



## Battle looms over Dalai Lama's succession

FT BIG READ, PAGE 21

## Why is Canada such an economic laggard?

TEJ PARIKH, PAGE 23

# Russia's banks propped up by Chinese cash after sanctions

- ▶ Lending quadrupled to \$9.7bn
- ▶ Drive to create rival global currency

OWEN WALKER — LONDON  
CHENG LENG — HONG KONG

Chinese lenders stepped in to extend billions of dollars to Russian banks as western institutions pulled out in the year after Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, new data shows.

China's exposure to Russia's banking sector quadrupled in the 14 months to the end of March this year, according to the latest official data analysed for the Financial Times by the Kyiv School of Economics.

The lenders took the place of western banks, which came under acute pressure from regulators and politicians in their home countries to exit Russia, while international sanctions made doing business much harder.

The moves by four of China's biggest banks are part of Beijing's efforts to promote the renminbi as an alternative global currency to the dollar.

The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, Bank of China, China Construction Bank and Agricultural Bank of China increased their combined exposure to Russia from \$2.2bn to \$9.7bn, according to Russian central bank data, with ICBC and Bank of China accounting for \$8.8bn of the assets between them.

The data indicates a shift by Russia to adopt the renminbi rather than the US dollar or euro as a reserve currency.

"The loans by Chinese banks to Russian banks and credit institutions, which are for the most part a case of the yuan taking the place of dollars and euros, show the sanctions are doing their job," said Andrii Onopriienko, deputy development director at the Kyiv School of Economics, who compiled the data.

The rise of renminbi trading highlights Russia's economic pivot to China as trade between the two countries hit a record \$185bn in 2022.

Before last year's invasion, more than 60 per cent of Russia's payments for its exports were made in what the country's authorities now refer to as "toxic currencies", such as the dollar and euro, with renminbi accounting for less than 1 per cent.

"Toxic" currencies have since dropped to less than half of export payments, while the renminbi accounts for 16 per cent, according to data from Russia's central bank.

Austria's Raiffeisen Bank is one of the few western banks that has kept a significant presence in Russia.

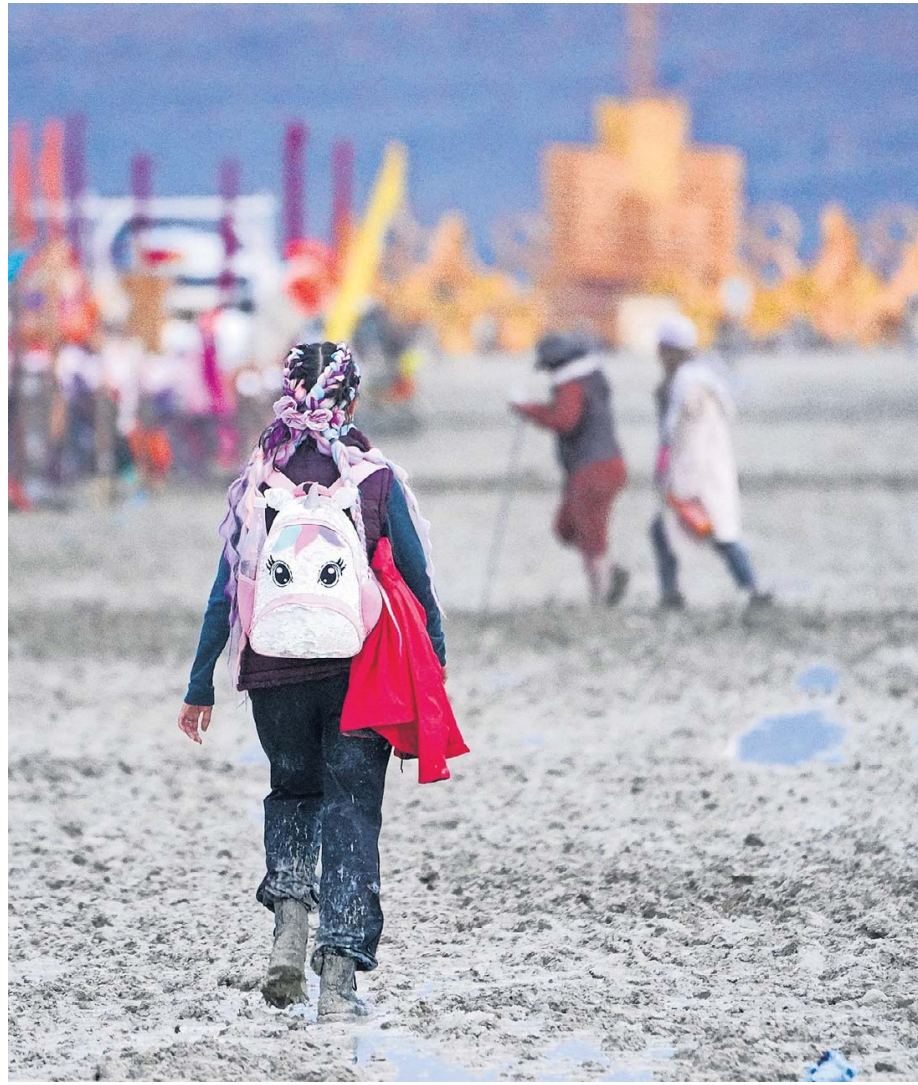
In the year to March Raiffeisen, the foreign bank with the biggest exposure to Russia, increased its assets in the country by more than 40 per cent, from \$20.5bn to \$29.2bn.

But reforms by the Kremlin last summer have made it much harder for foreign banks to sell their Russian subsidiaries. On Friday, Russia's deputy finance minister Alexei Moiseev reaffirmed the government's position to obstruct foreign bank sales.

The European Central Bank is increasing pressure on lenders it supervises, including Raiffeisen, to exit Russia. Raiffeisen said it was trying to find ways of selling or spinning off its Russian business while staying compliant with local and international laws and regulations. Since March, Raiffeisen has reduced its assets in Russia to \$25.5bn.

ICBC, Bank of China, China Construction Bank and Agricultural Bank of China all declined to comment.

## Muddy 'hellscape' Thousands of Burning Man festival-goers left stranded in Nevada desert



Trevor Hughes/ USA Today Network via Reuters

A festival-goer tramps through thick sludge at the annual Burning Man gathering in the Nevada desert, where thousands of people have been left stranded after torrential rainfall transformed the area into a muddy "hellscape".

The storms shut roads and trapped more than 70,000 people in a camping area where food and water are being rationed and portable toilets have

stopped functioning. The nearby airport is closed and no driving is permitted at the venue except for emergency vehicles.

Burning Man was once a symbol of American counterculture but has turned into an annual end-of-summer destination for social media influencers and celebrities. The event is named after the burning of a human effigy at a venue known as the playa, a ritual that

was postponed because of the rain. Local police said they were investigating one death. Wet conditions made it "virtually impossible" for vehicles to traverse the playa, the police said.

"Welcome to Burning Man aka Hellscape," a user named Thatcher posted on TikTok, showing a clip of hundreds of mountain bikes sinking into inches of thick mud.

Desert downpour page 6

### Briefing

▶ **Hunt pledges to do 'what it takes' over school safety**  
Chancellor Jeremy Hunt vowed that the government will stump up "what it takes" to make sure children can get to school safely as Labour criticised his party's "bare bones" response to a deepening crisis around building materials used on the country's education estate. — PAGE 2

▶ **P&O slides in UK freight**  
P&O Ferries has lost significant market share in UK freight since it was bought by its Dubai owner, according to new analysis showing the pressures on the group to sack hundreds of staff last year. — PAGE 11

▶ **Prudential looks to Africa**  
Africa gives Prudential the same long-term growth prospects as its insurance markets in Asia, said new chief Anil Wadhvani, after a drawn-out exit from its US and European operations. — PAGE 8

▶ **Builders' plea to Berlin**  
The German government must intervene to help the crisis-hit construction industry, said business groups, as insolvencies claim a growing number of big property developers. — PAGE 4

▶ **China battery plant boom**  
Vast state support and unchecked bank lending is building battery plants in China far beyond levels needed for domestic demand, prompting fears for global competitors. — PAGE 8

▶ **Odesa attacked by drones**  
A day before the Turkish and Russian presidents were due to hold talks over restarting grain exports via the Black Sea, Moscow launched a huge drone attack on Ukraine's Odesa port. — PAGE 4

▶ **No Hollywood ending**  
Four months after Hollywood's script writers took to the picket lines, the impact of the strikes on California's economy has reached almost \$5bn, a figure set to grow after the latest failed talks. — PAGE 6

▶ **Crossword and Lex**  
The Lex column, Business Life and the FT crossword can be found inside today. — PAGE 17

# Ireland seeks legal advice in bid to halt UK bill offering amnesty for atrocities

JUDE WEBBER — OXFORD

The Irish government is taking legal advice over the possibility of mounting a court challenge to controversial UK legislation expected to be passed at Westminster in the coming days that would offer an amnesty for atrocities committed during Northern Ireland's three decades-long Troubles conflict.

A legal challenge before the European Court of Human Rights would be only the second brought by Dublin against London, following a landmark case 52 years ago over its actions in Northern Ireland.

The case could strain the bilateral relationship, which has vastly improved since the landmark Windsor framework deal between the UK and EU ended a bitter row over post-Brexit trading rules for the region.

Irish foreign minister Micheál Martin told the Financial Times that London's legacy bill, which is opposed by all political parties on the island as well as by human rights groups, would not deliver for victims of the Troubles and Dublin could not back the UK government.

"We have asked for legal advice . . . I'll get that legal advice in the next fortnight and then we'll consider that in terms of what action we subsequently take," Martin said.

"There is concern with its [the bill's] non-compliance with Article 2 [of the European Convention on Human Rights]. Nothing is ruled out and we approach this with victims at the centre of our concerns," he added.

The ECHR was launched by the Council of Europe to protect human rights and freedoms. Some Conservative politicians have called for the UK to leave it

but respect for it is written into Northern Ireland's 1998 peace deal, the Good Friday Agreement.

The legacy bill, which shuts down new inquests and sets up an Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery, returns to the House of Lords tomorrow.

"The legacy bill will become law," Chris Heaton-Harris, the UK's Northern Ireland secretary, told an audience of officials, politicians, academics and civil society at a British-Irish conference in Oxford this weekend.

He said changes already incorporated into the bill meant it "will go into the statute book with a stable foundation in international law".

Martin said he had to be "frank" about the gulf between the two neighbours. "I would still appeal to the British government to pause [the bill]," he said.



## Revised data lifts spirits but economic woes persist

Last week's radical revisions to the Covid-era data have destroyed many recent narratives about the UK economy. The new data shows that by the end of 2021 the economy was 0.6 per cent larger than its pre-pandemic level, rather than 1.2 per cent smaller. But despite the scale of the generally rosier figures, economists warned that the big picture of the economy struggling to grow and improve living standards had not changed.

Altered narrative ▶ PAGE 3

### Subscribe In print and online

www.ft.com/subscribe Tel: 0800 028 1407  
Mon-Fri: 7am - 6pm / Sat: 8am - 1pm

For the latest news go to [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com)

© THE FINANCIAL TIMES LTD 2023  
No: 41,419 ★

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



9 770307 176012

### World Markets

STOCK MARKETS				CURRENCIES				GOVERNMENT BONDS			
	Sep 1	Prev	%Chg	Sep 1	Aug 25	Sep 1	Aug 25	Yield (%)	Sep 1	Aug 25	Chg
S&P 500	4503.17	4507.66	-0.10	\$/€	1.081 1.077	€/£	0.925 0.929	US 2 yr	4.90	4.85	0.04
Nasdaq Composite	13989.21	14034.97	-0.33	\$/¥	1.262 1.255	£/\$	0.792 0.797	US 10 yr	4.19	4.09	0.10
Dow Jones Ind	34736.84	34721.91	0.04	€/€	0.856 0.858	€/€	1.168 1.165	US 30 yr	4.31	4.19	0.12
FTSEurofirst 300	1812.07	1812.24	-0.01	¥/\$	146.030 146.580	¥/€	157.823 157.874	UK 2 yr	4.88	4.86	0.02
Euro Stoxx 50	4283.70	4297.11	-0.31	¥/£	184.284 183.979	£ index	82.436 82.864	UK 10 yr	4.52	4.45	0.07
FTSE 100	7464.54	7439.13	0.34	SFr/€	0.956 0.955	SFr/£	1.116 1.113	UK 30 yr	4.66	4.56	0.10
FTSE All-Share	4069.21	4059.53	0.24	<b>CRYPTO</b>				JPN 2 yr	0.02	0.02	0.00
CAC 40	7296.77	7316.70	-0.27		Sep 1	Prev	%Chg	JPN 10 yr	0.63	0.64	-0.02
Xetra Dax	15840.34	15947.08	-0.67	Bitcoin (\$)	25898.11	25936.20	-0.15	JPN 30 yr	1.64	1.67	-0.03
Nikkei	32710.62	32619.34	0.28	Ethereum	1634.22	1645.78	-0.70	GER 2 yr	3.00	2.97	0.03
Hang Seng	18382.06	18482.86	-0.55	<b>COMMODITIES</b>				GER 10 yr	2.55	2.46	0.08
MSCI World \$	2986.02	2991.52	-0.18		Sep 1	Aug 25	%Week	GER 30 yr	2.68	2.59	0.10
MSCI EM \$	980.33	988.30	-0.81	Oil WTI \$	85.14	79.54	7.04	Prices are latest for edition			
MSCI ACWI \$	686.15	687.86	-0.25	Oil Brent \$	88.16	84.10	4.83	Data provided by Morningstar			
FT Wilshire 2500	5834.96	5841.57	-0.11	Gold \$	1942.30	1917.05	1.32				
FT Wilshire 5000	45468.60	45521.30	-0.12								

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE  
— HOLISTIC HEALTH —  
SWITZERLAND

AGE-DEFY  
THE ULTIMATE LONGEVITY SUPPLEMENT

AGE-DEFY is the ultimate supplement for longevity, offering a 2-step routine of immunity and regeneration. With CLP Holistic Complex, proven to combat cell aging.

The Collection of Clinique La Prairie supplements is the result of a 90-year legacy of transformative wellness and science.

Contact us for an exclusive complimentary consultation with our teams of nutrition experts to unlock the secret to your longevity.



holistic.health@laprairie.ch  
+41 21 989 34 81  
www.cliniquelaprairie-hh.com

## NATIONAL

## Education estate

## Hunt promises to make schools safe

Labour urges ministers to list sites where defective material was used

ANNA GROSS

The government will stump up “what it takes” to make sure children can get to school safely, chancellor Jeremy Hunt promised yesterday as Labour criticised his party’s “bare bones” response to a deepening crisis around the safety of the education estate.

Hunt told the BBC’s Laura Kuenssberg that the government had “acted fast” in 2018 when it was first alerted to the threat to schools built with rein-

forced autoclaved aerated concrete (Raac), initiating a review of 22,000 buildings where the material was known to have been used in the construction process.

New information had come to light over the summer that had made the government reassess the safety rating of dozens of buildings, said Hunt, leading the Department for Education to order more than 100 schools to close sites just days before the start of the new academic year.

Shadow education secretary Bridget Phillipson criticised Hunt’s Conservative party for ending Labour’s school reform programme when it came to power in 2010, which she argued would

have ensured every school in Britain was rebuilt or significantly refurbished by 2020.

“One of the very first acts of that incoming Conservative government in 2010 was to cancel Labour’s Building Schools for the Future programme,” she said. “The chickens are coming home to roost.”

Labour has called on ministers to release a complete list of all the schools that have had to close buildings because of the presence of Raac, which was a popular construction material in the 1970s and 1980s and is prone to collapse. The demand comes amid concerns that the problem could extend beyond the more than 150 schools

already contacted about the problem – 104 of which were asked to close sites.

The government confirmed yesterday that thousands of schools had yet to respond to a survey about whether their buildings could have been built with Raac. It added that engineers would be sent this week to review the sites of any that believe it could be present.

In June, a National Audit Office report revealed that the material was present in at least 65 schools in England, of which 24 required “immediate action”.

The public spending watchdog also noted that a government programme to rebuild or refurbish 500 schools with buildings in the most urgent need was behind schedule.

A government spokesperson confirmed that existing capital funding would be used to pay for short-term building works as well as for temporary accommodation, including portable cabins, for schools that had to close sites. They added that the government would consider covering only the costs of renting external properties and of children’s transport to alternative sites on a case-by-case basis.

A growing number of other public buildings, including hospitals and courts, are now also known to have been built with Raac. The NAO last month reported that surveys had found that 41 buildings at 23 NHS trusts contained the material.

## Public health

## Researchers warn of cash threat to long Covid study

HANNAH KUCHLER

Scientists are warning that delays at the medicines regulator mean an important trial looking for ways of treating long Covid risks running out of money before it finishes.

Researchers looking for treatments that could benefit the millions of long Covid patients who currently have no approved drugs, have waited up to six months for the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency to approve adaptations that it is required to rule on within 35 days.

The Stimulate-ICP study is modelled on the UK’s flagship Recovery trial that found drugs to use against acute Covid-19. It has enrolled only 900 of the 4,200 participants that it aimed to recruit, and its funding from the National Institute for Health and Care Research runs out in March.

But whereas the regulator moved quickly to enable trials during the pandemic, the long Covid study has been stuck in a backlog at the agency, which has suffered significant staff cuts since Brexit. Amitava Banerjee, a professor at University College London who is co-leading the study, said it was “really frustrating” because the study was funded but had stalled because the MHRA did not have enough capacity to respond promptly to requests.

“We’re now in a situation where I’m struggling to see how we can get this over the line. And the worst-case scenario is that we have a job that’s unfinished,” he said. “If we’re unable to answer questions, that’s tragic for patients who don’t get answers and for taxpayers who had their money wasted.”

The government is promoting the NHS as the ideal location for clinical research. But the pharmaceutical industry has been warning that it is falling behind other countries because of delays at the regulator and an overwhelmed healthcare system.

The chancellor gave the MHRA an extra £10mn in this year’s Budget to help speed up the approval process for “cutting-edge treatments”.

The agency said it had taken “urgent action” over the summer and the majority of delayed applications for clinical trial approval had now been processed. It added that from September 1, all new and fully compliant applications would be assessed within the statutory timelines.

Scientists are also concerned that after March, the NIHR will have no more money set aside to research long Covid. Daniel Altmann, a professor of immunology at Imperial College London, who is examining the biology of long Covid in a separate study, said it was “pretty strange” because medical research takes time and is rarely finished within just two years. “Why on earth would you want to make the initial investment if you don’t follow through and deliver on it?” he asked.

The NIHR said it had invested more than £50mn in long Covid research projects and that project timelines could be extended if researchers and funders agreed. About 1.9mn people, about 2.9 per cent of the UK’s population, are living with self-reported long Covid symptoms, according to data released in March by the Office for National Statistics.

## Adult education. Reform

## Councils seek more power over apprenticeships

Authorities alarmed by fall in numbers put pressure on ministers to devolve levy

PETER FOSTER — LONDON  
JENNIFER WILLIAMS — MANCHESTER

Local councils in England have urged the government to hand them greater powers over apprenticeships and adult learning after figures showed a decline of almost 200,000 people taking part in adult education in their areas over the past five years.

The County Councils Network said urgent action was needed to address the drop-off which has come despite repeated government pledges to reform adult education and boost the uptake of apprenticeships.

Tim Oliver, the chair of the CCN which represents 37 councils covering 26mn residents, said the data showed that the introduction of the apprenticeship levy five years ago had failed despite the government’s best intentions. “We are calling on ministers to devolve the apprenticeship levy to local areas as well as restoring the adult education budget to 2010 levels,” he said.

The levy is paid by larger companies, with salary bills of more than £3mn. Smaller businesses that are not subject to the levy have to pay 5 per cent of the costs of apprenticeship training. The system was introduced to improve quality and increase apprenticeships from 2mn to 3mn. However across England as a whole, Department for Education figures show nearly 75,000 fewer apprenticeships since 2017, with the number of people in adult education overall falling by more than 500,000.

The government allocated £900mn in extra day-to-day funding for adult education in the 2021 spending review, but the Institute for Fiscal Studies said the increase did not make up for a previous decade of cuts, meaning spending on adult education in 2024-25 will still be 22 per cent below 2009-10 levels.

Baroness Alison Wolf of Dulwich, the crossbench peer and educational expert, who until February was a part-time adviser on skills in Downing Street, said that devolving greater powers over adult education to local government would help increase take-up of apprenticeships by small businesses. “We need to build a network of local authorities



Tailor made: apprentices at a London fashion event. Data shows a fall in apprenticeship take-up since 2017 — Tolga Akmen/FT

and local colleges to encourage and help businesses to use the apprenticeship scheme,” she said. “Currently, they get offered an incomprehensible national website which just puts them off.”

Andy Street, Conservative mayor of the West Midlands, which has already benefited from a more far-reaching dev-

olution deal, said that collaboration with colleges, employers and training providers had enabled him to “better respond” to targeted local needs.

“We’ve secured a 33 per cent increase in provision aligned to our regional priority sectors in construction, manufacturing, and business and professional services — with a 66 per cent increase in new digital provision,” he said.

The government has committed to giving a devolution deal to every part of England that wants one by 2030, but the CCN said it was concerned the devolution agenda was “losing momentum”. The education department said that nearly 60 per cent of adult education budgets were devolved and that it would launch a new website in the autumn to make it easier to access adult education options, including apprenticeships.

“We have built the skills system from the ground up, boosting investment in skills by £3.8bn over this parliament, and focusing on quality over quantity by replacing low-quality qualifications with those that better meet the needs

‘We need to build a network of local authorities and local colleges to encourage and help businesses to use the apprentice scheme’

of employers,” the department said.

The IFS said the sharp drop in overall apprenticeship numbers reflected a fall predominantly in intermediate “GCSE-level” apprenticeships, with more expensive degree-level programmes quadrupling between 2016-21 and overall funding static at £2bn a year since 2000.

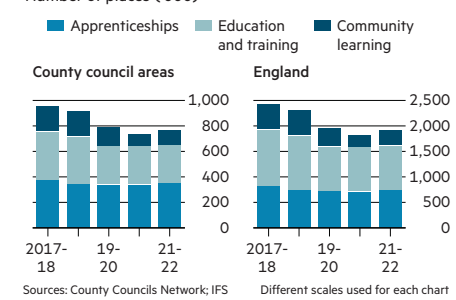
Industry bodies such as Make UK, the manufacturers’ lobby, have urged reform of the levy to enable companies to spend funds on shorter courses, alongside more government support for business investment in training.

Jamie Cater, senior policy manager at Make UK, said that targeted financial incentives for apprenticeships in areas of labour shortages and future skills demand would also improve take-up.

However Wolf argued that if larger companies were freed to spend all their contributions in other areas of training and skills development, it would leave little for small and medium-sized businesses whose apprenticeships are funded out of unspent contributions.

## Adult education places have fallen by a fifth over the past 5 years

Number of places (‘000)



## Populist danger

## Gove worried by green policy backlash and wealth divide

ROBERT WRIGHT

Michael Gove has warned that new environmental rules risked provoking a populist backlash and expressed his “worry” about the UK’s widening wealth inequalities.

Speaking at Saturday’s FT Weekend Festival, the levelling-up secretary said the growing strength of Germany’s far right exposed the danger of angering voters over environmental initiatives.

He also said that inequalities of wealth — ownership of assets — had widened more than inequalities of income in recent years and hinted he would favour a wealth tax.

Gove, the minister responsible for local government and housing, was responding to questions at a live recording of the FT’s *Political Fix* podcast. He also participated in a separate discussion of London’s housing market problems.

On green issues, the former environment secretary told the event that the government’s 2030 pledge to ban new

petrol and diesel cars would remain, but added it was vital to include some flexibility in policies.

Gove called for green initiatives to be pursued, but with sensitivity.

“There’s a recognition, particularly at the moment, that if we’re going to take people with us on this journey, we need to make sure that we’re not creating a number of disproportionate penalties or punitive measures that lead people to suffer economically or feel that the sacrifice isn’t worth it,” he said.

His remarks on wealth came in response to a question about whether the government was doing enough for young people. It was not, he said. “I do worry that in a number of areas that the structure of our society means that the concentrated influence of ‘those who have’ can sometimes act as a block on the aspirations and opportunities of ‘those who aspire,’” Gove said.

He suggested money would have to be raised from those acting in a “rentier fashion” — extracting income from assets, rather than working.

## Shadow chancellor

## Starmer’s Labour has ‘much to learn’ from Blair, says Reeves

ROBERT WRIGHT

An incoming Labour government would have “much to learn” from Tony Blair’s era in Westminster, but it cannot simply espouse the party’s 1990s political programme, shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves has said.

Its platform for the forthcoming general election — which must be held by late next year — will have to differ from the New Labour era because it faces “challenges of a different nature”, she said.

She was speaking at Saturday’s FT Weekend Festival on what to expect if the opposition party wins a majority, as is widely expected because of its large polling margin. She also reiterated the party’s longstanding position that it would not seek to rejoin the EU but would aim to improve relationships with the 27-nation bloc.

Labour has faced criticism from both left and right since Sir Keir Starmer became leader because of the similarity of his cautious centrist approach to the one followed by Blair in the run-up to

his 1997 landslide general election victory. Among the best-known aspects of the party’s strategy in that election was a five-point “pledge card” setting out key policies.

Asked about how similar Starmer’s approach would be to that of Blair and Gordon Brown, architects of New Labour, Reeves suggested they would engage in a balancing act.

“We’ve got so much to learn from what Tony and Gordon did in 1997,” Reeves said. But she added: “The challenges we face today are of a different nature. So we’re not going to pick up the pledge card from 1997 and somehow think we can dust it off.” She added that the party would build a stronger public sector, with a particular focus on the NHS.

On Europe, Reeves reiterated Starmer’s stance that Labour has to accept that the UK has left the EU and will not rejoin soon. However, she insisted the party would seek to improve on the withdrawal agreement signed by former prime minister Boris Johnson’s government.

FT FINANCIAL TIMES  
Bracken House, 1 Friday Street, London EC4M 9BT.  
Tel: 020 7873 4000; advertising@ft.com  
letters.editor@ft.com  
Executive appointments  
Tel: 020 7873 4909; www.exec-appointments.com

MAKING A WISE INVESTMENT  
Subscribe today at  
ft.com/subscribe today

FINANCIAL TIMES  
Bracken House, 1 Friday Street, London EC4M 9BT.  
Tel: 020 7873 3000  
Editor: Roula Khalaf

Published by: The Financial Times Limited,  
Bracken House, 1 Friday Street,  
London EC4M 9BT.  
Tel: 020 7873 3000  
Editor: Roula Khalaf

Subscriptions and Customer Service  
Tel: 0800 028 1407; subscriptions@ft.com;  
www.ft.com/subscribe now

Advertising  
Tel: 020 7873 4000; advertising@ft.com  
Letters to the editor  
letters.editor@ft.com  
Executive appointments  
Tel: 020 7873 4909; www.exec-appointments.com

Printed by  
Newsprinters (Bloxboorne) Limited, Hertfordshire,  
Newsprinters (Knowsley) Limited, Merseyside,  
Newsprinters (Eurocentral) Glasgow, and Irish Times,  
Dublin, Ireland

© Copyright The Financial Times Limited 2023. All rights reserved.

Reproduction of the contents of this newspaper in any manner is not permitted without the publisher’s prior consent.

‘Financial Times’ and ‘FT’ are registered trade marks 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

Reprints  
Are available of any FT article with your company logo or contact details inserted if required (minimum order 100 copies).

One-off copyright licences for reproduction of FT articles are also available.

For both services phone 020 7873 4916, or alternatively, email syndication@ft.com

Newspapers support recycling  
The recycled paper content of UK newspapers in 2018 was 69.2%



## NATIONAL

# Data revisions alter narrative of decline in the economy

ONS puts Britain in middle of G7 pack after radical changes to Covid-era output figures

CHRIS GILES — ECONOMICS EDITOR

Last week's radical revisions to Covid-era data have destroyed many recent narratives about the economy.

Rather than Britain still producing fewer goods and services than before the pandemic, the Office for National Statistics figures show that gross domestic product exceeded that benchmark in late 2021.

And instead of being a global outlier, marked by its feeble economic recovery from the pandemic, the new data shows the UK to be in the middle of the G7 pack, roughly equal with France and ahead of Germany.

The revisions show that by the end of 2021 the economy was 0.6 per cent larger than its pre-pandemic level, rather than 1.2 per cent smaller.

The good news, delivered in an obscure publication entitled *Impact of Blue Book 2023 changes on gross domestic product*, triggered political euphoria. Chancellor Jeremy Hunt declared: "The declinist narrative about Britain and its long-term prospects — for which post-pandemic growth was usually cited as a main piece of evidence — is just wrong."

But that headline change is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the shifts in the UK's economic narrative that the statistical agency has unleashed.

Extreme changes to detailed figures across many sectors of the economy will completely alter analysts' and policy-makers' thinking about productivity growth, inequality and how society has

changed since the pandemic. For example, according to the previous data, the gross value added to the economy by agriculture increased by 11.7 per cent between the date of the Brexit referendum in 2016 and the end of 2021. Yet the new data shows a contraction of 7 per cent.

And this is by no means the biggest change. Basic iron and steel manufacturing increased by 56 per cent between 2019 and the end of 2021, according to the previous figures. The update changed that to a 66 per cent decline.

In general, the contribution of services to economic growth has been revised up, while manufacturing, construction, agriculture and oil and gas extraction have fallen. Many economists reacted with some alarm to the changes in the figures. Ruth Gregory, deputy chief UK economist at Capital Economics, said the ONS figures were "vastly different to the previous data".

Simon French, chief economist of investment bank Panmure Gordon, said the previous data, showing the UK at the bottom of the pack, undermined its reputation abroad and the change "has cast huge doubt on recent investor conclusions".

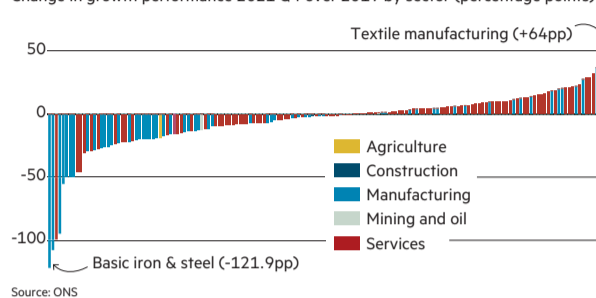
Some economists excused the ONS for the changes, saying the pandemic was a time of huge economic upheaval. Julian Jessop, a fellow at the free-market Institute of Economic Affairs, said it was "extraordinarily difficult to measure GDP during Covid".

The ONS has come up with several



The ONS revisions have produced enormous changes in the pandemic performance of different sectors in the UK economy

Change in growth performance 2021 Q4 over 2019 by sector (percentage points)



Source: ONS

**Health check:** a mural at Manchester's Northern Quarter depicts an NHS nurse during the pandemic, which some economists say complicated efforts to measure growth

Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

reasons for the large revisions. It now thinks that companies in 2020 were producing goods and services, adding to piles of unsold stocks, rather than running them down.

The bigger revisions come in 2021, where it has looked in more detail at each sector's inputs and outputs rather than simply looking at turnover, which guides the initial statistical release.

This is why some industrial sectors such as steelmaking perform so much worse in the new data. The ONS found that far more of the added value from producing iron, for example, was coming from the energy the sector used and there was much less additional value generated by turning it into metal.

By contrast, the wholesale and retail sectors streamlined their cost bases in the Covid period and so produced more value than previously estimated.

Last year's ONS data revisions were almost as large and went in the opposite direction. Had it waited until now, the aggregate changes over two years would have been much smaller.

Many other statistical agencies have not yet produced in-depth analyses of their GDP data for the Covid period and economists expect that they are also likely to log large revisions.

EU data also shows upward revisions from initial Covid-era estimates.

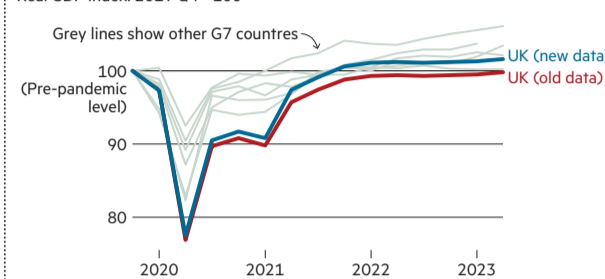
The contraction in the EU in the year to the fourth quarter of 2020 was initially estimated by Eurostat to be 4.8 per cent, but that has been revised up to a decline of 3.8 per cent. In the following four quarters the initial rebound estimate of a 4.8 per cent expansion has been revised to 5.2 per cent.

In the US, the latest analysis of revisions shows little bias in the initial releases. But in general it has tended to revise down its GDP growth rates, unlike European countries.

Rupert Harrison, who was George Osborne's chief of staff when he was chancellor, said that compared with the US, Britain's statistics tended to look bad when first published. "The recovery after 2010 was repeatedly revised up, whilst the US was revised down — we

After revisions, the UK is no longer likely to be a G7 outlier with the worst post-pandemic recovery

Real GDP index: 2019 Q4 = 100



Source: ONS (New UK data splices existing published 2022 and 2023 data onto the revised series from 2019)

**'The declinist narrative about Britain and its long-term prospects is just wrong'**

Jeremy Hunt

now know the two grew the same in 2010 to 2016 but that wasn't the narrative at the time," he said.

This has been a longstanding transatlantic trend. Before the financial crisis, Goldman Sachs calculated that the annualised average quarterly growth figures were revised up by 0.7 percentage points in the UK and by 0.5 points in the eurozone and revised down by 0.3 points in the US.

Despite the scale of the generally rosy UK revisions, economists warned that the big picture of the economy struggling to grow and improve living standards had not changed.

Gregory said: "With the UK still likely to be suffering from a labour supply shortfall, this is no guarantee of future long-term resilience."

George Buckley, chief UK economist at Nomura, said that better performance in the past might leave less room for recovery in future. "It may make a UK recession more of a risk going forward as there's less catch-up [now] to be had," he said.

**FT** BOARD DIRECTOR PROGRAMME

WORKSHOP

## SO YOU WANT TO BE A NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR?

Join a half-day virtual workshop to position yourself for success in non-executive roles

This highly interactive virtual workshop has been designed to help participants gain a better understanding of the role, its duties and liabilities as well as what impactful boardroom behaviour looks like. Our leading experts will demonstrate how to get that all important first role, including presenting your CV for success and interviewing effectively.

Attendance counts as 6 CPD hours of structured learning.

Find out more at [bdp.ft.com](https://bdp.ft.com)

+44 (0) 207 873 4909 | +852 2905 5506

In association with

**CPD**  
MEMBER  
The CPD Certification Service



## INTERNATIONAL

## Ukraine

## Russia launches drone strikes on Odesa

Port area hit as Erdoğan and Putin prepare for Black Sea export talks

JOHN PAUL RATHBONE — ODESA  
ROMAN OLEARCHYK — KYIV

Russian forces launched a massive drone attack on Ukraine's southern Odesa port region yesterday morning, a day before the Turkish and Russian presidents were due to hold talks about restarting the export of grain via the Black Sea.

Moscow pulled out in July from the agreement that had allowed Ukraine to ship grain from Black Sea ports, claim-

ing that a parallel deal to remove obstacles from the export of Russian fertiliser and food had not been honoured. The river Danube has since become Ukraine's main maritime export route for grain. Yesterday's attack, which lasted for more than three hours, hit grain shipping infrastructure on the Danube, injuring at least two people.

"Russian terrorists continue to attack port infrastructure in the hope that they will be able to provoke a food crisis and hunger in the world," Andriy Yermak, chief of staff of Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy, wrote on Telegram. Ukrainian air defence shot down 22 of the 25 Iranian-made Shahed drones, Ukraine's air force said.

Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan hopes to persuade his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, to renew the grain deal at talks that are due to take place today in Sochi.

The original grain deal, brokered by the UN and Turkey in July 2022, had allowed Ukraine to export nearly 33mn tonnes of grains and other commodities from three Ukrainian Black Sea ports.

After Russia refused to renew the deal, Ukraine has steadily increased the amount of grain it exports via the Danube ports, or overland by rail and truck, to about 36mn tonnes.

Kyiv has also tested Russia's de facto blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea by carving out a "humanitarian" corridor, a

route that hugs the Odesa coastline until ships reach the safe waters of Nato members Romania and Bulgaria.

Two commercial vessels transporting metallurgical goods safely completed the trip this weekend, after two grain vessels made the same voyage in mid-August.

"Two more vessels have successfully passed via our temporary Black Sea grain corridor," Zelenskyy said in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter. "Ukraine restores true freedom of navigation to the Black Sea . . . We urge our allies to support our effort by providing more air defence systems. Together, we can protect freedom of navigation in the Black Sea and beyond," he added.

Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine's deputy prime minister, said the two latest vessels were operated by a Singaporean shipping company and had been stuck in Ukrainian ports since before February last year, when Russia launched its full-scale invasion.

Shipping tracking sites showed that one of the ships had docked outside the Romanian port of Constanța while the other had made it to Istanbul.

Although Ukraine is confident that its onshore defence systems — with a range of more than 100 nautical miles — would deter Russia's navy from mounting an assault, only one ship has tried the voyage in reverse, sailing from international waters to Ukrainian ports.

## Germany

## Berlin urged to support struggling construction industry

GUYP CHAZAN — BERLIN

Business groups and economists have called on the German government to intervene to help the crisis-hit construction industry, as a wave of insolvencies claims a growing number of high-profile property developers.

Builders are facing a perfect storm of rising interest rates, more expensive construction materials, a dire shortage of skilled workers and slowing demand for new developments, leading to financing problems across the industry.

"We are at the end of a 10- to 15-year property boom," said Moritz Schularick, head of the Kiel Institute for the World Economy in Germany. "The financial cycle is now such that every day another property developer is going bust . . . The old funding models are no longer sustainable."

Developers filing for insolvency in the past few weeks include Düsseldorf-based Gerch, Centrum Group and Development Partner, as well as Euroboden of Munich and Project Immobilien Gruppe of Nuremberg. Landlords such as Vonovia and Aroundtown have announced big writedowns of their property portfolios.

"With interest rates rising so quickly, a lot of projects are just not profitable any more," said Clemens Fuest, head of the Ifo institute in Munich, a think-tank. "Demand in residential housing has just collapsed."

Some experts think the situation could deteriorate further. "With developers that bet on rising prices I expect to see an increasing number of insolvencies in the market," said Dirk Salewski, head of BFW, the German association of independent real estate and housing companies. "The most highly indebted are the most vulnerable."

The crisis is a problem for Olaf Scholz, chancellor, who came to office vowing to build 400,000 flats a year. Just 295,300 dwellings were built last year and industry executives expect the numbers for this year and next to be even lower.

Ministers have adopted measures to help. Scholz's cabinet passed a €7bn package of corporate tax relief that included new rules on the depreciation of investment costs for builders.

Building minister Klara Geywitz said that should help "really rev up" housing construction. But Salewski of BFW called it a "drop in the ocean".

"It doesn't solve the main problem, which is a lack of liquidity," said Tim-Oliver Müller, head of HDB, the central federation of the German construction industry.

Construction, which accounts for 12 per cent of Germany's gross domestic product and employs nearly 1mn people, is seen as a key pillar of the German economy. But it is stuck in a deep recession.

Only 135,200 flats were permitted in the first six months of this year, 27 per cent or 50,600 fewer than in the same period last year. According to Ifo, in July 40.3 per cent of construction companies complained about a shortage of orders.

Schularick called on the government to intervene in the sector, saying it should usher in a big housing construction programme which would have the added advantage of stimulating Germany's weak economy.

## Front line. War of attrition

## Kyiv gains ground despite doubts about tactics

Military chiefs favour local knowledge over orthodoxy advocated by western allies

JOHN PAUL RATHBONE

Arenosol is a sandy, well-aerated soil that dries quickly. Its presence in land either side of the strategic south-eastern Ukrainian city of Melitopol is one little known reason why Kyiv's counteroffensive may yet have a better chance of success than some of its allies fear.

"It is an example of the importance of local knowledge, the specific situations and context that determine every war," said Mykola Bieliesskov, research fellow at the National Institute for Strategic Studies in Kyiv.

"Because much of the soil in southern Ukraine remains firm even with rain, Ukrainian troops will still be able to manoeuvre through the winter. Time is not necessarily the limiting factor some people believe," he said.

Even as some allies have despaired of the campaign's slow progress, Kyiv's military chiefs argue that such detailed local awareness is key to its counteroffensive, enabling Ukraine to make small but significant gains while saving troops' lives. Dmytro Kuleba, foreign minister, last week went so far as to say that critics of the campaign should shut up.

"It would be helpful if the US had some high-ranking military observers on the ground," said Andriy Zagorodnyuk, Ukraine's former defence minister.

Worries that Ukraine's counteroffensive risks getting literally bogged down have prompted a flush of anxiety this summer, especially in Washington. One criticism is that Kyiv needs to reset its military strategy if it is to make decisive progress and maintain international support before wet weather hinders its forces' ability to attack.

Another is that Ukrainian troops have failed to make best use of the combined arms manoeuvres recommended by western allies, instead falling back on artillery fire to pound Russian positions in an exhausting war of attrition that relies on dwindling supplies of western ammunition. "The tactics have not changed. Our mission has not changed," said Oleksiy Danilov, chief of Ukraine's national security council.

Progress has been painfully slow since Kyiv launched its counteroffensive



On the move: Ukrainian troops enter the village of Robotyne in the region of Zaporizhzhia

Skala/Ukrainian armed forces/Reuters

nearly three months ago. Troops have recaptured only a handful of villages, with daily advances averaging a few hundred metres. One bleak assessment by the US intelligence community leaked in August suggested that Ukrainian forces would fail to reach Melitopol this year. The transit hub, whose recapture would help sever Russia's land bridge through occupied southern regions to the Crimea, is a main focus of the south-eastern campaign.

Yet last week, Kyiv's approach began to show signs of success, after forces penetrated a layer of Russian defences around Robotyne and tested the next line around the village of Verbove. The strategic town of Tokmak lies 20km further on through thick Russian defences, and Melitopol 50km beyond that.

On Friday, John Kirby, the US National Security Council spokesperson, said Ukraine had made "notable progress". The day before, Jens Stoltenberg, Nato's secretary-general, said

Ukrainian commanders deserved the benefit of the doubt and that "we need to trust them".

Fortifications that Russia has built in southern Ukraine present a uniquely formidable obstacle to the blitzkrieg-style rapid manoeuvres that have been advocated by the Pentagon and western military advisers.

Minefields, covered by constant artillery fire and monitored by drones, make it all but impossible for Ukrainian troops to advance — let alone deploy western-supplied main battle tanks and armoured vehicles in fast-manoeuve warfare. Behind the minefields lie trenches and tunnels that allow Russia to move troops, weapons and ammunition along the frontline.

"No western country has fought a war like this since the 1940s and we're seeing some military thinking being applied in a very oversimplified manner," said Zagorodnyuk.

Bieliesskov added: "Manoeuvre war-

'Manoeuvre warfare is not a silver bullet . . . Ukrainians need to fight the way they know how to fight'

of the British establishment had begun to unravel long before, with the crash in August 1997 that ended the life of his beloved son Dodi and Diana, Princess of Wales. Al Fayed subsequently accused the Royal Family of conspiring to murder the princess.

While Al Fayed enjoyed the trappings of upper-class British life — owning houses in Mayfair and in the country, and travelling by helicopter to glittering sporting and social events — he harboured a deep resentment at what he saw as his enduring outsider status.

Al Fayed's upbringing in Egypt was a humble one. As a young man he hustled for cash by selling drinks and sewing machines on the streets of Alexandria. He would go on to develop his family's business interests in several industries.

These ambitions were helped by his professional relationship with Saudi arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi, to whose sister Samira he was briefly married in the mid-1950s. Fayed was married again in the 1980s, to the former Finnish model Heini Wathen, with whom he had four children.

He began his own shipping company in Egypt. The opening of an office in London in the 1960s was the launch pad for his business interests in the UK. He added the "Al" to his name in the 1970s.

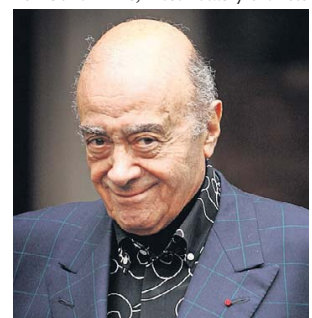
Al Fayed helped the Sultan of Brunei to buy London's Dorchester Hotel. He also acquired trophy assets on his own

account, including the Ritz hotel in Paris, which he bought in 1979.

The acquisition of Harrods in 1985 for £615mn would be his most lucrative investment and one of the most controversial. The deal for the upmarket department store was questioned by Roland "Tiny" Rowland, a rival bidder and long-term adversary, who claimed he had been cheated by Al Fayed.

Al Fayed sought to create a unique retail spectacle at Harrods. In later years, this included an Egyptian room that contained statues of himself and memorials to Dodi and Diana. A Qatari sovereign wealth fund acquired the store for £1.5bn in 2010.

With Dodi, Al Fayed helped finance a number of films, most notably *Chariots*



Mohamed Al Fayed: felt he had been rejected by the British establishment

*of Fire*, which won Best Picture at the 1982 Oscars. He also owned Fulham football club in south-west London between 1997 and 2013, reflecting a lifelong passion for the sport.

He commissioned a statue of Michael Jackson outside Fulham's Craven Cottage ground after inviting the pop star to watch a game. Fans who did not like the statue could, he said, "go to hell".

Shahid Khan, owner and chair of the club, said on Friday: "The story of Fulham cannot be told without a chapter on the positive impact of Fayed as chair. I always enjoyed my time with Fayed, who was wise, colourful and committed to Fulham."

Al Fayed was an admirer of Margaret Thatcher and in the 1980s developed close relationships with Conservative MPs, including two, Neil Hamilton and Tim Smith, who were drawn into the so-called cash for questions scandal.

Hamilton and Smith were said by Al Fayed to have accepted money from him in exchange for helping him in his long-term bid to secure British citizenship. Hamilton later lost a libel case against Al Fayed.

After his death, Michael Cole, Al Fayed's long-term spokesman and friend, said he "was a remarkable man in many ways and did more good in this world than all his mealy-mouthed critics put together".

Daniel Thomas

## Obituary

## The outsider who mixed bravado and provocation

Mohamed Al Fayed

Businessman  
1929-2023

Mohamed Al Fayed once told the Financial Times that when he died he wanted his body on display in Harrods, the London department store he owned, "so people can come and visit me".

The remark, with its mixture of bravado and provocation, was typical of the Egyptian-born businessman who has died at the age of 94. It was tinged with hubris too, for by 2010 he had sold the department store.

In truth, Al Fayed's energetic bid to place himself and his family at the heart

FT FINANCIAL TIMES



## MAKE A WISE INVESTMENT

Choose the Financial Times subscription for you

- React to trusted global news everywhere you go, with ft.com and FT apps
- Get the iconic FT newspaper delivered to your home or office from Monday to Saturday
- Enjoy our award-winning lifestyle journalism with FTWeekend

Subscribe today at [ft.com/subscribe/today](https://ft.com/subscribe/today)



ARCTIC OCEAN



PACIFIC OCEAN



JB  
1735  
BLANCPAIN  
MANUFACTURE DE HAUTE HORLOGERIE

X  
swatch

9.9.2023

ATLANTIC OCEAN



INDIAN OCEAN



ANTARCTIC OCEAN

## INTERNATIONAL

## Film industry

## California counts cost of Hollywood strikes

State economy takes \$5bn hit as support services lose business through dispute

CHRISTOPHER GRIMES — LOS ANGELES

The impact of the Hollywood strikes on California's economy has reached almost \$5bn four months after script writers took to the picket lines. The figure is expected to rise after the latest talks between union representatives and studios ended in acrimony.

The first joint strike by actors and writers in 60 years had closed most Hollywood productions, creating a knock-on effect for caterers, dry cleaners, drivers, rental companies and other

small enterprises that supported the industry, said Kevin Klowden, chief global strategist at the Milken Institute, who conducted the research. "All these different people who provide support services that make productions happen — they're getting nailed," said Klowden, who has been an adviser to the industry and California governors.

With the writers' strike now in its 124th day, the toll on California's economy has eclipsed the \$2.1bn hit from the previous big Hollywood industrial action in 2007-08, when members of the Writers Guild of America walked out for 100 days.

Fiona Ma, California's state treasurer, sent an "urgent appeal" to the major studio heads this week in which she crit-

icised their failure to reach a deal with the unions and urged them to return to the bargaining table. Noting that about 700,000 Californians worked in the entertainment industry, she said the strikes threatened "the stability and value of retiree investments" in the state and called for an end to the stalemate.

The latest standstill has raised concerns that the strikes could continue into the autumn or beyond. There have been no discussions for several weeks between the studios and the 160,000-strong Screen Actors Guild, whose members went on strike in mid-July.

Studios have started to push movie releases into next year, in large part because strike rules prevent actors from promoting their films. Warner Bros has

delayed the release of *Dune: Part 2* starring Timothy Chalamet and Zendaya until next spring. Sony has pushed several films into next year, including *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*, and has taken *Spider-Man: Beyond the Spider-Verse* off its release calendar.

Beyond the direct impact on film and TV releases, the lengthening strikes would have a sizeable effect on Los Angeles's economy, Klowden said, even though Hollywood lagged behind the ports in financial importance.

"The jobs for average people in Hollywood — not the stars — have always been viewed as great middle-class jobs," he said. "When that's disrupted, the ripple effect on LA is more broad."

Among those affected is Gregg Bilson,

president of ISS Group, which provides props and other services to the global film industry. In normal times Bilson's company deals with about 3,000 vendors to supply props — but he is doing business with none of them now.

"That means my employees aren't buying coffees, aren't buying lunches, so the trickle down impact is really tremendous," he said.

When the strikes were resolved, LA's recovery would be "not nearly as fast as you would think", Klowden said. Many actors and writers may find jobs in other cities and would not be available when productions resumed, some crew members may move to other industries and studio space may be limited when the strikes ended.

## Desert downpour

## Thousands of Burning Man festivalgoers stranded in Nevada mud

AMANDA CHU — NEW YORK

Thousands of people attending the Burning Man festival in the Nevada desert have been left stranded after torrential rainfall transformed the US's signature countercultural event into a muddy "hellscape" that could endure for days.

The storms hit Black Rock City, Nevada, on Friday evening, shutting roads and trapping more than 70,000 people in a camping area where food and water are being rationed and portable toilets have stopped functioning.

"It is chaos . . . The [portable toilets] are flooded over and they cannot get the sewage trucks in here," said Kris Edwards, a festival attendee, on TikTok on Saturday. "People are still partying though, you hear it."

Burning Man was once a symbol of American counterculture but has turned into an annual end-of-summer destination for social media influencers and celebrities.

The event is named after the burning of a human effigy on the venue known as the playa, a ritual that has been postponed because of the rain.

Among those attending this year were comedian Chris Rock and Diplo, a DJ. They fled on the back of a pick-up truck after hiking to a freeway, according to a TikTok post from Diplo.

Videos on social media showed other festival-goers trudging five miles through six inches of mud in an attempt to escape the venue before lockdowns went into effect.

"Welcome to Burning Man aka Hellscape," a user named Thatcher posted on TikTok, showing a clip of hundreds of mountain bikes sinking into inches of thick mud.

Organisers urged festival-goers to shelter in place and to conserve food, water and fuel. The local airport is closed and no driving is permitted on the venue except for emergency vehicles.

"Take advantage of a moment of calm to connect with campmates and hunker down," the organisers wrote on X, formerly Twitter, on Saturday morning.

The Pershing County sheriff office, the local police authority, said it was investigating one death. Rain conditions made it "virtually impossible" for vehicles to traverse the playa, the police said. "There is more rain forecast for the next few days which could cause further delays and disruptions for participants attempting to leave the festival," said Pershing County sheriff Jerry Allen.

Attendees were quick to post videos on TikTok and Instagram of conditions over the weekend, including immobilised, sunken SUVs and broken portable toilets. "I've never seen conditions like this — even a nice mountain bike doesn't work," said festivalgoer Marshall Mosher on TikTok yesterday.

The National Weather Service expected rain and thunderstorms to continue into yesterday evening. Some festival attendees say they do not expect to be able to leave until Wednesday.

Angie Peacock, a first-time festivalgoer, assured her followers on TikTok on Saturday that she was alive and dismissed concerns of the conditions at Burning Man. "We're just doing minimal life activities . . . I can probably predict that everybody's gonna get naked and run through the mud," said Peacock, sharing a clip on Instagram hours later of a naked mud run.

## Latin America. Election

## Rightwing radical wins over angry Argentines

Self-styled 'anarcho-capitalist' surges from fringe candidate to frontrunner in presidential race

CIARA NUGENT — BUENOS AIRES

Posters of dozens of severe-looking faces, all belonging to Javier Milei, the frontrunner in Argentina's presidential race, are plastered across a shuttered shop front in Caseros, a lower middle-class Buenos Aires suburb a mile from where the free-market economist grew up.

Inside the headquarters of a small libertarian campaign group, Gabriel Muñoz, a 45-year-old railway worker, said mismanagement by Argentina's politicians had driven the country to economic ruin — pushing inflation to 113 per cent and the poverty rate over 40 per cent this year — and converted him into a diehard Milei fan.

"We railwaymen used to have a barbecue three times a week, now it's once a fortnight. And I'm lucky — I see more and more people eating from the trash," said Muñoz, who is running for a seat on the town council.

"It's become common to call Argentina a shitty country. But it's only our politicians that have made it shitty," he added. "Milei knows how to fix it."

Before his shock victory at the August 13 nationwide primary, which serves as a dry run for October's election, most pollsters had considered Milei — an eccentric former TV commentator and self-described "anarcho-capitalist" who wants to dramatically shrink the state and dollarise Argentina's stricken economy — as a fringe player.

But Milei's 30 per cent of the primary vote suggests a significant chunk of the population no longer trusts Argentina's establishment blocs — the ruling populist Peronist coalition, which scored 27 per cent, or the pro-business opposition Juntos por el Cambio (JxC) on 28 per cent — to address chronic national dysfunction.

"There is an entire generation who have never seen the country [do well] economically and that frustration has led us here," said Juan Negri, a politics professor at Torcuato di Tella University in Buenos Aires. "There are plenty of Argentines who want something new."

In October Milei's main rivals will be JxC's Patricia Bullrich, a rightwing former security minister, and Sergio Massa, the centrist economy minister.

Milei's Libertad Avanza party won the



Primary winner: Argentine presidential candidate Javier Milei, centre, at a business event in Buenos Aires last month

Agustín Marcariani/Reuters

most votes in 16 of Argentina's 24 regions. Analysis of voting districts suggests Milei did well in both working class areas and well-heeled neighbourhoods. He scored slightly higher in areas with a younger demographic.

Alejandro Stemke, 20, who studies politics and works in his family's sandwich shop, said the key to creating jobs was Milei's plan to reform strict labour laws and slash the tax-to-gross domestic product burden — the highest in Latin America after Brazil, according to the OECD club of mostly rich countries.

Late last month the IMF approved a \$7.5bn disbursement from its current \$44bn loan agreement, despite the failure by Buenos Aires to meet key targets, to prevent the country falling into arrears before October's elections. Argentina is the fund's largest debtor.

After the economy, voters rank crime and corruption as their main concerns, polls suggest. Milei's hardline rhetoric — he has promised "zero tolerance" for criminals and punishment for the "murderous" political class — strikes a chord with Julian Victor, a middle-aged

Uber driver, who said his three teenage children had all been mugged recently for their mobile phones. "The rest of the parties are all corrupt, and too soft on the gunmen and motorcycle thieves who are running all over the place."

October's vote will be closely fought, though most polls say Libertad Avanza has widened the three percentage point gap to JxC and the Peronists since the primary. The presidential election normally sees a 5 per cent increase in participation from the primary, and attention will now shift to those voters and the 7 per cent that backed smaller parties that will almost certainly not make it to a November run-off.

Milei's primary voters were unlikely to abandon him now, said Juan Cruz Diaz, managing director of Cefedidas, a political advisory group. "Even if some people were voting as a protest against the establishment, the fact that he won legitimises him. That makes the 30 per cent more of a floor than a ceiling."

In Caseros, some voters who did not plump for Milei in the primary are intrigued by his radical policies. Cris-

'There is an entire generation who have never seen the country [do well] and that frustration has led us here'

tina, a middle-aged pharmacist, said she was still weighing what to do in October.

"Milei has a lot of good proposals," she said, citing his education plan, which involves reallocating state resources that normally go to public schools to a voucher system, enabling parents to choose which school their child attends. "But I don't like what he said on organs," she added, referring to several interviews in which Milei has voiced support for legalising the sale of human organs to reduce transplant waiting lists.

Ana Iparraguirre, a political consultant at GBAO, a strategy firm in Washington, said Milei's campaign and his performance at presidential debates in October would determine whether he attracted enough new converts to reach a run-off. "That said, it would be very difficult for him to not make it to a [run-off]," she added.

If the run-off was against Bullrich, Cristina said she wasn't sure what she'd do. "But if it's against the Peronists, I'll vote for Milei," she said. "I wouldn't think twice."

Short shrift on bonds Page 8

## Clean energy

## Hydrogen spinout tests the ground for Australia's hopes of industrial transformation

NIC FILDES — WOLLONGONG

The steelworks that overshadows Wollongong's beachfront relies on the coal and iron ore at the heart of Australia's resource-rich economy. Now the town south of Sydney is a proving ground for Australia's hopes of an industrial transformation based around hydrogen.

Next to the steelworks, Hysata, a university spinout, has converted an 8,000 sq m building to make electrolyzers, which separate hydrogen from water, both for export and to support Australia's need to develop hydrogen fuel for industrial use.

Hysata, with backers including Vestas, the Danish wind turbine developer, and IP Group, a British venture capital firm, expects commercial rates of production by 2025. It is a rare example of an Australian company looking to become a vital part of the manufacturing segment of the energy supply chain in an economy more accustomed simply to exporting its natural resources.

Chris Bowen, the energy minister,

announced A\$20mn (US\$13m) of government funds for Hysata at the plant's opening. "Hysata is a case study of what this region can achieve," he said.

Australia has talked for years about becoming a leader in the global supply of hydrogen, based on its potential to process it using abundant renewable energy. Exports of "green" hydrogen, made by passing water through a renewable energy-powered electrolyser, could offset expected long-term declines in sales of coal and natural gas.

But the country has made little progress to date in securing investment needed for a hydrogen sector, and is now coming up against determined efforts by other governments to develop cleaner energy. They include America's Inflation Reduction Act, US president Joe Biden's clean energy subsidy launched last year, while countries including India and China have announced bold hydrogen plans.

Alison Reeve, the former head of Australia's hydrogen task force and now at the Grattan Institute think-tank, said

the country had missed its window to get a head start.

"Australia talked a big game in hydrogen. We've got lots of lovely slide decks with 3D renderings but we haven't built that much," she said.

Australia's previous conservative government backed hydrogen production as a policy but maintained its support

for the fossil fuel sector, including coal.

The Labor government, which was elected last year, set new climate goals for the country, backed broader investment in renewable energy and gave hydrogen a more central role in the energy transition. One intention is that towns such as Wollongong will be able to bid for funds from a A\$2bn "Hydrogen

Headstart" programme, included in the 2023 budget, to support hydrogen production.

The government also said in August that it was preparing its own version of the US subsidies to stimulate more investment in clean energy projects.

Bowen said that by 2050 Australia's hydrogen industry could generate A\$50bn in additional gross domestic product and create more than 16,000 jobs. Highlighting that 40 per cent of hydrogen projects in the world are in Australia, he said the country needed to capture more value from the energy supply chain.

Domestic investment would be only part of the puzzle. While pilot projects to ship liquefied hydrogen to Japan have already taken place, the best way for Australia to export hydrogen remains unclear because of the cost and complexity of the process.

One option is to mix green hydrogen with nitrogen to create "green" ammonia that is easier to export, due to the high cost of shipping liquefied hydro-



Old and new: Wollongong steelworks cloaks the Hysata site — Brook Mitchell/Getty Images

Opinion page 23

INTERNATIONAL

Monetary policy

# Cooling US economy gives Fed breathing room on rates

COLBY SMITH — WASHINGTON

New data confirming that the world's largest economy is cooling has given the US Federal Reserve room to hold interest rates steady, economists say, even as it leaves open the possibility of resuming a historic monetary tightening campaign later in the year.

Friday's US jobs report, which showed the unemployment rate ticked up in August while a healthy 187,000 jobs were added, marked the latest evidence that the economy, while still resilient, is beginning to cool as consumers and businesses confront higher borrowing costs.

The new data comes less than three weeks ahead of a crucial Fed policy meeting when chair Jay Powell and officials will decide whether they have squeezed the economy sufficiently to bring historically high inflation back under control, after raising the benchmark interest rate to a 22-year high.

The Fed is widely expected to waive an interest rate increase at the September gathering, leaving the federal funds rate between 5.25-5.5 per cent.

"The Fed doesn't need to be extremely aggressive any more," said Gargi Chaudhuri, head of iShares investment strategy Americas at BlackRock. "Now is the time to just let restrictive rates continue to work as they have been."

Coupled with an inflation report on Thursday showing that price rises have slowed despite brisk consumer spending on everyday items and services this summer, economists and investors say the US central bank can afford

to wait before inflicting more pain on the economy.

"There's really no reason for them to deliver more tightening at this point," said Jan Hatzius, chief economist at Goldman Sachs. "It makes a lot of sense to stay on hold for potentially quite a long time."

If the Fed forgoes a September increase, it would maintain the gradual pace of tightening begun this summer, when the central bank ended 10 consecutive months of rate rises by pausing in June and opting for a quarter-point rate rise in July.

"It almost feels like the Fed can have its cake and eat it too, lowering inflation without causing too much damage in the labour market," said Blerina Uruçi, chief US economist at T Rowe Price.

While the "benign" economic data affirmed her call that the central bank can pass up a September move, she is still braced for further tightening later this year.

"There are reasons to be cautiously optimistic, but the data has behaved in such unusual ways that we have to recognise that there is a lot of uncertainty around what happens next," said Uruçi.

Powell has warned that inflation remains "too high" and that further tightening could be needed. Future decisions would be made "carefully" and reflect the "totality" of data, he said at the Fed's annual symposium in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Officials are now trying to balance the risk of squeezing the economy too hard and causing undue economic pain, with the risk of allowing inflation to remain too high for too long.



## Slowing down China decline sends ripples across Asia

Drop in demand: shoppers at a mall in Pudong's Lujiazui financial district in Shanghai  
Oilai Shen/Bloomberg

China's slowing growth is sparking warnings of contagion in Asia, as waning consumer demand and slower manufacturing hit regional countries with close ties to the world's second-largest economy.

A manufacturing decline in South Korea has extended to the longest in nearly half a century, while other big exporters in east Asia are also being hit by slow demand. South Korea, Asia's fourth-biggest economy, is viewed as a bellwether for the region's technology supply chain.

The country's exports fell in July at the steepest pace in more than three years, led by smaller shipments of computer chips to China, while purchasing managers' indices on Friday showed that factory activity fell in August for the 14th consecutive month, the longest drop in the survey's history.

Readings in Japan, where activity dropped for the fifth month in a row, and Taiwan also indicated contracting factory output and noted weaker foreign demand.

Concern has intensified in recent weeks after the Chinese economy retreated into deflation, fuelling fears over soft consumption, a weakening currency, a shaky property sector and unsustainable levels of local government debt.

In a sign that slowing global demand is further dragging on the Chinese economy, the country's manufacturing sector contracted for a fifth straight month in August, official data showed on Thursday.

Australia's economy has proved resilient during a period of trade tension with China, which had applied tariffs on goods ranging from coal to barley to lobsters, many of which have been unwound in 2023.

However, the country now appears vulnerable to its largest trading partner's economic malaise, with the Australian dollar dipping to its lowest levels against the US dollar in 10 months as expectations of China's growth have been scaled back.

Vietnam, a key exporter of garments and textiles, footwear and wood items

as well as electronics, reported that second-quarter exports fell 14 per cent from a year earlier, indicating an industrial production slowdown this year.

Malaysia's growth rate dropped to its slowest in nearly two years, data this month showed, as it too confronted the slowdown led by its main trading partner.

Thailand's economy also grew at a much slower pace than expected for the second quarter, hit by domestic political instability and lower levels of tourism from China.

While Asia is facing immediate pressure, Gavekal analysts warned that more pain was coming for other regions too.

"As China's economy weakens, foreign suppliers that grew fat supplying raw materials and machinery face lean times. The cratering of China's property market will not quickly reverse, and conditions may worsen before they improve," they said.

FT reporters

FT Weekend Festival

Headline partner

BANK OF AMERICA

DID YOU MISS THE FTWEEKEND FESTIVAL?



Watch all sessions on demand:  
[ft.com/festival](https://ft.com/festival)



Featured speakers include:



Be inspired by

Global festival partner

Festival partners

Festival friend



You're hired! Apprenticeships for boardroom roles are one way of gaining a diversified pool of directors → WORK & CAREERS, PAGE 18

# Companies & Markets

## China's race to build battery plants spooks global rivals

- State subsidies fund rapid expansion
- Rerun of steel and solar growth push

HARRY DEMPSEY — LONDON  
EDWARD WHITE — SEOUL

China is building battery plants far beyond levels needed to meet domestic demand for electric cars and grid energy storage, underlining vast state subsidies and unchecked bank lending that are expected to underpin the international expansion of Chinese manufacturers.

Production capacity at China's battery factories is expected to reach 1,500 gigawatt hours this year — enough for 22mn EVs — more than twice demand levels, forecast at 636GWh, according to data from CRU Group, a research firm.

Battery manufacturers were follow-

### 'Many manufacturers are overproducing and continuously building up their stocks'

ing a pattern exhibited in other sectors such as steel, aluminium and solar panels, industry executives warned, where Chinese companies benefited from subsidies to take a huge share of the global market and squeeze out competition internationally.

"We are worried," said Olivier Dufour, co-founder of Verkor, a French battery start-up backed by Renault. "What I see there is very similar to what I knew in aluminium. It's more than preoccupying," added Dufour, a former executive at mining company Rio Tinto.

Regions of China are racing against each other to take advantage of government subsidies and become production epicentres for batteries in anticipation of surging future demand, risking a glut of production.

The battery production rush has concerned Chinese leader Xi Jinping, who warned the industry in March about the risk of overexpansion and the potential for a boom and bust cycle, which has

befallen some fast-growing Chinese industries, including property and solar.

Sam Adham, head of battery materials at CRU Group, said Chinese battery production at roughly 550GWh last year outpaced the 450GWh that went into end products and were exported. "Many manufacturers are overproducing and continuously building up their stocks," he said.

Based on announcements to build battery plants, the overcapacity is set to surge to nearly four times what the country needs by 2027, its data shows, and twice the volume of what China's entire car fleet would need to go completely electric by 2030.

According to one senior western motor industry executive in China, manufacturers' expansion plans are "totally unrealistic" and have come despite hopes of industry consolidation. Now, as overcapacity issues worsen, there is a risk that more companies turn to exports, in line with the solar industry, and add to geopolitical tensions between China and the west.

In a presentation to EU officials seen by the Financial Times, Verkor warned that a 500GWh supply gap in Europe in 2030 could be "compensated" by 1,100GWh of overcapacity in China.

Patrik Andreasson, vice-president of strategy and sustainability at Northvolt, the Swedish battery manufacturer, warned that Europe's grid energy storage sector was particularly vulnerable to Chinese exports. "A large import of Chinese, low-budget batteries would decrease" Europe's sustainability ambitions and "probably be seen as a strategic mistake", he said.

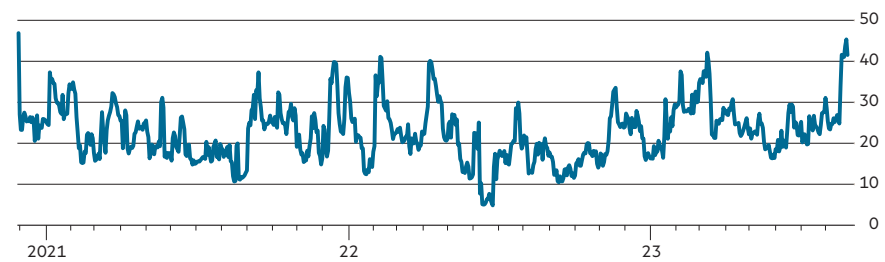
While China is likely to face obstacles in flooding the global market with battery exports, its battery makers are being incentivised to set up locally because of protective policies and incentives in Washington and Brussels.

Additional by Gloria Li in Hong Kong

## Short shrift Political uncertainty fuels sharp rise in wagers against Argentine bond issues



Hedge funds crank up bets against Argentina's bonds  
Market value on loan (\$mn)



Source: S&P Global Market Intelligence

MARY MCDUGALL

Hedge funds have upped bets against Argentina's bonds as the emergence of radical rightwing candidate Javier Milei has sparked investor fears that the country is on course to elect a leader who will struggle to govern in the throes of an economic crisis.

The total value of Argentina's bonds borrowed by investors to wager on a fall in prices has jumped 65 per cent since Milei, a self-described "anarcho-capitalist", won a primary poll last month ahead of a presidential election in October.

His plans to cut public spending and dollarise Argentina's ailing economy have shaken the country's fixed income and currency markets. The value of short positions against Argentine bonds lent by international custodian banks is \$41mn, a sharp increase from \$25mn ahead of the mid-August vote, according to data from S&P Global Market Intelligence.

While the numbers are small com-

pared with the overall value of Argentina's debt, the surge comes despite the fact the bonds already trade in deeply distressed territory.

Caution from international investors comes after a period of turmoil for Argentina's teetering economy. Inflation is running above 113 per cent, foreign exchange reserves are at dangerously low levels and the peso has lost more than half of its value against the dollar over the past 12 months.

"Given the Argentine dire macroeconomic situation, there is no room for errors," said Alejandro Arevalo, head of emerging markets debt at Jupiter Asset Management.

He added that investors were worried about the difficulty Milei would have implementing much-needed reform policies without a majority in Congress or backing from Argentina's powerful labour unions, as well as execution risks with Milei, an inexperienced and radical leader.

"The question is not so much whether the proposed reductions in

public spending will trigger social protests, but rather how Milei will react to these protests," Arevalo said.

Investors say the most market-friendly candidate is the more moderate rightwing Patricia Bullrich, who is also proposing a programme of fiscal consolidation. While Milei said he would dramatically cut government spending, his radical stance has raised concerns over the feasibility of his proposals.

The primary election result has also extended a period of political paralysis. With the electorate split roughly three ways between Milei voters, the mainstream centre-right party and those of the incumbent populist Peronists, October's election is hanging by a thread and analysts say a run off in November is a near certainty.

Investors are worried about what could happen in Argentina between now and November, as the devaluation of the exchange rate puts even more pressure on the country's spiralling inflation problem.

## Prudential chief maps expansion plan in Africa

IAN SMITH — LONDON  
KAYE WIGGINS — HONG KONG

Prudential's new chief executive has said Africa presents the same long-term growth prospects as its markets in Asia, signalling that expansion in the continent would be the next roll of the dice for the FTSE 100 insurer after a drawn-out exit from its US and European operations.

Anil Wadhvani, who announced last week that he would "do things differently" at the insurance group, said the drivers of growth in Africa were "very similar" to those the group has experienced in its core Asian markets, with fast-growing populations and rising appetite for insurance.

"We believe that over a period of time, Africa will provide us with that growth opportunity, as the markets mature, as the customers get a lot more aware of wanting and needing insurance as part of their protection, health coverage, as well as savings needs", he said.

Over the next five to 10 years, said Wadhvani, Africa could be "absolutely a growth engine that could complement" the growth in its Asian business. He pointed to Vietnam, which has grown from a small operation to one that provided \$298mn of sales last year, or 7 per cent of the group total. "If I could find the next Vietnam in Africa, that would be awesome."

Wadhvani began his role in February, but has started publicly outlining his plans for Prudential only in the past week, after the company published half-year results.

Prudential has been through a transformation in recent years, shedding its businesses in the UK and the US following pressure from shareholders to focus on faster-growing markets in Asia. It completed the restructuring in 2021.

That left it with a large exposure to Hong Kong and China at a time when Covid-19 restrictions cut off an important revenue stream, in stopping mainland Chinese customers from crossing the border to buy insurance policies in Hong Kong.

Prudential operates in eight African countries, where sales increased by a double-digit percentage in the first half of this year. But the entire continent provided just 3 per cent of 2022 sales. Wadhvani highlighted Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia as examples of countries that could provide outstanding growth.

## Technology. Augmented reality

### Magic Leap looks to optics for turnaround

Start-up gains competitive edge in manufacturing knowhow as rivals such as Apple enter fray

PATRICK MCGEE  
PLANTATION, FLORIDA

Magic Leap, the augmented reality company, is seeking to mount a turnaround on the back of its high-tech optics at a time when larger rivals such as Meta and Apple are entering the market.

The Florida-based start-up was valued at \$6.4bn in 2018, having secured funding from investors including Alibaba, Google and Qualcomm. But poor sales of its consumer-oriented headsets led to lay-offs, a restructuring and a pivot to business customers.

Its valuation fell to \$2bn by late 2021, when Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund bought a controlling stake in the company, infusing it with more cash and taking total funding to \$4bn.

Since then, the company appears to have stumbled into a new revenue line: manufacturing and licensing the intellectual property for components crucial in AR devices that overlay images upon real-world surroundings.

"The highest value, the hardest and most complex area, is the optics," said Peggy Johnson, who led business development at Microsoft before taking on the role of Magic Leap chief executive in 2020. "And it's hard to replicate. So we're getting interest from the industry in our IP, our manufacturing knowhow, our capabilities and our high-yield rates."

While Magic Leap said it could not comment on specific partners, the com-

pany said it had signed commitments to license its IP and to manufacture optics for "multiple" companies.

The Financial Times reported in June that Facebook parent Meta, which has spent \$10bn a year on projects to create an avatar-filled "metaverse", had held talks with Magic Leap to manufacture optics for its future devices.

The company said its focus was still on its own headset, the latest of which starts at \$3,299, but this new line of business could be significant.

Apple, Microsoft and Snap are all in various stages of developing AR glasses, a product widely understood to be more difficult to make than virtual reality headsets. Google killed its decade-long Glass project in March but is reportedly still hoping to build an AR software platform, while Microsoft has recently downsized its HoloLens team.

Apple has reinvigorated enthusiasm for the sector after unveiling its Vision Pro headset, a "mixed reality" device that can fully immerse users in a digital world or show a video feed of their real surroundings containing other digital images. The long-term goals of the Big Tech companies are to make much slimmer AR glasses, which may need to utilise technology pioneered by groups such as Magic Leap.

LexisNexis Intellectual Property, a group that measures the "competitive impact" of filed patents, gives Magic Leap an industry-leading score for the mixed-reality sector of 9.5, roughly double that of Microsoft and four times that of Meta.

"At the core, they have an optics system that is significantly ahead of everybody else's, and they have the patents to support it," said a person familiar with

Magic Leap's tech. "Whether they can turn that into a business or not is Peggy Johnson's challenge."

How much this lead matters remains to be seen. Company executives admit the AR industry is still in the "brick" stage of development — a reference to early mobile phones.

Jeri Ellsworth, chief executive of Tilt Five, a 3D gaming company that makes its own AR glasses, called Magic Leap "one of the worst offenders out there for overhyping what the device could actually do". She said she was not convinced its optics were leagues better than the competition.

Magic Leap declined to comment on its revenues or how many units the Magic Leap 2 headset had sold since becoming available last year. Two people close to the company said that while sales numbers were unimpressive, what would matter was if the company could secure enterprise clients who were still testing its headsets and might find future uses. Its factories have the capac-

ity to build optics for 3mn devices a year, far above current demand.

Magic Leap argues that new uses will come from both its software and hardware. Already, its advances have allowed the product to shrink from what was once, in 2012, an unwearable prototype the size of a fridge, to a reasonably comfortable headset linked to a hip-based pack offering more than three hours of battery life.

Those advances are on display at its 250,000 sq ft headquarters in Plantation, Florida, which sits atop five factories where core parts of the manufacturing process are completely automated. Some of the manufacturing takes place in "clean rooms", exploiting fabrication techniques more commonly associated with semiconductors. For instance, the glass "lens" — technically a "liquid crystal on silicon" display — is etched with tiny patterns 3,000 times thinner than a human hair that allow images to be projected into the wearer's field of vision.

"Those diffractive structures are what allow us to take a projector pointing towards the world and essentially steer the light back into your eyeball but still allow you to see the real world so it's a transparent display," said Scott Carden, head of eyepiece engineering.

As tech companies come under pressure to shorten their supply chains following the coronavirus pandemic and to de-risk their exposure to China, Magic Leap's factories in Florida are proving to be an asset, according to Johnson. "[Having factories in the US is] not only an advantage technically, because our engineers sit upstairs and the manufacturing plants are two floors down, but in this environment it's definitely an advantage," she said.



Focal point: the US business says headsets remain its core interest

Presented by **FT LIVE** In partnership with **TRW**  
A Financial Times company

## THE GLOBAL BOARDROOM

7th Edition: Strategies for Growth and Disruption

8-10 November 2023  
Digital Conference

Join leading voices from government and business

**Petr Pavel**  
President,  
Czech Republic

**Olivér Várhelyi**  
Commissioner for  
Neighbourhood  
and Enlargement,  
European Commission

**Tom Alweendo**  
Minister of Mines  
and Energy,  
Republic of Namibia

**Henadi Al-Saleh**  
CEO,  
Agility

**Adena Friedman**  
President and CEO,  
Nasdaq

**Alex Baldock**  
Group CEO,  
Currys

REGISTER NOW  
Scan here to register for free

Gold sponsors: Chevron, IFC, LUXEMBOURG FOR FINANCE

Silver sponsors: Baker Hughes, BeiGene, Bupa, Deloitte, mashreq



## COMPANIES &amp; MARKETS

# Och's fight against Sculptor sale takes ugly turn

Board accuses founder of seeking retribution after his tax affairs became entwined in attempt to clinch \$639mn deal

SUJEET INDAP, ORTENCA ALIAJ  
AND ANTOINE GARA — NEW YORK

Sculptor Capital Management explicitly warned investors ahead of its 2007 initial public offering that “conflicts of interest” stemming from a complicated ownership structure could one day pit the hedge fund’s billionaire founder Daniel Och against public shareholders.

That theoretical tension has turned very real in recent weeks as Sculptor — worth \$12bn when it listed — aims to sell itself to real estate specialist Rithm Capital for a fraction of the sum.

Och this month attacked the \$639mn transaction as bad for shareholders, accusing the board of breaching its fiduciary duty by selling Sculptor on the cheap.

The board has fired back, insisting that it struck the best deal possible and alleging that Och has undermined the company out of his own self interest.

The ugly dispute underscores how Wall Street firms dominated by big personalities can have an awkward existence as public companies. It involves complex partnership units and tax agreements that are common among the private asset managers that have listed over the past 25 years.

The latest twist in the saga came late last Wednesday, when Sculptor said it rejected a rival bid to Rithm led by billionaire hedge fund managers including Boaz Weinstein of Saba Capital and Pershing Square’s Bill Ackman. The group had boosted its offer to \$12.76 a share, compared with the \$11.15 a share agreed with Rithm.

Och, a former star trader at Goldman Sachs, co-founded what was then known as Och-Ziff Capital Management in 1994 as a hedge fund investing across debt, equity and global macro. Its assets eventually peaked at \$50bn.

But disappointing results followed the global financial crisis and investor enthusiasm for hedge funds waned. In 2016, the firm paid \$412mn to settle charges of bribery in several African countries, which it now says led to Och’s removal as chief executive and Och-Ziff’s rebranding as Sculptor.

In a scorching letter released last week, Sculptor accused Och of orchestrating a campaign of “retribution” and a “well-publicised, years-long smear campaign against the company’s management” since his exit. The firm said Och had taken home \$3.3bn in profits and dividends even as Sculptor’s share price collapsed by 96 per cent.

In an earlier securities filing, Sculptor detailed a year-long process to find a buyer for the hedge fund amid what its board said was Och’s distracting meddling. Sculptor said Och had demanded outsized personal payouts and that his and other founders’ “economic interests diverge in certain respects from those of a public company shareholder”.

The alleged divergence largely stems from layers of partnership units held by Och and other founders that remained in place after the Och-Ziff IPO. Och and other founders owe tax liabilities on their units, costs not borne by public holders of Sculptor’s common stock.

The IPO structure used at Och-Ziff was replicated by several private capital managers and boutique investment banks, crystallising wealth for their founders but also complicating a potential sale down the road.

Several bidders initially made offers for the firm as a whole, but they could



Daniel Och, left, co-founded the hedge fund Sculptor, whose plan to sell itself to real estate specialist Rithm Capital has drawn a bid from investors including Boaz Weinstein, right  
FT montage/Bloomberg/Getty Images

not provide a per-share bid because they were unable to count the number of Sculptor’s underlying shares, according to the securities filing.

“The alphabet soup of units was a real issue,” said one deal adviser to Sculptor. “Bidders all had the wrong share counts and no understanding of how those things work. When they saw how the payout waterfall works, they’d be like, ‘I have a ton of different units I didn’t know about and that I have to pay up for.’”

Victor Fleischer, a tax law professor at the University of California at Irvine, told the Financial Times that US investors were more accustomed to traditional corporations that offered more recourse for minority shareholders.

“Publicly traded partnerships have much more complicated structures and may not provide the same level of protection that corporate shareholders receive,” he said.

The board launched its auction at a time when Och was also criticising the company over Sculptor chief executive Jimmy Levin’s pay, which totalled \$146mn in 2021. The securities filing described “alternative transaction

‘[Och has] a \$170mn reason to ensure he blocks the deal [and] for Rithm to pay him to go away’

approaches” and “inducements” aimed at winning Och’s support for a deal.

In one concession, Rithm offered Och and the other founders the chance to keep or “roll over” their stakes in Sculptor’s “class A” partnership units, which would spare Och from a large tax on capital gains. But Rithm says it is no longer contractually bound to the rollover now that the Och group has publicly criticised its deal.

Rithm will also separately assume \$173mn that Sculptor will be obliged to pay Och and other fund founders over

several years under what is known as a tax receivable agreement. Under the terms of the transaction, Sculptor realises corporate tax deductions when Och swaps his partnership units into common stock. Under the TRA, Sculptor pays Och as compensation for the tax benefits from the exchange of units into shares.

Sculptor’s proxy filing said that Och had considered supporting a Rithm buyout, but demanded that it “pre-pay a significant portion” of the \$173mn and “reimburse the [Och] group for histori-

cal legal fees”. This week Sculptor disclosed that the Och group had already reaped \$150mn in TRA payments since the firm’s IPO.

Rithm has assumed the obligation to pay the \$173mn even if it does not ultimately generate enough income to need the tax deductions. Still, Och would prefer to have at least a portion of the sum made immediately upon the deal closing, according to securities filings and people familiar with the matter.

“He’s got a \$170mn reason to ensure he blocks the deal [and] for Rithm to pay him to go away,” said an adviser to Sculptor. “If you’re sitting there and Rithm is saying ‘I’d like you to support the deal’, these are all parts of the play.”

A representative for Och denied that his personal financial priorities were influencing his public campaign against the Rithm deal, which he has described as the product of a “breach of fiduciary duty” by the Sculptor independent directors.

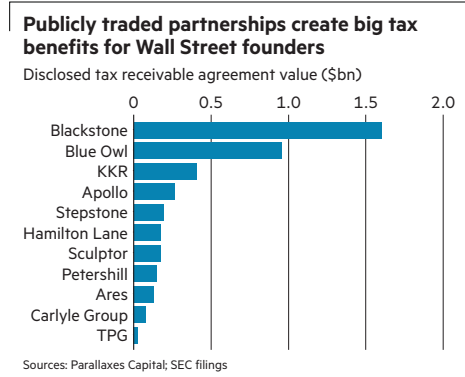
“It is outrageous that the special committee continues to restrict the [Och group] and other parties from engaging in discussions that could surface a higher offer that would benefit all shareholders,” the representative said.

This week Och demanded that Sculptor release previous bidders from confidentiality agreements in order to spark rival offers and pushed for detailed records on how Sculptor conducted the sale process.

Both Sculptor and Och each say they have made big concessions in order to ease a sale for common stockholders.

Sculptor’s current management said in the securities filing that it had given up \$112mn of special class of partnership units they had previously been granted, while Levin had reduced his upcoming pay as well.

A representative for Och said that the founders, including Och himself, gave up \$600mn of equity in a 2019 restructuring intended to put the fund on a firm footing following the Africa bribery scandal and allow it to add and retain new talent.



## Pharmaceuticals

### Roivant rejects founder’s criticism of FDA

JAMIE SMYTH — NEW YORK

US biotech company Roivant Sciences has moved to distance itself from its founder, Vivek Ramaswamy, after the Republican presidential contender alleged that the US Food and Drug Administration was “corrupt” and said it should be gutted.

Matt Gline, Roivant’s chief executive, told the Financial Times that Ramaswamy was no longer associated with running the company following his decision in February to stand down as chair to run for president.

“Vivek and I are different people,” Gline said in an interview. “Vivek is not associated with Roivant right now other than as a shareholder.”

Vivek’s views on FDA are different than my personal views on FDA and different than Roivant’s views on FDA. We have an enormous amount of respect for FDA as our regulator,” he added.

The comments from Gline, a former Goldman Sachs banker who replaced Ramaswamy as Roivant’s chief executive in 2021, come as the company’s subsidiary, Dermavant, prepares to ask the FDA to approve a drug to treat eczema. The skin cream Vtama and another



Vivek Ramaswamy: presidential contender called the FDA ‘corrupt’

Roivant-backed drug in development targeting bowel disease could become multibillion-dollar opportunities if the FDA gives them the green light, according to Jefferies, an investment bank.

Ramaswamy, who owns 7 per cent of Roivant, has enjoyed a bump in Republican primary polls in recent weeks, but remains in third place behind former president Donald Trump and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis.

The 38-year-old former biotech entrepreneur, whose campaign for the White House is based on a pledge to vanquish the “woke left”, lashed out at the FDA in a video posted to X, formerly Twitter, last month.

“When it comes to agencies like the FDA, boy, do I know their corruption,” Ramaswamy said. “One agency I have been waiting for a long time to expose and to ultimately gut, is much of the FDA itself.”

Ramaswamy’s criticism of the FDA has alarmed some former colleagues, who note the candidate’s near-\$1bn personal fortune was based mainly on drug approvals by the regulator.

“It marks to me a deep hypocrisy,” said Don Berwick, a former administrator of the US Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, who resigned from Roivant’s advisory board in 2021.

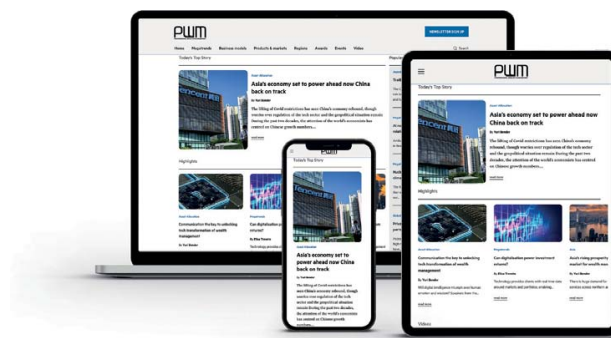
Ezekiel Emanuel, a bioethicist and vice-provost for global initiatives at the University of Pennsylvania, told the FT that Ramaswamy’s comments on the FDA were “outrageous”.

“Maybe he never heard of Thalidomide and the need to protect Americans from promising but ultimately dangerous drugs,” said Emanuel.

Ramaswamy has dismissed Berwick’s criticism as “politically motivated”, pointing out that he headed up the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid during Barack Obama’s administration.

The FDA did not reply to a request for comment.

**PWM**  
PROFESSIONAL WEALTH MANAGEMENT



### The insights you need to succeed in global wealth management

PWM, a publication from the Financial Times, is read by the founders of family offices, private banking bosses, and senior executives at fund houses.

We focus on the ‘megatrends’ that define business models in private banking, portfolio management and wealth services. These include the rise of the ‘global family’, digital transformation, ESG investing and geopolitics.



Scan here or visit  
pwmnet.com

## COMPANIES &amp; MARKETS

## Technology

## YouTube staff fear decline of longer videos

Ad revenue under threat as audiences are drawn to platform's Shorts offering

CRISTINA CRIDDLE

Senior staff at YouTube have expressed concern that Shorts, the Alphabet-owned company's answer to short-form video app TikTok, risks cannibalising its core business.

Shorts has amassed more than 2bn users since its launch in 2021 but has drawn away audiences from traditional longer videos on the platform, according to people familiar with the figures.

Recent YouTube strategy meetings have discussed the risk that long-form

videos, which produce more revenue for the company, are "dying out" as a format, according to these people.

Consumers have turned to short-form video, a move driven by phone usage and the exponential growth of TikTok, particularly among the younger generation. In October last year, YouTube reported its first-ever quarterly decline in advertising revenue since the company started giving its performance separately in 2020. In the following two quarters, the platform reported further falls compared with the same periods the previous year.

But in July, YouTube announced that ad sales rose 4.4 per cent to \$7.7bn in the second quarter. This made up around 13 per cent of Google's ad revenue. Despite

this recent uptick, YouTube staff have expressed concern over internal company figures that suggest content creators are making fewer long-form videos – driven by a lack of consumer appetite and commissions from brands that favour short-form content for product placement.

At one meeting, a senior staff member likened the trend of fewer people watching longer videos on YouTube to how people were reading fewer books, because it required more time and focus.

YouTube said Shorts was "designed to complement, not compete with, all the other formats creators use" on the platform, such as audio and livestreams.

"We've been very pleased with its ini-

tial success. This is not a zero-sum game," it said, adding that offering different mediums created "a virtuous cycle that drives new viewers to different formats".

Rival and older social media companies, including YouTube and Instagram owner Meta, launched their short-form offerings in 2021. Joseph Teasdale, head of tech at Enders Analysis, said that because of the threat from TikTok, YouTube was "pushing Shorts in front of its billions of users, even at the expense of ad revenue. It's a defensive move".

Longer videos mean more opportunities to serve advertising and have a higher click-through rate on adverts to e-commerce sites, according to people familiar with YouTube's business.

YouTube has tried to win over new creators with payment mechanisms that are more lucrative than TikTok's and by offering editing tools within the platform.

The video division has enlisted the help of its parent company's AI branch, Google DeepMind, to design artificial intelligence solutions that create cost savings and performance improvements for the platform, such as faster video compression before users can post a video.

However, less than 10 per cent of creators use YouTube's in-app editing tools for Shorts, according to one person familiar with the figures. The platform also downgrades videos that are posted with TikTok branding.

## Racial equality

## Campaigner sues law firms over diversity programmes

JOE MILLER — NEW YORK

The architect of the Supreme Court victory against affirmative action at US universities is now targeting recruitment practices at the nation's largest law firms, in a strategic ploy that could pave the way for broader challenges to corporate America's diversity and inclusion schemes.

Edward Blum, a conservative campaigner who in June won a decades-long battle to end racially conscious admissions at US colleges, has already sued global firms Perkins Coie and Morrison Foerster, arguing that prestigious fellowships designed to attract "historically under-represented" applicants are illegal. He told the Financial Times he was gearing up to potentially file lawsuits against similar firms "over the next few weeks".

While other activists, including Stephen Miller, a former adviser to Donald Trump, have led efforts to sue over diversity practices at larger companies such as Kellogg's, Starbucks and Target, Blum has focused his efforts on the legal profession.

"Over the past 10 years, especially with [the murder of] George Floyd – the tragedy of that – we saw corporations initiating racially exclusive hiring promotion policies, policies in which managers' bonuses were tied to specific racial outcomes in their hiring and promotion," Blum said.

If law firms "are compelled to open these internships up to all races and ethnicities, then it must follow... that corporations that have had nearly identical racially exclusive quota programmes in their employment endeavours must also end their practices", Blum said.

The challenges are the latest front in a legal battle over the legitimacy of corporate diversity programmes and have become a talking point among conservative hopefuls for the Republican party presidential nomination. Blum's new organisation, American Alliance for Equal Rights, went after Perkins Coie and Morrison Foerster because they were "crystal clear" about the criteria for their diversity fellowships.

In a statement, Perkins said it planned to fight the suit: "As a firm, we have been a leader in efforts to promote diversity, equity and inclusion in the legal profession. Our commitment to those values remains steadfast." Morrison Foerster did not respond to a request for comment.

The lawsuits against the two firms are based in part on a Civil War era statute, Section 1981, which prohibits racial discrimination in contracts by public and private bodies.

They do not rely directly on June's 6-2 Supreme Court decision in Students for Fair Admissions vs Harvard, which declared decades-old admissions policies unconstitutional.

But a concurring opinion from conservative justice Neil Gorsuch in that case – in which he stated that "it is always unlawful to discriminate among persons even in part because of race, colour or national origin" – had created "a pathway [from challenging] the use of race to achieve diversity in college admissions to [challenging] the use of race to achieve diversity in corporate hiring and promotion etc," Blum said.

## Market questions. Week ahead

## Investors keep close eye on US mortgage rates

## Will US mortgage rates remain above 7 per cent?

If the average cost of a new US home loan stays above 7 per cent for a fifth week, it will be equal to the most painful run for homeowners since January 2002.

Mortgage rates have doubled since the Federal Reserve began tightening monetary policy 18 months ago, but rising borrowing costs have not had the expected effect of cooling house prices, which would have made moving more affordable.

Because most US homeowners hold 30-year fixed-rate loans, they have in effect been trapped in their properties by existing low rates. Roughly three-quarters are paying less than 4 per cent, JPMorgan estimated recently.

Mortgage costs are being watched closely by investors who have enjoyed gains of more than a third by backing leading homebuilders this year. That market has benefited from higher demand for new houses because of the limited supply of existing ones.

The latest data from the Mortgage Bankers Association, covering the week to September 1, is due on Wednesday. Rates stood at 7.31 per cent in the week to August 25, and should have eased slightly as Treasuries rallied, pushing yields on 10-year notes to a three-week low. *Jennifer Hughes*

## Have Canada and Australia finished raising rates?

The Bank of Canada and Reserve Bank of Australia kick off September's central bank meetings, with markets betting that they will set the tone by pausing rate rises as monetary policymakers in the western world reach the twilight months of an aggressive rate raising campaign.

The Bank of Canada, which delivered a 0.25 percentage point increase at its last meeting, is expected to hold rates at 5 per cent on Thursday despite recording stronger-than-expected inflation of 3.3 per cent in July. Swaps markets are pricing an 80 per cent probability that Canada's central bank will hold rates, with a slowdown in economic growth and a rise in jobless rates seen as outweighing concerns over a resurgence in inflation.

Similarly the Reserve Bank of Aus-



A home for sale in Fairfax, Virginia. Mortgage rates have doubled since the Fed began tightening monetary policy 18 months ago.

Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/

AFP via Getty Images

tralia is expected to keep its key interest rate at 4.1 per cent for the third month running. Australia's inflation rate fell more than expected in the year to July, bringing the headline rate to 4.9 per cent. On top of cooling price growth, unemployment also increased 0.2 percentage points to 3.7 per cent in July.

Markets are pricing in a near certainty that the RBA will hold rates next week. But analysts at ING expect a further rate rise this year, noting insufficient signs that inflation will cool to 2 per cent in the coming months.

The central bank decisions come in a week where traders have pared back expectations of rate rises elsewhere. Markets are now betting that the Federal Reserve and European Central Bank are both likely to have finished raising rates. *Mary McDougall*

## Will Turkey's lira strengthen?

Turkey's lira has already lost more than half of the gains it made after a sharp boost in interest rates – a break with years of unorthodox policy as the country's new economic team attempts to tackle its outsized inflation problem.

The lira rose close to 6 per cent against the dollar last week after Turkey's central bank raised its one-week repo rate by 7.5 percentage points to 25 per cent, bringing the country's interest rate to nearly triple the level of when President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was re-elected in May and appointed a new central bank governor.

But the currency has since slid more than 3 per cent, bringing it back close to historically low levels. Turkey's inflation rate jumped to almost 50 per cent

'With inflation at 50%, [Turkey's] central bank raising rates to 25% has no meaning at all in real terms'

in the year to July, boosted by the lira's weakness pushing up the cost of imports.

Under the direction of new finance minister Mehmet Şimşek, Turkey has abandoned its costly defence of the lira and allowed the currency to plummet more than a fifth against the dollar since the end of May.

Analysts say that the lira will continue to depreciate until investors have confirmation that Turkey's central bank is committed to further monetary tightening. "The recent hike is very positive but not positive enough," said Cagri Kutman at KNG Securities. "The next central bank meeting will be key. With inflation at 50 per cent, the central bank raising rates to 25 per cent has no meaning at all in real terms – they are still deeply negative." *Mary McDougall*

## Retail. Growth plans

## Aldi thinks big with Winn-Dixie and Harveys shopping spree

## Discount grocer's acquisitions underpin change of direction as it seeks expansion in US

LAURA ONITA — LONDON  
ALEXANDRA WHITE — NEW YORK

Aldi has been on a shopping spree in the US. Earlier this month, it announced that it would buy the Winn-Dixie and Harveys supermarket chains, expanding in a market where big stores still reign supreme.

The deal shows a change in direction at the business. After it opened its first US store in 1976, Aldi became known for selling cheap own-brand products in small shops – the antithesis of a giant store stocked with tens of thousands of branded goods.

With its takeover of Southeastern Grocers, which owns Winn-Dixie and Harveys, it is moving into more conventional supermarket territory.

"Everyone is kind of jostling to scale," said Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData Retail. "It's not only Aldi doing this deal, you've got Kroger and Albertson looking to merge."

Commanding a large chunk of the market was important in a highly competitive sector where profit margins are wafer-thin, he added.

The deal underpins Aldi's growth plans: it hopes to have 2,400 stores across 38 states by year end, excluding the 400 it just bought. It is one of the fastest-growing supermarket chains in the US.

The discounter, which started life in Germany in the 1960s, also appears to have succeeded where other foreign rivals failed.

"It's difficult for international grocery stores because you're met with more scepticism and you need to build brand loyalty," said John Clear, a consumer and retail director at consultancy Alvarez & Marsal.

The US market has been particularly difficult for UK retailers. Tesco, for example, retreated in 2013 after its Fresh & Easy chain failed to take off. Customers were not keen on some of its pre-packaged produce; own-label ranges fell flat and self-pay checkouts confused customers. The exit cost Tesco \$1.6bn.

In 1988, Marks and Spencer bought Kings, a US supermarket chain, which was later sold for a fraction of its pur-

chase price. Sainsbury's sold its Shaw's Supermarkets chain to Albertson's in 2004 in the face of rising competition.

Nor has rival German discounter Lidl found the market easy. It let go of around 200 employees in February and US chief executives have come and gone at a speedy rate – five in 10 years. Store openings, the only way to grab meaningful market share, remain slow at fewer than 200 since it set up in the US in 2015. "A lot of the locations they opened were less than ideal, they have been inconsistent with store design unlike Aldi... and I don't believe they have given their chief executives enough time or back-up to really learn the US mar-

ket," said industry veteran Phil Lempert.

Aldi's US boss Jason Hart, he added, had been in the industry for a long time. Hart has been Aldi's US CEO since 2015.

Being privately owned also allows Aldi to plan its next steps without external pressure from shareholders.

"They were able to spend a lot of time early on figuring out what areas work for them, the real estate portfolio they need, the type of customers they're going to target and the type of competitors that they're successful against," said Clear. "They know what they're good at."

Overall visits to Aldi increased 30.8

per cent between the fourth quarter of 2019 and 2022, according to data provider Placer.ai. Although much of the rise was because of an expansion in store numbers, the average number of visits to each store increased 9.3 per cent over the past three years, Placer.ai said.

The economic environment also offers opportunities, as more consumers look for bargains amid persistent inflation, particularly for groceries.

"Aldi sees the current time as being an ideal opportunity for them to expand because of the cost of living prices and consumers trading down to value," said Saunders. "It would be foolish not to take advantage."

Lempert agreed: "Of course the economy has helped bring more shoppers to Aldi but it's the quality of the products and consistently lower prices that keep them coming back."

A sign of the times, the fastest growing brick and mortar stores in the US are discount retailers Dollar General, Dollar Tree and Five Below.

Aldi is not far behind and ranks among the top 10 retailers for new store openings this year, according to CoreSight Research.

In Winn-Dixie and Harveys' south-



Competitive edge: an Aldi store in Pflugerville, Texas. The German chain is succeeding in the US where foreign peers have failed — Brandon Bell/Getty Images

## UK COMPANIES

## Shipping

## P&amp;O drifts as low-cost rivals steam ahead

Ferry group's cargo share has plunged since its 2019 takeover by DP World

OLIVER TELLING

P&O Ferries has lost significant ground in the UK freight market since it was acquired by its Dubai owner, according to new analysis that underlines the pressures that pushed the company to sack hundreds of crew last year.

The UK shipping group, which caused a political storm with the sackings, has come under criticism again after

announcing it had been forced to close its Liverpool to Dublin service.

According to MDS Transmodal, a shipping consultancy, P&O was responsible for 34 per cent of the cargo capacity scheduled to travel between Kent and northern France in the third quarter this year on roll-on, roll-off vessels that carry passengers and heavy goods vehicles. This was sharply down from 2019, the year DP World took over P&O, when the ferry company had roughly two-thirds of the share.

Over the same period, P&O's share of shipping capacity for the North Sea trade between the UK and Europe has

almost halved from 17 per cent to 9 per cent. Its share of capacity between Great Britain and the island of Ireland has dropped from 27 per cent to 18 per cent.

The decision to close the Liverpool to Dublin route, which P&O said was made after Peel Ports, which operates Liverpool port, decided "not to renew its contract" and left "no viable alternative", will further hit the shipping services offered by the ferry group.

"P&O is no longer a major player in European ferry trade," said Mike Garratt, chair of MDS Transmodal. "You have to look at who is buying new ships. [With the exception of two new ships on

the Dover to Calais route], it's not P&O."

The data shows how P&O has faced increasing competition from low-cost operators such as Irish Ferries. After entering the key Dover to Calais trade route in 2021, the company is now responsible for up to 25 per cent of shipping capacity on the short straits.

P&O said it would be "misleading" to judge business performance by its shipping capacity. The ferry industry has long struggled with overcapacity and P&O said it was "better matching capacity to demand" to trade more efficiently than its rivals. The company said that this year it was moving an average of 92

freight units per shipment, compared with 70 in 2022. P&O added that while capacity had fallen, it remained the leader for trade between Dover and Calais, delivering up to 46 per cent of freight volumes so far this year.

P&O's profitability has also been dealt blows by Brexit, which led to EU-bound cargo being diverted from the UK, and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which hit demand for passenger transport.

Losses before tax more than tripled to £374.5mn in 2021, the most recent year that it has reported results.

Additional reporting by Simeon Kerr

## Banks

## Goldman's London office culture under scrutiny in health lawsuit

JANE CROFT

The workplace culture at Goldman Sachs's London office is set to come under scrutiny in a high-profile £1mn lawsuit brought by a former executive. He claims his role triggered mental health issues and alleges the bank had a "dysfunctional" workplace with meetings characterised by "high emotions, often tears".

Ian Dodd, 55, former global head of recruiting at Goldman Sachs International, is suing the bank in London, claiming that his role affected his mental health as he was "working excessive hours", according to High Court documents. Dodd started work at the Wall Street company's London office in November 2018 but became unwell in 2019 and left in 2021. The bank denies his claim and is defending the case.

A case management hearing has been scheduled for December, which is likely to set down a timetable for trial. Goldman has filed a detailed defence at the High Court denying Dodd's claims.

"As with many workplaces, there were occasions when colleagues were upset, for a variety of reasons (sometimes unconnected with work and sometimes connected with work), but it is denied that such instances were frequent or usual", Goldman's defence filing reads.

"It is denied that there was a 'culture of divisiveness' or unpleasant infighting at the defendant, whether as alleged or

The bank denies Dodd's claims that 'sobbing through meetings' was 'common behaviour'

at all", the bank's defence document continues. It also denies Dodd's claims that "sobbing through meetings" was "common behaviour" or that there was a "consistently high level of emotion" running through team meetings.

The lawsuit comes amid heightened scrutiny of Goldman's working environment, which has prompted the bank to instigate changes. Goldman last year told senior bankers they would be allowed to take as much holiday as they want so they can "rest and recharge".

In its defence document, Goldman points out that Dodd wrote to his line manager in November 2018 that while his first few days had been intensive, they had "reaffirmed why Goldman Sachs is a wonderful place for me to be right now".

In the document the bank claims that Dodd "was not required to work excessive hours", adding that Dodd was "provided with appropriate reasonable advice and support", and it denied Goldman "knew or ought to have known that the claimant was becoming unwell".

Goldman claims that colleagues had urged Dodd not to overwork and one had told him to reduce his travel and put time in his diary to go to the gym.

Goldman said in a statement to the Financial Times: "We believe these claims are completely without merit."

Matthew Tomlinson, lawyer and head of serious injury at law firm Slater and Gordon who is acting for Dodd, confirmed the December listing but declined to comment further, citing the ongoing litigation.

## Financials. Wealth management

## St James's Place faces pressure to revive its model

Investors fear impact of curbs on fees at time of weakened client inflows and share price

SALLY HICKEY AND STEPHEN MORRIS

For much of the past quarter century St James's Place was a stock market darling as it rose from a start-up based in the Cotswold Hills to the largest wealth manager in the UK.

But the past two years have been bruising. About half its market value, or £3.8bn, has been wiped out as client inflows have slowed, several of its biggest funds have underperformed and regulators have cracked down on inappropriately high fees.

Now the FTSE 100 company is preparing for a change in leadership, appointing headhunter Russell Reynolds Associates to find a successor to chief executive Andrew Croft, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

Crunch interviews are to be held this week. Mark FitzPatrick, a former chief executive of Prudential, is the frontrunner to replace him, although others are also being considered. FitzPatrick and SJP declined to comment on the process.

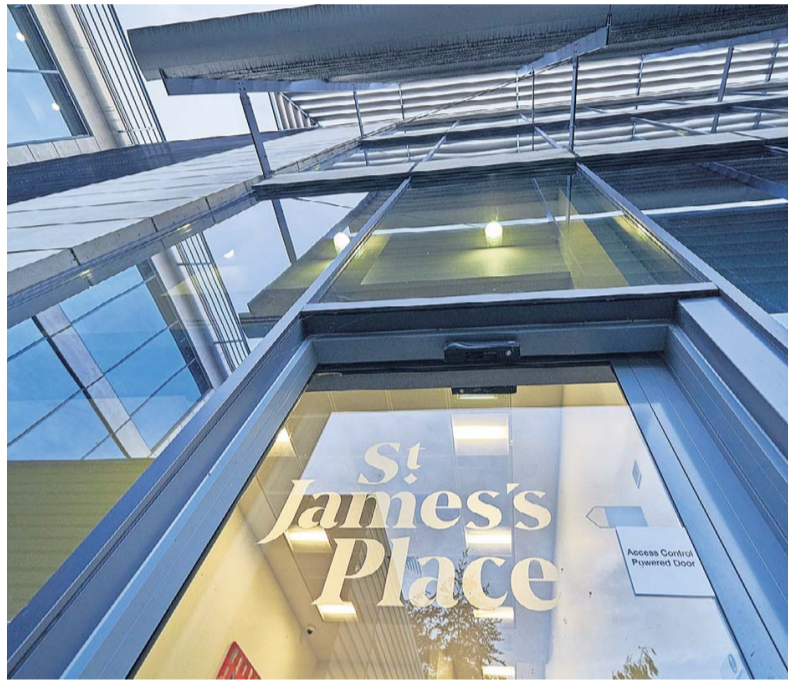
Among the priorities for an incoming chief executive will be managing scrutiny of the company's fees. St James's Place said in July it would reduce some of its charges in response to the Financial Conduct Authority's "consumer duty" regime, broad rules that require financial services companies to deliver "good outcomes" for customers.

A chunk of SJP's 941,000 UK clients should benefit from lower annual fees. But investors worry that a lucrative business model serving well-heeled clients, many of whom lack experience managing investments themselves, is unravelling. The company produces most of its profits from annual charges.

Founded in 1991 as J Rothschild Assurance, the company launched on the stock market six years later through a reverse takeover of St James's Place Capital. SJP, headquartered in Gloucestershire, has since become a powerhouse with £158bn of funds under management and a network of almost 4,800 advisers offering wealth management and tax planning.

SJP advisers can recommend only the company's investment products, in contrast to independent financial advisers, who have no such restrictions.

Whether clients benefit from the arrangement is unclear. SJP's figures show that 41 per cent of UK clients' assets under management were in funds



The Cirencester headquarters of St James's Place. A sell-off in recent weeks has left the shares trading near three-year lows — Gareth Iwan Jones

www.garethiwanjones.com

that delivered "insufficient value" last year. Last month, six of its funds with a combined £29bn under management were included in Bestinvest's twice yearly "Spot the Dog" report that identifies the worst-performing funds over a three-year period.

Some clients complain SJP's fee structure has long confused them. One said he encountered "obfuscation" when he asked for a breakdown. "It was never entirely clear," he said. A former SJP adviser said "[SJP] advisers do not understand it either."

The company said it conducts training with its advisers to ensure they understand the charging structure and how to explain it to clients.

SJP charges 4.5 per cent upfront for initial advice, as well as 0.5 per cent annually. Investment and product charges are additional. After a client has been with St James's Place for six years, the company applies an annual "product management" fee of up to 1 per cent. Last month, SJP reduced this to 0.85 per cent, although only those who have been with the firm for at least a decade — about 65,000 — will benefit.

UBS analysts estimate the reduction will reduce the group's earnings 8 per cent, or £40mn, next year.

The tacit admission that some of its fees do not represent "good value"

under the new FCA criteria is the latest reputational hit to SJP.

The company was forced to overhaul pay and perks three years ago after the Sunday Times reported advisers received lavish rewards, including cruises, for hitting sales targets. There is also disquiet over executive pay: 22 per cent of shareholders voted against a £3.1mn package in 2022 for Croft.

Returns for shareholders in SJP, whose board is led by former Prudential chair Paul Manu, are also under the spotlight.

Nasib Ahmed, an analyst at UBS, said the company had been seen as "dependable" in the City. But he now expects SJP to miss some of the financial targets it set in 2021.

The company had intended to increase "new business", a measure of inflows, 10 per cent on average each year until 2025, but Ahmed forecasts it will achieve only 7.5 per cent.

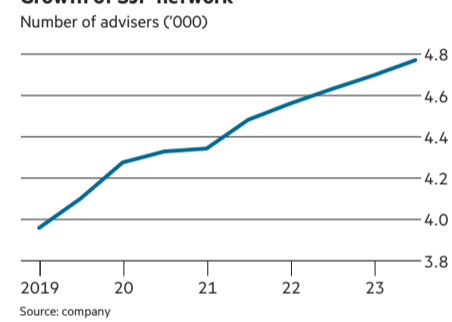
While SJP's shares reached an all-time high at the start of last year as customers ploughed in savings accumulated during pandemic lockdowns, they lost ground as that effect waned. Net inflows in the six months to the end of June dropped 58 per cent year on year.

The sell-off in recent weeks has left the shares trading near three-year lows. Costs are only part of the equation for

## Market value of St James's Place



## Growth of SJP network



The tacit admission that some fees do not represent 'good value' under the new FCA criteria is the latest blow

clients, said Mike Barrett, director at the Lang Cat consultancy.

"It is about the trust and the relationship and the piece of mind," Barrett pointed out. "That's what [SJP] is good at."

SJP boasts a high retention rate, which stood at 95.6 per cent in the first half of the year. Consultants said exit charges put customers off leaving, however.

Clients are subject to exit fees starting at 1 per cent, which in some cases can be applicable for the first 11 years. Total charges can be as high as 7.5 per cent if customers withdraw their money in the first year.

The FCA declined to comment on SJP's fees. The regulator said that generally, financial products must "provide fair value".

The company said "feedback has been they [clients] understand the early withdrawal charge". Croft added exit fees were justified given that the company manages long-term investments that are not intended to be redeemed early.

But while strengthening asset prices after the financial crisis made SJP clients willing to stomach the fees, some analysts warned they could be less likely to do so if they see persistent declines in portfolio values.

Additional reporting by Laura Noonan

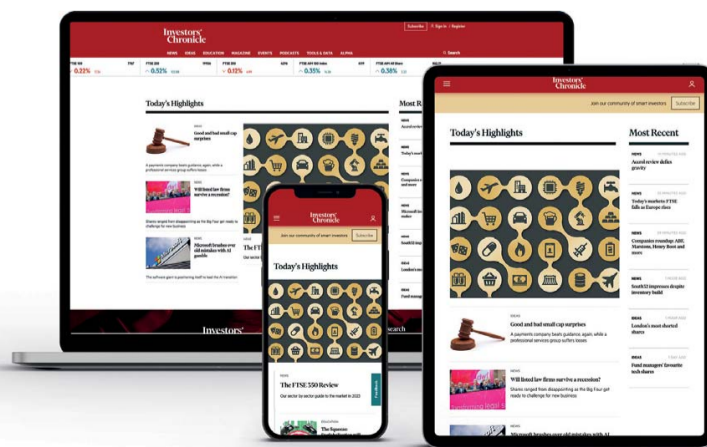
## Investors' Chronicle

## Register now for free

Get access to three\* online articles a month by registering to Investors' Chronicle.

Our comprehensive news and analysis of the UK stock market will give you the ideas and guidance you need to manage and protect your portfolio.

Join us now:  
investorschronicle.co.uk/signup



\*Excluding Alpha, Opinion and Ideas articles

MARKET DATA

WORLD MARKETS AT A GLANCE

Change during previous day's trading (%)



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

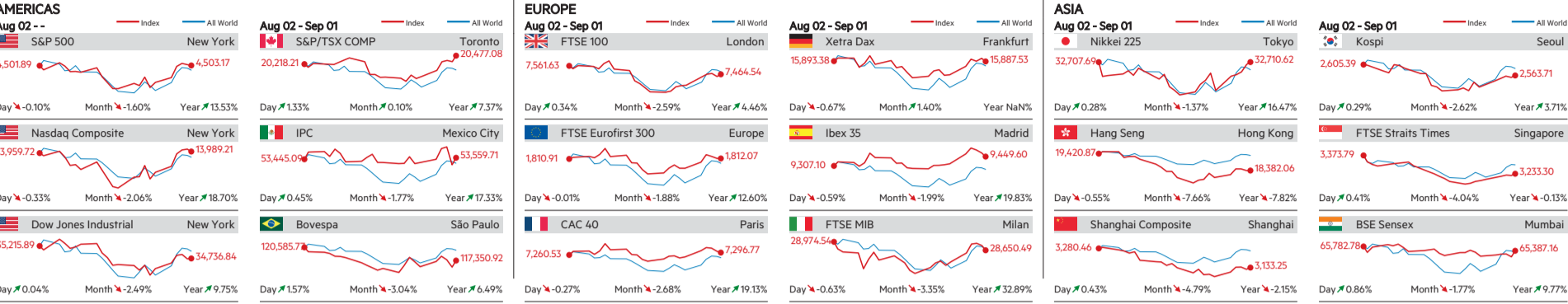


Table with columns for Country, Index, Latest, and Previous values for various global stock indices.

(c) Closed, (u) Unavailable, (f) Forecast, (v) Subject to official confirmation. For more index information please see www.ft.com/worldindices. A fuller version of this table is available on the ft.com research data archive.

STOCK MARKET: BIGGEST MOVERS

Table of stock market biggest movers, categorized by region: AMERICA, LONDON, EURO MARKETS, TOKYO, and ASIA.

UK MARKET WINNERS AND LOSERS

Table of UK market winners and losers, listing stock names, price changes, and percentage movements.

CURRENCIES

Table of currency exchange rates for major currencies including Dollar, Euro, Pound, and others.

FTSE ACTUARIES SHARE INDICES

Table of FTSE Actuaries Share Indices, showing performance metrics for various actuarial funds.

FT 30 INDEX

Table of FT 30 Index components, listing stock names and their respective values.

FTSE SECTORS: LEADERS & LAGGARDS

Table of FTSE sectors, identifying leaders and laggards in various industry groups.

FTSE 100 SUMMARY

Table of FTSE 100 Summary, providing a detailed overview of the index's performance and constituent stocks.

FTSE Sector Indices

Table of FTSE Sector Indices, showing performance for various industry sectors.

UK COMPANY RESULTS

Table of UK Company Results, listing earnings, dividends, and other financial metrics for major UK firms.

UK RECENT EQUITY ISSUES

Table of UK Recent Equity Issues, detailing new bond and equity issuances.

UK STOCK MARKET TRADING DATA

Table of UK Stock Market Trading Data, showing volume, turnover, and other trading statistics.

UK RIGHTS OFFERS

Table of UK Rights Offers, listing companies with upcoming rights issues.

Data provided by Morningstar unless otherwise noted.

All data provided by Morningstar unless otherwise noted. All elements listed are indicative and believed accurate at the time of publication. No offer is made by Morningstar or the FT. The FT does not warrant or guarantee that the information is reliable or complete. The FT does not accept responsibility and will not be liable for any loss arising from the reliance on or use of the listed information.

For all queries e-mail ft.reader.enquiries@morningstar.com

Data provided by Morningstar | www.morningstar.co.uk



Figures in £m. Earnings shown basic. Figures in light text are for corresponding period year earlier. For more information on dividend payments visit www.ft.com/marketsdata. Pricing price: Issue price. \$When issued. Source: Annual report/prospectus available at www.ft.com/ft. For a full explanation of all the other symbols please refer to the FT.com Share Service notes.

MARKET DATA

FT500: THE WORLD'S LARGEST COMPANIES

Table with 10 columns: Stock, Price/Week, High, Low, Yld, P/E, MCapm. It lists the top 500 companies globally, categorized by country (Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, UK, USA, Vietnam, etc.).

FT 500: TOP 20

Table with 10 columns: Stock, Price, Prev price, Day change, Week change, Month change. Lists the top 20 companies in the FT 500 index.

FT 500: BOTTOM 20

Table with 10 columns: Stock, Price, Prev price, Day change, Week change, Month change. Lists the bottom 20 companies in the FT 500 index.

BONDS: HIGH YIELD & EMERGING MARKET

Table with columns: Issuer, Red date, Coupon, Ratings, Bid price, Bid yield, Mth's spread, Day's chge, Mth's yield, Spread vs US. Lists high yield and emerging market bonds.

BONDS: GLOBAL INVESTMENT GRADE

Table with columns: Issuer, Red date, Coupon, Ratings, Bid price, Bid yield, Day's chge, Mth's yield, Spread vs US. Lists global investment grade bonds.

INTEREST RATES: OFFICIAL

Table with columns: Sep 01, Rate, Current, Since, Last. Shows official interest rates for various countries.

INTEREST RATES: MARKET

Table with columns: Sep 01, Over, Night, Day, Week, Month, One, Three, Six, One Year. Shows market interest rates for various terms.

BOND INDICES

Table with columns: Index, Day's change, Month's change, Year change, Return 1 month, Return 1 year. Lists bond indices and their performance.

FTSE

Table with columns: Index, Day's change, Month's change, Year change, Return 1 month, Return 1 year. Lists FTSE indices and their performance.

CREDIT INDICES

Table with columns: Index, Day's change, Month's change, Year change, Return 1 month, Return 1 year. Lists credit indices and their performance.

BONDS: INDEX-LINKED

Table with columns: Price, Yield, Prev, Month, Value, Stock, Market, No of stocks. Lists index-linked bonds.

BONDS: TEN YEAR GOVT SPREADS

Table with columns: Bid, Spread, Yield, Bid, Yield, Bid, Yield. Lists ten-year government bond spreads.

VOLATILITY INDICES

Table with columns: Index, Sep 01, Day Chng, Prev, 52 wk high, 52 wk low. Lists volatility indices.

BONDS: BENCHMARK GOVERNMENT

Table with columns: Red Date, Coupon, Bid, Bid yield, Day chg, Wk chg, Mth chg, Yld chg. Lists benchmark government bonds.

GILTS: UK CASH MARKET

Table with columns: Sep 01, Price, Yield, Day, Week, Month, Return, High, Low, Amnt. Lists UK cash market data.

GILTS: UK FTSE ACTUARIES INDICES

Table with columns: Sep 01, Day's chg, Month's chg, Year's chg, Return 1 month, Return 1 year, Return 1 year. Lists UK FTSE actuaries indices.

Yield Indices

Table with columns: Sep 01, Aug 31, Yr ago, 20 Yrs, Return 1 month, Return 1 year, Return 1 year. Lists yield indices.

Real yield

Table with columns: Sep 01, Dnr yrs, Previous, Yr ago, Sep 01, Dnr yrs, Previous, Yr ago. Lists real yield data.

United States

Table with columns: Sep 01, Dnr yrs, Previous, Yr ago, Sep 01, Dnr yrs, Previous, Yr ago. Lists United States data.

COMMODITIES

Table with columns: Commodity, Price, Change, Price, Change. Lists various commodities and their prices.

Precious Metals (PM London Fix)

Table with columns: Metal, Price, Change, Price, Change. Lists precious metals prices.

Commodities

Table with columns: Commodity, Price, Change, Price, Change. Lists more commodities.

\*Available to Premium subscribers



Advertisement for FT.com/newsletters, featuring the text 'SWAMP NOTES' and 'The FT's newsletter on US politics and power. Sign up now at ft.com/newsletters'. It includes the Tradeweb logo and a 'POWERED BY MORNINGSTAR' badge.

FINANCIAL TIMES SHARE SERVICE

Main Market

Main Market table with columns for Sector, Price +/- Week, 52 Week High/Low, and Vol. Includes sub-sections like Aerospace & Defence, Automobiles & Parts, Banks, Chemicals, Construction & Materials, Electronic & Electrical Equipment, Financial General, Health Care Equipment & Services, House, Leisure & Pers Goods, Industrial Engineering, Insurance, Media, Mining, Pharmaceuticals & Biotech, Real Estate, Retailers, Support Services, Tech - Software & Services, and Telecommunications.

AIM

AIM table with columns for Sector, Price +/- Week, 52 Week High/Low, and Vol. Includes sub-sections like Aerospace & Defence, Banks, Chemicals, Construction & Materials, Electronic & Electrical Equipment, Financial General, Health Care Equipment & Services, House, Leisure & Pers Goods, Industrial Engineering, Insurance, Media, Mining, Pharmaceuticals & Biotech, Real Estate, Retailers, Support Services, Tech - Software & Services, and Telecommunications.

Investment Companies

Investment Companies table with columns for Conventional (Ex Private Equity), 52 Week High/Low, and Vol. Includes sub-sections like Conventional - Private Equity, Discretionary Unit Fund Mgrs, and Discretionary - Property ICs.

Tech - Software & Services table with columns for Sector, Price +/- Week, 52 Week High/Low, and Vol. Includes sub-sections like Computer, Database, ERP, CRM, and SaaS.

Travel & Leisure table with columns for Sector, Price +/- Week, 52 Week High/Low, and Vol. Includes sub-sections like Airlines, Hotels, and Travel Services.

Morningstar logo and data provided by Morningstar text.

Guide to FT Share Service

For enquiries about the FT Share Service pages e-mail ft.reader.enquiries@morningstar.com. All data is as of close of the previous business day.

FT Weekend advertisement featuring 'Start your weekend thinking' headline, 'Read things differently with the weekend's clearest view on the world, plus uncover the new and noteworthy in art, culture, style and travel.' and 'Pick up your copy this weekend or subscribe online at ft.com/subscribe today'.



## MANAGED FUNDS SERVICE

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Kleinwort Hambros Bank Limited						
5TH Floor, 8 St James's Square, London, SW1Y 4JU						
Dialing and enquiries: 033 0024 0765						
<b>Authorised Inv Funds</b>						
<b>Unit Trust Manager/ACD - Host Capital</b>						
HC Kleinwort Hambros Growth A Acc	242.93	-	0.42	1.36	1.87	2.83
HC Kleinwort Hambros Growth A Inc	220.41	-	0.38	1.38	1.87	2.83
HC Kleinwort Hambros Equity Income A Inc	91.70	-	0.72	3.06	-1.59	6.42
HC Kleinwort Hambros Equity Income A Acc	187.94	-	1.48	4.50	-1.59	6.43
HC Kleinwort Hambros Multi Asset Balanced A Acc	171.99	-	0.35	0.81	0.64	0.27
HC Kleinwort Hambros Multi Asset Balanced A Inc	162.56	-	0.32	0.81	0.64	0.27
HC Kleinwort Hambros Fixed Income A Acc	123.89	-	-0.03	3.44	-10.06	-2.73
HC Kleinwort Hambros Fixed Income A Inc	93.86	-	-0.02	3.44	-10.06	-2.73



**LAZARD**  
ASSET MANAGEMENT

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Lazard Fund Managers Ltd (1200)F						
P.O. Box 364, Darlington, DL1 9RD						
Dealing: 0870 6066408, Info: 0870 6066459						
<b>Authorised Inv Funds</b>						
<b>Lazard Investment Funds (OEIC) B Share Class</b>						
Developing Markets Acc	116.74	-	0.23	0.52	4.85	-2.79
Emerging Markets Acc	370.59	-	0.28	4.69	4.68	8.81
Emerg Mkts Inc	277.44	-	0.21	4.92	4.68	8.81
European Alpha Acc	109.90	-	-0.48	1.14	16.93	6.84
European Alpha Inc	935.55	-	-2.98	1.14	16.95	6.84
European Smaller Cos Acc	655.31	-	-1.04	1.16	4.95	2.65
Global Equity Income Acc	227.09	-	-0.71	3.28	1.17	10.71
Global Equity Income Inc	111.88	-	-0.35	3.33	1.17	10.70
Managed Bal Inc	180.63	-	0.17	2.21	2.13	3.74
UK Income Acc	1692.74	-	-0.39	4.18	5.42	10.56
UK Income Inc	565.29	-	1.23	4.30	5.42	10.56
UK Omega Acc	287.76	-	0.53	1.97	12.25	11.22
UK Omega Inc	235.86	-	0.45	2.00	12.26	11.22
UK Smaller Cos Inc	2001.70	-	8.44	0.40	-24.24	1.74

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Lothbury Property Trust (UK)						
155 Bishopsgate, London EC2M 3TQ +44(0) 20 3551 4900						
<b>Property &amp; Other UK Unit Trusts</b>						
Lothbury Property Trust GBP	£1613.54	1657.86	4.16	3.44	-25.17	-

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
M & G Securities (1200)F						
PO Box 9038, Chelmsford, CM9 2XF						
www.mandg.co.uk/charities/eng./Dealing: 0800 917 4472						
<b>Authorised Inv Funds</b>						
Charifund Inc	1392.08	-	1.76	6.05	1.67	10.06
Charifund Acc	2654.60	-	36.20	5.23	1.66	10.06
M&G DebtStarter Fixed Interest Fund (Deduction) Inc	£ 1.06	-	0.00	3.35	-0.49	-3.05
M&G DebtStarter Fixed Interest Fund (Deduction) Acc	£ 38.78	-	0.02	2.85	-0.49	-3.01
M&G Charity Multi Asset Fund Inc	£ 0.87	-	0.01	4.16	3.61	8.95
M&G Charity Multi Asset Fund Acc	£ 106.34	-	0.08	3.97	2.83	8.96

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
MNIP Investment Management Limited						
Regulated						
Multi-Manager Investment Programmes PCC Limited						
UK Equity Fd CI A Series 01	£ 3080.40	3084.11	231.75	-	-2.98	13.94
Diversified Absolute Rtn Fd USD 0 AF2	£ 1688.02	-	45.93	-	-1.51	1.32
Diversified Absolute Return Slip Call AF2	£ 1579.00	-	-1.96	-	0.70	2.45
Global Equity Fund A Lead Series	£ 1747.16	1747.16	-5.31	-	-1.04	6.13

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Marwyn Asset Management Limited						
Regulated						
Marwyn Value Investors	£ 329.72	-	-6.14	0.00	-	-7.17

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Milltrust Laurium Africa Fund SP A	\$ 95.77	-	-0.54	0.00	-1.23	4.99
Milltrust Marcellus India Fund SP	\$ 131.97	-	-0.11	0.00	-3.92	-
Milltrust Singular ASEAN Fd SP Founders	\$ 129.56	-	0.42	0.00	-1.20	0.60
Milltrust SPARK Korea Equity Fund SP A	\$ 124.93	-	0.94	0.00	21.46	-2.12
Milltrust Xinglai China Fund SP A	\$ 91.22	-	0.21	0.00	-8.68	-13.35
The Climate Impact Asia Fund SP A	\$ 78.25	-	-0.02	0.00	-3.24	-
The Climate Impact Asia Fund (Class B)	\$ 77.34	-	-0.02	0.00	-3.73	-

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Ministry of Justice Common Investment Funds (UK) Property & Other UK Unit Trusts						
The Equity Idx Tracker Fd Inc	1866.00	-	-21.00	2.45	2.99	7.71
Distribution Units						

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Prusik Investment Management LLP						
Equities - 0207 493 1331						
Regulated						
Prusik Asian Equity Income B Dist	\$ 174.72	-	0.78	5.90	4.36	7.57
Prusik Asia Fund U Dist	£ 193.99	-	0.18	0.00	-18.62	-2.05
Prusik Asia Sustainable Growth Fund A Acc	£ 85.54	-	0.04	0.00	-5.28	-

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Purisma Investment Fds (UK) (1200)F						
65 Gresham Street, London, EC2V 7JQ						
Order Desk and Enquiries: 0345 922 0044						
<b>Authorised Inv Funds</b>						
<b>Authorised Corporate Director - Link Fund Solutions</b>						
Global Total Fd PGC A	423.66	-	-0.21	0.16	13.46	8.85
Global Total Fd PGC B	417.61	-	-0.21	0.00	13.18	8.58
Global Total Fd PGC INT	409.15	-	-0.21	0.00	12.90	8.31

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Purisma Investment Fds (CI) Ltd						
Regulated						
PGC B	329.35	-	0.71	0.00	18.68	5.87
PGC C	319.92	-	0.69	0.00	18.43	5.64

**ram ai**

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Ram Active Investments SA						
www.ram-ai.com						
<b>Other International Funds</b>						
RAM Systematic Emerg Markets Eq	\$ 226.79	226.79	-1.05	-	8.47	6.53
RAM Systematic European Eq	£ 525.00	525.00	-0.26	-	3.57	6.45
RAM Systematic Fnd Global Sustainable Income Eq	\$ 152.94	152.94	-0.70	0.00	6.87	8.79
RAM Systematic Long Short European Eq	£ 145.38	145.38	-0.41	-	-6.53	1.74

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Royal London						
80 Fenchurch Street, London EC3M 4BY						
<b>Authorised Inv Funds</b>						
Royal London Sustainable Diversifd A Inc	£ 2.36	-	0.00	1.24	4.21	1.06
Royal London Sustainable World A Inc	357.60	-	-1.10	0.16	5.75	2.83
Royal London Corporate Bond Mkt Income	72.80	-	-0.71	4.35	-0.24	-4.17
Royal London European Growth Trust	209.20	-	-1.10	1.69	15.89	7.84
Royal London Sustainable Leaders A Inc	773.90	-	-3.40	1.42	7.62	6.13
Royal London UK Growth Trust	609.30	-	0.50	2.32	6.91	8.03
Royal London UK Income With Growth Trust	199.80	-	0.70	5.04	3.82	8.05
Royal London US Growth Trust	414.70	-	-0.30	0.00	10.97	13.87
Additional Funds Available						
Please see www.royallondon.com for details						

**RUFFER**

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Ruffer LLP (1000)F						
65 Gresham Street, London, EC2V 7JQ						
Order Desk and Enquiries: 0345 601 9610						
<b>Authorised Inv Funds</b>						
<b>Authorised Corporate Director - Link Fund Solutions</b>						
LF Ruffer Diversified Rtm C Acc	99.09	-	0.20	1.91	-4.03	-
LF Ruffer Diversified Rtm C Inc	97.28	-	0.19	1.92	-4.02	-
LF Ruffer Equity & General C Acc	573.71	-	-0.06	0.76	4.62	8.77
LF Ruffer Equity & General C Inc	518.31	-	-0.05	0.76	4.62	8.77
LF Ruffer Gold C Acc	233.90	-	-0.67	0.00	6.08	-11.27
LF Ruffer Gold C Inc	141.57	-	-0.41	0.00	6.08	-11.27
LF Ruffer Total Return C Acc	530.86	-	-0.85	3.00	-3.71	3.35
LF Ruffer Total Return C Inc	326.74	-	-0.53	3.07	-3.69	3.35

**RUBRICS**

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Rubrics Global UCITS Funds Pfc						
www.rubrics.com						
Regulated						
Rubric Emerging Markets Fixed Income UCITS Fund	\$ 138.87	-	-0.16	0.00	5.51	0.61
Rubrics Global Credit UCITS Fund	£ 16.94	-	0.02	0.00	0.98	-0.86
Rubrics Global Fixed Income UCITS Fund	\$ 170.52	-	0.23	0.00	-0.39	-2.30

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Scottish Friendly Asset Managers Ltd						
Scottish Friendly House, 16 Blythwood Sq, Glasgow G2 4JH 0141 275 5000						
<b>Authorised Inv Funds</b>						
Managed Growth	355.20	-	0.50	0.00	7.57	7.52
UK Growth	405.50	-	1.30	0.00	4.67	8.09

**S/CO**  
Est 1995  
سیکو

**TOSCAFUND**

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
SICO BSC (c)						
+973 17515031						
www.sicobank.com						
Khaleej Equity Fund	\$ 624.54	-	-6.60	0.00	2.44	20.39
SICO Kingdom Equity Fund	\$ 37.72	-	-0.69	0.00	3.66	22.62
SICO Gulf Equity Fund	\$ 164.37	-	0.82	0.00	-1.62	15.82

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Toscafund Asset Management LLP						
www.toscafund.com						
<b>Authorised Funds</b>						
Aptus Global Financials B Acc	£ 5.23	-	-0.04	3.75	16.57	16.90
Aptus Global Financials B Inc	£ 3.25	-	-0.02	3.87	16.47	18.32

**Slater Investments**

Fund	Bid	Offer	+/-	Yield	1Yr	3Yr
Slater Investments Ltd						
www.slaterinvestments.com; Tel: 0207 220 9460						
FCR Recognised						
Slater Growth A Acc	587.86	597.86	-2.07	0.00	-10.56	1.04





**Rutherford Hall**  
 What do you mean the intern posted it on my LinkedIn page?  
 WORK & CAREERS

## How not to network – lessons from my summer in the city



**Miranda Green**  
 Business Life

In Spain, so my colleagues tell me, for male office workers to stay in the city alone in August – and to live it up while off the familial leash – is known as “*estar de Rodriguez*”. It’s an ideal common surname to use as an alias if you don’t want your reputation tainted when the summer comes to an end, speculates one former Madrileño. Rodriguez is also the protagonist’s name in a 1960s sex comedy about solo summertime exploits: “*Lo que pasa en Madrid de vacaciones, se queda en Madrid*”, as it were.

Like many contemporary Spanish women, or so I imagine, I’m now as likely as the man of the house to be the one to stay in town when the seaside beckons. And so, trusty wheelie bag dragging behind me, this summer I criss-crossed London: from train station to office, to my mother’s, back home and then back to the train to get to the beach again. Like “Rodriguez”, I was determined to make the most of the time stuck here while the family were frolicking on the beach. Although not hoping for the same kind of meet-ups as our anti-hero (the very thought!), I did want to network and keep some useful contacts warm.



Kenneth Andersson

Spoiler alert: I failed. The meetings did not happen. And the episode made me realise my clumsy approaches had in this instance displayed a tendency I disapprove of: seeing other people in terms of their usefulness and little else.

Beyond blisters and a new, vicious hatred of the wheelie bag, I’ve been left with some lessons from my doomed networking experiment. My “main-character energy” may not have been a user: and who wants to feel themselves demoted to supporting cast? I got no takers because it was all about me and my list of how others could help me.

The classic works on networking ram the lesson home. Carole Stone, once known as the “networking queen” of British politics, had a bank of more than 50,000 contacts among the UK’s most influential people. My dog-eared copy of her slim volume from the turn of the millennium remains supremely

**“By trying to glom on to people in August when they were contentedly decompressing, I risked creating resentment”**

relevant. Networking can have a bad name, she admits, conjuring up “images of pushy people ruthlessly brushing others aside to advance themselves”. Done right, it must be about “mutual benefit”.

I once saw her in action at a reception – she displayed Olympic-level skill, made everyone feel they were fascinating by asking questions, put the right people together and hoovered up contacts without it seeming transactional.

The even more tattered copy of Dale Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People* buried on our shelves has a pithy first rule for making people like you and confirms the Stone method: “Become genuinely interested in other people.” (Rule two is even pithier: smile.)

Even recent self-help books I consulted on the topic stress that good networking is about reciprocity: if you just want others to scratch your back, forget it. (Beyond this, the tips and tricks tend to get dull and techy, involving stationery or spreadsheets.)

By trying to glom on to people in August when they were contentedly decompressing, I was in danger of creating resentment – none of the

necessary interest in others, which in my case is usually very genuine, was in evidence. I was being too nakedly self-serving, trying to cram these people into my schedule, one they found irksome in the heat.

Apart from one lovely – and impromptu – evening of wine-fuelled political gossip, I eventually left my contacts alone. I hereby apologise and resolve never to slide again into seeing other humans as instruments to further my own aims. When people do it to me, it makes my skin crawl.

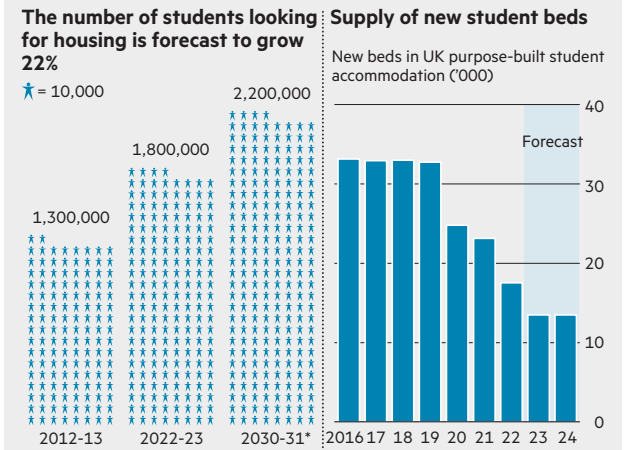
So take stock. If when you meet someone, you conduct an efficient interview to detect their status and then move on to mentally composing a follow-up email of requests (I’ve received a lot of these recently), please desist. You may as well just come out with it: “Are you useful to me? If so, consider my subsequent demands in good order.” If you reduce people to a to-do list, as I did, they won’t enjoy it.

My behaviour was nothing like as bad as Rodriguez, but both of us should probably take the same advice: don’t be a tool and don’t treat others like one, either.

*miranda.green@ft.com*

# Lex.

## Student digs: no room at the dorm



UK school-leavers are enjoying a few weeks of relief after their exam results. Yet for many planning to go on to university, a fresh struggle awaits.

The 1980s British sitcom *The Young Ones* satirised life in squalid student digs. Quality may have improved since then. But finding affordable rental property has become extremely hard, reflecting a wider crisis in the sector.

London-listed university accommodation business Unite Group says the need for new student rooms is now at the greatest level for “several years”. The charity Unipol has warned of a chronic student housing shortage in certain cities.

Unfortunately for the UK’s 2.9m student population, high demand is unlikely to trigger greater supply.

Unite’s 70,000 beds in purpose-built student blocks were nearly all booked by July. In a normal year, about 10 per cent would still be available to rent.

Growth in student numbers is down to demographics and near-record application rates. The number of UK youngsters turning 18 will increase 19 per cent by 2030, according to official forecasts. Demand among overseas students remains strong, particularly for postgraduate degrees.

Insufficient student housing supply

partly reflects problems in the wider buy-to-let sector. Higher interest rates and planned regulatory reforms are pushing landlords to sell.

Developers of purpose-built student accommodation are also building less. The so-called PBSA sector accounts for about 700,000 beds. Until 2020, PBSA developers added more than 30,000 student beds each year. New additions are expected to dwindle to 12,000-15,000 beds over the next few years.

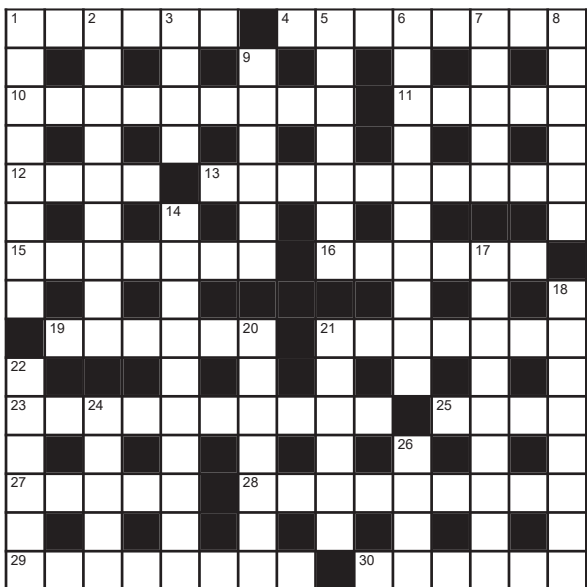
Build costs for student housing developers are today about £95,000 per ensuite room, according to Cushman & Wakefield. These have risen from £60,000-£65,000 in just a few years. To make their numbers stack up, developers need to charge rents of £185 a week or more per room, the property group says. In most places, save for cities such as London, Edinburgh, Bristol, Glasgow and Manchester, this is above wider rental prices, which are at records.

Already there are stories of students starting university life in hotels or rooms 30 miles from lecture halls. Some may even be forced to keep living with their parents. Unless there is a let-up in developers’ costs, freshers will continue to find there is sometimes no room at the dorm.

## NIKKEI Asia The voice of the Asian century

### CROSSWORD

No 17,513 Set by PETO



#### ACROSS

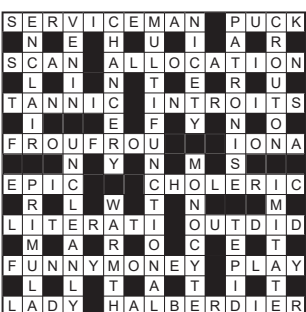
- Not the same after start of business trouble (6)
- Piece of info largely introduced to frighten Capone (8)
- Case for a cymbal say (9)
- Good to include a note on opening of conventional flap (5)
- Retracted part of last cat book (4)
- Letter about fellow consumed by absurd drivell is matchless (10)
- Hasty scoundrel regretful right away (7)
- Become equal partners originally going after alternative venue (4,2)
- Frequently repeated slogan of American conservationists taken in by Mr Agnew at first (6)
- Grant found in bed with English novelist (7)
- Deny the opportunity to debate normal pot use around France (2-8)
- Actually existing somewhere in Canada? Not half (4)
- Outrageous when not in use against soldiers (5)
- Answer accepted by outstanding star of dance (5,4)
- Scandinavians finding sermon oddly in French (8)
- Assert without proof of everyone say taking Ecstasy (6)

#### DOWN

- Before getting an opportunity perhaps (2,6)
- Volunteers seizing reckless traitor in a restaurant (9)
- Somewhat nominal exemption sent up with style (4)
- The most essential part unfinished on delicate architectural feature (7)
- Study reportedly featuring fossil fuel lobby’s ends again and again (10)
- Set aside article on the beginnings of nationalisation under Labour (5)
- Concede after initially failing to crack cipher (6)
- Mean to make money outside of Germany to support son (6)
- Assemble to protect a right withdrawn in dispute (10)
- In an excited state Rod describes most of them as slightly mad (2,3,4)
- Austrian nationalist’s story is revealing (8)
- An improbable account holding up heartless Alf as kindly (7)
- Bob’s short and extremely slimy (6)
- Borrowed from John’s oddly neglected single by the sound of it (2,4)
- Safe for fellow hiding in Togo’s capital? Just the opposite (5)
- Key entirely made of brass (4)

### JOTTER PAD

Solution 17,511



You can now solve our crosswords in the FT crossword app at [ft.com/crosswordapp](https://ft.com/crosswordapp)

# LONDON GOLF CLUB

## FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS DESIGNED TO COMPLEMENT YOUR NEEDS.

Family Membership is available for two adults and includes two children less than 18 years of age.

Members in this category enjoy full use and access to all the facilities on offer at London Golf Club, including our various social events, exclusive fitting days, and more. Members also enjoy privileged rates at some of the best golf courses around the world.

For more information please contact the LGC Golf Sales department on **01474 875752** or email [dominic@londongolf.co.uk](mailto:dominic@londongolf.co.uk)

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Destination

Get the business insights you need to succeed in Asia  
 Visit [asia.nikkei.com](https://asia.nikkei.com)

## WORK &amp; CAREERS

# How a new generation is entering the boardroom

More businesses are offering apprenticeships to diversify the pool of future directors, writes *Anjali Raval*

After 20 years in investment banking, Rupal Patel joined risk analytics fintech Acin in 2019. Since starting her role, she has met board directors and advisers – typically older people in corporate life who had been on similar trajectories to hers and now have portfolio careers involving multiple board seats. They manage their own time, do varied and interesting work and give strategic advice without the stress of an executive role. “This sounded like a good proposition for me longer-term,” she said.

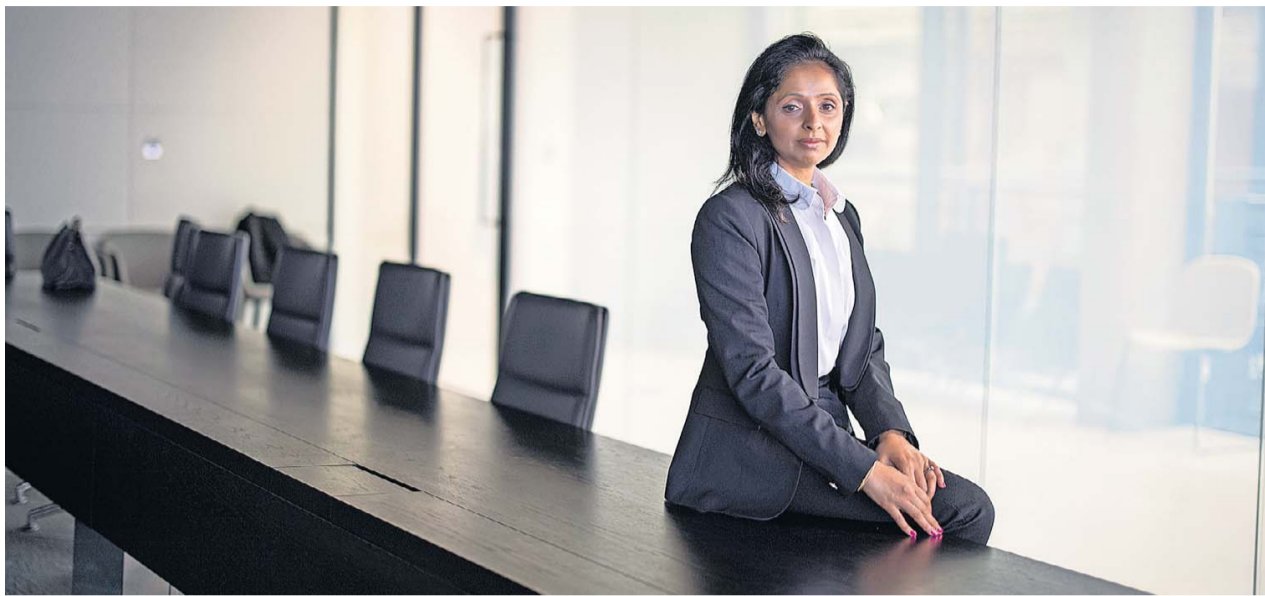
But Patel soon realised getting her first board seat would be difficult. As a 44-year-old woman of Indian origin, the odds are stacked against her. The world of non-executive directors is “a closed circle of who you know”, she said. “You really need experience and a network.”

Rather than signing up for a programme that teaches the theoretical aspects of boardroom life, Patel wanted practical experience. She got in touch with Heather White, a matchmaker who helps executives work their way to a first NED role by facilitating boardroom apprenticeships. For a fee of £7,800, White interviews candidates and connects them with a host board for a 12-month stint as an observer. They are mentored by the chair and assigned a coach to help them navigate the relationships and decisions. (Everyone signs non-disclosure agreements.)

Boardroom apprenticeships in the UK are a nascent idea and data is scant on how many convert to NED roles. But demand is rising, according to White.

“Lots of executives are looking for board roles but are not getting them,” she said. Such schemes provide insight into what a seat on a board involves and are a way to boost the candidate’s CV.

For businesses, they can be useful for



**When Rupal Patel set out to get her first board seat, she sought to gain practical experience of boardroom life**

Charlie Bibby/FT

finding and training a more diverse pool of future leaders and an opportunity to bring in specialists – from marketing to compliance – for a short period. It is also a chance to “try before you buy”, according to the chair of one board that hosted an apprentice before making them a non-executive director.

“Boards want more diverse NEDs but aren’t finding people with relevant experience,” said White.

Boardroom diversity has been in focus as big companies have questioned whether their teams are representative of society. Most boardrooms are largely middle class, older, white men who have reached the tops of their professions and have lots of corporate experience.

“There is a long debate about whether we remove experience and replace it with talent and skills,” said Mark Freebairn, head of the board practice at headhunters Odgers Berndtson. “But then there is the question about how to develop the capability.”

FTSE 100 and 250 boards, which are under the most scrutiny, tend to be

reluctant to bring in outsiders as observers for confidentiality reasons, instead focusing on developing and diversifying their own executive pipeline.

“Apprenticeships are great if you can get one,” said Susie Cummings, founder of Nurole, a board recruitment platform. “What’s difficult is getting boards to agree to take one on.”

Smaller companies can be more amenable to the concept. The government too has started its own initiative.

Patel was matched with Zenitech, a software company. She does not have legal or voting rights but can see board papers and contribute to monthly discussions. “You have to be proactive. No one is going to come to you. This is an opportunity for learning, networking and relationship building,” said Patel.

An alternative way to bring in fresh voices would be to address diversity in executive committees. That would boost the pool of, for example, experienced female or non-white candidates and remove the fear many have that they are part of a box-ticking exercise.

There is no guarantee demographic shifts will take place naturally, according to Moni Mannings, a non-executive director at companies including easyJet and Hargreaves Lansdown. She set up Epoc, a non-profit focused on getting more people of colour on to boards. “We don’t get people to [make] big promises. We don’t have targets. But we are asking [companies] to do stuff,” she said.

Epoc is due to start a boardroom “fellowship”, where companies identify a couple of high performers from ethnic minority backgrounds within their own organisations, a level or two below the executive committee, to be observers on boards of another participating company for 18 months. The aim is to create a “virtuous circle”, said Mannings, with boardroom roles helping individuals in their day job. “It does help to amplify your executive career,” she said.

Nicolina Andall, a lawyer who was a board apprentice at Aldermore Bank in the UK, sits on the board of public institutions including as an independent panel member for the Ministry of

Justice. She is on committees assessing candidates for director and judicial roles. She acknowledged the barriers, particularly for FTSE boards, but said it was easier to get on boards elsewhere, such as charities. Part of the issue stems from people from diverse backgrounds not putting themselves forward. “There is a lack of knowledge about what roles are out there and what an individual could achieve,” she said.

Other avenues for gaining board-level experience are opening. Courses and diplomas, including ones provided by the Corporate Governance Institute, the Institute of Directors and by the Financial Times, are covering aspects of governance, management, finance and strategy for those seeking board seats.

Shadow, junior or next generation boards within companies are another way companies have sought to tackle the issue. These boards, often filled with younger or under-represented voices, provide insight, feedback and ideas to the main board. One director at a company with a junior board said it was helpful to hear from younger colleagues.

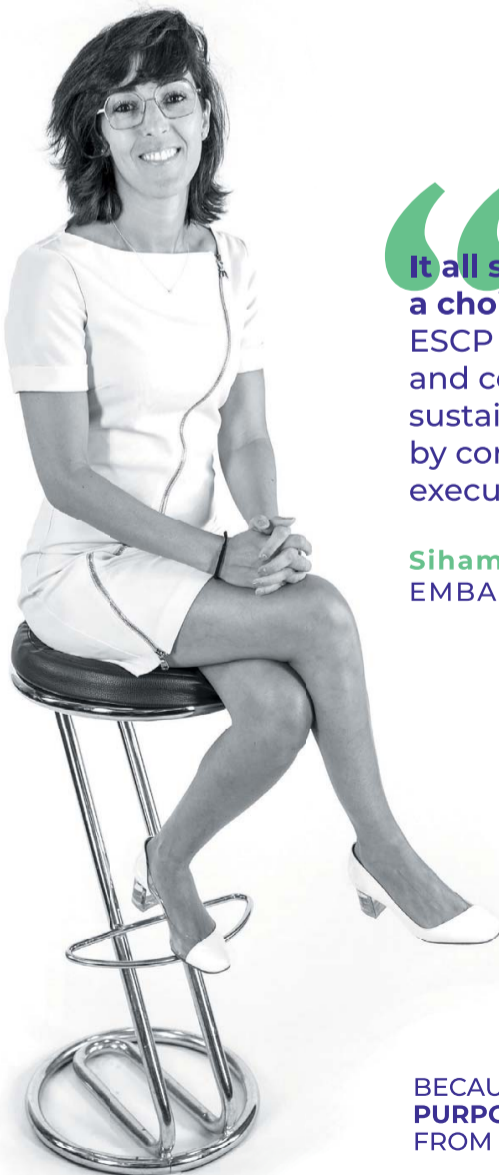
“All of these initiatives are like going to the gym,” said Ellie Doohan, an executive coach and mentor to first-time board directors. “You start with 3kg weights and build to 5, 10 and beyond. You build that confidence.”

But one boardroom adviser said it was unclear how many initiatives would succeed. She had come across women who had been “abandoned” once their apprenticeships were over. “Many have not secured a role on a board,” she said.

A non-executive director at multiple FTSE companies stressed that a proven record in executive roles was still the most important. “It’s not just about the great CV and skillset, it’s about their judgment,” he said. “Those that thrust themselves forward are not necessarily the ones who are the most capable.”

Even Gordon Wilson, the chair of Zenitech, which has hosted Patel, cautioned: “It’s not a silver bullet this thing . . . just because individuals have been an observer it doesn’t mean they are qualified for an NED role. Most good NEDs have been a CEO or CFO or senior executive in a company.”

**‘It’s not just about the great CV and skillset, it’s about their judgment’**



**“It all started with a choice to join the ESCP Transition Network and contribute to the sustainability transition by convincing other executives to do the same.”**

**Siham Vidard**  
EMBA Class of 2022

**BECAUSE OUR WORLD CAN’T WAIT, ESCP EDUCATES PURPOSE-DRIVEN LEADERS WHO CHOOSE TO ACT FROM DAY ONE OF THEIR STUDIES.**

IT ALL STARTS HERE

BERLIN | LONDON | MADRID | PARIS | TURIN | WARSAW

## WORK &amp; CAREERS

# The bosses helping staff with long-term sickness

Illness is exacerbating a tight labour market, putting pressure on employers to support staff, writes *Alicia Clegg*

In 2019, PageGroup's chief executive Steve Ingham had a life-changing skiing accident that put him in a wheelchair. Yet within months he had returned to his job, leading the recruitment business through the pandemic before retiring last year.

According to Ollie Thorn, a diversity manager at PageGroup and himself a wheelchair user, the return sent a message: it is OK to have a health condition at work. Leading by example, the chief executive changed company attitudes towards staff with long-term health conditions, and encouraged managers to support them to fulfil their potential.

Ingham's story may seem an unusual case. But it holds lessons for tackling one of the global economy's biggest challenges: long-term sickness of workers.

People with health conditions face serious obstacles getting, and staying in, work. In 2019, people with disabilities in the OECD group of richer nations were 2.3 times more likely to be unemployed than those without, an increase compared with a decade earlier.

Sickness-related absence became more common during the pandemic and in some countries has continued to rise. In the UK, about 36 per cent of

working-age adults report a long-term health condition, with 2.5mn economically inactive as a result – up 400,000 since March 2020. Among those with health conditions, the average rate of sickness absence is at a 15-year high of 4.9 per cent, compared with 1.5 per cent for those without.

Sickness absence “keeps reaching record highs”, said Louise Murphy, economist at the Resolution Foundation think-tank. People who were away from the labour market for longer were less likely to return, she added. As policymakers battle inflation and staff shortages, this is not just a problem for individuals: “We're not seeing those increases in labour supply that would help sustain the economy.”

For companies, illness makes it difficult to recruit, and limits growth. Yet employers are not powerless. By ensuring people with additional needs are managed well, experts say, they can help more contribute to the workplace.

At PageGroup, Thorn said, the approach had been to focus on the individual. Managers encourage staff to communicate their needs, and allow them to work when they are most productive. One of Thorn's colleagues, for example, has a fatigue condition that she manages with daytime naps, starting work early in the morning.

The recruiter has invested in training managers, improving accessibility of IT systems and simplifying processes for obtaining reasonable adjustments such as extra breaks, which staff with disabilities are legally entitled to request. If a



‘People with health challenges shouldn't be dependent on the luck of the draw’

‘Workers who have disabilities want the focus to be on what they can do’

Mark Blois, a lawyer who has cystic fibrosis, praised the managers who had supported him — Andrew Fox/FT

manager is unsure about how to support a worker, they know who to ask in HR.

“A lot of sidelining of employees with disabilities and health conditions is underpinned by a fear of not having all the answers, or saying the wrong thing,” Thorn added. “The question is, ‘What can we do to mitigate that fear?’”

Mark Blois, a senior partner at law firm Browne Jacobson who has cystic fibrosis, agreed collaboration was the most effective approach. “It's about not rushing to judgment, [but] allowing the individual to experiment and creating an evidence base” of what works.

Blois praised managers who had supported him to pursue a “full-blooded” career, despite flare-ups forcing him to disappear for weeks at a time. But not everyone has been understanding.

“Had I not met good people and ended

up working in their area, I probably wouldn't be where I am,” he said. “People with health challenges shouldn't be dependent on the luck of the draw.”

He has used his role on the firm's partnership committee to encourage managers to approach diversity not as “an exercise in compliance” but a chance to harness the “unique strengths” people develop to cope with life's uncertainties.

Building on his own strategy of putting agreed adjustments on record, he has worked with HR to develop reasonable adjustment “passports”. These documents ensure that as trainees move around the firm they are not subjected to the anxiety of repeated conversations disclosing details about their condition.

Such initiatives have caught the attention of the UK government. Jeremy Hunt, the chancellor, is set to announce measures this year to tackle the rise in people unable to work due to mental health problems, including subsidies for workplace occupational health services.

The plans come after the Office for Budget Responsibility estimated extra welfare spending and lost tax revenues

linked to health-related economic inactivity costed the state about £16bn a year more than before the pandemic. More than half of Britons off work for health reasons have mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression.

Mental health groups said efforts to support those who wanted to work were welcome. However, Maggi Rose, of Mental Health at Work, said they needed to include more diverse approaches than occupational health. “I don't think it's one size fits all,” she said.

Angela Matthews, head of policy and research at Business Disability Forum, a membership group, warned against disparities between what employers were “saying outwardly and doing inwardly”.

Sara Weller, a former managing director of Argos, has held board roles at BT and Virgin Money despite being diagnosed with MS in her forties. She said that boards needed “to set the culture”. That means measuring not only how many staff have a condition, but also how valued they feel and rewarding managers who create inclusive teams.

Using empowering language is also

helpful, she added, citing employee networks with names such as Enable. “In my experience, people with disabilities passionately want the focus to be on what they can do, not what they can't.”

Open conversations also helped, said Sophie Bassil, who hosted a forum and quiz at the PR agency where she works to explain how Crohn's affects her life.

In 2019, after a successful private equity investment in the Netherlands-based business he led, Phill Robinson became one of few chief executives to go public about their health when he told staff he had Parkinson's. As he worked to put “diversity of health” on a par with other inclusion initiatives, before stepping down in late 2020, he hosted workshops to encourage staff to talk. Subsequently, a colleague revealed a terminal diagnosis he had received.

Blois noted that people who had the uncertainty of fluctuating health often had attributes organisations needed more of. “It's possible to do, and to do it well,” he said of managing inclusively. But “it does require time; and application and curiosity”.

## Dawn starts and donkey milk. How I shine like a Dimon in the mornings



Rutherford Hall  
Critical Comms

From: [Rutherford@monkwellstrategy.com](mailto:Rutherford@monkwellstrategy.com)  
To: [Stephen@monkwellstrategy.com](mailto:Stephen@monkwellstrategy.com)

Stephen — do you see all these articles about how power players start their day. Thought I'd offer my own version for a few select colleagues. What do you reckon?

Back to work week often seems to include a run of blogs, videos and articles explaining how the rich and successful start their working day. Many sit in awe of these titans who rise early enough to eat a gourmet breakfast, clear their inbox and complete a triathlon before heading into the office.

Not that this is any surprise to us here at Monkwell. We are already pretty “on it”, champing at the bit and ready for success. You may have seen that Jamie Dimon apparently likes to start the day at 5am. Well some of us have been shining bright like a Dimon for some time.

I've spent years rising early, giving it 110 per cent and delivering in high-pressure roles (not least the years I spent in Downing Street). I don't usually like to talk about it. But given the fashion for sharing, I thought people might be interested in my own regime and experience just in case it inspires anyone else.

**5am:** Rise like Jamie, drink a glass of filtered water and retreat to my study in the east wing (the room above the garage) to speed read the complete works of Dostoevsky. You can learn a lot from the master. I have set Google alerts for every client and sector we cover and spend the time making sure I am entirely across every development. I check them all as my first order of business. This is a slog, but it is essential and made a little easier by the intern I have ordered to get up at 4am to fillet the alerts so I don't have to deal with the rubbish. I scour our clients' social media as well as our own to make sure there are no problems. Too many firms let inexperienced youngsters run these accounts and it gets them into trouble. It's a rookie error.

Finally, I'm a firm advocate of zero inbox, so I clear all emails and send out early marching orders for the day before showering and heading to the kitchen.

**6.30am** Power breakfast. Salmon and avocado, chia seeds, protein shake — or whatever's left in the fridge. One latte prepared on my new Rocket

Espresso coffee maker. It's a monstrous indulgence, I know, but you really can taste the difference, and it looks awesome. I use only donkey milk, for the beneficial effects of the extra lactic acid. If I have a work breakfast, which I often do, I cut this back to a coffee and a banana.

**7am:** Wake and say goodbye to the kids and leave them for nanny to prepare for school. Head to door before remembering that we don't have a nanny. But the good news is that kids miraculously manage to get themselves to primary school on time every morning without my help. Dash back to the kitchen to make their organic packed lunches. Once a week I go in late and walk them to school because I believe in sharing the parental burden.

**7.10:** 20 squat jumps and then I'm on my bike. I like to get out before the worst of the traffic and can be in the centre of town in 25 minutes. Cycling through London not only sharpens the senses it also clears my mind for the day ahead. At weekends I challenge myself with longer rides. Find me on Strava and check out my KoM. As I zip through the outer boroughs I chuckle at the soon-to-be-abandoned husks of vehicles owned by the drivers who could not afford to pay the anti-pollution Ulez charge and delight at the cleaner air I am already breathing. They say you can't put a price on lungs. Well in London it's £12.50 a day. Quick shower at work and I'm raring to go.

**8pm:** Back in time to read kids a bedtime story. Do we really have three of them? I was sure it was two last time I looked.

Keep it real,  
Rutherford

Find me on Strava, KoM Sydenham Hill, PR London to Brighton 3h 17m

**WhatsApp to Stephen:** Am getting some odd texts? Anything going on?

**WhatsApp to Stephen:** What do you mean the intern thought I wanted it posted on my LinkedIn page! It was a joke. Who the hell sent it to him in the first place? How could he think I was serious? No one believes those articles.

And how did we let him run our social media? Get him to take it down immediately and tell him that shows of initiative are seriously overrated. Can't do it myself. Am trying to tie a seven-year-old's shoelaces.

The kids miraculously manage to get themselves to school on time every morning without my help

FT LIVE

## THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION: SPOTLIGHT ON MASTER'S PROGRAMMES

20 September | 13:20 - 17:50 GMT +1  
Digital Conference | #FTEducation

*Are you an ambitious student or young professional curious about doing a Master's in Finance or Management? This event is for you.*

Meet the world's leading business schools and connect with reputable alumni to discover how a Master's degree can kick-off and benefit your career.

REGISTER FOR FREE

Strategic Sponsor

Imperial College  
Business School

## ARTS

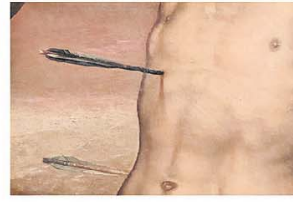
# Outsider's view of a mysterious world

Photographer Catherine Opie's new show is a close study of the architecture and ideology of the Vatican City. She talks to Caroline Roux

In May 2021, the American artist Catherine Opie arrived in Rome for a six-week residency at the American Academy. Replacing her far-reaching view in Los Angeles, from the Frank Gehry apartment block that she calls home, here she found herself gazing down upon the Italian capital from an apartment in the Academy's Villa Aurelia — a 17th-century mansion perched on the Gianicolo hill. On her second day, she was invited to the Vatican to photograph the swearing-in of the Swiss Guard, which protects the Pope.

"I was late," she laughs. "The old American lady with the camera, who couldn't find the right private porch where it was all taking place." Once there, however, the ceremony, which has taken place annually on the same day for hundreds of years, proved pivotal to her project, which had been given a loose proviso of "the idea of the city". "It's like the secret service," she says of the Vatican experience. "The outfits... the pageantry. It's a weird military parade taking place inside this closed space circumscribed by ancient ideas and old laws derived from what's written in the Bible."

The Vatican City, a place that creates its own systems and norms, is a queer one, Opie decided, and she wanted to bring to it her own queer eye. "After that ceremony," she says, "I didn't want to be on the inside." She decided to conduct her photographic project independently. For the next six weeks, Opie and her camera visited the Vatican City daily to construct an outsider's view of this arcane world, which sustains rules that govern 1.4bn lives. Her ability to dig into its every corner and luxuriate in its spaces was facilitated by the lingering pandemic lockdown: she had access



because it was open to the few — scholars, researchers — not the usual masses. "Quite often it would be me and three others in the Sistine Chapel," she says. The results will go on show this month in Naples.

Opie, who is a very youthful 62, has become one of the finest narrators of American life through her carefully crafted imagery. At first she focused on her own queer community in Los Angeles — leather-wearing lesbian women in man-drag depicted in exquisitely still, vibrantly coloured portraits that owe a debt to the clarity of Holbein and the internal mystery of Vermeer.

Since then her 40-year career has — through images of elegiac landscapes, young football players, lesbian families, corporate architecture, political protests, freeways and a lingering study of



Top: 'Blood grid #4' (2023) by Catherine Opie, above

All works © Catherine Opie. Courtesy the artist, Thomas Dane Gallery and Regen Projects, LA. Portrait: Heather Rasmussen

the home of Elizabeth Taylor — delved into issues of community and identity, politics and power. She has also turned the camera on herself, her arms pierced with multiple pins, her skin bleeding from words and pictures she has cut into her own flesh.

For Opie, whose background is decidedly non-religious, it was the historical and subcultural nature of the Vatican that resonated. "The Vatican has its own government, and I wanted to work out the relationship of this governance to humanity," says Opie, who was "significantly exposed" to the values of Catholicism through her ex-wife of 21 years who was from a "very Catholic" family in Louisiana.

"The Catholic world is intolerant and authoritarian. This body of work examines that," she says. "I wouldn't label the Vatican as dystopian, it's too important to too many people. But there is hypocrisy there."

Opie had tried to make work outside of the US before. She gleefully recounts how she failed to do so in New Zealand and Venice. "So much of my work is consistent with the American identity," she says. "So when I was in Venice, I tried to show what Venice was to Canaletto and what it is now, and all I did was make nice pictures that looked like they'd been taken by a tourist. But in the Vatican, I found a structural development."

Splitting the project into three parts, Opie has focused on the City's soaring old walls; the hundreds of windows that punctuate its buildings; and the multiple images of blood that wash across its huge collection of art.

The walls, shot with a panoramic camera turned vertically, are revealed to be cameras in themselves, each fitted with a — sometimes barely visible — surveillance apparatus. They suggest

both the physical and metaphorical fortress of a sometimes oppressive Catholic faith, but are equally a landscape, alive with vegetation that grows freely in the cracks and crevices, a lesson that man cannot suppress nature.

The windows evoke a world that can be opened and closed, that is always tightly framed. In a parting shot, Opie shows the Pope waving from one of his papal balconies, as he does every Sunday. "You look up at him from the piazza," she says, "and his importance to people is something really quite surreal."

But for those familiar with her work, it is the images of blood that will resonate the most. Blood, after all, has other connotations in the queer lexicon — in the US, for many years gay men were not allowed to donate it — and it flows through her work as a motif of injustice and judgment as well as humanity. With her camera, Opie has closed in on paintings and tapestries, to



'Untitled #8 (Windows)' (2023)

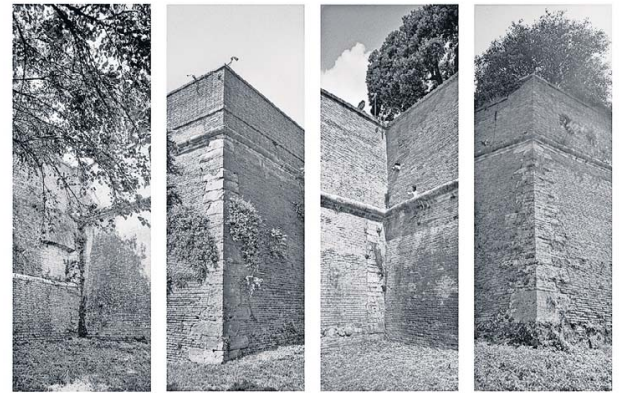
create grids of fragmented gore, like a slasher storyboard.

"I wanted to create a Modernist framework for this history of violence," she says. "To give it a profoundly rigid structure, to understand the relationship of blood to the Vatican." While Opie's own images of flesh wounds are sometimes accompanied by trigger warnings when shown in art galleries, in the Vatican she found pictures of children about to be slaughtered, of knives penetrating limbs, of blood gushing from the torsos of men and horses, all in the name of religious intolerance and social control.

"We need to be shocked by it, otherwise we just perpetuate the presence of violence. We need to stop proliferating wars."

"I'm not Lewis Hine," she continues, referring to the 20th-century sociologist and photographer whose images of children at work helped bring about laws against child labour. "I'm not going to create social change in my pictures, but I still think I can help to start a conversation." In these revelatory images, she seems to have done rather more than that.

'Walls, Windows and Blood' runs at Thomas Dane Gallery, Naples, September 19-November 18, [thomasdaneartgallery.com](http://thomasdaneartgallery.com)



Catherine Opie's 'Untitled #1, #2, #9, #6 (Walls)' (2023)

## Five guys going around in circles

### PODCASTS

Fiona Sturges



Should you need evidence that podcasting is a skill, rather than something that anyone with a public profile and a microphone can do, let me refer you to *Strike Force Five*, a new podcast featuring the big beasts of American late-night talk shows: Stephen Colbert, Jimmy Fallon, Jimmy Kimmel, Seth Meyers and John Oliver. The series represents a remarkable display of altruism from its hosts, having been created to provide financial support for the hundreds of staff on their TV shows, which have been on hiatus owing to the Writers Guild of America strike. That the series already has multiple sponsors, including a phone company that was until recently part-owned by the actor Ryan Reynolds, would suggest it is set to make a tidy profit.

In short, *Strike Force Five* is a nice thing made with the best of intentions, so it is a shame to report that the first episode is a bit of a mess. There is the fact that it has five hosts, which is three more than is ideal; they can't stop interrupting one another (not for nothing is the opening episode entitled *Five Late Night Hosts Talk at the Same Time for the First Time*). There is also the problem of geography: the hosts are scattered across the US, which means

they are recording over Zoom, with all the annoying sound glitches which come with that.

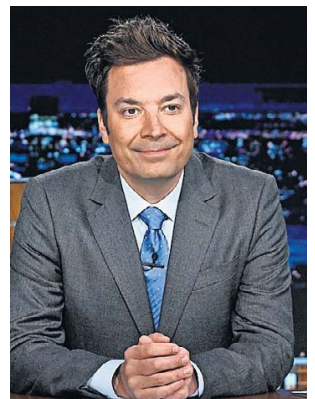
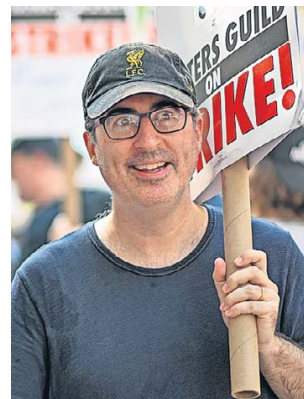
But the main hindrance is that the podcast has no real concept beyond a group of chums, who also happen to be professional rivals, getting together to chew the fat. With no obvious theme to propel things forward, the conversation goes around in circles. Meyers isn't wrong when he says of their respective writing teams: "You're going to really feel their absence while we're talking without their help."

That's not to say the opening episode doesn't have its moments. There is some amusing ribbing of Kimmel and the celebrity fishing trips he hosts at his home in Idaho — "Is there any truth to the rumour that you have scuba divers under the water who hook the fish to the rods of A-listers?" Meyers asks — and

the revelation that Colbert owns a pair of trousers belonging to the late Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle (before the latter embarked on a political career, he and Colbert's mother went on a date).

Elsewhere, though, there is a lot of shop talk and unremarkable anecdotes about taking the kids to college and who among them has an honorary doctorate (all of them, bar Oliver, it turns out). For a podcast featuring five of the highest-paid comedians on TV, the gag rate is remarkably low. What Colbert and co are doing is commendable, but if they want to hold on to their listeners, and their sponsorship, they might consider a little forward planning before the next episode, and perhaps even jot down a few jokes.

[open.spotify.com](https://open.spotify.com)



John Oliver, left, and Jimmy Fallon feature on 'Strike Force Five'



IGNITES  
ASIA

News for Asia's  
asset management  
industry

Scan to start  
your trial



## FT BIG READ. ASIA

The passing of the spiritual leader could spark an extraordinary stand-off in global politics – and set up a contest between the atheist communist leaders in Beijing and exiled Tibetan Buddhists.

By John Reed and Joe Leahy

**O**n a rainy Thursday morning in July, many thousands of people gathered at the Namgyal monastery in McLeod Ganj, northern India, to mark the 14th Dalai Lama's 88th birthday.

The Tibetan spiritual leader has said he plans to live beyond the age of 113, and will address the matter of his reincarnation – including whether he is reincarnated at all – in two years' time, when he is 90.

"I am still determined to serve everyone for the next few decades," he told a large crowd of Tibetan exiles, Indians and foreigners, speaking of his mission to "serve all sentient beings", and joking about the fact that he still had all his teeth. "You should also make your prayers for my long life."

But behind the scenes, there are already signs that both the Tibetan exile community and the Chinese leadership are stepping up preparations for his passing – an event that has the potential to spark one of the most extraordinary stand-offs in international politics.

The death of the Dalai Lama could set up a contest between the atheist communist leaders in Beijing and exiled Tibetan Buddhists over who gets to orchestrate the spiritual rituals that have been used in the past to "discover" his reincarnation and anoint a successor. It would be a tug of war that could also draw in India and the US, making the Nobel laureate's health and prospects for longevity a matter of growing international interest well beyond the exile hub of Dharamshala in India.

The exile community's political leadership say the succession process – which they frame in religious terms – lies entirely in the control of the Dalai Lama. Devout Tibetans believe that certain highly accomplished lamas are reborn as *tulkus*, or reincarnated lamas.

"With regards to reincarnation, it lies completely with His Holiness because it is His Holiness who is going to be reborn," Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong or leader of the India-based Central Tibetan Administration, tells the Financial Times. "So it will be [the] people or institutions that he will entrust [who will] look for his reincarnation and he might leave definite signs as to where he will be born."

At the same time, the community is starting to make preparations for "logistics" and other arrangements that will accompany the Dalai Lama's passing, says the Sikyong. This includes how to communicate with the international community and how to accommodate what are expected to be large numbers of international visitors to Dharamshala, if he dies there. "As an administration or a government, like every government around the world, there needs to be protocols developed in such an eventuality whenever that comes, and those are being prepared," he says.

Meanwhile, Tibetan exiles and foreign analysts say China, which claims it has the final say over the appointment as the country's former Qing dynasty emperors had in the past, is cementing preparations for its own parallel selection process. They believe this might be a rerun of its installation of a Panchen Lama – Tibetan Buddhism's second spiritual leader – in 1995. (Exiles say the Panchen Lama is not recognised by the majority of Tibetans.)

The transition, when it comes, could emerge as a new and potent source of friction between China and India, which has hosted the Dalai Lama since he fled into exile in 1959, at a time when the two Asian giants are at odds over their shared border. The long-simmering dispute flared into deadly violence in eastern Ladakh in 2020.

It will almost certainly resonate in the US at a time of already intense Sino-American rivalry. The current Dalai Lama has vocal bipartisan support. The Tibet Policy and Support Act, passed in 2020, calls for sanctions to be imposed on any Chinese officials that interfere in the process of selecting Tibetan leaders, including the Dalai Lama. In December, Washington slapped sanctions on two Chinese officials for alleged "serious human rights violations" in Tibet.

The process also promises to be an extraordinary spectacle, as Chinese communist leaders seek to shape and spin a religious ritual guided by visions, portents and centuries of tradition – a notion that Tibetans in exile deride.

"On the one hand they believe in communism, which calls Buddhism or any religion an opium, and at the same time they are interested in recognising the reincarnation, which is very much a religious thing," says Lhakdor, a monk who serves as director of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamshala. "This is rank sheer lying and using force."

For China's Communist party, securing a smooth transition is crucial to ensuring not only political control over the country's roughly 7m Tibetans



## The looming succession battle over the Dalai Lama

'When one lama dies, then the followers and others form a search party and ... look for a child of [the right] age'

but also stability in a region with one of the country's most volatile borders.

Known in China as the Tibet Autonomous Region, the area's inhabitants are nominally guaranteed some independence in areas such as education and language as an ethnic minority under Chinese law. But in reality, while China says it has brought greater development and tourism to the region, it has ruled it with an iron hand, critics say, imposing martial law in the 1980s, maintaining tight censorship, controlling religious teaching and arresting dissidents.

One of the foundational elements of the party's own narrative about modern China is that in 1950 it "liberated" Tibet, then an independent country, from economic backwardness and feudal serfdom. If the Tibetan succession process proves messy, or if a potential 15th Dalai Lama is not a docile supporter of Beijing, that version of history will be harder to sustain.

"If there are two Dalai Lamas, it will come down to how people inside Tibet react," says Tansen Sen, professor of history at New York University Shanghai. "Ultimately, are they [the party] going to be able to convince the Tibetan people?" Consulting Tibetans, he adds, "is not something they really have invested a lot of time on".

### 'A look of joy on his face'

The current, 14th Dalai Lama was identified in 1937, four years after his predecessor's death, in the farming village of

Taktser in what is now China's Qinghai province, which then was on the fringes of the Tibetan region of Amdo.

A reincarnated lama can be located on the basis of senior Buddhist clergy's visions, or through other ritual practices. The deceased lama's followers will visit certain children to see whether they are drawn to them or are familiar with the deceased's belongings.

"When one lama dies, then the followers and others form a search party and go to different places and look for a child of around [the right] age," explains Lhakdor, the archivist. "And then ask the question whether anything extraordinarily or unusual has happened in the family, things like that."

After the death of the current Dalai Lama's predecessor in 1933, then-independent Tibet's clerical leaders in Lhasa dispatched three search parties. One trekked deep into Amdo on the basis of a vision from the Tibetan regent at the time, the Reting Rinpoche, at the sacred lake of Lhamo La-tso.

Hearing word of a local two-year-old called Lhamo Thondup, the party visited his family. They were impressed when the toddler pulled at a rosary the party's leader was wearing around his neck and correctly identified him by his Buddhist name.

On a second visit, in the account of the Dalai Lama's biographer Alexander Norman, they were greeted by the boy, who was wearing a jumpsuit and "had a look of joy on his face". He then correctly identified objects that had belonged to the deceased 13th Dalai Lama, including a rosary, a cane, a length of fabric and a drum.

Tibetan exiles have indicated they will follow similar traditional practices after the spiritual leader's death.

For his part, the Dalai Lama has made it clear that China should have no say in his reincarnation. In a 2011 statement, he said that when he was "about 90", he would consult with high lamas, the Tibetan public and other followers of Tibetan Buddhism and "re-evaluate whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue or not".

The speech also raised the possibility of an "emanation" who would take the title and role while he was still alive. He said it was "particularly inappropriate"

for the Chinese communists, who explicitly reject the idea of past and future lives, to "meddle in the system of reincarnation".

In other remarks, the spiritual leader has said he will not be reborn in a Tibet that is "not free". He has spent much of his time recently in Buddhist communities outside China, including India's northern Ladakh territory, prompting speculation that the next Dalai Lama might come from there. Two previous Dalai Lamas were born outside Tibet.

"The succession is something that's exercising everyone's minds, because there are so many hopes and expectations centred around the Dalai Lama," says Amitabh Mathur, a former adviser to the Indian ministry of home affairs on Tibet.

The British and Tibetans drew up the border between Tibet and what was then British India in the Simla treaty of 1914. Today Beijing disputes it, arguing that Tibet was under Chinese control at the time and had no right to negotiate its own boundaries.

The frontier has been a source of lasting conflict between China and India. The two countries fought a war over it in 1962 and have clashed repeatedly along the Line of Actual Control, the disputed de facto border. In 2020 Indian and Chinese troops fought in and around the Galwan valley in Ladakh in brutal hand-to-hand combat at high altitudes that killed at least 24.

In recent years, China has invested heavily in infrastructure in Tibet, expanding airports and approving the construction of new ones, according to state media. It has also opened a 435-kilometre high-speed railway to Lhasa. China touts the works as a means to raise low living standards in one of the country's poorest regions but they also have strategic military objectives, analysts say. But the infrastructure drive has been watched with alarm in India.

"Now we have a lot of infrastructure in Tibet. I think it's not only for the people's prosperity but also because Tibet is very huge, very large," says Qian Feng, director of the research department at the National Strategy Institute at Tsinghua University in Beijing. "We use good infrastructure to safeguard our borders and we do not want any foreign

powers to take our territory again."

The prospect of having two competing Dalai Lamas, based in China and India, threatens to make tensions between the two countries worse.

Tibetan analysts and exiles believe Beijing's replacement of a Panchen Lama chosen by the Dalai Lama nearly two decades ago could be a template for what might happen when he dies. Notwithstanding the Communist party's embrace of atheism – eight years ago President Xi Jinping said members must be "unyielding Marxist atheists" – China's leadership has steadily inserted itself into the business of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, and the identification of *tulkus*.

In the early 1990s, Beijing indicated it would allow Tibetans to use traditional processes to select reincarnated lamas. But in 1995 the party's stance hardened. That year, after the Dalai Lama chose a new Panchen Lama, Beijing abducted the boy and his family. They have not been seen since, prompting regular calls for their release. Beijing installed its own Panchen Lama, who lives mostly in the Chinese capital and has said that the state alone can select Tibetan spiritual leaders and authorise searches for reincarnated lamas.

In 2007, China's central government issued an edict formalising these regulations. Beijing has installed four-person Communist party working groups in every Tibetan village, part of whose job is to ensure that everything goes smoothly during the transition, experts believe. China's propaganda machine has reinforced its claims that it has ultimate control over the selection process. In a recent documentary, experts describe how the selection process for the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama is controlled by the Communist party.

Robert Barnett, a Tibet specialist at Soas, University of London, says there are indications that the party is already preparing for the transition process. The regional government has reportedly set up a 25-person "preparatory search committee" probably led by Tibet's top official, the party secretary, as it did in the 1990s for the Panchen Lama. "This will almost certainly be the same set-up," says Barnett.

Tenzin Lekshay, a spokesman for the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamshala, says that Chinese authorities are preparing young lamas inside Tibet "to be in the search team to recruit or appoint the next Dalai Lama".

The exile communities' Sikyong is scathing about the notion of "two Dalai Lamas". Even if China attempts to control the process, he says, "when and if" the time comes, the exiles will choose their own. "Would China want a life-long headache on their hands, or not?" he adds.

"Let's see whether His Holiness the Dalai Lama outlives the Communist party or the Communist party outlives the Dalai Lama," he says. "It's something they have to think about."

He adds: "That's why I say Chinese leaders need more common sense."

### A middle way?

Some analysts have discerned in the Dalai Lama's 2011 remarks on his succession a potential source of reconciliation. "He's not deciding what the system will be, what he's saying is it could be anything," says Barnett. "That's a pre-negotiating signal."

While often sharp in his rhetoric about China's communist leadership, the Tibetan spiritual leader has pursued a "middle way" in relations with Beijing. That means not seeking independence for Tibet – a notion which enjoys no formal support from any country – while pursuing autonomy for all Tibetans living inside China.

But tougher attitudes are emerging among a new generation of younger Tibetan exiles, some of whom support independence. "We continue to fight for the complete independence of Tibet, based on our historical independence status," says Sonam Tsering, 31, general secretary of the Tibetan Youth Congress, one of the exiles' largest non-governmental groups. "And we keep on saying that we don't trust the current communist government."

Tsering fled his family home in central Tibet on foot at the age of 10 with a group of about 40 people, many of them children. They went first to Nepal and then Dharamshala, a journey that took more than two months.

Before departing, he remembers being asked by his parents if he wanted to "go to India to get the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama". He says: "Out of five siblings, they chose me." He had to cut contact with his parents out of concerns for their safety, he says.

Tsering takes solace in the fact that the Dalai Lama has said his reincarnation will be born in a "free" country. "He has kindly accepted that he will live long enough to solve the Tibetan issue," Tsering says.

A young monk at a Dalai Lama birthday celebration in July. The exile community's political leadership say the succession process – which they frame in religious terms – lies entirely in the control of 'His Holiness' AP

'If there are two Dalai Lamas, it will come down to how people inside Tibet react'



## The FT View



## FINANCIAL TIMES

"Without fear and without favour"

ft.com/opinion

## Time is up for the House of Lords

**Careful reform is needed to end the practice of unelected legislators**

If replacing the UK's House of Lords was simple, it would have happened long ago. The arguments for reforming parliament's second chamber are powerful. Its patronage system begets cronyism and worse. Filled with appointees, political apparatchiks, party donors, 26 Church of England bishops and more than 90 hereditary peers, it is a democratic outrage. It is elderly, geographically and demographically unrepresentative and, with nearly 800 members, it is far too large.

It is also weak. It can delay legislation but cannot ultimately defy the elected Commons. Yet this weakness is why it survives. The Lords, which returns from summer recess this week, also does vital work as a revising chamber, and does it well without threatening gridlock. Its

debates are infinitely superior to those in the Commons and it offers a way to parachute ministerial expertise into parliament. Yet, as recent furore over Boris Johnson's and Liz Truss's honours lists show, it is being abused as a place of patronage. Both handed political allies and advisers peerages. But while all see its flaws, it endures because there is no consensus on how to replace it.

Sir Keir Starmer has committed his Labour party to replace the existing Lords with an elected chamber, but his resolve has recently appeared to waver. There is talk of "interim" reform. Some changes are easy to envisage and support. The 92 hereditary peers need to go. Birth cannot entitle one to a place in a legislature. Other options include time limits or a compulsory retirement age, and a "one in, two out" policy to reduce its size. The automatic seats for bishops should be scrapped or at least reduced.

Beyond such reforms, accord soon breaks down. A report for Starmer by Gordon Brown, the former prime

minister, recommended replacing the Lords with a smaller elected Assembly of the Nations and Regions to improve geographic representation, with a specific remit and powers to protect the UK's devolution settlement and reject laws changing the constitution.

Any discussion on the future shape of the Lords needs to start not with a debate on membership but with absolute clarity on its purpose and its powers. The Brown report offers some of that purpose but falls short on the issue of powers and looks too driven by his desire for a new wheeze to stave off Scottish independence, though it is unlikely to satisfy separatists without spending powers or the right to initiate legislation.

Aside from the role in protecting devolution, Brown proposed largely similar powers to now. Yet in calling for the chamber to be elected and at different times to the Commons, he has created the conditions for it to challenge MPs' supremacy by claiming

Any discussion on its future shape should start not with a debate on membership but with clarity on its purpose and its powers

greater legitimacy. Precise rules will be needed to avert that.

There will also be a clear loss to its essential revising role as experienced legislators are replaced with aspiring party hacks. If it is seen merely as a stepping stone to the Commons, it will fail in its central mission, especially if reform means the loss of independent and often expert cross-benchers. There is an argument for giving seats to elected mayors and leaders of devolved parliaments. But all debate on its future must start by recognising, safeguarding and ideally strengthening its primary job as a revising chamber, fixing poor legislation.

The time for an appointed chamber is clearly past but the next steps must not be rushed and ought to command cross-party agreement. If elected, Starmer should bring forward his interim reforms while still making clear that the commitment to an elected chamber is non-negotiable. Whatever the complexities, it is time to consign unelected legislators to history.

## Opinion Society

## Trump's anti-hero status is making him unbeatable

Ben Hickey



Jemima Kelly

Anyone had hoped that the dubious distinction of becoming the first American president to have a police mugshot taken might be a humiliating or humbling experience for the person concerned — or that four criminal indictments, 91 felony counts and an enforced tour of US courtrooms in the run-up to an election might precipitate some kind of fall in popularity — they must be feeling somewhat disillusioned.

Since the release of the image of Donald Trump in Fulton County jail — showing the former president adopting a thuggish pose, brows furrowed and eyes glaring contumaciously up towards the camera — he has only increased his lead. Trump is now more than 50 points clear of his nearest rival Ron DeSantis in some surveys, and a poll by The Economist and YouGov last week found he would win in a run-off between him and Joe Biden. In RealClearPolitics' polling average, the

current president is still ahead, but by less than a percentage point.

### Among those who plan to vote for him, he is more trusted than their own family or friends

Far from working against him, Trump's mugshot became instantly iconic; "next-level", as Elon Musk put it on X, formerly Twitter. Trump himself even took to Musk's platform for the first time since he was banned in January 2021 to share the picture, along with a link to his website where supporters could make donations. His campaign said that it had made more than \$9.4m since the mugshot was released, including \$864,000 from selling 24,000 coffee mugs printed with the image (geddit?) and \$1.7m from T-shirts.

Many worry that all his legal woes are turning Trump into a "martyr", but I'm not sure that quite captures it. It would imply, apart from anything else, that Trump is being persecuted for some kind of strongly held beliefs or principles. But he is in possession of neither — apart from the belief in himself. No, Trump is no feeble martyr. He is something altogether more "based" — to borrow the internet slang-word for someone who is respected for paying no regard to political correctness or even basic morality. Trump is the ultimate American anti-hero.

An anti-hero, a word normally associated with fictional characters, is someone who plays the central role in

a story despite possessing none of the virtues associated with a traditional heroic lead character. In a 2022 paper, a pair of researchers described the anti-hero as "a bewitching, unrepentant, amoral outsider who breaks old rules and creates new ones while leaving chaos in his wake".

They argued that Trump's popularity was "foretold by decades of pop-cultural obsession with, and adulation for, the anti-hero". Tony Soprano in *The Sopranos*, Walter White in *Breaking Bad*, or Michael Corleone in *The Godfather* are examples of the cultural popularity of the anti-hero before Trump.

"People love [the anti-hero] because they are fascinated by their amoral or even immoral stance — a stance which they cannot really take because they would get into trouble," says Igor Prusa, co-author of the paper and a lecturer at Ambis University in Prague. "We admire them despite their transgressions, corruption and wrongdoing, which become a kind of aesthetic achievement."

The anti-hero might commit or be implicated in evil acts, but he is not to be confused with a simple villain: not only is he the protagonist but there is also nuance to his character. He might be twisted, but he is not pure evil. Trump, likewise, might be a liar and a cheat, who shows contempt for democracy and has been found liable for sexual abuse, but he is not without all sorts of redeeming features: charisma, charm, relatability, huge stamina and the ability to be very funny, among other things.

Another strength, which plays a large part in the anti-hero's appeal, is that Trump is unafraid to utter things that others will not. "We love anti-heroes because they say what shouldn't be said, and they do what shouldn't be done," Prusa tells me.

Trump's willingness to go off script rather than to stick to what he thinks he *should* say, is surely a key part of his appeal. Despite his countless lies, it means people trust him: a CBS/YouGov poll last month found that among likely Republican primary voters who believe "honesty is very important", 61 per cent would vote for Trump. Even more astonishingly, among those who plan to vote for him, Trump is more trusted than their own family members or friends.

The question is: can anyone beat an anti-hero, and how? The fictional versions often tend to bring about their own downfalls — certainly a possibility for Trump, but not one that can be relied upon. In the real world, what might be more effective are the kind of virtues associated with heroism: courage, conviction, humility, honesty and fortitude. These are, unfortunately, in short supply. That makes Trump's increasingly anti-heroic status increasingly threatening.

jemima.kelly@ft.com

## Letters

## The renminbi's international ambitions grow apace

Lex rightly argues that the US dollar is set to maintain its position as the world's leading currency ("Brics/dollar: reserve preserved", Lex, August 23). However, developing countries have been looking for alternatives. The New Development Bank — the Brics bank — is the latest to diversify from the dollar, with about 30 per cent of its total lending to be available in local currencies by 2026.

It makes sense for large developing countries — especially China — to replace the dollar with their own currencies in bilateral transactions, but this is not going to be easy. Having embarked on a policy to

internationalise the renminbi, China knows that non-residents are reluctant to accept payments in renminbi and, more crucially, hold renminbi rather than exchange them for dollars.

Since 2010, this policy has resulted in about 30 per cent of China's bilateral trade settled in renminbi. The renminbi is the fifth most used currency in international payments and has the fifth largest share of foreign reserves. Its pace of progress has been remarkable; however, the gap with the dollar remains substantial. The renminbi's share of international payments, at 2.8 per cent, is tiny compared with the dollar's

(42 per cent), and so is the share of foreign reserves (2.6 per cent against 59 per cent for the dollar).

The weight of the renminbi in the international monetary system underscores the fact that the world's second-largest economy and largest exporter doesn't have a fully-fledged international currency. If great nations have great currencies — to paraphrase Nobel Prize winner Robert Mundell — then for China, not having a "great currency" is a source of vulnerabilities. In addition, as Lex notes, sanctions on Russia have highlighted the risks of holding foreign reserves in dollar-denominated assets while

hostile geopolitics has increased the costs inherent to the dollar system compared with its benefits.

What about then moving to an alternative system? China can create alternative infrastructure for lending and cross-border payments that many developing countries would be willing to sign for. But this would lead to fragmenting the international monetary system, hindering international policy co-operation with risks for financial stability.

**Professor Paola Subacchi**  
Chair, Advisory Board, Queen Mary Global Policy Institute, Queen Mary University, London E1, UK

**On Schengen and the euro, UK could still get opt-outs**

Just as opinion polls show support for Britain rejoining the EU passing the 60 per cent mark, Robert Shrimmsley pours cold water on the idea, claiming that "rejoining would mean a commitment to abolish the pound and give up independent immigration controls" (Opinion, August 31).

Really? The EU now has seven member states which have not joined the euro, six of which show no intention of joining. The EU is also embarking on a process of accepting eight new members, including Ukraine, which has kindled a recognition that a two-tier Europe — with some in the euro, some not — is inevitable.

When it comes to negotiations, it should be possible to agree the same opt-out, with a right to join later, that we previously had as a member. The same applies to Schengen, all the more so as Ireland, with which we share a common travel area, is also not a Schengen member. As to immigration, we would do well to remember that most migration to Britain was and is from outside the EU — entirely a matter for national, not EU, regulation.

We can be as open or as restrictive as we choose. EU citizens coming to the UK, always a minority, were exercising a reciprocal right of free movement which worked both ways, and was subject to conditions (of finding work or being self-sufficient) that successive British governments never enforced, but could if they chose.

It is in the EU's interest too that Britain rejoins the main framework for co-operation among our highly interdependent neighbouring countries. They too were hurt by Brexit, albeit not as much as Britain. They will not be going out of their way to make this more difficult. Their main worry would be to avoid the whole Brexit saga being repeated in the future.

If the current trend in public opinion continues (and even more if it is amplified by our future leaders), they will be reassured that that is unlikely.

**Richard Corbett**  
Former Labour Party Leader in the European Parliament  
Shipley, West Yorkshire, UK

**The nature of bribery is it takes two to tango**

Surely there is an asymmetrical approach to justice in the prosecution ("UK charges Nigeria's former oil minister with taking bribes", Report, August 23) of Nigeria's former oil minister for taking bribes which can only lead to the continuation of this corruption. Where are the prosecutions of those making the bribes?

**Raj Parkash**  
London W4, UK



Novelist Jane Austen (1775-1817) 'still offers the best advice on dating'

**COP28 cannot ignore the global south's oil demand**

John Kerry, the US climate envoy, has pointed out a pivotal question: how do we engage the oil sector in climate change mitigation ("Kerry presses oil and gas chiefs for net zero commitment", Interview, August 29).

COP28 in Dubai presents a perfect opportunity, as the climate summit will be hosted by a major oil producer. Drawing on existing knowledge of the petroleum sector, one could easily assume that the industry holds the silver bullet for decarbonisation.

Gas-flaring alone, which extensively occurs during the production process, contributes around 350m tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. This equates to the emissions of a small industrialised country. The reduction of methane emissions across the industry chain, through modern electric appliances, offers even greater potential, something that remains largely unexplored.

However, the crux remains the growing oil demand among emerging economies. While the consumption of naphtha, diesel and liquefied petroleum gas has stagnated in the global north, the world's demand for oil products has tripled since 1980.

Africa and Asia still have room for growth, with the Indian economy alone being three times more oil-intensive — comparing oil consumption growth against gross domestic product — than the EU economy. Given this, the real issue is how to address the incremental greenhouse gas emissions that are very likely to occur with the global south's thirst for development.

**Andrei Belyi**  
Adjunct Professor in Energy Law and Policy of the Centre for Climate Change, Energy and Environmental Law at the University of Eastern Finland; Board Member, Balesene, Tallinn, Estonia

**Reform of property tax should look at capital gains**

The editorial highlighting major problems with our taxation of property (FT View, August 29) also needs to look at capital gains on homeowners' main residences. Our research with the Resolution Foundation found that house price growth over the past 20 years had delivered an untaxed and unearned windfall gain worth £3tn, representing a fifth of all wealth in Britain.

Most of the gains have accrued to those who already have significant assets. The least wealthy third of households gained less than £1,000 per adult on average, compared to an average gain of £174,000 for the wealthiest 10 per cent.

Some of this rise in wealth has reduced in recent months with house prices falling but it remains significant. Reforms are far from easy but are critical if we are to sidestep big cuts to public spending and avoid further tax increases on people's wages.

**Mubin Haq**  
Chief Executive Officer, Abrid Financial Fairness Trust, Edinburgh, UK

**On generative artificial intelligence, you're spot on**

John Thornhill is spot on in critiquing the avalanche of enthusiasm for generative artificial intelligence (Opinion, August 18).

I might add that several luminaries in linguistics such as Noam Chomsky and Andrea Moro have shown that the use of human language is not a probabilistic Bayesian process at all, despite those who wish it were so. In adopting language skills, children learn a set of grammar and linguistic rules, actually located in a particular part of the brain.

And besides the ongoing errors likely from these models — garbage in, garbage out — a deeper thought is what these systems tell us about human speech, written or spoken, and its reference to any existential reality. This is what science deals with.

Jiddu Krishnamurti, the Indian mystic, saw this decades ago and asked what would we do when machines thought for us?

But machines do not, currently, come close to passing the Turing Test for full machine mimicry of humans.

Buddhism centuries ago classified most human thought, and speech was one of the three natures of things — the imaginary, the others being the dependent and the consummate or perfected nature of things.

Unfortunately, most humans are flooded by a mental narrative of ego-based greed, hatred and anger-based judgments and narrowing prejudices.

**Michael Ayres**  
San Francisco, CA, US

**University is chance to read Aristotle and Austen**

Regarding Emma Jacobs' column "University is more than just a spring-board to a career" (Opinion, August 22), I think that life-long engagement with the best works of literature, history and philosophy is an important part of being human.

However even most of the people disposed to believe this (who are a fraction of us) will not develop such engagement unless they have someone who will point them to the "best that has been thought and said in the world" — to quote Matthew Arnold — and help these people to develop and acquire appreciation and passion for it.

Most of us have little chance to encounter such mentoring but a university with a traditional liberal arts programme is our best opportunity and hope to meet a talented and passionate guide to the humanities.

In his work *To Have or To Be*, Erich Fromm observed that while animals live by instincts, humans need a frame of orientation. This suggests one more point in favour of university education, this one rather utilitarian. Literature, history and philosophy are major sources for developing your frame of orientation. Someone observed that: "Jane Austen still offers the best advice on dating. Aristotle still has the last word on friendship."

**Lenny Gengrinovich**  
Oradell, NJ, US

**Many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip**

Having read Simon Kuper's comment piece on "football's moment to change" (Opinion, August 29), I agree on some of his points, but to call Luis Rubiales, president of the Spanish football federation, "the cartoon villain" and the kiss "the grotesque climax of the women's World Cup" is too harsh.

The story about the kiss, now heard around the world, ruined a great tournament and leaves a bitter taste for all the fans who made this tournament the most watched World Cup in female soccer history.

Instead of the Spanish team and the country celebrating a tremendous achievement, it will now be remembered for this. Sad.

**C Neil DeCrescenzo**  
Brick, NJ, US

**Rejoin rejoinder**

Robert Shrimmsley ("Rejoining the EU remains a distant dream", Opinion, August 31) reports opinion polls show a majority for rejoining the EU, though he does add that polls are unreliable. But weren't polls similarly suggesting a Remain vote before the referendum?

**Lord Leigh of Hurley**  
House of Lords, London SW1, UK

## Opinion

## Ukraine cannot win against Russia now, but victory by 2025 is possible

Richard Barrons

Ukraine's current counteroffensive will not throw Russia out — not that anyone expected it to. Nor is it likely to cut the occupation in half before the winter, which might have been one of the more optimistic aims. It has, however, shown how the Russian army can be beaten. Not in 2023, but in 2024 or 2025. Thus the refrain among western allies of supporting Kyiv "for as long as it takes".

The modest progress achieved this summer shows that, while overcoming a well-prepared conventional battlefield defence may be one of the hardest operations in war, it can be done. The Ukrainian military has only breached the first line of trenches to take Robotyve in the south, having battled for weeks through minefields to get there. Progress is about eight miles

with another 55 miles to go (through three lines of defences) before reaching the sea. The aim is to cut the land bridge to Crimea. To the north and south of Bakhmut, advances amount to about five miles with 10 miles to the Russian main defensive line and 60 miles to the border.

The presumed assassination of Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin and the top leadership of his mercenary group has had no effect on the fighting, save perhaps for stiffening the troops' loyalty to Vladimir Putin. Russian forces are stretched, worn out and short of reserves but unless they simply give up, this will still be a long haul.

Ukraine has enough air defence to cover about a third of the country. Shortages of artillery ammunition were resolved only temporarily by the US providing cluster shells. Ukraine will take until mid-2024 to reconstitute a sufficiently powerful air force and is very short of the key equipment needed to clear mines. Fixing all this will take the war into next year at the least.

It would be catastrophic to allow what is left of 10th Corps, Ukraine's uncon-

mited reserve, to be smashed to pieces on Russian defences because of a hasty timetable. Big wars — and this is a war for national survival along nearly 1,000km of front line — are fought at the scale and pace they evolve into. Defeating the Russian invasion relies on five crucial steps.

First, Kyiv must not press for substantial battlefield success before the means

**Kyiv must not press for substantial battlefield success before the means exist to deliver it**

exist to deliver it. War is never best conducted as a close-run thing: Ukraine must be made stronger and Russia weaker or there will be stalemate.

Second, relentless pressure must be maintained on the Russian occupation throughout the winter. This means sustaining the successful "bite and hold" operations (advancing in short bounds to reduce casualties and stay within

artillery and air defence cover), within the limits of sustainable manpower and ammunition supply. Pinning Russian forces to the front will steadily erode strength, will and reserves.

Third, Ukraine must systemically weaken Russia's military grip on its territories into 2024 and beyond. Smashing the artillery arm is important, and so too are attacks on deeper targets across occupied Ukraine. The objective is to destroy Russian military capability faster than it can be replaced, rendering it unable to withstand a stronger future Ukrainian offensive. Kyiv is constrained by the western bar on use of its equipment and munitions in Russia itself — but it must still apply its ingenuity and courage to strike beyond its borders.

Fourth, the Russian Black Sea Fleet must be neutralised as an engine for Moscow's devastating cruise missile strikes and a key constraint on the export of grain. Ukraine's own missile strikes and rapidly expanding maritime drone capability can damage Russian ships faster than they are replaced. By spring 2024, the Black Sea Fleet should be playing no major part in this war.

The fifth and most important aspect is to accept that this war turns on the defence industrial capacity of the west and Ukraine as the determining factor in military success. More could be provided from stocks, but Ukraine's campaign now relies on allies ramping up their defence industries. Ammunition from expanded production lines will take until at least mid-2024 to arrive; this should enable a major turning point in Kyiv's offensive capability.

Ukraine must win on the battlefield to survive as a state. Not only is this victory vital to Nato's security and its ongoing relationship with Russia, it will also influence China's appetite for military adventure. The current counteroffensive shows Putin's occupation can be beaten. It will take longer and cost more than we hoped, but hope isn't enough. The west must now commit to the harder campaign ahead or condemn Ukraine to fighting without the prospect of winning.

The writer is a former general in the British Army and was previously commander of Joint Forces Command

## Why are we wasting our limited supply of green hydrogen?

Aoife O'Leary

Shipping and aviation have barely begun to decarbonise and, unlike other industries, they don't have many easy options for doing so.

There are ways for us to reduce emissions in those two sectors in the short term: increase efficiency, use wind power on ships and fly less. We need to do all of that. Ultimately, though, these industries will require new fuels to replace oil — and those fuels are likely to be made from hydrogen.

But hydrogen doesn't come easy. The green version of the fuel is made via the energy-intensive process of splitting water molecules with clean electricity — and if you are converting it to another fuel (such as methanol for shipping or synthetic kerosene for aviation), further energy is lost. Plus, hydrogen is tricky to store and can't be transported without serious energy usage. You can imagine how much that is going to cost.

The hydrogen industry touts the fuel as a solution to almost all sectors of the economy that need to be decarbonised — it is cited as an option for heating homes and for filling up our cars with. But there are better alternatives. As long as heat pumps and electric cars exist, it makes little sense to turn electricity into hydrogen, rather than using it directly.

Building out a supply of hydrogen for use in sectors that don't need it, rather than focusing on those that do, will delay the transition to a post-oil world by decades. We need regulation to ensure that the aviation and shipping industries can turn to hydrogen instead. And with recent increased investor con-

**Using the fuel in sectors that don't need it will delay the transition to a post-oil world**

fidence in the fuel, governments need to make sure that it is not wasted.

As things stand, the aviation sector has successfully created a new acronym: SAFs, or Sustainable Aviation Fuels. But, despite what the name suggests, SAFs include unsustainable components too. Yet when I speak to industry insiders, they cite these hybrid fuels as the reason why they are unwilling to push governments for policies which will hasten the roll out of hydrogen.

SAFs covers everything from carbon-intensive biofuels to green hydrogen-made synthetic kerosene. Biofuels, when made from crops, often emit more carbon than the fuels they replace once you consider indirect land use change. While they can also be made from truly sustainable feedstocks such as used cooking oil, there is a very limited supply of those inputs.

Meanwhile, in the shipping world, Maersk, the world's second-largest shipping container company, has pledged to move to sustainable fuels. However, its chief executive has announced that even he doesn't think there will be enough green methanol available for the company's recently ordered ships.

The EU has brought in new legislation to decarbonise aviation and shipping. But the legislation encourages a move to lower carbon fuels (such as those dodgy biofuels), rather than the lowest carbon sustainable fuel (green hydrogen). Meanwhile, politicians are sending the limited hydrogen supply we have to sectors that don't need it — in the UK, for example, there are plans to trial hydrogen heating and other alternative heating solutions by 2025.

There's a woeful lack of policy supporting the production of green hydrogen for shipping and aviation. That, in turn, is slowing down demand and discouraging investment. There is a gap between the number of hydrogen projects planned and the number that go ahead, due to a lack of demand.

Regulation stimulates innovation and would guarantee that demand. If aviation and shipping companies are to have the hydrogen they need, they need to send clear signals to green hydrogen producers as soon as possible.

But without legislation, both industries will have to take on this cost voluntarily and, as we've seen, even Maersk doesn't feel capable of doing that. It's time to plug the hydrogen gap — for the sake of a greener, more efficient future.

The writer is the chief executive of Opportunity Green, a not-for-profit, and the director of the Sasha Coalition

## The EU is poised for a giant leap

EUROPE

Martin Sandbu



The cliché that European countries only unite in the face of imminent catastrophe is captured in Jean Monnet's oft-quoted claim that "Europe will be made in crises, and it will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises".

But that cliché belies the EU's proven ability to pursue deeper integration as a deliberate, long-term political goal. Take the creation of the single market in the 1980s, the adoption of the euro in the 1990s, and the absorption of the ex-communist bloc in the 2000s. All of these tied Europe more closely together — not as desperate responses to acute crises, but as products of ambitious political choices to pool more national sovereignty. The achievements look even more remarkable when one considers how quickly they were fulfilled.

This bit of corrective history is worth keeping in mind when assessing the call, delivered by European Council president Charles Michel in a speech last week, to make the EU ready to accept new members as soon as 2030. Far from being an idle fantasy, the proposal is in fact the sort of move the EU has proved adept at making time and again.

Michel's intervention does not by itself make the admission of new members any more likely. And it is not novel — foreign policy experts proposed a 2030 readiness target earlier this year. Michel is merely pushing on doors that are already being forced open by political necessity.

By the end of this year, EU leaders must decide whether to open formal membership negotiations with Ukraine. It is inconceivable that they will decline to do so. Kyiv is doing its homework well enough that the European Commission will give it a positive assessment in an upcoming formal review. And Ukraine's costly counteroffensive will pile political pressure on its EU allies — to either reward success with progress on its path to European integration, or not to add to its woes by blocking it. It is also accepted that if Ukraine moves ahead, so must other would-be members, including countries in the western Balkans.

So the question is not whether negotiations will start, nor even how or when they will end, but how they will transform the bloc itself. Two debates are already stirring.

The first relates to the EU's ability to make decisions if prospective members join, expanding the numbers from 27 towards the mid-30s. Both France and Germany have emphasised the need to reform decision-making before admitting new members. At times this has been seen as a way to kick enlargement into the long grass. But the brutal return of geopolitical thinking to centre stage in Europe means that enlargement is



increasingly seen as unavoidable. Hence the growing intensity of serious thinking about reform.

A Franco-German working group kicked it off at the start of the year. In May, Germany's foreign minister hosted a new "group of friends on qualified majority voting" in foreign and security policy, to replace current unanimity requirements. Even a country as traditionally sceptical of integration as Denmark attended as an observer — and its foreign minister has broken its taboo on more majority voting in the EU. There is talk of moving away from unanimity in other areas too, such as tax questions.

Against these appeals for more majority voting, Poland's prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki has argued that the many decisions taken since the pan-

**The brutal return of geopolitical thinking means enlargement is increasingly seen as unavoidable**

democratic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine prove that unanimity is not an obstacle to decisiveness. In addition, many capitals will be sympathetic to Michel's point that unanimity is itself a political strength. Even the friends of majority voting recognise that safeguards are needed to respect key national interests.

The second debate is — inevitably in a multi-nation union — about money. Michel said publicly what many capitals are already admitting: that the next multiyear EU budget, for 2028-2034, will have to be drawn up for a possibly larger membership. That means that the budget talks, traditionally the most painful and exhausting moment in the bloc's political cycle, will be even harder the next time round.

It is clear that if Ukraine or other candidates join, the redistribution key will favour the newer, poorer, members. Many current net recipients will become net contributors, because today's net payers will not accept simply upping their payments to cover the newcomers' needs. But nor will they be

able to resist the pressure for a bigger budget, especially given the imperative for more investments in common European priorities such as net zero emissions, energy security and defence.

Every seven-year budget round produces futile talk of greater funds in return for fundamental reform of how it is spent. This could be the time when the political conditions are propitious for turning such talk into action. The sheer weight of new priorities combined with enlargement could be what overcomes resistance to reprioritising old spending. And for the first time, there is a model — the post-pandemic recovery fund — for how to tie EU funds to politically agreed milestones and joint priorities, rather than simply handing money from rich to poor countries.

The past three years of crisis produced a more cohesive EU, as Monnet predicted. But that reactive unity may be nothing compared to the deliberate leap EU leaders are about to embark on for the rest of the decade.

[martin.sandbu@ft.com](mailto:martin.sandbu@ft.com)

## The Canada conundrum

ECONOMICS

Tej Parikh



Canada rarely makes the global news. When it does, it is often in reference to the exploits of Canadian entertainers — Justin Bieber, Céline Dion and Drake. For a country of about 40mn people, roughly the population of California, that is not a bad return on celebrity icons. But while the country may exceed expectations in the pop and rap arena, it underwhelms on the international economic stage, relative to its vast potential.

By land mass it is the second-largest country in the world, with the longest coastline. Bookended by the vast Pacific and Atlantic oceans it has enormous trading advantages, alongside access to the largely untapped Arctic to its north. It is a net energy exporter; it has the

third-largest proven oil reserves and is the fifth-largest producer of natural gas — but it also boasts large deposits of critical minerals vital to the green energy transition. And, of course, it borders the world's largest economy.

By any measure, Canada's geography suggests it could be an economic powerhouse. But few ever talk about it in such terms. By purchasing power parity, its economy is ranked 15th globally by size, behind the likes of Turkey, Italy and Mexico. The OECD has forecast Canadian per capita gross domestic product growth up to 2060 to be the lowest among advanced nations.

Canada boomed at the turn of the 20th century. Settlements grew, industrialisation was in full swing, investment rolled in from the UK and US. In 1904 Wilfrid Laurier, then prime minister, predicted "the 20th century shall be the century of Canada and Canadian development". Yet, post-second world war expansion gave way to periods of high inflation, rising deficits and low commodity prices. Laurier's forecast was not true for the last century and so far it is not true for the 21st either: PwC's

The World in 2050 report expects Canada's global economic ranking to slip to 22nd by the middle of the century.

Poor productivity is at the heart of the country's growth challenges. In an hour a Canadian worker produces just over 70 per cent of what an American can — that's below the euro area and even the UK based on 2022 data. Many would have expected the resource-rich economy to benefit as globalisation powered

**The country's geography suggests it could be a powerhouse, but few talk about it in such terms**

forward, but its relative labour productivity has actually slipped since 2000.

Canada has aggressively pursued free-trade deals; it is currently the only G7 nation to have such agreements in force with all other G7 members. But it has not been able to take advantage of that. "Two of the economy's previous main drivers of economic growth — natural

resources and manufacturing — have struggled to expand in recent years, due to a combination of a more onerous regulatory backdrop and increased competition from abroad," says Stephen Brown, deputy chief North America economist at Capital Economics.

Researchers at HEC Montreal's Centre for Productivity and Prosperity argue that Canadian industry is not strong enough to compete globally. Indeed, the country's vast size, mountainous geography and provincial legislation may hinder competition, investment and innovation among its companies. The Business Council of Alberta estimates these internal trade barriers are equivalent to a 6.9 per cent tariff on goods. Protectionist measures on top have often coddled Canadian industry.

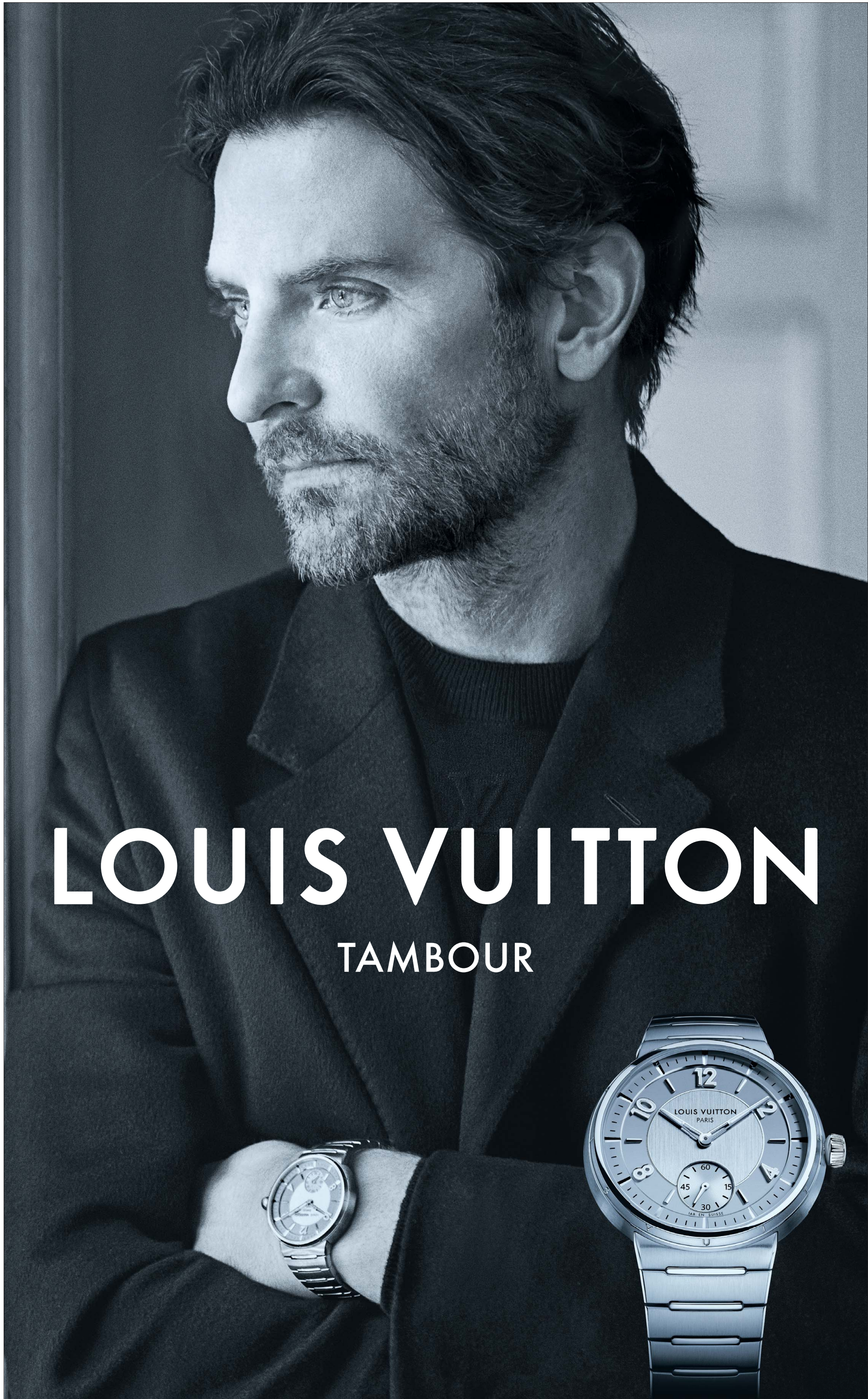
A lot comes down to population. Canada has one of the lowest population densities in the world. Its fertility rate has been declining sharply and it does not have enough people to capitalise on its economic potential. Priorities may also be different from those of other countries. Canada ranks high on health, education and life satisfaction indica-

tors; its leading cities, Calgary, Vancouver, and Toronto, are considered among the world's best to live in. And the country consistently ranks among the top destinations for emigrants.

Canada's attractiveness as a place to live and its openness to immigration means there is scope to turn its demographic problems around. Last year, it achieved its highest annual population growth rate in more than 60 years, in part due to government efforts to recruit migrants. The climate transition is raising demand for its vast copper and nickel resources as well. The melting of the Arctic ice shelf will open new trading opportunities for northern Canada.

Rising up the GDP tables is not the be-all and end-all for any nation. And clearly the Canadian lifestyle is coveted around the world. Yet, as long as current trends in productivity continue, living standards will drop and Canada's enormous economic potential will remain latent. That would be a great shame for the thousands moving there seeking a better life, and for the global economy.

[tej.parikh@ft.com](mailto:tej.parikh@ft.com)



# LOUIS VUITTON

TAMBOUR

