks.

FTSE 100 SUMMARY

Table with columns for Name, % Change, Price. Lists key components of the FTSE 100 index.

FTSE SECTORS: LEADERS & LAGGARDS

Table with columns for Sector, % Change, Price. Lists performance of various market sectors.

FTSE 100 SUMMARY

Table with columns for Name, % Change, Price. Lists key components of the FTSE 100 index.

CURRENCIES

Table with columns for Currency, % Change, Price. Lists exchange rates for major currencies.

FTSE GLOBAL EQUITY INDEXES

Table with columns for Index, % Change, Price. Lists global equity indices.

FTSE WILSHIRE 500 INDEX SERIES

Table with columns for Index, % Change, Price. Lists Wilshire 500 index series.

FTSE GLOBAL EQUITY INDEXES

Table with columns for Index, % Change, Price. Lists global equity indices.

UK STOCK MARKET TRADING DATA

Table with columns for Index, % Change, Price. Lists UK stock market trading data.

FTSE ACTUARY SHARE INDICES

Table with columns for Index, % Change, Price. Lists actuarial share indices.

FTSE 100 SUMMARY

Table with columns for Name, % Change, Price. Lists key components of the FTSE 100 index.

FTSE SECTORS: LEADERS & LAGGARDS

Table with columns for Sector, % Change, Price. Lists performance of various market sectors.

FTSE 100 SUMMARY

Table with columns for Name, % Change, Price. Lists key components of the FTSE 100 index.

FTSE SECTORS: LEADERS & LAGGARDS

Table with columns for Sector, % Change, Price. Lists performance of various market sectors.

UK COMPANY RESULTS

Table with columns for Company, Revenue, Profit. Lists UK company financial results.

UK RECENT EQUITY ISSUES

Table with columns for Company, Issue Size, Price. Lists recent equity issues in the UK.

UK STOCK MARKET TRADING DATA

Table with columns for Index, % Change, Price. Lists UK stock market trading data.

UK COMPANY RESULTS

Table with columns for Company, Revenue, Profit. Lists UK company financial results.

UK RECENT EQUITY ISSUES

Table with columns for Company, Issue Size, Price. Lists recent equity issues in the UK.

FTSE 100: The FTSE 100 index is a market capitalisation-weighted index of the 100 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange Group's main market. It is the most widely followed of the FTSE's indices and is used as a benchmark for many investment funds. The index is calculated as the total market value of the 100 companies divided by the number of shares in issue. The index is rebalanced annually in November. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index.

FTSE 500: The FTSE 500 index is a market capitalisation-weighted index of the 500 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange Group's main market. It is the most widely followed of the FTSE's indices and is used as a benchmark for many investment funds. The index is calculated as the total market value of the 500 companies divided by the number of shares in issue. The index is rebalanced annually in November. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index.

FTSE 1000: The FTSE 1000 index is a market capitalisation-weighted index of the 1000 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange Group's main market. It is the most widely followed of the FTSE's indices and is used as a benchmark for many investment funds. The index is calculated as the total market value of the 1000 companies divided by the number of shares in issue. The index is rebalanced annually in November. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index.

FTSE 2500: The FTSE 2500 index is a market capitalisation-weighted index of the 2500 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange Group's main market. It is the most widely followed of the FTSE's indices and is used as a benchmark for many investment funds. The index is calculated as the total market value of the 2500 companies divided by the number of shares in issue. The index is rebalanced annually in November. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index.

FTSE 5000: The FTSE 5000 index is a market capitalisation-weighted index of the 5000 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange Group's main market. It is the most widely followed of the FTSE's indices and is used as a benchmark for many investment funds. The index is calculated as the total market value of the 5000 companies divided by the number of shares in issue. The index is rebalanced annually in November. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index.

FTSE 10000: The FTSE 10000 index is a market capitalisation-weighted index of the 10000 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange Group's main market. It is the most widely followed of the FTSE's indices and is used as a benchmark for many investment funds. The index is calculated as the total market value of the 10000 companies divided by the number of shares in issue. The index is rebalanced annually in November. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index.

FTSE 20000: The FTSE 20000 index is a market capitalisation-weighted index of the 20000 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange Group's main market. It is the most widely followed of the FTSE's indices and is used as a benchmark for many investment funds. The index is calculated as the total market value of the 20000 companies divided by the number of shares in issue. The index is rebalanced annually in November. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index.

FTSE 50000: The FTSE 50000 index is a market capitalisation-weighted index of the 50000 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange Group's main market. It is the most widely followed of the FTSE's indices and is used as a benchmark for many investment funds. The index is calculated as the total market value of the 50000 companies divided by the number of shares in issue. The index is rebalanced annually in November. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index.

FTSE 100000: The FTSE 100000 index is a market capitalisation-weighted index of the 100000 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange Group's main market. It is the most widely followed of the FTSE's indices and is used as a benchmark for many investment funds. The index is calculated as the total market value of the 100000 companies divided by the number of shares in issue. The index is rebalanced annually in November. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index.

FTSE 200000: The FTSE 200000 index is a market capitalisation-weighted index of the 200000 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange Group's main market. It is the most widely followed of the FTSE's indices and is used as a benchmark for many investment funds. The index is calculated as the total market value of the 200000 companies divided by the number of shares in issue. The index is rebalanced annually in November. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index.

FTSE 500000: The FTSE 500000 index is a market capitalisation-weighted index of the 500000 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange Group's main market. It is the most widely followed of the FTSE's indices and is used as a benchmark for many investment funds. The index is calculated as the total market value of the 500000 companies divided by the number of shares in issue. The index is rebalanced annually in November. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index.

FTSE 1000000: The FTSE 1000000 index is a market capitalisation-weighted index of the 1000000 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange Group's main market. It is the most widely followed of the FTSE's indices and is used as a benchmark for many investment funds. The index is calculated as the total market value of the 1000000 companies divided by the number of shares in issue. The index is rebalanced annually in November. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index. The index is subject to fluctuations in value due to changes in the price of the constituent companies' shares and to changes in the composition of the index.



MARKET DATA

FT500: THE WORLD'S LARGEST COMPANIES

Table with columns: Company, Price, Change, % Change, Dividend Yield, P/E Ratio, Market Cap. Lists top 500 global companies including Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, etc.

FT100: THE UK'S LARGEST COMPANIES

Table with columns: Company, Price, Change, % Change, Dividend Yield, P/E Ratio, Market Cap. Lists top 100 UK companies including AstraZeneca, HSBC, BP, etc.

ASX 200: AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST COMPANIES

Table with columns: Company, Price, Change, % Change, Dividend Yield, P/E Ratio, Market Cap. Lists top 200 Australian companies including BHP, Rio Tinto, Westpac, etc.

FTSE 40: EUROPE'S LARGEST COMPANIES

Table with columns: Company, Price, Change, % Change, Dividend Yield, P/E Ratio, Market Cap. Lists top 40 European companies including ASML, SAP, Siemens, etc.

FTSE 100: TOP 20

Table with columns: Company, Price, Change, % Change, Dividend Yield, P/E Ratio, Market Cap. Lists the top 20 UK companies.

FTSE 100: BOTTOM 20

Table with columns: Company, Price, Change, % Change, Dividend Yield, P/E Ratio, Market Cap. Lists the bottom 20 UK companies.

BONDS: HIGH YIELD & EMERGING MARKET

Table with columns: Issuer, Maturity, Coupon, Yield, Spread, Rating. Lists high yield and emerging market bonds.

BONDS: GLOBAL INVESTMENT GRADE

Table with columns: Issuer, Maturity, Coupon, Yield, Spread, Rating. Lists global investment grade bonds.

INTEREST RATES: LOCAL

Table with columns: Instrument, Rate, Change, Maturity. Lists local interest rates for various instruments.

BOND INDICES

Table with columns: Index Name, Value, Change, % Change. Lists various bond indices.

COMMODITIES

Table with columns: Commodity, Price, Change, % Change. Lists prices for various commodities like oil, gold, etc.

GLTS: UK CASH MARKET

Table with columns: Maturity, Rate, Change, % Change. Lists UK cash market rates.

INTEREST RATES: MARKET

Table with columns: Instrument, Rate, Change, Maturity. Lists market interest rates.

BONDS: EUROPEAN

Table with columns: Issuer, Maturity, Coupon, Yield, Spread, Rating. Lists European bonds.

BONDS: US TREASURY

Table with columns: Maturity, Yield, Spread, Rating. Lists US Treasury bonds.

GLTS: US FTSE ACTUARIES INDEX

Table with columns: Maturity, Rate, Change, % Change. Lists US FTSE Actuarial Index rates.

COMMODITIES

Table with columns: Commodity, Price, Change, % Change. Lists commodity prices.

BONDS: EUROPEAN

Table with columns: Issuer, Maturity, Coupon, Yield, Spread, Rating. Lists European bonds.

BONDS: US TREASURY

Table with columns: Maturity, Yield, Spread, Rating. Lists US Treasury bonds.

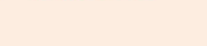
GLTS: US FTSE ACTUARIES INDEX

Table with columns: Maturity, Rate, Change, % Change. Lists US FTSE Actuarial Index rates.

Equity Research from Morningstar

Make confident investment decisions powered by our independent global insights and a consistent methodology across our qualitative and quantitative universes.

Get your next investing idea from one of the world's largest independent analyst teams at morningstar.com/products/research/institutional



Tradedeb

Data provided by Morningstar



MANAGED FUNDS SERVICE

SUMMARY

FT.COM/FUNDS

Table with columns: Winners - Europe ex-UK Equity, Losers - Europe ex-UK Equity, Morningstar Star Ratings, Global Broad Category Group - Commodities. Includes Fund Name, 1Y Return, 3Y Return, 5Y Return, and other performance metrics.

Advertising Feature

Mcnroy & Wood Portfolios. Includes a line chart showing performance from Jan 2020 to Feb 2023. Text: 'McNroy & Wood Portfolios Limited'.

Performance



Weights - As of 31/12/2022



Top 10 Holdings - As of 31/12/2022

Table with columns: Sector, Weighting, Cat Avg, Holdings, Sector, Weighting. Lists top 10 holdings with their respective sectors and weightings.

Information provided is courtesy of Morningstar. While the Financial Times has every reason to ensure that the information is truthfully reported, the information is not verified by the Financial Times and therefore it accepts no liability for any loss which may arise relating to the information. Past performance is no guarantee of future results.

Algebra Investments. Logo and text: 'Algebra Investments'.

Blue Whale Growth Fund. Logo and text: 'BLUE WHALE GROWTH FUND'.

Candriam. Logo and text: 'CANDRIAM'.

Dodge & Cox. Logo and text: 'DODGE & COX WORLDWIDE FUNDS'.

Fidelity. Logo and text: 'Fidelity INTERNATIONAL'.

Fundsmith Equity Fund. Logo and text: 'Fundsmith Equity Fund'.

Algebra Investments. Logo and text: 'Algebra Investments'.

Brooks Macdonald. Logo and text: 'BROOKS MACDONALD'.

Chartered Asset Management Plc. Logo and text: 'Chartered Asset Management Plc'.

Dragon Capital. Logo and text: 'DRAGON CAPITAL'.

CP Global Asset Management. Logo and text: 'CP Global Asset Management'.

Guinness Global Investors. Logo and text: 'GUINNESS GLOBAL INVESTORS'.

The Artemis European Fund Limited. Logo and text: 'ARTEMIS'.

Brown Advisory. Logo and text: 'Brown Advisory'.

CP Global Asset Management Plc. Logo and text: 'CP Global Asset Management Plc'.

EdenTree. Logo and text: 'edenTree investment management'.

EdenTree. Logo and text: 'edenTree investment management'.

EdenTree. Logo and text: 'edenTree investment management'.

Artemis. Logo and text: 'ARTEMIS The Dynasty Investor'.

Brown Advisory. Logo and text: 'Brown Advisory'.

CP Global Asset Management Plc. Logo and text: 'CP Global Asset Management Plc'.

EdenTree. Logo and text: 'edenTree investment management'.

EdenTree. Logo and text: 'edenTree investment management'.

EdenTree. Logo and text: 'edenTree investment management'.

Ashmore. Logo and text: 'Ashmore'.

CP Global Asset Management Plc. Logo and text: 'CP Global Asset Management Plc'.

DWS. Logo and text: 'DWS'.

EdenTree. Logo and text: 'edenTree investment management'.

EdenTree. Logo and text: 'edenTree investment management'.

EdenTree. Logo and text: 'edenTree investment management'.

Ashmore. Logo and text: 'Ashmore'.

CP Global Asset Management Plc. Logo and text: 'CP Global Asset Management Plc'.

DWS. Logo and text: 'DWS'.

EdenTree. Logo and text: 'edenTree investment management'.

EdenTree. Logo and text: 'edenTree investment management'.

EdenTree. Logo and text: 'edenTree investment management'.







WORK & CAREERS

Is there such a thing as too much pay?



Anjali Raval Management

As the UK entered a cost of living crisis in recent months, private equity headhunter Sila Kolossa had a surreal conversation with a client about his salary. "He told me £1m was not enough," she said, sounding aghast, noting that this figure excluded his bonus. "I mean, what do I even do with that?" While the private equity industry is a particular beast where even £1m may be considered mere pennies for some executives (Blackstone chief executive Steve Schwarzman took home \$1.1bn in income in 2021), the incident highlighted an issue facing many chief executives: how do you manage the pay and expectations of the highest earners? The problem is especially acute at a time when the cost of living is escalating and companies are prioritising making life easier for those with the lowest salaries. With many UK public sector workers taking strike action this winter, after years of effective pay cuts, an easy response may be to tell the highest earners to get a grip. Yet bosses say they are facing a real dilemma. Their highest earners are often the most senior people, the biggest revenue generators and longest serving employees, who have helped foster growth at their companies. They are demanding even greater pay.

Tight labour markets and a rush to secure top talent have helped their cause, as managers calculate that finding new people to replace senior staff with institutional knowledge would only cost more money and take more time. An endless pot of cash could placate everyone. Really means making compromises. So what should a manager keep in mind when dealing with their highest earners? The first point is that some of the highest paid individuals probably do deserve pay rises. Those associated with the long-term growth of the company are important and need to be recognised as such. Martin Reeves, chair of the BCG Henderson Institute, a think-tank linked to the consultancy, researched business resilience by looking at the competitive performance of all public companies across a 50-year period. In periods of turbulence, particularly as recessionary pressures take hold, there might be a bias towards a short-term focus and penny pinching. But competitive gains, Reeves says, come from those companies which focus on the next set of growth priorities. And while not every high earner is essential, companies must protect those individuals associated with its future growth through "active retention

measures", says Reeves, which can include remuneration. This could take the form of one-off bonuses, a higher salary, long-term incentive plans and other ways to financially reward staff. The second point is that retaining high earners is not always about the money. CEOs can be more imaginative and use other levers available to show a person's value. Individual recognition can come in many forms – a bigger role, a seat at the decision-making table or a clearer career path. A positive company culture and attractive working conditions should be another way to entice colleagues. Uniting behind a shared company vision, more flexible working arrangements and greater ownership over one's own time are perks that money can't buy. But don't then shoot yourself in the foot by doing stupid things. Outsize payouts at the top when a company has cut jobs elsewhere, made huge losses, or embroiled itself in a scandal – or if there is very little leeway to help those at the lowest end of the pay structure – will mean senior managers automatically become a target of worker ire and negative press. Finally, pay attention to the differential between the highest and lowest paid. While the pay of chief

executives always seems to be in focus, in this environment the top band of earners should all watch out. This is a reflection of corporate culture and it affects the motivation of a significant part of the workforce, says Georg Wernicke, who conducts research on strategy and business policy at HEC Paris business school. "You want to pay the highest earners a sufficient amount to incentivise them to steer the company through difficult times but also enough that you can retain them as staff. But you'll also be pressured by unions, the public, and the media to pay them something that's fair, particularly if you're cutting the workforce," he said. As workers push for greater transparency on pay, the issue of the differential will only become more important. Wernicke added: "There is room for the top earners to be humble." If an executive team is highly motivated by pay, chances are business leaders and boards will always be battling that frontier and it could be something innate to the culture of a particular company. If it is no longer working, it is something that needs to be dealt with structurally and change has to start at the top.

anjl.raval@f.com

Psychological safety

The art of encouraging teams to be more open

Constant managerial effort is needed to build a 'fearless' organisation that has candid employees, writes Andrew Hill



It is said to be the secret to finding and nurturing new talent at one of the world's biggest record companies. It is the key to encouraging a sovereign wealth fund's asset managers to make more contrarian bets. It is a central plank in a multinational bank's policy of inclusion and belonging. "Psychological safety" – ending, or at least reducing, interpersonal fear in teams and increasing candour – has become a mantra for many executives seeking an edge over rivals in innovation, performance, and staff attraction and retention.

But it can be a short step from today's organisational phenomenon to yesterday's management fad. Intensifying interest in psychological safety has come with a chaser of scepticism and concern. Even its best-known advocate, Harvard Business School's Amy Edmondson, says she fears her original findings are sometimes being "watered down" and "used to mean anything". Edmondson stumbled over the concept as a doctoral student in the 1990s, studying the impact of teamwork on medical errors. Surveys found a strong correlation between error rates and team effectiveness. Contrary to her prediction, though, better hospital teams seemed to be making more mistakes than weaker ones. Further research confirmed good teams in fact reported more errors because they talked more openly about mistakes. The positive effects of psychological safety held well beyond healthcare, further studies found.

Wider interest was ignited by a 2016 New York Times article about a separate study at Google that found psychological safety was easily the most important ingredient in the technology company's best teams. Edmondson's 2018 book, *The Fearless Organization*, added further fuel. The pandemic and the parallel focus on staff wellbeing drove the idea deeper into the corporate vocabulary. As Edmondson acknowledges, other academics had previously identified the importance of open dialogue within teams. Elements of the idea were also present already in high-performing organisations. In manufacturing, Toyota had its Andon cord, which any worker could pull to halt the vehicle production line and deal with a problem. In aviation, crew resource management had cut aircraft crashes by reducing deference and stimulating more openness in cockpit communication.

Tom Geraghty, founder of Psych Safety, which aims to disseminate work and advice on the topic, points to the direct link to traditional health and safety policies, which have moved from a "safety first" approach, trying to prevent things going wrong, to a "Safety II" quest to make more things go right,

Intensifying interest in psychological safety has come with a chaser of scepticism and concern. Below Harvard Business School's Amy Edmondson stumbled over the concept as a doctoral student in the 1990s. FT Magazine, Organisation, Getty Images/Photo via iStock



more often. Error prevention is only one way psychological safety helps improve performance, according to fans. Nicolai Tangen, chief executive of Norway's sovereign wealth fund Norges Bank Investment Management, uses the concept to make fund managers feel bolder about taking more risk, for instance. Psychological safety is a core part of a new training programme Warner Music is rolling out to its 1,500 people managers. Members of its all-important A&R (artist and repertoire) teams, for example, are encouraged to offer frank feedback about each other's hits and flops, a process known as "retrospectives" or "retro-ing".

Tanu Kapilashrami, group head of human resources at Standard Chartered, describes psychological safety as a "key enabler" of inclusion and belonging across the banking group. Edmondson says the pandemic encouraged interest in her research. It also uncovered dysfunction, even in teams that seemed to have a healthy working environment. At one US healthcare system, the pandemic "exposed some tensions and potential resentments" about who was sent home and who was not. Hospital staff reassigned to unfamiliar roles during the emergency found that "when you suddenly really had to learn something new... it was hard to ask for help".

The emphasis on staff wellbeing in lockdown also reinforced a common misperception that psychological safety involves creating a "safe space". Edmondson says that in a climate of candid feedback, people sometimes ask, "How can anything that hurts me or causes me pain in any way [be good]?" But true psychological safety involves being "unafraid to disagree with the boss and point out others' mistakes because we care more about the customer, the patient,

the quality of the work, than about our ego in the moment". Sharyn Clarkson-Kent, head of learning and development at Abri, a UK housing association, has found that the 200 managers who have been going through training in psychological safety are happy to speak up. But they remain wary about hurting others' feelings. "We're a kind and caring organisation with kind and caring colleagues," she says. "Sometimes that can lead us to not want to upset people and not challenge as much as we should".

Scott Chambers, managing partner of consultancy Carus Change, which advises companies on applying Edmondson's insights, says that far from forming a comfort zone, "Once you create psychological safety, it becomes a lot less comfortable because people are

have "high-quality conversations without causing unnecessary harm and without stepping into traps that you were completely unaware of". Critics believe the concept is often misapplied. Executive coach and leadership development consultant Paul Berry, of Human Performance Science, says many leaders are implementing a "sanitised version of feedback" which is "banal and non-threatening" to their own position. He also wonders whether psychological safety is "unequivalently desirable in all contexts".

Even leaders committed to the idea, such as Tangen, admit it was hard to hear direct criticism at first, "but you quickly realise that constructive feedback shows that you truly care for people". Psychological safety "isn't a panacea for people to be able to say what they are thinking without consequences", says Jo Daly, responsible for learning and development at Warner Music. "It's about understanding that we have a responsibility to listen to one another, to identify truths and speak them well but speak them kindly".

All agree achieving the goal requires constant managerial attention. Kapilashrami monitors how psychological safety works in practice, drawing on data from employee surveys. She looks, for instance, at the number of anonymous complaints lodged by StanChart staff and asks, "Does that mean people feel empowered [to complain] but don't have the confidence to say things to their leader?" As for Edmondson, she sometimes sounds disconcerted at how this one element of her wider work on good teams has taken hold. Other factors are crucial, too, she says, such as motivation, good learning strategies and the balance of advocacy and inquiry that leads to better conversations. "Part of my angst... is I always think of this [psychological safety] as just one little thing," she says. "It's an important thing but it isn't a silver bullet."

Book review

How economics can solve problems, big and small

Philosophy professor Erik Angner argues that the discipline can shed light on significant global challenges. By Tej Parikh

At a time of information overload, Erik Angner offers a fitting reminder of how economics can help structure our critical thinking on matters more familiar with it. *How Economics Can Save the World* is a refreshing exploration of the subject's growing application. For newcomers it will offer a clear guide into how economic reasoning can filter through noise and identify solutions for problems, big and small. Economics has sustained its share of bad publicity. Broadside against experts by politicians, criticisms over incorrect forecasts, and some economists' dogmatic attachment to outdated theories have all undermined faith in the subject. Indeed, a 2019 UK survey found economists were among the least trusted professionals in the country. Meanwhile, the abundance of clickbait and partial analysis promoted by social media and some news organisations, has only added to confusion around certain issues.

Angner, a professor of practical philosophy at Stockholm University, concedes the need for economics to be less insular, better communicated, clearer about how values – welfare and justice, for instance – factor into its analysis, and more open to diversity. Yet by walking the reader through how branches of economics can illuminate humanity's greatest challenges, such as reaching net zero carbon emissions, and how valuable it can be in our daily struggles, he is able to demystify the subject and reassess that improving everyone's economic literacy is crucial.

The author argues that the core experimental tools of economics – such as randomised control trials and empirical analysis – distinguishes it as an original way of problem-solving. It is the consistent application of these tools to public policy that makes economics distinct from psychology and sociology. Through a series of case studies, Angner outlines how these instruments help identify what is at the heart of various economic and social issues and then how they can isolate, test and justify certain actions.

Most effectively, through engaging examples, he highlights an "economic way of thinking", tackling

problems through heuristic devices. He goes through concepts such as rational choice theory, which make the subject's logic more accessible. This is important as some are put off by the discipline's reputation for being overly mathematical.

Angner also applies microeconomic theory to shed light on global challenges. This includes an investigation into the efficacy of direct cash transfers in alleviating poverty, and the role of carbon taxes in fixing climate change. There is a neat defence of the power of markets, drawing on Alvin Roth's work on market design to support kidney exchange. His research has helped thousands to get lifesaving transplants through a system which matches donors and patients.

Between the heavier topics, Angner explores more unconventional applications of economic thinking, leaning on the use of behavioural

HOW ECONOMICS CAN SAVE THE WORLD: Simple Ideas to Solve Our Biggest Problems

'How Economics Can Save the World: Simple Ideas to Solve Our Biggest Problems' by Erik Angner, Penguin Business, £20, 288 pages

science and approaches centring on the role of beliefs, preferences and values. This includes an entertaining chapter on how to change norms and bad behaviour, linking to game theory. Considerable space is also devoted to challenging our own cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias, and how not to be overconfident. Angner's call for "epistemic humility" – a realisation our knowledge is always incomplete, and may require revision in light of new evidence – is a reflection of his overall message that economics is at its core a way of critical thinking.

The book offers readers hope that a more rational, balanced and considered public debate is within reach, providing the insights of economics are more widely understood.

The author is the FT's economics leader writer



WORK & CAREERS

The Henry Mance Interview

# 'The McKinseys and the Deloittes have no expertise in the areas that they're advising in'

MARIANA MAZZUCATO

The economist argues that consultants are hobbling the state's ability to perform the role of economic motor



Charlie Bibby/FT

The theory is simple. When organisations face challenges, they bring in high-flying, high-octane outsiders with specialist skills and new ideas. Although the outsiders cost a lot, they don't stay long and they're more than paid for their way by improving efficiency. No one ever got fired for hiring McKinsey.

The reality has long been more complex. What do these outsiders – strategy consultants, such as the 'Big Three' of McKinsey, Bain and Boston Consulting Group – really know? Critics say their ideas are often ones that the hiring organisation has already thought of. There are some complete disasters, such as McKinsey's work promoting opioids. Yet consultants, supposedly brought in for short projects, never seem to leave.

If Mariana Mazzucato were afraid of controversy, she might leave this debate alone. But Mazzucato, a fast-talking, 54-year-old economist at University College London, leans into intellectual combat.

For the past decade, she has waged a sometimes lonely battle to rehabilitate the state's reputation as an economic motor. Her new book, *The Big Con*, written with Rosie Collington, argues that consultants are hobbling governments' ability to perform that role. In her office, she says: "For me, the big wake-up call was Brexit [preparations], because [consultants] were everywhere." In 2019-20 the British government spent nearly £1bn on strategy and other consultants. Mazzucato and Collington's critique also includes the Big Four accounting firms, such as Deloitte, and outsourcing companies, which carry out chunks of the state's core functions.

The Big Con of the book's title is not a crime; it's a confidence trick. Consultants are a therapist who has their client in therapy forever obviously isn't a very good therapist

cies and outsourcers, Mazzucato argues, know less than they claim, cost more than they seem to, and prevent the public sector developing in-house capabilities. "We're not against consultants. The problem is when an industry [has] no incentive to get government to be independent. A therapist who has their client in therapy forever obviously isn't a very good therapist." Consultants are not "neutral" about the role of the state, either, Mazzucato argues, citing their private sector work. They promoted slimming the state after 2008.

On both sides of the Atlantic, advocates of state action like Mazzucato are in the ascendancy. But she worries there is still an unwillingness to invest in the bureaucracy itself. "The state is back, if you look at the figures." The EU has a C2n recovery plan. Mazzucato despairs that, in Italy, even under "a great leader" like Mario Draghi, the plan for EU funds was guided by McKinsey. The US spent \$2tn in Covid aid. "It's going to be wasted if we don't know how to govern that."

Born in Italy, raised in the US, Mazzucato has lived in the UK for 22 years. She is charismatic and media-savvy. Before we meet, I receive an email instructing me to refer to her as a professor, not an economist. I assume this is a status game, but she laughs it off as a point of principle. "I'm proud to be an academic."

Mazzucato's work has pushed back against post-financial crisis austerity, and the theory that the private sector knows best. "For the past 50 years, the Chicago school kind of economics, new public management, public choice theory has in some way reduced our faith in what government can do." Government was "there at best to fix market failures".

Her 2013 book *The Entrepreneurial State* detailed how governments had historically done much more, seeding technologies, including the internet and electric cars. Although she places herself on the centre-left, her ideas have appealed to those on both the left and right. Mazzucato worked with Scotland's first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, to set up the Scottish National Investment Bank. She missed going to Davos this year because she was due to fly to Buenos Aires to work with its premier Mia Mottley, and had to juggle childcare with her husband. She has four children with Carlo Cresto-Dina, an "artsy-fartsy" film producer whose latest film, *Le Pupille*, is nominated for an Oscar.

To highlight the risk of consultants, Mazzucato goes back to the Apollo space programme, where Nasa's director of procurement in the 1960s said the agency was at risk of being "captured by brochuremanship". In recent times, Covid has been a bonanza for consultants: the UK paid Deloitte £1m a day for its work on testing and contact tracing.

In 2020 Theodore Agnew, then a UK government minister, complained that the reliance on consultants "infantilises the civil service by depriving our brightest people of opportunities to work on some of the most challenging, fulfilling and crunchy issues". But his proposed in-house government consultancy has been abandoned, because it struggled to match the range of external consultants, Mazzucato describes that as "a tragic" step, suggesting that Whitehall departments aren't committed to reducing their spending on consultants.

The difficulty in criticising consultants, Mazzucato describes that as "a tragic" step, suggesting that Whitehall departments aren't committed to reducing their spending on consultants. The difficulty in criticising consultants, Mazzucato describes that as "a tragic" step, suggesting that Whitehall departments aren't committed to reducing their spending on consultants. I suggest, is that evidence is elusive. Consultants' work is often opaque, and feeds into broader processes. French parliamentarians criticised McKinsey for its role in the country's sluggish vaccine rollout. But how do we know that things wouldn't have been even worse without the firm? "These are private companies, the McKinseys and the Deloittes, that have no expertise in the areas that they're advising in."

*The Big Con* covers HealthCare.gov, Barack Obama's stumbling healthcare

On the spot

**Do you support Nasa going back to the Moon?** I support Nasa getting back its mission-oriented policies and not simply thinking it's there to de-risk Elon Musk.

**Do you support the strikes in the UK?** Yes.

**Your best critic?** David Willetts [a former UK higher education minister].

**Did you consider leaving the UK after Brexit?** It's less dynamic, I wouldn't have moved here now. But I can't think of any better place to live than London.

portal, which involved more than 55 contractors. An official report blamed a federal agency for failing to oversee the contractors; Mazzucato argues the very complexity of subcontracting would have defeated anyone. But can this debate go beyond competing anecdotes of consultants' incompetence and civil service incompetence?

Equally, the idea that consultants' net zero proposals are shaped by their commercial contracts is plausible, but hard to prove. Mazzucato says what she wants is more disclosure of the firms' interests. She wants contracting to stop being the "default response", and for governments to look to public research institutions where possible.

Her own unit at UCL does consulting work. "The main difference is that our goal is to make that government entity independent. We don't want that second contract." The calls keep on coming in: "Just yesterday the deputy prime minister of Spain got in touch because they have their own scandal now with consulting companies," she says as an aside. You can see how her fluency and confidence would appeal to lost politicians.

What does Mazzucato think of Keir Starmer's vision of the state? In a speech last month, the Labour leader spoke of investing in "national missions" – her

'How do you revive the civil service? Change the remit of government. We need to make it cool'

own language. But he also said he would be "more relaxed about bringing in the expertise of public and private".

"That's a problem," she says. The question is not to be relaxed about the balance of private and public, it is: "How do you get ambitious?" She praises the BBC, "one of the only organisations that has thought about things like public value", and how public investment can catalyse private investment.

"My recommendation to Labour is to not fall into the trap of public versus private, and when we talk about public, [to always do so] with a warning... Starmer needs to step up the narrative on what [they] can do together – sharing risks and rewards – versus how one should facilitate and de-risk the deal."

The EU's Green New Deal, for example, can't be done "using old tools". A cost-benefit analysis of the Moon landings would have grounded the crew, she says. "If we applied today's criteria, there would have been no justification for trying." The Apollo missions helped bring it left to the companies. She applauds the French government for public investment "dismisses" the possibility of such positive spillovers.

Governments must learn how to get good value for their investments. The US's Chips Act, for example, should have more conditions in its loans and grants. "Giveaways are a bad use of public money," Mazzucato cites Germany, where state bank loans to steelmakers were conditional on lowering material inputs, but with the exact way of achieving it left to the companies. She applauds the French government for making Covid support to Air France and Renault conditional on reducing carbon emissions, while the Bank of England simply "gave" easy jet a £600m loan.

The civil service can't match the pay or training that private consultancies provide. But if it took more responsibility, and paid a little better, it might attract the brightest graduates. "You can have a creative and dynamic civil service," says Mazzucato. "By design, we're making it much more interesting to work in the Google, the Goldman Sachs. How do you revive the civil service? It's not by the Dominic Cummings 'we need geeks in government'.

It's by changing the remit of government. We need to make it really cool."

I wonder if voters' scepticism of a stronger public sector will linger, because they fear there is no money left. Mazzucato blasts back: "Money comes out of the woodwork for wars. Has anyone ever said we can't go to Afghanistan, we can't fight world war two, we can't go to Ukraine because there's no money?"

When we care about stuff, we create money, especially in countries with their own sovereign currency." Austerity often creates its own costs, she argues, citing the closure of youth clubs in her neighbourhood in London. For a moment, she is breathless, ideological, relentless. Then she steps back and tries to appeal to the widest possible audience: "It's not about big government or small government. It's about the how."



**Level up by branching out with an online MBA for just \$23K.**

Learn more at [onlinemba.illinois.edu](https://onlinemba.illinois.edu)

**Gies College of Business**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



ARTS

# New blood from Laurel Canyon

POP

Weyes Blood  
Roundhouse, London  
★★★★

Ludovic Hunter-Tilney

The singer-songwriter scene that emerged in bohemian California in the 1970s has become an object of fascination and idealisation half a century later. Former hippy enclaves such as Laurel Canyon in Los Angeles are treated as dreamy utopias where the grooves are forever easy and the melodies always sweet. The cult of the Canyon has its pantheon of gods, such as Joni Mitchell and Harry Nilsson, and its high priests, such as Lana Del Rey and Father John Misty. It invokes the fantasy of an analogue paradise amid the marketised hustle of the modern digitised world.

Weyes Blood is among the best of the Canyonite revivalists. Real name Natalie Mering, she is an LA-based singer-songwriter whose latest album *And in the Darkness, Hearts Aglow* was among last year's most acclaimed records. She opened her London show with its first track, "It's Not Just Me, It's Everybody".

The music, played by a four-strong band, has a warm thrum, rising and falling with the measured rhythm of a melody. Mering sings in a resonant alto voice that seems to hold something in reserve, a nicely enigmatic register. Holding a microphone and wearing a chic white caped dress and matching 1960s boots, she resembled an angelic singer-songwriter materialising amid the heat and marijuana haze of a vanished Californian idyll.

For the purposes of the gig, this imaginary haze was elucidated by a busily puffing smoke machine. Too busy for Mering's liking, it turned out. "No more fog," she appealed after the second song in her set, the richly burnished soft-rocker "Children of the Empire". The supposed excess of dry ice became a running gag in her patter, which lent it



Weyes Blood – real name Natalie Mering – on stage at the Roundhouse

the feel of a stage routine. But it also illustrated the difficulty of turning her impeccably styled recordings into live performance.

Like its similarly acclaimed predecessor, 2019's *Titanic Rising*, Mering's new album delights in old-fashioned studio sophistication. Each sound is carefully shaped, from the rich cadence of a piano chord to the sense of the close-miked vocalist's proximity as she

sings. It creates the illusion of intimacy, an analogue-era remedy for the themes of digital alienation in her songs. The yearned-for utopia embedded in her music is the product of recording artifice.

At the Roundhouse, Mering was alive to the challenge of transposing her work into a concert setting. She spoke drolly between songs, a more impish presence than her records allow space for her to be. Her playfulness was also expressed by kitschy stage moves, such as exaggerated prom-queen twirls and jolly Busby Berkeley kicks. For the big climax to "Hearts Aglow", she flung herself to her knees, arm outstretched with full rock-star dramatics.

The subversive elements in her music, its political edge, were highlighted. Specially composed visuals by the polemical filmmaker Adam Curtis were shown during "God Turn Me into a Flower", a rapid montage of film clips showing a crazed world of greed, pleasure, violence and resistance.

Meanwhile, Mering sang in a powerfully hymnal way about reflections and truth, with no trace of irony in her voice. The finale, "A Given Thing", was an entrancing piano ballad about love and the cosmos, an easily mocked Laurel Canyon vision of how life should be refashioned for present times.

weyesblood.com

ARTS ONLINE

**Burt Bacharach obituary**  
Ludovic Hunter-Tilney celebrates the great songwriter, who has died aged 94

ft.com/arts

CLASSICAL

Joshua Bell: Lang Lang  
Kennedy Center, Washington, DC  
★★★★

Clemency Burton-Hill

On an unseasonably temperate evening in Washington, DC – the sort of evening when you could almost hear the cherry buds stirring *con brio* – Indiana-born violinist Joshua Bell strolled on to the stage at the Kennedy Center, not far from the excruciatingly divided heart of American power, and reminded us that all is not lost: in life, in politics, in art and definitely not in the music we generally call "classical".

Bell was joined by Peter Dugan, the multitalented 52-year-old pianist, Philadelphia native and host of NPR's beloved *From the Top*. What followed was a first-class American recital executed with flair, nuance and technical prowess; a proper joy to behold.

Their repertoire was not exactly radical, brimful as it was of the romantic European gems in which Bell has always excelled: Beethoven's exuberant Violin Sonata No 1, composed in the final years of the 18th century, via glorious sonatas from Robert Schumann and César Franck, to Ernest Bloch's moving "Nigun" from his *Basel Shem Suite*, composed in 1924. It was an unashamed celebration of a golden era of violin playing.

Bell even inadvertently implied this when introducing the second of their two encores, Bloch, as he reminded us, studied violin with Eugene Ysaÿe – the "biggest rock star of the violin, when violinists were rock stars". Ysaÿe, who was taught by Henryk Wieniawski, composer of the encore, in turn taught Josef Gingold, who went on to teach a young... Joshua Bell. He hurriedly clarified, "Not to be putting myself in any way in that line!"

Presenting this very familiar music – even Clara Schumann's Romance No 1, their first encore, is now programmed with some regularity – with such breathtaking excellence, Bell and Dugan were able to cast these pieces into new relief. No wonder the standing ovation was instantaneous, the

atmosphere as warm inside the hall as the breeze rolling off the Potomac outside.

The music of Robert Schumann also provided the opener in an earlier solo recital in the same hall. As politicians and lawmakers up the road argued with each other about the newly dented Chinese spy balloon, Chinese pianist Lang Lang seemed to quietly – and not undiplomatically – moot the idea that other things with the power to transcend national boundaries were available, if we cared to listen. After the short but musically rich Arabeske in C major, the rest of his programme was comprised of JS Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

Lang Lang, whose personal circumstances seem to have engendered a new maturity in his playing – last year he turned 40 and became a father – is still a dazzling and fascinating musician. Some of his more curious interpretive decisions, especially in his



Dazzling: pianist Lang Lang

tempi, dynamics and rubato, worked, some did not. I had my reservations about the wisdom of performing that particular repertoire, in that space. But the power of Lang Lang's presence is immense and multi-dimensional; I would argue that it almost doesn't matter if the particulars of his Quodlibet, for example, were lost on some. (The Kennedy Center concert hall was crawling with very young fans.)

Maybe his encores, both of which came from Disney movies – Stephen Hough's gorgeous arrangement of "Feed the Birds" from *Mary Poppins*, and "Reflection" from *Mulan* – were enough.

kennedy-center.org



Joshua Bell played with flair and technical prowess



## PUTIN'S WAR ON UKRAINE: ONE YEAR ON

How and when will it end?

23 February | 13:00-14:00 GMT | Webinar | Exclusive for FT subscribers

As Vladimir Putin's brutal war to subdue Ukraine enters its second year, join **Financial Times** correspondents and special guests for a subscriber-only webinar as they debate how and when the war might end.

Expert speakers include:



**Andriy Zagorodnyuk**  
Former Ukraine Defence Minister & Distinguished Fellow Eurasia Centre, Atlantic Council, Chairman Centre for Defence Strategies



**Ekaterina Schumann**  
Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow Robert Bosch Academy, Berlin



**Sergey Aleksashenko**  
Former Deputy Governor Central Bank of Russia; Independent Consultant Washington DC



**Christopher Miller**  
Ukraine Correspondent Financial Times



**Ben Hall**  
Europe Editor Financial Times



Register for free and put your question to our expert panel [ukraine.live.ft.com](https://ukraine.live.ft.com)

## Where women have space for growth

PODCASTS  
Fiona Sturges



In the accompanying blurb, *Why Women Grow* lets us know it is not a series about gardening, at least not in the conventional sense. If you want to know how to grow a prize-winning carrot, or the best way to deadhead your roses, this is not the podcast for you. Instead, it looks at the practice of gardening through a feminist lens. It is hosted by the journalist and author Alice Vincent, who talks to guests about their relationships with nature and coaxes from them profound reflections on heritage, identity, memory and the yearning for a different way of life.

The best part is that it is recorded outdoors. Podcasting is a medium traditionally created in small, heavily soundproofed spaces, so there is something invigorating about having the sounds of the outside world piped into your ears. The opening episode features a conversation with Claire Ratnon, a writer based in East Sussex who grows her own fruit and veg and who gives Vincent a tour of her plot. In the background, we can hear her chickens and the sound of trees whispering in the wind.

Before moving to the country, Ratnon lived in Hackney, east London, and in New York. She reveals her delight at now living in a place where she finally

has space to grow things, and her parallel discomfort as a black woman in an overwhelmingly white rural area. "I'm quite conspicuous and have definitely walked with the story that to be a black woman in the rural was incongruous," she says.

Reflecting on her relationship with the land, Ratnon says her role is "to encourage and enable thriving. It isn't about domination and it isn't about imposing yourself upon the land in order to extract something from it... Your presence there has to give more than it takes."

In the second episode, against a backdrop of buzzing insects and bird song, Vincent talks to Sarah Raven, a former doctor who now runs a garden nursery in Ferch Hill, East Sussex, and who, as the daughter of a botanist, was brought up in a gardening family. Asked why she grows, Raven says: "I'm

somebody who just needs to be connected not just to the season but to the day in the season and the hour in the day. Growing is the most creative thing that you can possibly do."

It's no accident that the series arrives as the days are getting longer and we are seeing the first green shoots of spring. These rich and intimate conversations offer new perspectives on our interactions with nature and encourage us to find wonder in our green spaces.

Now is also a good time to revisit nature writer Melissa Harrison's terrifically therapeutic series *The Stubborn Light of Things*, which she made during the 2020 pandemic and where she documented the passing seasons through walks around her Suffolk village.

anchor:ft.alice-vincent4  
melissaharrison.co.uk/podcast



Alice Vincent, centre, in conversation with Claire Ratnon, right



FT BIG READ. SPORT

The top English clubs unleashed an onslaught of spending on new players in a sign of growing financial dominance. Many in the sport believe they are starting to resemble a de facto European super league.

By Josh Noble and Sam Agini

# From English football to real Super League

Almost two years ago, a dozen elite football clubs proposed a breakaway European Super League. The objective was to establish one single league competition that would boast a large number of the world's very best players — and could grab a significant part of the sport's multimillion-dollar revenues.

The plan failed — victim of a furious revolt by fans and by many of the clubs left outside. Over the past two weeks, the same goal has been on its way to being accomplished — albeit in a very different form. After an onslaught of spending on new players by its leading clubs, many in the game are now wondering if the English Premier League has become a de facto super league, where superior financial muscle is leaving the rest of European football behind.

During a frantic January transfer window in Europe, English clubs spent €830m, almost double the previous record. Chelsea alone spent more than all the top-tier clubs in Italy, Spain, Germany and France combined, a sign of the Premier League's increasing financial dominance over the world's most popular sport. Of the top 10 biggest spenders in Europe this season, all but one play in England.

The perception in some European leagues that the top English clubs have enjoyed an unfair advantage thanks to years of light-touch regulation was bolstered when the Premier League quietly posted a notice on its website last Monday, accusing Manchester City, the current English champions, of over 100 breaches of the league's financial rules.

The accusations — the result of a four-year investigation — cover a period of more than a decade, starting soon after the club was bought by a member of the Abu Dhabi royal family in 2008. City, now the wealthiest club in the world, denies any wrongdoing.

For the league, the charges against City illustrate how seriously it takes the idea that clubs should not be allowed to just buy success. But for those who see English football as a haven from financial regulations, the belated action against City together with the lavish January transfer spending appeared to confirm their suspicions.

Javier Tebas, chief of Spain's La Liga, accused the Premier League of allowing its wealthy club owners — from Middle Eastern petrostates to US private equity billionaires — to weather "barbaric" losses, which put the health of the broader game at risk by driving up costs for everyone else.

"It is quite dangerous that the [transfer] markets are being inflated, and that is happening in recent years," he said. "That can jeopardise the sustainability of European football."

Ironically, the architects of the European Super League have highlighted the widening gap between English football and everyone else in an effort to rally support for their plans. A presentation put to clubs last week by A22 — a sports marketing company that continues to lobby for a breakaway competition — included a slide titled: Premier League has become the Super League.

Others outside Europe's top five leagues see the Premier League as simply the most extreme example of far broader inequalities in football where the biggest clubs get bigger and the rest get smaller.

"The system in European football is broken. It may not be broken in England for the time being, but even there it will lead to something which is unsustainable," says Dariusz Mioduski, president of Polish team Legia Warsaw. "England is just at the top of the pyramid, and it's making the problem most visible, but it's the same situation in Italy, Spain, France and Germany."

### A 50-year makeover

English football wasn't always the glitzy global entertainment spectacle it is today. The 1980s were blighted by fatal events such as the Hillsborough stadium disaster. The response was a major overhaul of infrastructure, bringing in all-seater stadiums just as pay TV was gaining traction.

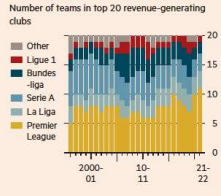
In 1992, the top clubs then decided to break away from the existing system by forming the Premier League, aided by cash from BSkyB, then Rupert Murdoch's UK satellite television venture.

Barney Francis, executive vice-president at sports and media company IMG and former managing director of Sky Sports, says rising broadcast revenues stemmed from building better

### The Premier League's financial power dwarfs Europe's other big leagues



### Premier League takeover



### Championship clubs' revenues and wage costs



stadiums, recruiting the best managers and players, and creating a "much more exportable product".

"If you're a broadcaster in the Far East or Latin America, the Premier League became head and shoulders above everybody else," he says. "It's where the big managers are, the best players, it's where the football is super competitive."

England's top division has enjoyed rapid growth outside its home market, with international rights now accounting for more than half its income. Its total income this season is expected to top €4.6bn for the first time, according to Deloitte, thanks in part to a new multi-billion-dollar US TV deal.

That strong financial performance has made Premier League clubs rich. Deloitte's league table of the 20 wealthiest teams in Europe now includes 11 English clubs, up from seven a decade ago. Club owners include a Serbian-born media tycoon, a Greek shipping magnate, the Saudi sovereign wealth fund and several American billionaires, making ownership something of a

Manchester City owner Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The club is the wealthiest in the world

status symbol for the mega-rich. "Owning shares in IT companies and property in Manhattan is not as sexy as owning a Premier League club," says Francis.

Without billionaire benefactors, other leagues in Europe have chosen to implement stricter financial standards. The idea is to stop teams living beyond their means in pursuit of glory. In Spain, La Liga's economic controls require clubs to submit regular updates on revenues, which the league then uses to calculate pre-determined spending limits.

Last summer, those rules briefly barred FC Barcelona from registering new signings, before the Catalan club used asset sales to boost its balance sheet. The league has since tweaked its controls to make that harder to do.

In Germany, ownership of clubs is guarded by the so-called 50+1 rule, which prevents outside investors from acquiring controlling stakes in most teams, leaving clubs to rely on their income. The Bundesliga says these rules help protect German football from "reckless owners".

Italy and France do not have such tight rules on ownership and have attracted investment from US billionaires, sovereign wealth funds and Chinese conglomerates. But those two leagues also have the lowest broadcast revenues of Europe's top five leagues, leaving most teams in both countries a long way behind English clubs. Only one French team and three Italian clubs make it into the top 30 clubs by revenue, according to Deloitte.

As a result, many of the game's superstars gravitate towards English clubs. "It's the Chelsea spent millions on young players in January, including Mykhailo Mudryk, and World Cup winner Enzo Fernández, centre, who cost more than €200m. Right, Manchester City's Erling Haaland and Jack Grealish, who cost a combined £160m. Manchester City is accused of breaching Premier League financial fair play rules

same as any industry — the way you attract talent is by offering generous compensation. The Premier League just happens to have the most money," says Jake Cohen, sports lawyer at Mackrell Solicitors. "I don't see that changing."

### A Covid revenue shock

While the financial disparity between the Premier League and the rest of football has been growing for years, Covid-19 added rocket fuel. The onset of the pandemic put a sudden stop to football across Europe and left many clubs exposed to a dangerous revenue shock. With stadiums closed and some broadcast deals in limbo, many clubs scrambled for cash to keep the lights on.

The Spanish and French leagues turned to private equity, with both taking a cash infusion from CVC Partners in return for a future share of broadcast rights. Italy and Germany both explored doing the same, but ultimately opted against it. Uefa estimates Covid resulted in losses of €7bn for European football.

Thanks to its far larger broadcast deals and wealthy team owners, the Premier League was better placed to ride the Covid wave, with clubs in the division making an average profit of €25m in 2021, according to Uefa, while most teams in Europe reported losses.

But for those further down England's football pyramid, Covid proved a far more serious blow.

The race to get into the Premier League is so competitive that the finances of many clubs just in one division below have become perilous. The average wage to revenue ratio of the teams in the

second tier reached 125 per cent in the 2020-21 season, according to Deloitte. While Covid exacerbated the problem, teams in the league had spent more on wages than they generated in income for the previous three seasons.

Rick Parry was the first chief executive of the Premier League after helping to orchestrate its formation in 1992. But now, as chair of the English Football League — the body representing the country's lower leagues — he warns that the gulf between the Premier League and the rest of football is widening.

"Now is the time for a reset and a proper rethink," he said. "There's huge amounts of money flowing in at the top, it's not flowing downwards."

The EFL argues that the "root cause" of "boom and bust" in football is the "enormous wage inequality" between its clubs and the Premier League. The price of standing still — never mind reaching the top flight — is that owners cover the losses that arise from wages exceeding revenues. When the money dries up, clubs are at risk of collapse.

Accounts for the Premier League that revenue was £45.7m in fiscal 1995, versus £34m for the EFL. The Premier League's accounts for the year ended July 2021 showed revenues of nearly £3.2bn. The EFL's £1.89m. The EFL says the solution is for the two leagues to "pool" their TV rights to sell them together and agree on a 75:25 split and recalibrate prize money based on league position to narrow the gap between the top of the Championship and the bottom of the top flight. The Premier League says it is on course to contribute £1.6bn to the rest of English

'Now is the time for a proper rethink. There's huge amounts of money flowing in at the top, it's not flowing downwards'



'The Premier League just happens to have the most money. I don't see that changing'



football across the three seasons to 2024-25. Despite pressure to find a solution from the UK government, which is set to establish an independent regulator for the game, the EFL says talks with the Premier League are at an early stage.

"There is clearly an issue there around redistribution where the game is struggling to get to a point where it's agreed a solution among itself," says sports consultant Dan Jones. "If the game really can't sort itself out, then the regulator will dictate to them."

### Success breeds success

When faced with accusations of fostering unfairness elsewhere in football, the Premier League can point to its huge commercial success — which it says has been built on years of investment in stadium infrastructure, a savvy approach to media rights and a commitment to keeping the league exciting.

In the past 10 years, five different teams have won the English title: in Germany, Bayern Munich is gunning for its 11th championship in a row. Broadcast revenues are more evenly split among teams in the Premier League than any other division in Europe.

English clubs also argue that the claims about their growing dominance are not borne out by the results in pancontinental competitions.

In the past decade, Premier League teams have won the Champions League twice — the same number of European titles as Bayern Munich. Meanwhile, Real Madrid have won it five times. Over the same period, English sides have won the Europa League three times, one fewer than Spain's Sevilla.

A list of the biggest transfers in football history also highlights the enduring might of some of Europe's biggest teams. The most expensive player in history, Brazilian forward Neymar, joined Qatari-owned Paris Saint-Germain for €222m back in the summer of 2017. Chelsea's €107m move for Enzo Fernández last month, a record in England, only just makes the top five.

PSG also have the highest wage bill in football, spending €729m last season on star players such as Lionel Messi, according to Football Benchmark, while Real Madrid sit second with €630m. Late last year, Uefa reached settlements with eight clubs for failing to meet certain financial requirements — none of them was from the Premier League.

January's enormous transfer spending was buoyed by Chelsea's desire to rapidly revamp its squad, and is not likely to be matched in future windows. This summer, the flow of money in the transfer market is likely to depend on potential moves for a handful of top stars, including Kylian Mbappé and Jude Bellingham — neither of whom currently play in England. Should one or both of them move to Spain, the pendulum of spending between leagues could swing back to Europe quickly.

The biggest potential threat to the financial firepower of English clubs could come from regulation at home. The Premier League's move against Manchester City last week served as a sharp reminder that leagues and governing bodies have the power to step in where they see foul play.

City has been referred to an independent commission, which will have the power to deduct points, impose fines or expel it from the league if it is found guilty.

However, the Premier League's decision came after a four-year probe and many expect the expensive legal battle between football's richest league and its wealthiest club to drag on, perhaps for years.

The club has fought some of these allegations before against Uefa, which banned City from competing in the Champions League for two years — a decision that was overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

Some legal experts believe that ultimately it will fall on governing bodies to try to level the playing field. "Uefa has the means there to try to create a more stable environment in football," said Carlos Hurtado, sports lawyer at Baker McKenzie. "If you have strong governance and financial controls, you're creating the perfect environment for the sport to develop, investors to come in and create more value for the business. When you do that you're going to have more competitive football."



# The FT View



FINANCIAL TIMES  
Without fear and without favour

## A UK government revamp in search of a strategy

Reorganisation of business, energy and technology is the latest in a long line

The UK business department has gone through more reincarnations than Doctor Who, the science fiction character who is a product of Britain's highly successful creative industry. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is now reorganising it again – hiving off parts of what was the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and merging the business ramp with the international trade department. There are arguments in favour of the revamp. Unless it quickly produces results, however, it risks going down as just another restructuring in search of a strategy. It is easy to be sceptical of another reshuffle of departmental nameplates. "Machinery of government" changes act up time and money; the Institute for Government has suggested the latest

shake-up could cost over £100m. These issues are even more pertinent with a government behind in the polls and facing an election in less than two years, after which a Labour administration might rejig things again. The changes make some sense, nonetheless. For energy security and net zero policy to be in its own department with a seat at the Cabinet table is logical. The need to safeguard energy supplies since Russia's war on Ukraine must be carefully balanced with the imperative to accelerate the transition to renewables. While energy sources and costs are key issues for businesses – an argument for having them in one department – many felt energy had become predominant within BEIS, squeezing out the business focus.

There is a case, too, for putting science, innovation and technology under one roof – incorporating the digital portfolio that previously sat with culture, media and sport. True, rather than creating a new ministry, most of the science community might have preferred the govern-

ment to patch up differences so it could rejoin the EU's €95bn Horizon Europe programme. But the government believes for the UK to prosper it needs to be a leader in technology and at the forefront of the green transition. Rather than ram these together with business into a super-department, Sunak has chosen to give each its own champion.

Some parts of business are fretting, though, over the erosion of the "one-stop shop" approach. Technologies including quantum, AI and semi-conductors, as well as life sciences and green technologies, are now the domain of the science department. Business more widely comes under Kemi Badenoch's business and trade ministry, but many companies worry the business portfolio has been hollowed out after the first David Cameron premiership.

There are broader concerns, too. Wherever departmental dividing lines are drawn, the key to success will be how well they work together, but coordination has not been a strong point

For energy security and net zero policy to be in its own department with a seat at the Cabinet table is logical

of Conservative administrations since 2010. And above all, companies prize continuity – of policy, funding and personnel. Since BEIS was created seven years ago, there have been seven secretaries of state responsible for business.

Change has occurred so frequently that business has become dubious over whether the reshuffles amount to much. Any underlying sense of vision has also been dissipated. Premier Theresa May's 2017 industrial strategy was ditched by Kwasi Kwarteng as business secretary in 2021, though his department kept the idea in its name. Now that, too, is gone.

The key test will be whether the rejig delivers more coherent policy. Businesses want to see a sensible approach to reform of EU-derived regulations, signs of more support for enterprise and entrepreneurship, and a sound strategy for growth. Above all, they want the full clout of Downing Street and the Treasury put behind the latest changes. With an election looming, Sunak has limited time to show his structure can deliver.

### Opinion Geopolitics

## It's time to cut Russia out of the global financial system

By Geoffrey D. Stebbins



### Serhiy Marchenko

In the aftermath of the cold war, world powers put in place systems of global governance. The goal was to protect liberal values, human rights and the world economy, and to extinguish the threat of nuclear annihilation. The unquestionable success of this new rules-based international order was its reach, bringing in Russia and post-Soviet Union states as well as other burgeoning economies such as China and India.

But such a system only works when its members follow the rules. With its violent and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, poisonous support of corruption and documented financing of terrorism, Vladimir Putin's Russia makes a total mockery of the rules-based international order that gave us a unique period of peace and economic development.

Yet, despite everything, Russia maintains a foothold in the global

also been found to have enabled or otherwise co-operated with various terrorist groups and blacklisted states, including the Wagner Group, the Taliban, Hizbullah, the Assad regime in Syria, North Korea and Iran.

Iranian kamikaze drones were found to have been used to attack Ukrainian civilian targets, leading to further US sanctions in November 2022. Moreover, Russian individuals and entities were also placed under sanctions in December 2022 for actions supporting the weapons of mass destruction and ballistic programmes of North Korea.

These examples barely scratch the surface, however. Russia is also responsible for state-sponsored and criminal cyber threats to critical infrastructure. Its war against Ukraine is exacerbating the global energy crisis and drastically raising food costs, causing great harm across the world, especially in developing economies.

In short, Russia is not simply undermining the global economic system. It is holding us all to ransom. More must be done, therefore.

Ukraine calls on the FATF to expel Russia and blacklist it. This would arguably be the most effective tool for restricting terrorists' access to the global economy, as it would force all states to apply enhanced due diligence to any transactions involving the financial system of a blacklisted jurisdiction.

Sanctions are introduced by specific jurisdictions and are followed by their subjects. This leaves a big part of the global economy that has not introduced sanctions open to Russia. Blacklisting by the FATF would create universal controls and require enhanced due diligence. Any transaction with the Russian financial system would be reviewed and scrutinised.

This would significantly increase the cost of doing business with Russia and effectively choke Putin's ability to finance his illegal war of aggression. Just as important, it would help us to get economic growth going as a result of following most of the Tory hard Brexit rules, might business start speaking out against the Labour Brexit? The Tories throughout 250 years of their history have always sought to grow, not damage, wealth in the nation. The Tories have generally avoided hard ideological positions.

Might the Conservatives surprise us and decide Labour's Brexit isn't working? Only three constituencies now have a majority supporting Brexit today. Of course, polls are not votes.

But by the time of Brexit's 10th anniversary, how many MPs will be ready to say it is working and benefiting Britain? Denis MacShane Former Europe Minister London SW1, UK

The writer is Ukraine's minister of finance

### Letters

## China the ultimate competitor – and capitalist?

In the guest column by Daron Acemoglu, Alex X He and Daniel Le Maire "Are CEOs with MBAs good for business?" (Opinion, FT.com, February 7), it isn't clear that the authors are taking proper account of the independent variables that influence business performance. There are many besides executive education. They include externalities that chief executives have little or no control over during their tenure, such as business sector cyclicality, foreign competition, regulation or war. They also include supplier performance, the state of capital markets, energy costs,

governance, management quality and legal complexity. Moreover, the authors leave out arguably the most important part of the corporate performance equation: customer power. Modern competition theory rests on optimising consumer welfare, thought to be realised when there are competitors so numerous that no one entity can control pricing, and consumers thereby are able to enjoy "sovereignty". When pricing power is so limited, then cost reduction, including labour categories, indeed becomes accentuated. For the authors to criticise such efficiencies

that lead in many cases to greater consumer welfare, is a curious economic dissonance.

The authors' actual criticism seems to be with capitalism and its apparent de-emphasis on worker welfare. The question, then, isn't so much whether chief executives with MBAs are good for business but rather, whether competition is good for national economies, including the political economies of trade and advantage. If so, then China, ironically, may be the ultimate competitor, and capitalist. Matthew G Anderson Clearwater, FL, US

### Here's my road map to Britain rejoining the EU

Rejoice! Rejoice!" said Margaret Thatcher after the Falklands war. Now the gurus of the Financial Times are saying "Rejoice! Rejoice!" as Brexit has its seven-year itch (Gideon Rachman's "Brexit could be reversed here's how", February 7) and Martin Sandhu's "Free Lunch column "Bold (but not crazy) solutions to Britain's growth problem", FT.com, February 9).

I wish they were right but wishful thinking is not real-time politics. The Labour party was hostile to European partnership at elections in 1951, 1955, 1959, 1964, 1970, 1983 and 1987. All Labour leaders from Clement Attlee to Keir Starmer were at some stage not keen on Europe.

Tony Blair stood on a Brexit manifesto in 1995 when he entered parliament. Even Gordon Brown refused to sign the Lisbon treaty with fellow heads of government and his team briefed nonstop against the euro. By contrast, the Conservatives were the party of Europe until William Hague launched "Euro-scepticism" and opened the door to Ukip followed by David Cameron's "political Brexit" in 2009 when he broke links with European centre-right parties headed by Angela Merkel. His four successors as prime minister have toed the anti-EU line.

Sandhu mentions re-entering the customs union as a partial rejoinder. But Turkey has been in the customs union since 1995 and is no closer to Europe. Rachman says restoring EU membership is like the "Restoration" of King Charles II in 1660. A better comparison might be Prohibition in the US – embraced with enthusiasm in 1920 but given up in bored indifference 13 years later when it was seen only to have negatives.

Business bodies – the CBI, the British Chambers of Commerce, the big trade federations, the National Farmers' Union, the City – all refuse to finance Brexit, let alone suggest rejoin. But if a Labour government struggles to get economic growth going as a result of following most of the Tory hard Brexit rules, might business start speaking out against the Labour Brexit? The Tories throughout 250 years of their history have always sought to grow, not damage, wealth in the nation. The Tories have generally avoided hard ideological positions.

Might the Conservatives surprise us and decide Labour's Brexit isn't working? Only three constituencies now have a majority supporting Brexit today. Of course, polls are not votes.

But by the time of Brexit's 10th anniversary, how many MPs will be ready to say it is working and benefiting Britain? Denis MacShane Former Europe Minister London SW1, UK



A Brexit comparison: Prohibition in the US was given up after just 13 years

### This boomer's solution is to tax property properly

I found Chris Giles's "OK boomer, you're more generous than we thought" (Opinion, February 3) verged on being smug. Perhaps he should question how we boomers are being so generous. Much of that generosity is based on the security provided by owning property which has escalated in value over the long term and, in so doing, has priced younger generations out of the property market. What is more, boomers who help to put their children on the housing ladder are actually helping to fuel property prices further. We are in a never ending spiral. The solution? Tax property properly through a land value tax. Catherine Hodgkinson Oxford, Oxfordshire, UK

### Capitalism shares blame for San Francisco's plight

San Francisco is "a strange city" indeed. And one which breeds strange mindsets. The dire situation described by Michael Moritz (Opinion, February 9) is also the substrate upon which the most powerful venture capital firms have grown, including his Sequoia Capital, which by one account backs companies that control \$1.4tn of the Nasdaq share market.

If he is so distraught about the state of the open-air drug market and homeless encampments, surely he could put some fraction of his firm's formidable financial assets towards societal solutions – housing, equity, mental health.

It is strange therefore that his critique is aimed only at government culture, rather than the failure of private capital markets to address the societal crises he describes. Eric Strzygosz Managing Director, Global Institute For Tomorrow, Hong Kong

### Making profits is just one central bank responsibility

Agustin Carstens, the general manager of the Bank for International Settlements ("Central banks are not there to make profits", Opinion, February 7), is right to argue that central banks are not for-profit entities. But no serious commentator has asserted that. The key issue is rather what they should do when they experience unavoidable losses.

As he notes, central banks can operate with negative equity. Because of that, in a financial crisis they can vacuum up risky assets that they are much better able to hold than the private sector. The Swiss National Bank's brilliantly executed decision to take over illiquid assets from UBS at the height of the financial crisis in 2008 and sell them at a profit in 2013 is a case in point.

But their ability to operate when a company would be bankrupt also raises the issue of what they should do when they experience losses. To facilitate budget planning, ministries of finance across the world prefer central banks to smooth their profit transfers over time. In Switzerland, that is a requirement of the National Bank Act. The much harder question is whether a central bank that makes a loss should cease to transfer past profits.

And should they do so, even if they have positive capital after the profit transfer? As Carstens notes, central banks have a mandate to operate in the public interest, and I hasten to add, not their own. Stefan Gerlach Chief Economist, EFG Bank, Zurich, Switzerland; Former Deputy Governor, Central Bank of Ireland, 2011-15

### Alas, what happens in the future is still up to Google

Rana Foroohar ("Let the public decide on Big Tech regulation", Opinion, February 6) demands more democracy in the regulation of the likes of Google, Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen, then respectively the Google executive chairman and Google Ideas director) seemed to agree with her a decade ago, in the introduction to their book *The New Digital Age*, when they wrote: "Most of all, this is a book about the importance of a guiding human hand in the new digital age. For all the possibilities that communication technologies represent, their use for good or ill depends solely on people. Forget all the talk about machines taking over. What happens in the future is up to us."

The problem is that up to now the final "us" in this introduction has referred to the likes of Schmidt and Cohen, and not the rest of us. Gwyneth Taylor Worcester, Worcestershire, UK

### The right lessons to take from the LDI debacle

John Ralfe ("LDI: What happens now?", FT Alphaville, February 3) writes cogently, and helpfully explains that most liability-driven investment is in fact "leveraged", not LDI but LDDI. First, I agree that many trustees and corporate sponsors do not fully understand this, and the investment consultants (ICs) who usually intermediate can be opaque at explaining it. Unhelpfully, I have also seen many different calculations of leverage, depending on what "denominator" is used.

However, I don't agree that LDDI is "speculation" any more than a company that issues debt, or a bank that operates on fractional reserves, is speculating. Responsibly managed LDDI is no different to the financial engineering that sits beneath corporate or financial balance sheets; but it must be responsibly managed.

Third, do defined benefit schemes "have to be leveraged"? Well, not if they are fully funded on an "appropriate" discount rate. I'll suggest a corporate bond rate similar to the credit risk of the sponsor, although Ralfe may disagree.

The problem is that most schemes are not fully funded, and there is a trilemma between chief financial officers weigh up Pensions Regulator obligations, with their obligations to shareholders and to profits. Yet moderately-leveraged LDI has been highly valuable for almost all of the past 30 years, saving UK schemes tens, if not hundreds of billions of pounds in offsetting what would otherwise have been unmatched increasing liability values.

I'll finish by agreeing with Ralfe: what is needed is far more disclosure and understanding of strategies such as LDDI, gilt swaps, gilt-swap spread hedges and what is eligible collateral, not to mention liquidity waterfalls. It also needs delegated responsibility to ICs, fiduciary and LDDI managers to act quickly. The answer is not to ban innovation, but to upskill and regulate appropriately for the greater good. Paul Dixon Independent Consultant and Trustee London SW3, UK

### Bears, spy balloons and Xi

Perhaps it's just as well that Bernard H Casey is writing from London and not from inside China, or especially Hong Kong ("China spy balloons sparks Pooch Bear memories", Letters, February 9) when he mentions the famous bear in the context of China.

Since about 2013 the bear has been *ursa non grata* for the Chinese government because of the memes circulating online suggesting President Xi Jinping resembles him, not least around the waistline.

Pro-democracy protesters nicknamed Xi "Pooch", and in Hong Kong some wore Pooch masks.

A film featuring the fictional character did not make it to the limited list of foreign films allowed into the country in 2018.

There is no suggestion any character from children's literature was ever so thin-skinned. Judith Martin Winchester, Hampshire, UK

OPINION ON FT.COM  
Cash rules every thing around me  
Despite positive recent economic data on the US economy, it isn't making high-quality corporate bonds any more attractive – especially relative to cash, writes Alexandra Scogg  
www.ft.com/alphaville



# Opinion

## The untold story of the world's most resilient currency

**MARKETS**  
**Ruchir Sharma**



In February of 1998, 25 years ago this month, I was in Bangkok, ground zero of the Asian financial crisis. The implosion of the Thai baht had triggered a serial meltdown of currencies and markets with protesters in the streets across the region and chaos spreading. As world leaders raced to slow the global contagion, Thailand and its neighbours had sunk into a depression. The Thai economy contracted by nearly 20 per cent, as stocks fell by more than 60 per cent and the baht lost more than half its value against the dollar. Prices in Bangkok felt unbelievably cheap. I did not dare buy Thai stocks, with so much unsettled. But I did leave with many shopping bags and two golf sets, one to give away.

While the drama of that year is etched in history, the episode comes as a surprise. Since early 1998, Thailand has faded on the global radar but the baht has proved uncommonly resilient, holding its value against the dollar better than any other emerging world currency and better than all but the Swiss Franc in the developed world.

In contrast, in Indonesia, where the 1998 crisis toppled the dictator Suharto, the rupiah trades near 15,500 to the dollar, down from 2,400 before the crisis. The baht trades at 35 to the dollar, not much lower than 26 before the crisis.

Yet Thailand hardly feels expensive: a foreign visitor can find a 5-star hotel room for under \$200 a night, a fine dinner in Phuket for \$50. Despite the strong baht, Thailand is globally competitive. The epicentre of the crisis became an anchor of stability, and a lesson to other emerging economies.

After 1998, many emerging societies tested financially conservative, especially those hardest hit in south-east Asia. Indonesian banks went from squeal demes of conservatism to models of good management. The Philippines and

Malaysia moved to rein in deficits. But nowhere in the region did a government turn more economically orthodox than in Thailand, avoiding the excesses that can scare off outsiders and tank currencies.

South-east Asia was in recovery by 2000. Since then, Thailand's government deficit has averaged 1 per cent of gross domestic product, less than half

**Since early 1998, Thailand's baht has held its value against the dollar better than all but the Swiss Franc**

the average for emerging economies. Its central bank has been similarly cautious, keeping rates relatively high and broad money supply growing at 7 per cent a year, third lowest among major emerging economies.

The ultimate pay-off for orthodoxy is low inflation. Thai inflation has averaged just over 2 per cent, the same as the US, a rare feat for an emerging country.

Among other emerging economies, only China, Taiwan and Saudi Arabia have had lower inflation than Thailand since 1998.

Before the crisis, Thailand pegged the baht to the dollar, which allowed it to borrow heavily abroad, and run up huge current account deficits. As foreigners lost confidence in Thailand, the government was forced to drop the peg and allow the baht to float freely. Its crash followed, but the baht would go on to recover its losses and become one of the least volatile currencies.

Steady foreign income helped. Thailand remains among the most open emerging economies. Trade has risen from 80 per cent of GDP in 1998 to more than 110 per cent today. The external deficits that forced the crash gave way to surpluses, as Thailand built on its strengths in tourism and manufacturing, which generates a quarter of GDP.

During the crisis I drove on a new four-lane highway out of Bangkok to see the factories rising on the green pagoda-dotted hills of the eastern seaboard. This manufacturing base in paradise continues to evolve, lately for example

from cars into electric vehicle parts, and to draw heavy foreign investment.

Meanwhile the tourist hotspots around Phuket and Koh Samui expand alongside new forays into medical and wellness services. Since the crisis, tourism has more than doubled as a share of GDP to 12 per cent, becoming an unusually large source of foreign exchange. Most countries with tourist sectors that big are tiny islands.

Thailand also has its flaws, including heavier household debts and a more rapidly ageing population than most of its peers. Despite that, its per capita income has more than doubled to nearly \$8,000, up from \$3,000 before the crisis. Moreover, Thailand has achieved financial stability despite constant political upheaval, including four new constitutions in the last 25 years. By overcoming challenges the Swiss franc never faced, the Thai baht has sealed its unlikely claim to be the world's most resilient currency — and a case study in the upsides of economic orthodoxy.

*The writer is chair of Rockefeller International.*

## Consigning diesel reliance to history is a long road

**Vince Cable**

When the high-profile battery-making company Britishvolt collapsed last month, it did not bode well for the country's ambition to generate "green growth". But other building blocks in the UK's zero-carbon economy have been more successfully laid of late with the rollout of new hydrogen filling stations for HGVs.

Using hydrogen for HGVs is important: transport accounts for around a quarter of national carbon emissions and just under 20 per cent of that is from heavy lorries. The diesel used by these vehicles doesn't just affect climate change but adds to air pollution through nitrogen oxide and particulates. And diesel vehicles, like petrol ones, will be phased out after 2030 under the net zero strategy.

The green choice now is between batteries to power electric vehicles and hydrogen, used in those with fuel cells. They each have relative merits in terms of cost, convenience and range. But the current thinking is that EVs are better suited to cars and hydrogen to heavy vehicles.

It would be foolish, however, to be dogmatic about the future mix and costs — technology will advance in both sectors. I was a teenage milkman, driving electric floats over half a century ago and General Motors launched a hydrogen-powered car at about the same time.

Much has happened since — today I'm a director of a hydrogen fuel infrastructure company. In practice, a mix of EVs

**In transport, we are seeing the start of a commercially realistic hydrogen economy**

and hydrogen vehicles will be needed to transition well to the net zero.

Both, however, face a chicken-and-egg problem. Operators of trucks, fleets and manufacturers will only invest in the technology if there is a reliable supply of fuel hydrogen or "green" electricity for battery charging. The producers of these fuels will only invest when they are sure there is a market. A failure of either is fatal.

Infrastructure needs to connect both sides of the market and take the commercial risk. That is now happening: the business model involves matching various sources of hydrogen supply with a wide range of consumer contracts.

Fortunately, given that the British Isles are especially well-endowed with wind power, we have an in-built advantage — the UK has the second largest wind industry after China. It should become even bigger and cheaper after the lifting of the damaging ban on onshore wind. Wind farms sell into the grid but can have a surplus to use to electrolyse water and create "green" hydrogen.

There is a veritable kaleidoscope of colours reflecting different degrees of pollution in extracting carbon. "Grey" hydrogen, for example, can be chemically manufactured from natural gas, tempting the big oil and gas companies to become unlikely — and awkward — competitors in the hydrogen business.

Customers want 100 per cent "green" hydrogen but until the market develops, the best is the enemy of the good. Different sources, including imported hydrogen, are necessary. EV's face similar problems: charging batteries from the grid can involve using electricity generated from natural gas or even coal.

The private sector will continue to do much of the heavy lifting during the transition — the profit margin is higher than for diesel. But government needs to ensure market signals are aligned. It would help if hydrogen were treated as a fuel, carrying 5 per cent VAT rather than the 20 per cent charged on its use as a chemical.

There is a lot of hype around hydrogen's potential for steel and cement — even domestic heating. It may or may not be justified. In transport we are, however, seeing the beginnings of a commercially realistic hydrogen economy based on UK resources.

The potential is vast, but Britain is being left behind in the greening of the economy. It doesn't have to be.

*The writer, a former business secretary, is a non-executive director of E.ON Energy.*

## Superpowers in destructive codependence

**BUSINESS**  
**Rana Foroohar**



What's the best language through which to understand the complex events of the world today? Is it economic? Political? Cultural? I've begun to think it might be psychological.

Psychologists (at least many of those I know) tend to divide the world up into two types of personalities: paranoids, who operate as if they are always playing a zero-sum game, and depressives, who are more willing to embrace nuance (and thus sadness). Just as people can lean towards either of those personality poles, so too can nation states. Nazi Germany was paranoid, as Russia is today. Scandinavian social democratic states are depressive. So is the EU, at its best.

Recent global events, from Brexit and the election of Donald Trump to Russia's war on Ukraine or economic decoupling, can also be viewed through a psychological lens. As behavioural economist Robert Shiller has laid out in his book on narrative economics, such events are driven by "the prevalence and vividness of certain stories, not the purely economic feedback or multipliers that economists love to model".

Such stories may be subjective, but the effects are real. Shiller's work explores how events like the 1929-21 market correction, the sharpest in history, were driven as much by unsettling narratives about the rise of communism, influenza and race riots as by flawed interest rate policy. Stories have an impact on our psychology, and that psychology changes the world.

Nowhere is this truer today than in the US-China relationship. In his recent book *Accidental Conflict*, former Morgan Stanley Asia head and Yale professor Stephen Roach applies a psychological lens to the complex relationship between the two countries. This culminated last week in the calling off of US secretary of state Antony Blinken's diplomatic trip to Beijing after a Chinese balloon was discovered floating over US airspace.

Roach likens the reaction, as well as the general ratcheting up of diplomatic tensions between the two countries over the past few years, to that of an insecure couple deep into the conflict phase of codependency. The couple, in this case China and the US, need each other for reasons they don't like to express. "A savings-short US economy lacks a certain sense of economic self," writes Roach, and is anxious about China's development goals, which involve putting its own surplus savings to use in ways that may move capital away from the dollar. Meanwhile, "China, lacking its own internal supply of consumer-led growth," feels threatened by American tariffs.

He's right. While US politicians on

both sides of the aisle like to blame China for "stealing" jobs, it was America's own choice to build an economy based more on asset inflation than income growth. Foreign capital helped ease the profligacy. US debt relative to GDP has risen 95 per cent since 2000, and is now higher than it was before the financial crisis. Government debt grew at 0.7 times GDP, mostly as a result of that crisis and then the Covid-19 pandemic. Household debt and financial sector debt are down from their pre-2008 peaks, but are still higher than they were before 2000, according to McKinsey Global Institute data. All this would be far less sustainable if China stopped buying US debt. China, meanwhile, may point the finger at the US for trade wars, but it has for years pursued

**China and America need each other for reasons they don't like to express**

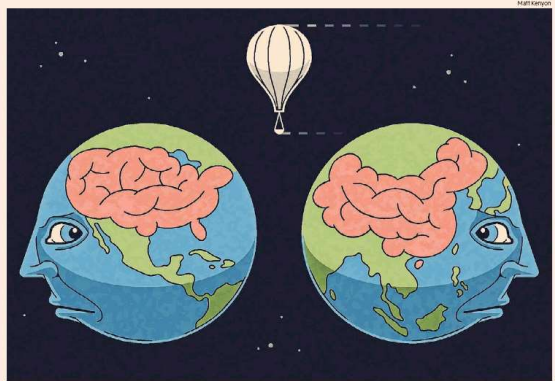
a mercantilist economic policy, and has yet to prove it can inspire enough domestic political confidence to get people behind their cash-strategy game with structural problems of over-leverage, particularly when it comes to real estate. If the current paradigm holds, China will not be able to get rich

The problem with this economic codependency, says Roach, is that it is inherently reactive. "The slightest disturbance becomes amplified, risking retaliation and a progressive unraveling. China's balloon triggers a diplomatic response from Blinken that is strikingly reminiscent of cold war 1.0 actions in 1960, when the USSR shot down our U-2 spy plane. That, of course, ushered in the most dangerous phase of the first cold war, culminating in the Cuban Missile crisis," he says. "There is no trust in a conflicted codependency, making it hard to put the pieces of a once healthy relationship back together. That leaves the conflicted codependency hyper-vulnerable to flashpoints." With House of Representatives speaker Kevin McCarthy heading to Taiwan

soon, one might wonder if that island nation will be the next Cuba.

So, how do both sides tiptoe away from such a disastrous outcome? By doing what any good therapist would advise — using "I" statements. American policymakers need to admit that debt matters, and the US must eventually start living within its means, saving more, and using those savings to fund the things that fuel real growth — infrastructure, education and basic R&D — rather than the financial kind. This White House has made a good start with the American Rescue Plan and the Chips Act, but it will take years, if not decades, to plug the gap of Main Street investment in America. China, for its part, needs to grapple with how and why it has lost the world's trust. From lockdowns to political attacks on the private sector to surveillance capitalism, there's a reason that Chinese consumers still keep so much cash under their mattresses. You don't need a balloon to see that it's not America's fault.

*rama.foroohar@ft.com*



## These tools could help bring Ukraine into the EU

**GLOBAL AFFAIRS**  
**Martin Sandbu**



President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's triumphant European tour may have provided his partners towards contributing more weapons to defend his country against Vladimir Putin's assault. That is welcome: Europe needs Ukraine to win the war and Russia to lose.

But it also needs Ukraine to win the peace. For that, two other big Ukrainian asks — for reconstruction support and EU membership — are central. A Ukraine that stagnates in poverty, or is refused the tight political bonds that unite EU members, will be a permanent source of instability. It is in the EU's self-interest to bring Ukraine into the community of prosperous liberal democracies.

Europe is split between politicians who fully grasp this and those who do not. The current balance between the two is why we remain far from a real political commitment — a "whatever it takes" — to rebuild Ukraine and ready it for membership.

This is understandable. No discussion about money can avoid questions over moral hazard, who bears the risk, whether loans are better than grants, and the legal basis for common financing. As for membership, big questions loom beyond economic integration. Will Ukraine be fit to join the Schengen borderless travel area? Will its judicial system be independent and effective? What about monetary union? What happens to European agriculture with the market entry of Ukraine's big farm resources? How would Ukraine's voting rights change the political equilibrium of the union?

These political difficulties are real and will take great statecraft to overcome. But while they remain unresolved, paths must be found along which Ukraine can make immediate progress towards becoming the prosperous EU

member it needs to be. Two overlooked approaches deserve attention.

Finding a new funding mechanism for tiding Ukraine over this year, which the EU pulled off in December, was hard enough. Creating one for vastly greater amounts needed for reconstruction is harder. But the eurozone countries have a disused mechanism available: the European Stability Mechanism, set up to grant rescue loans to financially

**The ESM's huge borrowing capacity should be repurposed for the country's reconstruction**

distressed member states. The ESM has more than €400bn of unused financing capacity — enough for the 21st-century Marshall Plan promised by German chancellor Olaf Scholz.

But the ESM will never be used for its original purpose again. It proved so politically toxic that no country wanted to tap it in the pandemic.

Its huge borrowing capacity should be repurposed for Ukraine's reconstruction. The ESM treaty authorises finance ministers to revise its support instruments. They could issue ESM bonds to fund euro governments which would lend on to a reconstruction platform. Currently lending must be for "the benefit of ESM members [facing] severe financing problems, if indispensable [for] financial stability". Since the ESM remains an intergovernmental and not an EU body, its members could allow Ukraine to join — or revise the treaty to allow supporting a non-member.

As for EU membership, the debate has ignored the European Economic Area, which extends the single market to three European Free Trade Association countries — Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. They adopt EU economic regulations and enjoy frictionless exchange, apart from customs rules of origin, in all sectors except for fish and agriculture.

EEA membership is the closest existing alignment with the EU. If Ukraine qualifies for the EEA, it will have qualified for the EEA. Conversely, qualifying for

the EEA would fulfil important requirements for EU membership, and bring the rewards of the single market. Why not aim for the EEA as a staging post?

This path would give EFTA countries a chance to advance Ukraine's European ambitions, first by inviting it to join EFTA. Norway could then support a Ukrainian EEA candidacy: the EEA Agreement gives all EFTA countries the right to apply [for] financial stability.

Joining the EEA is a long slog too. But it is harder to stall Ukraine's admission to the single market than full EU membership, because the thorny issues above would not be in play. Today those future difficulties create incentives to kick accession into the long grass, a move which Ukraine fears. Once in the EEA, it would be well placed to hold the EU to confronting those questions.

In both cases, powerful institutional vehicles are at the ready. So in the spirit of recycling, let's find new uses for old tools. Economising on institutional engineering to leave more space for statecraft is the geopolitical version of thinking locally and acting globally.

*martin.sandbu@ft.com*





How much is too much? Managing the pay expectations of the highest earning staff

WORK & CAREERS

How not to be the panellist from hell



Pilita Clark Business Life

Not that long ago I met a moderately successful business executive who asked a question I was not expecting...



can answer any question on their own organisation. But the speakers who light up a room can also talk about how cyber attacks or hybrid work patterns or trade tensions are affecting their industry and the world in general.

debate about a fracking company boss and a green campaigner. My increasingly frantic efforts to restore order went nowhere. I felt useless. The audience loved it.

Take a photo of the audience or each other. This was unexpected, but nothing compared with the obnoxious practice of checking your phone for messages as soon as another speaker starts talking.

It is taken for granted that a panellist

Lex.

Biomethane: what-whiff scenario



Table with 3 columns: Animal manure, Agricultural residues, and Industrial waste-water, showing potential in 2030.

Biomethane — emitted by rotting organic waste — has failed to win the endorsement of the decarbonisation glitterati. But that is changing. Goldman Sachs Asset Management plans to invest more than €1bn in developing biomethane plants.

NIKKEI Asia The voice of the Asian century

Crossword puzzle section with 'CROSSWORD No 17,331 Set by SLORMGORM' and 'JOTTER PAD'.

Advertisement for IPA (Incorporated by Royal Charter) with the headline 'Come back in a year and tell us if cutting your budget was a good idea'.

Get the business insights you need to succeed in Asia Visit asia.nikkei.com

Brands can help in a cost of living crisis by cutting their marketing budgets. Wrong. We have more than 40 years of evidence that a short-term reaction is never as effective as long-term investment.